The London School of Economics and Political Science

The Emotional Labor of Sexual Violence Survivors in Mainstream Media:

A Study via Auto-Ethnography and Interviews

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Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

I declare that my thesis consists of 93,325 words.

Abstract

This thesis explores the emotional labor of sexual violence survivors who collaborate repeatedly with mainstream media platforms to publicly share their experiences of trauma and their identities. While the #MeToo movement has yielded a proliferation of media discourse around rape survivors and scholarly analysis of those texts, the labor and media practices *producing* that discourse – and the emotional experiences of the mediated survivors – remain largely invisible.

I combine two methods of data collection in my research: semi-structured interviews with survivors who have maintained visibility in newspapers, television, or radio over the course of years; and an auto-ethnography of my own media experiences as a rape survivor, writer, and activist, from 2008 until 2022. Focusing on the temporality of an individual's 'journey' from private victim to public survivor and inadvertent media worker, I explore how and why survivors choose to 'go public' in the first place, what are the emotional costs of maintaining that visibility, how those costs are justified or compensated, and finally, how intersectional differences impact individual experiences and outcomes.

My research situates individual survivors as agentic in their decisions, who are highly aware of stereotypical representations of rape, and learn to actively negotiate with media platforms about their visibility. Central to my analysis is Hochschild's (1983) theory of emotional labor: Not only must survivors regulate their emotions to communicate effectively about their trauma, but media visibility is produced through their own, often unpaid labor, performed within the workplace of the creative industries. My findings indicate that their emotional labor is intense and multi-layered, a convergence of existing forms of emotional labor embedded in the multiple subjectivities that a public survivor inhabits: as a survivor of trauma, a visibilized female subject, and a media worker. Within the creative industries, where financial compensation and practices of care for workers are often poor, individuals can feel constrained from asking for pay, by an 'economy of believability' which is quick to judge public rape victims as 'gold-diggers.'

In lieu of pay, compensation is sought in emotional rewards and a strategic use of media visibility as publicity for one's self-brand. Ultimately, individuals with cultural capital are privileged in shaping a sustainable, increasingly neoliberal career as a public survivor, while other voices become excluded.

For all who spoke up

And all who stayed silent

Those who made it visible

And those who kept it hidden

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All PhDs demand a lot of their researchers, but it is a particular form of intellectual masochism and self-exploitation to write a PhD that deals so explicitly with your own lived trauma.

The over-riding question in my research was to ask public rape survivors if they felt their work was worth it, due to the emotional toll it might exact on them. However, it is also a question I refrained from asking myself about my doctoral work, because I have long been (and still am) afraid of the answer. When I first applied for a PhD at the LSE nearly ten years ago, I had no idea that the research and writing of it would take up so much of my post-rape life. And that so much of it would also coincide with a career and a personal life I could not have predicted. Balancing my doctoral work with everything else in my life has been the greatest challenge of this PhD, but equally, having to acknowledge and understand the impact of its emotional labor on me.

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Or maybe that is something I already learned from surviving rape. If so, it helps to be reminded of it every day by your presence in my life.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Auto-Ethnography:
Listening to a radio talk show via my laptop, April 2008
London, UK

'*But we're starting the programme this morning with this horrific story of a rape in Colin Glen Forest Park. The PSNI [Police Service of Northern Ireland] are continuing their appeal for information on a horrific sexual assault on Saturday afternoon in broad daylight. The young girl, believed to be of Chinese appearance in her late 20s, was approached by her attacker. He walked and talked with her through the park. He then dragged her into the bushes and carried out the assault. And if you maybe are one of the people who police think may have walked past that young woman in the company of her attacker, they would like to speak to you urgently. And if you have something you'd like to share with us on the programme, [ring] 0845 9555678…*'

- *The Nolan Show, BBC Radio Ulster, Monday, 14 April 2008*[1]

It was two days after my rape, and I sat alone in my London flatshare, Googling 'rape West Belfast.' With a surreal queasiness, I watched as a slew of headlines from Irish news outlets popped up on my search engine page. 'Hunt for rapist after park assault.' 'Sex beast in West Belfast.'

I don't know what compelled me to run that Google search… curiosity? A desire to know more about my case, and perhaps, in knowing more, to somehow feel I had some semblance of control over what was happening?

Then I stumbled upon that morning's hour-long discussion on The Nolan Show, Northern Ireland's most popular radio chat show. Here were complete strangers talking about my rape, what it meant about the safety of Belfast, expressing their concern for me. 'My heart goes out to that wee Chinese girl,' a woman caller said, with empathy in her voice. 'Because her life is now ruined.'

I was mute as I absorbed all this in a state of shock. (Then again, I lived perpetually in a state of shock for many months after my rape.) I may not even have mentioned this radio chat show to any of my friends, because it seemed – at the time – incidental and minor compared to the enormity of the trauma itself.

But as the years passed, the significance of that radio chat show grew on me. And even though the days and weeks after my rape blended into a post-traumatized haze, the memory of listening

[1] https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b009t1jh

to that radio show alone in my flat remains crystal clear. My own story, my own rape announced so forthrightly to the listening public, by media professionals going about their day-to-day work, with nary a concern that I – the victim of that 'horrific' rape – might be listening, too.

My name was not revealed during these news bulletins, so I remained a nameless cipher to all those people who listened in, a poor victim of an unconscionable crime. They didn't know who I was – and perhaps there was a certain safety in that. But also a certain dismissal of my own identity and personhood. And yet, the public on the receiving end of that radio broadcast was also nameless and vast to me. An anonymous victim to an anonymous public.

I find it strange that a news presenter in the course of their career will likely report many stories of rape (given the news media's appetite for them) – so much so that they all blend together. As media consumers, we, too, hear so many news reports of rape that we cannot distinguish them, save for the most 'horrific' ones. But amongst all this media content, there remains the survivor of that rape, for whom the trauma is fundamentally life-changing – the exact opposite of unmemorable. And the anonymity of the news report almost leaches the trauma of its meaning, it denies that the very real impact of this crime happened to you.

Years later, when I began giving public talks about my rape and recovery, I realized that starting my talk with that radio broadcast would be the most dramatic way to get my audience's attention. Because who can deny the urgency, the poised gravity of a news (male) presenter's voice? And the terrible irony of having your own story of trauma neatly summarized in a public news report for others to discuss?

So I searched through my computer files for that recording I had downloaded and tried to forget so many years ago. I incorporated the first 20 seconds of that radio broadcast into the PowerPoint that accompanies my talk. I even carry a recording of it on the voice memos in my phone, in case the PowerPoint doesn't work. So it is always with me, that radio broadcast. Easily accessible, and now transformed into a tool for my own speech.

That really is where this all begins. If my rape had not been reported in the news, if it had remained private and unspoken for so long (like it has been for so many other survivors), I might not have undertaken this PhD research, or written that particular debut novel,[2] or 'spoken out,' as victim-survivors are often exhorted to do.

So perhaps everything I have done as an activist, a writer and an academic on the issue is a reaction to that first encounter of hearing my own trauma discussed by complete strangers for public consumption, my own story taken away from me.

Because in that moment, it felt like the public were being exhorted by the media to discuss my rape, but they were unaware that I myself – the victim of that crime -- might be listening and might have something worthy to say. So this is me saying it. Over and over, in different ways over the course of sixteen years. Sometimes you grow weary from sharing your

[2] *Dark Chapter*. Li, 2017.

story. Sometimes that which is meant to be freeing – a breaking of your silence – becomes a burden after a while. Sometimes, maybe one day, you arrive at a moment in your life when you feel like you no longer have to keep saying it. I think I'm still looking for that moment to arrive.
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What prompts a rape survivor to speak out about her trauma in the mainstream media? And what does it *feel* like to share your story of sexual violence, for an anonymous public to see and hear?

These are the governing questions that drove me to undertake this research. Because while media audiences can see the external results of our decision to speak out — the quotes in newspaper articles, the essays and social media posts, the online recordings — they rarely get a glimpse of what happens behind the scenes and in our own minds to prompt that decision: the emotions behind being so very visible about our trauma, the doubts and fears and frustrations we might have, alongside the connection and solidarity we may feel with other survivors.

It has been nearly sixteen years since I sat in front of my laptop and first listened to that radio chat show, paralyzed with shock and disbelief. I have lived a third of my lifespan as a rape survivor, with some story of my rape 'out there' in the public sphere. But hearing that radio chat show permanently intertwined my own lived experience of sexual violence with an awareness of how it was perceived and presented by mainstream media to the public — and of the notable absence of my own subjectivity within these mediations. In the intervening years, I have dedicated much of my personal energies to recovering from the trauma of rape and rebuilding my life, but also the majority of my professional efforts — in researching, writing, thinking, speaking, organizing — to publicly reclaiming that subjectivity, to try and make sense of sexual violence and what it does to us as victims and survivors.

This merging of the private and the public, the personal and the professional, upsets the traditional separations which often govern our lives as subjects and as academics, writers, activists, survivors, and consumers of culture. It can be destabilizing, even exhausting and overwhelming to operate with these categories collapsed, with emotions and energies swarming amuck, un-disciplined. This dissertation is an attempt to understand this complexity that I have lived with as a 'public survivor.' To acknowledge the contradictions that come with occupying so many multiple positions, and to contextualize the past sixteen years of labor: all the surviving, all the speaking out, all the writing.

In undertaking my research, I was very conscious that my specific experience was an anomaly. Of the many rapes that occur in our society, very few of them are reported in the news media. Stranger rapes like mine are disproportionately reported in the news, even though they only constitute 10-20% of actual committed rapes (Benedict, 1992; Boyle, 2003, 2019; Braber, 2014; Kitzinger, 2004; Meyers, 1997; Soothill and Walby, 1991). But the image of a rapist dragging an unsuspecting victim into the bushes (as mine was described in the above news report) resonates strongly in the public imagination. So, too, does the notion of a helpless young girl, innocently and irrevocably wronged (Benedict 1992; Lloyd and Ramon 2017). Thus, in the eyes of the listening public, I became a 'wee Chinese girl' whose life was ruined.

In her 2004 study of filmic representations of rape, Tanya Horeck wrote: 'Rape has increasingly become the most 'public' of crimes' (p.vi). She proposes the term 'public rape,' which she defines as 'the idea of rape as an event that relates to the affairs of a community or nation' (p.vii). Perhaps this is how my rape was positioned during that radio chat show, when it served as a talking point for the people of Belfast to discuss if their city was safe enough. A few days later, the people of West Belfast gathered in a public vigil to 'show solidarity' for me[3], and again I found this emotionally surreal: Did they really care about me (whom they did not know), or was their concern more about the discursive meaning of my rape to their community? Years later, when I returned to Belfast to research for my first novel, I became friends with the community organizers of that vigil. So that initial superficial display of solidarity did, ultimately, form the basis for a more genuine human understanding.

If mine was a 'public rape' from the moment it was reported and discussed on the local news, then I only became a 'public rape survivor' when I decided to join the public conversation about my rape. It is not a position I have occupied with huge joy or delight. If anything, I have come to occupy it more out of a feeling of necessity: a sense that if *other people* were going to talk so much about my rape and the broader issue of sexual violence, then at least *I* should be doing it, as someone with a deep understanding of the experience.

[3] https://www.4ni.co.uk/northern-ireland-news/74694/west-belfast-rape-vigil-held

Rape Survivors and Emotions

However I am not the only rape survivor who does this kind of work in the public sphere. In the course of my work as an activist and writer, I came across other women who also spoke on panels and podcasts and radio shows about their experiences of sexual violence and abuse, who offered commentary on television news shows, who penned opinion pieces in newspapers, who wrote books about their experiences, who stood in front of audiences and narrated our deepest pain. We had all taken an unusual step to 'go public' about a trauma that had caused us irrevocable damage, an experience that was often laced with shame and misery — But I wanted to know: why? Why had we identified ourselves publicly as rape victims, when we could have carried on living our recovered lives in private? What did we hope to gain from repeatedly offering up our own lived experiences to the media?

So this research emerged from a deep personal desire to understand the experiences and motivations of other public survivors in achieving and maintaining mainstream media visibility— and to comprehend my own. It was an effort to make sense not of the rape itself, but of its self-mediation; that is, the survivor's attempts to enter into, contribute to and shape the public discourse around sexual violence by appearing in the media.

I also wanted to understand other survivors' *emotions* around mainstream media visibility. How had they felt sharing their story publicly and dealing with the media? Were they proud of what they accomplished? Were they terrified by revealing their name publicly as a rape survivor? Frustrated with ignorant journalists? Exhausted by having to tell their story over and over? Disappointed when they weren't paid for writing an article that drew on their trauma? Did they feel that 'going public' as a sexual violence survivor had been worth it?

My interest in the emotional aspect stems from my sense that what was missing from the discourse about public rape survivors — both in scholarship and in popular commentary — was an awareness of the vital role that emotions played in our experience first as rape survivors, and then as rape survivors with mainstream media visibility. Emotions were our reactions to the outside world — like my frustration at being labeled a 'wee Chinese girl' — but also reasons and motivations for *taking action* in the outside world. For many of the survivors I spoke with, as I will show throughout the thesis, emotions dominated our experience. We could summarize factually to a journalist what had happened: 'I was raped by a stranger in a park,' but these words

would not convey the sense of shock, surreality, destruction, anger, loss, and hopelessness that we felt. In my case, the adrenaline and numbness of being suddenly attacked meant that I didn't even really *feel* the physical violence of my rape, even though the police report had listed thirty-nine separate injuries. What I did feel, for months and years afterwards, was a constant anxiety, dread, and despair, a difficulty to feel any joy.

So emotions often remain invisible, yet they are an inextricable part of the trauma — and also an inextricable part of the work of being public through the media. But few people probably grasp the complicated emotions involved in working with commercial media platforms about the topic of your trauma. This thesis is an attempt to uncover the emotions of rape survivors who speak out in mainstream media and to shed some light on the private experience of being so very public.

Being a public survivor in the era of #MeToo

This brings me to one of the most striking contradictions about being a public survivor, especially in the era of #MeToo. Sexual violence has had a huge, spectacular visibility in the media in recent years, and especially in the wake of the Harvey Weinstein investigations. In 2017, in the first 48 hours after Alyssa Milano Tweeted the #MeToo hashtag which Tarana Burke had originally coined in 2006, #MeToo was ReTweeted almost 1 million times and shared 12 million times as a status on Facebook (Gilmore, 2022, p.vi). I was one of those Twitter and Facebook users. These numbers speak to the mass of women out there who have experienced sexual assault, abuse, and harassment.[4]

In the first six months after the #MeToo hashtag started trending, the nine major UK newspapers ran 3450 news articles about #MeToo, according to a study by De Benedictis, Orgad, and Rottenberg (2019). And yet, despite this extreme visibility, the media platforms themselves, which purport to elevate the voices of survivors, seem to care very little for the individual survivors who do speak out through the mainstream media. Often times, it feels like we are just 'hot topics,' attention-grabbing headlines, who speak well and write well, sources of

[4] In terms of rape statistics alone, the charity 'Rape Crisis' reports 1 in 4 women in the UK has been raped or sexually assaulted as an adult. Each year in England and Wales, 85,000 women experience rape or attempted rape or sexual assault. This figure, of course, does not include other forms of sexual assault or harassment. https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/statistics-sexual-violence/

authentic, often free content. It is up to the individual survivor to make the most of the media opportunities we are given, and to try and say something unique and thought-provoking, other than the stock phrases that are expected of us, as rape victims.

As Karen Boyle (2019) writes: '#MeToo is indivisible from the media platforms through which it has circulated' (p.3). And indeed, what gets printed in the papers and spoken on live radio by survivors is the sanitized, articulate, media-friendly version of survivorhood, which the media platforms want to see from us. But what *really* happens when the ugly, messy, raw reality of trauma meets the fast-paced, under-funded, often indifferent world of mainstream media production? When survivors seeking to speak the truth about a deep injustice they have suffered enter into an industry that cares about images, soundbites, and quantified click-throughs? These are questions I seek to unpack in my research. Because in a media environment that claims, on the surface, to celebrate and champion the voices of survivors, we actually face significant challenges in speaking out and being recognized for our labor.

A Re-Framing: The Media Labor of Rape Survivors

And the media visibility of public rape survivors *is*, in fact, labor, although that is not readily apparent to the public. Consider these real-life examples, each of them taken from the data I collected in my research:

- A survivor of a high-profile rapist (Harvey Weinstein) gives twenty separate media interviews in a single day, at the height of media coverage around his conviction. These include print, online, radio and television interviews with a variety of international media platforms, where she often has to answer the same questions over and over.

- A survivor is commissioned by a city newspaper to write an opinion piece about her trauma, but is given a short deadline. It is Christmas break, and she is on holiday, where the Australian bush fires happen to be blazing at the moment. The newspaper editor is firm about the deadline, so the survivor spends several frenzied hours writing this opinion piece to file it on time, while the Australian bush fires rage around her.

- A survivor is asked to participate in a television documentary about rape. She spends a full day of filming in London, where she narrates her own assault in detail in front of a camera. She then is flown to Belfast, where she will be filmed walking through the park where her assault took place. She travels to Belfast the night before and spends another full day of filming with the camera crew, beginning at 9am and finishing at 5pm.

It is important to highlight two crucial facts:

1) In every instance, these survivors were required to talk or write about their personal experience of trauma.

2) When initially approached for these opportunities, none of these survivors were offered any money to do this work.

And yet, each individual was contributing her time and energy, communicative skills, and her life experience to the creation of a media product — a news interview, a written essay, a television documentary — which would then be disseminated to an audience within a commodified market. Crucially, each of these media products required the survivor to give an account of her trauma.

In this sense, public survivors can be considered 'creative workers,' who are concerned with 'the communication of experience' through learned skills. This is Raymond Williams' definition of 'creative labor' (1961), which leads to the creation of 'products that entertain, inform, and even enlighten us' in their communication of experience and are disseminated through the media (Baker and Hesmondhalgh, 2011, p.2).

Thus, if we reframe the work of public survivors as 'creative labor' or 'media labor,' it mobilizes a new discussion about labor and compensation for public survivors. In speaking or writing about her trauma for a media platform, a survivor is in fact performing media labor. But this labor demands a survivor's skilful management and display of her feelings in giving an account of her experience of sexual violence. Therefore, a survivor's work can also be defined as 'emotional labor,' according to Hochschild (1983) in that it requires an individual's management of feeling for commercial purposes in a workplace setting. These concepts I will explore in greater depth in Ch 2, but I wanted to introduce them here, as they frame so much of my approach to the topic and are rooted so closely to my own lived experience.

The Emotional Labor of Public Rape Survivors

Emotional labor, as it is performed and felt by public rape survivors, lies at the heart of my research. Surprisingly, it has been missing from much of the feminist scholarship around rape survivors and the media, even in the wake of #MeToo. But emotions are too vital a part of the experience of being public to ignore. Campbell (2002), in her study on the emotional impact of researching rape, reminds us that emotions are a form of lived, embodied knowledge. She writes: 'Emotions can provide intellectual, substantive insight and therefore be a valuable tool for social research (p.10).

While feminist media studies until now have examined media texts and insightfully analyzed the discourses around rape survivors in the media, no scholars have actually interviewed public survivors about their experiences of appearing in the mainstream media – or asked them about the emotional labor of being so very visible. If being public comes through appearing in the media, then what happens to you emotionally when your identity and your story become mediated?[5]

In particular, I found existing scholarship to have overlooked three important aspects of mediated rape survivorhood: The first, as I have just stated, is the emotional nature of mainstream media visibility. The second is the issue of money and compensation for survivors' media labor. And the third is the nature of everyday media practice: how these media products packaging survivors' stories are created and disseminated.

Of course, these three aspects are closely intertwined. For example, everyday media practice means media platforms operate on tight budgets and avoid paying contributors where possible. Not being paid for your work (the sharing of your trauma) can lead to frustration and anger, which you nevertheless have to suppress in order to appear personable to journalists who will be presenting a version of you to the public.

The multiple positions of the public rape survivor are evident in this example: she is simultaneously a survivor of trauma, a creative worker collaborating with the media, and a visibilized subject in the media. And each of these positions, as I hope to argue, carries with it a specific form of emotional labor. We also see in this example that emotions and

[5] I will use the terms 'public survivor' and 'mediated survivor' interchangeably throughout this thesis.

how we present them externally are linked to financial compensation and a suppressed sense of what we *feel* we are owed for our efforts. Emotions, money, and everyday media practice remain closely intertwined, as I will examine further in Ch 2.

Summary of Research Project

My research, therefore, examines emotional labor in the experiences of public rape survivors who collaborate with mainstream media platforms to share their stories of trauma. Without understanding the specificity of this emotional labor, it is difficult to grasp the many ways in which everyday media practices constrain the types of survivors who are allowed to speak out on mainstream platforms and enter the public discourse about this widespread trauma — as well as how their speech and stories are performed, enacted, and presented to the public.

This research draws upon two sets of empirical data in trying to illuminate these lived experiences. One set is my own auto-ethnographic material, beginning with that first moment of listening to the Northern Irish radio chat show in 2008, to 2022, by which point I had published two novels and a body of essays, been profiled in a television documentary, delivered a TEDx talk and probably given at least 100 media interviews and over 200 public talks. The second set is a corpus of semi-structured, in-depth interviews I conducted with seven female sexual violence survivors about their experience of media visibility, conducted between 2021 and 2022. Many of these women I had known for some years by the time I conducted the interviews, while others I grew to know both personally and professionally after the interview.

My growing body of public-facing work, paired with motherhood, affected the rate of my academic research, while also providing an ever-expanding 'corpus' of lived experience to draw upon for my auto-ethnography. But it also gave me the opportunity to immerse myself further in the field of public rape survivors, to develop friendships and collaborations with other survivors, to establish my own visibility and status. This in effect granted me unique access to my field of study, as well as a ground-level insider's perspective into the emotions, motivations, and conditions of mainstream media visibility.

For the most part, I interviewed survivors who have sustained an engagement with the mainstream media through repeated interviews and interactions over years – i.e. not someone who has had a 'one-off' interview and then retreated back to their private life. Therefore, I am

aware that this is a self-selecting pool of survivors who have had enough successful, positive encounters with the mainstream media that they have continued to sustain their media visibility.

Interestingly, the survivors I interviewed were all primarily in their 40s and 50s. This is a distinctly older demographic than the young women active on digital media, whom many scholars have studied in their media activism around sexual assault (Horeck, et al., 2023; Mendes, et al. 2019; Rentschler, 2014; Salter, 2013) . This participant pool partly reflects the convenience sampling method that I relied upon, interviewing women I already knew, in the hopes of eliciting more open and intimate data. However, it also reflects the reserves of cultural capital, especially professional skills and networks gained through prior careers, which enable individual survivors to work effectively with the media.

There are undeniably costs — emotional, financial, professional, personal, and otherwise — to maintaining an ongoing visibility through mainstream media as a rape survivor. Likewise, there are benefits to this visibility. I often think of an 'unspoken pact' that I have with the media, to put up with their rushed deadlines, poor pay, and chaotic and often indifferent practices in exchange for the visibility. And so, in this research, I am interested in this trade-off that individual survivors engage in, when deciding whether the visibility – and the media labor and emotional labor required to sustain it – is, in fact, worth it.

Temporal Journeys

In the language of healing, recovery from sexual violence – and other forms of trauma or illness – is often represented as a journey (Frank, 1995; Smith, 2003; Wozniak, 2009), tracing a victim's growth from injury and loss of self after rape to a reclaiming of one's life. It is a metaphor I often use myself, as it helps me to envision the temporal and geographic distances I have put between my trauma and where I am now in my life. But a further journey can be seen in an individual's evolution from private victim to a public survivor who speaks out in the mainstream media. Throughout this thesis, I will refer to that evolution as a journey, because I argue the motivations, conditions, and challenges of media visibility *change* over time for an individual survivor, as does the emotional labor. For an individual who is speaking about her trauma for the first time to the media, the very thought of entering a recording studio may seem daunting, let alone narrating her rape to a news presenter. For a survivor who has been doing this for two years, that kind of an interview may no longer hold such anxiety, but it may also no longer feel as

novel, exciting, or emotionally rewarding. Thus, our relationship to our trauma, how we speak about it, and how we feel being visible about it is ever-evolving.

Does sustained media visibility offer these rape survivors personal fulfillment? Boost their egos? Does it function as publicity for a larger professional project? Do they see a continued ideological need to speak out on behalf of 'the greater good'? Ultimately, do the benefits of being visible continue to outweigh the costs?

These are important questions, because continued visibility compounds, like a form of cultural capital. In the world of contemporary media, visibility begets more visibility. You are more likely to be invited to speak at an event, if you've already been profiled in *The Guardian*. You are more likely to be invited onto a television talk show, if the producers can find existing YouTube footage of you, to confirm that you can speak and look presentable. Your skills and confidence also develop, so that you grow to inhabit the part of the media-friendly, articulate rape survivor, reachable by text or email or Twitter, in case a producer wants to bring your voice in for a rape victim's authentic perspective.

These influences ultimately cast the mediated rape survivor into the role of an increasingly professionalized, neo-liberal worker-subject, entrepreneurial in her deployment of media labor, highly conscious of the individual gains and benefits of her continuing visibility. As I argue in this thesis, resources like cultural capital can very much determine which individuals are able to sustain the emotional labor and the poorly compensated practices of media work — and this, in turn, determines the voices, identities, and stories of sexual violence survivors who appear in mainstream media and influence the public understanding of this crime and its aftermath. But the rape survivor as neo-liberal worker-subject is also a million miles from where we planned to be when we first began to speak out about sexual violence.

While this is one possible outcome for a survivor starting on her journey towards media visibility, a survivor can also choose the opposite: to withdraw from media visibility, or to take a more relaxed approach to media engagement. Overall, though, her decisions arise from her emotions, and these, in turn, are inflected by the multiple subjectivities a survivor inhabits.

Research Questions

In my research, I situate the media work of rape survivors specifically as a form of media labor, deserving of financial compensation, producing a visibility that is commodified by mainstream media platforms. This visibility demands significant emotional labor on the part of the individual survivor in its creation and ongoing maintenance. However, that emotional labor often goes unrecognized.
With this in mind, my research questions are:

RQ1: What are the motivations, challenges, and conditions for individual sexual violence survivors who maintain an ongoing public visibility through the mainstream media around their experiences of trauma?

RQ2: What is the emotional labor of this ongoing media visibility for individual rape survivors, and how is it negotiated, justified, and compensated?

RQ3: What role do intersectional differences play in impacting individual attitudes, emotions, and strategies towards this media work?

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 presents the literature review and theoretical framework which situates my research. I draw from three main bodies of scholarship: studies of sexual violence and survivors, feminist media studies, and creative labor studies. To better understand the starting point for public survivors, I begin with a review of the long-lasting negative impacts of rape from the field of psychology, followed by feminist theories on survivorhood and storytelling. Next, I provide a literature review of news media representations of rape and rape victims, which have long been criticized for victim-blaming tropes, distorting the reality of the crime, and fixating on the 'ideal rape victim' (white, middle-class, young, attractive). I summarize more recent scholarship on #MeToo media and current discourses around survivor speech, before identifying gaps that I aim to fill. Then I examine emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983), the crux of my theoretical framework. I suggest seven possible layers of emotional labor, each established in existing literature, which could emerge for public rape survivors due to the multiple positions they

inhabit. This, and an intersectional lens that considers a survivor's cultural capital, will serve as the tools for analyzing my empirical data.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology and research design of my study. First, I address the unexpected challenges I encountered: the heavy emotional labor of the research led to its temporal protraction, along with major changes in my life that impacted the academic workload I could take on. Then I explain why and how I changed my research design to better address these challenges and draw from my unique position embedded in the field I was studying. Next, I address my two data collection methods: auto-ethnography reflecting my experiences with mainstream media during 2008-2022 and in-depth interviews with seven public rape survivors. I discuss recruitment, sampling, and the interview process, followed by my analysis methods of thematic analysis and introspection for the auto-ethnography. I summarize the ethical considerations and measures, in particular anonymity and informed consent, which evolved over the eight years of my research. As self-care was a key concern throughout my data, many of my changes were made to manage risk that could affect my well-being or that of my participants.

Chapter 4, the first of my empirical chapters, examines the motivations that lead to a survivor's 'first time' speaking out in mainstream media about her trauma and the conditions surrounding her initial entry into media visibility. Drawing upon Emily as a case study, I demonstrate how a survivor can by fuelled by mixed motivations (ideological, personal, and professional) for seeking media visibility. But the decision to appear on a media platform is often part of a much longer personal process of speaking out. I suggest two characteristics of a survivor's 'first time': a gradual runway to media visibility, taking place over years, and a galvanizing moment, when survivors react to a representation in the wider media environment. I then outline five factors which enable a survivor to appear in mainstream media: 1) control over anonymity and pseudonymity, 2) usage of different types of media, 3) supportive environments, 4) time, and 5) cultural capital.

Chapter 5 explores in greater depth the emotional labor of an *ongoing* media visibility for rape survivors. Once they have entered into media visibility, there are conditions, benefits, and dangers of sustaining that visibility. I discuss the concept of the 'partial, circulating self' in the media, and how survivors feel about distorted, flattened representations of themselves, which obscure certain aspects of their selfhood. I examine how public survivors can self-police and be policed in relation to minoritized characteristics, like their race and their sexualities. I also

consider why an individual survivor would still consider a distorted media representation of herself to be 'worth it,' for the status and credibility that visibility confers. Finally, I consider how survivors' visuality is policed and self-policed, when media producers impose conventional standards of feminine beauty and glamour on them. In the process, survivors learn to *negotiate* their visibility with media producers, although this serves to further intensify their emotional labor.

If previous chapters argued that emotional labor is the primary cost of media visibility, the rest of my empirical chapters consider how their media labor might *pay off*. **Chapter 6** focuses on monetary compensation for survivors' media labor. I explore the practice of non-existent or inadequate pay for public survivors, and how individual participants feel about this. I discover an interesting display rule, regarding public survivors and pay, which seems rooted the long-standing cultural stereotype of the 'Gold-Digger,' and public perception of victim's believability. And yet, awareness of this stereotype had direct material impacts on the earnings of public survivors. I also examine two more contributing factors to the non-payment of survivors: a journalistic tradition of not paying sources in order to remain credible, and exploitative work conditions in the media industries.

Chapter 7, the last of my empirical chapters, considers the consequences of poor-compensation. If public survivors repeatedly go unpaid by media platforms, ultimately, the only individuals who are able to *sustain* media visibility are those who don't need to earn money. Or who are able to convert their media visibility towards profit-earning ends. I therefore explore how socioeconomic and cultural capital is the hidden reserve which ultimately enables specific survivors to succeed in their media visibility. In lieu of monetary pay, survivors often seek compensation in two ways: through a strategic use of visibility as publicity for their own enterprises, and emotionally, through the appreciation from and imagined solidarity with other survivors. I use specific case studies of four participants to examine the above models, taking on board each survivor's unique, intersectional particularities which impact the outcomes of her media visibility. Some survivors took a very entrepreneurial, individualized approach, while another experienced exploitation by the media team at a charity. In order for their media labor to feel 'worth it,' survivors increasingly applied a neoliberal approach to their visibility, which protected their individual interests instead of pursuing structural change around sexual violence.

In **Chapter 8**, my conclusion, I summarize the findings of my empirical chapters and advance my claims emerging from the research. As my central conceptual contribution, I present the figure of the public rape survivor who simultaneously occupies multiple subjectivities: she is a survivor of trauma, but also a highly visible, mediated female figure, and also a creative worker within the media industries. These multiple subjectivities each bring their own layers of emotional labor which can converge upon the survivor and exact a cost on her sustained media visibility. I consider my contributions to the fields of survivor studies and feminist media studies, and then expand upon the implications of my research for media practice, future academic research, and the wider goal of eliminating sexual violence. Finally, I conclude with a personal reflection on my own journey as a public rape survivor, writer, researcher, and activist, and I consider whether my own emotional, communicative, and intellectual labors have, in fact, been worth it.

Interspersed throughout the thesis are auto-ethnographic sections from my own lived experience as a public rape survivor. These serve as empirical material, too, in dramatizing a particular theme or tension I examine in the subsequent chapter. As the empirical chapters are structured to reflect the temporal journey of a public survivor from her 'first time' in the media to a sustained, increasingly professionalized visibility, my auto-ethnographic sections also parallel this. They appear in a roughly chronological order charting my own evolution and relationship with mainstream media. Thus, by the end of this dissertation, readers will hopefully glimpse how I myself have changed — personally, professionally, emotionally— in my attitudes, strategies, and emotions towards the media, a self-reflexive element of this dissertation that informs and interacts with my more academic findings.

A Note on Terminology

Underpinning this dissertation is the recognition that language constructs our social reality (Gill 1996). It is thus important to address the choice of words that we use to describe the lived realities of people. There has been a long-standing debate about which word — 'victim' or 'survivor' — we use to refer to individuals who have been raped (Orgad, 2009; Serisier, 2018). Many feminists prefer 'survivor,' as it emphasizes the ability of an individual to overcome her trauma (Alcoff and Gray, 1996; Serisier, 2018), rather than her defeat and helplessness as a victim. Interestingly, Chouliaraki (2020) argues that victimhood is now 'a master signifier within contemporary public discourse' (p.1), a status which is claimed tactically, perhaps dishonestly, by an individual to mobilize empathy and establish a superior moral position. But this is a strategy

that my research participants remain uninterested in; if anything they prefer to be referred to as survivors, with its implications of recovery and agency. Thus in most instances, I will use the word 'survivor' to refer to my participants. However, I will occasionally use the word 'victim' where the emphasis is on the *immediate* negative impacts of the crime of sexual violence. For brevity's sake, I may also use 'survivor,' to mean 'rape survivor' or 'sexual violence or abuse survivor,' in the context of this dissertation. 'Mediated survivors' and 'public survivors' are used interchangeably and will refer to those rape survivors who have shared their identities and stories of trauma to the public through forms of media, a category that includes both myself and my interview participants.

The verbs 'go public' or 'speak out' are used interchangeably to mean the act of sharing one's identity and story publicly through media, although 'go public' generally refers to the first time that a survivor decides to renounce her anonymity and share her identity. I realise that 'speak out' by definition means the act of speaking or verbalizing, however the phrase is often used in a broader sense across other forms of communication. A survivor can speak out on Twitter/X, for example, even though she is not actually physically speaking. 'Survivor speech' likewise refers to the noun equivalent of that act: what is produced when one speaks out or goes public. Again, it does not necessarily need to be spoken in order to be enacted. A memoir, a written article, or a social media post can all be examples of survivor speech. In using these terms, I followed precedents set by Alcoff and Gray (1996), Serisier (2018), and others.

Finally, I use several terms to refer to media forms and media platforms. 'Mainstream media' refers to television, radio, filmmaking, newspapers, magazines, books, and the online platforms for these outlets. I often use 'the media' to refer to mainstream media, a more lay term. Other scholars also call these 'legacy media' or 'traditional' media. These platforms are distinct from 'digital media' or 'social media,' which refer to online platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and even individual blogs, where users can upload content directly onto the platform without having to go directly through a media professional like an editor, producer, journalist, or commissioner.

A Note on Scope

My focus on mainstream media, as opposed to other forms of media, emerged from two observations. One is that the power structure embedded in mainstream media platforms is distinctly different from digital media participation. Interacting with media professionals like

journalists, producers, and editors creates more discursive, emotional, and operational demands — effectively, more work and more negotiation for an individual. There are significantly higher barriers to entry with mainstream media, and many more ways in which an individuals' subjectivity can be denied, ignored, or distorted by the lens of mainstream media. These all made for rich tensions that deserve unpacking. The other reason is that prior scholars have already conducted important research about survivor speech on digital media platforms (Hewa, 2023; Mendes, Ringrose, Keller 2019; Rentschler 2014; 2022; Powell 2015; Powell and Henry 2017; Ringrose and Renold 2014; Salter 2013), but the interaction between survivors and *mainstream media* had not yet been explored through survivor-centred interview data.

While rape affects both men and women, in my research, I will specifically look at female survivors. Male rape is a worthy topic of research in its own right, and the literature suggests that there are enough differences between male and female experiences of rape, due to dominant discourses around gender expectations (Ahrens, 2006; Ullman, 2010), that I would not be able to adequately address both in the scope of this study. Furthermore, theory about rape is largely drawn from a feminist perspective and rooted within a view of rape as a crime inflicted by men upon women (Brownmiller, 1975; Cahill, 2001). While I recognize the limitations of this view, my own interest and experience of rape will stay within this feminist tradition for the course of this study, thereby drawing upon a rich body of work from both feminist media studies and feminist studies of sexual violence.

Geographically, my auto-ethnographic and interview data emerges primarily from the UK and Ireland, again reflecting the convenience sampling I employed. However, because these methods recognise the embeddedness of discourse, knowledge, and experience in the broader lives of subjects, it is important to note that individual subjectivities and identities do not stop at national borders. Thus, I am American by birth and upbringing, but have lived primarily in the UK — and for a short period, Ireland — for the past twenty-two years. Because my rape took place in Belfast, much of my experience and visibility is with the Irish media. My interview participants include an American ex-pat in Ireland and a British ex-pat in the US. We all occupy and contribute to a 'transnational, Anglophone feminist "discursive public"' where media texts, media platforms and reference points are shared (Rentschler and Thrift, 2015, p. 239; Serisier, 2018). And it is in this transnational discursive public, largely shaped by both mainstream media and digital social media platforms, where so much of #MeToo and the stories of public survivors have been presented and contested.

Chapter 2:

A Theoretical Framework of Emotional Labor and the Public Rape Survivor

> 'When the 'womanly' art of living up to private emotional conventions goes public, it attaches itself to a different profit-and-loss statement.'
>
> — Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (1983)

In establishing the concept of 'emotional labor' in her seminal 1983 study, sociologist Arlie Hochschild was examining the convergence of two spheres often considered separate in our lives: the internal, private world of feelings and the external world of commercial work. Her above quote speaks to the gendered nature of this work: managing one's feelings is a supposedly 'womanly' art. But when feelings are put on display and managed on the job, another 'different profit-and-loss statement' emerges: one where our individual emotions tell us how we are appreciated and what we feel we are owed for our professional labors.

Hochschild's study was based on interviews with Delta Airlines flight attendants in the 1980s, but it is just as apt when applied to public rape survivors today, in 2024. There are 'private emotional conventions' around hiding or concealing experiences of rape, but when these private conventions are disrupted – when a rape victim goes public with her story – a new reckoning emerges. Many would assume that this new reckoning is about public truth-telling and confronting the perpetrators in our society, and I do not deny that this can and should happen when survivors speak out. But the 'different profit-and-loss statement' I am interested in takes place behind the scenes. It tracks the intense emotions involved when a rape survivor shares her story through media visibility, the effort of collaborating with mainstream media platforms, how she is compensated, and what she feels she is owed.

Thus, in rendering a private experience of trauma public, in converting it into a media product that circulates on the market of commodified stories, public rape survivors are enacting emotional labor which can easily go unrecognized and uncompensated, even though their identities and their stories are made very visible. And the intertwining of emotions, work, and compensation creates a complex situation for each public survivor, inflected by her specific attributes and the intersectional categories that make up her subjectivity.

But how does this theoretical profit-and-loss statement – what Hochschild often terms a 'ledger' – really work for public rape survivors, in deciding if their media labor is worth it? And how does the theory of emotional labor help to illuminate the research I am trying to do?

This chapter reviews the existing literatures relevant to my study, as a way through to illuminating the theoretical framework that undergirds my research. Specifically, my study draws from three main areas of scholarship: literature on sexual violence and its lived impacts on survivors; feminist media studies, specifically on the representation of sexual violence and survivors, but also on affect and the visible female worker-subject; and finally creative labor studies, performed by individual workers within the media industries. Linking all these literatures together is the concept of emotional labor, which, as documented in previous scholarship, manifests in the experiences of sexual violence survivors, of mediated female subjects, and of creative workers. Emotional labor is also heavily influenced by the intersectional identities of a public survivor: how she is perceived by the public, and how she is able to construct her own visibility through collaborating with the media.

In the first part of this chapter, I focus on the scholarship around surviving sexual violence: the indelible impact this type of trauma wreaks on individual lives, and the role of storytelling in recovery for survivors. It is important to understand the seminal lived experience of undergoing an act of sexual trauma, and to know how it changes the life trajectories, attitudes, and emotions of mediated survivors like myself and my research participants, even long before we decide to 'go public' about our trauma. To use a crude pop cultural term, this lived experience of sexual violence functions as the 'origin story' which fuels our desire to speak out in the media.

In the second part of the chapter, I summarize the rich literature on media representations of sexual violence, which are frequently flawed, influenced by rape myths, and serve to distort the reality of the crime and lived experiences of its victims. This has long been a subject of study by feminist scholars, and this scholarship has proliferated in the wake of #MeToo, resulting in many studies of '#MeToo media' and discourses around survivors and survivor speech. I situate my own research in relation to this newly evolving literature, identifying gaps that in the scholarship that I aim to fill, while engaging with the same questions of gendered visibility, subjectivity, and intersectionality, that previous academics have so cogently explored.

The third part of the chapter arrives at the theoretical crux of my study: emotional labor. I summarize Hochschild's concept, which is highly gendered and firmly rooted in studies of the workplace and the individual management of feelings for professional reasons. I then explore the ways in which emotional labor and may emerge in the experiences of public survivors, drawing upon existing scholarship from trauma studies, feminist media studies, activist studies, and creative labor studies. Literature on visibility suggests the emotional labor of being so very visible in the media, and of constructing one's visibility on public platforms. Likewise, the scholarship on creative labor considers the economic precarity, poor work conditions, and emotional complexities for individual workers within the media industries. I suggest these forms of emotional labor may converge upon public rape survivors in multi-layered and unpredictable ways.

The final part of my chapter focuses on intersectionality, which informs my study throughout. Intersectional differences of race, class, age, sexuality, nationality and other categories play a crucial role in shaping the tensions that an individual survivor experiences, the stereotypes she might be subjected to in going public as a victim of sexual violence, and the resources available to her in navigating the media. And therefore, they have an indelible impact on her emotional labor and her attitudes towards media visibility.

The chapter's structure mirrors a survivor's temporal journey from inner trauma, often concealed, to a public speaking out about that trauma, and an engagement with mainstream media. With each step towards greater visibility, an individual survivor opens herself up to further layers of emotional labor. Thus, in reviewing the relevant literatures in this chapter, I find it useful to start with the most private – the scholarship around the lived experience of rape survivorhood – and proceed from there.

PART ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF THE RAPE SURVIVOR

As a topic of study, rape and sexual violence has been examined across a vast range of fields for decades, spanning psychology, sociology, anthropology, criminology, the law, medicine, history, literary studies, the visual arts, gender studies, and media studies, to name just a few. From this extensive body of existing research, I would like to begin by focusing on one particular aspect:

the long-lasting impact of sexual violence on an individual's life, drawing primarily on empirical research by psychologists. It is important to establish what the reality of surviving rape is like, in order to better understand how media representations of rape and survivors diverge distort that reality. But more importantly for my study, it is vital to understand the starting point from which public survivors choose to speak out about their trauma and the emotional and psychological challenges they can face in doing so. Following this empirical review of the real-life consequences, I draw upon the work of feminist philosophers like Susan J Brison and Anne Cahill, to consider the particular role that disclosing one's experience of sexual violence – or as some say, storytelling -- plays in allowing survivors to heal and reintegrate themselves into the outside world.

The Impact of Trauma on the Individual Survivor

Philosopher Anne Cahill writes that rape is an act 'destroying the intersubjective, embodied agency and therefore personhood of a woman.' (2001, p.11) Her statement is illustrated by many studies of sexual violence survivors conducted by psychologists, establishing that the sexual violence has a deep, long-lasting, and multi-faceted negative impact on the lives of victims and survivors.

In describing the impact of their rapes, survivors often use themes of destruction, consumption or theft of themselves: Rape is 'taking a part of you that can never be replaced,' '[like being] run over by a TANK and ground into the pavement,' 'like having a cancer/parasite which feeds on you' (Chasteen, 2010, p. 124-127). Prominent in these descriptions is the sense of long-standing or irrevocable damage to their psyche, which persists for far longer than just the immediate physical moment of assault, with lifelong consequences.

Psychological studies indicate rape and sexual violence survivors experience a higher prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Berger et al., 2012; Breslau, 2009), depression, anxiety, suicidality, and substance abuse (Campbell, Dworkin, & Cabral, 2009; Jordan et al,. 2010; Kelly 1988; WHO 2003; Westmarland and Alderson 2013). Other studies with victims conclude substantial negative effects on a woman's self-esteem and enjoyment of her life (Campbell and Soeken, 1999; Ellis et al, 1991). Perilloux, Duntley, and Buss' (2011) study found rape victims acknowledged a decline in all thirteen domains of their life, including health, relationships, work life, confidence, self-perceived attractiveness, and self-perceived mate value. Loya's important research on the economic costs of being a rape victim indicate significant impacts, like an inability to work, diminished performance, job loss, and reduced earning power. Sustained over

years, 'these employment consequences compound one another and ultimately shift survivors' long-term economic trajectories,' forcing them onto different life paths and further complicating mental health issues (2015, p.2793). Loya's research on the actual economic losses experienced by rape victims stands in stark contrast with pervasive public stereotypes around 'Gold-Diggers,' women who accuse men of rape for financial gain, a theme that will emerge throughout my study.

Secondly, it is important to highlight the notion of shame and how it impacts victim's attitudes towards disclosing their experience to others. Many individuals describe being a rape victim as 'an ascribed status that affects others' perceptions and actions toward you…a status much like being a racial minority' (Chasteen, 2001, p.128) .This notion is very closely tied to the concept of shame: of what others would think of you, if they knew you were a rape victim. In their study, Vidal and Petrak (2007) found 75% of rape victims in their search felt ashamed of themselves after their assault, and Koss (1985; 1991) links shame to greater self-blame and non-disclosure among victims. In fact, much non-disclosure exists because many women do not acknowledge their own victimization: even if their experiences match the legal definition of rape, and their reactions are post-traumatic, they still do not consider using the label 'rape victim' to describe themselves (Fisher et al, 2003; Ahrens, 2006; Ullmann 2010). Disturbingly, then, for all the destructiveness of the crime, there is a strong reluctance to self-identify as a rape victim, even to oneself.

Thirdly, sexual violence survivors who do disclose often face negative consequences, especially within a criminal justice system that often fails to believe or protect victims (Estrich 1987). The prevalence of rape myths (Burt 1980) victim-blame and exonerate the perpetrator (Doherty and Anderson 1998). Williams (1984) argues strongly that 'secondary victimization' occurs when the victim experiences negative and judgmental reactions to her rape, prompting feelings of guilt and shame about her own conduct. This kind of victim-blaming behavior is also called the 'second injury' (Symonds 1980) or the 'second rape' (Martin and Powell 1994), and is often enacted by police and medical authorities, family, as well as informal social networks. Davis and Breslau (1994), who argue that the social processes of secondary victimization are directly implicated in the onset of severe and chronic post-traumatic distress. And yet, even when a victim discloses her rape experience, there will be obstacles. Burt and Estep (1981) identify the difficulties for an individual to be granted 'genuine victim status' and therefore receive the material and emotional

benefits afforded by this status (sympathy, monetary compensation, temporary relief from responsibilities, legal recourse).

Thus, the literature suggests dominant discourses about rape create an environment which largely discourages a victim from disclosing — which in turn, affects her ability to recover and the ongoing impact of the rape on her life. It is against these obstacles to survivor disclosure, that the present study is situated, in an attempt to understand specific survivors' decisions to disclose their rape experience publicly, and to underscore its challenges, costs, value and significance.

Storytelling and Recovery for the Rape Survivor

If empirical studies in psychology attest to the destructiveness of sexual violence, how have feminist philosophers, many of them survivors themselves, theorized about the possibility to recover from this destructiveness? For this, I return to Cahill who argues: 'The process of remaking oneself… necessarily includes intersubjectivity, including the telling of one's story, and the experience of caring for, and being cared for by others (2001, p.131). This is echoed by the writing of philosopher and survivor Susan J. Brison, who writes:

> In order to construct self-narratives we need not only the words with which to tell our stories, but also an audience able and willing to hear us and to understand our words as we intend them. This aspect of remaking a self in the aftermath of trauma highlights the dependency of the self on others and helps to explain why it is so difficult for survivors to recover when others are unwilling to listen to what they endured (2002, p.51).

In both these extracts, the importance of storytelling about one's trauma to a willing, caring audience plays a fundamental role in recovery – in 'remaking oneself.' Cahill's theory is very much rooted in the survivor as 'embodied subject,' a specific, unique individual who is both constrained by her social, historical, and political circumstances and capable of resisting them. Her bodily integrity has been destroyed by the act of rape and with it, her sense of subjectivity. But the act of telling the story of her trauma reclaims that subjectivity.

Culbertson (1995) an anthropologist and survivor, and Brison also write insightfully about trauma, disrupted memory, and embodiment, acknowledging the physiological impacts of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder like nightmares, flashbacks, panic attacks, nausea, recurring headaches and pains. Crucially Brison introduces a sense of temporality to our understanding of trauma. If trauma disrupts

memory, it severs past from present and renders it impossible for a victim to envision a future. By telling one's own story of trauma, a survivor can gain 'greater control over the memories themselves, making them less intrusive and giving them the kind of meaning that enables them to be integrated into the rest of life' (2002, p.54). Thus, according to Brison, storytelling enables recovery by offering the survivor a subjectivity in relation to her own life story, mending a disrupted past with a possible future.

In a similar way, leading psychiatrist Judith Herman cited storytelling as an essential tool in recovery, drawing upon her landmark book *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), which established Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. She conceptualizes the recovery process in three stages: establishing safety, retelling the story of the traumatic event, and reconnecting with others. 'The therapist plays the role of a witness and ally, in whose presence the survivor can speak of the unspeakable.' In all of these accounts, it is not only the act of storytelling which is vital for a survivor's recovery, but also the presence of a supportive audience, the intersubjectivity which rebuilds a survivor's relationship with the outside world. Like Brison, Herman emphasizes the importance that a survivor regain her sense of control: 'Trauma robs the victim of a sense of power and control over her own life; therefore, the guiding principle of recovery is to restore power and control to the survivor (2002, p.98).'

My interest in this literature is in understanding how the act of storytelling by a survivor – with its intimations of recovery and intersubjectivity – can get transplanted into a mainstream media environment, which in some ways can be the exact opposite of healing and supportive. Instead of a willing, empathetic audience or the patient, understanding therapist, the public survivor may be confronted with an anonymous public and media professionals who are relatively indifferent to or ignorant of the lived impacts of sexual violence. Do these media environments actually 'restore power and control to the survivor' (Herman, 2002, p.98) or do they exploit the vulnerable emotions and experiences a survivor is choosing to make public? And yet, the celebratory promises of storytelling remain, even though the subjectivity of survivors may become heavily contested within the media.

MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF RAPE SURVIVORS

So what then, is this potentially dangerous media environment which public rape survivors enter into when choosing to speak out? In this next section, I will review the rich body of feminist media studies which has examined media representations of sexual violence, victims, and survivors over the years. There are deep problems with these representations, which persisted even during the heightened media visibility of sexual violence and survivors after #MeToo, from 2017 onwards, with its claims towards elevating the voices of women. Therefore, it is important to understand the complex and often contentious discursive space within which contemporary survivor speech is situated.

There are many insightful studies of sexual violence as it is represented in fictional narratives in popular culture: in film (Projansky, 2001; Hogan, 2022; Horeck, 2004), television (Banet-Weiser and Higgins 2022; Cuklanz and Moorti, 2006; 2009; Moorti, 2002), literature (Field, 2020; Gunne and Brigley, 2010; Mardorossian, 2011; 2014), and many other forms of art and entertainment. For my purposes, I will be focusing primarily on a review of representations in corporate news media (television and radio news, newspapers, magazines, and their online forms), as this is where the media labor of public rape survivors often appears.

Rape in Mainstream Media: Key Critiques

Multiple scholars have detailed the many ways in which mainstream media distort the lived reality of rape in our culture with problematic consequences for the representation of survivors (Boyle, 2005, 2019; Benedict, 1992; Cameron and Frazer, 1987; Cuklanz, 2000, 2006, 2020; DeBenedictis, Orgad, and Rottenberg, 2019). I will now summarize the central critiques of these media representations vis-à-vis the lived reality of sexual violence.

First, by selectively representing only certain types of rape, traditional media propagate what Burt termed 'rape myths': 'prejudicial, stereotyped or false beliefs about rape, rape victims and rapists' (1980, p. 217). For example, a leading rape myth is that rape is something inflicted by a stranger. Not surprisingly, stranger rape is the most popular type of rape to be reported by news media, even though in reality, only an estimated 10-20% of all rapes are stranger rapes (Boyle,

2005; Gordon and Riger, 1989; Gravelin, Biernat, Kerl, 2023). Overall, by focusing on the more sensational cases, involving extreme violence, inter-racial assault, or celebrities, for example (Soothill and Walby, 1991; Boyle, 2005), news media ultimately misinform the public about the lived reality of rape. By isolating and visibilizing only the most extreme or unusual cases, news media also obscure the continuum of male violence against women (Kelly, 1988), and decontextualize the real-life context of experiencing gendered violence and aggression.

Second, rape is often represented as a sexual act (rooted in desire) and not a physically violent act (rooted in a need for power). Thus, the victim in traditional media is often dichotomized in sexual terms either as a virgin (innocent) or a sexualized vamp (asking for it) (Benedict, 1992; Waterhouse-Watson, 2011, 2016, 2019). This reinforces a victim-blaming culture, which places the burden on women to behave in ways that make them less susceptible to being raped (Kelly, 1988; Odem and Clay-Warner, 1998; Royal, 2018). News media can frame the victim as an object of desire (Braber, 2014; Lloyd and Ramon, 2017; Soothill and Walby, 1991), thereby reinforcing rape-as-sex with the perpetrator unable to control his sexual instincts — and not as a violent crime (Boyle, 2005; Cameron and Frazer, 1987). The media can also frame a rape victim as lower-class, untrustworthy, wild (Benedict, 1992; Cuklanz, 2000), leaning into stereotypes of the Gold-Digger, who 'cries rape' in order to seek money, fame, or attention (Garraio, 2023; Waterhouse-Watson, 2011).

Third, the 'ruined life trope' is central in the construction of victims (Boyle 2005), establishing a dichotomy whereby either silence is the *de facto* state of non-communication for the shamed, abject victim (Bal, 2006; Cameron .1996), or 'speaking out' becomes the triumphant act by the resilient survivor (Orgad, 2009; Serisier, 2018). But the heroic, 'empowered' survivor is constructed *vis-a-vis* the weak passive victim and de-legitimizes the decision to remain silent and private (Orgad, 2009; Alcoff and Gray, 1996).

Fourth, as mentioned by Boyle (2003; 2019), media representations often portray rape as individual cases where the victim suffers her terrible fate, but fails to connect these individual cases together to portray rape as a collective, societal problem suffered by many. Even in women's daytime talk shows, when victims are encouraged to speak, the emphasis is on her emotional distress and individual, personal journey (Alcoff and Gray, 1996). By emphasizing self-help, these shows place the onus on the victim, without suggesting a collective need to examine perpetrators' behavior (Moorti, 2002; Boyle 2003; Serisier 2019).

Finally, the individual victims whom the Western media do choose to valorize are often of a certain type: white, middle-class, educated, well-behaved, young, and physically attractive —

whether that is in news reports (Benedict, 1992; Banet-Weiser and Higgins, 2023) or in fictional narratives (Projansky, 2003). This notion of an 'ideal rape victim' not only reinforces patriarchal values (Meyers, 1997; Stevenson, 2000; Boyle, 2005; 2019), but also can influence which cases are legitimated within the criminal justice process by way of an actual conviction (Estrich ,1987). But clearly this is a very narrow subset of actual victims, and fails to accurately represent the experiences of many everyday individuals.

It should be noted that these dominant media portrayals of rape survivors, are inextricably tied to patriarchal and neoliberal values: the emphasis is on either a female vulnerability which must be kept pure and protected, a dangerous female sexuality which should be shamed (Benedict, 1992; Cuklanz, 1996; Barraio, 2023), or — on a more neoliberal note — a resourceful survivor whose bravery and self-belief demonstrates the 'correct' path toward recovery from trauma (Bletzer and Koss, 2006; Gilmore, 2017; Orgad, 2009) . These are all highly problematic, restrictive roles, which reduce female agency or proscribe how women should act. But if the central criticism of the media is for its failure to reflect the lived reality of rape, how can survivors disrupt these problematic mediations by speaking out themselves in the media?

Storytelling as Recovery or as Commodity?

In bridging the discussion between rape survivorhood as it is lived and experienced by individuals, to rape survivorhood as it is represented in the media, a useful reference is the work of sociologist Ken Plummer. Writing in 1995, he observed that the 'old stories of rape,' which were largely male-authored and influenced by patriarchal rape myths, were being replaced by new stories, informed by the work and activism of second-wave feminists (1995, p.67). Here he reminds us of the value of intersubjectivity, when a lived story of rape could be told and heard by another person:

> Although the story of another person's sexual danger may not be exactly our story, it provides signs and clues for us to make sense of our pains…. [Stories] aid in the creation of a past, a present and an anticipated future — marking out histories, differences, unities, and agendas for action. (p.78)

This moves beyond the healing potential for the survivor telling the story, to a political potential in this model of intersubjectivity, by allowing 'private pains to increasingly become public ones' (p.110). However, he warns that once stories of rape enter the mass media, a transformation occurs: 'At base, story telling becomes a commodity. It enters media worlds and sells' (p.107).

Notably, Plummer says that in mass media the 'classic old stories of rape,' based on patriarchal notions, still persist. Thus, we have two opposing models here when the stories told by rape survivors enter the media. On one hand: the promise of recovery and shared, intersubjective understanding, with its potential for political transformation. And on the other hand, the commodification of these stories, which become products in the media industries.

Likewise, Alcoff and Gray (1996), also writing in the mid-90s, declared that: 'Survivor speech has a great transgressive potential to disrupt the maintenance and reproduction of dominant discourses as well as to curtail their sphere of influence (p. 206).' But they demonstrated how this potential was often obstructed by media platforms themselves, citing television talk shows which ultimately demeaned and infantilized the rape victims who had appeared on television to share their trauma and raise awareness of sexual violence. Instead, 'cool, dispassionate experts' were positioned on the show as the voice of reason, while the victims were asked probing questions and cameras focused on their tears. Thus, 'the emotions of survivors were eagerly displayed for public consumption' and the victim became 'an example of emotional fragility' instead of agency (p.158). While survivor speech *could* allow for 'a new formation of assertive subjectivity' for the survivors, the emotional content of survivor speech was instead used by the media producers to discredit that subjectivity.

Alcoff and Gray's (1996) emphasis on survivor emotions and consumption is an interesting counterpoint to the concept of 'emotional capitalism,' which sociologist Eva Illouz would develop a decade later in 2007. Illouz observed that in contemporary Anglo-American culture, private emotions were increasingly coming to the forefront of public discourse, both inspiring the content of mass media products and informing the way we are encouraged to think, talk, and feel about our work, our pasts, and our identities. Thus, emotional capitalism is 'a culture in which emotional and economic discourses and practices mutually shape each other' (2007, p.4). She writes that in this 'emotion culture' 'never has the private self been so publicly performed and harnessed to the discourses and values of the economic and political spheres' (p.4). Furthermore, this performance of the private self takes place 'through a narrative which combines the aspiration to self-realization with the claim to emotional suffering' (p.4).

Illouz describes the popularity of this 'therapeutic narrative of self-realization' (p.49), whereby individuals confront a trauma from their past, the suffering it has caused, and achieve recovery as a result of the storytelling. On the surface, this sounds very similar to the claims that Herman

(1992), Cahill (2001), and Brison (2002) made about the role of storytelling in enabling sexual violence survivors to heal. But whereas those theories focused on the well-being of the individual victim, the personal working through of emotions and trauma in a supportive environment, Illouz is describing an economy and a popular culture built around that therapeutic narrative and the visibilization of emotions. She warns that 'self-realization and its commodification have become a global enterprise' (p.49) and cites several industries (publishing, television, pharmaceuticals, for example) which turn a profit from this popular narrative, by implicating audiences and consumers in the promise of this narrative.

Thus, a tension emerges between the model of intersubjective storytelling, care, and recovery which has been suggested for sexual violence survivors and the *commodified* narrative of suffering and self-help which Illouz links to profit-seeking industries like the media. The latter seems like a commercial distortion of the former: the conditions around who is listening to the survivor speech and what the outcomes are have changed. But the two models can seem to elide so easily into one another, with troubling consequences. It is within this world of emotional capitalism that mediated survivor speech is situated and contested.

Survivor Speech and #MeToo in the Media

Though much of it was written before #MeToo proliferated in 2017, Serisier's (2018) excellent *Speaking Out: Feminism, Rape, and Narrative Politics*, an in-depth study of survivor speech since the 1980s builds upon the work of Alcoff and Gray (1996) in recognizing the transformative potential of speaking out – and critically evaluating the conditions which constrain that potential. Writing from a cultural studies perspective, Serisier identifies the three promises of survivor speech: individual empowerment for the survivor, inspiration and support for other victims, and changing public understandings of rape (2018, p.6). However, she remains doubtful about whether or not these promises have actually been achieved. Serisier warns that the 'success of speaking out has produced a more complex set of risks, pitfalls, and ethical dilemmas for feminists and survivors (2018, p.12).' Crucially, she acknowledges the 'ambivalent position of survivors who tell their stories.' While speaking out can allow them to reclaim their subjectivity and agency, the act is also 'fraught with vulnerability and risk' (p.11). In conducting a thorough analysis of 'genres' of survivor speech, most notably the published rape memoir, Serisier delineates the intersectional inequalities influencing which survivors were able to meaningfully speak out in the public sphere.

Likewise, Boyle in her analysis of the #MeToo moment and feminism, reminds us to 'think critically about what it means to tell personal stories in a highly mediated context' and 'think not only about who benefits from these tellings but also who has the opportunity to be heard and in what capacity' (2019, p.29). This emphasis on intersectional differences of race, class, and cultural capital is one of the primary themes in scholarship around #MeToo, with many scholars and activists citing how media visibility coalesced around female personalities which were white, conventionally attractive, and often celebrities located within the cultural industries, who already possessed significant cultural capital (Boyle, 2019; De Benedictis et al., 2019; Zarkov and Davis, 2018). Secondly, survivors who were visibilized often had the particularities of their stories and identities flattened by the media, in an attempt to portray them as a relatable 'Everywoman' (Boyle, 2019; Royal, 2018). Thirdly, this emphasis on the personal stories of individual victims also served to de-legitimize feminist expertise on gendered structural inequalities, continuing long-criticized flaws in media coverage that prioritize the individual and personal over the structural. (Boyle, 2019; De Benedictis et al., 2019; Serisier, 2018). And yet, victims' perspectives were still frequently sidelined, with news media coverage focusing on the accused perpetrators and the damage done to their organizations (Cuklanz, 2020). Fourthly, instead of unlocking the consensus-building feminist potential to achieve structural change, stories were still cast into the more media-friendly narrative of conflict between two sides, the accused perpetrator and the victim (Boyle, 2019). This perpetuated the criminal justice framework within which stories of sexual violence are often made public (Gavey, 2005; Gilmore, 2019; Serisier, 2018) even though this legalistic discourse of rape often does not do justice to women's understanding of their experiences (Boyle, 2019)

Sarah Banet-Weiser and Kathryn Higgins (2023) build upon many of these findings in their work *Believability: Sexual Violence, Media and the Politics of Doubt* (2023). Focusing on mainstream mediations of survivors in the #MeToo climate, their claim is that judgement of public survivors has shifted from their *credibility* specifically within a legal setting, to their *believability*, as it is constructed and performed in the media. Located within a contemporary atmosphere of post-truth, they identify an 'economy of believability' which:

> designates a terrain of political struggle where one's capacity to "speak truthfully" – that is, to speak in a way that can be culturally recognized as truthful – is publicly negotiated through a combination of subjective resources (i.e., who one *is*) and performative labors (i.e., what one *does*) (2003, p.4-5)

They identify the 'dynamism of believability' as consisting of two components: the capability of being believed and the quality of being convincing to audiences (p.198). These components draw upon a survivor's social location, her access to resources like cultural capital, and therefore,

predictably, fall along intersectional lines of race and class. But 'the *work* of becoming believable, or believability as *labor* – is increasingly located in media platforms and products, and so increasingly refracted through their logics' (p.10). Significantly, survivors already possessing more resources need to perform less labor in order to appear believable (p.29). Thus, a white, middle-class, tertiary-educated woman will not have to work as hard at her believability as a black, working-class survivor, who would need to learn to speak and appear 'appropriately' for a media platform.

With their emphasis on the unequally distributed labor and resources of individual survivors, Banet-Weiser and Higgins provide a useful framework for my own research. They identify three key registers of survivors' labor to perform believability: physical, psychological, and affective (p.63). These categories would naturally lead to a discussion of emotional labor, but since their research focuses entirely on media texts, it does not provide an insight into how these types of labor are actually performed and experienced by public survivors.

Likewise, Serisier's analysis of survivor speech is notable for recognizing the ambivalent position of public survivors, and the potential costs and benefits to the individual. But since most of her published research is text-based, it is also limited in accessing the emotions and thoughts of survivors on their experiences of media visibility.[6] While these scholars write insightfully about the wider cultural climate and conditions for contemporary survivor speech, they miss out on examining the particularities of everyday media practice, questions of compensation, and emotional labor as experienced by individual survivors who speak out. It is this gap I aim to fill through my interview-based and ethnographic research.

PART TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Hochschild's Theory of Emotional Labor

Having established the media landscape surrounding survivor speech, I will now turn to the theoretical crux of my research: emotional labor, and central role it plays in defining the experiences of rape survivors in the mainstream media. Coined by Arlie Hochschild in her landmark study *The Managed Heart* (1983), 'emotional labor' refers to the management of feeling

[6] Serisier's forthcoming research does draw upon interviews with public rape survivors, some of which is previewed in her book chapter in *The Routledge Companion to Gender, Media and Violence* (2023). However her focus is more on the role of public survivors as political actors, and less on everyday media practice and the emotional labor of mediated survivor speech.

which people enact upon themselves in workplace settings: privately suppressing some emotions, while trying to heighten or visibly demonstrate others. Her study focused primarily on flight attendants at Delta Airlines, where company policy dictated they offer a smile and a perpetual cheerfulness to clients, no matter how rude or demanding those individuals might be. These work roles and conditions might, at first, seem very different from those surrounding rape survivors choosing to speak out in the media. But Hochschild's influential theory has been employed widely by academics and practitioners in a variety of settings, and it offers a productive lens for analyzing my own research.

One of the primary concepts Hochschild develops is the notion of 'feeling rules' and 'display rules.' Feeling rules dictate how one *should be feeling* according to societal norms, and relatedly, display rules dictate what feelings are appropriate to display. Thus, Delta training suggests that flight attendants should feel excited and grateful to hold such a vital job, embodying customer service for the airline, and display rules dictate they visibly embody an upbeat, caring persona for clients. But if a worker's actual feelings do not coincide with these rules – say, if clients are rude and wages are low -- the individual needs to actively manage their own feelings in two ways: 'surface' and 'deep acting.' 'Surface acting' constitutes putting on a smile and still *acting* chipper to that rude, demanding client. 'Deep acting' means trying to alter one's feelings by suggesting other, more 'appropriate' ways to think and feel. For example, a flight attendant might imagine that rude client is acting grumpy because they recently lost a loved one, and therefore is deserving of empathy.

Deep acting thus is ultimately an act of deceiving oneself for it masks what Hochschild calls the 'signal function' of our feelings: alerting us when something doesn't seem right or fair. Emotions like disappointment, anger, and anxiety thus indicate a sense of being undervalued, but they are often actively suppressed by workers. Navigating this gap between one's 'appropriate' feelings and one's true feelings constitutes 'emotion work' — and if it takes place within the workplace or a professional setting, Hochschild calls it 'emotional labor.' She also speculates on the overall psychic cost of constantly performing these self-directed acts of emotional deception, and separating yourself from your true feelings.

Several other aspects of emotional labor, as elaborated by Hochschild, are worth highlighting in relation to my study. First, emotional labor is heavily gendered: women's professions more often demand emotional labor because more women work in industries of care (childcare, nursing, counselling, service industries). Second, in conventional discourses of gender, women are

generally expected to be better at performing emotional labor and working with emotions. Thus, they are often left to perform the emotional labor in any given workplace, serving on student-staff relations committees, providing the affective welcome to new clients, etc. Thirdly, emotional labor is often lower paid or more undervalued than less emotional forms of labor, resulting in women performing more of the emotional labor in the workforce, while also being paid less. Fourthly, emotional labor is intensified by a hierarchy of power, whereby workers lower on the hierarchy must appear willing, grateful and appreciative of opportunities, and superiors on that hierarchy need not expend so much emotional labor. As fewer women inhabit leadership roles across the workplace, this results again, in more women performing emotional labor within professional settings.

Because rape survivors — and especially those who choose to appear on mainstream media — are predominantly women and occupy a freelance, precarious role in relation to media platforms, the heavily gendered nature of emotional labor is further reinforced in the women I study. In essence, these women are inevitably burdened with a triple load of emotion work when it comes to sexual violence: first in having to experience and live through the trauma; and then in performing the media labor of visibly sharing these experiences with the public; and finally, in working with media platforms. Thus, I am interested in how female public survivors manage their own feelings on multiple levels: internally in relation to their own trauma and sense of self, visibly when appearing on media platforms to discuss their trauma, and behind-the-scenes when collaborating with media professionals to produce their visibility.

One final element of Hochschild's theory is central to my study, and that is the 'different profit-and-loss statement' referred to in her quote that opened this chapter. This relates to the concept of 'social exchange,' whereby human interaction depends on an exchange of emotions, gestures, and acknowledgements, enabling us to demonstrate gratitude for efforts made by another and vice versa (1983, p.76). Through the concept of social exchange, we can feel if we have been appreciated enough or if we are still owed something by another. Hochschild suggests the metaphor of an *emotional ledger* by which we keep track of what we *feel* we deserve for the effort we have spent. When individual workers are required to perform customer service in professional settings, any unequal exchange of feelings (i.e. a requirement to still be polite to a rude customer) is 'evened by a wage' (p.86). But what happens if there *is* no wage in a situation where individuals are required to manage their feelings for commercial uses? Does that ledger feel unequal? I argue this is the scenario when public rape survivors collaborate with mainstream

media, sharing their personal experiences of trauma and performing media labor that often goes unpaid.

Emotional Labor and the Workplace

Since Hochschild's groundbreaking work on emotional labor, subsequent scholarship then has greatly elaborated upon her theory (Bolton and Boyd, 2003; Ward and McMurray, 2016), examining emotional labor performed by non-service sector employees (Brook, 2013; Rodriguez, 2023; Vedi, 2021), and crucially for this study , among freelance workers, who do not have steady employment, in the creative and media industries (Butler and Russell, 2018; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2008, 2011; McRobbie 2004; 2011; Thanki and Jeffreys, 2007).

In academia, Hochschild's study prefigured the 'affective turn' of the 90s. Since then, subsequent scholars envisioned emotional labor as a type of 'affective labor,' which 'produces or manipulates intangible, visceral, or embodied affects' on others (Hardt and Negri, 2004, p.108). There has been a proliferation of academic work around 'affect', with psychologists proposing 'affective regulation' in how we respond to our feelings; feminist cultural theorists writing about the 'affective economy' (Ahmed, 2004); 'affective solidarity' and 'affective dissonance' (Hemmings, 2012), and communications scholars exploring 'affective publics' (Papacharissi, 2015) and 'networked affect' (Hillis, Paasonen, Petit, 2015). Generally, affect is perceived as outward-facing, how we influence and are influenced by the feelings of others, while 'emotional labor' is performed upon the self, in managing one's own feelings (Woodcock, 2019). Because my interest is in how individual survivors feel about themselves and their mediated work in speaking out, I will primarily use the term 'emotional labor.' Undoubtedly, their survivor speech has affects on those who encounter it, but their internal, self-directed emotions around producing that visibility and collaborating with media platforms remains the focus.

Outside of academia, emotional labor as a concept has entered the everyday lexicon, where it is often used more broadly to mean emotion work and the effort of care, performed in domestic or personal settings. I wish to strictly adhere to Hochschild's original definition of emotional labor *within a workplace setting*, because it is here where the function of mediated survivor speech as products for media platforms comes to the fore, even though individual survivors may not be fully aware or concerned about that commercial function.

It is also worth returning to Illouz' (2007) discussion of the broader 'emotional culture' that dominates our modern-day discourse both at work and in culture at large. She claims this highly visible emotional culture — foregrounding the discussion of feelings between manager and employee — serves to mask continuing inequalities of power, money, and status that still define workplaces. Managing and visibly acknowledging emotions (both your own and those of others) becomes a valuable professional skill, which Illouz terms 'emotional capital.' These skills could also be characteristic of the media labor of public survivors, both visibly and behind the scenes when negotiating with media platforms.

Previously in this chapter, I introduced Illouz' concept of the popular 'therapeutic narrative of self-actualization' which 'makes emotions… into public objects to be exposed, discussed, and argued over. The subject participates in the public sphere through the construction and exposure of "private" emotions (2007, p. 52).' The existing literature suggests that public rape survivors (the 'subjects' in Illouz' example) operate in a landscape where emotions have become commodities in the marketplace of mainstream media. But I would argue, the individual labor that goes into producing and managing those commodifiable emotions remains largely unrecognized and uncompensated. In the next section, I will look more closely at the different ways in which emotional labor can emerge in the media work of public rape survivors.

Converging Layers of Emotional Labor for the Public Rape Survivor

In my case study of arts-based activism around sexual assault (Li, 2017), I examined multiple stressors that increase the emotional labor felt by individual survivor-activists who are involved in creating and performing art around their experiences of sexual violence. Central to this was the arena of working in grassroots arts environments, where financial compensation was virtually non-existent, because funding was hard to come by in these corners of the creative and artistic industries. Thus, work that was deeply personal and painful, financially uncompensated, and demanded one's creative resources might, in the long run, prove unsustainable for individuals and grassroots arts organizations. The data drew from observation, field notes, and interviews related to my own experience founding and running the Clear Lines Festival in 2015, the UK's first-ever festival addressing sexual violence and assault through the arts and discussion.

While that previous study illuminated the emotional, financial, and creative stressors intensifying the work of survivor-activists, I would like to build upon that research by further exploring the multi-layered nature of emotional labor faced by *mediated* rape survivors. Unlike my previous

study, the participants in my current research collaborate regularly with mainstream media platforms to produce a sustained visibility around their survivorhood. Thus, I am concerned with the specificity of being a rape survivor, being visible, and working within the profit-driven media industries. But what I have refined from my previous study is the idea of a *convergence* of different forms of emotional labor that result from this specificity.

Indeed, the media work of rape survivors can be called several things: feminist, communicative, creative, activist, deeply felt, embedded in and constrained by the media industries. As such, this work can be an intensely emotional recounting of the self and trauma to a public audience, often taking place within a work environment (the creative industry) which is financially precarious and indifferent to individual workers. A public rape survivor might encounter several distinct layers of emotional labor, each of which has been established in existing scholarship from trauma studies, activist studies, media studies, and creative labor studies. I will now examine the literature on these different forms of emotional labor to suggest how they may emerge in my current research. In keeping with the temporal structure to this thesis, I also divide these forms of emotional labor between what a survivor might experience *before* 'going public' through the media, and what comes *after* media visibility.

Before Media Visibility

1 - The Emotion Work of Surviving Sexual Violence

As reviewed in Part 1 of this chapter, decades of scholarship have established the long-lasting negative impact of sexual violence on a survivor's psychological and physical health (Herman, 1992; Kelly, 1998; Koss et al., 1994), including her self-esteem, self-perception, and enjoyment of her life (Campbell and Soeken, 1999; Ellis et al, 1991; Perilloux, Duntley, and Buss 2011). As Campbell (2002) has noted, these scientific findings can all be translated into a deeply negative emotional experience for survivors: feelings of fear, anxiety, worthlessness, hopelessness, loneliness, depression, shame, humiliation, anger, and sadness can linger for decades after a rape. Incorporating Hochschild's (1983) feeling and display rules, we can say individual survivors undertake emotion work in many everyday situations, including ones which may have previously brought her comfort, joy, and belonging. For example, attending a friend's wedding requires an outward display of happiness, when a survivor may actually be experiencing hopelessness and alienation from her peer group. This *emotion work* can become *emotional labor* when a survivor

enters into a professional workplace which requires a display of upbeat competence, when in reality she may be experiencing internal despair.

2- **The Emotional Labor of Working with Sexual Violence**

It is also relevant to note the scholarship on the negative emotional impact felt by professionals who work with sexual violence survivors (Baird and Jenkins, 2003; Brady et al 1999; Horvath and Massey, 2018; Schauben and Frazer 1995). Martin (2005) writes extensively of the emotional toll placed on professionals engaged in 'rape work' (community workers, therapists, police officers, doctors, etc), while other scholars explore 'secondary traumatic stress' (STS) (Choi, 2011; Figely, 1995) or 'vicarious traumatization' (Bride, 2007; Campbell, 2002). This is especially pronounced when the worker is a survivor herself (Ullman, 2010). Psychologist and rape crisis counsellor Campbell (2002) writes tellingly: 'There is no way to do this kind of work without emotional sacrifice' (p.69). She notes the emotional labor comes in having to suppress their feelings of compassion, empathy, and care for a survivor, and translate that emotionally intense knowledge into more professional and mundane actions like writing reports, analysing data, offering advice, filing paperwork, etc. Display rules of their workplace might require a professional to appear neutral, competent, and rational in relation to their task, and therefore manage their feelings of shock, horror, outrage, concern, and despair. Thus, having to perform and appear professional alongside an understanding of sexual violence constitutes emotional labor. I would suggest this can also apply to rape survivors who are expected to write and speak articulately for the media about their own trauma, and thus compartmentalize between their professional performance and their personal, deeply emotional and embodied knowledge of trauma.

3- The Emotion Work of Activism

Previous scholars have studied how activist work is fuelled by an individual's 'passion,' rooted in a deep sense of injustice that needs to be righted (Gorski and Chen, 2015; Maslach and Gomes, 2006). It is precisely the depth of emotion involved which can make a social movement successful in communicating its message to the public (Gould, 2009). But this creates intense emotions within the individual activist: anger and outrage at a societal injustice; empathy with other sufferers; passion and energy in galvanizing people at protests and meetings; and fatigue at a seemingly insurmountable workload.

These same emotions are also felt by feminist activists. Mendes, et al. (2019), in their study of digital feminist activists, write of 'intense labor' that is 'highly precarious, affective, invisible, and

time-consuming' (p.5): for example, in dealing with online misogyny (Megarry, 2014) or confronting the sheer quantity of stories of abuse shared online by other women. In particular, activism around sexual violence creates some of the greatest emotional intensity for individuals (Keller, Mendes, Ringrose 2018; Rentschler, 2014): in the sadness and outrage that can come from 'witnessing' stories of abuse, to the empathy and care that is required (and expected) to comfort a victim. If the individual activists are themselves victims of sexual violence, the emotional labor can be even more complex and intense.

Scharff (2023) coins the term 'care activism,' drawing a direct parallel between care work and activist work — both affective, often invisible, unpaid forms of labor. These types of labor overlap in digital feminist activism, where individual activists employ social media platforms to advance their causes, build their own self-brand, and even start to earn income. She notes the emergence of a neoliberal mindset: 'When activism is monetized, activists' emotional investments and passion become mobilized and tied to income generation' (p.1). I would situate the mediated rape survivors in my study very closely to these digital feminist activists in wanting to speak out about a lived injustice, with the key distinction that my research participants collaborate with mainstream media platforms. This leads to further layers of emotional labor, as I will now explore.

After Media Visibility

4- The Emotional Labor of Being Visible in Mainstream Media

Though she does not use the term emotional labor, Palmer's study *Becoming the News* (2018) demonstrates the intense and varied emotions felt by ordinary citizens who were interviewed by journalists and appeared in mainstream newspapers. Some participants felt pride, joy and delight at appearing in the news, but many felt negative feelings like disappointment, frustration, despair, even existential shock, leading to exhaustion. Some described feelings of betrayal and anger, upon seeing how a journalist misrepresented their story. Other participants were hyper-critical of how they looked in the media (i.e. fat or with a bad haircut), while others felt that they were now 'uncomfortably public,' or had 'lost control,' or were even 'simultaneously annihilated and preserved' (2018, p. 129). These emotional reactions are intrinsically tied to a power structure where the individual news subject feels they have little or no control over how they are represented to the public, while the media platforms are perceived to have all the power (Malcolm, 1990; Palmer, 2018).

Palmer's news subjects also reported the intense impact of other people's reactions to their appearance in the news. Again, many participants received admiration and respect, while others were roundly criticized for their comments, even ostracized, and one woman describes the day she appeared in the news as 'the worst day of her life' (2018, p.161). Emotional labor emerged in reconciling one's excitement or anxiety about appearing in the news with the actual outcome. Meanwhile, the concept of social exchange suggests why some participants felt their identity and comments had been used, exploited, and undervalued by the journalists.

Notably, Palmer found in her study that there were higher emotional stakes for those participants who appeared in the news about a topic or story that was deeply personal for them. By this metric, I suggest a rape survivor being interviewed by a mainstream media platform about her own trauma might feel the most intense emotions.

If Palmer's study was about being visible in the news media, there is also important scholarship on the wider politics of visibility. Sociologist Brighenti (2010) writes of three modes of visibility: recognition, control, spectacle. A visibility of recognition confers power, by rendering a minority group 'seen' and legitimized in the public domain. A visibility of control polices the subject, imposing surveillance, discipline, inspection, exposure. And a visibility of spectacle, which exists outside the realm of everyday life, draws upon the traumatic realism of disaster. While Brighenti does not specifically mention sexual violence survivors in his study, each of these modes can easily apply to them. Building upon Brighenti's theory, I would suggest that each of these modes of visibility also carries an emotional register which implicates an individual survivor. Thus, a visibility of recognition valorizes a survivor for her bravery in speaking out, conferring respect and admiration and engendering feelings of pride, joy, and accomplishment. In contrast, a visibility of control is punitive, damaging, even victim-blaming; it can lead to a survivor feeling diminished, maligned, sad, and angry. And finally, a visibility of spectacle might sensationalize a survivor's trauma, emphasizing the abject horror of her experience or render it sexually titillating. This could lead to her feeling pitied, used or exploited.

Brighenti warns that 'supervisibility' in the media can in fact lead to misrepresentation, disempowerment, and inferiorization for a minority group. I would connect this with Benedict's (1992) famous 'virgin or vamp' dichotomy, whereby individual rape victims in the media are squeezed into one of two stereotypes. With other minoritized groups, scholars have likewise demonstrated that greater visibility has not necessarily led to political or structural improvements; for example, Fischer (2019) on trans community visibility and Gray (2013),

writing about Black representations in the mainstream media. Gray proposes an 'economy of visibility' within the contemporary media landscape, where visibility itself remains the end-goal, replacing actual structural change for the minoritized group (Gray 2013).

Banet-Weiser (2018) builds upon Gray's argument when she writes that 'spectacular, media-friendly' popular feminism is simply that: high visibility of feminist sentiments which does little to actually change patriarchal, racialized and classed structures of oppression (p.8). In her 2023 work with Higgins, Banet-Weiser then refines this theory for mediated sexual violence survivors, arguing that media visibility for them has become a test of believability, dependent upon unequally distributed labor and resources. Communications scholar Hewa (2021) extends this discussion of visibility for sexual violence survivors by suggesting a 'politics of transparency' in the digital media landscape, whereby survivors are expected to make themselves transparent to media surveillance and scrutiny. Since a real victim has 'nothing to hide,' her believability rests on how willing she is to offer up the minutiae of her lived experience for public inspection. Hewa (2021) critiques this, asking: 'Should the burden of proof and believability be forced on survivors, or should their capacity for self-determination and their needs be prioritized and heard?'

Her question returns us to the *needs* of individual survivors. While the rich theorization on media visibility informs my research, ultimately, my focus is less on the politics of visibility surrounding mediated survivors and public perception, and more on the emotional labor of media visibility, as it is lived, experienced, and produced by individual survivors. It is therefore important to emphasize that being visible isn't simply a passive state: it is actively constructed, negotiated, and maintained by survivors collaborating with mainstream media platforms. For this reason, it is also important to consider the active construction of media visibility and its emotional labor for the female subject.

5- The Emotional Labor of Performing the Self on Media Platforms

Drawing upon Hochschild's theory of emotional labor, Gill and Kanai (2018) argue that feelings 'constitute a vital part of a functioning capitalist framework and indeed feelings follow social rules—rules, we contend, in which *media* [emphasis added] are increasingly implicated.' (p.318) Their work is part of an insightful body of feminist media scholarship which problematizes the emotional and affective labors demanded of the contemporary female subject. In these studies, visibility plays a crucial role: what is made visible in mainstream media discourse suggests social

rules regarding how women should display and feel themselves. The emotional labor, many scholars argue, lies in a woman reconciling the gap between her actual feelings, what she is expected to display, and how she is expected to feel.

In mainstream media discourse for example, contemporary women are confronted with the 'happiness industry' (Davies, 2016) and the 'confidence cult' (Gill and Orgad, 2015; 2017), but also enjoined to be resilient (Gill and Orgad, 2018), defiant towards patriarchy (Gill and Kanai, 2018), and publicly intimate about their deepest pain and insecurities (Berryman and Kavka 2017; Berryman, Kavka, et al 2018). There is an expectation for women to be 'authentic' (Banet-Weiser, 2012), but also undertake the aesthetic labor of appearing visually attractive in the public eye (Elias, Gill, and Scharff 2017; Duffy 2018). As part of an 'intimate public' (Berlant, 2008) that supposedly brings women together through their common cultural fantasies, insecurities, and disappointments, women in the public eye should be 'affectively relatable' (Kanai, 2017), offering self-deprecation and a satisfaction in 'just getting by' (Gill and Kanai, 2018).

Clearly, it is impossible for women to fulfill all these expectations; hence they are caught between the 'heel and the toe' (Hochschild, 1983) of 'affective neoliberalism: both enjoined to gamely take on the pain of existing inequalities whilst only able to speak of suffering in purely individualized terms of resilience, always already on the path to "making do"' (Gill and Kanai, 2018). Many scholars cite the role of neoliberal values in shaping female subjectivity (Scharff, 2016; 2023; Rottenberg, 2018): individual women are enjoined to be ultimately responsible for their lifestyles, their moods, their productivity levels, their careers, their appearance to the outside world, and their feelings.

This emotional labor is especially pronounced for women who actively construct their visibility on social media platforms like YouTube and Instagram. Duffy (2017) classified the unpaid, voluntary work of young female fashion bloggers as highly affective but also 'aspirational': performed in the hopes that it would lead to a professional career in fashion. In a similar vein, Bishop (2018; 2023) studied young female beauty bloggers, who often felt an anxiety over their viewing numbers: were they visible *enough* on the platform? Her finding was reinforced by Glatt's research (2021; 2023) on YouTube influencers, who also experienced anxiety and stress related to the quantification of their visibility and the economic precarity of their work. And yet, display rules suggested these influencers could not show this specific form of anxiety in the video content they created.

How do the above constraints impact sexual violence survivors who choose to speak out in the media? Do they, too, adopt neoliberal values and feel responsible for their speech, appearance, and visibility in speaking out about sexual violence? But there is added specificity when we consider the nature of their visibility is very different from beauty and fashion blogging: it demands they speak about their own trauma and its aftermath.

While all my research participants were active and 'public' on social media as survivors, my focus was on their visibility on mainstream media platforms, requiring a collaboration with media producers. This distinguished them from many of the participants in the above studies of digital influencers, who create and manage their own public content. This crucial difference of collaborating with professional media producers introduces a significant layer of emotional labor to the media work of public survivors.

6- The Emotional Labor of Working Within the Creative Industries

Are public rape survivors performing creative labor when they speak out in mainstream media? Raymond Williams (1961) defines the creative worker as someone who communicates *experience* through learned skills. In this way, a mediated survivor communicates her experience of trauma to the public through her writing and speaking skills. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) clarify that the creative worker makes 'products that entertain, inform and even enlighten us…such products might enrich our lives and make the world a better place to be' (p.2). These products are then disseminated 'to wider groups, primarily through the institutions and technologies we call the media (p.59).'

Existing creative labor studies indicates a high level of emotional labor experienced by individual creative workers in the media industries. Newspapers, TV and radio broadcasters, production companies, online journals — these are all working environments in the media industries, which are documented to be economically precarious and poorly paid (Conor, Gill, and Taylor, 2015; Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Ursell, 2000). Workers must contend with fast deadlines, tight budgets, competitive workplaces, and around-the-clock workloads (Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013; Harte, Turner & Williams, 2016; Neilson, 2021; Petre, 2021; Hewa, 2022) Yet pursuing careers in the creative and media industries is seen as a 'labor of love' (Hesmondhalgh, 2010; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011), where individuals are induced to tolerate precarious working conditions in order to follow their passions, 'Do What You Love' DWYL and attain self-actualization (McRobbie 2004; Conor, Gill

and Taylor 2015). This promise also leads individual workers to identify very closely with their chosen profession (Rose, 1999), but to also self-exploit and overwork (Ursell, 2000; Ross, 2003) in the hopes of furthering their career.

Emotional labor results, where true feelings of disappointment, fear of failure, and despair are masked, by an upbeat display of appearing passionate, enthusiastic, confident, and productive (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2008; Conor, Gill and Taylor 2015; McRobbie, 2011). This is especially pronounced for young female workers (McRobbie, 2004; Conor, Gill and Taylor 2015; Leung, Gill and Randle 2015), who experience greater economic precarity due to gendered working conditions affecting pay and employment (Thanki and Jeffreys 2007; Shade and Jacobsen, 2015) and greater pressure to always be working, networking, and 'on' (Scharff, 2015; McRobbie, 2011; Gill, 2011). In addition, young women in the creative industries often feel pressured to publicly present themselves as working creatives through social media (Conor, 2014; Duffy, 2017), with the gendered expectation to appear visually attractive demanding aesthetic labor (Elias, Gill, and Scharff 2017). This ties into an expectation to constantly 'self-brand' among young female professionals in the creative and media industries (Scharff, 2015; Khamis, 2017; Taylor, 2016).

I suggest that public rape survivors work within these same media environments: deeply entrenched power structures characterized by low pay, fast-paced and indifferent work schedules. In her study of the news media, Benedict (1992) noted similar work environments impacted journalists' coverage of rape cases, leading to sensationalized reporting. Thirty years later, Hewa's (2023) research uncovered that these same work conditions also challenge the journalists dealing with survivors; leading to journalistic practice that is careless, ignorant, or too stretched to offer adequate care to survivors. How then do survivors themselves fare in these work conditions, and what is the emotional labor that results?

7 - Relational Labor

Finally, I wanted to highlight the relational labor which often accompanies high visibility for creative workers. baym (2015) coined the term 'relational labor' in her study of freelance musicians: regular, ongoing communication with audiences over time to build social relationships that could lead to paid work. Other scholars (Butler and Russell, 2018; Potts, et al. 2008; Wittel, 2001) expanded on the concept to refer to the often-unpaid labor of 'networking' by freelance creative workers in order to sustain platforms and future income. Public rape survivors, likewise,

may need to maintain friendly professional relations with editors, producers, journalists, and other who could possibly offer them future work and visibility.
Feminist media scholars (Scharff, 2023; Mendes, et al., 2019) examine the relational labor of digital feminist activists in replying to and corresponding to comments on their social media profiles, part of the solidarity-building and care-offering that forms part of their activism. In a similar way, public rape survivors often receive many comments, messages, and queries, both public and private, from strangers and potential collaborators, which demand their attention. This is a significant dimension of emotional labor for public survivors, but my study focuses more on my participants' interactions with mainstream media platforms, rather than the audience interactions which result from that visibility.

Nevertheless, the presence of this relational labor is important when asking survivors if their media work is 'worth it.' As other scholars have concluded, the interpersonal relations that arise from connecting with fellow survivors and feminist advocates can be seen as a benefit (Rentschler ,2014; Mendes, et al., 2019). That camaraderie can be with like-minded creative or media professionals, solidarity with fellow activists, or praise and positive feedback from an audience. Brotheridge and Lee (2002) write that: 'Emotional labor can be simultaneously considered as an effortful process that drains mental resources and as a process for recovering resources by contributing to the development of rewarding relationships (p.13).'

If left unchecked, intense emotional labor can also lead to exhaustion and even burnout. Scholars have explored the high risk of burn-out among activists who feel deeply about the injustices they are challenging (Gorski and Chen, 2015; Maslach and Gomes, 2006); among academics and front-line workers who engage regularly with the issue of sexual violence (Campbell, 2002; Martin, 2005); and among creative workers working in precarious creative industries (Conor, Gill and Taylor 2015). The possibility of burnout caused some individuals to scale back their activism or including digital feminist activists who spoke out about rape culture (Mendes, et al., 2019). In my research, I would like to examine how mediated rape survivors contend with these seven layers of emotional labor, which can likely lead to burn-out. It is certainly a spectre that has loomed over me several times in recent years, and I would be curious to learn if other survivors experience similarly.

Intersectionality and Emotional Labor

Throughout the literature cited in this chapter, intersectionality has continually resurfaced as a concept to complicate how public rape survivors are represented in mainstream media and how they experience that visibility. As defined by Black feminist legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality acknowledges that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage can interconnect and compound to produce obstacles often unforeseen in conventional ways of thinking (p.149). Thus social categories like race, class, sexuality, age, disability, health, and nationality intersect uniquely in each individual to produce specific advantages or disadvantages for that person.

An intersectional lens is fundamental to my analysis of mediated rape survivors. While sexual violence inflicts long-lasting and negative consequences on an individual survivor, these consequences have been proven to vary greatly according to intersectional differences. As Loya established, poorer black and Latina survivors experienced greater economic setbacks after rape than white survivors (2014), and survivors with more stable finances had better access to counselling and therapy, and easier paths to recovery and good health (2015). Minority or low-income victims were more likely be treated in a detrimental and re-traumatizing manner by social workers than white, middle-class victims (Campbell and Raja, 1999). In the legal system, white victims who were assaulted by a man of color were more likely to receive a positive judicial outcome than non-white victims (Sommers, Goldstein, and Baskin, 2014). These are just some of countless examples that demonstrate how intersectional categories impact the social, judicial, medical, and professional impacts on individual sexual violence survivors.

In relation to media visibility, it has been long-established that intersectional differences influence how survivors are represented. As summarized in Part One, mainstream media often focuses on white, middle-class, young, attractive heterosexual survivors (Benedict 1992; Boyle 2005, 2019; Royal 2018). Married mothers fit traditional gender roles and are also frequently visible as acceptable victims, whereas working-class or black rape victims are more likely to be maligned, subject to victim-blaming, and accused of false rape accusations (Benedict, 1992; Cuklanz, 1996; Waterhouse-Watson, 2016). The heightened visibility around #MeToo persisted in these inequalities by highlighting white, beautiful Hollywood actors as the victims who were able to mobilize their existing celebrity to speak out publicly (Boyle, 2019; Tambe, 2018; Zarkov and Davis, 2018).

This illuminates a second key aspect of intersectionality, which is that inequalities of race, class, and socioeconomic position also determine the resources available to a subject and how she is able to construct and negotiate her media visibility. Thus, Hollywood actors already command a high level of visibility, but likewise Serisier (2018) observes that the majority of published rape memoirs were written by white, middle-class, tertiary-educated, heterosexual victims of stranger rape: women who had the education, skills, and luxury of time to write book-length memoirs. I aim to build upon the observations of Serisier (2018), Banet-Weiser and Higgins (2023), who identify cultural capital as a determining factor in who is able to successfully speak out in mainstream media.

Cultural capital, as defined by Bourdieu (1977), comprises the social assets of an individual, such as their education, social connections, taste, and cultural knowledge, which enable social mobility in a stratified society, and confer status and power. Intersectional categories like race and class affect an individual's cultural capital, but crucially, cultural capital can also be acquired in one's lifetime through education, marriage, socializing, work, and other means. When Banet-Weiser and Higgins (2023) refer to a mediated rape survivor's resources which she must draw upon to construct her believability, they largely mean her cultural capital. They see a direct inverse relationship between a survivor's resources and the amount of labor demanded of her to be believable: these forms of labor 'are unevenly demanded of the different types of subjects who must struggle for it within this economy, often in competitive ways' (p.80). For example, a black or working-class survivor might have to work harder to be seen as believable than a white, middle-class survivor who already has the poise, media skills, and cultural capital that enables her to speak effectively in a television interview about her rape.

My interest is in how the *emotional* labor of mediated survivors is connected to intersectional differences, and we might expect them to fall along similar lines of race and class: greater emotional labor is demanded of those individuals who are already disadvantaged. Previous scholarship indicates that women of color journalists receive more online abuse than white male journalists (Gardiner, 2018). And the online abuse received by people of color resulted in experiences of anger, anxiety, as well as negative professional, social, and financial impacts (Glitch report, 2018). Does speaking out carry a greater vulnerability for minoritized survivors? Recent studies (Banet-Weiser and Higgins, 2023; Gilmore, 2017) have examined the differences between mainstream media representations of white and black rape survivors. But as an East

Asian survivor myself, I was curious to understand the media experiences of survivors from East Asian and other minority ethnicities, which I have not seen addressed in previous scholarship.

One intersectional category is particular and significant to victims of sexual violence and abuse: namely the *type* of crime suffered. Stranger rape, date rape, acquaintance rape, intermarital rape, domestic abuse, child sexual abuse (CSA): these are all different categories of experience which impact how a survivor's trauma is perceived by others and believed, again influencing the resources available to her. A victim of a date rape or acquaintance rape is less likely to see her own assault as a rape, and therefore less likely to report what happened to her and seek the support she needs to recover (Ahrens, 2006; Parrot and Bechofer, 1991). When considering media visibility, stranger rape is much more widely reported in the news, despite comprising only 10-20% of actual rapes (Gravelin, Biernat, Kerl, 2023; Gordon and Riger 1989; Soothill and Walby 1991). Is there greater emotional labor for survivors of other, less visibilized forms of sexual violence, whose stories aren't as 'sensational' or as readily seen as rape? Do these survivors need to work harder to achieve believability?

I am interested in how these intersectional differences play out in individual cases, how they impact the emotional labor demanded of the individual, and their attitudes towards whether or not their media visibility has been worth it. An East Asian adult survivor of workplace sexual violence, for example, may experience a very different type of media visibility about her trauma than a white adult survivor of child sexual abuse, even though they may both possess comparable levels of cultural and economic capital. Intersectionality acknowledges that it is impossible to separate out any one social category in determining an individual's life outcomes; instead, a survivor's identities and subject formations intersect in complex and unexpected ways.

While other studies have involved an intersectional lens in analysing media texts around victims and survivors, my research extends this emphasis on intersectionality to interview and auto-ethnographic data with actual survivors. Although my sample size is small out of necessity, it is at least a first step towards illuminating how intersectional elements of our identities impact our lived experiences when appearing on mainstream media platforms.

CONCLUSION AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Throughout this chapter, I have highlighted different forms of emotional labor that might converge – or intersect – for my participants due to the multiple subject positions they inhabit: as sexual violence survivors, as mediated subjects, as creative industries workers. But to better situate my research, I began with a literature review from studies of sexual violence, specifically on the long-lasting negative impacts of rape on survivors, drawn from psychology; then feminist theories on survivorhood and storytelling. Feminist media studies have examined the problems in news media representations of rape and rape victims, taking us up to recent studies of survivor speech in the media by Serisier (2018) and Banet-Weiser and Higgins (2023). But ironically for so much scholarship around rape survivors as they are presented in the media, no studies thus far have actually *interviewed* public rape survivors to learn about their emotional labor. This is the gap I aim to fill.

Then I examined emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983), the crux of my theoretical framework. I suggest seven possible layers of emotional labor, each established in existing literature, which could emerge for public rape survivors due to the multiple positions they inhabit. My theoretical framework centers around Hochschild's concept of emotional labor, which examines the individual management of feeling in workplace settings, for commercial ends. There is the emotional labor of: 1) being a rape survivor; 2) of professionals who engage with the issue of rape in their work; 3) ofactivism; 4) of appearing on mainstream media platforms; 5) of performing the self on media platforms; 6) of working within the media industries; and 7) relational labor. And to better understand the emotional labor of public survivors, it is also useful to turn to an intersectional lens for analysis, to be aware of how intersectional categories impact the individual emotional labors of public rape survivors and the resources available to them in speaking out.

Recall that my research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What are the motivations, challenges, and conditions for individual sexual violence survivors who maintain an ongoing public visibility through the mainstream media around their experiences of trauma?

RQ2: What is the emotional labor of this ongoing media visibility for individual rape survivors, and how is it negotiated, justified, and compensated?

RQ3: What role do intersectional differences play in impacting individual attitudes, emotions, and strategies towards this media work?

But before we look at my data, I discuss my research design and the unpredictable journey this research has gone on, in my next chapter on methods.

Chapter 3
Research Design and Methodology

Auto-ethnography:
Walking Home Alone, A Few Days Before My PhD Upgrade is Due
London, May 2016

One evening in 2016, I was walking alone through the darkened residential streets of Hackney at 10pm. I had just left my friend's house, and I was hauling a heavy bag of books from the London School of Economics Library. In fact, my PhD upgrade was due in a few days, and I'd been ferrying these books around for weeks, from home to office and back, in some weird alchemical attempt to miraculously glean knowledge from them and convert said knowledge through the medium of footnotes and literature reviews and theoretical frameworks into material worthy of academic approval.

The books were on sexual violence, my topic area, which I'd been slowly absorbing as a scholar over the previous nine months. But I carried within me a heavier weight, too: my own lived experience of the topic area: a deep-seated layering inside my body and mind, laid down by some perpetrator eight years ago, and ever since then manifested in an unspoken language of raised heartbeats, suppressed anxiety, flashes of nausea. It was a language I had learned to read and recognize over the years, and I recognized it now, as my feet trod the empty streets of Hackney late at night, and the familiar panic threatened to swell.

At 10pm on a school night, there was no one else around. In the darkened areas between streetlights, my heartbeat quickened. I spotted a fox trotting on its own, before slipping under nearby bushes. I passed lit windows where the blue glow of televisions flickered silently, where strangers could look out into the spring night and watch me walk past, alone.

I was very aware of my own vulnerability. A solitary woman at night, slowed down by this enormous burden of books and memories.

My own rape had taken place under very different circumstances. It had been a sunny Saturday afternoon, a random act of violence by a stranger, under blue skies and tree branches, where the outskirts of Belfast met the countryside. But still I remembered: the panicked surge of adrenaline, the scrabble of my hiking shoes against the ground. The self-remonstration that if only I had been faster on my feet that day. If only I had been able to get away.

Wouldn't it be ironic, I thought, if I got mugged or attacked here in Hackney tonight? Made vulnerable by the weight of these books I was hauling. All that knowledge gained in my subsequent reading and writing and recovery — all that knowledge would still be unable to protect me.

The victim disappeared on her way to Haggerston Overground Station, the news reports would say.

All she left behind was a tote bag of academic books on sexual violence.

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As an academic researcher, I was not alone when I took that solitary walk back to the Haggerston Overground Station. Liz Kelly (1988) described how studying rape led her to feel anxiety, fear, sadness and reconsider her own personal safety: 'For the first time in years I felt scared walking alone at night' (p.15).

If emotional labor comes from navigating the gap between our real feelings and the 'feeling rules' and 'display rules' of our environments, then academic inquiry presents a whole new challenge for rape survivors researching the topic of our trauma. This was a challenge I hadn't anticipated when I embarked on my doctorate, but ultimately the unexpected emotional labor of the work altered and shaped the final research design and output in every aspect: in the theoretical framework, through data collection, analysis, and my own relationship to the PhD. In the above auto-ethnographic section, I reflected upon the gap between the lived knowledge which sexual violence survivors carry all our lives as a result of our experiences, and the learned knowledge which academic disciplines expect us to acquire in the course of our research. Do we take on a double burden as survivors *and* researchers? How can we embody a scholarly thirst for learning when the subject of our study also threatens to reignite our pain?

In this chapter, I present the methodology and research design of my study, as I grappled with these questions. I chart how my research design changed significantly over the course of eight-and-a half years, ultimately becoming a longitudinal study capturing the evolving attitudes of both myself and my interview participants, many of whom I had known through activism. In the first part of the chapter, I discuss the unusual temporal protraction of my research, due to several reasons: 1) the emotional labor that I encountered during the course of the project, much of which was tied to my own survivorhood; 2) 'outside world' factors like Covid; 3) changes in my own personal life like pregnancy and motherhood during Covid; and 4) the embedded nature of my academic inquiry in my wider work as a survivor, activist, and author. Ultimately, I turned to auto-ethnography as a method of inquiry, drawing upon my lived experience to better accommodate my situation and to sharpen the original contribution I could make to the field. I discuss the benefits and challenges of auto-ethnography in the second part of the chapter. In the third section, I discuss my use of interviews as a complementary form of data collection, which

counterbalances the inwards focus of ethnography by incorporating — or attempting to incorporate — the lived knowledge from other mediated rape survivors. In the fourth section, I discuss thematic analysis as the method through which I approach the interview data, and introspection as my analytic method for the auto-ethnography. Finally, I discuss risk management and research ethics, which includes questions of reflexivity, anonymity, informed consent, and ethics of care and self-care, as they arose during the design and writing of this research.

Temporal Protraction of the Research

I began my PhD in 2015 and submitted my thesis in 2024. Over these 8.5 years, my own career as a 'public survivor' has evolved, along with my attitudes towards the media, my own skillset and networks, accompanied by changes in both my personal life and the outside world. #MeToo and the Covid-19 pandemic both took place during the course of these eight years, and they had an indelible effect on the contemporary media landscape, as well as scholarship around it. Likewise, both of my novels addressing sexual assault were published during these years — *Dark Chapter* in 2017 and *Complicit* in 2022 — and my experiences with media surrounding the publication of these books offered a unique insight into my area of study, while also considerably affecting the pace of my academic research. Overall, it is hard to fully convey the emotional labor that accompanied all these developments, alongside what was taking place in my personal life, as a first-time mother raising a newborn in the middle of pandemic with a new partner.

And yet, through all of these changes, I have been — and always will be — a rape survivor, and the impact of that trauma can continue to manifest in unexpected ways throughout a lifetime (Brison 2002; Herman 2002). That desire to investigate the impact of my trauma and its reverberations has continued to sustain me through the various changes in my life, despite the emotional labor inherent in this inquiry.

ADDRESSING EMOTIONAL LABOR IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH

The PhD research I ultimately undertook was very different from the research I proposed in my PhD upgrade in 2016, when I walked home alone late at night in Hackney. In this section, I will detail the context for these changes. Initially, in 2016, I had proposed that my research would interview rape survivors about their actual traumatic experiences and how they turned to social media to find a community and support around these issues. Aware that social media usage skews towards a younger demographic (Andalibi, et al., 2018; Horeck, et al., 2023; Mendes,

Keller, Ringrose, 2019; Salter 2013), I planned to recruit two different groups of interview participants: those who were already engaged in using online spaces to share their experiences, and those who were not active online around this issue. I also considered using focus groups as a method of data collection, to foster a conversation between the two groups of survivors and learn more about their attitudes around trauma and online communications.

In the first year of my PhD studies, I conducted a pilot study based on three interviews with survivors: two survivors of child sexual abuse (CSA) within the family, and another survivor of multiple assaults throughout her life, including an acquaintance rape. The interviews yielded rich insights, both into their experiences of trauma and their attitude towards digital media. I was moved by how much the participants were willing to share with me — but I was not entirely surprised. Having been involved in activism against sexual violence for over a year by that point in 2016, I was aware how much individual survivors often relished the opportunity to speak about their trauma relatively openly with someone who understood, such as another survivor like myself.

While I was honored to be on the receiving of these participants' confidences, I also realized how emotionally intense it would be to recruit and interview sixteen survivors, to hear sixteen accounts of sexual violence, and to give them all the emotional attention they deserved. As Campbell (2002) writes in her illuminating book *Emotionally Engaged: The Impact of Researching Rape*: 'There is no way to do this kind of work without emotional sacrifice' (p.69). She cited the 'vicarious traumatization' that her team of researchers underwent in their extensive interviews with rape survivors for the Women and Violence Project. Ullman (2010) extends Campbell's work further and argues that this vicarious traumatization is greatly amplified if the researcher is herself a survivor. Past literature indicates that the pain and emotions associated with rape can be triggered by research interviews, for both interviewee and interviewer (Brzuzy, Ault, and Segal, 1997; Campbell, et al., 2009).

I became acutely aware of this in the spring of 2016, as I worked towards my PhD upgrade. If we consider the seven layers of emotional labor that I suggested for mediated rape survivors in Chapter 2, I myself felt the first two layers very keenly at that stage of my research. These two layers — the emotion work of being a rape survivor, and the emotional labor of addressing sexual violence in my professional work — are in fact precisely what Campbell (2002) and Ullman (2010) were describing in their writing. To have to be thinking, writing, absorbing

stories about sexual violence everyday as a PhD researcher: this was increasingly not a prospect I was looking forward to, as I much as I saw the value in it. And as a survivor myself, I wondered, had I done all the hard work of recovering and rebuilding my life over the past eight years to reach this point: thinking and reflecting upon rape every day *again*, just this time in an academic fashion? As my upgrade deadline approached, I shed many tears, faced with the irony that in pursuing academic knowledge around the issue of sexual violence, I had just consigned myself to several more years of pain and solitude.

I need to point out here that academic research in the social sciences was a new venture for me, having previously studied in the arts and humanities and then worked in the artistic and creative industries for nearly fifteen years, before embarking on my PhD. I will openly say that building a theoretical framework, and learning social science methods of data collection and analysis felt foreign to me, and ultimately dry. There was an affective coldness that didn't seem to capture or adequately recognize the emotional messiness of experiencing and recovering from trauma. Nor did academic analysis allow a way for me to *emotionally* process revisiting the impact of my own rape, a thought that was inescapable if I was thinking, reading, and writing about rape every day and therefore vulnerable to re-traumatization.

bell hooks (1994) argues movingly that if we draw from our lived experiences, including trauma, theory can be 'a liberatory practice' and academic inquiry can be intertwined with our living in the world. However, I did not find this to be the case, perhaps because, as a writer, I felt constrained by the methods and approaches of the social sciences. Feminist scholar Ruth Weatherall (2019) describes feeling a similar gap, between the academic conventions of scientific research and the 'heartbreak' of ethnographically observing and knowing Maori women who had survived extreme domestic violence. She writes: 'I felt completely cut off from the emotional turbulence of my fieldwork and the messy experience which often characterizes ethnographic research' (p.107).

As Campbell (2002) says, scientific methods often fail to adequately capture the emotions, and I believe it was this which I encountered. I, too, felt a gap between the intensely emotional experiences of my interview participants and my own trauma; and the dispassionate, scientific approach that treated their intimate outpourings, given in an atmosphere of trust, as 'data,' to be itemized and analysed for my own professional benefit.

However, I was also confronting emotions around subjectivity, control, and one's own relation to power within the academy. As a novice to social science research, so much of academic inquiry seemed rooted in a sense of inadequacy: an awareness that other scholars had come before you, and their endless body of scholarship needed to be ingested before you could embark on your own research. So there was always an anxiety that you hadn't read enough, and an implicit accusation that whatever you had to say wasn't good enough, if it wasn't rooted in pre-existing literature.

These attitudes clashed with being a rape survivor. I was already feeling inadequate in terms of how much my own life and finances had stalled as a result of recovering from the rape — and here I was again, at the bottom of an unlimited mountain of work, which I had voluntarily signed up to perform as a PhD student, for less than the London Living Wage. It seemed to negate the value of my own lived experience. If being a rape survivor already involved so much emotional labor, having to research it as a PhD student demanded even more.

Feeling rules and display rules (Hochschild, 1983) emerged. Here I was, performing the labors of academic inquiry, playing the role of the dispassionate, intellectually rigorous scholar, when in reality, the emotions plaguing me were ones of inadequacy, anxiety, and defeat. These are probably emotions that many a PhD student has felt, regardless of their topic area, but to state the obvious again: as a rape survivor researching rape, these emotions were intensified. My GP diagnosed me with secondary transferred depression, and a re-traumatization loomed large, which I could only stave off if I stopped working and thinking about rape.

CONTEXT FOR THE CHANGE OF RESEARCH DESIGN

This leads me to the first and most urgent of the four factors that necessitated a change in my research design and a switch to part-time study: to protect my own mental health. But three other factors were also very significant and, like the first, not aspects I could have predicted when I began my PhD. They are: the embedded nature of my academic inquiry in my wider work as a survivor, activist, and author; changes in my personal life; and 'outside world' factors like Covid. I will now discuss each of these four factors and how they impacted my research design in further detail.

My Mental Health. What exacerbated my depression was the incredibly solitary nature of PhD work. Unlike Campbell's team of researchers (2002), I did not have colleagues who were also interviewing rape survivors, and with whom I could share in supportive 'de-brief' sessions. Campbell advises building clinical support into the research design, and I attempted to do this. I had regular sessions with the LSE Student Counselling Service, I secured funding for a few therapist sessions, and I undertook a one-day training course with the charity Against Violence & Abuse (AVA) on managing secondary traumatization, primarily aimed at frontline workers who work regularly with survivors. But none of these forms of support were consistent enough and targeted enough to address the emotional labor of my specific situation: of being a rape survivor herself, who was now engaged in PhD research around sexual violence. I felt like unless someone also inhabited these dual positions, they wouldn't be able to fully understand what I was going through. In this way, as I suggested in Ch. 2, different forms of emotional labor converged as a result of my multiple subjectivities.

To help cope with the intensity of the emotional labor, I instituted a personal rule on weekends: Can I go twenty-four hours without thinking, speaking, or reading about rape? Temporary reprieves from the topic always helped, but given that I was simultaneously maintaining a public-facing career as a writer, this was easier said than done.

My Wider Work as an Author, Activist, and Survivor. After my first novel *Dark Chapter* was published in June 2017, I began to realize that it would be untenable to pursue full-time PhD research, while I was engaged in so many media interviews and events around the book. I was also involved in a charity called On Road Media (now called heard), on their Angles project, which aimed to improve media coverage of sexual violence and domestic abuse. I was still curating and running events for Clear Lines, the grassroots arts organization I had founded in 2015 before starting my PhD research, and I was regularly being asked to speak at events and participate in media projects around the topic. A film producer had commissioned me to adapt *Dark Chapter* into a feature film screenplay. And people kept asking me what my next novel was going to be about. In the economy of commercial publishing, the expectation was that I should produce a follow-up novel as soon as possible. In a perfect example of the 'bulimic' boom-or-bust work conditions for freelance creative laborers (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011), I didn't feel like I should put my next novel on hold because of the PhD — nor did I want to, as the recent Weinstein allegations and the then-new #MeToo movement had sparked my imagination

with a possible story I wanted to pursue. So in 2018, three years into my PhD, I began writing the novel which would later become *Complicit* and be published in 2022.[7]

All this increased visibility centered around my own public identity as a rape survivor, an irony I was fully aware of. I also felt I needed to stay active on various social medial platforms, in order to maintain my visibility as an author. Bishop (2023) identifies this attitude in artists who adapt influencer strategies to self-brand online; for me, it resulted in a feeling of endless unpaid digital labor. With the increased demands of visibility, I simply did not have the time and energy to progress on my PhD research as a full-time researcher, and a switch to part-time study seemed the only viable way.

Seen in one way, these events and media work were, of course, publicity for the book. But they also served an activist purpose for me, in encouraging a survivor-centered public dialogue around sexual violence. They were also immediately rewarding: I got instant emotional feedback from audiences when I spoke publicly, from editors and producers and presenters when I collaborated with media platforms, from readers of my writing, from other survivors. This feedback was always positive, boosting my confidence and affirming that my efforts had been worth it, instead of inevitably receiving notes that my academic writing wasn't rigorous enough, ultimately lacking in some way. This work was also more financially rewarding: by now, I was getting paid for speaking, for writing articles, for facilitating workshops with survivors and advocates. I write these things not to complain about the academic process, but to try and illuminate the emotional challenges of PhD research, especially for doctoral researchers who are simultaneously engaged in other, non-academic forms of work around their subject matter. While these other forms of work undoubtedly enrich a researcher's understanding of their topic area, they can also be more immediately financially and emotionally rewarding than the long, lonely road of embarking upon a PhD. This also creates a complicated positionality for the researcher, where the value of their subjectivity is judged by varying attitudes across industries: their worth is questioned in academia, but lauded in the media.

The emotional and professional rewards of my other work counter-balanced the affective coldness that I encountered in the academic work. In that sense, by moving to part-time study

[7] *Complicit.* Li, 2022. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/14/books/review/complicit-winnie-m-li.html

(which was necessary regardless, given my workload across multiple industries) I was also mitigating the emotional labor which came specifically from academic research on sexual violence, and allowing for other professional opportunities where my labors would yield more immediate rewards. As I argue throughout this dissertation, emotions, work, and compensation can be deeply intertwined, and these complications were very much at play in my own academic project, ultimately affecting my research design.

Changes in my personal life. Aside from my other professional work on the topic of sexual violence, progress on my PhD was also greatly affected by major changes in my personal life. In April 2019, while I was deep into writing my next novel and three months into a new relationship, I realized I was pregnant. At the age of forty, this news triggered a release of mixed emotions: shock, disbelief, panic and beneath all that, a hidden delight. While I had been single for most of my adulthood, the rape had undoubtedly instilled a deep cynicism in me about male-female sexual relations. Increasingly, I had found the world of work among fellow feminists, to be more emotionally rewarding and less brutal to my sense of self-esteem than any attempt at finding romance with a heterosexual man. But alongside this came a sense that my prospects of ever becoming a mother and having a 'conventional' personal and family life were slowly vanishing with each passing year. So the unplanned pregnancy represented to me a wild, near-impossible chance at motherhood — possibly, my last chance, given my age and disinclination towards romance. Other academics (Ellis and Bochner, 1992) have effectively captured the emotional journey of unplanned pregnancy and the decision between abortion and motherhood. While I never seriously considered abortion, the pressures of navigating this journey — and of preparing for impending parenthood with a person I hardly knew — certainly slowed my PhD work in 2019.

Outside factors. Then in 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, when our baby was a few months old. Covid regulations ultimately led us to move to the countryside three hours outside of London, to live with my in-laws in a small rural village, to benefit from their help with child-rearing and living space. But this meant distancing myself from London's intellectual, cultural, and social environments, which created a challenge for the ongoing intellectual project of my PhD. My partner lost his job during Covid, and we decided he would be the primary carer for our child, while my author career was in such a busy phase. I appreciated the rare opportunity this gave me to pursue my professional goals, but it also rendered me the sole breadwinner and placed greater psychological pressure on me to earn money and to prioritize the better-paying, non-academic parts of my work.

With all these changes in my life and in the wider world, I found having the time and headspace to devote to the PhD increasingly a challenge. Thus, it became necessary to reframe both the methods and the research questions of my study, to make the PhD practically and emotionally more tenable, but also better-suited to my unique position as a rape survivor and an increasingly more seasoned media practitioner in public discourses around sexual violence. In the next section, I will detail the reasons for the specific way in which I reframed my research.

CHANGES TO THE RESEARCH DESIGN: SHIFTING AWAY FROM TRAUMA

My original research design was to employ interviews and focus groups involving rape survivors, to discuss their trauma and the online solidarity they found in using social media. In the end, my research design shifted to examine rape survivors' experiences with *mainstream* media platforms, not social media, on this topic, and to employ auto-ethnography and interviews as my data collection methods. The reasons for this specific shift can be summarised below:

Finding a gap in existing literature. In the course of my study, it became evident that many scholars had already researched the use of social media and digital spaces by survivors and feminist activists (Rentschler 2014; Mendes, et al., 2019; Keller, et al., 2018). I had identified a gap: these studies did not empirically address differences in age demographics across survivors and their use of social media, and often did not interview older individuals. But the more I became involved in working with *mainstream media* around the issue of sexual violence, the more I was increasingly drawn to survivor speech on those, possibly more problematic, platforms. No study had previously identified the emotional labor for public survivors that was embedded in everyday media practice, particularly around issues of visibility, compensation, and power when collaborating with mainstream media platforms. Ultimately, I realized this was the original contribution I could make to scholarship.

Unique Positionality and Practical Ease. Given my positionality as a mediated rape survivor and activist, I had access to unique knowledge in the form of my own firsthand experiences with mainstream media platforms. This could effectively function as a data set which continued to expand as my career evolved. Through using auto-ethnography as a method, I could offer a more introspective, firsthand reflection on the personal costs and gains of this media interaction, one which few other scholars would be able to provide. From a practical perspective, because I

had already lived these experiences, I did not have to go out and collect more data, thereby reducing my workload when I was already very professionally stretched. Likewise, my activist and media work allowed me easy access to other public rape survivors through my network, which would reduce the challenges of recruiting interview participants.

Decreasing My Emotional Labor. Conducting the pilot interviews with three rape survivors made me realize how emotionally taxing this work could be. Not only would I have to internally process my own exposure to the pain and suffering of others, but I would need to simultaneously manage an interpersonal encounter that was respectful, compassionate, and responsive to the emotions the survivors would be sharing. As my public-facing work around this issue grew, I was starting to facilitate workshops for survivors, journalists, and frontline professionals around lived experiences of sexual violence — and I found these interactions to be emotionally meaningful, but also incredibly draining to facilitate. By changing my research methods and focus, I could reduce the emotional labor for me considerably. A good portion of my data would now come from auto-ethnography, a method of inquiry which came more naturally to me as a professional writer who had already written extensively about my trauma. While auto-ethnography would hopefully yield new insights that I hadn't uncovered, it would help lessen the 'affective coldness' I felt when using more distanced scientific methods to analyse an experience as emotional as the aftermath of rape. Instead of interviewing sixteen survivors, I reduced the sample pool to seven, six of whom I already knew and was friendly with. And most importantly, I was no longer expecting the participants to give an account of their trauma during the interview. Instead, the focus was on their experiences with *the media,* a shift which significantly reduced the emotional intensity of the interview and could make it more pleasant and convivial for both myself and the participants.

Decreasing the emotional vulnerability for participants. The type of interview participant also changed. I was now specifically looking at survivors who had already 'gone public' in talking about their trauma and had sustained their media visibility over the course of a few years. Thus, they were arguably more practiced and less emotionally vulnerable in enacting survivor speech. Since I was no longer asking them to narrate their trauma, I pitched the interviews to my participants as 'a chance to rant about the media' with another public survivor. These were conversations we'd rarely had, even though I suspected many of us had our own private frustrations and challenges about our work with the media. Thus, I hoped the interviews felt less

like work for everyone involved, and more like an opportunity to blow off steam, share our grievances, and build a camaraderie, while also capturing unique data for my research.

In reducing the emotional labor and vulnerability for myself and interview participants, reasons three and four can be considered forms of risk management in my research design. Certainly, all these changes rendered the research design much more practically viable for myself as a researcher, better suited to my sensibilities as a writer and survivor, and less exploitative for my participants. I will now discuss my data collection methods, starting with auto-ethnography.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Pivoting to Auto-Ethnography

Even now, I chafe at the term 'data collection' on a project about sexual violence because it seems so indifferent and procedural, when I am asking survivors to reflect upon some of the greatest emotional pain they have endured. Social scientists write about the 'risks of dissolving the lived experience in a solution of impersonal concepts and abstract theoretical schemes' (Ellis and Bochner, 1992, p. 98), through methods that are overly scientific. In contrast, ethnography preserves the unique subjectivity of the individuals studied within their contexts, offering the 'thick descriptions' that Geertz (1973) championed: 'nuanced, complex, comprehensive accounts… to facilitate an understanding, and critique, of cultural life' (Adams, Jones, and Ellis, 2014, p. 32). Auto-ethnography takes readers one step deeper inside these thick descriptions, by turning the observational lens on the researcher themself as an insider within a certain context, thereby providing a 'ground-level, intimate, and close-up perspective on experience' (p.23). In that way, auto-ethnographers are 'able to describe an experience in a way that outside researchers never could' (p.31).

Ironically, I didn't consider auto-ethnography as a possible method for data collection, until Autumn 2017 — two years into my PhD — when it was suggested to me while attending the Media, Culture, and Participation PhD course at the Centre Universitaire de Norvège à Paris, CUNP. After my presentation, various academics commented that I had so much 'insider knowledge' as a rape survivor operating within the media industries, that surely I should turn to auto-ethnography as a method of inquiry. In fact, I would be missing a trick if I didn't put more of myself into my research. The more I thought about it, the more I had to agree.

According to Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2014), the core ideals of auto-ethnography are:

1) 'Recognizing the limits of scientific knowledge' regarding identities, lives, relationships
2) Connecting personal (insider) experiences to larger (relational, cultural, political) conversations
3) 'Answering the call to narrative and storytelling'
4) 'Attending to the ethical implications' of one's work for yourself, your participants, and readers (p.25)

These ideals very much spoke to the aims of my academic project, as well as my concerns about the 'affective coldness' and emotional labor of researching sexual violence as a rape survivor. There was so much in my lived experiences with the media that I felt I wanted to unpack: moments and episodes that left me feeling frustrated, disappointed, mistreated by everyday media practitioners who did not understand — or care about — the specific emotional fragilities of being a rape survivor, while also wanting us and our stories as content.

And as a creative writer who was now operating in the social sciences, auto-ethnography would most certainly enable me to 'answer the call to narrative and storytelling' in exploring the media visibility of rape survivors from their own perspectives. In that way, my dissertation would benefit from one of the strongest tools in my tool-box — my writing — while also allowing me to do what came most naturally to me.

Several other characteristics of auto-ethnography rendered it a natural fit for myself and my research. Writing in 1992, before the mid-90s 'affective turn' in scholarship (Clough, 2007), Ellis and Flaherty argued that auto-ethnography was particularly well-attuned to capturing and studying emotions, which were often neglected by sociological researchers. Traditionally, sociology had established a distance between subjects and their lived experience, focusing on 'outer displays of emotions' but not inner emotions (1992, p.2). Bodily reactions and feelings were often ignored, and emotions were often separated from a subject's thoughts as well as from their wider social context. Hochschild's research on emotional labor (1983) had already started to unseat some of these thoughts, but auto-ethnography as a method could address some of these failings by allowing an innermost glimpse into the feelings of a subject within their social and historical context.

Furthermore, auto-ethnography often concerns itself with human experiences of inequality, and how these are imbued with emotion as we live certain identities, relationships, and conflicts. As a

method, it documents vulnerability, breaks silences, and reclaims lost and disregarded voices (Adams, et al., 2014), often reclaiming the subjectivities of minoritized individuals. In that sense, as a method of academic inquiry it can often advocate for social change. Ellis (1991a) claims that we write 'to acknowledge our own privilege, disempowerment, and accountability in cultural life' (p.28). For example, auto-ethnographers have examined lived experiences of racism (Marvasti, 2006); LGBTQ identity (Adams, 2011); bulimia and anorexia (Tillman-Healy, 1996); and childhood sexual abuse (Fox, 1996; Lemelin, 2006; Ronai, 1995). My own auto-ethnography would therefore be building on a tradition of auto-ethnography around gendered violence, but would bring it into dialogue with a study of media practice, focusing on my own complicated position in relation to power, visibility, and agency when performing media work around sexual violence.

Auto-Ethnography as a Process

In terms of how I 'did' or wrote my own auto-ethnography, there were several elements to my process. When I had decided in late 2017 that I would be pivoting to auto-ethnography as a data collection method, I began recording short regular journal entries, to capture my thoughts and feelings during a time when I was heavily involved in activism and media work as a public rape survivor. These were often close to stream-of-consciousness in style, similar to field notes, or what DeVault (1997) calls 'personal writing': confessional, behind-the-scenes accounts of being 'in the field.'

The auto-ethnographic section that opened this chapter can perhaps be seen as an example of personal writing, where I tried to capture the felt, embodied experience of being a rape survivor researching sexual violence, walking home alone late at night while weighed down with books on my topic. However, that section is considerably more polished than what my field notes were like — and interestingly, I never actually took any notes on that particular night in 2016. The episode simply lodged in my memory due to the symbolic and emotional weight it carried, and it was only years later that it occurred to me to capture it in personal, auto-ethnographic writing.

This speaks to a technique I eventually adopted in my auto-ethnographic process, in terms of deciding which parts of my lived experience to write up. I use the metaphor of sifting through my memory for a particularly bright or sharp shard of lived experience, which begged to be held up to the light, examined, and analysed for the meanings held within it. Usually, the brightness or

sharpness of that memory was due to its emotional intensity, prompting me to ask: why was I so unsettled by what happened? Ultimately, why did that memory stay with me, years later?

Of all the field notes I recorded during 2017 - 2019, none of them actually made it into the final auto-ethnography in recognizable form. Because the field notes helped me to privately 'let off steam' as a public survivor, they captured the thoughts and emotions of my everyday lived experience. And while I found reviewing these very useful in reminding me of my emotional state at various points in those years, none of the notes captured episodes which I felt were dramatic or notable enough to render into polished writing for the final auto-ethnography. Perhaps it is an instinct of mine as a novelist to want to write scenes that carry an inherent dramatic conflict, but I felt it would be more effective to locate those bright, sharp shards of experience which somehow crystallized the injustice or the surreality of being a mediated survivor. Thus, the moment I stumbled upon the Northern Irish radio chat show discussing my rape, two days after it had happened. Or the moment I was contacted by a journalist out of the blue, for a comment on my rapist's latest criminal activity. These were encounters I still clearly remembered years after the fact — and the emotional intensity, the dramatic irony, and the thematic weight of these episodes could more impactfully convey the lived experience of being a public survivor, than any account of the mundane day-to-day.

One could argue that is an inaccurate or deceptive representation, to be selecting the most dramatic moments to present to readers. It's effective storytelling, but it's only inaccurate if I'm claiming that *every* moment of my lived experience was like that. But in the account of each episode, I also tell the before and the after, and try to understand why that specific moment felt like a turning point for me.

Many auto-ethnographers operate in this way, selectively choosing episodes that seem to hold a certain significance in their memory. Ellis (2014) explains: 'My writing is usually prompted by a topic or experience that has grabbed hold of me and will not let go…[which] has the possibility of teaching me something, or one that will allow me to connect with the experiences of others' (p. 66). I was particularly drawn to the auto-ethnographies of Carol Rambo Ronai and Lisa Tillman-Healy, who narrated specific episodes from their lives to illustrate their experiences as a pole dancer with a history of childhood sexual abuse (Ronai, 1992), as a child of a mentally challenged mother (Ronai, 1996), and as a young woman living with bulimia (Tillman-Healy, 1996). Infused with a feminist awareness of gender inequality, their accounts brought to life

these marginalized experiences in a visceral, emotional reading, which captured both the ambivalences felt in these specific episodes and the multiple subjectivities the writers inhabited as simultaneously researchers and pole dancers, daughters, CSA survivors, bulimics, etc.

Ronai and Tillman-Healy also arranged their episodes in a loose chronological order, to document how their lived experiences of these issues evolved over time, thereby satisfying a narrative drive for emerging conflict and resolution (Denzin, 1997), while also remaining open-ended as to the future of their lived experience. However, they retained some authorial control over the timeline by moving back and forth between past and present, interjecting occasional comments on how the act of writing these past episodes were affecting them in the present-day. In this way, reflexivity lies at the heart of their work, allowing them to examine how their identities, background, and relationships continued to impact their current work as researchers.

In a similar way, I chose to narrate specific episodes from my life to demonstrate how my experiences with media as a public rape survivor *evolved* over the years. I begin with the 2008 radio chat show and conclude with another radio chat show in 2022, where I was no longer a passive listener to the story of my rape, but the 'special guest' on the show, as an author, activist, and public figure, in addition to being a rape survivor. In between, I narrate other episodes from my lived experience, ranging across encounters with different media platforms — behind-the-scenes on a TV documentary, at a highly-mediated awards ceremony, interviews with print journalists, negotiations with newspaper editors, etc. — to demonstrate how my own agency and attitudes changed in relation to 'the media' as both a workplace and a site of discourse production.

While many auto-ethnographers choose to write in present tense to capture a sense of living in the moment (Adams, et al., 2014), I wrote my auto-ethnographic episodes in past tense. I felt this would better convey their existence as memories from the past which continued to impact me years later, and the shifting meanings and emotions that these memories carried, as my own subjectivity evolved. Anthropologist Jackson (1995, p.2) writes that 'Lived experience accommodates our shifting sense of ourselves as subjects and as objects, as acting upon and being acted upon by the world, of living with and without certainty, of belonging and being estranged.' And for me, as a public rape survivor, author, and researcher, auto-ethnography offered me the most appropriate method of capturing this mutable, emotional, multi-layered nature of lived experience.

Of course, auto-ethnography has its detractors, who criticize the method as narcissistic, self-indulgent, and individualized (Atkinson 1997; Sparkes 2000). At its worst, it is a 'formless, evocative, literary method' that does not analyze or connect personal experience with systemic issues (Stahlke Wall, 2016). These are criticisms I aimed to avoid, by drawing links between my auto-ethnographic material and scholarship from a range of academic fields, and by counter-balancing my one individualized experience with the data I drew from interviews with other public survivors.

Interviews as a Feminist Methodology

Since I had first embarked on my PhD, interviews with other survivors had always remained an essential element of my research design. Undoubtedly, this stemmed from a deep personal query in regard to my own trauma: have other people experienced this too? But in the context of an academic project, this quest for community and understanding evolved into a more specific inquiry into the experiences of sexual violence survivors with mainstream media platforms: have other survivors had these experiences with the media too?

I knew that my own experience would not be representative of most public survivors. As a victim of a highly mediated stranger rape, my path to mainstream media visibility was a very different one from survivors of date rape, child sexual abuse, workplace abuse, or other forms of sexual violence, which traditionally drew less media attention (Benedict, 1992; Boyle 2003; Serisier 2018). Likewise, my relatively high level of cultural capital, in the form of my education and my professional background in the media industries, gave me a distinct advantage in shaping my mediations and negotiating with media producers. Thus, it was only by interviewing other survivors that I could gain a broader understanding of the many ways in which rape survivors approached and experienced their mainstream media visibility.

My research design falls within a long history of feminist methodologies where interviewing is seen as a means of eliciting the voices of women, overcoming silence, and valuing their narratives of lived experience (Gilligan, 1982; Reinharz, 1993). Interviewing women is way of learning from them, and it is therefore 'an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for women' (Reinharz, 1992, p.19). By placing women's experiences and their articulation of them as the central source of knowledge, interviewing women provides a fuller, more accurate view of society (Oakley, 1981), challenging patriarchal

structures of oppression which would seek to exclude women's knowledge from scholarship (DeVault, 1996).

Drawing from my theoretical framework, I wish to highlight three characteristics of my interview methodology, which I will expand upon further in the subsequent section of this chapter. These characteristics reflect the principles of a feminist research framework, as proposed by Skinner, Hester and Malos (2005) in their interview-based research on violence against women. First, given the focus on emotional labor, my methodology is rooted in an ethics of care and self-care. In a feminist communitarian ethics (Denzin, 1997), research ethics must be inscribed within the larger goal of serving the feminist community, reflecting concepts such as care, shared governance, neighborliness, and solidarity. Thus, I did not conduct my interviews merely to extract data from my participants, but to create a positive experience for everyone involved, one where we built upon the 'implicit knowing' and sisterhood between survivors (Kaur and Lee, 2020; Salter 2017a; 2017b) and co-created knowledge in sharing our experiences with mainstream media platforms.

Secondly, it views individual survivors as unique subjects who have made and continue to make agentic decisions about contributing our lived experience of trauma to the public discourse, despite the challenges and conditions of working with mainstream media. Instead of reducing my participants to passive victims or passive sources of information for my research, my interviews sought to trace the decisions, actions, and experiences that marked their temporal journeys (Warren, 2002) from trauma to speaking out – and their potential to help bring about social change (Westmarland, 2001) around sexual violence.

Thirdly, my methodology values a non-hierarchical, highly reflexive relationship between the researcher and the researched. In this sense, it is a 'rejection of the standard academic distinction between the researcher and the researched' (Skinner, et al., 2005, p. 11) in an attempt to reduce the emotional labor and 'affective coldness' that could arise from a more scientific approach to interviewing. This necessitates an awareness of power relations within the research process and the privileged position I occupied as a researcher eliciting and representing the experiences of my participants. Hesse-Biber (2014) proposes reflexivity as a useful tool that demands researchers be aware of these status differences. Reflecting upon my position as both a highly mediated survivor and researcher, I sought to mitigate this power difference by interviewing survivors who, like me, had achieved some level of 'status' through media visibility, and whom for the most part I already knew, thereby reducing the awkwardness, the hierarchical distance, and the potential feeling of exploitation. Because I was already public as a survivor, I did not

have to self-disclose. But that shared knowing that we were both survivors (Kaur and Lee, 2020) helped to mitigate the power difference between myself and my participants.

These three characteristics of feminist interviewing were reflected in my change in research design to interview public rape survivors about their experiences with mainstream media. By shifting focus away from their actual trauma, I was reducing the emotional labor and affective vulnerability for both researcher and researched. In the next section, I will detail how this feminist framework influenced many other aspects of data collection, from recruitment of participants, to conducting the interviews, to issues of anonymity and follow-up afterwards.

Selection of Participants and Sampling

Ultimately, I interviewed seven female sexual violence survivors with mainstream media visibility in semi-structured interviews that lasted from one hour to three hours. With one exception, these interviews all took place over Zoom from March 2021 until September 2022, with the majority of them in the Spring and Summer of 2021. The criteria for being interviewed was that the women had been victims of sexual violence and had appeared multiple times, with their name and identity made public, in some form of mainstream media, discussing, speaking, or writing about some aspect of their trauma. By mainstream media, I mean radio, television, film, newspapers, magazines, or online versions of these platforms, where the survivor would need to have interacted with a media professional — for example, a producer, journalist, editor, presenter, filmmaker — in order to appear on that platform. An eighth interview, taken from my pilot study in Spring 2016, informed my research, but I did not include it in the final corpus. That participant was a CSA survivor who had tried to speak out in mainstream media anonymously, but ultimately chose not to pursue media visibility, as she wanted to protect her family. I refer to her throughout my empirical chapters.

As recruitment came through my own professional networks, the women were primarily based in the UK or Ireland. Three had been based in London, where I had initially met them, but during Covid some of had moved out of London, like myself. One woman was English, but based in Glasgow. Two were based in Belfast. One was based in California. My participants also exhibited a cosmopolitanism of the middle classes, in that many were expatriates, like myself. One had recently moved to Belfast from America. One was an Australian who had been living in London for years. One was English, but had been living in California for over a decade. In this way, some

of my participants were part of the class of cosmopolitan elites that demonstrates a certain level of cultural capital, which I believe proved relevant to my study.

Likewise, two participants, in addition to myself, were of East Asian ethnicity. But as cosmopolitan elites, their cultural capital served to counterbalance some, though not all, of the obstacles we might have encountered as women of color appearing in mainstream media.

Of all my participants, only one could be considered working-class. I did not discuss class with her in our interview, as it seemed too crude and demeaning a question, given her significant childhood trauma. But in the media, this participant had described her childhood as one of extreme deprivation and neglect, characterized by repeated sexual abuse by multiple men, parental abandonment, hunger, and ineffectual social workers. So it seemed a very different upbringing from the materially stable backgrounds of my other middle-class participants. Scharff (2010) discusses this reticence to verbally address class difference in her interviews with economically deprived participants, and likewise, I felt it would have been uncomfortable to ask this individual to label her socioeconomic background, when the negative impact of her childhood trauma was already clear.

All the women were in their 40s and 50s, and four of them were mothers. While my sampling might be criticized for not being diverse enough, I was specifically focusing on survivors with sustained mainstream media visibility, which already leans towards women who are white and middle-class. I had identified public survivors in their 20s and 30s whom I wanted to approach, but as data collection coincided with Covid and a time when I was very overloaded in my work and personal life, I unfortunately did not get to pursue those interviews. I have to emphasize here the emotional labor that I was feeling during the course of the research. Because I was experiencing so much fatigue in 2021 around the issue of sexual violence, any additional effort required in recruiting participants and scheduling interviews seemed incredibly taxing to me. Thus, it was easier to follow a convenience sampling method, drawing upon the public rape survivors whom I was friendlier with. These naturally reflected my own age group of 40-somethings, but I believe our camaraderie and closeness also yielded more intimate discussions in the interviews.

Nevertheless, because my methodology aimed for depth and not breadth, there was only so much diversity I would be able to achieve with a sample size of seven. And because there is a relatively small group of women who would have fulfilled my selection criteria, I believe my findings still yielded unique data that reflected a diversity of attitudes and experiences. In Appendix A, I list my participants, along with their names, attributes, and additional information.

What I *did* specifically aim for was a diversity of trauma, regarding the types of sexual violence or abuse my participants had survived. For example, three were survivors of adult date rape or acquaintance rape. One was a survivor of a gang rape by acquaintances, which had happened forty years ago, when she was thirteen. Two more were survivors of child sexual abuse, within the family or home. And one was a survivor of workplace sexual assault. This wasn't actually a rape, but her assault was one of many perpetrated by a now highly visible, high-profile rapist (Harvey Weinstein). Significantly, the type of abuse and when it happened also determined the temporal distance of each survivor from her trauma.

I also aimed for diversity in terms of how far along the journey of media visibility each participant was. Thus, when I interviewed them, two of my participants were relatively new to media visibility, having only begun to appear in the news and participate on podcasts in the past year. One had been in the public eye for nearly two years, albeit this was a very intense visibility as a Weinstein survivor. One had 'gone public' in the past three years. The remaining three had been public for at least four or five years, when I interviewed them, and one of these four had by this point taken a deliberate 'step back' from media visibility. When I conducted the interviews, I had 'been public' for nearly ten years, and it was interesting for me to see the changes in attitude and approach that survivors took to their media visibility, the more they became accustomed to it. However, across the sample, my participants also experienced varying levels of intensity in terms of their media visibility. A year of very intense, very high-profile media attention, for example, would have a different impact on a survivor than ten years of slow and gradual visibility on smaller platforms.

Recruitment of Participants

Many of these women were also active in public or semi-public discourse around sexual violence in other ways: they attended or spoke at events on the issue, they had created or performed art around their experience, they participated in informal or semi-informal advocacy networks. These networks include the Clear Lines Festival, which I founded in 2015; the Angles Project, which was run by the charity On Road Media (since renamed heard) to improve media coverage of sexual violence and domestic abuse; and other feminist-oriented organizations like Women and Girls Network, Women of the World Festival, the UK Says No More campaign run by the domestic abuse charity Hestia, and specialist service providers like Nexus NI (Northern Ireland) Rape Crisis Counselling and New Pathways rape crisis and sexual abuse support services in Wales.

I had met four of my interview participants in person through these networks, and by the time of our interview, I had collaborated with each of them at various events or mediations addressing sexual violence. I would like to think we shared a mutual respect for each other's work on this issue. Many of these women I would consider friends or acquaintances, which doubtless made recruitment much easier. Nevertheless, I was clear that the interview was part of my PhD research, and it would be recorded, transcribed, and analysed in the future.

As my data collection took place when Covid restrictions were still in place, this necessitated Zoom interviews. By Spring 2021, Zoom had become a standard substitution for in-person meetings, so it did not seem awkward or less intimate to interview over Zoom, for the participants I already knew. In fact, there were some distinct advantages of Zoom interviews. For one, they demanded less physically of both myself and my participants: we didn't have to travel anywhere or worry as much about the additional effort of dressing up, applying makeup, etc. Secondly, because of Covid and my move from London, it had been a while since I had seen these acquaintances in person, so the Zoom interview felt like an opportunity to catch up socially as well. Finally, Zoom's built-in record function actually made transcription much easier, through the transcription software Ottr. This operational short-cut was incredibly handy at a time when I was busy with a toddler, finalizing the manuscript of my second novel, and juggling my other non-academic work.

Ethnographers like Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2014, p. 61) suggest 'friendship as method': approaching research participants 'as they would a friendship' and thereby building care, respect, and justice into interactions with them. I was already friends or acquaintances with Bonny, Emily, Imogen, and Madeleine, thus, our interviews felt less formal and yielded more open, intimate insights due to our established relationship. The potential power differential between researcher and researched was also largely negated; in fact, the interview request felt more like me asking them for a favour, in the form of a unique, interesting conversation with a friend about something we had in common.

That friendship-as-method approach was still in place when recruiting my other three participants, although I was more formal in my interaction with them, since I had not met them previously. However, because of my existing status as a public rape survivor, all three participants were already aware of my work and profile, and this helped to establish both my professional credibility and a perceived sense of solidarity as a fellow survivor-activist. I approached Holly after we both spoke at an annual conference run by Nexus NI Rape Crisis Counselling in Northern Ireland. Due to Covid, this conference had taken place online over

Zoom, and I initially approached Holly via Zoom's private chat function, then Twitter and email. We had a brief Zoom chat, before scheduling the actual interview a few weeks later.

Holly led to my one case of snowballing in recruiting participants. After our interview, she put me in touch with Michelle, another CSA survivor in Northern Ireland who had recently 'gone public' to the media and was looking to become more involved in activism. As we had not previously met online or in person, I composed my emails to her in a friendly, but more official manner, aiming to appear legitimate but not intimidating. I wish I could have had a pre-interview chat with Michelle to establish rapport. But at the time, I was extremely overloaded with work and personal demands and felt fatigued over the topic of sexual violence. Even having to compose formal but empowering emails to a stranger and use the language of 'contributing your voice to research,' etc seemed to exact emotional labor from me. So the friendship-as-method approach was also emotionally easier for me: it felt less like work, and more like a genuine connection.

This approach was very much in play, when I recruited the final of my seven participants. In some ways, Rowena was a 'reach' interviewee, someone I would have thought impossible to involve in my research. She had come to prominence as a survivor and former employee of Harvey Weinstein, and I recall reading her *New York Times* op-ed in early 2020 (when I was nursing a newborn) and finding the similarities between her real-life case and my then novel-in-progress *Complicit* striking. Rowena continued to appear in a spate of media interviews that spring; to me, she was someone I would have loved to know, due to our commonalities, but being so highly visible in the media, she also seemed unreachable. She also lived in California. Imagine my surprise, then, when *she reached out to me* via Facebook Messenger that year. It turns out we had a couple of Facebook friends in common, and Rowena wanted to connect with another public East Asian sexual violence survivor. She was also writing her memoir and had read my first novel *Dark Chapter*. We became friends through social media, and in Summer 2021, when she was visiting England, she drove to meet me where I now lived in the Wiltshire countryside. She brought dessert and hand-me-downs for my toddler, as her youngest son was only two years older than mine. Over lunch, we chatted. In this way, the research interview was embedded in a social meeting between like-minded individuals. I probably felt a little guilty for subtly pursuing a research agenda during the course of our lunch, but the conversation was genuinely interesting and solidarity-building for both of us. It was also the only unstructured interview I conducted. It would have felt too forced to resort to an interview guide. Instead, I let the conversation flow naturally, although obviously I was full of questions.

There was also a difference in status at play. I somehow felt that as a highly visible Weinstein survivor, whom had I first seen in *The New York Times*, Rowena was higher in status than me. I felt lucky to even be interviewing her, although quite likely, she did not see it the same way. But this perceived differential in status affected the way I conducted the interview, relinquishing significant control of the flow of conversation, and hiding my research objectives more covertly, even feeling guilty about them. Interestingly, despite knowing how constructed media visibility is, I still headed into the interview nervous, aware of a perceived hierarchy. But Rowena's friendliness and our rapport during the interview itself quickly eliminated that feeling.

Conducting the Interview

I realize the ethics of pursuing a research interview in the guise of a friendly meet-up might seem questionable, but I had made Rowena fully aware of my PhD research and obtained her consent in recording the interview. I also believe a more formal interview would have been less welcoming for her, as a highly public survivor who by then had done countless media interviews with journalists. For both of us, having that conversation as friends and like-minded individuals was much more pleasurable than as researcher and researched. And in seeming less like work, the conversation also became an example of positive emotional labor: a sharing of feelings which resulted in a genuine building of trust and camaraderie. Thus, from a standpoint of relational ethics and care, abandoning the more formal aspects of a research interview resulted in a more human conversation, with potentially more open, more intimate revelations.

My other interviews were more structured, and I emailed an interview guide, which I emailed to my participants in advance (Appendix B). I did not follow the interview guide to the letter: I might skip over questions if they felt too artificial or intrusive, in light of what my participant had revealed. I aimed for the interview to feel like a friendly, open conversation, valuing a shared emotional connection, reciprocal openness, and a non-hierarchical relationship (Oakley 1982; DeVault 1986; Reinharz 1992). This approach was vital for enacting an ethics of care, given the potentially retraumatizing nature of two sexual violence survivors addressing past trauma (Brzuzy, Ault, and Segal 1997; Campbell et al. 2009).

However, a key element for creating a reciprocal, non-hierarchical feel to the interview was my own self-disclosure as a public rape survivor and activist. In my case, this had already been established well before the interview, because the interview participant either knew me in advance or knew *of me* as a mediated rape survivor. But this knowledge was fundamental in

establishing greater trust with the participants (Douglas, 1985), that I understood where they were coming from, had also suffered a similar trauma, and would not be asking any insulting or ignorant questions. While conventional social science warns against interviewers sharing too much, as the focus should be on the interviewee (Weiss, 1994), feminist methodologists argue that interviewer self-disclosure actually reduces the distance between researcher and participant, encouraging the latter to be more forthcoming (Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1992b; Warren, 2001). And therapists (Salter, 2017; 2020; Bainbridge, 2022) have observed that when they self-disclose as survivors of gendered violence to clients, that 'shared simple knowing' between survivors (Kaur & Lee, 2020) often leads to a greater relational depth (Knox et al., 2013; Mearns & Cooper, 2018). Ultimately, it would seem cruel and indifferent to expect my participants to give accounts of trauma and exploitation without sharing some of my own. Thus, these were 'active interviews,' where I contributed some of my own thoughts and experiences, in an effort to create a more non-hierarchical conversation and jointly contribute to the active formation of knowledge (Holstein and Gubrium, 2011).

What I discovered during the interviews was that participants often liked relating a specific episode or vignette from their experience with the media and how it frustrated them. Thus, their emotions often coalesced around a specific story. This coincided with my auto-ethnographic approach of selecting a particular episode from my lived experience to 'write up' and analyse. Perhaps this particular subset of public rape survivors is especially inclined to storytelling as an effective means of communication. While this trading of stories made our understanding of each other's experiences more human and relatable, it also complicated the analysis process, since the vignettes themselves were harder to reduce into themes and codes.

Analysis: Thematic Analysis and Introspection

I conducted a thematic analysis on my interview data, importing the transcripts into NViVo, which enabled me to categorize the data into significant themes and establish patterns across the participants' material (Given, 2012). I employed a mixed deductive and inductive approach, building upon hunches that I had developed outside of my academic research, through my lived experience as a public survivor. However, the interview data surprised me and often challenged these hunches, leading to new ways of problematizing the themes. For example, I headed into the interviews very interested in drawing out my participants' attitudes towards money and being paid for their media labor. During the interview, I was surprised by their varied responses and attitudes around this issue, which I was able to track through NVivo. A thematic analysis allowed

me to isolate these responses, discover the similarities and differences across participants, and attempt to understand these responses by diving back into the literature around media representations of survivors, intersectional differences in the lives of creative laborers, and the ethics of journalistic practice. This work emerges in Ch. 6, when I discuss participants' attitudes towards compensation and media labor.

As I was working with a relatively small data set of seven interviews, it would be incorrect to infer anything about a specific intersectional aspect of survivor media visibility, based on such a small sample. Furthermore, as stated previously, much of the richness from my interview participants came from their accounts of vignettes drawn from their mainstream media experience. These vignettes were difficult to reduce into themes or codes in NViVo, without losing the richness of the whole story. Likewise, I could isolate quotes from my participants and contrast them with each other, but the strength of the data lay in a holistic understanding of an individual survivor's journey and how her attitudes towards media labor changed over time. Therefore, my analysis tends towards offering case studies of individual survivors to investigate a theme, as I feel fragmenting the interview data and de-contextualizing quotes loses a deeper understanding of participants' comments and how they are situated in their lives.

In pairing interviews with autoethnography, I became aware that, as Les Back, argues, the interior of a person cannot be fully captured through an interview (Back, 2020). The knowledge I gain from a 90-minute conversation with a woman, supplemented by mainstream mediations of her, can only lead to a partial representation of the social production of her identity (Skeggs, 1997). As researchers, we do not have direct access to others' life experiences, only ambiguous representations of them (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). This is in striking contrast to the depth of access and self-reflection available through investigating one's own lived experience. Ellis (1991) proposes introspection as a useful method for analyzing emotion in auto-ethnography, a form of active thinking about one's thoughts and feelings, how they emerge from social interaction and manifest in bodily sensations and mental processes. Ultimately, I felt more comfortable with this more holistic method of analysis and using my own experience as data, instead of subjecting the partial representation of other women's lived experience to analysis. Nevertheless, for all its shortcomings, combining different methods of data collection and analysis yielded interesting insights, which would not have been possible, had I relied on only one method.

ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

Risk Management and Ethics of Care and Self-Care

In the second year of my PhD research, I obtained approval from the LSE Ethic Committee for my original research design, which would involve interviews and a focus group with survivors on their trauma and their use of social media. Informed consent and anonymity would be important parts of this ethical framework, with participants given pseudonyms to protect their identity. As per the LSE Research Ethics Policy, my proposed research had ethical implications on several counts: 1) it would involve participants who could be seen as vulnerable, 2) it would involve the discussion of a sensitive topic, delving into a deeply personal experience, and 3) it could impact the psychological well-being of the researcher. My subsequent changes to the research design, explained earlier in this chapter, lessened the ethical jeopardy on all three counts: by involving participants who were already accustomed to discussing their trauma in public, who were more familiar to me, and therefore less vulnerable; by shifting the focus away from a discussion of their trauma and more on their experiences with mainstream media; and by incorporating auto-ethnography, a research method which felt more emotionally supportive in allowing me to self-reflect on my experiences with trauma and the media. These changes, along with the switch to part-time study, can be seen as risk management in the area of self-care, by mitigating the emotional labor embedded in the research process for me, as a survivor.

However, I retained many aspects of the ethical design I had originally proposed. All interview data and recordings were securely stored in Word documents, audio and NViVo software files on password-protected devices. Signed forms and emails were kept in password-protected digital files. In the following sections, I will detail my approach to informed consent and participant anonymity, an aspect of the research design which changed entirely after consulting with my participants.

Continuous Consent

Before the interview, participants were all emailed a consent form in advance (Appendix C). This obtained their consent to audio-record their interviews via Zoom — and in the case of my in-person interview with Rowena, on my phone. The signed consent form was to be returned to me either in advance of the interview or shortly afterwards. Given Covid restrictions and the remote online nature of our interactions, I felt it would be an additional hassle to ask the

participants to print, sign, scan and/or post their consent forms back to me, so I accepted an email from them confirming they had given their consent to the interview.

However, in line with the method of 'process consent' (Adams, et.al, 2015), or 'continuous consent' (Klykken, 2022) I also checked with my participants in the final two months before submitting my dissertation, to make sure that they were still willing to take part in the project. On a theoretical and ethical level, 'process consent views consent as dynamic and ongoing, one that persists for the life of a project… in a form and context that is accessible to and comfortable for participants' (Adams, et al., 2014, p 57). For sexual violence survivors who, by definition, have experienced a violation of their consent, it is especially important that they feel their consent in a research project can be retracted or renegotiated at any point. On a more operational level, I felt it was necessary to check in with participants, since my dissertation write-up took place nearly three years after the interviews were conducted, and their attitudes towards the research may have changed since then. Some participants asked to see the transcript of their interview or the sections I would be quoting from, but none requested any changes or withdrew their consent. I also gave them the opportunity to summarize their thoughts on media visibility and update me on their latest activity.

Anonymity

Anonymity was an especially interesting aspect of my research, which changed considerably as the work evolved. When I approached interview participants and in my consent form, I had said I would refer to them pseudonymously in my dissertation. However, nearly every participant said during the interview that they were happy to be identified in my dissertation, as they were already named in the mainstream media. I was unsure about this decision, as it contradicted my original ethical framework and conventional research techniques that ensure the safety of participants.

But three years later, when I contacted my participants again during the dissertation write-up, they still all chose to be identified. To inform their decision, I provided written information on how accessible my PhD dissertation would be and how it might be used, and they all provided written confirmation that they were choosing this over anonymity or pseudonymity (Appendix D).

This move away from anonymity enhanced the epistemological and ethical impact of my research. As all my survivors had already been identified in mainstream media, it would have been difficult to anonymize their information without detracting from the magnitude of their

story and their contributions. For example, Rowena Chiu, who appeared in *The New York Times* as a victim of Harvey Weinstein, is fairly easy to identify, since my empirical chapters also focus on her discussion of race as a highly visible East Asian victim of a workplace sexual assault. By being able to name her, her perpetrator, and the media platforms involved, I was able to avoid the challenges of anonymizing her story while the reader of this dissertation would gain a much fuller sense of her discursive significance.

On an ethical level, the decision about anonymity was also in line with my participants' wishes. These individuals are not just survivors but also activists, public speakers, and writers who want to share their work and advocacy, so I did not want to deny them an opportunity to be recognized for their achievements and their contributions to academic knowledge. Appendix A lists their full names and additional information, should you wish to know more about the important public-facing work of these individuals.

However, I did choose to anonymize most of the media professionals and platforms that are referred to in my auto-ethnography and in the interview data. This decision was rooted in a desire to center the subjectivity and experiences of the survivors, and not distract readers by naming the media professionals, particularly where descriptions of everyday media practice might reflect negatively on them. Nevertheless, I have not anonymized *all* media platforms and professionals: for example, eponymous platforms and their creators, like The Ryan Tubridy Show or The Graham Norton Show, as these would have been difficult to anonymize without detracting from the significance of the data.

Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor for presentation (1959) comes in handy here, when discussing media practice. In general, 'front stage' data, reflecting media texts which can be located by the public, has not been anonymized. 'Back stage' or 'off stage' data (behind-the-scenes interactions between media professional and survivors) has been anonymized in the case of the professionals and platforms, as this material is not readily available to the public. Where possible, I obtained the permission of media professionals whose email and social media correspondence with me was included in my autoethnography. This was not always possible, as many individuals have since moved on from working for those specific media platforms, my interaction with them was brief, and I did not have their contact details. Nevertheless, they remain unidentifiable from the material in this dissertation.

Follow-Up with Interview Participants

Beyond the procedural follow-up, I still remain in friendly contact with the majority of my participants. Some of this comes in the form of casual 'likes' and comments on each other's social media posts. We continue to support, respect, and recommend each other's work in addressing sexual violence, as well as our personal milestones. In every case, the interview itself gave me a better glimpse of their life story and their efforts behind the scenes, even for survivors whom I had already known for a few years.

Since the interview in Summer 2021, Rowena and I have become friends. We meet up in person when we're in the same city, and message each other regularly, often to complain about the media industries or to trade useful contacts. We've spoken at events together, I've stayed at her house in California, and we've met each other's families. Of course, our friendship — and our first meeting/ research interview — was grounded in our mutual status as public East Asian sexual violence survivors, and a shared understanding of the pressures and challenges of that status. I would not say that the research interview led to our friendship, but rather that it was embedded in our growing acquaintance, and deepened that relationship.

For me, the interviews were living proof of feminist communitarian ethics (Denzin, 1997): larger than the research itself, serving the feminist community through care, understanding, and solidarity. If mainstream media interviews for rape survivors are a mixed bag of indifferent media practice and under-appreciated emotional labor, then I hope our research interviews proved differently. Our interviews yielded not simply rich data, but the opportunity for us collectively to transform lived, private knowledge into more public, accessible forms of knowledge, and challenge wider understandings of trauma, survivorhood, and media practice.

CHAPTER 4
Beginnings: Survivors' Motivations and Conditions for Entering into Media Visibility

Auto-Ethnography:
Live on BBC Radio Ulster
Doha, Qatar, Autumn 2012

My perpetrator had just gone on the run. Or, to put it in less melodramatic terms, he had violated his probation after being released from prison, and the Northern Irish criminal justice system could no longer locate him.

At the time, I didn't know this. It was autumn 2012, four-and-a-half years after my rape, and by now I had moved to the Middle East, to Qatar, for a job running a film festival. There was a relief in starting a whole new life, making a new set of friends, none of whom knew anything about my rape. It felt like a clean slate, an existence free of the trauma.

But still, the rape followed me. I knew it the moment I listened to the voice message left on my phone from an unrecognized UK mobile number – and heard, unmistakably, a Northern Irish accent. Since 2008, hearing that accent would automatically trigger waves of nausea in me. With a sense of dread, I realized a Northern Irish journalist had somehow tracked me down, halfway across the world.

I could have ignored the voicemail. I could have pretended that was another part of my life (because by now, it was) and chosen to forget it. But I didn't. I called the journalist back, and learned that my rapist was now on the run, after serving half of his eight-year prison sentence.

Once more, I was thrust into the feeling of surreality that had dominated the immediate aftermath of my rape. The sense that this couldn't possibly be *my life*, or *my story* people were discussing in the news. My life had been my life — until my rapist and the media had barged in and turned it into something else. I was flooded with apprehension, despair, and anger. Why couldn't this individual just follow the rules and stop disrupting my life?

The journalist asked if I would agree to a live radio interview over the telephone in the next few days. I said yes. But why?

To be honest, that 2012 phone exchange was not my first experience with journalists, around the issue of my rape. In April 2009, after attending the sentencing of my perpetrator in Belfast, I was approached by a young female journalist. Would I answer a few questions for her local newspaper write-up? My anonymity would be retained in the article. I said yes.

Then in September 2009, I wrote an opinion piece, in the hopes it might be published anonymously by *The Belfast Telegraph*. I wanted to point out the hypocrisy of how the public handled the topic of rape: the professed outpourings of concern for poor rape victims (like what I'd heard on *The Nolan Show*) vs. the desire to look the other way when sexual violence actually entered the lives of people we knew. I showed the piece to a Northern Ireland journalist I'd been put in touch with, who gave me the email address for the editor of *The Belfast Telegraph*. Eighteen months after my rape, it was published.[8]

I had requested anonymity, as it seemed too early to invite in whatever might happen if I publicly identified myself. Scrutiny? Attention? Harassment? Or just a general sense of exposure? It somehow felt safer to stay unidentified, as I was just starting to rebuild my life, post-rape.

Two years later, in 2011, I wrote another essay about my rape and aftermath -- and this was published *with* my name, for a self-published Singaporean anthology of women's stories that a friend-of-a-friend was compiling. At the time, I was still an aspiring author, and the excitement of being in print somehow counter-balanced the queasiness that came with writing about my own trauma so openly. Still, the Irish press found out. By identifying myself as the Colin Glen rape victim, I was effectively renouncing my anonymity. *The Sunday Business Post* in Ireland interviewed me about my rape and printed an excerpt from my essay. But I didn't mind. By now, I was living in Qatar, and the Irish press seemed geographically very distant to my current existence.

The way I recount these events, it might seem like my steps towards mediation were planned and confident, but each of these decisions was suffused with a low-grade anxiety. Herman (1992) describes post-trauma as 'oscillatory,' swinging from apparent recovery to easily triggered regression; anything related to the rape triggered a wave of nausea and uncertainty in me. But on

[8] https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/life/as-a-tourist-in-belfast-my-rape-was-shock-news-so-why-did-you-forget-about-it-and-me-so-quickly/28495088.html

a more psychic level, there was also a sense of exposing a very vulnerable part of me, offering it out for the public to hear. Yet, I felt something worthwhile could be achieved in that offering, both for myself and for the readers out there.

So by 2012, when my rapist went on the run, I was already somewhat accustomed to interacting directly with the Irish media. Only a live radio interview was something else. It seemed like a next step: bigger, scarier, more immediate. With print media, I could hide behind the written word, something I was confident in. But live speaking on public radio seemed terrifying. What if I screwed up? What if I said something that made me sound like a fool to countless strangers?

Yet I reminded myself the journalists and listening audience were simply that: strangers. I wouldn't see them, I wouldn't know them, and therein lay a certain refuge. If I stumbled, no one would know, other than whomever happened to be listening on their morning commute, four time zones away in Northern Ireland. That thought helped, along with the fact I could do the interview over the telephone, from the comfort of my hotel room in Qatar.

But if I think about my *emotional* motivation, it stemmed from my memory of the media coverage of my rape four years earlier. The casual description of me as a 'wee Chinese girl' still rang in my head. To think that people in Northern Ireland imagined a helpless victim 'whose life was ruined,' when in fact, I was so much more than that. If the media were going to give me an opportunity to talk, well then I might as well take it.

Much of my post-rape life involved facing my fear over and over again. Was I too scared to go into a park again? To travel on my own? To fly back to Belfast for the sentencing of my rapist? To move to another country? To speak to a journalist about my rape? And now, to speak on live radio?

During the course of the live radio interview, my heart was beating very fast, but it was only 4-5 minutes of question and answer – and rhetorically speaking, not that difficult. (After the fact, I can never remember the questions in a media interview because everything goes by in a blur of adrenaline and nerves.) After me, they interviewed a spokeswoman from the local rape crisis centre, a standard journalistic practice of backing up 'victim' testimony with 'expert' perspective on sexual violence (Alcoff and Gray, 1993).

When the segment was over, I stayed on the line to listen to the radio broadcast as it continued. It seemed too abrupt to simply hang up the phone and be left in my hotel room in Doha, alone with the significance of what I'd just done. I remember the male radio presenter commented that I was a 'remarkably articulate young woman.' That filled me with a certain pride – I guess I hadn't screwed up my interview! But I also wondered, with a touch of annoyance: 'What makes you think a rape victim *wouldn't* be articulate when speaking on live public radio? Are we all just blubbering, sobbing messes in your mind?'

But that comment in various ways made me think: 'Maybe I'm good at this. Maybe I should keep doing this.'

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When deciding which events from my lived experience to write about in my auto-ethnography, that episode of my first live radio interview immediately came to mind. For me, that was the moment of intrusion: when the past came knocking on my door, in the form of a voicemail left by a Northern Irish journalist. I had been on a long journey of rebuilding my life post-rape, seeking out a new career and a new home on another continent, but 'the media' had other plans, disrupting my life to remind me that I was still a rape victim.

That moment crystallizes the emotional intensity that can come with experiencing rape, even years after the crime (Culbertson, 1995; Herman, 1992; Scher, Suvak, Resick, 2017). Victims speak of the unwanted lingering intrusion that a memory of rape can cause, triggering a relapse after years of hard work recovering (Brison, 2002; Herman, 1992; Koss, et al., 1994). While I did not experience a total regression from the journalist's voicemail, it nevertheless jolted me psychically back to my trauma and the fundamental, undesired turn my life had taken as a result of the rape.

In Ch 2, I discussed the first layer of emotion work that comes from surviving rape and living the aftermath: negotiating the gap between the display rules of functioning as a normal person in society, and the emotional truth of feeling helpless, sad, destroyed, exhausted, angry, etc as a result of the violence. In my case, by 2012, I felt I was doing a pretty good job of returning to a more normal life, a life that was under my control, when that disruption brought back the familiar anxiety and nausea of the rape — and the surreality of living a life where things could still be jolted out of control.

But crucially, the disruptive reminder of my trauma came in the form of a mainstream media request, thereby involving several more layers of emotional labor. What was an everyday practice in the world of media production— a journalist phoning up a potential source for a story — also served as an intrusion for me, a psychic reminder of my trauma. The journalist was by no means rude or pushy in approaching me; in fact, they were polite and solicitous. One could say they were simply doing their job. But 'simply doing their job' involved, in its very nature, contacting a rape victim years after her rape and asking her to speak about her pain. In that sense, it ran the risk of secondary traumatization or re-traumatization, which can often occur when survivors are asked to speak about their past trauma (Symonds, 1980; Williams, 1984). In other professionalized settings, 'trauma-informed practice' advises that survivors be given plenty of advance warning and preparation time before being asked to engage on this topic. (Campbell, 2002; Herman, 1992) In this case, some journalist at the BBC had kept my mobile number and decided to call me, out of the blue, dropping the news that my rapist was out there and unaccounted for. I had the benefit of living several time zones away, having rebuilt my life towards a promising new career. But how would I have reacted to the news if I was living much closer, in Belfast? How would I have reacted if I were in a much more precarious state, mentally, physically, or financially?

I will never know if the journalist took these possibilities into consideration, but it is an important question: is it ethical for a journalist to be relaying news like this to a rape survivor, given the emotional disturbance it could cause? As a survivor, I would say probably not. This calls into play two more layers of emotional labor for the mediated survivor: having to engage with the topic of rape in a professional setting, and dealing with everyday media practices in an industry which is often fast-paced, indifferent, and underpaid. In the former, I had to negotiate the gap between martialling the public speaking skills to communicate coherently on live public radio and the very personal, potentially re-traumatizing nature of the topic: the fact that my rapist was on the run again.

The latter type of emotional labor involved tolerating the indifferent, unfeeling elements of everyday media practice: getting phone calls out of the blue from journalists, having an interview about my rape end abruptly without a good-bye from the presenter or anyone else involved. Hewa (2022) describes how the working conditions of journalists, contending with heavy workloads on tight deadlines and tight budgets, often leads to them neglecting a more ethical,

care-centred approach to sexual violence survivors. For me, the radio station hadn't offered to pay me for my contribution, and this early in my experience as a mediated rape survivor, it didn't occur to me to ask for a disturbance fee. Instead, I came away with a different kind of reward: a sense of accomplishment, even pride in what I'd done. A boost to my ego. Arguably, this is an affective reward, and one that ordinary citizens may feel the first few times they appear favorably in the mainstream media, due to the novelty of the experience (Palmer, 2018). But for me as a rape survivor, the affective reward was even more pronounced, given the greater emotional challenge I had to overcome, to discuss my trauma live on the radio.

I'd like to make a few more observations which are relevant to the wider study. First, to emphasize that I never felt like I was being forced to do this live radio interview. As I said before, I could have chosen not to return the journalist's phone call or declined the request. So it was an agentic, internal decision on my part, even though I didn't at the time fully understand the reasons why I said yes.

But perhaps those reasons were tied to the emotions I felt around the safety of anonymity vs. potential danger of being public. For years, I had found a certain refuge in being unidentified as the Colin Glen rape victim. Anonymity meant being able to pretend I was normal, not a rape victim. But four and a half years on from my rape, maybe there was a tension between wanting to hide, to live a normal life vs. wanting to speak out, to publicly address the trauma full-on, and all the different forms of injustice that come from experiencing rape. In that sense, the decision to speak out about one's experience of rape — even if it takes the relatively passive form of saying yes to a radio request — is an inherently political one, as Serisier (2018) suggests in her study.

According to Serisier, the political nature of survivor speech also promises to be transformative for the survivor herself. Sexual violence is an act where you, the victim, are distinctly not in control of what happens to your body. And the aftermath — involving police, prosecutors, doctors, criminal justice, medical, and other public institutions scrutinizing your subjectivity and your body (Campbell, et al 1999; Martin and Powell 1994; Williams 1984) — is an extension of not being in control. Thus perhaps speaking out in the media is an attempt to wrest some control back, at least in the public telling of your story. In that sense, this *mediated* speaking out is very different from the healing self-narrative which Brison (2002), Cahill (2001), and Herman (1992) posit as essential to recovery after trauma.

My second observation is about the technological affordances of media itself and the varied emotional impacts on the survivor-speaker. Technology in 2012 enabled me to speak to a Northern Irish audience from my hotel room in Qatar. It had also rendered me locatable by a BBC journalist, even though I was four time zones away, attempting to rebuild my life. If contemporary information and communication technologies (ICT) collapse geographic space and bring geographically distant audiences in touch with a locutor (Castells 2000a; 2010) then this accessibility works both ways: as the mediated survivor, digital technologies render you more reachable, more 'on-call,' and more exposed — while at the same time, they allow you to have more impact on distant audiences. Again, this two-way accessibility has emotional implications in both directions: you can never entirely be free and anonymous, but you can also be proud of your ability to 'affect change' from a geographic distance.

And my third observation is about intersectionality. Clearly, my social position allowed me certain privileges which had made it easier both to access mainstream media platforms and also to capitalize on this access. As an Ivy League-educated American who lived abroad and worked in the creative industries prior to my rape, I could easily be classed as a 'cosmopolitan elite' (Brown and Held 2010; Buehlmann et al 2013; Calhoun 2003), a class 'constructed out of concrete conditions of cosmopolitan mobility, education, and participation in certain versions of news and other media flows' (Calhoun, 2003, p. 544). In real-world terms, this meant I understood how to network via email and locate a helpful media contact, when I wanted to have my opinion piece published anonymously in 2009. Likewise, my 2011 essay appeared in that self-published collection because I'd been put in touch with the right person by a friend. This form of cultural capital was an especially useful tool in the media and creative industries, where opportunities are found through social and professional networks and not through formal employment routes (baym, 2015; Butler and Russell, 2018; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011).

Lindell and Danielsson (2017) examine cosmopolitan capital as a particular form of cultural capital and define it as 'a set of socially recognized resources and skills used to navigate in a globalizing world, embodied and reproduced in privileged groups in society' (p.2). At that point in my life, I did not feel like I had any significant economic capital, but I certainly had a certain cosmopolitan capital. At twenty-nine, I was single and lived an unfettered, geographically mobile lifestyle, moving around easily from London to Bangkok to Doha. This cosmopolitan capital allowed me to forge a new career in another country (a job I had acquired through networking

with a Tribeca Film Festival contact in New York), and benefit psychically from a geographic distance from Belfast — especially when I learned my rapist had gone on the run. A victim with less cosmopolitan capital may have found it harder to relocate to a new job in a new country, while a victim with parenting or caring duties, for example, may not have been able to move countries and distance herself as much from the place of her trauma. So my independent lifestyle and my cosmopolitan capital served as another form of privilege, allowing me to move countries, establish distance from my trauma, and cushion my emotional state.

And most importantly, my cultural capital had given me the writing and speaking skills to address my rape through the media. As Serisier (2018) points out, not every rape victim possesses the communicative skillset to write a memoir, speak on television, or testify effectively in court — these skills are more likely to sit with middle-class, university-educated women who in turn are more likely to 'thrive' in the legal and media arenas where rape is contested and represented. I was a confident enough writer to tackle an op-ed and later an essay about my rape. And my interview on BBC Radio Ulster *was not* my first time on live public radio, as I had several years of experience as a volunteer student DJ for my campus radio stations. Overall, these forms of cultural capital combined to give me the self-confidence in my own communicative abilities — and moreover, the self-belief that I had something worthwhile to say publicly as a rape survivor. That my perspective was more than that of a 'wee Chinese girl' — and that it mattered.

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Introduction

In this chapter, I will examine the motivations and conditions that lead a rape survivor to share her story on mainstream media and to voluntarily seek the visibility that comes with collaborating with these media platforms. It focuses on her initial entry into mainstream media visibility, and the emotional labor of that survivor 'first time' appearing in the media. I define that 'first time' as the moment when a survivor speaks out in the media and is *identified by her name.* Prior to that, she may have spoken out anonymously or at intimate, in-person events. As the research interviews revealed, even defining that 'first time' is not necessarily straightforward for many of the survivors involved.

My auto-ethnographic section portrayed how a survivor's 'first time' with mainstream media is often fraught, loaded with emotions ranging from anxiety and fear around the media encounter,

to pride, affirmation, and relief afterwards. However, my own case should not be taken as representative for all mediated survivors. Depending on the individual and the specific scenario, there can also be shame at discussing their own rape, trepidation about how others will react, confusion at the media process, as well as frustration, anger, and disappointment at how the media product resulted. I use the 7-layer model of emotional labor described in Ch. 2, although in the early stages of media visibility, certain layers are *less* likely to emerge as a stressor: for example, the emotional labor of performing the self visibly, of working in the creative industries, and of relational labor.

As a victim of a violent stranger rape, my assault was more likely to attract media attention, whereas the other survivors I interviewed experienced their assaults in the context of dates, social circles, the family, the workplace: more typical settings for sexual violence, but also less 'spectacular.' None of my participants' experiences of trauma commanded media attention from the very beginning. So unlike me, there was not already an existing media spotlight on what had happened to them (with the exception of one participant, Rowena, who was a victim of Harvey Weinstein). Whereas Irish journalists sought me out for interviews at various stages, these participants had to take more definite, intentional steps towards appearing in the media.

So the interviews with my participants provided important data to understand other ways in which rape survivors achieved mainstream media visibility around telling their story, their motivations for doing so, and the emotional journey that involved.

Therefore, the first part of this chapter provides a case study of Emily, and her early experiences of speaking out on media platforms. I then expand out in the second part of the chapter to consider my other interview participants' accounts to discuss the early steps survivors take towards media visibility, and the conditions that enable them to achieve that visibility.

MIXED MOTIVATIONS FOR PUBLIC RAPE SURVIVORS

When asked about their motivations for going public, each of my participants gave responses which touched on *all three* of the 'promises of speaking out' which Serisier (2018) identifies. Recall from Ch 2 that these are: educating the general public about sexual violence, helping other survivors by dismantling stigma and shame, and achieving individual empowerment (Serisier, 2018, p. 6). These three promises are clearly echoed in the quotes below from my participants:

Madeleine: There's a lot of work that needs to be done educating people, changing their opinions, you know, or challenging their opinions on victim blaming, or rape culture, or all of it, it's all part of it.

Holly: My mantra is if I can help one person, right, by telling my story… then it's worth it.

Michelle: I felt like I was imprisoned by my own story being repressed.

Thus, public education, collective healing, and personal liberation, respectively, can be traced in these responses, and they emerged in all my other participants' interviews, as well. But these statements are also very much 'front stage' sentiments (Goffman, 1959) which are frequently found in public survivor speech, with its emancipatory tones. While I do not doubt the authenticity of these reasons for public survivors, are there other, more hidden motivations which also drive individuals towards seeking media visibility? To answer this question, I wanted to focus on one of my participants, Emily Jacob.

Emily: 'It was two-sided in a way. It's like activist angry, angry feminist. Plus oh, I'm a businesswoman.'

When I interviewed Emily, she was in her early 40s, and it had been thirteen years since her rape. Though we hadn't known each other at the time, her rape had taken place in the same month as mine, April 2008, and our parallel journeys through recovery, speaking out, and activism perhaps added a layer of affinity and camaraderie between us. By the time I interviewed her in 2021, Emily and I had spoken at several events together, and we had both appeared in a series of online videos about life after sexual violence, which a national UK newspaper had curated and produced.

But that was just the tip of the iceberg for Emily's media visibility around this topic. She sees addressing rape and its impact to be her great passion in life, even though her current job is working in digital marketing for an employer. Emily was one of ten survivors profiled in *Raped: My Story*, a Channel 5 BAFTA-nominated documentary; she also appeared in publicity to promote that documentary, around the time of its broadcast on a major UK terrestrial channel. She had written a number of online articles and think-pieces for media platforms around the topic of her rape, and curated and edited a self-published anthology of essays by other survivors, which launched with a panel event at the Houses of Commons in 2017. Having experienced many types of inadequate counselling and therapy around her own trauma, Emily had trained as

a counsellor and Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) practitioner, and then devised and launched her business, ReConnected Life, an online self-help programme for rape survivors that would combine her own training as a counsellor and coach, her own background as a rape survivor, and her communication and marketing skills. Since none of the media work described above earned her any significant money, she saw this 'online mini-course' as a commodified product, which could hopefully earn her an income from her expertise and experience as a rape survivor and counsellor. Emily also founded and maintains a private Facebook group for survivors of rape and sexual abuse survivors, which bears the same name as her online programme. This group is free and accessible to UK-based survivors who seek it out.

Emily's entrepreneurialism around the subject of rape and recovery is impressive, and I was prompted to ask: how and why did this all start? In the course of her interview, Emily gave several answers to this question:

> You asked where it started. So I guess when I decided to form ReconnectedLife [my survivor-centred enterprise], which took a long time for me because I really didn't want to…I started thinking…I was still in that headspace of, there's a lot of stuff going wrong in the world, and people need to talk about it, and I'll talk about it. And that was, also it was also motivated by trying to get the business known about and sort of publicity for the business. So it was, it was two-sided in a way. It's like activist, angry, angry feminist plus, oh, I'm a businesswoman. I'm supposed to, I'm supposed to promote what I do [laughs]. (Emily Jacob interview, May 2021)

Later, she pondered over this, demonstrating a fair amount of ambivalence:

> Am I doing this because I want to be able to say I've been on BBC News on my website… so is it driven by ego? Is it driven by: 'I have, I ought to do this because I'm speaking out for people who, who, whose voices are silenced?' Or am I doing this because I really actually want to? I never really kind of understand my motivations properly. And I don't think, I don't think they're ever really very pure, you know, there's always some of that ego side or business side or, you know, and I don't even know what I mean by pure there, because yeah, I was gonna say it was always out of some obligation, but obligation is supposed to be a pure thing. I don't know.

The 'two sides' to her motivations -- feminist activist and businesswoman – could be seen to align with conventional gendered divisions (Hochschild, 1983; Illouz, 2007): the feminine, emotional instinct to help others vs. a more masculine, commercially-minded, pragmatic focus on the self ('that ego side or business side'). She describes the first of these as 'pure': idealistic, altruistic, and public-serving, while she seems uncomfortable, even apologetic, for thinking about her ego or her professional desires when choosing to speak out in the media about her rape. Babcock (2003), in her study of gender differences in negotiating salaries, writes: 'Our society

still perpetuates rigid gender-based standards for behavior -- standards that require women to behave modestly and unselfishly and to avoid promoting their own self-interest' (p.11).

Emily, of course, identifies verbally as an 'angry, angry feminist,' and is presumably less influenced by these patriarchal divisions of gender and acceptable behaviour. Perhaps, then, her ambivalence is tied more to a notion of display rules around feminist activism. Emily's discussion of 'obligations' suggests that she feels she *should* speak up about sexual justice, because it's the 'correct' thing to do as a survivor. In the language of emotional labor, the feeling and display rules here seem to dictate that we should be outspoken feminists, rape survivors crusading publicly against injustice. We should *want* to do this for the greater good.

What is less 'pure,' according to Emily's dichotomy is concurrently pursuing her own individual desires for social recognition, professional success, and self-affirmation through mainstream media visibility. I found this to be a recurring motif in my interviews with survivors: a reticence to state their individual, self-oriented, professional desires around speaking out, in favor of championing the ideological, collective goal of fighting gendered injustice. In discussing motivations for media visibility, the collective good of *all* or *other* survivors is discursively always privileged over individual gain, and positioned as more noble and more worthy.

Perhaps this discursive move is particularly pronounced among women, but I believe it is *especially* pronounced for rape survivors, for whom so much lies at stake regarding their respectability and their believability. As I will explore in Chapter 6, individual survivors seem highly aware of the dangers of appearing to have profited from their speaking out, and downplay their individual gains, even if professional advancement was always among their original motivations.

Multiple Beginnings

To return to 'how it all started,' Emily's 'first time' identifying in public as a rape survivor took place when she was aiming to attract publicity for her business. She wrote a series of opinion pieces around rape and paid a publicist she knew £100 to place these articles on various online newspapers and magazines. In a very clear demonstration, she drew upon both her economic and cultural capital to achieve that media visibility.

So that was her first time as a public survivor on mainstream media. But the reality is years before that, Emily had already attempted to speak out about her rape, a gradual process of using

different forms of media and different environments to share her story. Emily's experience had been a date rape, which took place when she was single and dating, having recently divorced. Emily describes herself as bisexual and a member of the 'kink community' (Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, Sadism and Masochism (BDSM) community). She had met a man on a kink dating site, they had engaged in BDSM activity, and during the course of their date, he had raped her violently. The psychological impact on her was immediate, and affected her work life, ultimately leading to the loss of her job, and the loss of many friends, who didn't believe or support her. Even though she had disclosed to her family, they did not want to discuss or engage with what happened. As a result, Emily turned to online spaces for support. She cites two digital platforms that were particularly helpful for her: online forums for the kink community and Twitter. She explains:

> Not having any other real support probably meant that I leant a lot on the kink community and blogged through them. And that helped me find my voice… I found Twitter to be an absolute lifeline. When I was in the crappy years, yeah, I put something out on Twitter that basically said, help, SOS, sort of stuff. And you'd get all these people supporting and helping you. And that experience was how I knew, was why I wanted to create [the Reconnected Life] community. So there was, you know, a place where people could go. (Emily Jacob interview, May 2021)

Thus, years *before* her first time as a public survivor, digital media served as a crucial intermediate step for Emily, providing the 'online communities of care' that other scholars have described in supporting and galvanizing young feminists, survivors, and activists (Rentschler 2014; Mendes, et al., 2019). Note Emily's use of the popular 'voice' metaphor: these positive experiences with digital media affirmed her own subjectivity as a rape survivor, and developed her self-confidence in telling her story.

In describing the whole arc of Emily's story, the emotions felt in each moment sometimes get left out in the description. But imagine some of the emotions involved for Emily. First, to undergo the shock of the rape itself and its impact on her ability to work. The sadness of her loss of job and her income. The hurt and disappointment of finding friends and family to be unsupportive and indifferent. The despair at how much her life has disintegrated. The loneliness that drives her to seek online support from strangers. But alongside this, too, there is the determination] to seek out the help she needs. The turn to writing as a form of self-expression, especially during 'the crappy years.'

Emily describes how she then attended Slutwalk, a 2011 public protest against rape culture, and attempted to speak out about her rape to the crowd there. For reasons she didn't detail, this experience left her emotionally exhausted, and she 'took too many pills.' Emily laughed at this point in the interview, and also clarified this was not a suicide attempt: in order to sleep, she had accidentally taken too many sleeping pills and woke up more than twenty-four hours later. Nevertheless, the incident served — literally and figuratively — as a wake-up call to Emily: that her despair and self-annihilation had reached a dangerous point.

During this time, writing was an essential way for Emily to compromise: 'I wrote a lot of blogs that were quite, you know, the outpourings of my pain kind of thing during, during the sort of, the bad years.' But these blogs, which she posted anonymously online, were more than just emotional outlets for her. Emily was also processing and reacting to what the world was saying about sexual violence. She grew angry in 2012 when UK comedian and feminist personality Caitlin Moran made a comment 'about women clattering down the streets in their heels,' personal safety, and their vulnerability to rape, which was accused of victim-blaming.[9] Emily took this comment as a personal affront, and wrote what she describes as a 'Dear Caitlin' blog addressing those comments, 'and then another Dear Caitlin part two.' She explains: 'I was writing blogs that were kind of activism. Angry blogs, as well as my kind of 'I'm in so much pain' blogs. And I guess, it was kind of where I put a lot of my pain was in, was in, was in writing.'

Emily's cultural capital, in the form of her writing skill, enabled her to write these blogs and to find a communicative outlet for both her emotions, as well as her more political thoughts on the public discourse around rape.[10] Effectively, her cultural capital helped her to contribute to this public discourse, in a similar way that I was able to write my first, anonymous op-ed for *The Belfast Telegraph* about my rape.

The writing of these anonymous blogs took place *before* Emily's 'first time' as a public survivor in mainstream media. But already, we see in Emily's journey a definite shift in her use of media as a

[9] https://www.mamamia.com.au/mia-freedman-interviews-caitlin-moran/

[10] After writing so many blogs on the topic, Emily later collected and edited them into two e-book collections, as she thought they might be more helpful to readers in that format. They are available to buy online, although they don't feature prominently on her website and are not a significant element of her business. But today, these e-books list her name as the author: the writing is no longer anonymous, the way they originally appeared in blog form

rape survivor: from *seeking* online spaces for emotional support and comfort; to *writing* blog posts that communicate both her emotions and a growing activist consciousness around sexual violence. The step that followed was to 'go public' and no longer remain anonymous in speaking out. It is here where Emily decided to launch her business (the counselling and online mini-course for rape survivors) and paid a publicist to place some of her opinion pieces with online magazines and newspapers. After that, mainstream media platforms were open to publishing more writing by Emily on this topic, and in time, she was approached for TV and radio interviews. It is important to point out that Emily was never paid a fee for any content she created for mainstream media, a condition I will explore more fully in Ch. 6.

Emily's journey with media evolved from emotional motivations in her personal, anonymous usage of online media in search of support and solidarity; to a dawning political awareness that emerged in her writing and online posting of anonymous blogs; to professional and financial motivations in speaking out on mainstream media. This kind of arc I witnessed in other survivors' journeys, which I will address in the next section of this chapter.

CHARACTERISTICS IN SURVIVORS' JOURNEYS TO MEDIA VISIBILITY

I chose Emily as a case study for the first part of chapter because she was one of the most open in expressing her ambivalences about collaborating with media platforms, but there were many parallels between her journey to media visibility and those of other participants. In this section, I want to highlight two particular characteristics that I noticed in these journeys: a gradual runway to media visibility, and a galvanizing moment that prompted survivors to finally take action and speak out.

A Gradual Runway to Media Visibility

> *It wasn't like I was immediately jumping on stage and being like 'This is me, I'm a survivor.' Like, it did still take quite a long time for me to build up to the process where I could comfortably get on stage and be like, yeah, this is who I am. (Imogen Butler-Cole interview, June 2021)*

Imogen is a theatre-maker, and her quote encapsulates a slow, step-by-step process of self-realization, before she could begin devising and performing her one-woman show about her experience of acquaintance rape. For her, the stage is a literal stage, but it also recalls Goffman's front stage / back stage metaphor (1959), and can in fact be applied to many public survivors who decide to go public. Similarly, Madeleine described her speaking out as 'a gradual process. I

haven't overnight just, you know, decided to share my story and that was it.' Their cases exemplify what I call a survivor's 'gradual runway' to mainstream media visibility: a progressive move towards engaging with various media platforms around the issue of rape, which often takes place over the course of years, even decades, at the survivor's self-regulated pace.

In my research, I was struck by how many of my participants found it difficult to pinpoint when exactly was 'their first time' engaging with the media around the issue of their trauma. Was it the first time they had typed an online comment below an article? The first time they'd posted on Facebook alluding to their experience (without spelling it out clearly)? In many cases, they were already active about the issue on social media, without publicly identifying themselves as a survivor or victim.

If I narrowed the question to when was the first time they had *publicly* spoken out, the answers were nearly always embedded in the chronology of the individual's relationship with their trauma. The first media appearance coincided with other, less overtly public work they were undertaking to address the issue. For some, this work had become careers for them.
Just as Emily had already trained as a coach and counsellor and devised an online course for survivors before 'going public,' Michelle, a child sexual abuse (CSA) survivor had been working for years as a frontline social worker for children, a professional choice that emerged from her own childhood experiences. She decided to 'go public,' when she participated in a running challenge fundraiser for her employer, a national charity helping children in need. In a series of Facebook posts, she asked for donations, while also identifying herself as a survivor of CSA. The posts were widely shared, drawing the attention of a local newspaper, and from there, her mainstream media visibility developed, but it was Michelle's initial agentic decision which set everything in motion, and that decision had not been made overnight.

Madeleine, who survived a gang rape in her adolescent years, began to speak out publicly in her early 50s. She, too, had built a career as a counsellor, which she attributes directly to wanting to address her own experience of trauma. For years, she had been attending a series of healing retreats led by a shaman, in an attempt to make peace with the violence of her past. In a sharing circle at one of these retreats, she felt compelled to tell her own story of trauma. The audience responded positively, and the shaman encouraged her to continue speaking out. Like Emily at Slutwalk, one of Madeleine's first steps involved speaking out about her rape at an in-person gathering — but the results were very different. Whereas Emily felt emotionally overwhelmed

after her Slutwalk experience, leading to an accidental overdose of sleeping pills, Madeleine felt emotionally supported in her shaman's sharing circle. This coincides with the therapeutic model of self-narrative after trauma, of healing by being listened to and believed in a supportive setting (Herman 1991; Brison 2002). Ultimately, it led Madeleine to continue on her journey towards media visibility.

Later, Madeleine became involved in The Forgiveness Project, a charity which 'collects and shares stories from both victim/survivors and perpetrators of crime and conflict who have rebuilt their lives following hurt and trauma.'[11] Run by former journalist Marina Cantucazino, the charity aims to 'bear witness to the resilience of the human spirit' and to 'help people examine and overcome their own unresolved grievances' - thus, it can be considered an example of 'media witnessing' by transforming 'embodied experiences into speech acts and forms of documentation that generate (and demand) collective response' (Rentschler, 2022, p.917). For the first time, Madeleine's full name, her photo, and her story of rape were printed publicly – in the charity's booklet and on their website. She was clearly identifiable as a survivor of gang rape. From that moment onwards, journalists took notice of her story and began to approach her for interviews.

In their journeys towards mainstream media visibility, Emily, Michelle, and Madeleine present a very different picture from the popular image we may have of an ordinary citizen unwittingly 'doorstepped' by an intrusive journalist (Palmer 2018; Malcolm 1990), where media attention forces someone into the spotlight before they are ready. Far from passive, powerless victims, these survivors had been (consciously or not) building a platform to share their stories over the course of years. It was only at a later stage when the mainstream media platforms drew upon these individuals' existing efforts and helped to amplify their visibility.

This underscores a significant temporal tension: the rate at which mainstream media platforms operate seems completely at odds with a survivor's long, slow journey of recovery from rape. Mainstream media industries, especially news media, are often seen to move quickly, increasingly turning to 'speed-driven journalism' (Lee, 2015; Reinardy, 2011; Thurman and Walters, 2013). For example, I've been contacted by TV news producers for a live interview within a few hours,

[11] https://www.theforgivenessproject.com/stories-library/madeleine-black/

or commissioned by an editor to write and file an op-ed later that very day. A possible interviewee may only have a few minutes to make a decision about a media request, or a few hours to prepare for an interview – and that interview may be cancelled at the last minute. In contrast, the process of addressing one's trauma is a slow and gradual one, the result of years – even decades – of therapy and self-reflection (Herman 1992; Brison 2002). Being asked to decide quickly around visibilizing one's trauma can create significant stress for the individual survivor, but seen through a longer temporal lens, that decision is the result of years of recovery and internal preparation towards speaking out. Thus, while a mainstream media encounter may *seem* (from the outside) sudden and intrusive, it also arrives at a specific time in a survivor's life in relation to their trauma. Depending on their trajectory and intention, a media request may appear more like an opportunity – a natural outgrowth of a survivor's existing work -- than an intrusion. And to bring in the discussion of emotions, the stress and anxiety that can come from interacting with mainstream media platforms, can be counterbalanced by the excitement and validation about what that media visibility represents for the survivor.

In the years since their trauma, these survivors had not only been healing, but also steadily accruing their lived and professional knowledge around these issues, their communicative skillset, their resolve to speak out — it might only take one spark to the flame, to compel them towards sharing their story on mainstream media.

A Galvanizing Moment: Reacting to Media Representations

A second important observation was that my interview participants were often nudged or driven to action by an existing representation of sexual violence and victims in the mainstream media. Kitzinger (2010) writes that media can function as a trigger for survivors, leading them to 'confront memories they had been trying to ignore' (p.96) or even enabling them in 'making sense of and even disclosing what had happened' (p.97). Royal's (2019) study of survivors' reactions to mainstream media representations of rape has demonstrated that they can be highly affected by damaging or demeaning media texts. Their emotional responses range from sadness and upset at reflecting upon their own trauma, empathy with mediated victims, and even anger at an inaccurate, sensationalist or 'victim-blaming' portrayal of rape. I would like to extend this claim and argue that my interview participants were not only emotionally affected by existing mediations, but also galvanized to take steps towards their own speaking out, by what they saw, read, and heard in the media.

Of my seven participants, five had been moved to action by a specific media representation of sexual violence. Remember that Emily, for example, was compelled to write and post not one, but two 'Dear Caitlin' blogs, reaction to Caitlin Moran's 2012 comment on women in high heels and their vulnerability to rape. In a very similar fashion, 'Linda' (pseudonym), a CSA survivor, was prompted to take media action by the Jimmy Savile abuse scandal. She recalls sitting on a train, flipping through a tabloid newspaper and having a very visceral, bodily reaction to the news report: 'I felt like I wanted to vomit right there, the way they were talking about Jimmy Savile's victims.' ('Linda' interview, 20 April 2016) Linda felt enraged and disgusted, as if she herself as a CSA survivor had been insulted and her experience distorted. From that moment, she felt like she had to do something, to speak out about her own trauma and the reality of it. She began writing letters to the editor at various newspapers, but received no response. In the end, she started an anonymous blog. Thus, a feeling of outrage at an existing media representation of CSA compelled Linda to take part in the public discourse around the issue. And while her desire to reach a large audience through mainstream media was thwarted by the inaccessibility of those platforms, she resorted to another, more accessible and 'safer' platform to express herself, online and anonymously.

Holly, another CSA survivor, grew up in America. She was abused by her step-father at a young age and never told anyone. But a few years later, at the age of fourteen, she experienced what she calls her 'God moment.' While watching *Something About Amelia* (1984), a television film about child sexual abuse, starring Glenn Close and Ted Danson, she realized what had happened to her. Without any hesitation, she got up, went into the next room and told her mother what her step-father had done to her years ago. That led to a police report, a conviction for her step-father, and even local news media coverage of the case. Though the summary of these events can never quite convey the emotions felt at the time, Holly is now in her 50s, and still regards Glenn Close and Ted Danson — two Hollywood actors whom she will likely never meet — with feelings of gratitude and respect for their work on this programme. She highlights this made-for-TV movie in her public talks as a survivor, and has always wanted to write a letter to Close and Danson to thank them for their role in a media text which she admits changed the course of her life. This is a powerful example of the impact that mainstream mediations of sexual abuse and violence can have on survivors, reaffirming Kitzinger's claim (2010) that regarding media texts can lead survivors to self-realization and even disclosure of their trauma.

Holly's case demonstrates that 'positive,' accurate media representations of sexual violence and abuse can be just as galvanizing for survivors as 'negative,' sensationalist ones, although with different emotional results. In the language of emotional labor, an inaccurate, flawed mediation of the crime can lead a survivor to feel insulted, frustrated, saddened, overwhelmed. The emotion work of negotiating with these feelings forces her to break through the normal display rules of not discussing rape and speak out about the reality of her lived experience. Whereas a more positive, accurate mediation of sexual violence and abuse can instill in a survivor feelings of recognition, validating her experience, and giving her the confidence to — again, break through the normal display rules of silence around these topics — and affirm to another individual what happened to her. Even if a survivor is too young to participate in the public discourse, as in the case of Holly at thirteen-years-old, a positive mediation can still prompt her to speak out in a different way and seek the real-life recognition and support she needs. While I do not have the empirical evidence in my own research, we can only imagine the kind of impact that a negative, victim-blaming media representation might have on a young survivor, and how it may in turn engender negative feelings of shame and guilt around her own experience of sexual abuse.

We see here the impact that media representations of rape can have on survivors throughout the course of our lives, ultimately affecting our own attitudes to our trauma and the decisions we take to change the public dialogue. These reactions will be even more intensely felt if the media representation is of *you*, as I discovered when I heard myself described as a 'wee Chinese girl' on Northern Irish radio. Because to witness these inaccurate media representations as a survivor constitutes a form of emotion work, feeling a gap between what we experience and know of sexual violence, and what we see presented to the world. For myself and many of my participants, this gap between lived experience and mainstream mediation is a rift we hope to somehow traverse in speaking out.

FACTORS IN ACHIEVING MAINSTREAM MEDIA VISIBILITY

In my case, the mainstream media came figuratively knocking at my door. Over the years, journalists (primarily Irish ones) left me voicemails, sent me texts and emails, slid into my Twitter DMs in the hopes of an interview. Nearly all of these interview requests I obliged, but many of my fellow survivors needed to find other ways to achieve media visibility. Drawing from my own experience and that of my participants, I have identified certain conditions that make it easier for some survivors to successfully take that first leap into media visibility.

These factors are: 1) control over anonymity or semi-anonymity; 2) usage of different types of media in speaking out; 3) supportive environments; 4) time; and 5) cultural capital. These conditions allowed individual survivors to make 'baby steps' towards mainstream media visibility, which made the whole journey more manageable as an individual progressed on that 'gradual runway.' These factors also affected the emotional labor required of the individual survivor. In essence, by mitigating the emotional labor for the individual, they make the entrance into media visibility easier.

Anonymity and Pseudonymity

Four of the survivors I interviewed first began speaking out under the guise of anonymity. My first op-ed was published anonymously in *The Belfast Telegraph* eighteen months after my rape. I would have never considered printing my name next to it, that early on in my recovery journey. In the aftermath of her rape, Emily's posts seeking help and support on online kink community forums were anonymous — or at least, pseudonymous, as were her online blogs. Recall that Linda also set-up an anonymous blog to disseminate her writing, after being spurred to action by the Jimmy Savile news coverage. Interestingly, Linda never pursued mainstream media visibility. As her abuse had taken place within her family, she felt it would be 'too painful' and 'too unfair' to subject her family members to the judgment and exposure that might follow, if she chose to publicly reveal her identity as a CSA survivor. Thus, she made a deliberate decision to stay out of the mainstream media spotlight, on ethical and personal grounds, even though clearly she felt galvanized enough to take some sort of action by writing her pseudonymous blog.

Family was also another reason why Rowena, the Weinstein victim I interviewed, opted to stay out of the media spotlight for so long and retain her anonymity. As a victim and former employee of Harvey Weinstein, she had been approached by various journalists over the years, hoping to break the story of Weinstein's repeated assaults on women. On a legal and pragmatic level, she had signed an NDA, which she felt prevented her from being able to speak with these journalists. But on a moral and personal level, she, too, felt responsible for protecting her children and her parents from the media attention that would result if her identity were publicly revealed.

Existing literature demonstrates that sexual violence survivors can equate anonymity with a certain safety, in disclosing their trauma on anonymous online spaces (Aandalibi, et al., 2018;

Dolen-Cohen, Ricon, Levkovich, 2020). Anonymity is an important first step, allowing survivors to share their stories and express their feelings around the issue of sexual violence, and avoid the added practical hassle, exposure, moral weight — and emotional labor — of being a public survivor. Madeleine began to speak to local journalists about her experience, under the guise of anonymity. Her daughter worked as a publicist and was able to help her achieve these media interactions. But after enough instances of being quoted anonymously, she felt 'tired of being ashamed':

> I just thought fuck it, I don't want to hide myself anymore. Because I knew it was holding me back, the shame was holding me back… And so it was part of a big, huge, big step, and even now I'm not saying it was easy. But I just thought, I have to, something in me just said that I have to do this for me and for other people. (Madeleine Black interview, Sept 2022)

Note the reference to both herself and other people, an emancipatory act akin to Serisier's three promises of speaking out (2018). Thus, the act of 'going public' as a rape survivor can be seen as casting away of the shame that victims are made to feel they should bear. Perhaps it is a claim for full recognition: of both the damage that the rape has inflicted on you and your full history and identity as a human being.

Oldfield and McDonald (2022) argue that a victim's anonymity, legally imposed for her own protection, simultaneously renders her an 'absent victim' in the media, never fully realized as a person in public discourse. Chanel Miller, the victim of Brock Turner in the infamous 'Stanford sexual assault,' writes of this in her memoir, appropriately titled *Know My Name* (2019)

> In newspapers my name was "unconscious intoxicated woman" -- ten syllables and nothing more than that. For a while, I believed that that was all I was. I had to force myself to relearn my name, my identity. To relearn that this is not all that I am' (p.342)

For years, Miller was referred to using the pseudonym 'Emily Doe.' After it was published pseudonymously on Buzzfeed, her victim impact statement was viewed online 18 million times in the first four days. As the victim of the world's most heavily mediated sexual assault at the time, her scenario was very different from Madeleine's, whose gang rape had taken place nearly forty decades ago, and who had never reported the crime or received the evidential force of the criminal justice system legitimizing her victimhood.

And yet, despite their very different scenarios, both Madeleine and Chanel Miller had benefitted from first entering the public discourse pseudonymously, and then, when the timing felt right for them, choosing to renounce that anonymity as they continued to share their story in

the public sphere. Being able to control and choose one's anonymity coincides with the literature on 'best practice' with rape survivors — where they benefit from being in control of how they are identified and represented by other parties (Campbell 2002; Herman 1992).

Usage of Different Types of Media

In a similar way, survivors benefited from using a range of communicative forms and media formats, which offered varying levels of control — before 'graduating' to their 'first time' on mainstream media platforms. If appearing in mainstream media is intimidating precisely because of the power differential, of not being able to control how oneself is edited, filmed, disseminated to the rest of the world, then social media offers survivors greater control over how their words, images, and identities are implicated in the public discourse about sexual violence. Most of my participants first began speaking out on social media and digital media, which offer lower 'barriers of entry' to contribute to the public debate (Mendes, et al., 2019). Recall how Linda, thwarted by newspapers ignoring her letters to the editor, set up her pseudonymous blog to disseminate her writing on CSA. Similarly, Emily's first speaking out took place on online forums, and later Tweets and pseudonymous blog posts. And Michelle first 'went public' as a CSA survivor on Facebook, when she launched her social media campaign to raise money for her charity. Neither Emily nor Michelle mentioned aiming for mainstream media visibility when they began speaking out online: their goal simply was to share their story with the wider public, using the digital media platforms that were available to them.

Different types of mainstream media offer different levels of anonymity, exposure, and visibility, for a survivor trying to share her story. Would I have said yes right away to a TV interview as my 'first time' in the media? By all means, no. That would simply have been too scary. But answering questions from a local newspaper reporter (my first step, on the day my perpetrator was sentenced) was a relatively easy way to contribute to the public discourse around my rape, without having to expose my identity or my voice. Contributing an anonymous op-ed for the regional paper also allowed me to protect my identity, while simultaneously sharing my thoughts and experiences directly in written form. And while I was certainly nervous about speaking live on BBC Radio Ulster for my first radio interview, there was a reassuring lack of visuality in the medium. I did not have to worry about how I would look to the unknown audience, only about how I would sound. I was able to retain a greater degree of control over a radio interview precisely because there was less demanded of me in terms of what I presented to the public. Put in affective terms, live radio felt 'less scary' than television because less of my identity needed to

be offered up for public exposure. Different forms of media thus demand different levels of emotional labor, and intermediate steps using these forms of media can build an individual survivor's confidence, resolve, and communicative skills towards mainstream media visibility.

Supportive Environments

Another significant appeal of social media is that online spaces like chat forums, Twitter, and Facebook can offer 'communities of care' (Rentschler, 2014) to individual survivors, as other scholars have noted (Andalibi, et al., 2018; Mendes, et al., 2019; Sills et al., 2016). In this way, they serve as a supportive environment, another significant factor that can ultimately lead to a survivor's mainstream media visibility. These platforms offer potential recognition, support, and solidarity to the victims and survivors who seek out these spaces.

According to Brison (2002), survivors heal by telling their stories and being believed, in a supportive environment. Finding these environments is often a crucial step for survivors in their journeys towards speaking out publicly. For example, Rentschler (2014) describes the chat forums, social media groups, and digital spaces as 'online "peer-to-peer witnessing." She later writes:

> These networks not only create contexts of belief for survivor claims; they also see victims as worthy of care and support, when so many victims (especially those who are racialized, indigenous, trans, or queer) are cast as damaged, unworthy, and disposable for having been assaulted. (Rentschler, 2022)

As a member of the BDSM community who had been raped within the context of that community, Emily found valuable support online in BDSM forums, whereas more mainstream environments may have maligned her for her sexual practices and questioned her believability.

Aside from online spaces, many of my participants cited a specific instance where they told their story in person to a group or semi-private audience, before their experiences with the media. These instances helped build their self-confidence in their communication skills, as well as their self-belief in the power of their story and how others might receive it. Madeleine, for example, cites her experience of narrating her trauma in a sharing circle at shamanic retreat, as a turning point in her journey of speaking out. Likewise, Rowena, the Weinstein survivor, had been in touch with New York Times reporter Jodi Kantor for nearly two years before deciding to 'go public.' A turning point for her was attending a two-day gathering of Weinstein victims and advocates at Gwyneth Paltrow's house, which Kantor had invited her to, and which was

described at the end of their non-fiction book *She Said* (Kantor and Twohey, 2020). Rowena says:

> I did tell my story in that environment, and Jodi [Kantor] and Megan [Twohey] were like, 'There's no obligation to speak, you could just come and observe or you could tell your story and we promise it will go no further than this room.' And so everybody did share experiences, not just about the original assault, but also about how they had dealt with the media onslaught after, you know, coming forward with our story… So I think it was good for me, psychologically, to be in a room full of women who'd come forward with their stories and were still able to talk about it and laugh. (Rowena Chiu interview, July 2021)

Again, the lack of pressure to speak ('There's no obligation') and the assurance of privacy ('it will go no further than this room') help to give the survivor control (Campbell 2002), but also invite her into a supportive environment. After that experience, Rowena felt more ready to go on the record against Weinstein and renounce her anonymity as one of his victims. What is embedded in these supportive environments is an affective atmosphere of sisterhood, care, and camaraderie (being 'able to talk about it and laugh') which counter-acts the fear and anxiety a survivor might have when sharing their story to the wider public (Bainbridge, 2022; Salter 2017). Thus, the support found in these environments can mitigate the emotional labor of public speaking out.

Supportive environments do not have to be in-person events, either, such as a shamanic retreat or a catered gathering at Gwyneth Paltrow's house. More professional groups, such a like-minded charities or social justice organizations, can also offer supportive environments where individual survivors can share their stories on a bigger stage, while also developing their narrative and communicative skills. For example, Madeleine's work with The Forgiveness Project provided an opportunity where she could reveal her full identity and her story, on a platform that carried legitimacy and an ethical mission. While Madeleine's particular experience was positive and formative towards her subsequent mainstream media visibility, the use of survivor speech by charities can also tip over into exploitation and lack of care, as I will examine in Ch. 7. However, positive collaborations with charities, like a successful sharing of one's story either online or in-person, can play an instrumental role for individual rape survivors by offering recognition, solidarity, and care. Salter (2013) suggests they can function politically as 'feminist counter-publics' (Fraser 1990) where the devalued narrative of rape survivors is championed, in the face of the doubt and silencing that can occur in the wider public spheres.

Time and Temporal Distance

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, time is not a resource that mainstream media platforms seem to value, as they often operate on short production schedules, fast news cycles, and impending deadlines (Reinardy 2011; Lee 2015). This places both journalists who cover sexual violence and the survivors they speak to under significant temporal pressure to deliver content (Hewa 2022), creating emotional and ethical stressors for the individuals.

But time *is* an important factor for rape survivors in the recovery process (Brison 2002; Herman 1992; Miller 2019), allowing individuals the space for healing and reflection, the time to acquire more life experience and self-confidence, and the time to build a professional skillset that can aid them in speaking out and collaborating with mainstream media. I noted in Ch. 3 that my interview participants were largely in their 40s and 50s, a significantly different age demographic from the young feminist activists whom other scholars (Rentschler, 2014; Mendes, et al., 2019; Horeck, et al., 2023) have interviewed in their usage of digital media to speak out. Existing scholarship around mediated rape survivorhood therefore does not really address the issue of speaking out and time — or as I like to say, the temporal distance from one's trauma.
Public discourse often punishes survivors for speaking out long after their trauma, with their believability doubted through questions like 'why would you wait so long to tell?' (Gilmore, 2017) But these popular opinions fail to understand the lived reality of trauma.

My own experience suggests speaking out publicly about your rape shortly after the crime, when you are still in shock and suffering from PTSD, might demand much more emotional labor than speaking out years later, when your psychological state is not as fragile, and you have had a chance to rebuild and reflect upon the trauma. I observed that many of my participants had benefitted from that gradual runway to mainstream media visibility, which resulted from having years — even decades — to grow and recover from their trauma.

Much of this recovery simply meant being able to build another life for themselves, full of personal and professional accomplishments. Holly, for example, describes her current work against trauma and CSA — more than forty years after being victimized — to be the 'second act' in her life, following a lucrative corporate career which gave her the financial resources, the material stability, and the business skills to now build her enterprise for trauma survivors. Both Michelle and Madeleine, as I have described above, recovered from their childhood trauma over the course of decades, becoming mothers in their personal lives and professionals who, in their

day-to-day lives, helped clients overcome the impact of trauma. These careers also gave them the knowledge, credibility, and self-confidence to speak to mainstream media about these difficult topics.

Rowena, who was silenced from speaking about her assault by Weinstein's NDA, pursued another career entirely. In the twenty years between her assault and speaking out, she married, became a mother of four, earned a business school degree, moved countries several times, and worked for prestigious companies like McKinsey, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, and the World Bank. Through her career, she acquired confidence and communicative skills, which later aided her experience of speaking out. The time span also enabled her to geographically move away from the places that she associated with her trauma, and establish a new life somewhere else, like Holly and myself. Emotionally and practically, this translated into a temporal *and* geographic distance from the trauma, which can serve as a benefit to survivors.

In some ways, time as a factor for rape survivors simply means *growth*: the chance to grow away from your trauma, to pursue your interests and passions, to find human connection — and a supportive environment — in the form of relationships and possibly, your own family. But growth also gives you a longer lens — and greater personal wisdom — through which to view your trauma, to realize the impact it has had on your life, and to manage the emotions that accompany the memory of those events. Thus, survivors with a longer temporal distance from their trauma, may be better equipped emotionally to handle the challenges that come with mainstream media visibility. Crucially, they will have had more time to build the resources like cultural capital, which prove so instrumental when dealing with mainstream media platforms.

Cultural Capital

After her pseudonymous victim impact statement went viral on Buzzfeed, Chanel Miller (2019) reflects upon the public surprise to her statement being so well-written, including many suggestions that it must have been written by a more skilled professional, not the actual victim.

> What they were really saying is, victims can't write. Victims aren't smart, capable, or independent. They need external help to articulate their thoughts, needs, and demands. They are too emotional to compose anything coherent. It cannot be the same drunk girl who was found unconscious… My writing is sophisticated because I had a head start, because I am years in the making, because I am my mother and her mother before. (p.319-320)

She emphasizes her mother and grandmother were also authors, therefore from an early age, she had a 'head start' through a family that valued the craft of writing. Miller's quote highlights several important ideas: the public conception of victims as overly emotional, helpless and infantilized; the discursive 'flattening' of victims which renders it impossible to imagine that the same woman could be both an abject rape victim and a skilled writer. Elsewhere, she writes about feeling insulted by these comments, while her invocation of her family's writing tradition counters this with a feeling of pride. In fact, this is an important aspect of the cultural capital she possessed: as a writer, she is 'years in the making' due to the family she was raised in.

Serisier (2018) likewise notes how cultural capital plays a pivotal role in enabling tertiary-educated, middle class, predominantly white survivors to successfully write and publish their memoirs, while many other demographics are rarely reflected in the commodified genre of rape memoirs. Banet-Weiser and Higgins (2023) repeatedly stress cultural capital as a resource that builds the believability of mediated rape survivors.

This final factor — cultural capital — in enabling mainstream media visibility emerged time and time again in my research. Already, we see specific examples of cultural capital at play in the cases of my interview participants: in Emily's ability to hire a publicist to place her articles with online magazines, in her writing and marketing skills that allowed her to pen op-eds and launch an online product; in Madeleine's publicist daughter, who gave her opportunities to be interviewed by local media outlets. More broadly, cultural capital plays a key role in the larger arcs of Holly, Michelle, Madeleine, and Rowena described above: the professional skills they gained in their post-trauma careers gave them the self-confidence to develop networks, to fund their enterprises or begin their projects of media visibility. These are factors we will see in greater details throughout the subsequent chapters.

In my own 'arc', I have become very aware that my own cultural capital influenced how my rape was handled by authorities like the police: as a well-educated, adult American I was more likely to be taken seriously and treated with credibility by the Northern Irish police than someone of a different class, age, or nationality. But it also impacted how my rape was mediated afterwards, beyond that initial labelling of me as a 'wee Chinese girl': my previous career in the media industries gave me the skillset and confidence to not only speak and write effectively about my rape, but to locate useful media contacts, like the Belfast Telegraph editor who published my anonymous op-ed. If that 'first time' on mainstream media is full of anxiety and self-doubt,

then cultural capital mitigates the emotional labor of appearing in the media by giving survivors the knowledge, familiarity, and confidence to operate within the media industries. Moreover, it fosters an individual's belief that their subjectivity matters and can make a difference. Put another way, cultural capital aids survivors in controlling some of the other factors I identified above: anonymity, usage of different forms of media, finding a supportive environment. Meanwhile, time enables a survivor to accumulate their cultural capital, through education, careers, marriage, and other stabilizing factors.

In the subsequent empirical chapters, I will continue to use an intersectional lens to examine how cultural capital functions at every stage to legitimize and bolster the subjectivity of the individual rape survivor, as she negotiates the emotional labor of mainstream media visibility.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the beginnings of a survivor's media visibility, with a focus on her initial entry into the mainstream media. The two broad questions were the why and the how of her 'first time.' My opening auto-ethnography of a live radio interview, four years after my stranger rape, served to demonstrate a few points: the intense emotional labor of re-confronting one's trauma *via* the mainstream media, the questionable ethics of everyday media practice when contacting rape survivors, my 'gradual runway' towards speaking out, and the role of cultural capital in enabling my first experience as a public rape survivor on radio.

In turning to my interview data, I first looked at the motivations of public rape survivors: *why* did they choose to speak out in mainstream media? On the surface, all my participants cited the three emancipatory promises of speaking out (Serisier 2018): educating society, helping other survivors, empowering the self. But delving behind these 'front stage' reasons, I also discovered other motivations, such as publicizing one's own enterprise or project related to addressing sexual violence. Emily served as a fascinating case study, but her answers revealed an ambivalence about combining her ideological motivations for speaking out, alongside more professional ones like publicizing a survivor-oriented product she had developed. I located in this a recurring motif in my interview data, where survivors discursively positioned the ideological value of their speaking out above any individual material gain. This theme will emerge significantly in subsequent empirical chapters.

Emily's case study also exemplified *how* a survivor first achieved mainstream media visibility. I identified two key characteristics in my interview data. First, a gradual runway, whereby a survivor took many small steps towards speaking out publicly, over the course of years, before finally 'going public.' Secondly, a galvanizing moment when a survivor reacted strongly to a mainstream media representation, prompting her to break through the 'display rules' of silence around rape, and speak out publicly. I also identified five factors that aid an individual in achieving mainstream media visibility: control over her anonymity and pseudonymity; usage of different types of media; supportive environments; time and temporal distance from her trauma; and cultural capital. If appearing in mainstream media for the first time is a terrifying prospect for a sexual violence survivor, these five factors help to mitigate the emotional labor she experiences in achieving that visibility. In the next chapter, I will examine the *costs* of sustaining that media visibility: in other words, the emotional labor involved when collaborating with mainstream media to speak out about one's trauma.

Chapter 5

Costs: The Emotional Labor of Mainstream Media Visibility

Auto-ethnography:
En route to filming a TV documentary
On a bus into Belfast, December 2016

On a rainy night in early December 2016, I flew to Belfast to film the second part of a television documentary I'd agreed to participate in. The first part had consisted of an in-depth interview with me at my flat in London, where I narrated my rape and aftermath in great detail, a process that took hours. By now, eight and a half years after my rape, I felt like I was largely in control of my trauma. But even so, the interview had left me exhausted and emotionally dazed for a few days after the filming.

For the second part of the documentary, the filmmaker, a compassionate, intelligent woman by the name of 'Paula' (pseudonym), wanted to film me returning to the park in Belfast where I had been followed and raped by my perpetrator. The very thought of this was daunting and even nausea-inducing, but I had agreed to this. I guess part of me saw it as yet another challenge, even an opportunity, to push the border of how far I would let the trauma restrict me. Was I really too cowardly, 'too chicken' to return to that park, knowing that that fear was irrational — that the chances of being assaulted *again*, while I had a camera crew with me, were non-existent?

And so I said yes.

As usual, I traveled on my own to Belfast. This wasn't the first time I had traveled back to Belfast since the legal proceedings against my rapist had concluded. In Spring 2011, I'd been flown back to be interviewed by a psychologist, to assess how much my mental health had been affected and how much money I should be awarded by the Northern Ireland Criminal Injuries Victim Compensation Scheme. In 2014, I'd traveled back twice to research for the novel I was writing, a fictional re-imagining of my rape.

My apprehension had lessened with each of these trips, as I continued to meet Belfast residents who were supportive and sympathetic, who all remembered my case when it was reported in the news back in 2008. But tonight, on the coach from the airport into town, a new anxiety mounted within me. A visceral, embodied fear of the park itself. I kept trying to reason with myself. What did I have to be scared of by stepping into that park again? Was I really this much of a coward? And what were the filmmakers expecting would happen when I re-entered Colin Glen?

There was a new weight of expecting the unknown, which had plagued the entire aftermath of the rape for me. Not understanding the criminal justice process. Not knowing how the trial would resolve. Not knowing how I would ever be able to return to a normal life.

And now: not knowing how I would act when confronted with the physical landscape of my assault.

But I had brought it all on myself by agreeing to be in this documentary.

I broke down in tears. The thought of returning to the park was too much, the task that was being put before me, and the significance of it. The sheer dread, the familiar nausea, and the all-encompassing misery that the rape always brought, like a deadening weight that dragged me downwards. Reminding me that despite all my progress, I was still a rape victim, that this would always be part of my life.

As I had felt so many times in the aftermath of my rape, I felt entirely alone.

Thankfully, there was no one else on the upper level of that coach to witness my sobbing. By the time the coach pulled into the Europa Bus Station in Central Belfast, I had dried my tears. I told myself I was going to do this. I'd get over the fear. I'd go to my friend's house, and in the morning, we would welcome the documentary crew. I would obligingly do what they asked, talk to camera, ride in the car to Colin Glen, walk through the park entrance — and I would let them film it all.

Ever since my rape, I had developed a technique of 'steeling myself' to get through the grim, unpleasant aspects of victimhood: most notably, the invasive forensic exam hours after the assault, when my insides were probed for genetic evidence of my rapist. But also, so many other aspects of the criminal justice process, like the 'ID parade,' when I had to identify my perpetrator from a video line-up, and the very thought of the trial itself, when I had to imagine giving detailed testimony about my rape in front of a public gallery – and in front of my perpetrator.[12]

Here, in the bus, I employed that hardening again. It was tiring to have to steel myself so often, to feel a need to eliminate any weakness, any uncertainty or softness within me.

As if in the process, I'd lost a bit of my humanity.

***

[12] In the end, my perpetrator pleaded guilty on the first morning of the scheduled trial, when I sat waiting in the courthouse for the jury to be selected. It came as a complete surprise: on one hand, relief that I did not have to testify, but also anger that I had still been subjected to the unbearable dread and anxiety of waiting for the trial, and a strange sense of loss that the 'moment of reckoning' wasn't going to take place. I ended up writing a trial scene in my novel *Dark Chapter,* as I felt it was the necessary dramatic climax which we would expect, as readers accustomed to 'Hollywood' depictions of crime and justice. But also because it would portray the emotional pain and dehumanization that trials inflict on rape victims.

'Rape,' Chanel Miller (2019, p.263) writes in her memoir about surviving the infamous 'Stanford sexual assault,' 'makes you want to turn into wood, hard and impenetrable. The opposite of a body that is meant to be tender, porous, soft.' In a similar way, the *aftermath* of rape, the infinitesimal ways in which the trauma continues to diminish us, often lead us to develop an outer armor to protect us ironically, from the fear, anxiety, and doubt that often threaten to bubble within us.

In her account of cultural constructions of female desire and consent, Katherine Angel (2021, p. 36-37) uses a similar metaphor: 'Hardening oneself is often a necessary response to violence, or a necessary strategy in the face of it. Perhaps the fear — the constant spectre — of rape does this to our thoughts, our ideas, too.' Angel situates this response within a post-feminist sensibility that believes 'weakness and insecurity must be avoided at all costs' (p.37), akin to the 'confidence culture' which champions the modern woman as fearless and forthright, denying negative feelings like vulnerability and anxiety (Orgad and Gill, 2022).

Many of these feelings clashed within me, as I sat on the coach from Belfast International Airport, but crucially these conflicts were sharpened and complicated by the looming presence of the media. I was not simply a rape survivor returning to the scene of her assault (a harrowing enough prospect), I was a rape survivor returning to the scene of her assault for the specific purpose of being filmed by a television documentary crew. Thus, much of what I had to fear was also about *visibility*: what would be made visible by the camera? Would I break down in tears when I set foot in the park? Was this what the filmmakers were secretly hoping for? And would that somehow embarrass me, if *this* was preserved on film, for all the world to see: the abject image of the helpless victim — that 'wee Chinese girl' — whom I had been trying to disprove all these years?

Paula, the filmmaker, in her conversations with me, had assured me that the camera was just there to observe: there were no expectations on how I should behave, and if I decided on the day that I didn't want to go into the park, that was perfectly fine, too. But, perhaps as a media producer myself, I suspected that ultimately what the filmmakers wanted — and what the audiences wanted — would be for me to return to the scene of my rape. That was the strongest, most emotional narrative, the scene of greatest conflict. And strong emotions made for good drama.

When ordinary people collapse into tears or fury on screen, this is the drama that television workers aim to capture, 'the money shot' (Grindstaff, 2002), a term taken, ironically enough, from pornography and filming the male climax. So sure, it would be 'good television' if I broke down crying on screen. Audiences would be moved. The documentary would be deemed 'powerful.' But how would *I* feel about it? And with all this in mind, with my own will towards challenging the image of the abject rape victim, and my own desire to appear capable and in control, would I even be able to cry — or want to cry — with the camera rolling?

My experience speaks to the broader question of how a rape victim or survivor is expected to appear in the public eye, how we are *allowed* to appear, and how we *allow ourselves* to appear. I did not want to break down in tears in front of the camera, for all the world to see in that documentary, but it was fine to sob in private, when I was alone on the upper level of that bus, with no one around to witness my vulnerability.

My predicament was also about the emotions we allow ourselves to feel when confronted simultaneously with the legacy of trauma and the glare of the media spotlight: the display rules that dictate what emotions we are expected to make visible and how we feel about these display rules. Internally, I found myself running a narrow gauntlet between what I suspected the filmmakers wanted (me in tears on screen), what *I* wanted (an image of a capable survivor who was on the journey of recovery), and what the audiences wanted (a narrative where I did not appear too emotionally detached), all while fulfilling a demand that I be authentic.

In steeling myself, forcing me to face my quite justifiable, post-traumatic fears of the park, I was doing the 'deep acting' that Hochschild (1983) writes of: mindfully convincing myself why I should not be so scared. This involved various ways of being hard on myself. On one hand, I would be 'too chicken' if I did not return to the park: an appeal to my own sense of self as a would-be fearless explorer, unsusceptible to gendered notions of cowardice and bravery. On the other hand, I was responsible for bringing this emotional hardship upon myself by agreeing to the documentary. Because I had signed up for it, I deserved this, so I might as well suffer through it. This is an interesting variation on the 'just world belief' (Furnham, 2003; Lerner and Miller, 1978) that is often used to blame rape victims for getting what they deserved.

In either case, I was using conventional attitudes around emotion and gender to trick or bully myself into being less scared. The emotional side of myself wanted to say, 'I'm scared, I don't

want to do this, I wished I'd stayed at home.' The tougher, more rational side was saying: 'Don't be such a baby. Man up. You signed up for this, so it's too late to back out now.' If deep acting 'involves deceiving oneself as much as deceiving others' (Hochschild, 1983, p. 33), then I was most certainly doing that, trying to defy traditional notions of the weak, vulnerable female victim, by proving myself better than that. And if self-care is about listening to your emotions as a signal function to our genuine state (Campbell, 2002), and recognizing the impact that trauma can have on our lives, then I was wilfully ignoring my feelings of fear and vulnerability, in order to participate in this documentary.

In that moment, all the other motivations for participating in the documentary vanished: the status, the credibility, the ego-boost, the publicity, the larger opportunity to tell the truth about sexual violence. Those motivations were external, they were between me and the outside world. But this – the question of whether not to step into that park -- came down to a struggle inside myself, a wrestle among my feelings, my values, and my thoughts. It was a struggle I could have avoided entirely if I hadn't agreed to a television documentary that involved returning to Colin Glen.

Media visibility was demanding a lot of me emotionally, and yet I felt compelled to hide all that and keep it internal.

In the final documentary, I didn't break down in tears. There were moments where my voice cracked, my eyes grew misty, and the emotions threatened to spill over. But I contained them, as I had learned to contain so many emotions since my rape. Some things you were allowed to make visible, but most feelings you had to keep just below the surface.

***

Introduction

I'm trying to get my head around this kind of opposites… of the fact that I want to be visible and yet I totally want to hide from visibility at the same time. (Emily Jacob interview, May 2021)

How do we feel about visibility, as rape survivors whose stories and identities are repeatedly put on display for the public? How do we negotiate and re-negotiate this visibility with mainstream media producers? And how do we negotiate with ourselves *emotionally*, in relation to our self-image, our values, and our desires, in order to manage the costs and challenges of that media visibility? In this chapter I will examine these questions about the emotional labor of an *ongoing* media visibility for sexual violence survivors. If my previous chapter focused on the *initial* motivations and conditions for survivors who achieve that visibility, this chapter looks at what happens after, once you have appeared time and time again in print and online interviews, on the radio and even television. I explore the costs of media visibility, primarily in the form of emotional labor. In keeping with an agentic view of survivors, I examine the skills, strategies, and attitudes we develop to cope with this media visibility, like the 'hardening' I described in my auto-ethnographic section.

In the first part of the chapter, I will look at survivors' feelings around the notion of the 'partial, circulating self' that is made visible to the public by the media (Palmer, 2018), but reflects only a portion of our real selves and lives. From an intersectional perspective, this question is particularly acute for survivors from a minoritized community, who may find certain aspects of their identities and experiences either flattened, obscured, or heightened. Next, in keeping with the notion of mainstream media visibility as a compromise or 'trade-off,' I consider why survivors would tolerate this flattening or distortion of their identities for the recognition, status, and other benefits that media visibility confers. In a similar way, the frustrating indifference of everyday media practice is also tolerated, as part of the trade-off. I return to the case study of Emily, in examining how media visibility offers status and publicity, while also constraining the self both in terms of one's representation and one's genuine feelings. In the final section of the chapter, I consider how public rape survivors are also aesthetically policed by media platforms, our visual appearance altered in a way which may not feel authentic to ourselves. This policing can reinforce anxieties about our bodily autonomy, which is particularly intense for rape survivors. Here I consider the arenas within which mediated visibility of female rape survivors is granted and the uncomfortable clashes between glamor, authenticity, believability, and aesthetic and emotional labor.

Theoretically, I draw upon Brighenti's (2010) three models of visibility: of recognition, of control, and of spectacle. More specific to the discussion is Banet-Weiser's economy of visibility for popular feminism (2015; 2018), and the economy of believability that, according to Banet-Weiser and Higgins (2023), individual rape survivors are subjected to within the media. It is important not to lose sight of the specificity of being so very visible about one's sexual trauma. Thus, underpinning everything is the *emotional labor* that is placed upon an individual survivor -- who has suffered (and perhaps continues to suffer) the multiple negative impacts of sexual violence -- and yet, for varying reasons, has chosen to put on that media-friendly face and 'go public' about her experience of trauma. Of the seven forms of emotional labor I referred to in Ch. 2, it is the fifth and sixth layers – the emotional labor of appearing publicly in the media, and then of working in the creative industries – which largely emerge here. The struggles described here are predominantly about the power differential between individual survivors and the media platforms which present their stories and identities to the public.

Ultimately, if media visibility disseminates a public version of ourselves which is distorted and incomplete – a partial, circulating self – I am interested in how rape survivors justify our ongoing 'pact' with the media: that this compromised public version of ourselves and the emotional labor it entails is ultimately worth it.

THE PARTIAL, CIRCULATING SELF

> The frame isolates its content from the outside and severs it from the continuum of events in which it was originally immersed. Thus, it partitions visible and invisible events, something is framed and something framed out (82).
>
> — Andrea Brighenti, *Visibility in Social Theory and Social Research*

Me: What do you find draining about the press?

Emily: [pause] Um, they want the personal stuff, instead of the 'I work with other people, and I can talk about this' stuff… They want the insider stuff of me being a victim, rather than me being someone who's empowered to help other people. So I always feel disempowered from the conversation.'

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In her study of private citizens who appeared in the news, Palmer (2018) found that many interviewees were unsettled by the notion of a 'partial, circulating self,' an incomplete, often inaccurate representation of themselves which was out there in the public sphere, which they

could not control, and by which they would be judged (133). This representation was partial and incomplete because the news media had chosen to emphasize a specific aspect of the individual in framing their news story, while obscuring the rest of their personhood.

For mediated rape survivors, this notion is even more pronounced: our identities are made known to the world *precisely* because we have been raped. It is unsettling, even depressing, to realize that our public identities as rape victims eclipse any other knowledge of what we have accomplished and what we can offer the world. Of all my participants, five out of seven voiced a discomfort and a sense of loss over this partial public representation of themselves. Emily's quote above reflects these sentiments, remarking how the media 'want the insider stuff of me being a victim,' while excluding her capabilities as a counsellor, coach, writer, businesswoman, or activist. Ultimately, she feels 'disempowered,' a comment that clearly illustrates the power differential between herself and the mainstream media, who are able to control how she is presented to the world. Later she said she lamented that the media would never be able to show 'the whole of me.'

Rowena admitted a similar sentiment, after becoming publicly known as a Weinstein victim:

> I'm frustrated this will forever be the thing I am 'most famous' for. No matter how good a development economist, management consultant, speaker, teacher or writer I'll become, THIS is the thing I'll be known for. (Rowena Chiu, Facebook message, March 2024)

She also remarked on how the media attention she received as a Weinstein victim always focused on her identity as a mother of four, but rarely ever mentioned her post-Weinstein career working globally as a strategy consultant for McKinsey, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, and the World Bank. This framing, of course, is intentional, in wanting to portray Rowena as a traditional, respectable woman (Benedict, 1992; Cuklanz, 1996), an innocent-victim-turned-devoted mother, but not the accomplished, corporate professional she also happens to be. To employ Brighenti's description of visibility and 'the frame' (2010), the media framing of her conveniently severs Rowena's assault in 1998 and the public #MeToo reckoning against Weinstein in 2017 from the rest of her life: it is as if the intervening twenty years and all the recovery and accomplishments that took place in between are erased from public view. She is either the unsuspecting young victim of Weinstein, or the present-day forty-something mother-of-four — and nothing in between. Previous scholars have commented on this distorted representation of rape victims in the media, in an effort to present them as innocent, unimpeachable women in traditional roles, whom audiences can sympathize with: a mother, a married woman, a university student (Benedict 1992;

Cuklanz, 1997). Other academics describe this as a 'flattening' of the individual survivor's experience or identity in the media, in order to fit mainstream expectations of believability (Banet-Weiser and Higgins, 2023; Boyle, 2005; 2019). But to the survivor herself, such a 'flattening' can feel disappointing, disempowering, even insulting — as I discovered, when I was reduced to as a 'wee Chinese girl' in remark I heard on the radio.

Mediations of rape victims as innocent and deserving of empathy, can easily tip over into stereotypical portraits of 'the abject': victims who are helpless, pitiable, with their lives ruined (Boyle 2003, 2019; Royal 2019; Serisier 2018). Michelle's story was often conveyed in abjectifying headlines, for example: 'Abused by multiple men and my Mum knew' (Bear & Scully podcast, YouTube, Feb 2024). She admits she struggles emotionally with this media practice:

> A lot of media coverage is sensationalizing the story with taglines and headings that can feel very harsh. I know that's how they capture audiences, but due to this there has been an emotional impact personally following any public disclosure… I struggle with this as I don't want to be pitied or thought of as damaged. So I often find it is this I grapple with the most. (Michelle Duffy, private Instagram message, March 2024)

The desire not to be pitied also emerged in many other participants' responses, as it felt very much at odds with where they were in their lives now, as survivors who had chosen to speak out. Madeleine was frustrated that when her memoir came out, the publicity in broadsheets sensationalized her story towards the abject, writing headlines like:

> 'Rape victim horror'… 'She knows because she's lived the terror and the horror.' And you think, For fuck's sake. I'm like, I'm actually really okay now. I'm not like, you know, damaged-goods-for-life person. (Madeleine Black interview, Sept 2022)

Again, these framings of Madeleine severed the 'terror and horror' of her adolescent gang rape from the wider context of her life and the fact she was now recovered.

The greater irony is that the agency and capability that survivors possess in 'going public' is often obscured by these abjectifying, pitying representations. Moreover, certain forms of cultural capital which privilege survivors in achieving mainstream media visibility — especially professional backgrounds and skillsets — are conveniently concealed when portraying them as guileless, innocent victims in the media. Thus, individual survivors can feel diminished and disempowered by these representations, while the inequalities of social and cultural capital that operate behind-the-scenes in the media industries remain invisible to the rest of the world

POLICING AND SELF-POLICING SURVIVORS' VISIBILITY

Sexuality

Benedict's (1992) famous dichotomy of the virgin or the vamp in media representations of rape survivors remained very much in play for my interview participants, as they navigated their media visibility. Recall that Emily was raped on a date with a man she had met in the Bondage Discipline Sadism and Masochism (BDSM or 'kink') community. She discusses the media's framing of her:

> I'm always kind of aware that they're [the media] trying to present a version, which isn't actually real [pause]. And I'm also aware that they initially think, oh, 'This one's going to be good,' because of the way I present as being a middle-class white girl, acceptable… an undeserving victim kind of thing. And then they get to, 'Oh, it's all a bit more complicated than that.'

She continues:

> My story is one that is only ever told in the press-friendly way of white, newly-divorced woman, naive about dating circumstances, gets taken advantage of and drinks too much… And what they never put in is the fact that he raped me with the coffee grinder handle thing. That, that he used a cane on me so hard that I still had bruises from the welts six months later, you know, they don't use the kink side. They don't use the viciousness of it at all. (Emily Jacob interview, May 2021)

In contrast to the abjectifying headlines that Michelle and Madeleine experienced as CSA survivors, Emily's story was white-washed and made more palatable, while she herself was rendered more respectable. She and the journalists were both aware that linking her story to the kink community would render her less believable and empathetic as a rape victim, easily labelled a vamp in the virgin/vamp dichotomy. Ironically, it was in online forums for the kink community where Emily first found support and solidarity after her rape, when her family failed to support her and *long before* her decision to go public. But in casting her as a respectable woman and 'undeserving victim,' mainstream media platforms flattened the specificity of her own story and identity, in much the same way that her identity as a writer, counsellor, and activist against sexual violence was also obscured in favor of portraying her simply as a victim.
Emotionally, Emily seemed resigned to this flattening of her identity, as if it was an inevitable aspect of working with mainstream media platforms. Comments from my participants indicated they were highly aware of media stereotypes around rape victims like the virgin/vamp dichotomy. I would argue that seasoned public rape survivors have internalized this awareness, and pre-emptively alter their behaviour in the media as a result.

For example, Bonny Turner explained how her approach to media visibility changed once she had gone public as a rape survivor. Years before going public, she had appeared on television on the popular *The Graham Norton Show*, as one of the audience members who gets to sit in 'The Red Chair' and tell a funny anecdote. Her story had been about a funny sexual encounter, in keeping with the slightly risqué tone of the show, and she was pleased with how it had been received. Years later, as she was starting to become more active in campaigning and speaking out as a rape survivor, she was contacted by *The Graham Norton Show*, who wanted to include her Red Chair segment in a 'Best of the Show' compilation and release it on YouTube. Bonny continued:

> And I said no, because I knew that I would be slut shamed. And it would be really bad for me going public, if, if simultaneously there was already a story about me -- you know, telling this sexual story in the red chair. And so I didn't do it. And actually, only a couple of months ago, I woke up from a nightmare, heart racing, with anger, feeling angry that I had to give up doing something joyful in my life, something that celebrated something fun and joyful, because of your fear of being sexualized, of being slut-shamed. And you know, what impact that would have on me telling my story about rape in the public. (Bonny Turner interview, March 2021)

Bonny's feelings of anger and loss at having to negate a joyful part of her life manifested in a visceral bodily way, in a nightmare and heart palpitations. And yet, just as Emily's public story obscured her link to the BDSM community, Bonny felt compelled to police her own media visibility, recognizing the potential harm of 'being slut-shamed,' labeled a vamp, and thus, having her own believability as a public victim compromised. The emotional labor for her was in suppressing her disappointment at having to flatten her own identity, but the anger that spontaneously erupted could be seen as a signal function, indicating her sense of injustice in having to deny her own authenticity and conform to media expectations in this economy of believability.

Race

In a similar way, Bonny also expressed discomfort around her racial identity and how it was visibilized or obscured in the media. As a woman of East Asian descent, she was very conscious of 'the optics' around race and standing out as East Asian, in a field of public rape survivors who are predominantly white. Rowena, likewise, frequently referred to her East Asian identity, and the long-standing Western stereotype of East Asian women as hypersexualized: either sexual temptresses, or shy and sexually submissive (Cho 1997; Hwang and Parrenas 2021; Shimizu 2007) — a racialized twist on the virgin/vamp dichotomy. Both Bonny and Rowena expressed

concerns about a 'white savior narrative' (Cole 2012; Yang 2014) influencing how their story as an East Asian victims were portrayed to the public. After Rowena was assaulted by Weinstein, she sought the support of her immediate supervisor Zelda Perkins, a young white woman, who confronted Weinstein. Both were forced to resign under an NDA. But Rowena remains very conscious of being portrayed in the #MeToo press as a helpless East Asian victim, 'saved' by the strength and heroism of a white woman. In a similar way, Bonny turned down media interview requests, when the proposed panel would be her as an East Asian victim positioned alongside older white women experts. To her, the optics of that 'screamed white savior' (Bonny's words), and she was uncomfortable appearing like a racialized, vulnerable victim.

In a similar way, my reaction to being called a 'wee Chinese girl' was largely due to the racialized nature of the statement. Like Bonny and Rowena, representation of my race is an issue I'm highly conscious of, and the infantilizing tone of the phrase, the implication of racialized helplessness grates against my own self-image. Like them, I was conscious of not wanting to be reduced down to the cipher of 'helpless East Asian victim.'

In Rowena's case, her race was heavily foregrounded in the very first piece she wrote for the public. When *The New York Times* ran her op-ed, they used this as the headline:

> 'Harvey Weinstein Told Me He Liked Chinese Girls'[13]

Rowena admits she was 'really startled' when she first saw the headline in a draft of her article, before it was published. But she explains that 'the sub-editor was Asian,' and 'it was an incredible experience to work with her.' A non-Asian sub-editor using that headline might have been accused 'Othering' of Rowena for her race. But because she and the sub-editor were both Asian, that headline became an act of discursive defiance:

> I remember thinking, wow, that's audacious, but great, good for her… I would not have thought to kind of push race so ostensibly ahead of the agenda. But hey, if you can get away with it, let's do this. (Rowena Chiu interview, July 2021)

'Let's do this' speaks to a sense of teamwork, where Rowena and the sub-editor were collaborating to make the op-ed piece as impactful as possible. In this case, they were in

[13] https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/05/opinion/sunday/harvey-weinstein-rowena-chiu.html

agreement around using the media visibility of her headline, not just to lean into stereotypes about Asian women and sexuality, but also to challenge those stereotypes and link them directly to a lived experience of sexual violence. Rowena describes the headline:

> like a red rag to a bull… I guess they chose it because they were trying to be slightly controversial, and it's obviously lifted from my article, but I probably would not have had the courage to literally fly a red flag in that way. But loads of Asian women wrote to me after that, ranging from the very old… Asian women in their 70s… they obviously also suffered sexual assault. But in those days, it was impossible to talk about it.

In her 'red rag' metaphor, Rowena speaks of an intense, attention-grabbing visibility surrounding her race. But she feels this is justified because it indirectly grants a visibility to a community of other survivors (Asian women, especially older ones) who are able to connect with her experience, even though they themselves have been silenced. She goes onto say:

> a lot of Asian victims have come to me to say, I'm a voice that stands for them. You know, there is that whole side of things where I obviously do feel proud of the work that we [myself and the other public Weinstein victims] do, and I do feel it's important that we do it. But then it's partnered with this ambivalence around, but hold on, it's rooted in the fact that the only reason why people listen to us is our rapist was Harvey Weinstein.

Rowena's feelings about her visibility are mixed: pride and status as a very public campaigner; but a discomfort because this status is inextricably linked to her perpetrator, Harvey Weinstein; and finally a responsibility to speak out for other Asian survivors. Thus, race complicates the experience of mediated survivorhood, creating a burden of representation for the minoritized individual who achieves visibility, as well as a heightened awareness of how one's race is represented.

And yet, the opposite — the complete erasure of one's racial identity — can also ring false for a minoritized public rape survivor. Bonny recalls a time when she participated in a political party's social media campaign on violence against women.

> I was happy for them to use my name and story as part of a campaign, and my image. And yet, the campaign manager removed my image. And I'm like, but my name sounds white. I need to have my face as part of this…like, use an image where possible, you know? Because that's part of my activism. It's not just about rape and sexual violence. It's about racial injustice, as well. (Bonny Turner interview, March 2021)

It is possible the campaign manager was trying to obscure Bonny's racial otherness by removing her image, but this very flattening of her story and identity as a rape survivor felt like an insult to

her. Bonny sees her public visibility as an East Asian survivor as part of her activism; to have her racial identity denied and erased therefore negates her aim in speaking out.

In these instances, we see how media platforms may impose a visibility of control when showcasing rape survivors, but as they progress in their ongoing media visibility, individual survivors become more agentic in their decision-making to negotiate around these constraints. Bonny's multiple decisions to say no to media interviews may not have earned her visibility in those specific instances, but they demonstrate a practical, assertive attitude not to be exploited or portrayed in a particular way. And yet, the additional emotional labor for minoritized survivors became clear. None of my white participants made any comments about race in discussing their media visibility. But for Bonny, Rowena, and myself an awareness of our race and representation created a further layer of concern, opening up more avenues through which our visibility could be distorted and demanded negotiation.

VISIBILITY AS PUBLICITY

Despite the frustrations that come with distorted, flattened representations of the self, individual rape survivors do clearly pursue and maintain mainstream media visibility. But why?

According to Brighenti, that first mode of visibility is one of recognition, a validation of one's perspective and subjectivity. Lazarsfeld and Merton (2004) write that appearing in mainstream media confers status on an individual, and Palmer's study (2018) reports some of the pride and excitement that her interviewees felt after appearing in the news. But she warns: 'This triple whammy of fame, status, and credibility can be attained only by giving up control of your own message to a news outlet, then sitting back and hoping it produces a representation that meets your hopes, needs, and expectations' (p.147-8).

This ultimately is the compromise that public rape survivors make, trading imperfect, flattened representations of themselves for the wider goal of speaking out and the heightened status that comes with mainstream media visibility. It is a compromise that I have come to accept during my sustained collaborations with the media, realizing that a journalist won't always get everything right in representing my story, but as long as *most* of it is 'right enough,' at least my story will get another boost in being 'out there.' Among my participants, it was Emily who again, verbalized this utilitarian sentiment the most, perhaps because she tied her media visibility so closely to

publicity for her business. Her website displays the logos of all the media platforms she had appeared on, as if to demonstrate the credibility of her work. And recall that Emily had paid a publicist to place her first written opinion piece with online magazines; clearly she had perceived this type of media visibility to carry a value worth paying for.

In the media and creative industries, this visibility is often called 'exposure,' a word which is notoriously used to excuse not paying creative freelancers for their labor (Conor, Gill, and Taylor, 2015; Duffy, 2017; McRobbie, 2016). But these creative freelancers recognize the value of 'exposure,' in the same way that Emily did: exposure functions as publicity for one's enterprise and one's self (Leung, Gill, and Randle, 2015). This entrepreneurial approach to visibility is very recognizable within the contemporary media landscape. Deuze and Prenger (2019, p. 21) write that for cultural workers the 'entrepreneurial mindset reinforces the idea that making media is not just a way to make a living — it becomes your identity.' Multiple other scholars explore the idea of the individual as self-brand (Banet-Weiser, 2012; Gehl, 2011; Gershon, 2017; Marwick, 2013). Individuals seeking visibility on digital platforms use branding tactics popularized by mainstream media platforms (Gandini, 2016; Poell, Nieborg, Duffy, 2022), aware that mainstream social media networks prefer to confer visibility on individuals and personalities, rather than collectives and groups (Ellison & boyd, 2013; van Dijck, 2013). In this entrepreneurial sphere, Emily is like many individual media workers who pour time, energy and resources into developing and maintaining their personal brands (Duffy, 2017; Gershon, 2017; Scolere, 2019). As Scharff (2023) demonstrates in her research, many digital feminist activists develop an individual self-brand on social media platforms, where they advocate against a specific type of injustice. These activists draw upon their own cultural capital gained through working in the creative and media industries, to develop their social media content and maintain their mediated visibility. Emily exemplifies many of these qualities, but her emotional landscape behind that visibility and the discursive strategies in which she shapes that visibility are worth examining.

In Ch 4, I observed how Emily appeared almost apologetic in pursuing her professional interests of publicizing her business, alongside the 'pure' activist goal of speaking out against the injustice of sexual violence. These conflicting motivations are also evident in her website. A closer look at it raises questions of what we are allowed to make visible as survivor-activists, and which interests we feel compelled to obscure from the public.

Unlike many social media influencers who emphasize an individual subjectivity, Emily's brand is very much about acknowledging a collectivity of survivors out there. The website for her enterprise features pithy, evocative statements like: 'We have all been hurt, and we all need to heal' or 'Rape changes us all. But it doesn't have to define our future.'[14] In highlighting these sentences, she emphasizes a collective 'us' who have been damaged by sexual violence and would identify with these statements. But she also distinguishes herself as an authority on healing from rape, when her website says: 'I was where you are. This is what I needed.' Emily is effectively saying here that she has since healed and can offer wisdom, insight, and tools to help other individuals who are suffering. Elsewhere in her website, she explains that she later trained as a coach and Master Neuro-Linguistic Programming Practitioner, and these tools and techniques feature in the online course she is offering.

But the primary source of authority Emily emphasizes is her own status as a survivor. The strapline that appears under her product's logo on the homepage is 'Developed for survivors, by a survivor.' Thus, Emily foregrounds her own survivor experience almost as a higher, more credible form of authority over her less visible professional background. She explains to me that this stems from 'many experiences of bad counselling, as well as some experiences of good counselling,' and wanting to combine 'all the good things' into a 'toolbox' for other survivors. Implicit in this statement is a sense that the 'experts' out there (therapists, counsellors, mental health professionals, psychologists, etc) don't always know what's best for rape victims, but another rape victim will. And while some outside the field might view this attitude as arrogant or even dangerous, I myself can see the appeal in it, for I, too, have experienced a fair amount of ineffective, even damaging, counselling as a rape survivor.

This feeling perhaps speaks to an activist sentiment that 'the system is broken' because authorities can't be trusted to fully understand what rape victims are experiencing (Beecher, 2023). But it also coincides with a tendency for mainstream mediations of sexual violence to exclude expert voices from feminist scholars (Boyle 2019; Serisier 2018) or specialized services like rape crisis centres (Royal, 2019), in favour of more emotional personal stories from victims. Discursively and in media practice, the onus thus falls on individual survivors to both give authentic voice to the experience of sexual violence *and* to offer solutions. In some of her media interviews, Emily is more directly critical of how she was failed by criminal justice

[14] https://reconnected.life/

authorities in handling her rape. But on her website, with its soft pastel colors and feminine font, she aims to establish a safe, welcoming, understanding space for survivors, which highlights her own lived experience but emphasizes a collective, shared suffering and the potential for healing.

Thus, it is interesting to see what Emily makes visible on her website: 1) the pain that is experienced by 2) an imagined collective of survivors, and 3) her own status as a survivor which gives her credibility to offer this product. Even though she has to me identified as an 'activist, [an] angry angry feminist' and elsewhere criticized ineffective authorities and mental health professionals, this anger — and this activist desire to affect political change — is not present on her website. Emily's media savvy as a marketing professional is evident here. If the goal is to offer comfort to despairing individual survivors and encourage them to feel hopeful (as opposed to angry), then her website accomplishes this. But there is an interesting set of discursive moves here: Emily is making visible the invisible (the pain and suffering of rape victims), and visibilizing a *collective* sense of survivorhood; while distinguishing herself as an individual survivor who has devised a solution, and then exhorting individual survivors to embark on their individual journeys of healing and buy her product. Thus, she is both acknowledging a collective, shared sense of a suffering community and her membership in that community as part of her self-brand, while also advancing her own entrepreneurial project and encouraging others to embark on their own commodified, neoliberal journeys of self-help (through her product).

While this may seem inauthentic to some, I think Emily's situation speaks to both the real and discursive struggles of establishing oneself as a survivor with a mediated 'voice,' while also needing to earn an income through one's communicative and other professional skills. In the next chapter, I will look at the deeper implications of earning money while speaking out publicly against sexual violence.

But first, I wanted to continue examining the different modes of visibility that public survivors may be implicated in. If, as Brighenti suggests (2015, p. 41) 'visibility oscillates between recognition and control,' then control can emerge in certain media expectations around visuality that are imposed on a survivor, even when she is being recognized and conferred a higher status. We see this in my next auto-ethnographic episode.

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Auto-Ethnography:
Irish Tatler's Woman of the Year Awards, Autumn 2017
Clayton Hotel, Dublin

Nearly a year after I sat sobbing alone on the coach from Belfast Airport, I found myself wearing an evening gown and high heels, wandering through the lobby of an upscale Dublin hotel, to attend Irish Tatler's Woman of the Year Awards.

The documentary profiling me had aired on Irish terrestrial television a few weeks earlier, coincidentally the same week that the Harvey Weinstein allegations had broken in the US media. *Dark Chapter*, my novel inspired by the rape, had been published that summer, accompanied by online, print and radio interviews.

By this point, it was ten years after my rape, and seen from one vantage point, one might say I'd had some success as a 'public' rape survivor. My novel had been published, I'd been featured in a television documentary and numerous articles, I'd launched Clear Lines, and embarked on my PhD research. But it seemed that 'success' was measured primarily by the visibility I'd achieved in the public sphere. And yet, visibility bred more visibility, in unpredictable ways.

A few weeks after the documentary aired, I was shortlisted for Irish Tatler's Woman of the Year Awards in the Special Recognition category. I didn't know what to make of it.

It was a strange experience, donning an evening gown to attend a black-tie awards ceremony, where attendees walked not a red carpet, but a purple carpet in honour of the event's beneficiary, Women's Aid Ireland (a domestic violence charity). Our luxury gift bags included samples from leading hair and cosmetics brands, and attendees were encouraged to pose in a life-size lightbox that made us appear as if we were on the cover of Tatler magazine. If we shared our photos on social media with the event hashtag, we might win the latest model of a Samsung phone. The awards ceremony presentation included short videos from Women's Aid Ireland to raise awareness about domestic violence, followed by live performances from female belly dancers and a capella groups to entertain us. At my dinner table, I was seated next to fashion bloggers and stylists, and it felt jarring to casually make small talk over our three-course dinner about my activism against sexual violence. I began to wonder why I was even at this ceremony.

I didn't win the award, nor did I expect to. No one really explained why I had been shortlisted in the first place, though I assume it was in recognition of my mediated survivor speech: the TV documentary, my book, or some combination of all this. So I had booked myself a flight to Dublin, put on the requisite evening gown and makeup, because I assumed attending the awards ceremony would somehow be good for my visibility. There was a certain status, a visibility of recognition that had been achieved by my invitation. And my personal brand might be boosted if I was seen attending a desirable, highly visible awards ceremony like this one. But I wasn't sure what it all really meant and what purpose it would serve.

My ambivalence at the event speaks to the discursive, but also affective clash between this form of highly mediated visibility and the survivor experience. Duffy (2018) writes that social media influencers desire moments of high visibility to document that they can be seen in all the right places and at all the right events. Was I, too, meant to be celebrating my visibility as a rape survivor at such a heavily commodified media event? I had enough cultural and economic capital to spend on a plane ticket and the appropriate wardrobe to attend, but I wondered if it had been worth it. Did the event feel like an authentic platform for listening to survivor speech and affecting actual change? And how could it possibly feel authentic when domestic violence and corporate makeup brand sponsors were being mentioned in the same breath?

Moments like these typify Banet-Weiser's feminist economy of visibility (2015), where popular feminism is 'glammed up,' thereby achieving frequent and intense visibility within the media landscape, but not actual structural change against gender inequality. The same strange clashes of glamorized visibility, publicity, and survivor speech continued in the following months, when the Time's Up campaign announced itself on the red carpet of the Golden Globes Awards Ceremony, three months after the Weinstein allegations went public. To raise awareness of the Time's Up campaign, female Hollywood stars wore black gowns on the Golden Globe red carpet and brought activists as their dates to the highly mediated event. While we should assume that a feeling of genuine solidarity compelled these stars to support the Time's Up campaign, in this economy of visibility, there was a clear mutual benefit for everyone involved. On a transactional level, stars benefitted from the 'positive optics' of publicly aligning with a 'good cause' like the elimination of workplace sexual harassment and assault. And for the activists attending the Golden Globes, their work and their activist organizations experienced an immediate boost in visibility and potential earning power. (In Autumn 2018, I met one of the individual activists

who had walked the Golden Globes red carpet as a Time's Up guest, and she mentioned that since then, her public speaking fee had increased ten times.)

In short, Time's Up was good PR for everybody. For a brief moment.[15]

But while this form of highly mediated visibility translates into a currency for the individuals and causes involved, there are constraints placed on this type of visibility. More specifically, individual survivors and activists are expected to conform to certain visual expectations for highly visible women, even survivors of trauma. Thus, a visibility of recognition also functions as a visibility of control, dictating acceptable images and narratives for an individual rape survivor to be seen as believable, media-worthy, and empathetic.

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VISIBILITY AND THE AESTHETIC LABOR OF RAPE SURVIVORS

> *I want to appear in the media not looking glamorous, but just... I don't want my appearance to be distractingly good or bad. You know, I just want to appear with dignity, you know? — Bonny, Interview Participant, March 2021*

'Don't wear too much makeup.'

- *My friend, the morning of the trial against my perpetrator, 2009*
- *The documentary filmmaker, the morning we filmed in Belfast, 2016*
- *The media charity advocate, before I filmed an online video series about rape 2017*

In the final section of this chapter, I will look at the ways in which individual survivors negotiate the constraints of this highly mediated, highly controlled visibility, particularly in relation to their visual appearance. Media professionals and commentators often speak about 'the optics' (Safire, 2009; Zimmer, 2010), a term which originated in US politics, indicating a heightened awareness of how something would appear and be perceived by the public. All the participants I spoke to, even though most of them didn't identify as media professionals, were also very aware of 'the

[15] Time's Up ceased operations at the end of January 2023. https://variety.com/2023/biz/news/times-up-cease-operations-me-too-movement-1235498002/ Between 2018 and 2021, the Time's Up Legal Defense Fund had referred over 4,800 victims of workplace sexual harassment and assault to lawyers and funded 256 cases, so it was not purely about visibility. https://www.vogue.co.uk/arts-and-lifestyle/article/times-up-shut-down

optics' of being a public rape survivor. Arguably you could say rape survivors have long been aware of how they will be perceived and judged, and this has long impacted their behaviour. But in the realm of mainstream media, the emphasis on appearance is paramount, and individual rape survivors are subject to greater visual scrutiny: judged on their adherence to both 'acceptable' images of victims and the general appearance of women in the public sphere.

Negotiating around these acceptable norms of appearance constitutes further labor for survivors. Many scholars have explored feminism and the concept of beauty, arguing that women's appearance is subject to profound discipline, regulation and surveillance (Bartky, 1990; Bordo, 1993; Gill, 2007; Sawicki, 1991). More recently, scholars have written about glamour labor (Wissinger, 2015) and aesthetic labor: the time, effort, and resources spent by women to appear attractive and acceptable in the public sphere (Elias, Gill, and Scharff, 2017). The aesthetic labor of appearing *in the media* is even greater, as evidenced by some of my participants.

Policing and Self-Policing of Survivors' Aesthetic Appearance

Bonny recounts one particularly jarring episode when she felt the burden of a glamorized aesthetic. She had been approached by a major UK tabloid newspaper who wanted to interview her for a feature and photo shoot in their weekend women's magazine:

> I said yes. But then, the more I spoke to the editor and the journalist at [the tabloid], the more reluctant I became… Because they started asking me what clothing size I was, telling me what colors to wear, what to wear. 'Oh it'll be nice if you wore a jacket and a skirt.' And, um, and I actually have a disability where I want to cover my legs, like I've got a very very severe skin disease on my legs and so I think I was anxious about them telling me what to wear, what colors to wear. They said, 'Oh, we've got some wardrobe here as well. We're gonna do your hair and makeup and nails.' (Bonny Turner interview, March 2021)

Bonny felt an affective clash between the tabloid's emphasis on her appearance and the serious nature of her story as a rape survivor. She later describes that due to her disabilities, she finds it difficult to do her own hair and makeup, and she has asked TV stations in the past for professional help. But this time, the request from the tabloid felt different.

> Like I want to appear in the media not looking glamorous, but just... I don't want my appearance to be distractingly good or bad. You know, I just want to appear with dignity, you know? .... But, but this feels like I'm being - like a Christmas turkey being fattened up for Christmas... I felt uneasy about it…. It was on the Wednesday morning I was

> supposed to have the interview because they were going to do a full weekend feature article of it. And I just — I woke up having a panic attack, heart pumping, sweating profusely.... having had a nightmare of a man standing over my bed, you know, and I just couldn't go ahead. So I turned it down. (Bonny Turner interview, March 2021)

When pondering her discomfort over the episode, Bonny said she was 'concerned about being sexualized… dressed up to put out a certain image.' Recall from earlier in this chapter that Bonny was highly aware of hypersexualized images of East Asian women in Western media. Here, her description 'like a Christmas turkey being fattened up' evokes bell hooks' powerful essay 'Eating the Other,' which considers how Western culture portrays ethnic and racial difference as a gustatory pleasure to be sampled. hooks writes: 'The overriding fear is that cultural, ethnic, and racial differences will be continually commodified and offered up as new dishes to enhance the white palate — that the Other will be eaten, consumed, and forgotten' (1992/2015, p. 39). In Bonny's case, the metaphor of being devoured is intensified by her specificity as a rape survivor and the suggested lack of control over her body, the discursive consumption of it, and its presentation to the public. It led to an extreme visceral reaction, triggering a reminder of Bonny's past traumas — and her eventual decision to avoid such a moment of visibility.

Even when the aesthetic labor is not being performed *upon them*, individuals still internalize the expectation to appear presentable in the public eye. Rowena spoke about spending significant money on professional hair and makeup appointments before her media appearances. As a Weinstein survivor, she was aware of being in the full glare of the spotlight, especially when appearing on television next to actual Hollywood stars like Ashley Judd. Of course, Rowena possessed enough reserves of capital to afford professional aesthetic labor, but she felt it was necessary if she was going to enter into and maintain that level of media visibility. Interestingly, Rowena, like Bonny, also uses metaphors of being devoured when describing the media. She recalled the fears she had when deciding whether or not to go public with her story as a Weinstein victim: 'The media will eat me for breakfast, and I won't even come back alive.'

In both these contexts, Bonny and Rowena compared themselves to something about to be eaten, with the attendant feelings of helplessness and eventual decimation through the process of giving yourself over to the media. In the case of rape survivors, the aesthetic labor that is subjected *upon them and their bodies* by a media platform can trigger feelings of bodily coercion, and negations of consent and individual agency, which bring their own emotional burden.

It is worth noting that Bonny and Rowena are both women of color, who were very conscious of 'the optics' around being a highly visible East Asian rape survivor. Perhaps this awareness of their own difference — and how it would be perceived visually — made them particularly concerned about appearing aesthetically acceptable to the media, in a lingering echo of hooks' sentiments: of being presented publicly and consumed as an Other. My other participants, all white women, may have made the odd comment about looking nice for the camera, but they didn't seem to express the same anxiety over their personal appearance. In these instances, we see how media platforms may impose a visibility of control when showcasing rape survivors, but individual survivors experience these constraints differently according to intersectional characteristics like their race. They also can learn to be agentic in their decision-making to negotiate around these constraints. Bonny's multiple decisions to say no to media interviews may not have earned her visibility in those specific instances, but they demonstrate a practical, assertive attitude not to be exploited or portrayed in a particular way.

On Makeup: Aesthetics, Believability, and Emotional Labor

I myself have both internalized an expectation to appear a certain way for the media, while also weathering specific comments related to my aesthetic appearance as a rape survivor. Like many a woman in the modern era, I pay more attention to my makeup if I am going in front of a camera or appearing before an audience. But I can recall three separate occasions when a sympathetic party suggested I not wear 'too much makeup' in preparing for a public appearance: 1) by my friend when I was getting ready to appear in the courtroom for the trial against my perpetrator, 2) by the director of the television documentary, on the morning we were filming in Belfast, and 3) by a media advocate, just before I was going to film an online video series with a national British newspaper. Crucially, all these situations were highly visible moments when I would be appearing *to the public* as a rape survivor. I was not offended in the least by the advice from these women, whom I considered to be friends and supporters. Obviously the film director and the media advocate had professional interests as well in curating my appearance. But what was the implication? That in order to be acceptable in the public eye, a rape survivor should not wear too much makeup? That too much makeup would somehow diminish my believability?

This hearkens back to Benedict's virgin/vamp dichotomy (1992). If the 'unbelievable' rape victim is a vamp, she is promiscuous, she wears short skirts and too much makeup. In contrast,

the 'true' rape victim is innocent and doesn't flaunt her sexuality; she dresses modestly, she doesn't wear too much makeup. In my situation, I was amused by my friends' advice because I am not generally known for wearing much makeup. But at the moment when I sat in front of a mirror with my makeup kit, before appearing before a video camera or a live audience, these women felt there was more at stake — my believability — and they needed to warn me about the dangers of 'too much makeup.'

For the public rape survivor, there is a specific tension here around her visibility and her aesthetic appearance: you need to wear enough makeup to look attractive and presentable, but not too much to appear like an untrustworthy vamp. Arguably all women in the public sphere feel some version of this tension: how much makeup should I wear? (Duffy, 2018; Wolf, 1991). But for individual rape survivors appearing in the media, the tension is particularly weighted. On one level, there is the practical tension related to behind-the-scenes media practice: advocating for professional hair and makeup help (as Bonny and I have done), paying for professional services yourself (as Rowena has done), or developing the skillset of applying your own makeup. Nearly all of these require some investment of time, effort, and resources. On another level, the question of makeup and feminine appearance taps into deep-rooted societal beliefs about female victimhood, female sexuality, guilt, innocence, and believability. It almost seems comical that so much should be at stake over the simple question of makeup — and yet, it was important enough that on three separate occasions, my friends felt they needed to offer me advice.

And finally, there is the emotional labor over the question of makeup for individual survivors, which falls into both practical and ideological categories. As silly as it sounds, it is very easy to stress over one's makeup, when there is so much at stake over a five-minute appearance in the public eye. Few things are more nerve-racking than having to apply your own mascara in the minutes before appearing in front of a live camera to speak about your own rape. When it comes to makeup mistakes, the camera doesn't lie. For this very practical reason, having a professional hair and makeup artist handle everything can greatly reduce the stress and anxiety for any individual — but especially a rape survivor — before a media appearance.

But for the individual survivor, the emotional labor also operates on a more ideological level: to think that our believability rests on how much makeup we wear. Victims will have suffered significant, life-changing trauma in the wake of a rape. And yet for the *truth* of that to be doubted over something as superficial as makeup is nothing short of insulting. When I stop and think

about this enough, it infuriates me: the idea that our physical appearance plays such a significant role in how we are judged by the world, as rape victims. That the external package trumps the weight of our internal thoughts and experiences. But the anger over this basic injustice is often glossed-over by a more self-deprecating, Everywoman laugh. 'Oh, ugh, the hassle of makeup,' I might joke to another woman, behind the scenes. 'Isn't that something we can all relate to as women?' Thus, affective relatability to *all women* (Gill and Kanai, 2018; Kanai 2017; 2019) over the everyday hassle of makeup obscures and suppresses an awareness of the deeper, more insulting injustice where the believability of an individual rape survivor is judged by our appearance. This move could be considered 'deep acting,' masking our deeper sense of injustice with a more visible conformity to display rules befitting all women, not just rape survivors.

Of course, makeup is only one aspect of that physical appearance. Our clothing and wardrobe are another significant element. Rowena says she has a specific outfit or two which she uses for public appearances. All these are suitably respectable and flattering, but she is conscious of wearing any one outfit too many times in the public eye. Chanel Miller (2019) writes about worrying over what to wear when she appeared in court to give testimony in the sexual assault trial against her perpetrator Brock Turner. She suggests that there should be a fund available to help rape victims for the unexpected economic costs of their victimhood, like affording appropriate clothes for the courtroom.

This brings me to my final observation, on cultural capital. Just as economic capital can buy nice clothes and professionally styled hair and makeup, there is an element of cultural capital in a woman knowing how to dress appropriately, and just *how much* makeup to wear and *how* to apply it. Again, middle-class aesthetic values around femininity seem to be the prevailing ones for respectability (Benedict, 1992; Boyle, 2003; 2019). Working-class women are often mocked for wearing too much makeup — or makeup which is too visible or too flashy (Skeggs, 1997). In a similar way, if rape survivors are encouraged to wear less makeup or *less obvious* makeup, then the implication is that the believable rape survivor is one whose appearance suggests cultural capital — who is middle-class, and by implication, is more credible and has nothing to gain (economically) from publicly sharing her story of rape. One's aesthetic appearance is a good example of the 'two-pronged' economy of believability (Banet-Weiser and Higgins, 2023) that implicates mediated rape survivors: it demands both a survivor's aesthetic and emotional labor in creating a respectable appearance, and her resources to attain that middle-class aesthetic

respectability (the cultural capital of knowing how to appear, the economic capital that can purchase beauty products and professional services).

And yet, if the practical solution to the makeup question is solved by having a professional handle your makeup, issues of consent and control inevitably arise when third parties — specifically, media platforms with an agenda — are curating your appearance. Rowena recounts when she was given professional hair and makeup before delivering a public talk in Singapore. Without asking for her permission, the hair stylist dyed her normally black hair *blonde* (presumably to hide her grey hairs). While she was able to find humour in the situation, a more fragile, less assured personality might have been more shaken. But for an individual who has suffered sexual violence, these questions of bodily autonomy and alterations to one's appearance can carry a particular affective charge. To return to Bonny's description of feeling 'like a Christmas turkey being fattened' for consumption, the tabloid's proposed curation of her aesthetic appearance for the pleasure of their readers crossed a line: it felt grotesque and ultimately destructive to her personhood.

Abject Appearances

But our visual appearance as rape survivors can be distorted in other grotesque ways by the media. Just as a visibility of control demands a survivor's respectable appearance conforming to middle-class aesthetic values, it can oscillate towards imposing an appearance of the abject victim. Consider this email exchange between myself and the editor of an online news magazine. Shortly after the TV documentary had aired, I pitched an idea for an opinion piece about rape to the editor of an Irish online magazine. As visuals for the piece, I had also sent my official author photo and a link to YouTube video ('One of Us') of survivors speaking directly to camera, which I had scripted and designed back in 2015.[16] When my piece appeared on the website, it looked very different from what I had expected. Irate, I wrote an email to the editor.

> **From:** Winnie M Li
> **Subject: URGENT - image used in the article was NOT approved**
> **Date:** 16 November 2017 at 23:35:00 GMT
> **To: '**Sharon' [pseudonym]
>
> Hi Sharon --
>
> Thanks for running my article— but I can I ask you to please change the main image which is used for the article? (It shows up as the main image in the mobile phone version and when Tweeted) I did NOT give you permission to pull a still image of me from the 'One of Us' video, and to use this as the main graphic for the article. I look weary and miserable,

[16] 'One of Us' video for the Clear Lines Festival: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-l9QwPrH2E

> and while I understand this tonally may fit better with what people expect of a rape victim, this use of the video (pulling a still image from it) was not something which I would have ever approved of. It is quite disrespectful to use the video in this way without my permission.
>
> A lot of the work I do as activist is to counter the notion of rape survivors as perpetually sad and defeated, and the image you have decided to use for the article unfortunately promotes that notion.
>
> The image I gave you to use was my official author photo, and if you wanted something different, you should have asked me, instead of pulling a still from the video, without my consent.
>
> I hope you can understand and I look forward to hearing from you.
>
> Many thanks,
> Winnie

As you can see from the time stamp, I wrote that email close to midnight, in a fit of anger. I received a response back the next morning.

> On 17 Nov 2017, at 9:20 am, Sharon wrote:
>
> Hi Winnie,
>
> …I want to apologize for the use of the photograph. It was not intended to portray you in victimhood - it was taken as a still from the video you suggested we embed. I can see that it was not appropriate to put it at the top of the piece for the reasons you outlined - unfortunately, we just did not think it through in that way.
>
> Kind regards, Sharon

In this exchange, I vent that deeper sense of injustice to Sharon, but I do so in a way that follows certain display rules. As a former film producer and media professional, I knew how to word an email using the language of permission and rights to point out where legally, in terms of media practice, the online magazine gone wrong. My tone is not dissimilar to an irate email about customer service, where I am shaming the business (the media platform) about treating me (the client) poorly. This is an acceptable form of verbalized anger that is allowed within the discursive landscape of the market, and which can achieve results. But crucially I do this by appealing to the wider ideological cause of more accurately and justly serving rape survivors, ultimately accusing the online magazine of failing to do that.

Whereas anger over the indifference of everyday media practice is often suppressed by survivors, I found an acceptable outlet for that anger and was able to negotiate successfully with the media platform to achieve the change I needed. But I drew upon my existing cultural capital (my writing skills, my knowledge of media practice) in order to make that possible. Moreover, this all demanded significant emotional labor on my part, which would have been avoided if the

magazine had simply used the photo I gave them, instead of insisting upon a more abject, more victim-like image of me. These sorts of unthinking everyday media practices and decisions can sap the individual survivor's soul. But they also demonstrate how dominant the image of the innocent, abject victim is, even causing a magazine to locate and use another photo than the one that has been provided to them by the author.

As I and other rape survivors have found, the behind-the-scenes negotiation with media platforms is endless. Even when a media product carries your voice and your writing, there can be a move to portray you as a helpless, miserable victim. Negotiating between being portrayed as something other than a sad, vulnerable victim or a glamorous, triumphant heroine takes constant work, constant vigilance, and constant emotional labor. Visibility may beget more visibility, but it is not without a compromise – and not without its costs.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the costs of ongoing mainstream media visibility for public survivors, in the form of emotional labor. My auto-ethnographic episode revealed the intense self-policing of emotion which I had to undergo, during the filming of a TV documentary around my rape and its aftermath. Other intense emotions were felt by public survivors over the notion of a 'partial, circulating self' (Palmer, 2018): that the public version of them was an incomplete, imperfect representation of their personhood, and that they would always be known as a sexual violence victim. Survivors' stories and identities were framed by the media to make them appear more innocent, often obscuring key aspects of their lives and resorting to stereotypes of the 'abject, helpless victim,' a media practice which individuals found frustrating and emotionally challenging. In particular, survivors' visibility was policed and self-policed in relation to their sexuality, in an attempt to fashion a more respectable image, in line with the virgin/vamp dichotomy (Benedict, 1992). Race was another significant area where survivors felt subjected to a visibility of control. East Asian participants were hyper-aware of their public representations being inflected by 'white savior narratives', against the cultural backdrop of demeaning, often hypersexualized stereotypes of East Asian women in Western media. When their race was heightened or erased in the media, some survivors learned to negotiate with mainstream media platforms over this, or in some instances, would decline a particular opportunity for visibility.

But many participants viewed an imperfect media representation of themselves as a trade-off, in exchange for publicity for their own enterprise related to the issue of sexual violence. The case study of Emily demonstrates how she constructed an acceptable visibility that highlights her own survivor status vis-à-vis a collective of other survivors, when trying to market her business. An entrepreneurial approach to one's visibility as a public survivor will be explored further in Ch 7, particularly in relation to monetizing and earning income.

The final part of my chapter examined the aesthetic labor that comes with being a public survivor, and the complex emotions surrounding that. When mainstream media platforms place aesthetic demands on survivors, it can trigger feelings of annoyance, anxiety, helplessness, and even threat to one's bodily autonomy, possibly re-traumatizing victims. Survivors self-police around their aesthetic appearance, and there may be a racialized element to this, with minoritized survivors hyper-aware again, of their appearance. Makeup becomes an emotionally fraught issue, with a strong emphasis placed on survivors appearing attractive, but not overly made-up, so as to embody middle-class taste and conform to images of believability for public survivors. On the flip side, media platforms may also propagate abject images of survivors, engendering more anger and more emotional labor in having to negotiate with media platforms around your aesthetic visibility.

Thus far, I have explored how mainstream media visibility is achieved and sustained by individual survivors. If emotional labor is the primary *cost* of this visibility, the rest of this thesis is concerned with this question: does it pay off? In the next chapter, I will look at the issue of monetary compensation for survivors' media labor, and the emotions surrounding pay and financial recognition of survivor speech.

Ch 6
Compensation: Monetary Pay and the Media Labor of Public Survivors

Auto-ethnography:
Negotiating with a documentary film producer for a fee, Autumn 2016
Emailing between London and Dublin

Let's return to that trip I made to Belfast, to film the second part of the Irish TV documentary.

Five weeks *before* I found myself sobbing alone on that airport bus, I was deep in an emotionally fraught email exchange with the documentary's producer, Laura (pseudonym), over the issue of pay. When I'd initially been approached by the filmmakers to be involved, there had been no discussion of money. It didn't occur to me to ask about a fee, because I felt flattered and excited about the prospect of featuring in a TV documentary.

But the first afternoon of filming in London had left me exhausted for days afterwards. I realized how draining this whole process could be. So when Laura emailed me to schedule in dates for the second, even more daunting part of the shoot in Belfast, I balked.

The following are extracts from my email correspondence with Laura, in the lead-up to the Belfast trip:

> From: Winnie Li
> Date: Mon, 24 Oct 2016
>
> …I'm not entirely sure about a more extended shoot without some compensation for my time. As a freelancer, any day that I'm dedicating to the shoot is a day that I can't be earning money or working on my other projects. And while I am of course very much on board with your project and want to contribute in as helpful a way as possible, I also have to acknowledge the significant time, effort, and emotional/personal energy that goes into participating in these shoots…
>
> On 27 Oct 2016, at 10:31, Laura wrote:
>
> …We are completely conscious of the time that you'll be giving to the project and the impact that that can have on your own work. However, we can't pay any of our contributors for their participation in the series, but I can offer you a location fee of € XX for allowing us to film in your apartment. This would also include if we needed to return to London to film with you again…
>
> How does that sound?
>
> From: Winnie M Li
> Date: Sun, 30 Oct 2016 at 23:33
>
> …I do find it ethically strange that your production will pay a daily fee to crew like the camerawoman and sound recordist, but does not allocate a fee for the 'on-screen talent' whose very story and ability to tell it provides the content for the documentary. Especially when that process of telling it is quite emotionally and personally draining for the persons involved…

From: Laura
Date: Wed, 2 Nov 2016 at 14:37

I take your point about acknowledging the time and commitment that you're giving to the documentary.

We in no way expect that you would be out of pocket due to your participation within the documentary. Please let me know how much you expect this to be and I will work with you as best I can.

Regarding your fee, I really wish that we had the budget to pay you what you normally earn and deserve. Could we say € YY for three shoot days and your therapy expenses?

***

Distilled into these extracts, these emails seem, on the surface, to be a regular part of everyday media practice: a documentary film producer who wants to save money on her production budget, and a contributor who wants to be paid a higher fee. But for me, beneath the politely worded discussion raged a torrent of emotions.

Frustration that the filmmakers thought it was okay to film me returning to the scene of my rape and not pay me. Anger at having to argue my case over several rounds of negotiation. Dread over the upcoming film shoot and setting foot into Colin Glen Forest Park, the camera filming me the whole time. Anxiety over my overall financial situation as a writer, activist, and PhD student, with no stable income. Worry that I was potentially upsetting my relationship with the filmmakers, whom I had otherwise enjoyed collaborating with. And sadness, that even eight years after my rape, I was still having to do the work of continually advocating for myself.

If feelings serve a 'signal function' (Hochschild 1983) to alert when something seems off or unjust, my emotions seemed to be telling me that maybe -- unless I got paid -- giving my time, energy, identity and story to the documentary might not be worth it.

Having to corral these emotions into a politely worded, professional email negotiation with a producer constituted a new form of emotional labor for me. By then, I had eagerly written opinion pieces, for free, for *The Huffington Post, The Conversation*, and other platforms about my rape. I had willingly appeared in radio and TV news interviews on a local and national level, in both Ireland and the UK. In the seven years that I had been collaborating with mainstream media platforms over this issue and my story, it hadn't occurred to me that maybe I *should* be paid.

Until then, these media opportunities all presented themselves as a chance to speak out about sexual violence, an issue which had indelibly impacted my life. Like many of the interview participants in Palmer's study (2018), I felt a certain nervous excitement at appearing in the media: it boosted my status and granted me credibility, especially as a rape victim whose identity and voice had initially been erased in those original news reports of my rape.

But all these media opportunities had been relatively short-term. When I wrote an unpaid opinion piece, the satisfaction of seeing my own writing and byline in print had been compensation enough. Palmer's participants, likewise, had mainly been involved in one-off encounters with journalists, where the published article or TV interview — and the sense of accomplishment it brought -- was delivered soon after. In contrast, it would be nearly a year before this documentary aired on television. And to film with a documentary crew for eight hours straight, to speak eloquently and honestly to camera about my rape required an entirely different level of effort. So for me, it was the first time that collaborating with a media platform felt like *work*. And I was prompted to think: what am I *really* getting out of this?

That television documentary represented a turning point for me in my dealings with media producers and platforms. From then on, I began to consider my visibility in the media -- and conditions under which I granted it -- as something that could be *negotiated*.

Previously, I had for the most part accepted the terms of my participation: wait to be called by this radio station, consent to be photographed, do all this for no pay. I still felt a power differential between me and the filmmakers, who would shape that 'partial, circulating' version of me for the Irish viewing public to see. But by now, I had built enough confidence in communicating about my rape to realise I was good at what I did. I had a specific skillset, just like the camerawoman or the sound recordist. And with these skills came a value that deserved to be recognized financially, as I had argued in my email to Laura.

But even then, I may not have argued for pay, if I hadn't found the process of filming so emotionally arduous. Thus, entwined in the feeling of labor, is the lack of immediate pleasure in the act of creation.

It was the thoroughly draining nature of speaking to camera, being fully conscious of the camera capturing my every move. In other interviews, conversing with a journalist had rendered the

interview a more human, spontaneous back-and-forth. In contrast, the documentary camera just *took* from me – and gave nothing back. And when I flew to Belfast to be filmed re-entering the park where I was raped, that camera would still be there, taking even more, capturing more of my upset and trauma.

We see here five characteristics that made participating in this documentary feel like *work*, despite my passion for the project: 1) the amount of time and effort involved; 2) the level of skill involved in my labor; 3) the pleasure of the process in delivering the work; 4) the immediacy of the reward afterwards; and 5) the emotional intensity of the work.

So I knew I was giving a lot to the documentary, and I felt the compensation for what I was giving to be inadequate. It was, in short, an unfair transaction. Just as Bonny in Ch. 5 had learned to negotiate aspects of her visibility, I was learning to negotiate with the filmmakers over something else: money. In essence, I was negotiating towards a more just, more equitable exchange of labor and reward.

By Hochschild's (1983) definition, it is in professional workplace settings where the concept of emotional labor -- as opposed to 'emotion work' – becomes fully mobilized. Emotional labor is fundamentally tied to the notion of *exchange*: what we feel we are owed for our efforts, and how we are paid, either through money or through a display of appropriate feeling. Therefore, it is rooted in a sense of compensation, of the equity of efforts and gestures between humans.

It is my contention that only later in a survivor's journey with mainstream media does the issue of compensation tend to emerge. Until then, appearing in the media feels like a unique and exciting opportunity to tell your story and have your message heard. But if we do this for long enough, the novelty wears off. And after telling our story of rape over and over enough times to media producers, perhaps we start to wonder if we should be owed something for our survivor speech.

Hochschild (1983, p.85) writes: 'In the public world of work, it is often part of an individual's job to accept uneven exchanges' of emotion. For example, a flight attendant is expected to 'take' the rudeness of a client and offer him a placating smile, suppressing her own anger. In this instance, 'the ledger is supposedly evened by a wage' (p.86) because it is part of her job. The flight

attendant is *paid* by her employer, the airline, to tolerate this uneven exchange of feelings in the name of customer service.

But in the case of this TV documentary, there was no wage for me. And yet, I was performing significant amounts of emotional labor for the filmmakers, offering my painful story, returning to the physical scene of my trauma, for an inhuman camera which gave nothing emotional in return. Interestingly, off-screen, there *was* an appropriate exchange of emotions: the all-female documentary crew were compassionate, supportive, caring, and grateful. But to me, it felt that the ledger was not evened *enough* by their positive exchange of feelings. What I needed at this point was money.

Much of my fee negotiation with Laura lay in the undefined nature of my role as a documentary subject: unlike the camera crew, or the flight attendants in Hochschild's study, I was not seen as an employee. In the existing literature, some media scholars and film practitioners prefer to use the term 'participant' instead of documentary 'subject,' acknowledging that 'the filmmaker-participant relationship is central to the ethics of documentary filmmaking' (Winston, 1995, p. 1). Filmmakers are urged to be aware of power imbalances in this relationship (Nichols, 1991; Sanders, 2013), to 'minimize harm' to participants in the filming process (Lambeth, 1986); and to employ a collaborative, transparent approach in working with participants, so they, too, may feel a sense of ownership in the film (Winston, 1995; Thomas, 2012). And yet, many of these suggestions do not mention financial compensation to participants.

In 2022 the issue is clearly addressed by the US-based Documentary Accounting Working Group (DAWG). Their 'Framework for Values, Ethics, and Accountability in Nonfiction Filmmaking' encourages filmmakers to 'consider the economic impact of production on participants and, where participants may face unacceptable economic hardship (e.g., loss of pay, transportation costs, childcare costs), to address those costs where possible' (p.14).

At the time of my negotiation with Laura, these guidelines did not exist. Admittedly, I did not 'face unacceptable economic hardship' by participating in the documentary, but I still felt I deserved a wage. And the guidelines would have been a useful reference, to mitigate the emotional labor of advocating for my own fee. In her email, Laura admitted she *wished* she could pay me more, but was apparently limited by her budget. This statement, along with her earlier claim 'we can't pay any of our contributors for their participation,' hints at constraints imposed

by her budget, broadcaster, or media conventions. Filmmaker and scholar Thomas (2012, p. 332) argues that 'industrial constraints and pressures can impinge on a documentary maker's ability to behave ethically towards participants.' This is a recurring motif in media practice around survivors: individual media professionals find themselves awkwardly caught between protecting the survivor's best interests and serving the industry demands of their platform.

The above anecdote, though, demonstrates how even the most well-intentioned of media professionals may be blind to the material needs of the individual survivors they collaborate with, and to the many layers of emotional labor which exist for public survivors. If we recall the seven potential layers of emotional labor which I outlined in Ch. 2, all of these were present in my collaboration with this TV documentary, as a perfect case in point.

The first layer, the emotional labor of survivorhood, immediately surfaced in the very act of narrating my trauma — and having to return to the physical scene of my assault. The second layer, the emotional labor of professionally engaging with sexual violence, lay in corralling these emotions, and somehow delivering a coherent, authentic rendering of my story suitable for a television documentary. Likewise, having to negotiate my fee also demanded a regulation of my own feelings, in favour of a professionally effective email exchange.

On the third level of emotional labor, my activist impulse on this issue of sexual violence had been driving me for years to speak out. It was precisely this passion and 'depth of emotion' (Maslach and Gomes, 2006) which had led me to saying yes to the participating in the documentary and reaching a wider audience, despite the labor involved.

And yet, this decision entangled me further in the fourth level of emotional labor, which came with media visibility. As I described in Ch. 5, I had to regulate not only my fear of returning to the scene of my rape, but also my fear of making my pain so very visible to the camera, and to audiences who might only see me as a fragile victim.

The fifth layer of emotional labor, of publicly performing the self, lay in running the narrow gauntlet of acceptable visibility for public rape survivors: in appearing before the camera, I was conscious of having to appear articulate, but not too polished; traumatized, but not abject; emotional, but also coherent.

The sixth layer of emotional labor is mobilized by working within the creative industries, where the financial precarity and low compensation of creative labor (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011) is off-set against the supposed desirability of creative jobs, the promises of self-actualization, and the passion of individual workers to 'make it' in these industries (McRobbie, 2011; 2016). My passion as an activist and survivor, and my excitement over appearing in a television documentary had obscured the lack of pay – and my attempt to rectify this unequal ledger had created another layer of frustration and anxiety for me.

The seventh layer — of relational labor — was also present in the anecdote above. Documentary filmmaking is a close collaboration between filmmaker and subject, and in negotiating, I did not want to ruin my working relationship with the filmmakers. So I needed to stand my ground while still appearing cooperative. Further relational labor lay ahead, after the documentary aired, when I received messages from members of the public and other rape survivors who saw it on television.

Thus, the emotional labor for me in collaborating with this documentary was intense and multi-layered. But it is the sixth layer of emotional labor — of working in the creative and media industries — which I want to focus on the most in this chapter, and how it interacts with and intensifies the other layers of emotional labor which public rape survivors experience.

It is important to note how gender impacts the expectation of acceptable professional behaviour within the creative industries, and the material outcome for women. If women are socialized to be pleasant and cooperative, they are more willing to accept the poor wages and precarious employment status of the creative industries, in exchange for the chance to pursue their 'dream jobs' (Leung, Gill and Randle, 2015; McRobbie, 2011). Beyond creative labor studies, social psychologists have observed that women are less likely to negotiate for a higher salary (Babcock and Laschever, 2003; Babcock et al., 2006; Bowles, 2013), ask for and receive less in their negotiations (Hernandez-Arenaz and Iriberri, 2017; Rigdon, 2015; Säve-Söderbergh, 2007; 2019); and worry that asking for a higher salary may lead to negative treatment in the workplace. (Kray et al., 2001). Interestingly, women may be more inclined to negotiate if they are dealing with another woman (Dittrich et al., 2014; Hederos, Eriksson, and Sandberg, 2013).

These elements were present in my situation, with an added complication: the negotiation did not take place in the recognizable milieu of a job offer from employer to potential employee.

Instead, much of my negotiation involved convincing the producer that what I was doing was, in fact, work. Thus, I had to actively reframe my contribution to the documentary as more than simply a testimony from a survivor, and as an act of labor that bore an emotional and material cost to me.

Illouz (2007) writes that our current-day 'emotional culture' has made the discussion of emotions central to workplace conversations and relations between employer and worker. Unknowingly, I drew upon this 'emotional language' in my negotiations, when I highlighted how the process of filming the documentary was 'emotionally and personally draining' for me. But I also employed a more practical economic language to quantify that emotional cost, suggesting reimbursement towards therapy expenses and my loss of earnings. Thus I rendered my specific form of labor into calculable figures, which could then be drawn from the production budget for the documentary.

The success of my negotiation highlights the first of three observations, which I'd like to make before concluding this auto-ethnography. First, that cultural capital in the form of my professional background was key to my successful negotiation. As a former film producer myself, I was accustomed to haggling over fees and I also recognized the unique position I was in to negotiate: with one interview already filmed and the next, more crucial part of filming dependent on me flying to Belfast in order to complete the filmmaker's vision. This effectively gave me leverage, and emboldened me to negotiate in the first place. Thus, as previous scholars have noted, intersectional elements like class and cultural capital greatly impact an individual rape survivor's ability to benefit from a media engagement (Banet-Weiser and Higgins 2023; Boyle 2019; Serisier 2018).

Secondly, economic need also played a part. I likely would not have gone through the trouble of negotiating a fee if I hadn't worried about money. Much of my anxiety and frustration lay in an awareness of my financial precarity, like the precarious creative workers studied by previous scholars (Glatt, 2023; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; McRobbie, 2011). Thus, economic need impacts an individual survivor's emotions around compensation, although I had enough cultural capital to successfully negotiate around that issue.

Finally, the scenario highlights the unequal playing field on which individual survivors are placed when collaborating with media platforms. There were three other survivors featured in the

documentary, but I have no way of knowing if they, too, were paid, or if they even attempted to negotiate a fee. As with much creative industries practice, discussion of remuneration was highly individualized, opaque, and very likely granted on a 'don't ask, don't get' basis (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011) This atomized approach to compensation reinforced a neoliberal shape to the outcome of our labors, in a media project which purported to elevate the voices of four rape survivors, yet may have paid us unequally.

Ultimately, the agreed-upon fee covered a few weeks of my rent in London. Useful enough, but not world-changing for me. In an example of deep acting, I had to remind to myself that the value of my work for the documentary lay not in what I was *earning*, but in what I was *giving* to others. Yet the fee acted as an emotional stop-gap to placate my signal feeling that something was unjust, quelling any resentment I may have developed around the project and my relationship with the filmmakers. Ironically, while Laura and I were at odds with each other in the negotiation, we were ideologically on the same side: we both believed in the discursive potential of the documentary and a survivor's testimony. Ironically, I had to explain these monetary injustices in the context of a project which was itself attempting to expose the larger injustice of sexual violence for survivors.

But everyday media practices can fragment the good intentions of collaborating on a media project that relies on survivor speech. In the remainder of this chapter, I will continue to investigate contradictions like these, which ultimately circulate around the issue of money and compensation for public survivors.

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Introduction

How can media platforms put a price on a survivor's public speech? And how do we know if this price seems fair?

In this chapter, I will explore financial compensation for the media labor of sexual violence survivors. As I suggested in the preceding auto-ethnographic section, it is often only in the later stages of an individual survivor's relationship with the media that the question of money rears its head, after the novelty wears off, and we become more aware of the value of our skills, our time, and effort. In Ch 4, I examined a survivor's initial entry into mainstream media visibility, and in Ch 5, the emotional labor entwined in the project of her *ongoing* visibility. If the overriding goal

of my dissertation is to explore how individual survivors determine if the costs of this visibility are *worth it*, the question of compensation lies central to this valuation.

Of course, individual survivors assess the worth of their media visibility according to their unique value systems. And their attitudes towards media visibility are constantly evolving, in relation to their present-day situations and their future goals, both personal and professional. A survivor may change her strategy about media visibility, once she has children and feels a need to protect them from the public. Or a survivor of intrafamilial childhood sexual abuse may feel herself *more* liberated to speak out publicly once her perpetrator dies. Likewise, a survivor in a new work situation may find her employer to be less welcoming of her public profile around sexual violence. Conversely, she may quit her 'day job' and decide to focus all her efforts on speaking out and advocating for change, in which case maintaining a high level of media visibility becomes a higher priority. So the *value* of media visibility rarely remains static for any individual survivor over the course of her life, and therefore, her attitude towards compensation also evolves and shifts over time.

While there are other, non-monetary ways in which survivors feel rewarded for their media work (and which I will explore in Ch. 8), *money* remains the primary metric by which people are paid for their labor. So to ignore the question of money all together only serves to obscure both the economic reality within which media texts are produced and the material needs of individual survivors, as well as the intersectional differences which privilege certain survivors over others in enacting their survivor speech.

My own experiences with the TV documentary made me curious about the experiences of other survivors. How did *they* feel about money in relation to their survivor speech? In the first part of this chapter, I summarize what my interview participants had to say, focusing on two questions: *had* they been paid for their media labor? And had they ever *asked* to be paid? I found that my interview participants, like me, had rarely been compensated. But their responses to this issue were surprisingly complex – and seemed to suggest a feeling rule discouraging survivors from asking for pay.

Next, I examine the conditions that have fostered this feeling rule and the non-payment of survivors. This relates very specifically to conditions around money, survivor speech, and the recurring 'Gold-Digger' stereotype which is often cast on women who speak out. Thus,

operating within a specific economy of believability for public rape survivors (Banet-Weiser and Higgins 2023), individuals find themselves constrained within media practice from asking for adequate compensation for their labors.

In the final part of the chapter, I explore how this practice of not paying survivors is bolstered by external factors in the media industries. First, long-standing conventions around journalists, sources, pay, and credibility: a moral opposition to 'checkbook journalism.' And secondly, by the underpaid work conditions of the creative industries, which often exploit an individual's willingness to perform creative labor they are passionate about.

While both media producers and survivors seem reluctant to bring up the issue of pay when collaborating, the silence around this issue produces a deeply ambivalent tension for public survivors. This tension only develops further as a survivor's communicative skills become honed and professionalized. It is therefore vital to examine these practices around monetary compensation, as they illustrate a devaluing of labor within the creative industries, and serve to intensify the overall emotional labor experienced by public rape survivors.

PART ONE: SURVIVORS' EXPERIENCES AROUND COMPENSATION

Have you been paid for your media labor?

> *The [city newspaper] paid something like 80 pounds, it was pretty low. Like when I consider the amount of hours, the effort put into it, it was below minimum wage... So, you know, given how much -- like it wasn't talking just about strategic stuff. It was about, you know, my innermost pain and trauma. So, yeah, it's, you know, kind of a really ridiculously low level of compensation really for that. (Bonny Turner interview, March 2021)*

When asked directly if they had been paid for their media work, the dominant answer from my interview participants was no.

Emily had written a series of articles for newspapers and online platforms, appeared in a BAFTA-nominated documentary, and in television and radio interviews to promote it, and that had all been unpaid. In fact, the only time she had ever received a fee was for writing an article about sexual life after assault, for a sex toy company. (She recalls they had paid quite well). Madeleine had appeared on national television and radio, and in multiple regional newspapers. She had never received a fee for those interviews, although travel had been covered. This was in

line with my own experience of performing media work unpaid – both writing and speaking – for eight years, until I raised the issue of compensation with the TV documentary filmmakers in 2016.

Imogen explained that ironically, the only time she had ever been paid by a media platform was when she *didn't* appear on BBC Newsnight, who had initially lined her up to be interviewed live on an episode about her sexual assault, in the wake of #MeToo. They had subjected her to pre-interviews, and at the last minute, cancelled her appearance. She described how emotionally 'gutting' it was to be treated like this, after the anxiety and excitement of preparing herself to speak live on national television about her trauma. In regard to compensation, Imogen explains:

> I insisted that they pay me anyway because it was like…it's for the BBC. They don't 'pay you,' it's a disturbance fee. So I was like, 'Listen, I've been disturbed [laughs] and that's not changing, so you're gonna have to still pay me.' And they did, and it was like a pathetic amount. I can't remember, it was like 80 quid [pounds] or something, like it's not proper money. (Imogen Butler-Cole interview, May 2021)

Here Imogen pokes fun at the official term 'disturbance fee', which the BBC uses to describe money that is paid to a contributor or interviewee. Tellingly, the term does not acknowledge any labor performed by the individual, just that their time and energy have been 'disturbed' by appearing in the media. More tellingly, it is often only experienced interviewees who are even aware that disturbance fees can be requested and paid out. Thus, individuals with less cultural capital are automatically disadvantaged and often go unpaid, because media producers often stay silent on initially offering any pay.

But what Imogen is criticizing in her joke is her time, effort, and emotional labor in preparing over days for the interview, and the 'pathetic amount' of 80 pounds that was ultimately paid out to her. To her, it was an unequal exchange.

It's worth highlighting two specific aspects of her experience. First, that the common media practice of lining up potential participants to ensure they are available and suitable, and then cancelling them last minute has significant emotional repercussions (Baker and Hesmondhalgh, 2011) for survivors, especially those less experienced with the media. The excitement, anxiety, trepidation, and labor of being offered an opportunity to speak your trauma — are suddenly negated with a single text message or phone call. This reinforces a sense of being discarded, of erasure.

Secondly, given the feeling of 'short shrift' that emerges from this practice, then the only way to *somewhat* repay a survivor for her efforts is through monetary means. Like the fee that I negotiated with Laura, this disturbance fees serves as an 'emotional stop-gap' to quell any feelings of being used. But this still feels emotionally unsatisfying, because, ultimately, a survivor's attempt at speaking out was silenced. This demonstrates how the work conditions of fast-changing production schedules and constrained budgets within the media impacts negatively on public rape survivors, paying off their emotional investment with minimal amounts of pay. Perhaps only those survivors who are more acculturated to the media are equipped to weather the emotional storms of mainstream media practice and the mismatch between their emotional labor and its monetary compensation.

When asked further about compensation for media work, Imogen said: 'I feel like they [survivors] should be handsomely remunerated… Of course, because of the amount of labor it takes to hold this stuff, yeah, it should be paid, and it should be well paid.' She elaborated further, by pointing out the psychological, financial, and emotional damage that trauma inflicts on survivors:

> And like fucking hell, we went through this shit, we should be compensated, you know, and if I'm not going to be compensated by any fucking grant, government, like something which could, should be there, in my view, then let me be compensated for putting it out in the world, you know? And of course, yeah, that's a fuck of a lot of work. But maybe eventually we'll get to the point where the work is less and the compensation is more.

Imogen's anger seems rooted in not just the damage caused by sexual trauma, but on the invisible nature of that damage, and the lack of financial support available for survivors. As Loya's research highlights (2014; 2051a; 2015b), survivors' careers and finances are significantly disrupted after experiencing sexual violence. And yet, as Imogen points out, this financial loss is virtually never recognized or compensated for – and certainly not by the media, who benefit from the labor of survivor speech.

Bonny expressed similar feelings, in recounting the paltry 80 pounds she was paid for spending hours of her time when on holiday, writing about her 'innermost pain and trauma.' Her disappointment, along with Imogen's, Emily's, and mine, serves a signal function, hinting at a sense of inequity, in how our efforts were not matched with adequate compensation from the media, either financial or emotional.

Have you asked to be paid?

Not every participant expressed the same level of outrage around the issue of inadequate pay, a pattern I will explore further in Chapter 7. But when prompted, nearly all interview participants felt that at some level, survivors *should* be paid financially for their contributions to mainstream media platforms. However, not every survivor *did* ask to be paid, for reasons I found to be even surprising or revealing.

> Winnie:
> Why didn't it occur to you to ask [to be paid] -- or did it occur to you and you didn't think you should ask for money, or...?
>
> Emily:
> Um, I think I asked the first time when I got the story in [that city newspaper]. I think I asked would that then be paid, and that was such a dismissive no [laughs], 'We don't pay for this,' that I never, I never expected that there would be payment from anything. I think I asked the BBC, when I went on the news, and that was a 'We never pay.'
>
> Bonny:
> I think in terms of compensation, I feel as though... Yeah, it's a tough one.... I think when it comes to the media, it's a bit more tricky. Because I kind of think, 'Well, I don't want it to appear like a transaction.' You know, like...That appearance can be tricky.'
>
> Rowena:
> Survivors can't be seen profiting from their trauma

Emily's short anecdote illustrates how indelibly — and rather painfully — a single experience of media indifference can impact an individual's attitude towards the media and its valuing of survivor speech. Like many of us, her emotional experience was of being under-valued around the issue of money. Bonny, on the other hand, felt similar emotions, but also expressed an ambivalence around asking to be paid for her media labor. She said: 'I don't want it to appear like a transaction...That appearance can be tricky.'

But what is tricky about it? Interestingly, this discussion of appearances was echoed by Rowena, when I asked her about compensation for any of her many, many media interviews as a Harvey Weinstein survivor:

> I don't know, we just established a tradition of not asking for it [a fee], and Laura [Madden] and Zelda [Perkins] don't also. So that I feel like I don't want to be the American one [laughs] and be money grabbing and whatever. And then I just feel, *it's not even just the appearance of it* [emphasis added]. I feel like I don't want to make money from my trauma. And we're already getting criticized for having once made money from our trauma [because of the NDA], so to speak. So, you know, yeah, it's, you know, it's not a thing I want to perpetuate. (Rowena Chiu interview, July 2021)

Note how Rowena downplays any discussion of an individual financial gain by invoking a solidarity amongst other Weinstein victims and witnesses (Laura and Zelda). This echoes the discursive moves that Emily made on her website (detailed in Ch. 4), where the individual gains of a public survivor were both minimized and justified by referring to the overall benefit given to an imagined *collective* of all survivors.

Interestingly, Rowena is highly aware of the optics, not wanting to seem like 'the American one and be money grabbing,' even though she speaks with a clear English accent, as a British ex-pat now living in the US. In Ch 4, I demonstrated how public rape survivors are often highly aware of dominant stereotypes about rape victims and modify their speech to accord to the boundaries of believability, even if they internally object to these boundaries.

Here Rowena demonstrates a hyper-awareness of a national stereotype that could be negatively pasted on her: Americans as money-grabbing. Later Rowena reflected on her reticence to ask for pay:

> It's all about cultural nuance really, to ask for money [pause] to do with this whole area. Because it's so interesting, but survivors can't be seen to be profiting off their trauma. However, anyone else that's involved -- lawyers, journalists, publicists, plenty of other people profit off other people's trauma, but for some reason, we can't be seen to be profiting financially off our own trauma.

But what is that reason? Rowena specifically pinpoints the NDA that she was forced to sign by Weinstein's legal team under duress, and how this impacts people's perception of her silence and speaking up.

We've already received quite a lot of criticism for, in the first place, taking a payment attached the NDA, which we didn't even want to take, we didn't want that payment in the first place. And at that time, we negotiated very, very hard not to have a settlement fee, because it felt like we were being paid to being, to be silenced, which of course we were.

Thus, silence carries a moral weight in relation to money, for a public rape survivor. And likewise, speaking out does too.

Fear of the Gold-Digger Stereotype

While I was surprised by some of the attitudes from my interview participants, their answers led me to uncovering a very specific reason why sexual violence survivors might feel uncomfortable asking for pay. While Bonny and Rowena both recognized that they deserved to be compensated for their media labor, they were also wary of how asking for a fee would *appear* to the rest of the world. Their concern over appearances suggests an unspoken display rule that is in place for public sexual violence survivors: in Rowena's words, 'survivors can't be seen to be profiting off their trauma.' In this sense, they are both aware of functioning within an economy of believability, where the mere mention of money related to a media appearance would disrupt the fragile believability that is accorded to them in the public eye.

What Rowena and Bonny seem to be skirting around is a deeply damaging stereotype that haunts any mediated account of a rape survivor: that of the 'Gold-Digger, 'the woman who publicly cries out and even lies about sexual violence, in order to profit financially. Previous scholars have written extensively about the gold-digger stereotype, as part of the virgin vs vamp dichotomy that is imposed on women who report rape (Estrich, 1986; Benedict, 1992); a rape myth that encourages victim-blaming and undermines the credibility of survivors who speak out (Hall, Howard, Boezio, 1986; Lonsway and Fitzgerald, 1994; Waterhouse-Watson, 2011; Yap, 2017).

Anthropologist Peggy Sanday (1996) identifies the Gold-Digger stereotype in criminal rape trials dating as far back as the 18th century, and historian Joanna Bourke (2007) cites a common Victorian fear that women impregnated out of wedlock would accuse a man of rape, in order to force a marriage to a man of higher socioeconomic standing. The act of speaking out is equated to a shameless bid for financial gain on the part of victim. In the 21st century, Waterhouse-Watson (2011) indicates that the Gold-Digger stereotypes surfaces repeatedly in contemporary Australian media discourses around football rape cases. Even a self-proclaimed feminist Germaine Greer (2004, p.14) evoked the stereotype when she wrote that women now "also seem quite interested in another factor in sex with footballers – namely, indecent amounts of money."

Waterhouse-Watson cites Gold-Digger references in the online comments around the Australian football rape cases, and there is a nauseating echo in the user comments below videos of Rowena Chiu's interviews about her assault by Weinstein.

In Rowena's very first public appearance as a Weinstein victim, on *The Today Show* (2019), *these* are some of the user comments on YouTube[17]:

> @lilitincher4973
> Rowena Chiu has no shame. She had no problem taking the money then.
> She's breaking the NDA because she spent all the money and now needs more!!!
>
> @coolyajets8638
> Oh Rowena - is this is another way of making money - you took the money and went along with it all - 20 years later??????
>
> @khav11
> ASIANS ARE HOT CASN'T [sic] BLAME HIM LOL

These comments equate Rowena's speaking out in 2017 with 'another way of making money,' an assumption which stands in direct contrast to her reality: in fact, she has received no fees and has been careful not to ask for any. I also included the comment 'Asians are hot' to demonstrate the pervasiveness of stereotypes like the Gold-Digger and the hypersexualized Asian Woman, and how they are used by everyday media users to casually undermine the victim status and ethical respectability of genuine sexual violence victims.

But even four years later, when Weinstein had already been convicted of sexual assault, gold-digger comments continued to circulate around Rowena. When she did a video interview with the Singaporean newspaper *The Straits Times*[18] in 2023, these are some of the user comments:

> @kamma44
> Signed an NDA took the money and speaks out 20 years later after the money has all dried up?! Pathetic!
>
> @SuccessforLifester
> It was a win win situation for these ladies and now they want to complain
>
> @cataniamommaitalia87
> Giving up your values for money...NDA

The casual moral judgement of Rowena again stands in stark contrast to the actual reality of what happened. Someone calls it 'a win win situation for these ladies,' and yet, Rowena had been sexually assaulted by a serial predator, forced to sign an NDA under duress, and subsequently lost her career and life trajectory. By this point in 2023, Weinstein had already been convicted, and therefore, Rowena's story had the evidential force of his confirmed criminality. And yet,

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[17] The Today Show, 'New Harvey Weinstein Accuser Speaks Out for the 1st Time,' 9 September 2019, https://youtu.be/rIXwgw5olCY?si=LH9zAnsSD-DEZEd4

[18] The Straits Times, 'Harvey Weinstein's former assistant Rowena Chiu – Wong Kim Hoh Meets,' 16 April 2023. https://youtu.be/nISZ8_h9IWw?si=bm-jg542L7lULmsg

many individuals denied her any empathy as a victim, instead criticizing her for 'taking the money' and then speaking out years later.

We see clearly here how the Gold-Digger stereotype plays a role in the economy of believability which Banet-Weiser and Higgins (2023) describe, whereby a rape survivor speaking out in the media is subjected to a public judgement of her believability. And any slightest whiff of financial compensation can compromise that believability. If Rowena's silence was 'bought' by Weinstein's NDA, and she received significant compensation in exchange for her trauma, that appearance is bad enough. Silence becomes associated with money, and paying a victim off. By that same dichotomy then, speaking up must be seen as the opposite: free of any associations with money, purely altruistic in its attentions to showcase the truth.

For Rowena and Bonny, the display rule that 'victims can't be seen profiting from their trauma' contradicts their deeper feeling that they *deserve to be paid* for their media labor. Citing Hochschild, reconciling the gap between display rules (one shouldn't be paid) and one's true feelings (one deserves to be paid) constitutes emotional labor. Yet virtually all of my participants seemed to accept, with a certain resignation, the unlikelihood of being paid adequately by media producers. This suggests that this aspect of emotional labor around inadequate compensation is felt by many public survivors.

Tellingly, Bonny worried about the appearance of being paid for her survivor speech: 'I don't want it to appear like a transaction.' Yet in any normal workplace, media labor performed should be compensated. In essence, it *should* be transactional. But because survivor speech is so impacted by public perceptions around sexual violence, it *cannot* appear transactional, if it is to be believable.

INDUSTRY FACTORS INFLUENCING THE NON-PAYMENT OF SURVIVORS

> *Rowena: 'Obviously, reputable newspapers would not pay their sources.'*
>
> *Laura, documentary producer, to me: 'We can't pay any of our contributors for their participation in the series.'*

What are these statements about, and why is it, to Rowena, so obvious that reputable newspapers will not pay their sources? I recall how angry I felt when I was told, with no actual explanation, that I could not be paid for my labor in the TV documentary. The producer's tone

came across as dismissive and absolute, the same way the newspaper editor sounded when he explained to Emily that 'we never pay' for opinion pieces. But what are these policies of non-payment rooted in, and how are they justified and exploited?

In this section, I will look at two external factors in media practice contributing to poor compensation for survivors: first, a long-held journalistic tradition around impartiality, and secondly, the actual work conditions involving inadequate pay for creative workers. In essence, a display rule which claims an ideological stance within journalism, and a profit-driven operational reality.

A Fear of Checkbook Journalism

Both the above quotes seem to be referring to a journalistic stance where individuals who provide stories or information (known as 'sources') to journalists, cannot be paid. To pay sources would be labeled 'checkbook journalism,' a practice which, according to the Society of Professional Journalists in the US, 'threatens to corrupt the newsgathering and reporting functions of the media.' The underlying fear of checkbook journalism is that a source could ultimately distort or invent 'the truth' in exchange for money. Therefore, the credibility of both the individual 'selling' the information and of journalism as a whole could be destroyed (Kittross, 2011). This parallels the implicit judgement of public rape survivors in the economy of believability: if they sell their story for money, their 'truth' is no longer credible.

Another criticism of checkbook journalism suggests that a source privy to exclusive information could abuse their power for money (Boynton, 2008). But as Hewa (2023, p.9) notes in her study of journalists and sexual violence survivors, 'Journalistic practices that are largely effective when applied to people in power risk retraumatizing victims.' In relation to the media, sexual violence victims are hardly the ones 'in power' because the information they provide to journalists often requires them to expose their own pain and vulnerability.

Individual journalists have, over the years, questioned this tradition of not paying sources, given the emotional cost of private citizens who share their story with the media (Boynton, 2012; Gordon 2011). Mengelkoch (1994, p.38) detailed the case of a young gang rape victim and her family in the United States, who were in desperate financial straits as a result of legal battles and loss of employment following the local reaction to the news. She wrote: 'For the powerless in our culture who knowingly open themselves up to very personal stories that should be told —

that have a real message for the public — it seems only fair that they should be compensated for their willingness to go public.' Given the financial loss that often accompanies the trauma of sexual violence (Loya, 2014; 2015b), media compensation can go some small way towards reparations, echoing Imogen's quote in the previous section. But Mengelkoch suggests there is also a symbolic and discursive value to mediated survivor speech, which deserves to be recognized.

Other journalists argue that the actual labor of giving extensive interviews deserves direct compensation for interview subjects. US journalist Nora Neus (2023), who does not work specifically with sexual violence survivors but survivors more broadly, wonders: 'how I could possibly ask survivors to spend hours speaking to me, reliving the most traumatic days of their lives in intense detail, without any kind of compensation. It sounded like work, work they deserved to be paid for.'

Interestingly, financial compensation does *not* appear in journalism industry guidelines for interviewing sexual violence victims. Both IPSO (Independent Press Standards Organization) and Zero Tolerance, which focuses on eliminating male violence against women, suggest journalistic best practice for victims, like building rapport, ensuring confidentiality, and offering a read-back to victims. But they do not mention a fee for a victim's time and contribution. Perhaps the spectres of both checkbook journalism and the Gold-Digger stereotype seem to haunt the media landscape, ensuring a strange silence around the possibility of paying sexual violence survivors for their stories.

But there is a difference giving information to a journalist (what a 'source' does) and giving a lengthy, involved media interview, which in its recorded or live format may even become the direct text of the media product. In other words, when does giving information to the media become labor? When an interview passes the 30 min mark? When the topic is emotionally and personally stressful to the interviewee? No clear guidelines exist, but it seems a broad ethical stance against checkbook journalism has been stretched to justify a blanket policy of not paying interview subjects *at all*, a policy that obscures both the communicative and emotional labor of survivor speech, and the costs that individual survivors bear in speaking out.

Precarious Pay within the Media Industries

While individual journalists like the ones cited above have advocated for paying sources, media platforms themselves — the corporate entities that profit off low production costs — have been silent on this issue. Thus, how much is this display rule around the ethics of not paying sources simply a convenient excuse for keeping costs down, given the financially constrained work conditions of the creative industries? As discussed in Ch. 2 and throughout this dissertation, a large body of scholarship documents the financial precarity of creative workers, whose labor is often freelance, poorly and erratically compensated (Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Ursell, 2000). This aspect is heavily gendered, as young female workers are often more willing to work in the creative industries for no pay (McRobbie, 2011; Bellfante, 2012; Attfield and Couture, 2014; Shade and Jacobson, 2015) in order to follow their 'passion' and hopefully achieve creative fulfilment (Tokumitsu, 2014; Duffy, 2017; Jaffe, 2021).

Mediated rape survivors fall under this promise, too, encouraged to pursue our passions in speaking out, and to ignore the poor financial compensation endemic to media labor. But the added irony for rape survivors — as opposed to other creative workers — is that to even *ask* for pay violates a display rule surrounding the believability of their speech. How emotionally fulfilling can this work truly be, then, if recognition of a survivor's labor and its corresponding monetary value is consistently undermined?

Focusing the discussion more specifically on journalism, many scholars detail the exploitative working environments which individual journalists currently face, where social media traction is seen to determine an article's value and a journalist's monetary worth (Harte, Turner & Williams, 2016; Neilson, 2021; Petre, 2021). Hewa (2023) further applies this scholarship to study journalism about sexual violence, revealing how these exploitative working environments ultimately impact individual journalists' interactions with the rape survivors whom they approach and interview. One of her participants went so far as to say that his workload was so stretched as a journalist, that ethical practices like duty of care and informed consent for interview subjects (in this case, sexual violence survivors) were basically impossible to maintain, despite his best intentions.

This presents a troubling media landscape within which public rape survivors are implicated. With the profit motive in media platforms driving down staff and production costs, media professionals are unable to deliver either adequate duty of care or monetary compensation for

survivors. And the squeeze ultimately bears down — both emotionally and financially — on the individual survivors who do choose to speak out and collaborate with the media. Emily, Bonny, and myself have all reported poor pay from the same city newspaper for our written pieces, ranging from 'we never pay' to a fee of 80 pounds to an unusual quote I received in 2018 when approached by an editor there. It would be an initial fee of £20 for writing a 600 to 800-word piece, rising to £65 if my article got more than 1500 clicks. This coincides with the literature on the quantification of click-throughs and journalists' pay (Lee, 2015; Petre, 2021), but the immediate reaction I felt at the time was disgust and frustration: that my efforts as a writer and as a survivor-activist should be valued so little. And that their value should be determined so directly by their quantified circulation on social media. That pay structure also placed an additional onus on me to perform more digital labor in promoting my article widely on social media platforms, in order to reach 1500 clicks and 'unlock' the higher fee. Thus, the intense digital labor often documented in feminist activism (Mendes, et al., 2019; Scharff, 2023) intersected here with a devaluing of creative labor, in a severely under-paid model that ignored the deeply personal and emotional nature of the content I would be writing.

I decided, in the end, not to write for that particular newspaper. The mismatch between labor and compensation was simply too severe.

Ultimately, our experiences with this city newspaper speak to the economy of visibility which Banet-Weiser (2018, p. 24) describes, where the nonstop circulation of feminist content — the metrics, clicks, likes, etc — determine its worth, at the cost of emptying the content of its actual meaning. I would add that there is a further emotional cost to the creator of that content, the public rape survivor, in that it feels like a cheapening of our heartfelt labor. If we are paid a pittance for pouring our 'innermost pain and trauma' into an online article that gets minimal clicks and is then seen as a failure by the media platform, what does that do to our self-esteem and our mental well-being as public survivors? How does that impact our attitude towards working with the media in the future?

One could argue that our poor compensation was justified because we were positioned by this particular newspaper as 'citizen journalists' or 'community contributors, as opposed to trained professionals. (Even though Emily was a marketing professional and myself a published novelist, and both of us very capable writers). Kittross (2011) describes the practice of citizen journalism as simply 'a cleverly disguised way of saving money by cutting news staffs and

replacing them with volunteers,' while Gordon (2011) argues that citizen journalists add unique, authentic perspectives, which can enrich a news platform's coverage of an issue. Both of these claims may be true. In our case, the quality and inherent value of our work mattered less than our employment status, which enabled a media platform like this city newspaper to conveniently justify paying us so little. And yet, Emily, Bonny, and myself all willingly wrote for this newspaper at one time or another, fuelled by our individual 'passion' to speak out about sexual violence. So in that sense, we were unintentionally complicit in a system that financially de-values survivor speech.

However, there is a key difference between public rape survivors and other freelance cultural workers: they are relatively unique, compared to the rest of the workforce. The low pay and economic precarity of creative industries work is often attributed to the 'large reservoir of labor' available: the many talented and passionate individuals eager to work in desirable, creative jobs (Miege, 2011; Ursell, 2000; Willis and Dex, 2003; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011) allows employers to pay such low wages, because the surplus of workers, especially in entry-level positions, makes them easily replaceable. In contrast, there are not that many survivors who both are willing and skilled to speak or write publicly about their experiences of sexual violence, under the constraints and standards imposed by mainstream media. As a workforce, then, public survivors are not easily replaced. They retain a unique skill and experience – a status which might suggest being able to command a higher rate of pay. And yet, they rarely are paid in a commensurate way, nor do they *ask* to be paid by media platforms, due to the display rules around sexual violence survivors and money. This significant tension highlights the contradictions embedded in their specific form of media visibility.

Public rape survivors thus occupy an undefined labor role in relation to mainstream media platforms: treated as 'sources' of information who should not be paid, according to conventional journalistic ethics, or voluntary 'citizen journalists' who are not trained professionals; but often asked to perform significant amounts of communicative and emotional labor, towards the creation of unique and deeply-felt media products within a commodified market. That they do this with great passion and ideological drive is often used to their disadvantage. While I have diverged from an analysis of my empirical data in the second half of this chapter, I felt it was necessary, in order to investigate the conditions that encourage and justify the poor financial compensation for public survivors, despite the media labor they perform.

Conclusion

If media visibility exacts a high cost on public survivors in the form of emotional labor, this chapter explored how that labor might be compensated financially by mainstream media platforms. Unfortunately, both my auto-ethnographic and interview data point to a situation where survivors are rarely or poorly paid for their media work. This lack of pay and the anxiety around poor compensation serves to intensify the emotional labor of public survivors, demonstrating the sixth layer of emotional labor I highlighted in Ch 2: that of working within the creative industries and their conditions of economic precarity for individual workers.

While the initial stages of media visibility are marked by strong, conflicting emotions like anxiety, fear, pride, and a perceived boost in status and credibility (Palmer, 2018), later stages prompt public survivors to realise the repeated effort of speaking out is, in fact, labor. The feeling of 'work' was defined by five factors: the amount of time and effort involved in the work; the amount of skill required; the pleasure of the process itself; the immediacy of the reward afterwards; and the emotional intensity of the work. Survivors, especially those who were less financially stable, felt a mismatch between the intensity of their media work, and the financial compensation.

However, despite feeling like they deserved to be paid for their media labor, some survivors felt as if they should *not* ask for a fee, citing the 'transactional' appearance of asking for money as rape survivors. This suggested a display rule whereby survivor speech should be visibly motivated by altruism, and any hint of individual gain was to be avoided. I suggested this display rule can be traced to the 'Gold-Digger' label that historically has been levelled at women who accuse men of rape. This particular display rule both reinforces an economy of believability that judges public survivors and results in a de-valuing of their media labor in speaking out.

Likewise, a display rule around journalistic credibility and not paying sources is stretched to justify the profit-driven poor compensation of survivors, despite the significant and valuable media labor they provide. In both cases, visible invocations towards ideology and ethics on a discursive level overrides the lived material and immaterial needs of individual survivors who collaborate with the media. Ironically, claims towards truth, justice, and neutrality in public discourse obscure the real financial inequality of media practice.

Yet to remain silent about financial compensation engenders another layer of emotional labor for survivors: in addition to the emotional labor of communicating their story of trauma, they also need to suppress their frustration and sense of being exploited in cooperating with a media platform that does not financially recognise their time and labor. A survivor's agentic decision to share their experience through the mainstream media becomes complicated and denigrated through a sense of being used in a different way.

The result is that they are left to individually navigate this media landscape, relying on their own resources and aims, in order to supplement and justify their poorly paid media labor. In the final chapter, I will examine the non-monetary rewards which public survivors seek out, as they attempt to even the ledger of what they feel they are owed in a proper, fair exchange of work, money, and emotions.

Chapter 7

Rewards: Media Labor and the Hidden Role of Cultural Capital

Auto-ethnography:
Asking for A Little Free Publicity, September 2017
Email from London to Dublin

Ten months after I had filmed in Belfast for the television documentary, I sent this email to Laura, the documentary producer with whom I had been negotiating over a fee for my participation.

> Mon, 11 Sept 2017 at 14:54
>
> Hi Laura —
>
> […] Have you locked picture yet?
>
> For the end title cards [in the film], Paula and I had discussed the final one about me could mention the novel. Obviously we don't want it to appear as too much of an obvious plug, but maybe something like:
>
> In 2017, nine years after her assault in Colin Glen, Winnie's debut novel, Dark Chapter, was published.
>
> It is dedicated to 'all the victims and all the survivors -- and most of us, who are somewhere in between.'

****

For all the fraught negotiation over my fee in 2016, it still took about ten months for me to be paid the full fee which Laura and I had agreed upon. I was slightly annoyed, but not bitter about the delay in payment; it is a standard practice in the creative industries that freelance fees, in addition to being low, can be paid long after the labor has been performed (Banks 2007; Dex et al 2000; Huws 2006; Ursell 2000).

And despite the emotional challenge of flying to Belfast to be filmed in the park where I had been assaulted, I had developed a feeling of camaraderie with the documentary crew. As scholars have documented (Hardt and Negri 2000; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011), work in the creative industries often results in pleasant and authentic social bonds, feelings of teamwork and collective accomplishment on a shared artistic vision, which help to emotionally counter-balance the economic precarity of the work. On a trip to Dublin in Summer 2017, I had met with the

director Paula in her edit suite and watched a rough cut of the documentary, which impressed me with its sensitive portrayal of myself and the other survivors.

It was in this vein of goodwill and camaraderie that I sent the above request to Laura. Because alongside the pleasant emotional rewards of bonding with the film crew, I was very conscious that there was another way in which the documentary could compensate me: it could function as publicity for my debut novel, *Dark Chapter*, which had just been published that year.

In the above email, I am specifically asking for that publicity from the filmmakers. Even though neither Laura nor myself states this explicitly, we are aware of the *value* of that kind of visibility for my book. But I do not state my request outright or position it as a favour I'm asking of the filmmakers. Instead, I offer a suggestion to enhance the ending of the documentary: by adding these lines to the end title cards, we can contribute to a triumphant survivor narrative (Winnie went on to publish a book about her experience) and signpost a further resource for viewers (you can check out the book if you want to know more). Crucially, my suggestion aligns with the creative and ideological vision for the documentary: one of individual survivors sharing their stories, in their own voices, and of an implicit collectivity among survivors (and viewers).

But of course, adding those lines would also be great publicity for my book.

In our previous negotiations, Laura had confessed that the documentary's tight budget made it impossible for me to be paid my full usual day rate. Arguably, this publicity could make up for the low pay, but I didn't raise that argument in my email to Laura. To employ Bonny's phrase from Ch. 6, that would appear too 'transactional.' As if talking too openly about money in the realm of survivor speech might somehow sully the nobility of the collective project.

In making my request, I therefore obscured the economic reality behind compensating survivors for media labor through a more visibly acceptable appeal to the ideological value of survivor speech. It's telling that even for a media project that aimed to champion the voices and subjectivities of survivors, I still felt it safer to conform more closely to the display rules of what was and was not acceptable for individual survivors to ask for.

But again, to state the now-obvious, it's also impossible to ignore the role that my own resources played in how I approached this request. The months-long delay on paying me my full fee had

no negative impact on my finances, though it could have been for someone in more dire financial straits. So despite my annoyance at being paid so late, I was able to casually let this issue slide, be financially flexible, and maintain the goodwill that often greases the wheels of collaboration within the creative industries (Bashford 2006; Banks 2007). My background in the media industries helped me recognize the potential for cross-platform publicity, identifying a possible audience for my novel through the TV documentary. It also gave me an effective language to advocate for my case, employing industry terms like 'locked picture' and 'end title cards' to demonstrate my understanding of the post-production process and suggest myself as an equal, who could be negotiated with reasonably.

In the end, the filmmakers *did* include the name of my novel in the end title cards of the documentary. And while it is impossible to track how this publicity impacted book sales for my novel in Ireland, it undoubtedly secured my book greater visibility than if the end title cards hadn't mentioned *Dark Chapter*. The documentary aired on terrestrial Irish television in late September 2017, and a week later, the Harvey Weinstein allegations broke in the US media. I myself was not present in Ireland to witness the documentary's impact on audiences, but I gained a sense of it through social media posts and subsequent commentary in Irish mainstream media.

And it felt like my personal experience of rape, which I had already shared multiple times through previous media encounters, had now become part of something bigger – especially with #MeToo gaining prominence in the wake of the Weinstein allegations. Feminist life writing scholar Leigh Gilmore (2022, p. xi) considers the discursive and personal significance that the mediations around #MeToo hold for survivors: 'Those who speak and those who hear are transformed into a new relation through the power of truth-telling' (xi).

While these emotional rewards were certainly in place for me, we should not ignore the more worldly benefits that came to me after appearing in the documentary. A month after it aired, I was nominated for the Irish Tatler Woman of the Year Award, an awards ceremony I described in Ch 5. *Dark Chapter* also won *The Guardian*'s Not The Booker Prize that month by public vote. The following year, I was invited to speak at a high profile conference on women's rights in Ireland, and then conferred an honorary doctorate by the National University of Ireland in recognition of my writing and activism. My cultural capital as a public survivor, writer, and activist was starting to compound. Even though the monetary fee I earned on the documentary

wasn't significant and certainly felt hard fought-for, in exchange for the labor I performed, my involvement in the project paid off in other ways. So for me, despite the intense emotional labor I experienced, that project of media visibility definitely felt worth it.

***

Introduction

Money, of course, is not the only way in which individual sexual violence survivors can be paid for their media labor. In this final empirical chapter, I will explore the emotional, ideological, and cultural rewards that survivors may seek in choosing to speak out through mainstream media, especially in lieu of adequate financial pay. When we ask a survivor if going public was 'worth it,' many will assert the value of their work in terms of validating their 'own voice,' helping other survivors, and changing the public understanding of sexual violence -- the three promises of speaking out, according to Serisier (2018). But there are also more pragmatic rewards for the public survivor: gains in status or publicity, which might later be monetized, even leading to new career possibilities and new sources of income.

In this chapter, I will look at these other, non-monetary ways in which the media labor of individual rape survivors might 'pay off' for them — and crucially how so much of this benefit is tied to an individual's cultural capital. If, as I suggest, mediated visibility for sexual violence survivors compounds layers of emotional labor that converge from their multiple subjectivities, then cultural capital helps to mitigate this emotional labor and transform it into rewards that can 'even the ledger' of their media work.

The presentation of my empirical data takes the form of case studies in this final chapter. While it is possible to thematically group participant responses to an issue, I found the richest understanding of the material lay in situating each participant's answers in the context of her life situation, goals, and emotions. That way we can view a holistic and unique portrait of each survivor, instead of fragmenting her responses. This allows us to better grasp the implications of intersectional differences among public survivors, and how they impact their *individual* experiences of mainstream media visibility.

In the first part of this chapter, I examine the *consequence* of non-compensation for survivors: given the inadequate pay for their media labor, survivors rely on individual resources of cultural

capital to sustain their media visibility and enable a more rewarding, more positive emotional experience of being public. But this is not always the case: intersectional differences like race and type of victimhood can profoundly impact each public survivor's experience. Madeleine and Rowena are my case studies in this section.

In the second part of the chapter, I will explore how, in lieu of pay for their media labor, survivors strategically see media visibility as a form of currency in itself, which can serve as publicity for a larger entrepreneurial project of theirs. I will return to the case study of Emily, whose experience as a public survivor, activist, and businesswoman, informed so much of Ch. 5. But Holly also demonstrates an agentic awareness of media visibility and its commercial potential. Hers can be seen as a project of 'the enterprising self,' rooted in the skills and confidence that demonstrate her own existing cultural capital, where media visibility is employed strategically towards her own goals. I also consider how charities employ survivor speech for commercial intent, a move that capitalizes on its discursive value, while continuing to deny the material needs of the individual survivors who speak out.

The third part of my chapter provides a sharp contrast in the case of Michelle, a survivor who felt exploited by media platforms, even as she began her speaking out to affect change. A lack of cultural capital, tied to her own background of trauma and class, may explain why Michelle never felt in control of her own visibility as a trauma victim. Ultimately, Michelle's emotional reactions reinforced a more neoliberal shape to her future decisions around media visibility, in order to protect her own interests and well-being.

PART ONE:

Cultural Capital: The Hidden Weapon in Sustaining Media Visibility

In Ch 4, we saw how cultural capital plays a key role in allowing individual survivors to attain media visibility in the first place. Economic resources, communicative skills, professional networks, confidence – these material and immaterial aspects of cultural capital greatly aided survivors in their initial stages of visibility, in line with previous, more text-based scholarship on public survivors (Serisier 2018; Boyle 2019; Banet-Weiser and Higgins 2023).

But *beyond* that initial entrance into mainstream media visibility, these benefits to the individual survivor persist and in fact, can accrue. There are four main ways in which an individual survivor's level of cultural capital aids them in relation to their sustained media visibility and the issue of compensation. These aspects are:

1) **Financial** – Survivors with greater economic capital are in a financial position to continue performing unpaid or poorly paid media labor, without suffering materially.

2) **Emotional** – This financial stability helps to diminish the stress and frustration which more economically precarious survivors may feel over inadequate pay. Therapy and practices of self-care which cost money are also more available to the financially stable, bolstering a survivor's emotional health (Loya, 2015a).

3) **Professional** – Cultural capital can come in the form of professional skills, networks, and industry knowledge, which aid in collaborating with mainstream media platforms. This enables survivors to strategically negotiate their media visibility towards their own interests.

4) **Social** – A survivor's social and personal networks can amplify the reach of their media visibility, leading to further professional opportunities, which they can then capitalize upon.

In all of these ways, cultural capital helps to mitigate the emotional labor involved, to convert their media labor into rewards that 'pay off,' and to thereby cushion the negative feelings that may arise with media visibility. The burden of emotional labor can be notably reduced if individuals don't have to worry about monetary compensation, and if they can envision shaping their media visibility into a larger portfolio of work that offers both self-actualization, and a potential income-earning career as a public survivor. As I explore the case studies of individual public survivors below, look out for these four aspects of cultural capital, which are often intertwined with each other and embedded in the life situations of each survivor.

Madeleine: 'Luckily for me, I've never done it for the money'

Of the survivors I interviewed, Madeleine stood in contrast to participants like Bonny, Emily, and Imogen, who expressed worry and frustration over lack of monetary compensation for their media labor. Like myself, these participants were also slightly younger, often single, and worked

in economically precarious industries like the arts, media, or non-profits, without steady salaries. In contrast, Madeleine seemed much calmer about the issue of pay. She admitted that she would *like* to be paid for her media work in speaking out, but she would continue to speak out, regardless.

Madeleine is a survivor of a gang rape at the age of thirteen, but is now in her 50s. In her interview, she was transparent in acknowledging her financial privilege: for the past three decades, her husband's income has provided for herself and her three children, enabling Madeleine to pursue a career as a counsellor, explore different approaches to recovery, and later write her memoir. Largely because of her family's financial stability, she has had the luxury of time and resources to explore and later speak out about her experience of trauma, forgiveness, and recovery, enhancing her memoir's reach through mainstream media appearances and a growing professional and social network. Madeleine has since developed a public speaking career, and speaking fees combined with sales from her published memoir have become a small but growing income stream.

In the interview, Madeleine did not dwell on discussing poor compensation and simply said: 'Luckily for me, I've never done it for the money.' In other words, she was driven by a higher purpose: publicly speaking the truth about sexual violence. She implies she would be unlucky if she *had* to 'do it for the money' because of the added stress and worry that comes with the inadequate pay. This easy statement is echoed in research on the precarity of pay in the creative industries. For example, young women working in full-time unpaid internships in the media often said they were 'lucky' that their parents could cover their living costs, enabling them to build their careers in the poorly compensated creative industries (Shade and Jacobson, 2015). Family wealth and cultural capital were also seen to enable young people in their unpaid or poorly compensated work as musicians (baym, 2015); television workers and journalists (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Ursell, 2000); stand-up comedians (Butler and Russell, 2018); as fashion bloggers (Duffy 2015); and as online 'influencers' (Glatt 2022). As Baker and Hesmondhalgh (2011, p.45) summarize: 'The precariousness of creative careers inevitably favours those who can draw easily on other sources of income, especially from well-off parents.' In Madeleine's case, it was not so much parental wealth but her husband's source of income which mitigated the economic precariousness of her work as a public rape survivor.

This financial stability not only provided Madeleine with peace of mind over finances and the freedom to pursue her passion projects, but it also allowed her to pivot to other media platforms. During Covid, many of her speaking appearances were cancelled, so instead, she decided to start a podcast interviewing other speakers and activists who had overcome trauma in their lives. The podcast series, *Unbroken: Healing Through Storytelling* shared the same name, as Madeleine's memoir, *Unbroken*, thereby reinforcing her self-brand. Madeleine herself did not receive any funding or income from the podcast, and she in fact paid a producer to edit and upload these episodes onto various podcast platforms. She saw the podcast as a worthwhile project to invest her own time, money, and energies into: buying the labor of a media professional and enlisting the unpaid labor of herself and her podcast guests. Madeleine was thus able to create a media product which increases her own visibility and network, acting as publicity for her book and her speaking career — while also accomplishing her larger goal of speaking out about trauma and recovery.

Scholars have noted how a family's cultural capital can also help individuals pursue creative careers in non-financial ways, by securing entry-level jobs or internships through their contacts, by offering advice or insight into the media industries (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Shade and Jacobsen, 2015). This was also the case for Madeleine, whose daughter is a publicist, and often gives Madeleine opportunities to appear on local radio, TV, and newspapers. She also provides professional insight and support for her mother to develop her own brand. But Madeleine herself has proved adept at eliciting informal advice from acquaintances and contacts every time she has wanted to explore another avenue of public communication: from writing a memoir and finding a book deal, to becoming a professional public speaker, to starting a podcast. Madeleine says:

> I've always sought the help of other people and the right people just seem to appear at the right time through recommendations. Or looking at something, I think 'Okay, I fancy that, I'll give that a go'… I would never have got where I am without the support of many, many people. (Madeleine Black interview, Sept 2022)

Madeleine demonstrates an admirable entrepreneurial drive in her project of speaking out, but she is aided by her socioeconomic position: financial stability and cultural capital in the form of her own professional and communicative skills, personal and professional networks that can advance her enterprise, and her confidence in navigating the creative industries. All four aspects of cultural capital are present here, enabling her to capitalize on her existing media visibility and further expand her platform.

But the specificity of rape survivorhood also intensifies the visibility of Madeleine's story, foregrounding the morally admirable component of her identity. Madeline acknowledges the support she's had from other people in wanting to help her speak out, because she has 'a powerful message.' Thus, there is a humanitarian appeal to her case as a gang rape survivor turned truth-teller. To be a survivor who speaks out, who doesn't ask for money, and who benefits from the goodwill and support of her family and larger network is a rousing story indeed. But it's a story that is only available to a select few survivors, who possess the right reserves of cultural capital.

Madeleine thus typifies Banet-Weiser and Higgins' economy of believability (2023), drawing upon her 'twin prongs' of socioeconomic resources and individual labor, to become a successfully believable victim of sexual violence in the public eye. Her public identity is that of a white, middle-class, mother-of-three finally addressing the trauma that disrupted her life forty years ago. These external socioeconomic signifiers of the believable victim also provide the resources of capital which have enabled Madeleine to transform the emotional and communicative labor of speaking out into a personal enterprise with economic potential.

Rowena: 'I'm not really asking to be paid actually. I'm asking to not lose so much money, not have to put out personally so much in order to survive it.'

I wanted to return to Rowena, who possesses similar reserves of cultural capital to Madeleine, but whose experience of speaking out in the media has been entirely different, due to elements of race, timing, the nature of her trauma, and the wider media landscape. Madeleine's socioeconomic position enabled her to gradually grow her mainstream media visibility over the space of several years. In contrast, Rowena was suddenly thrust *towards* the media spotlight when the Weinstein investigation publicly erupted in Autumn 2017.

Even though Rowena's decision to 'go public' as a Weinstein victim was a two-year process, once she did, the media attention was intense. Her first public appearance was live on *The Today Show* with Ashley Judd, Jodi Kantor, and Meghan Twohey, and after that, she participated in a constant barrage of international media interviews: television, radio, print and online interviews, podcasts, public speaking events to promote *She Said*. Rowena estimates she has given over 700

media interviews in total, up to twenty interviews in a single a day, all of them unpaid. On top of this demanding workload was the financial cost. Rowena described:

> The MeToo movement probably cost us personally anywhere from 5000 to 10,000 [US dollars] a month, as in we were outlaying all of this, because we were paying babysitters, we were paying for flights [for my toddler to travel with me]. I was away. I had loss of income because I wasn't working for a while, while I was campaigning… Let's just say we were losing about 5000 a month, you know, in terms of costs and lost opportunity and all the rest of stuff. We kept that going for six months. (Rowena Chiu interview, July 2021)

Rowena estimates her household spent at least 30,000 US dollars over the six months when she was most heavily involved in the media around the Weinstein expose. (Our interview was conducted in 2021, and in late 2022, Rowena participated in another heavy round of uncompensated media labor to promote the *She Said* film — labor which again, would have required a financial outlay from her family to support.) Personally, I was shocked to hear the extent of these economic costs. After all, USD 30,000 was more than my average annual income from my combined doctoral stipend, activism, and writing, during the majority of my PhD candidacy. This puts in stark contrast the very different financial situations that individual survivors can find themselves in, and how the costs of high-level media work operate on a vastly different scale to their individual economic reserves.

Rowena explains that a media platform like a national television talk show would pay for her flight and her hotel, but there were always additional costs, particularly linked to childcare. Recall that in Ch. 6, Rowena was most adamant about *not* asking for a fee, being hyper-aware of the display rules for public rape survivors in this economy of believability. But it is clear that even participating in this media labor so intensely, without monetary compensation -- and thereby achieving that level of visibility — would have been impossible without the financial stability of her family.

Rowena is married with four children, and lives in an affluent community in the United States. Like Madeleine, her husband's career in the technology industry functions as the household's primary income stream, enabling Rowena to perform her media labor unpaid. It is this conventionally gendered division of labor and earnings within a household, which enables Rowena and Madeleine to maintain their media visibility at both a material level and a discursive level: allowing them the freedom of time and resources to speak out, but also providing the respectability of middle-class, married motherhood that lends itself to sympathetic mainstream media coverage of a sexual violence victim (Benedict, 1992; Cuklanz 1996).

But unlike Madeleine, Rowena admits she 'often worries about money,' which she attributes to her immigrant parents' background. She was often aware of a loss of income, the money she *could* be earning if she weren't performing all this media labor unpaid. Rowena sums it up this way: 'I'm not really asking to be paid actually. I'm asking to not lose so much money, not have to put out personally so much in order to survive it [the media visibility].' Her words refer to both the financial and the emotional cost of media visibility for herself. And yet, hyper-aware of the display rule around sexual violence victims and pay, Rowena is caught in a double bind: anxious over money and loss of income, but also anxious over the appearance of *asking for money* as a survivor – and as a result, forced to rely on her own economic resources to support her media work. In this way, the emotional labor of speaking out is intensified by issues of money and the specificity of being a mediated rape survivor.

Beyond class, other intersectional elements of Rowena's identity further complicate her position and her emotional experience of media visibility. While she attributes her anxiety over money to immigrant parent's background, she also cites her race as one of the reasons she says yes to every media request. In Ch 5, I examined how Rowena's race was foregrounded in the headline of her *New York Times* op-ed: 'Harvey Weinstein told me he likes Chinese girls.' In a media landscape that often fixates on white, middle-class survivors (Benedict 1992; Boyle 2005, 2019; Orgad and Gill 2018; Banet-Weiser and Higgins 2023), Rowena feels a responsibility to maintain her role as a public East Asian survivor.

But this responsibility is also linked to her age and generation. Rowena recalls speaking to an elderly East Asian woman who, many decades ago, had been sexually assaulted by an older white man. This woman had stayed silent, but in Rowena's words:

> She spoke about how it's our responsibility. I mean, I'm middle aged, right, I'm in my 40s, but it's my responsibility in this generation, just to speak out to protect the grandchildren's generation. So she very much sees things as a generational change.

Rowena mentions how this sense of needing to protect subsequent, younger generations while speaking for older generations is 'very Asian,' particularly in regard to issues of silence and the potential predation of older white men.

Thus, race, class, age, and generational awareness all inflect Rowena's feeling of responsibility in speaking out as a sexual assault survivor. But these aspects of her identity also manifest

selectively in media representations of her. For example, journalists often mention her Oxford education, her British accent, and her status as a mother-of-four. In an economy of believability, these details reinforce her middle-class Western respectability, while also diminishing any sense of difference that might emerge from her East Asian race.
However, journalists are less likely to mention Rowena's considerable post-Weinstein career working for institutions like McKinsey Consulting, PriceWaterhouse Coopers, and the World Bank. Even though this background might reinforce her credibility in a professional setting, it is excluded in mediations of Rowena as a victim of sexual assault, as if her high-powered professional career might somehow diminish the believability of her as an innocent, guileless Weinstein victim in her mid-20s. A 'mother of four' serves as a more convincing, believable sexual assault victim than a 'high-powered' corporate professional.

Cultural capital in the form of her education and professional skills have enabled Rowena to successfully appear in hundreds of media interviews and public talks, but it is only recently that she has tried to monetize her visibility. She has recently taken on a public speaking agent and started to book paid speaking engagements. Since 2018, she has been working on a memoir, a process that has proved commercially challenging. At the suggestion of one literary agent, Rowena spent thousands of her own money on hiring a ghostwriter and editor to help with her memoir with little luck, before finally deciding to write it herself. Until now, a series of literary agents have been unable to secure her a book deal, with publishers intimating that her Weinstein story has already been covered in *She Said* or that the Asian-American survivor perspective was already addressed in Chanel Miller's bestselling memoir *Know My Name*.

These market logics instigate feelings of disappointment and frustration in Rowena, but they also carry a cruel sense of injustice: for even though she has freely given her own media labor to promote someone else's book and the film adaptation of it, her own creative agency as an author has not yet been realized. And her extreme media visibility has yet to be matched by a career where she can draw a reliable income from her visibility.

The discussion of Rowena seems to have strayed from the issue of monetary compensation, because it is impossible to fully extricate an individual survivor's economic status — and her ability to perform unpaid media labor — from all the other intersectional elements of her positionality. All these elements are bound up in a survivor's identity, her resources, and her emotions around responsibility, labor, and reward in speaking out.

Even though she shares similar resources of cultural capital to Madeleine, Rowena's position seems significantly more fraught with emotional labor, due to issues of race, her personal worries about money, the intensity and suddenness of the media spotlight on her and the money needed to sustain that demanding media visibility. As a victim of gang rape at age thirteen, Madeleine's position was morally blameless, engendering automatic sympathy. But despite Weinstein's conviction, Rowena continues to receive casual criticism for signing an NDA twenty years ago and 'taking the money.' Thus, she has also adhered more stringently to a policy of NOT asking to be paid for her media labor, resulting in a wider gap between the volume of her expended labor and capital, and the actual financial and creative rewards. And yet, Rowena attempts to reconcile this gap, by reminding herself of the ethical and emotional rewards of her work: that she is a voice for other East Asian survivors, that her work is important and meaningful. The question remains, though, if ethical and emotional rewards for such a huge amount of labor can very really feel like they are enough.

PART TWO:

Visibility as Currency, Aspirational Labor, and the Entrepreneurial Self

All the survivors I interviewed spoke out because they believe in the ideological importance of their work, but their different socioeconomic positions framed their attitudes to money and compensation in different ways, resulting in different levels of emotional labor. In Madeleine or Rowena, we saw two financially stable survivors who did not set out on their 'media journey,' intending to earn money, but have gradually sought to monetize their visibility.

In this section, I will profile survivors who, from the outset, were more intentional in viewing media visibility as publicity to potentially promote another income stream. In this way, they sought to justify their inadequately paid media labor.

Emily: 'All just having a platform to write on'

> *Emily: I did get paid for that [writing that one article]. But no, never paid for anything else.*
>
> *Winnie: Okay, so [writing for] HuffPost, Psychologies Lifelabs, that was all...*
>
> *Emily: All just having a platform to write on.*

In Ch. 4 and 5, I explained how Emily, a date rape survivor, initially went public in mainstream media for ideological reasons, but also because she saw her visibility as potential publicity for her commodified enterprise: an online recovery course she had developed for survivors. Single and earning precariously at the time, Emily wrote a series of articles for The Huffington Post, Psychologies Lifelabs, and other online platforms and accepted not being paid, because the work was about 'having a platform to write on.'

Emily's unpaid media work could be framed as 'aspirational labor' (Duffy, 2015; 2017), performed freely in the hope that the labor would one day 'pay off' for her future career. Duffy's study of social media fashion influencers details the significant unpaid digital labor performed behind-the-scenes by individuals to create a mediated visibility, which in turn *might* lead to sponsorship deals, an income, or a salaried job in the fashion world. In similar way, Emily wrote for free about sexual violence and recovery for established media platforms, hoping that this visibility would drive interest towards her recovery package — the commodified product — she was selling. In her interview, Emily was quite open about the emotional labor of this media work, intensified by her money worries, having debt to pay off, and alternating between her 'job job' in digital marketing for an employer (which paid her bills) and the vocation *she would* like: helping rape survivors rebuild their lives (which she finds personally and ideologically rewarding). In this sense, her economic precarity and the 'passion' which drives her uncompensated labor around sexual violence and recovery recall the 'DWYL' Do-What-You-Love' philosophy that obscures precarious economic conditions for creative workers, with the promise of personal fulfilment (Hesmondhalgh 2010; Conor, Gill, and Taylor 2015). These working conditions carry significant emotional labor and are particularly pronounced for young, female creative workers (Gill 2011; Conor, Gill, and Taylor 2015; McRobbie, 2016; Duffy 2017).

However, unlike the social media influencers and other creative workers studied by these scholars, the actual nature of Emily's media labor was much more personally revealing and affectively gruelling: to be writing and speaking about one's own experience of sexual violence and its aftermath, over and over, ultimately requires more emotional vulnerability than to be posting about the latest fashion trends. For public survivors like Emily, emotional labor converges in multiple layers: from both the unpaid, aspirational nature of her passion-driven media work, but also, more fundamentally, from the sharing of her personal experience of trauma. And yet, these forms of emotional labor appear invisible to the public eye: readers of Emily's columns might be affectively moved by what she is writing about sexual violence, but

they may not be aware of the energy it takes for Emily to convey her experience coherently — and whether she is earning a fee by writing about it.

Holly: 'If you have an emotional story — and they believe you, right? — people will donate money'

Emily's entrepreneurial approach to media visibility was shared by Holly, who nevertheless occupied a different position in relation to her trauma, her economic resources, and subsequently, her attitude towards compensation.

Holly is in her 50s and a survivor of child sexual abuse (CSA). Whereas Emily's experience of rape in her late 20s disrupted her career at the time, Holly followed her childhood experience of trauma by becoming a 'workaholic' (her words) as an adult. Subsequently, she had a very successful and lucrative career working for a major American corporation, but recently quit that job and relocated to Northern Ireland, where her current partner is from. At the time I interviewed her, Holly was training to become a trauma-informed coach and planning to launch a trauma-recovery centre in Northern Ireland. She saw this as the 'second act' of her life, dedicated to helping other survivors, after the first act was spent building her career and economic resources. Unlike Emily, Holly saw herself as being at the very start of her journey as a public survivor.

Because she felt less established as a public survivor, Holly was content to do unpaid media work, to build relationships and gain visibility. She saw the value in 'exposure' and in giving a talk for free because it might help her enterprise in the long run. Crucially, Holly had her own savings from her earlier career, which she was already investing in her training and would invest further in launching her recovery centre. Thus, she clearly viewed her public survivor work as a long-term enterprise she was building, not the freelance gig-to-gig scenario often experienced by precarious cultural workers in trying to chase 'exposure' (McRobbie 2016; Neff et al 2015). If Holly's labor was aspirational (as defined by Duffy), what struck me during her interview was her absolute confidence that it would work out financially:

> It's so needed [my work], the money will come. That's one thing. I am damn well determined to fight for it and work for it. And I know my own work ethic. So I will go out, I have no problem asking [for money], and telling people why and giving real stories. I think I know, I've got some money that I'll just put in, you know, myself. And so that will get some of it done… I'm lucky to be able to not have to worry about it, right?… I just think the money is going to show up. (Holly Dillon interview, Mar 2021)

Like Madeleine, Holly comments that she's 'lucky' not to have to worry about money and has the economic resources to invest in a project she believes in, freeing her of the need to earn money for her survivor speech. At the time of the interview, Holly had done several public talks and several podcasts, and a few months later, delivered a TEDx talk. She envisioned writing a book one day, but hiring someone else to write it, as she didn't particularly enjoy writing herself. She was very clear-eyed about her reasons for this:

> For a long time, I thought, if you don't have a published book, you're not going to be seen… Think of Oprah or Brene [Brown], they're always interviewing people who've written a book. It's always based off a book, right? So I think just having a book gets get you publicity that you wouldn't get just being a normal person... So how can you get the message out there globally? That's one way to do it.

For Holly, having a published book is another entrepreneurial tool for greater visibility — not an artistic project of self-expression, as it was for me. In that sense, Holly exemplifies the enterprising self (Rose 1992), built on ambition, calculation, and personal responsibility. And with her economic resources, she is in a position to hire another person to shoulder the creative and emotional labor of writing her book.

In some ways, Holly's approach to unpaid media labor was not dissimilar to Emily's: as aspirational labor that would build her networks and publicity, and could 'pay off' later down the line. Notably, she was hopeful and confident; she didn't demonstrate the frustration or anxiety that other survivors felt around everyday media practices. This may be because Holly was just at the start of her media journey, but her long-term approach to investment and network-building, and her lack of financial worry speaks to her position of economic stability and her relative cultural capital.

Interestingly, Holly was also very clear about the monetary value of sharing her story. She spoke glowingly of a high-profile fundraising event taking place within a corporate context. As emcee of that event, she was able to raise significant amounts of money for a charity supporting CSA survivors. She explains:

> If you have an emotional story — and they believe you, right? — people will donate money…So telling your story can really I think, help drive funding. So that is another reason [to speak out], right?

Here Holly links survivor speech directly to its money-earning potential, but crucially, the beneficiary of that money is not the survivor herself, but a third party, the charity. Her statement recalls a politics of pity and privilege (Boltanski, 1999; Chouliaraki, 2004) that is often used to mobilize charity donations, but here, the figure of distant suffering is brought much closer, into

the room, for maximum impact. Holly emphasizes two specific aspects of survivor's visible story that are needed for success in this regard: it is emotional and it is believable. Thus, the *emotions* of a survivor's experience have to be visible in order to monetize an audience's empathy, an example of Illouz' 'emotional capitalism' (2007) where emotional and economic discourses and practices are inextricably linked. And the *believability* of a survivor's story is also essential. Extrapolating further, the *unbelievable* story has no value, regardless of how true it is. Thus, in order for this visibility to have any currency, a survivor must take on the emotional labor to ensure her story is believable.

Recall that in Banet-Weiser and Higgins' framework, this believability is achieved through two channels: 1) a survivor's social position (her resources), and 2) her labor. Here, Holly seems to be aware of both forms of resource, and very willing to provide them. She speaks of investing her own money into her enterprise, and she says, 'I know my own work ethic.' But Holly's formulation fits entirely within a neoliberal framework. She speaks of wanting to help others through trauma-informed coaching and a recovery centre for CSA survivors, but all these services are dependent on clients paying for them. Thus, it is a commodified and individualized environment, where the barriers to accessing support are still financial and the barriers to utilizing visibility to promote one's enterprise are also largely financial.

As Scharff argues in her research on digital feminist activists (2023, p.3), neoliberal values have reshaped the attitudes of individual activists who hope to bring about societal and political change: first, through a trend towards monetizing their activism, secondly because 'emotional investments and passion become linked to income generation,' and thirdly, through self-branding and 'performatively producing neoliberal subjectivities.' Holly and Emily demonstrate all these attitudes, but the specificity of rape survivorhood further complicates the question of monetizing, which I will examine in the next section.

Survivors' Visibility, Monetary Value, and the Potential for Exploitation

Let's rephrase Holly's statement above, as it is an intriguing inversion of the dynamic we discussed earlier about survivor speech and money. She seems to be saying that a story of trauma, told by the individual survivor and *freely given*, can help elicit sympathy and monetary donations from the public. But recall Bonny and Rowena's comments earlier: to give your story and *expect* to be paid — or to demand to be paid — comes off as transactional, the behaviour of a Gold-Digger. Thus:

A rape survivor speaks and does not expect to be paid = worthy of donations

But:

A rape survivor speaks and expects to be paid = labeled a gold-digger

In both scenarios, the survivor sharing her story is, in fact, an act of emotional labor. But in the first scenario, the survivor speech is positioned as storytelling, of basic human connection. The survivor is praised as 'brave,' and a third party, often a charity, receives the monetary benefits. In the second scenario, the truth-telling element of the survivor speech is obscured. The survivor may be accused of speaking *in order to be paid* — and ultimately, of unbelievability. By simply shifting the potential recipient of any money, the story's veracity and the moral position of the survivor is called into question. Both these scenarios ignore the emotional labor performed by the individual survivor in sharing her story, even though one scenario recognizes the potential monetary value of her speech and the other negates it. Moreover, both scenarios ignore the material and emotional needs of the survivor herself, in lieu of the discursive value of her speech.

What observations can we draw from this conundrum and Holly's comment? First, that an individual's social position influences their attitudes towards financial compensation and media labor. As we saw with Emily, a survivor in a precarious economic position will naturally be more inclined to worry about money and compensation. Whereas a survivor like Madeleine or Holly, who doesn't 'do it for the money' is more willing to achieve visibility without the expectation of pay, because she sees the long-term gain in her enterprise. Secondly, there is an element of cultural capital at play, in terms of recognizing the game described above and knowing how and when to ask for money. A savvy survivor like Holly knows how to operationalize her story of trauma, to elicit sympathy and monetary donations *to a cause or a charity*, in lieu of a more overt appeal to be individually paid for her labor.

To be clear, Holly does not deny the emotional labor of speaking about her trauma in public. She recalled giving a talk to an online event for a rape crisis centre, and it took her three days to recover from delivering the talk — her energy levels were shot, and she explains 'the trauma has to work its way through your body.' But she did not experience the same layers of emotional labor about being paid or not paid for her survivor speech. Instead she found joy and excitement at the prospect of raising money for a good cause through speaking out. When a survivor does not have the economic need for monetary compensation, the emotional labor of

speaking out can be significantly reduced. Thus, cultural capital acts as an affective cushion for the individual, protecting her from feelings of disappointment or exploitation around pay, and amplifying the potential for positive feelings in speaking out.

Thirdly, this formulation of survivor speech suggests a display rule in what is *allowed* to be visible and what should remain invisible, for maximum public impact. It is acceptable, even encouraged, to show the pain and suffering of victimhood and a triumphant individual journey towards recovery, in order to elicit donations. But what should remain invisible is the emotional cost of speaking out for the survivor, her current desire for compensation, and the intersectional differences of cultural capital that make it so much easier for certain survivors to participate in mediated survivor speech, and so much harder for others.

Survivor-Ambassadors: Visibility in service of a charity

By now we have established how publicly sharing one's traumatic story — and not expecting to be paid — obscures the emotional labor and material needs of the individual survivor. Nevertheless, many a charity has employed the strategy that Holly mentioned, securing individuals to serve as 'survivor ambassadors,' speak at fundraising events and appear in publicity campaigns, and thereby spread the message of the charity. These charity campaigns are an established part of the media landscape, and act as a third party, engaging and training survivor-ambassadors to appear on mainstream media platforms in the name of the charity.

For example, Women's Aid, Woman's Trust, Refuge, Solace Women's Aid, and Karma Nirvana are all charities dedicated to addressing domestic and gender-based abuse, and they all feature 'survivor ambassadors' on their websites. Website visitors are invited to click on a link to 'read her story,' which is framed as one of empowerment. While the pain and suffering of each survivor's experience is a fundamental part of her story, these ultimately end on a positive note, with the survivor recovered and on the way towards a brighter future, often due to the services of the charity she is representing. Thus, the survivor's story is not dissimilar to that of a satisfied client who provides a testimonial to a business's services — but in this case, the client is required to share her story of pain and trauma in order to legitimize her claim.

Website visitors are also invited to apply to be a survivor ambassador themselves, with encouraging testimonials like this one for a charity against honor-based abuse.

> Being a Survivor Ambassador has helped me realise I am not alone and it has given me a platform where I can share my story and help others.
>
> Survivor Ambassador, Pav[19]

The language is familiar and celebratory: this form of survivor speech 'has helped me realise I am not alone' and 'has given me a platform,' emphasizing solidarity and community to redress a painful experience, while also empowering her voice. The testimonial thus serves as an advertisement for the survivor-ambassador experience, exhorting individuals to offer up their time, experience, and stories to join the public discourse around this form of trauma.

What is *not* made visible is whether or not survivor ambassadors are paid for their work, what form of training or support they will receive, and the process for selecting survivor ambassadors. All these obscured elements mobilize layers of emotional labor for individual survivors, offering potential moments of disappointment, anxiety, or fear. Will a survivor be compensated for her time and effort? Will she be clinically supported in going public with her story?

On this particular webpage, there is an implication that the work is voluntary and unpaid; the URL for the survivor-ambassador page falls under the 'get-involved/volunteer' subheading. The webpage offers vague but empowering language, promising 'opportunities for you to tell your story' and 'to help us bring about change.' But there is no acknowledgement that being a survivor ambassador is, in fact, *labor* -- even though individuals are asked to apply for the role in much the same way they would apply for a job. Instead it is advertised as an opportunity for self-actualization and finding a like-minded supportive community. If she applies for the scheme, is there a chance she will be rejected? By failing to offer any information and only emphasizing the positive feelings around survivor-ambassadorship, these charities ironically serve to downplay the emotional labor asked of survivors and their individual material needs.

In turning a critical eye towards these practices around survivor speech, I do not want to deny that these unpaid experiences nevertheless often prove to be valuable ones for individual survivors. I myself and many of the participants in my research have gained much from unpaid opportunities to speak about our trauma. And voluntary opportunities like this, as I noted in Ch. 4, are a necessary starting block for individuals launching more professional and financially compensated careers as public rape survivors.

[19] https://karmanirvana.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer/survivor-ambassadors/

However, in obscuring the labor involved for individuals to become survivor ambassadors and erasing any discussion of pay for their labor — or the monetary value of their speech in terms of fundraising and publicity — these practices serve to co-opt individual survivor speech towards corporate interests and ignore the personal needs of the individual victims who these charities purport to be helping. In my next section I will consider one of my research participants Michelle, whose attempts to speak out about her childhood trauma were in fact co-opted by her employer and proved detrimental to her own mental health, career stability, and livelihood.

Michelle: 'You're basically an asset to us'

Thus far, we have seen an entrepreneurial drive in survivors like Holly, Emily, and Madeleine, who, in varying ways, combined their ideological motivations to speak out through the media with the advancement of their individual enterprises. Michelle, too, initially gained public visibility through an entrepreneurial drive, but this and all her subsequent visibility went towards publicizing a specific charity.

Michelle was suggested to me as an interview participant by Holly. They were both 'public' CSA survivors based in Northern Ireland, but the similarities ended there. Whereas Holly was American and forthright, perhaps armed with the confidence that came from her lucrative corporate career and her nationality, Michelle was Northern Irish, humble, and initially soft-spoken. But she possessed a quiet strength and through her recent experience of 'speaking out,' she had already developed a critical, more cynical edge towards interacting with the media.

When I interviewed her, Michelle was employed as a social worker for a major national charity dedicated to combatting child abuse, a profession she attributes to her own experience of CSA and wanting to help others. But it was only recently that she had 'gone public' about her own experience. During the pandemic, Michelle publicly identified as a CSA survivor on social media; she was embarking on a challenge — running 100 kilometers in 30 days — to raise money for the charity she worked for. Her posts also reflected upon mental health challenges during the lockdown and feelings of captivity and isolation that CSA survivors might be experiencing. The success of Michelle's homegrown social media campaign recalls Holly's comment ('if you tell your story, people will donate'), but it also attracted local media attention. Eventually, she was requisitioned to serve as an informal spokesperson for the charity, by their internal communications team. She describes how they approached her for this media work:

> And then the week after [that first newspaper article], they [the communications team at the charity] had rang to say, 'Oh, you're the only person in Northern Ireland who is willing to show your face and to speak about this stuff publicly. You're basically an asset to us.' And for me at the time, it met a need, it got my voice out there. (Michelle Duffy interview, Apr 2021)

By calling Michelle 'an asset,' the charity acknowledges the economic value of her visibility; she likewise admits that speaking out 'met a need' of hers, emotionally and personally. But this media work was not in her job description for the charity, and in fact, impeded on her workload as a frontline social worker. In essence, Michelle's workload for the employer had doubled, but she was not being paid for this additional labor. If anything, her co-workers on her team began to resent her absences due to the media work, and accused her of being attention-seeking. Michelle explains the difficulties of the situation: she began to resent how her identity and voice were being used by the charity, to the detriment of her own work and her relations with her colleagues, who all assumed she was 'getting special treatment.' But in fact, Michelle had very little control over how her own story was now appearing in the news. After some time, she was no longer given any warning when articles about her were forthcoming in the local newspapers:

> Nobody had mentioned to me that this was in any of those papers. And it was quite a shock when someone messaged you, and your picture's there, and these big headlines of: 'Raped by four people, threw out in the middle of the night in her underwear.'

Michelle's distress is palpable here — and entirely understandable. It recalls the emotions of Palmer's research participants (2018), who experienced outrage, anger, and even existential despair when they realized they had given up control over how they would be represented to the public. But Michelle's reaction is significantly intensified because her media visibility is a sensationalist representation of her own trauma. She also resented how the news articles distorted the truth of her own life experience for their own ends. They seemed to indicate a timeline where Michelle, in childhood, was recognized and 'rescued' from her abusive home situation by social workers, thereby reinforcing the 'saviour' image of charities like her employer. In reality, she tells me that social workers were well aware of her damaging situation, but did very little about it, and she didn't escape that situation until age sixteen, when she went to go live with a boyfriend. But since the news media coverage was functioning as publicity for her employer, her life story was distorted and packaged to trumpet the positive role of child welfare charities, regardless of how unhelpful services like these had been to Michelle in her own childhood.

But again, the specificity of being a *rape survivor* appearing in the media about her trauma cannot be ignored. Three observations here strike me as particularly concerning. First, that Michelle's trauma and victim status were sensationalized by media platforms for maximum emotional impact. The headlines relaying Michelle's story use words such as 'heartbreaking,' 'heartrending,' and 'harrowing,' invoking the figure of the 'abject' victim deserving of pity. While some of the headlines also describe her as 'brave' in taking action against CSA, the majority emphasize Michelle's pain and suffering. As many scholars have explored, mediated visibility of rape victims is often sensationalized to evoke strong emotions and extreme vulnerability, often erasing the victim's own subjectivity and agency (Estrich 1987; Kitzinger 2004; Boyle 2005; Serisier 2018).

Secondly, it is troubling that all these mediations had been instigated by the communications team at her own employer. Thus, a charity dedicated to fighting the reality of CSA was also promoting media narratives that still fed into the sensationalist portrayal of helpless victims in need of a saviour charity. But perhaps, the charity was deliberately invoking a politics of pity to drive interest and donations towards their cause, at the cost of Michelle's own subjectivity and public image.

Thirdly, this charity, which should be aware of the impacts of childhood trauma on mental health, was in fact showing very little concern for its own employee. Their communications team had involved her in mediatizing her story, without taking responsibility for the impact it would have on her as an individual. There was no offer of compensation for her media labor, and when Michelle requested clinical support from the charity to help her cope with her sudden media visibility, but they refused. By the time I interviewed her, five or six months since her first social media postings, she was 'well and truly fucked off' at her employer and looking forward to leaving them, so she could pursue her own enterprise in creative therapy for children who had experienced trauma.

Cultural Capital, Neoliberal Goals, and Recognizing Your Value

Returning to Brighenti's three modes of visibility, Emily, Madeleine, and Holly all were able to achieve a visibility of recognition as individual rape survivors. But Michelle's experience was closer to a visibility of control – veering towards spectacle -- where her story and identity were co-opted and distorted to fit into familiar tropes of pity, in order to serve the needs of her employer. Unsurprisingly, Emily, Madeleine, and Holly were all dealing directly with media

producers and could somewhat negotiate the terms of their visibility. Michelle's interactions with the media largely went through a third party — the communications team at her charity — and as a result she had less control.

It is impossible to ignore the role of class and cultural capital in impacting individual attitudes towards speaking out through the media. Madeleine and Holly clearly spoke with a greater ease around the issue of money, and what it was able to purchase. Emily expressed concerns about money, but still identified herself as North London, middle-class and privileged. While I did not ask Michelle to identify her socioeconomic position, her childhood was one of extreme neglect, marked not only by repeated sexual abuse but also hunger and abandonment. She left school in her teenage years, and did not complete her education until much later in life. She appeared more unsure in her dealings with media professionals, even though she admitted she had learned quickly in recent months. In short, Michelle possessed less cultural capital than the other three participants described here, reinforcing the class divisions that often determine who stands to benefit from mediated visibility (Boyle 2003, 2018; Gill and Orgad, 2018; Banet-Weiser and Higgins 2023). Tellingly, Michelle had also experienced the most severe, sustained abuse from the youngest age, and this trauma, combined with her socioeconomic position, had ultimately affected her later education, her livelihood, her cultural capital, and her confidence with the media in significant ways.

Michelle draws a direct line between education and her ability to deal with authorities and those in power. She describes a decision she made at an earlier point in her life, even after she had escaped the immediate abuse of her childhood and teenage years:

> And I also felt powerless with other professionals and people around me and I thought, you know, if I get a job and education it will give me more power. And more power to my voice.

Here, the 'job and education' grant her more cultural capital and more power to interact with other professionals and, by implication, negotiate and assert her own will. In regard to her recent experience with the media, Michelle admits she was inexperienced and at a disadvantage: 'I probably just regret not being a bit more assertive in terms of [the charity] and what they were putting out there.'

But shortly before my interview with her, she did start to speak up for herself:

> I've now told them [the charity] they've put stuff out in the media that I didn't agree to, and the whole sense of having no control and feeling kind of a bit exploited. They're asking for stuff, like two or three times a week. It's too much. And they're putting the same things out over and over again... I was just saying no, enough's enough, and letting them know it's not okay, what they're doing.

Michelle very closely draws parallels to the issue of consent, recognizing that her own consent was not protected when her employer arranged with media platforms to portray her in a certain way.

Michelle didn't talk at length about the issue of compensation and surprisingly, answered:

> I don't know if I would want to be paid. But I feel like, you know, there's no recognition for how hard it is to do that, put yourself out there. And just the way they [the media] then interpret it [your life experience], and change it about, with no regard for the impact that has. It's kind of put me off doing it for [the charity].'

Even though Michelle emphasizes the emotional labor involved in the media work, she does not equate this with deserving financial compensation. I found this to be an interesting contrast to the opinions of my other participants, who were perhaps more experienced in the media industries. After all, it was only several years into my own journey of speaking out that I started to recognize the value of the content I gave to media producers and asked for a fee. Perhaps, then, an individual's expectation of *deserving* to be paid developed over time, with an increase in cultural capital and one's confidence in the value of their media skills.

Or perhaps Michelle's sentiment was more in line with Rowena's, in not wanting to mix money with her own trauma, to intertwine profit and the ideological value of speaking out. In a very controlling move, the charity had strictly forbidden her from speaking to any media outlets without their involvement. Her negative experience with her employer ultimately led her to end her work with them and take a step back from the media. At the time of the interview, she mentioned wanting to maintain these media contacts, so she might use them herself in the future, for her own enterprise.

When I caught up with Michelle three years after the interview, she had done this. She had launched her counselling service Creative Healing NI, which offers arts-based and talk therapy to young people. And she had appeared in the local news several times to share her story, while also publicizing her enterprise. Like Holly and her trauma-informed coaching venture, Michelle's work on the issue had taken on a neoliberal shape, moving towards monetizing and self-

branding, as Scharff (2023) found in her research with digital feminist activists. Thus, negative experiences with the media and the corporate co-opting of their speech can drive public survivors towards strategies that are more protective of their individual interests, and increasingly more neoliberal. Ironically, survivors may end up directing their activist desires to bring about change towards individualized, monetizable solutions -- both for themselves as public survivors and for the clients who will pay for their services – thereby failing to achieve the transformative, structural change they may have originally envisioned in speaking out.

Still, the ideological and emotional *rewards* of speaking out remain the most discursively visible. When I asked Michelle via Instagram if going public had been worth it, she admitted the high emotional cost of being so visible. But she also explained: 'When I have so many other victims/survivors reach out to me to say they have felt heard, understood and less alone…. then this makes it worthwhile' (private Instagram message, 2024).

This is similar in sentiment to Rowena's comment on her responsibility for speaking for other East Asian sexual assault victims. In fact, every one of my participants acknowledged the intense emotions involved speaking out through the media -- but they also all cited helping other victims and survivors as the ultimate reward.

And if you were to ask me, I would give a similar answer, too.

But the question remains if these emotional and ideological rewards of helping an imagined collective of other survivors truly 'even the ledger' created by the media labor of speaking out – or if we are just telling ourselves that to feel better.

BONUS MATERIAL

Auto-Ethnography:
Writing for a Newspaper over New Year's Holiday
Wiltshire, England, January 2020

> **Text message received:**
>
> **Wed, 1 Jan 2020, 3:49am**
>
> Hello Winnie Li. How are you? Happy New Year. I am not sure you will remember me but I am the journalist from the [LOCAL NEWSPAPER] in Belfast who has interviewed you a few times in recent times. I have heard you have had some wonderful news this Christmas after you gave birth to a little baby boy? I understand you are very busy being a new mum however would you have five minutes for a quick phone call so I can get a few quotes off you as our readers would love to hear your wonderful news. I promise I will not keep you too long. My number in Belfast is [XXXX] or I can call you. Would you be able to let me know as it would have to be today? Thank you.

It was New Years' Day, and I was still in the surreal, sleep-starved haze of new motherhood, having just given birth to my son three weeks' prior. I was hardly sleeping, I was on constant painkillers to recover from a Caesarean, and I was at the beck and call of a newborn who would breastfeed for an hour at a stretch, for most of my waking hours. On the first day of the new year, the last thing I expected to see on my phone was a text message from a Belfast journalist I hardly remembered, hoping for a brief interview that very day. When I saw that text I felt a combination of emotions: annoyed that a journalist had tracked me down on a holiday and encroached into my already chaotic domestic sphere. But also amused that my personal life was deemed of public interest by news outlets in Belfast, and I guess mildly flattered by this.

I could have replied to that text in a number of ways. I could have simply ignored it and let the silence be my answer. I could have briefly texted back: *I'm so sorry, thank you for your interest, but things are too manic right now with the newborn.* (Because they were.) But instead, I wrote back and agreed to be interviewed by the journalist. Instead of a phone conversation, I asked her to email me questions, which I replied to. This was an interview method which I found less intrusive, and which granted me greater control over how my quotes would appear. That next day, that local Belfast newspaper ran a major article on me and the birth of my son, as they felt it would be a 'nice positive story' (her words) to start the new year with.

Off the back of that story, the next day, the editor of *The Belfast Telegraph* (the major regional newspaper in Northern Ireland) asked if I wanted to write a first-person piece for them about

the experience of becoming a mother decades after my rape in Belfast. I had worked with this editor before, writing two prior op-eds about my rape, so we had an existing professional relationship. They would pay me a fee of 100 pounds, and they would need the piece filed by 5pm that day.

Again, I could have said no. But I did a quick calculation in my head, concluded I could write something like that in the space of an hour, asked my mother-in-law to look after the baby for that hour, and frantically typed something out.

The next day, a large photo of myself and my baby from hospital appeared on the front page of *The Belfast Telegraph*, and a further two full pages were taken up with my article,[20] a re-cap of my 2008 assault, and more photos of myself, my partner, and my baby from hospital and at Christmas (Appendix E).

By now, I was accustomed to how surreal it felt to appear in the news. But to have the birth of my son treated as front-page material in a regional newspaper read by the public in Northern Ireland was thoroughly weird, even de-stabilizing. In the intervening years, I have returned to this episode time and time again in my thoughts to wonder why I agreed to collaborate with newspapers and have my son's birth become front-page content for them. What did I gain from doing that? Did I feel compelled to? Obligated to? Was it an act of narcissism?

Recalling Emily's quote in Ch 4, I wonder if my decision was 'driven by ego… [or] because I'm speaking out for people… [or] because I really actually want[ed] to?' Like Emily I doubt — in fact, I know — that my motivations weren't 'very pure.' When I say I did a quick calculation to decide, it wasn't just about the time it would take to write the article, with a newborn on my hands. It was also about what I would get out of the situation. Would it be worth it? Sure, *The Belfast Telegraph* would get a heart-warming human interest story and a well-written article by a unique person of interest. But I would get a paid a fee. As an author, I would get another byline published in a newspaper, and I would get both the creative and the ideological satisfaction of writing that piece.

[20] https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/belfast-rape-victim-winnie-m-li-on-joy-of-first-baby-after-fearing-she-would-never-be-a-mum/38830365.html

As a writer, I always prefer to write my own pieces on a sensitive topic, than to be interviewed. A journalist who chats with you for twenty minutes is only ever going to capture a portrayal that's 'partial and incomplete.' But writing your own piece allows you to convey more accurately the nuance and complexity of a lived experience. So it felt like a unique opportunity to share something important with the public: to make visible the journey from rape victim to 'normal person' — and to tell it in my own words. To show that motherhood *was* possible in the wake of a trauma like sexual violence (something I had doubted for many years), and that life after rape contained the potential for new, positive experiences we could never expect.

Recalling the discussion in Ch. 3, this mixture of motivations led me to collaborate with the media, even on New Year's Day with a newborn on my hands. Yes, there was what Emily called the 'business side' of things: writing an impactful article with front-page visibility would boost my public profile in Northern Ireland and contribute to my self-brand. But as an individual, I also weirdly relished the opportunity this presented: Write an incredibly personal piece while sleep-starved in an hour's time? Challenge accepted. Oddly, it has always been in my personality to push myself to the limits of my professional and practical abilities, just as I had agreed to be filmed by the documentary crew, returning to the very park where I was assaulted.

So this opportunity presented an enticing challenge to me as an author, despite the less-than-favourable work conditions under which it was offered. My decision could thus be seen as 'a labor of love and self-exploitation,' which McRobbie (2002b) and other scholars recognize in the attitudes of female creative workers operating under a 'Do-What-You-Love mantra': a willingness to undertake poorly-paid, freelance work in precarious conditions which don't respect personal boundaries of time, under the promise of creative self-fulfilment (Ursell 2000; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Gill 2011; Conor, Gill, and Taylor 2015) The very female experience at the heart of my article — becoming a mother, even after becoming a rape victim — speaks to the gendered nature of this precarious creative work and the female workers who willingly undertake it. Moreover, it exemplifies a media economy that demands that intimate, even painful, female experience be rendered visible for audiences to consume (Illouz 2007; Berlant 2008). And the more intimate, the more first-hand the account of that experience, the more authentic and meaningful it is.

Notably, the question of believability was never on my mind— after all, *The Belfast Telegraph* had been reporting on my rape and its aftermath for nearly twelve years at this point. The newspaper

thus provided the 'evidential force' confirming me as an authentic rape victim, and granted me the status to write first-hand about my experience. But what does this episode say about the responsibility I felt to write honestly and authentically about my experience, despite the newspaper's preference for something slightly more sentimental?

When commissioning me, the editor asked: 'Can the piece be largely about the joy of becoming a Mum and the healing that has brought?' In other words, don't dwell too much on the trauma and focus on the positive side of your story. Even though she didn't spell it out, I intuited that it was the start of the new year, and readers (and the newspaper) would want something optimistic and wholesome. I saw this as a consumerist demand, but I didn't mind. I agreed willingly ('I understand the need for a positive spin!' I wrote in our private Twitter conversation) but in the final piece, I also didn't shy away from discussing the links between trauma, pregnancy, and motherhood. In fact, I wrote:

> Rape and voluntary motherhood are not experiences you'd imagine to be closely connected. But as women we are so often still subject to the limitations of our biology: how our bodies can be cruelly used by others, or become requisitioned in the process of pregnancy.

(To be fair, I hadn't physically enjoyed the experience of pregnancy and childbirth, and I wasn't going to say everything was wonderful and rosy, simply because a newspaper wanted something positive.) The editor had requested that I write about the 'the joy of becoming a Mum and the healing that has brought.' So I wrote:

> Has becoming a mother helped me heal? I think as rape survivors, we face a lifelong process of healing. But any life experience that can lessen the memory of our trauma, that can put distance between what happened then and where we are now - anything like that is a welcome step towards building a new, brighter life.

In essence, I was never going to say outright that becoming a mother had helped me heal, because that was too simplistic and untrue a statement — and three weeks into being a mother, it wasn't something I would ever claim. I wanted to show a more complicated portrayal of trauma, recovery, and motherhood than what the editor was perhaps hoping for. I was reluctant to reduce my experience of 'rape-victim-turned-mother' to something that simplistic, and had to negotiate between the editor's hopes for an uplifting, positive affect and an article which I felt was more realistic and authentic to my experience. To be too simplistic and upbeat would, I felt, be doing a disservice to other survivors in portraying an unrealistic, idealized journey of recovery.

But I knew my final piece was well-written enough and unique enough — and had been produced under unforgiving enough circumstances — that the editor wasn't going to object to how I'd handled her commission. In essence, I was operating with a fair amount of power here, confident in my relationship with the newspaper, but also in my writing abilities and my unique status as a survivor of a high-profile local rape. Thus, my cultural capital gave me the confidence to interpret the editor's commission in a way that felt more authentic to me as a survivor.

Intimate Publics and Emotional Labor

The final piece and its creation is an interesting example of the intimate publics which Berlant (2008) writes about. The affective labor I performed — sharing an intimate part of my personal life, and producing it under affectively challenging conditions as a new mother — was commissioned and disseminated by the newspaper, in the hopes of creating a mediated 'intimate public,' through which an 'emotional contact' was hopefully made with readers of my piece. These intimate publics are created through the production and dissemination of female-centered cultural texts within a consumerist marketplace — linking consumers emotionally to the female experiences portrayed in the texts. But for me, my ideological aim went beyond simply finding readers, but being able to connect to readers who were also rape survivors. In this sense, the intimate public functions as 'a porous, affective scene of identification among strangers that promises a certain experience of belonging' (Berlant 2008; viii).

I remembered how hopeless I felt in the immediate years after my rape — and in my written piece, I connect that hopelessness directly to the issue of motherhood:

> I especially doubted if I'd ever become a mother, as the long tail of the trauma disrupted my career and finances, the places I lived, my social circles, and - I feared - my chances of ever meeting someone suitable before my child-bearing years came to an end.

This was an issue I rarely saw in public mediations around rape, which often framed the experience through a criminal justice lens (Boyle 2019; Serisier 2018) or a far more sensationalist one (Benedict 1992; Royal 2019) which rarely reflected the subjectivity of the survivor herself. What might reading my piece mean for a reader who had herself experienced sexual violence, and doubted her own chances of motherhood? To reference Berlant, perhaps I hoped that in sharing my own intimate experience, I could emotionally connect with readers who were also

rape survivors and help achieve for them 'a certain experience of belonging.' In a similar way, all my participants discussed wanting to speak out in order to help other survivors. Imogen, for example, wanted to speak to her 'younger self' and 'the silenced others' writing her memoir, and Rowena was very conscious of speaking for/ to other Asian sexual assault survivors unseen by the public. Thus, an imagined community and audience of fellow rape survivors remains an ideological goal for survivors who speak out — even in and amongst more self-oriented concerns like publicity, financial compensation, and professional accomplishment.

And I would say, that sentiment also resonated with me when deciding whether or not to write that article for *The Belfast Telegraph*. But the fee, the high visibility, and the status that came with appearing in a major regional newspaper were all essential deciding factors, too. In short, while I recognized the potential value of my writing to an imagined public, I would not have agreed to creating that article so hurriedly on January 2nd, if I wasn't going to be financially compensated.

This conundrum more than anything exemplifies the multiple publics that a public rape survivor must bear in mind: on one hand, the general, uneducated public which doubts the credibility of a survivor who doesn't appear vulnerable or abject enough. And on the other hand, the sub-altern counter-public of other survivors who believe and identify with us, and most likely want to see a mediated portrayal of a survivor who isn't abject and miserable (Royal 2019)..

Your Story as a Product: Negative Emotions of Guilt and Ambivalence

While I had some control over the content of my article, I had less control over the presentation of it in its public form. To this day I remain proud of the piece I wrote (especially given the constrained conditions under which I created it), but the headlines and its appearance make me cringe. The newspaper's front page has a large smiling photo of me and my sleeping baby in hospital, sandwiched between two other news stories. On the right, a story about Northern Irish politics, and on the left, a much bigger headline: 'Officer's terror as shotgun murder bid fails.' For a newspaper, to have crime, human interest, and politics all on the front page offers broad appeal to the general public. But nonetheless, it felt thoroughly weird and surreal for me and my baby to *be* that front-page human interest story, like a feel-good product advertised for public consumption, and juxtaposed against a sensationalist headline of violence. This is particularly jarring because my own rape had been treated like that sensationalist violent news story, just a decade earlier by that same newspaper. Of course, I understand that newspaper headlines don't

deal in nuance, and need broad, simplistic messages to attract readers. But it is still emotionally jarring, almost like a negation of the violence and the trauma which I experienced.

The headlines and sub-headlines for my story radiate cliched positivity. On the front page: 'Belfast rape victim Winnie M Li writes exclusively… on the joy of her first baby after fearing she'd never become a mum, and how it has been a healing experience for her.' On page three: 'It's impossible to erase the past, but this is such a welcome step in the lifelong process of healing.' This is not actually a quote from my article, but an amalgamation of several lines. None of these headlines are especially offensive or objectionable, but to me, the positive affect feels somehow manufactured. Partly because three weeks into motherhood and recovering from a difficult birth, I didn't especially feel joyful — if anything, overwhelmed and in shock. But it simply seemed strange to have the complexity of my lived experience distilled into a more audience-friendly, simplified form for heightened affect on the front page of a newspaper.

This is in keeping with Palmer's research (2017) with ordinary-people-turned-news-subjects, whose response to seeing themselves in the news was emotional, multilayered, destabilizing or 'just plain weird.' She writes that becoming a news subject should actually be re-named becoming a news object, because 'It is a procedure that strips a living, thinking human of agency and pops him or her out the other end in object form, with no agency at all' (p. 129). In contrast to Palmer's participants, I actually had a fair amount of agency: I had *written* the very piece that was being printed and read, and received a byline and a fee for it. And yet, it still felt weird and jarring to see my story being packaged and marketed with headlines that approximated, but didn't quite capture, how I really felt.

A particular source of my discomfort was the fact that the news story heavily featured my newborn baby, printing four separate photos of him while asleep. Rowena used the word 'icky' to describe her feeling of taking money for her survivor speech, and I would use that word here to describe how I felt about *The Belfast Telegraph* story: basically that I had prostituted my own child for visibility. 'Prostituted' is obviously a strong word here, especially in the context of survivor speech, because it recalls the virgin vs. Vamp dichotomy and the familiar gold-digger accusation levelled at public rape survivors. It also recalls Emily's comment that motivations for a survivor to speak out in public should be 'pure,' i.e. entirely altruistic, and separate from thoughts of money, ego, or career. But nevertheless, it remains the most accurate word to describe the feeling I had: that I had somehow betrayed the innocence of my newborn child, and

used his image, name, and existence as material for a commodified news story, one which brought me visibility and money (albeit, a small amount of money).

Unlike Rowena, I didn't feel 'icky' for taking the money — I recognized my writing labor deserved to be paid, especially when performed under such demanding circumstances. (In fact, upon seeing how prominently the newspaper used my photos, I regretted not asking for a fee for image usage.) It wasn't the amount of money or the even the exchange of money which felt 'icky,' but simply a feeling of exploiting my newborn baby, who was literally sleeping in those mediated photos, and at his age, obviously incapable of giving his consent to be featured on such a public platform. Much scholarship exists around the potential dangers of 'sharenting,' where parents sharing photos and details of their children on social media (Ferrara, Cammisa, et al 2023; Brosch 2016; Blum-Ross 2015), perhaps even as content on a commodified platform as an influencer-parent (Jorge, Maropa, et al 2022; Campana, Van den Bossche, et al 2020). In these studies, parents often cite maintaining community as a justification for their online actions, even as they acknowledge that their children do not necessarily give consent to be visibilized in this way.

In contrast to these 'sharenting' parents who self-present on social media platforms, I was dealing with a mainstream media platform, who had asked for photos of myself and my son. Because the request had been so unexpected, with such a tight deadline when I was otherwise occupied with parenting a newborn, I didn't have the time to fully reflect upon the consequences of sharing those photos. I do not say this to excuse my decision, but I had been operating for so many years as a single author-activist-survivor in the public eye, that I made my decision as I would have months prior: where I readily offered up the emotional landscape of my own life as material to make an activist point about rape survivorhood, trauma, and recovery. But now, as a new mother, it wasn't simply my life that was implicated in this public mediation; it was the identity and story of my son, too. This new role as a mother came with new responsibilities that in sudden, unexpected ways, further complicated my relationship with the media and visibility.

I could claim that 'community' is a good enough reason for sharing photos of my son with that newspaper, but that seems like an ill-fitting, catch-all justification. Sure, readers seeking a feel-good human interest story were very likely drawn to photos of my sleeping, innocent newborn — and if those, paired with the sentimental headlines, led someone to read my article, partake in this intimate public, and gain a more nuanced understanding of life after sexual violence, while

also feeling emotionally connected to my story — well, then, I guess that was a positive outcome. And if there were rape survivors among my readers who felt recognized, validated, 'seen,' even more hopeful as a result of my writing, that was an even better outcome. In general, I felt both the wider public and the sub-altern counter-public of survivors would be satisfied by the end result of my collaboration with *The Belfast Telegraph*.

But how did *I* feel? As an activist and a media practitioner, I felt I had made a sound decision that conveyed an important message, while earning me visibility, creative satisfaction, some money, and professional credibility. But as a new mother, I felt like I hadn't necessarily done the right thing or the best thing for my child. And as a rape survivor, as proud as I was of the article, I couldn't ignore the feeling that this early on in my child's life, his identity and his existence had already been sullied by being mentioned in the same breath — the same headline — as my rape. No matter what, I had become 'famous' for being raped, and seen from one perspective, everything I did and achieved afterwards — even the good stuff — would still fall under the long, inescapable shadow of that trauma. To return to the specificity of being a rape survivor, we, too, cannot always escape the dichotomies of pure/impure and innocent/sullied which dominate mediations of this crime. Even as we recognise the injustice of these dichomitized ways of thinking, perhaps we still long to access a purer, less complicated mode in our lives.

But mainstream media rarely has the space or airtime for such complicated reflections on sexual violence survivorhood. If mediations are affectively disturbing because they only ever circulate a partial, incomplete version of ourselves as a victim-survivor — and never 'our whole selves' as individuals — then the power dynamics, exploitative work conditions, and short time frames of media practice also force us to make decisions as media professionals and activists, but maybe not as our whole selves, as victim-survivors, mothers, daughters, carers, and all the other aspects of our lived experience.

In retrospect, I don't regret collaborating with those Northern Irish newspapers at the start of 2020. I proved to myself that I was still able to write and act impactfully to the public, even as a new mother. I tell myself that years from now, few people will be delving through the back archives of these newspapers to glean information about my son. I probably put more information out about my son on Instagram anyway, and the emotional connection I made with readers, the public glimpse into post-trauma life, as well as all the worldly benefits (the byline, the

publicity, the fee) outweigh any affective discomfort, any guilt or feelings of exploitation that linger about my decision. Over time, that's how I've learned to operate with the mainstream media: using these hard-nosed, rational cost/benefit analyses to trump any emotional ambivalence I feel about each media encounter.

It's an imperfect solution, but it does the job.

So that's it: done and dusted. And the only way I can really handle the surreality of it — the sharing of an incredibly intimate part of my life with an anonymous public — is to compartmentalise it and let go of that particular media encounter. To say: it's out there, I did a good enough job, now onto the next thing.

Chapter 8

Conclusion: When can we stop working?

Auto-ethnography:
Live on The Ryan Tubridy Show, RTE Radio One, July 2022[21]
Wiltshire, England

RYAN TUBRIDY: You say that you've told the story [of your rape] so many times, Winnie, that it's easy to say it and then get on with it. Are there times when you tell that story, when you 'let it in'?

[Pause]

Does that make sense? Maybe I'm not asking it the right way.

ME: Um…. I know what you're saying, and I think… we're obviously on live radio, so I'm not going to do it on live radio and break down, even though that might be better —

RYAN TUBRIDY: On the contrary, actually. But go on, yeah —

ME: Exactly, because people want real emotion. I think, um… [pause] Yeah, not anymore. Because I've become so professionalized in talking about it, right? That if I 'let it in,' and let the emotions get to me every single time, like, I would be a complete wreck, right? So there is a professionalization of needing to speak about that story and speak about my own trauma in a way which is coherent and has impact. And maybe not the kind of raw emotional impact that possibly [media] producers are looking for, but in a way which allows me to tell the story and have control over it.

[…]

RYAN TUBRIDY: You've said that trauma isn't always a person shaking, crying, or visibly falling apart. A lot of people are very uncomfortable with someone who's been traumatized…. And don't really want to discuss it.

ME: Yeah, exactly. And I think a lot of us have trauma that we have to hide. But how do you talk about the trauma in a way that's effective and doesn't make people feel uncomfortable? Because I think once people get uncomfortable, and they turn off the radio and they don't want to listen, then actually, that conversation isn't happening. So it's precisely the silence around trauma, the unwillingness to speak about this, that leaves that gap wide open. And that's where rape myths and all sorts of misperceptions about sexual violence and other forms of trauma come in. So I think if we speak honestly and openly about it — which requires a certain level of coherence, right? — then people maybe start to get an insight into what the actual experience is like.

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[21] https://www.rte.ie/radio/radio1/clips/22120652/

It was the summer of 2022, more than fourteen years after my rape, and I was *still* being asked — on live public radio — to summarize what had happened to me in that park in Belfast in 2008. I didn't mind. I was promoting my second novel, *Complicit*, and I knew this was part of the deal when it came to the media: tell them the story of your rape, get publicity for your novel.

This was especially true for Irish audiences, who over the years, may have gained some familiarity with my story, from the initial news media coverage of my assault, my subsequent media visibility, and my books. Because no media interview would be complete without some recap of my rape. In this way, the transactional nature of mainstream media visibility had become fully transparent to me. In this round of media coverage, I wasn't being paid a contributor fee by any of the TV or radio platforms, and I understood: the visibility *was* the compensation. In boosting greater awareness of my book, I would, ostensibly, be rewarded by higher book sales. It was labor I would perform willingly, while my book publishers would earn the majority of the profit.

I had, by now, lost count of how many times I had narrated the story of my rape in a variety of scenarios: in person to an audience of hundreds, aided by PowerPoint slides; over Zoom to a faceless grid of names on a screen; in front of the camera, to the director of a TV documentary; to a news presenter seated next to me in a TV studio — and even now, in my own home, where through Zoom, I had been 'patched into' a live, in-depth interview with Ryan Tubridy, one of Ireland's leading radio and TV presenters. Telling the story of my rape had become a standard part of my professional repertoire, a task that no longer evoked anxiety or nervousness in me.

With so many media interviews under my belt, they often seemed to blend into each other. But this particular interview proved memorable to me. It was not just the chatty, friendly approach of Ryan Tubridy (for which he had become well-known as an Irish media personality). His tone put me at ease, but I found myself enjoying the opportunity to verbally spar with a presenter who wasn't shy to ask more revealing questions.

What did he mean with this question: *'Are there times when you tell that story, when you let it 'in'?'*

Let *what* in? Tubridy seemed to be referring to my emotions. The implicit question seemed to be: how could a rape survivor share her story of trauma and not break down crying? Why weren't my emotions more visible? Had I closed them off somehow?

It was not the first time I had encountered a query about my seeming lack of emotions as a rape survivor. In the months after my rape, I would relay the story of my rape matter-of-factly to friends, who would say that they hoped 'I was getting a chance to properly grieve about what happened.' These comments from friends were expressions of care, concern that I, a newfound victim of violent crime, deserved to be able to vent my feelings around the trauma somehow.

But fourteen years after the assault, on a live radio appearance to promote my latest novel, this similar query from a radio presenter evoked a different response in me. Because it seemed to suggest, that surely, the trauma of sexual violence should make me more *emotional*; that crying and being upset was the real, authentic behaviour of a rape victim. To be clear, Tubridy wasn't questioning my truth in this mediated 'economy of believability' for rape survivors (Banet-Weiser and Higgins, 2023). But he was suggesting that perhaps that I was putting up a front for the media by restraining my emotions. For me, this sentiment veered dangerously close to the popular expectation that rape victims are 'emotional basket-cases' (Alcoff, 2018): weak, irrational, incapable of controlling our behaviour and reactions.

But if by implication, I wasn't letting in my true emotions, then I wasn't being authentic, either.

My response to him attempted to shut down that stereotype. Effectively, I was saying: 'I'm not going to become that tearful victim, because that's not who I am anymore.' By now, I was a professional; I had grown away from the actual trauma and towards a more polished, more productive public discourse around rape. Throughout our dialogue, Tubridy and I consistently posit the two images against each other: the tearful, emotional rape *victim*, ruled by her own tumultuous feelings, vs the coherent, effective *professional* who performs an act of emotional labor, skilfully managing her emotions when discussing trauma. Perhaps both roles do have an impact on an audience, but I suggested that the former renders a raw, emotive, even uncomfortable impact on listeners, while the latter is a positive, educative impact.

In our discussion, Tubridy and I are dancing around this key question: How we publicly *communicate* about trauma, and specifically, how rape survivors are expected to communicate about *our own trauma.*

And that was the crux: it was *my trauma* and I could communicate about it however I wanted. For me, that meant not crying on live radio. But it was about much more than simply staving back

tears. In reality, I would never allow the tears to come, because my emotional regulation worked at a much deeper level, one that was tied to my own value system. Since childhood, I had harbored such an aversion to appearing weak and needy — and in my mind, traditionally feminine — that even when discussing my own experience of rape, I could not, would not, do it in a way that allowed me to be publicly seen as incapable or frightened (even though I certainly felt frightened at times). In eliminating a visible display of tearful emotion from my story, I was communicating a certain personal image of strength and self-sufficiency, but one which potentially undermined my external believability as a victim, because I simply wasn't 'emotional enough.'

My radio conversation with Tubridy indicates the pitfalls and complexities around a professionalized management of emotions: specifically, the emotional labor of speaking about your own trauma on a mainstream media platform. But this goes far beyond the 'surface acting' (Hochschild, 1983), where we alter our behaviour to appear more pleasant and accommodating. And even beyond the 'deep acting' where we actively try to change our attitudes around a situation. This is rooted fundamentally in our self-belief and value systems, in honoring my values around independence, self-sufficiency, and how I wanted to present myself. Just as individuals have unique and different reactions to trauma (Herman, 1992), we also have unique and different reactions to discussing our trauma in public.

And yet, rape survivors are subjected to such a one-size-fits-all judgement of our public speech and appearance. This often fails to consider the singular complexities and value systems of ourselves as individuals, which surely influence our reaction to trauma, our behaviour, our ongoing decisions, and the way we talk about what happened to us. To have a such a short-sighted, judgmental understanding of trauma and human complexity can only be damaging to those of us who live and experience trauma in a myriad of ways.

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A few hours after my RTE Radio One interview with Ryan Tubridy, I had another radio interview on BBC Radio 5 Live, which felt entirely different. *That* radio interviewer, Nihal Arthanayake, also male, had taken a very serious, somber approach to questioning me about the impact of sexual violence. Perhaps his demeanour was intended to match the seriousness of the topic, or perhaps he felt uncomfortable about the topic. But the overall effect left me feeling cold.

Arthanayake did not appear to have actually read my book, and I wasn't surprised by this. I don't expect a professional radio presenter hosting a slew of guests across a daily three-hour show to have read all his guests' books. But whereas Tubridy had put in the emotional labor to make me feel like a welcome guest on his show, and I had responded back, Arthanayake seemed to just be going through the motions.

In short, speaking to him felt like *work*.

But who cares?

It *was* work. I was promoting my book, and appearing on the BBC Radio 5 Live show was still worth it for me professionally, even if it wasn't hugely enjoyable. So the ledger of my emotional labor – what I was putting in, and what I was getting back -- was still evened by the publicity I was receiving.

Yet the experience felt entirely different because Tubridy had made the effort to engage me in a more humane way, acknowledging the emotional impact of my trauma. I was not simply an author with a book to promote, but an author who was also addressing her experience of rape. In that sense, Tubridy's approach was to engage with 'the whole of me,' not just me as an author or a rape survivor.

Of course, Arthanayake may have been having a bad day, or maybe he was given little time to prepare for my interview. Unless we're on the inside, it's impossible to know the particular working conditions of how a media show is run behind the scenes: the politics of programming, the pressures of budget and timing. But all these have an impact on the guests and interviewees experiencing the media visibility — and ultimately, on the media content that is broadcast to the public. These elements of everyday media practice like a presenter's demeanour and interviewing style — these individual expenditures of emotional labor — can greatly impact the lived experiences and subsequent emotional labor of public rape survivors who appear on mainstream media.

The media is a professional space, but each interview and each interaction is a human one: between interviewer and interviewee, journalist and subject, writer and editor. And even for the most seasoned of us, we retain a memory of the warmth or coldness, the competence or incompetence, the compensation or under-compensation of these human encounters. As a writer and public rape survivor, I operate within a web of professional media contacts, and I

have specific affinities towards individual journalists, editors, critics, producers, filmmakers, colleagues, and platforms whom I would want to work with again — and those whom I would prefer not to. But might still choose to, for the benefit of the visibility.

Emotional labor is the determining factor in many of these instances. Does it feel like 'work' to be working with these people? Or is the emotional labor somehow mitigated or rendered enjoyable, through some combination of rapport, co-creative energy, and shared ideology? In the long run, the decision to sustain my media visibility as a rape survivor seems to be largely determined by whether or not the emotional labor is worth it.

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In this final chapter, I present my formulation of the public rape survivor, who, in sharing her identity and her story of trauma through mainstream media platforms, experiences significant, multiple layers of emotional labor. Ultimately, sustained media visibility relies on whether the individual survivor feels the emotional labor of being public and collaborating with the media is 'worth it,' a decision which increasingly falls along individualist, neoliberal lines, despite the initial altruistic intentions of speaking out.

In the first part of this chapter, I will briefly review my research questions and summarise my empirical findings. I will then proceed to the claims which emerge from these results, and my formulation of the public rape survivor and the emotional labor demanded of her.

In the next section, I explore the original contributions of my research to two bodies of literature: first, trauma studies, in particular the experiences and subjectivities of rape survivors; and secondly, feminist media studies, especially regarding survivor speech and labor within the creative and cultural industries. I also present my theoretical contribution to understanding a convergence of emotional labor, and my methodological contributions in combining data collection methods and reflecting upon the emotional labor of academic research itself.

In the third section of this chapter, I address the significance of my project for future policy, practice, and research around sexual violence survivors and the media. I suggest improved standards of 'best practice' for media producers and platforms seeking to work with survivors, as well as future areas of academic research that can expand upon the limited scope of my own

study. But I also reflect upon the wider project of eliminating sexual violence and how my research fits into the larger picture of public, mediated discourses around gendered violence that still need much improvement.

And finally, I reflect upon my own future trajectory as a public survivor, writer, and researcher, alongside those of my fellow survivors and interview participants. If the work of challenging sexual violence is never-ending, how do we put an ending to a piece of work — and how do we achieve that much-desired state called 'closure' in addressing our own trauma and the ways we publicly communicate about it?

Research Questions

My project sought to answer these three research questions through the data I collected via auto-ethnography and interviews:

R1: What are the motivations, challenges, and conditions for individual sexual violence survivors to initially achieve a public visibility through the mainstream media around their experiences of trauma?

R2: What is the emotional labor involved in maintaining this ongoing media visibility for individual survivors, and how is it negotiated, justified, and compensated within the workplace of mainstream media?

R3: How do intersectional differences impact individual attitudes, emotions, and strategies towards the labor of this media visibility, as it is performed and felt by survivors?

In this section, I will outline my empirical findings presented in Ch 4-7, and how these relate to the research questions I posed. Like the overall structure of my dissertation, these empirical chapters also followed a basic chronological structure, tracking survivors' journeys from private trauma towards our first public appearances on mainstream media, and then our ongoing collaborations with media platforms over the years. Because my data collection was longitudinal as well, encompassing my own media encounters from 2008 until 2022, the answers to these research questions would shift over time: an individual survivor's motivations, challenges, attitudes, strategies, etc in regard to media visibility were constantly evolving in relation to her

own trauma, life trajectory, and personal and professional desires. It is important to keep this notion of time and personal growth in mind, and I will highlight its impacts in the following summary.

SUMMARY OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Chapter 4
Beginnings, Motivations, and Conditions for Entering into Media Visibility

What prompts a rape survivor to 'go public' with her story of trauma? My first empirical chapter began with an auto-ethnographic account of my first-ever live radio interview about my rape. This took place in 2012, four-and-a-half years after the assault. I reflected upon my motivations for saying yes to this interview request, even though by then, I had successfully 'moved on' from the immediate trauma and rebuilt my life. I then draw from the interview data to summarize my participants' initial entrances into mainstream media visibility. These 'entrances' or 'first times' were all intentional on the part of the survivor, a journey towards visibility that they had been building towards for years.

I found that my participants' narratives of their entrances into mainstream media and their motivations for doing so were complex, multi-layered, and even diffuse. In fact, survivors often found it hard to pinpoint their 'first time.' Their accounts of these initial stages of media visibility were characterized by mixed motivations: both ideological goals to educate the public and help other survivors, but also personal motivations, both liberatory and more material, in aiming for publicity. Emily felt ambivalent about having both activist, community-serving motivations and more worldly, professional ones.

I identified two characteristics in survivors' entrances into mainstream media visibility. First, the 'gradual runway' towards media visibility, meaning the step-by-step process by which individual survivors could gain skills and media contacts, build their confidence, and find a supportive environment for publicly speaking out. Secondly, individual survivors were often galvanized into action by encountering a media portrayal of sexual violence that was misogynist, insulting, or inaccurate in representing the lived experience— and seemed to demand someone to speak out

against it. In many instances, this served as the spark that ignited an individual survivor's long-gestating desire to participate in the public discourse around sexual violence.

I observed five conditions that enabled individual survivors to achieve mainstream media visibility. These were: an ability to control their anonymity and pseudonymity; usage of different types of media; supportive environments; time to recover from their trauma, grow, and develop professionally; and finally, the cultural capital that aided a survivor's access to and ability to navigate the often exclusive world of mainstream media production. Thus, intersectional differences of class, race, education, ability, nationality, etc undoubtedly play a part in the amount of cultural capital that a survivor wields within her environment, which in turn affects her likelihood of achieving and benefitting from mainstream media visibility.

Feminist media scholars have long established this link between cultural capital and media visibility, especially in relation to public rape survivors and survivor speech (Benedict 1992; Boyle 2003, 2019; Serisier 2018; Banet-Weiser and Higgins 2023). My findings confirm this, with granular detail demonstrating how specific skillsets and aspects of cultural capital aid the achievement of media visibility. Interestingly, the data also highlights the advantage of time and professional experience in enabling a survivor's journey with mainstream media, whereas previous literature often focused on younger feminist activists who employ digital media to speak out (Horeck, et.al, 2023; Mendes et.al, 2019; 2020; Rentschler, 2014)

These findings indicate that individual survivors' journeys in the mainstream media were agentic and intentional, unlike the more passive image of an unsuspecting private citizen suddenly 'door-stepped' by a pushy journalist (Malcolm 1990; Palmer 2017). These survivors' journeys in media often unfolded through a series of unplanned opportunities, but they drew upon an individual survivor's existing skillsets, networks, and desire to speak out. Nevertheless, the emotional labor in these early stages of media visibility was extreme. Negative feelings included a fear of what others might think, a fear of being vulnerable, the anxiety of speaking or appearing well in public, and a residual shame over being a rape survivor. Positive feelings included pride, excitement, and sense of accomplishment in speaking out for other survivors and achieving a long-time goal.

This chapter addressed all three of the research questions, although the focus was always on the early stages of a survivor's media visibility. More sustained media visibility led to an evolution in

the emotions, desires, and strategies for individual survivors, as I demonstrated in the next empirical chapter.

Chapter 5
Costs: The Emotional Labor of Mainstream Media Visibility

My second empirical chapter opens with an auto-ethnographic account of me, detailing the extreme emotional labor I experienced in 2016 filming a TV documentary, which had brought me back to the park where I was raped. I reflect on the deep acting I was performing on myself to get through this media project. So much of this emotional labor was not just related to the trauma, but more specifically to the pressures related to media visibility.

This chapter examined the different forms of emotional labor that survivors experience in our ongoing journeys of mainstream media visibility. More specifically, I explored the ways in which public rape survivors *police ourselves* emotionally and discursively in relation to our media appearances, and how we *are policed* visually, aesthetically, and narratively by mainstream media producers — resulting in further emotional labor for ourselves. Brighenti (2015) writes that visibility oscillates between recognition and control, and we see this in play when applied to public rape survivors, our images are often distorted to conform to two very disparate, predominant tropes: the abject, weak victim with the ruined life vs the triumphant, glamorized heroine who has overcome adversity.

Taking the notion of the 'partial, circulating self' from Palmer's study of private citizens who appeared in news media (2017), I expanded upon this in relation to mediated rape survivors, whose identities and specific subjectivities are often 'flattened' (Boyle 2018; Banet-Weiser and Higgins 2023). Many survivors found it initially disorienting or unsettling to know that there was an incomplete representation of themselves circulating freely in public discourse, and that this portrayal was specifically linked to their identity as a rape victim. One participant stated that she wished the media could represent 'the whole of me,' not just the parts of her that were a victim-survivor. But for minoritized survivors, the emotions surrounding partial media representations of themselves were particularly acute. For example, East Asian participants were painfully aware when their race was heightened or erased in media portrayals of them. Other survivors were both policed and self-policed in eliminating their sexual histories from media visibility, even

though these parts of their lives may have offered them pleasure and joy in the past. The emotions regarding this kind of policing and self-policing included sadness, anger, frustration, and resignation.

Nevertheless, the findings indicate that public rape survivors are far from naive, are highly aware of the dominant media tropes around sexual violence, and actively negotiated with media platforms to improve representations of themselves and of the issue. With increased experience, survivors can become more selective, choosing to decline media opportunities if the behaviour of the media platform, the framing of themselves or the issue doesn't feel right. In this sense, public survivors often see media visibility as a 'trade-off,' a pact with mainstream media platforms to allow a circulating representation of themselves which will always be partial and slightly inaccurate, in exchange for the greater benefit of media visibility. This visibility could serve a transformative purpose in improving the public understanding of sexual violence, but also a more practical one in providing publicity for one's own business, enterprise, or profile.

The final section of my chapter explored the aesthetic policing performed on survivors by media platforms, and the specific emotional ramifications around bodily autonomy and control that this brings for a survivor of sexual violence. While a general expectation to look attractive and glamorous exists for women in the media, this standard, when applied to public rape survivors is especially complex. Individual survivors must contend with the aesthetic labor of styling one's own makeup, hair, and wardrobe for public appearances, expend significant economic capital to achieve this, or learn to negotiate with media producers around aesthetic expectations and provisions. Aesthetic standards often conform to middle-class values around a visually appealing respectability, invoking the virgin vs vamp dichotomy for mediated rape victims (Benedict, 1992). And media platforms' demands on an individual's appearance can violate a survivor's sense of bodily autonomy and safety, triggering intense emotional reactions. Conversely, survivors also have to contend with media platforms selecting photos of themselves which emphasize their vulnerability and misery, to fulfill images of the abject, weak victim.

In a journey of ongoing media visibility, the emotional labor for survivors often changed from the initial fear, anxiety, and excitement of appearing in the media to an ongoing frustration with media practices and exhaustion by constant performance for and negotiation with media platforms. Increasingly, questions of whether or not this trade-off is 'worth it' emerge, which I explored in the remaining empirical chapters.

Chapter 6:
Compensation: Monetary Pay for Media Labor

The third empirical chapter began with an auto-ethnographic section capturing an email negotiation in 2016 between myself and an Irish documentary producer, where I argued to be paid a fee for two intense days of filming with them. This episode illustrated a turning point in the course of my mainstream media visibility: when I realized that I was performing labor for media platforms, and that that labor deserved to be compensated.

This chapter investigated questions of monetary compensation for survivor speech and how survivors felt about it. If initial stages of media visibility are marked by strong emotions like anxiety, fear, pride, self-actualization, and a perceived boost in status and credibility (Palmer, 2018), later stages prompt survivors to realize the repeated effort of speaking out is, in fact, labor.

However, survivors have varied responses and experiences to the question of monetary compensation. Asked if they had been paid for their media labor, most survivors answered no. Nominal amounts were paid, but overall their experiences reflect a general media practice whereby monetary compensation is not offered to survivors by the media platforms who approach them. Often the answer from media platforms was simply 'we don't pay,' similar to what I experienced when I initially asked for a fee from the documentary producer. The lack of pay, and having to negotiate for pay, resulted in additional emotional labor for survivors – anger, frustration, outrage, anxiety – notably among those individuals who were less financially stable.

How did the survivors feel about asking for pay? I received some surprising answers here. Most survivors felt that their labor should be paid, but some felt uncomfortable about the 'transactional' appearance of asking for money as rape survivors. This suggested a display rule whereby survivor speech should be visibly motivated by altruism, and any hint of individual gain was to be avoided.

In the second part of the chapter, I investigated the roots of this display rule, tracing it to the 'Gold-Digger' stereotype that historically has been cast upon public victims. This is a variant of victim-blaming, suggesting that women publicly claim rape victim status in order to seek

attention and profit financially. The Gold-Digger stereotype is alive and well today, as evidenced by social media comments surrounding public survivors. Despite being an actual victim and having borne significant emotional, professional, and financial costs by going public, Rowena, for example, insisted on not asking for money for any of her extensive media labor. This demonstrates that once more public rape survivors are highly aware of victim-blaming stereotypes, not only policing their visible discourse but also their behind-the-scenes interactions fit within these narrow constraints of acceptable behaviour.

Finally, I examine the external media conditions that enable and encourage the non-payment of survivors. The first of these is a journalistic practice of not paying sources, in a bid to avoid the accusation of checkbook journalism. This practice coincides with an ideology whereby the truth cannot be tainted by money, but perhaps that too is a display rule which conveniently ignores the material reality of mediated speech. Thus, some journalists advocate compensating sources who have experienced trauma that is being made visible through the media, and are giving significant time and effort to media platforms.

The second external factor is the exploitative work conditions of the creative industries, where individual workers are poorly paid, made to negotiate their fees independently, and treated as expendable. However, I question if these conditions should really apply to public rape survivors, who possess a rare combination of traits: a unique lived experience and the communicative skills to talk and write about it. Nevertheless, because so few mediated survivors speak up about pay, these practices of poor compensation are perpetuated. In the final chapter, I investigate the deeper implications of this practice.

Chapter 7
Rewards: Media Labor and the Hidden Role of Cultural Capital

If mediated survivors repeatedly go un-paid, then the only individuals who are able to sustain media visibility are those who don't need to be paid – i.e. those in a position of economic stability. Socioeconomic and cultural capital is thus the hidden reserve which ultimately enables specific survivors to succeed in their media visibility. And in lieu of monetary pay, survivors often seek compensation in two ways: through a strategic use of visibility as publicity, and

emotionally, through the appreciation they receive, imagined solidarity, and feeling of 'having done good' for other survivors.

The first part of this chapter investigates how cultural capital continues to determine not just which survivors attain media visibility, but how they are able to develop it and benefit from it. I use the case study of Madeleine, who drew from her economic stability and cultural capital to explore recovery, healing, memoir-writing, and media work, transforming her 'passion' of speaking out into a career with some income. This is in direct contrast with Rowena, who despite having high cultural capital which enabled her to participate in #MeToo media, has been constrained by the sudden intensity of her media visibility, and public judgement of the NDA she signed. Recently, she has begun to capitalize on her visibility by earning income as a public speaker.

The second part of the chapter explores the non-monetary rewards which survivors seek as compensation for their media labor. Visibility can serve strategically as publicity for a survivor's own enterprise. Holly, for example, takes a very entrepreneurial approach towards speaking out and the role it can play in building her network and visibility for her own survivor-focused enterprises. Emily, too, had a similar approach. Both of them possessed cultural capital from their previous careers, enabling them to think strategically about their media visibility.

In contrast, the third part of the chapter examines how survivor speech can be exploited by media platforms, especially for survivors with less cultural capital. Charities often recruit survivor-ambassadors under ambiguous conditions, where the labor they perform is positioned as a chance to speak out and contribute one's voice to a community. Yet their presence serves as publicity for the charities' fundraising ventures. In a similar way, Michelle's decision to go public as a CSA survivor led to her being requisitioned by the media team at her employer (a charity). But she had little control over her media visibility, felt exploited, and eventually asked to stop. Her negative experience led her to reassess her goals in media visibility, and she ultimately left her employer to launch her own enterprise in offering counselling for abused children.

These case studies indicate how each survivor's unique, intersectional particularities – particularly her cultural capital -- can impact the outcomes of her media visibility. Due to the high emotional costs and potential for exploitation, survivors increasingly applied a neoliberal approach to their visibility, protecting their individual interests and goals in order for their media labor to feel

'worth it.' In a media landscape where so much is constrained by money and profit-making practices, the only way to maintain an ongoing media visibility is to turn a profit oneself.

Thus, a survivor's initial motivations to speak out for collective change and to help others potentially evolves towards seeking media visibility to promote their individual, commodified enterprises, where other survivors can serve as a future clients. It is a neoliberal move, prescribed by the media environment, and ultimately serves to address survivors' individual goals and desires, but not bring about structural change around sexual violence.

Meanwhile, the ideological reward of helping the larger community of survivors remains the emotional compensation that survivors often use to 'balance the ledger' and justify their media work – but is this truly satisfactory?

CLAIMS

Drawing upon these findings, I will now summarize the claims I would like to make, many of which I have suggested throughout this dissertation.

First, I present my formulation of the public rape survivor who is visible on mainstream media, and whose visibility is produced by her own creative labor, by collaborating with media professionals. The public survivor is often driven to speak out from mixture of motivations, including a desire to help other survivors, change the public understanding of rape, and achieve self-actualization, though there may be professional aims as well. She simultaneously occupies multiple subjectivities: she is a survivor of trauma, but also a highly visible, mediated female figure, and also a creative worker within the media industries. Each of these subjectivities brings with it a different form of emotional labor.

Secondly, the media visibility of rape survivors demands a high level of emotional labor, which is intense and multi-layered. I devise a typology of seven types of emotional labor that can converge upon a public survivor; each form of emotional labor is already established in existing scholarship. They are: 1) the emotion work of surviving rape, 2) the emotional labor of being professionally engaged with sexual violence, 3) the emotional labor of activism, 4) of being visible in the media, 5) of performing the self on media platforms, 6) of working in the creative

industries, and 7) of relational labor. Each of these forms demands that the individual survivor manage her feelings according to acceptable display rules and feeling rules. In performing these multiple forms of emotional labor, the public survivor creates a media product for in a commodified marketplace.

Thirdly, the media visibility that is created by this labor is a partial, imperfect, and often distorted representation of the survivor, which can be inflected by intersectional differences like race, class, sexuality, and type of survivorhood. Nevertheless, many survivors see this partial, imperfect representation as part of a trade-off, in exchange for other benefits conferred by the media visibility. In time, individual survivors learn to negotiate their visibility with media platforms to their own ends, although this negotiation also demands further emotional labor.

Fourth, the media labor and emotional labor of rape survivors is poorly compensated. Unlike Hochschild's original definition of emotional labor (1983), the mediated survivor as worker often is not paid a wage for her labor, despite a profit being earned from it by the media platform. This suggests deep inequalities about the working conditions of the media, and a mismatch between the discursive and societal value of survivor speech, and the compensation paid out to the survivor who performs that speech. The personal costs and investments of performing that labor are high, but they are not levelled off with adequate pay. This lack of pay is often justified by a public claim towards truth-telling: the intrinsic altruistic value of the truth, which should not be equated to money, both in the rhetoric of ethical journalism and in the tendency to stereotype the public rape victim as a Gold-Digger. But this emphasis on the ideological obscures the material needs of the individual survivor, while justifying the economically precarious work conditions of the media.

Fifth, the lack of pay intensifies the emotional and financial pressure on those survivors who have less money, ultimately privileging those from higher socioeconomic positions. Cultural capital is the main determining factor in the success of a survivor's visibility and her ability to capitalize on it. But other intersectional categories, like race, type of assault, age can also significantly impact a survivor's experience of media visibility, its outcomes, and income-earning potential.

Sixth, as public survivors become more adept at managing their media visibility, there is a will towards professionalizing, where individual careers and enterprises related to sexual violence

survivorhood can start to earn an income for the survivor. But this ultimately leads to a neoliberal approach to media visibility, as a tool to help achieve individual success and help other survivors though commodified means. But the goal is no longer to achieve structural change in challenging sexual violence.

And yet, public survivors still cite helping the wider community of survivors as their primary goal in speaking out. This emotional reward and the genuine connection and solidarity they may feel with other survivors serves as a form of compensation. For some survivors, it does not fully rectify their feelings of being underpaid for their media labor, but it is their attempt to balance the ledger.

It is a concern that the claim to activism and truth-telling obscures the commercial reality of the media project, which is that media producers often want to save money on its production, at the expense of 'non-professional' contributors like rape survivors and activists. This places survivors in a double bind: to raise the issue of money and financial compensation makes them appear greedy and self-serving, in an environment where there is such a high emphasis placed on the nobility, innocence, and altruistic motivations for a victim to speak out and be believed.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCHOLARSHIP

My research has made valuable contributions to several fields: feminist media studies, trauma and survivor studies, and creative labor studies. I drew upon all three of these fields to situate my inquiry, bringing together a knowledge of the lived reality of surviving rape with the rich body of feminist research on media representations of sexual violence and survivors, as well as the visible female worker-subject. This brought me in dialogue with creative labor studies and the challenging, underpaid work conditions that constrain individual workers in the media industries.

What I brought to these literatures was an understanding of everyday media practice and how it emerged in the experiences of sexual violence survivors who collaborate with mainstream media platforms to achieve media visibility. By situating this media visibility as the result of labor performed by the individual survivors, I was able to mobilize a discussion of survivors' emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983), the management of their feelings within the workplace of the media industries, in order to produce a specific mediated visibility as a public rape survivor. If work, money, and emotions are closely intertwined for the contemporary worker-subject, then

these inter-linkages are particularly acute for public survivors, who in performing their media labor, occupy a potentially emotional position and contribute to emotionally powerful media products for very little pay. Thus, I have used the concept of emotional labor to link these three literatures and position public rape survivors as simultaneously, survivors of trauma, highly visible media subjects, and creative workers.

In regard to trauma and survivor studies, my research has focused on a unique subset of sexual violence survivors: those who have chosen to go public on mainstream media platforms with their identities and their experiences of trauma. While this challenges traditional assumptions of shame and silence (Aandalibi et al., 2018; Koss, 1985) around rape victimhood, it also indicates that some survivors make the agentic decision to publicly demonstrate a different model of survivorhood through collaborating with the media. Why they choose to do this can come from a mixture of decisions, both personal, ideological, and professional. While sexual violence fundamentally alters the economic and professional trajectories of victims (Loya, 2015), then public survivors are a unique subset of individuals who can potentially craft new careers or income streams as a result of their survivor identity, but in combination with intense emotional labor and the development of specific communicative skills. Just as socioeconomic advantages aid individual survivors in their recovery from sexual violence (Loya, 2014), these advantages also aid public survivors in achieving and maintaining media visibility. And intersectional differences of individual survivors like race, are further amplified by the media, with mixed emotional impacts on the survivor herself. Finally, everyday media practice – if done badly – can potentially retraumatize survivors and reanimate previous psychic injuries, such as a feeling of being used, a lack of consent being respected, and a lack of care for survivors. While there is a rich tradition of auto-ethnography written by survivors of sexual abuse and assault, my research provides an auto-ethnographic portrait of the additional pressures of being a survivor in the media.

In terms of feminist media studies, this is the first study that examines everyday media practice as it is experienced by public survivors with mainstream media visibility, through interview data and auto-ethnography. Thus, it is a unique empirical data set, which builds upon the existing text-based studies of survivors as they are represented in the media. My research demonstrated how survivors experience the media's 'economy of believability' (Banet-Weiser and Higgins, 2023), with specific material and emotional impacts on survivors, who go so far as to refrain from asking to be paid for their labor. Furthermore, we saw how the media's tendencies to narrow and

flatten survivors' identities (Boyle, 2003; 2019), heighten or erase specific aspects like race (Benedict, 1992; Serisier, 2018; Gilmore, 2017), and police their aesthetic appearance can serve to intensify the emotional labor of individual public survivors.

My findings align with existing scholarship which claims that intersectional privileges, like race, class, confidence, and cultural capital in the form of specific technological and communicative skills serve as an advantage for individual survivors (Banet-Weiser and Higgins, 2023; Mendes, et al. 2019; Serisier 2018) in achieving and maintaining their media visibility. But my research adds to this intersectional awareness by highlighting an additional intersectional category: the type of crime suffered – stranger rape, workplace assault, date rape, child sexual abuse, etc. – which can have profound impacts on how an individual survivor is believed and how her visibility is constructed in the media. Furthermore, existing studies employing an intersectional lens have primarily focused on racialized differences between black and white sexual violence survivors, as they are represented in the media. My research offers something new to the discussion of race, media, and sexual violence by providing empirical interview data detailing how *East Asian* survivors experience and negotiate their racialized media visibility. This underscores the basic injustice in intersectional theory whereby categories over which individuals have no control (their race, the type of crime suffered, etc) indelibly impact their emotional and material welfare in becoming visible.

Creative labor studies greatly informed my research, allowing me to situate public rape survivors as creative workers within the media industries, involved in the work of communicating experience through the production of media texts (Williams, 1961), and also subject to the precarious pay and work conditions of other media workers (Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). Just as media workers are exhorted to accept these precarious work conditions in order to follow their 'passion' and achieve creative self-fulfillment (Conor, Gill, and Taylor, 2015; McRobbie, 2011, 2016), public survivors also follow their 'passion' for truth-telling and activism against sexual violence. However, these ideological, altruistic goals are often used to obscure their work as labor, deserving of compensation. I also investigate how the common, profit-driven media practice of inadequate pay was enabled by survivors' desire to avoid the Gold-Digger stereotype, and justified by media producers' ethical claims towards impartiality and not paying sources. Nevertheless, in such a poorly compensated landscape, many of the familiar inequalities of creative labor remain, with cultural and economic capital playing a

significant role in determining *which* survivors are able to maintain and monetize their media visibility (Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013; Duffy, 2017; Shade and Jacobsen, 2015).

My theoretical contribution deepens our understanding of emotional labor, suggesting a typology whereby multiple forms of emotional labor can converge on a single figure, due to the multiple subjectivities she inhabits. This built upon my earlier work (Li, 2017) wherein I described 'multiple stressors' on artist-activist-survivors performing labor that was creative, activist, deeply felt, and poorly compensated. However, my earlier work did not engage directly with Hochschild's theory of emotional labor (1983), and survivors' relationships with mainstream media platforms. My current typology draws upon studies of emotional labor in a number of fields -- feminist media studies, activist studies, creative labor studies, trauma studies -- suggesting that similar typologies of multi-layered emotional labor can be developed when studying the convergence of personal trauma and media labor.

My methodological contribution was to employ both auto-ethnography and interviews, in order to gain a longitudinal insider's view of survivorhood and speaking out in the media over the course of years. I positioned the deep introspection and creatively rewarding method of ethnography alongside the interviews, which employed feminist communitarian ethics by enacting friendship and co-creative solidarity through my research project. These positive forms of emotional labor – offering creative fulfilment and emotional connections -- helped to counterbalance the negative emotional labor embedded in undertaking my research.

My contribution also illuminates how the emotional labor of academic research itself, as it is undertaken by survivors on the very topic of their trauma, can be intense and unrelenting, ultimately shaping our research design and the outcomes. I would have strong reservations against *individual* sexual violence survivors undertaking academic research on sexual violence in an isolated fashion, without the solid support of a trauma-informed team or community to cushion the unavoidable emotional labor. An ethics of self-care must be firmly centered in attempting this research.

SIGNIFICANCE

Why should this research matter? I keep thinking about that moment when I sat in front of my laptop listening to guests on a radio chat show pronounce that *my* life was now ruined, as a rape victim. My research demonstrated that many public survivors were initially galvanized to action and spoke out in direct reaction to something damaging or frustrating they had seen in the media. As many scholars have established, media representations of sexual violence and victims *are* problematic. They can engender anger, frustration, sadness, defeat to the victims who may be in the audience, negatively impacting their own self-perception. But they can also have a profound impact in how the public perceives of a crime as widespread as sexual violence (Kitzinger, 2004; Royal, 2018; Stevenson, et al., 2011) and those who suffer from it, leading to attitudes and behaviours that further damage victims and condone the activity of perpetrators.

The recent rise of #MeToo is often framed as a disruptive and emancipatory force, amplifying the voices of survivors and building a valuable public feminist solidarity. But there is a danger in being too celebratory, and a danger in being too naïve about how the media works. My research has demonstrated that even those survivors who appear in the media as exemplars of bravery and truth-telling bear significant costs in performing that media visibility. These costs to the individual can be financial, personal, professional, and above all emotional. And yet, it is the media platforms who benefit from their labor, by producing content that is unique, deeply felt, and authentic in the commercial marketplace, and yet acquired at a very low price. The significant failure to pay survivors for their work obscures the cost to the individual and contributes to an ongoing culture of poor pay for creative workers, even for work that is rooted in a worker's trauma. This continued exploitation of survivor voices perpetuates a landscape where only those survivors with cultural capital and economic stability can maintain media visibility, thereby narrowing the range of survivor identities and experiences that are reflected in the media.

This begs the question of whether 'the media' are really trying to help in eliminating sexual violence, or are they simply aiming to turn a profit by capitalizing on a 'hot topic'? Since my research focused only on the experiences of public rape survivors, I am not in any position to claim that media platforms deliberately aim to exploit survivors. It would easier (and more comforting) to think that certain practices have been able to persist under the budget-constrained work conditions of media production, without any outcry.

IMPLICATIONS

Therefore, media practice has much room for improvement when collaborating with sexual violence survivors. Organizations like the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) and Zero Tolerance Scotland have suggested best practice guidelines for interviewing sexual violence survivors, like ensuring anonymity and informed consent, checking terms like victim or survivor, offering 'read-backs' of articles before they go to print. But one fundamental guideline that is missing should be to pay survivors for any significant media labor. Instead of creating a situation where individual survivors are required to advocate for their own fee — an 'everybody for herself' neo-liberal environment — media producers should build that standardized fee into their production budgets, as they would for any freelance worker. That would go some significant way towards a) recognizing the value of what individual survivors are giving through their visibility, b) alleviating the emotional labor that comes with advocating for your fee, and b) reducing intersectional inequalities, whereby survivors who have the cultural capital to negotiate are more likely to receive financial compensation, or those who don't need the fee are the ones who can afford to do the interviews.

Another important guideline would be for media platforms to feature a greater diversity of survivors. Of course, media platforms have a finite amount of space to devote to the issue of sexual violence, and they have pre-existing standards for what is desirable in a mediated survivor: that she is photogenic, articulate, believable, generally demonstrates middle-class values and a certain level of professionalism. And constrained, rushed working conditions suggest journalists and media professionals will tend to work with 'the usual suspects': survivors whom they already know, who are reliable and easy to access. But by operating within these conventions, media platforms replicate the same employment problems of the exclusive 'closed shop' (Eikhof and Warhust, 2013) across the creative industries, and ensure only a narrow range of survivor experience is visibilized in the media.

A final suggestion would be for media professionals to be aware of the emotional impact of their actions when interacting with survivors, because poor media practice can in fact retraumatize individuals. Asking someone to speak about their trauma or *because* they have experienced trauma calls for an ethical duty of care which should not be compromised due to the fast-paced, underfunded working conditions of the media. Something as simple as thanking a survivor for her time and contribution and guiding her out of a television studio can make a big difference.

Sending a text or an email in advance informing a survivor about a media opportunity is much better than an intrusive phone call. And avoiding abject, pitiable representations of sexual violence survivors is always something to strive for.

Of course, the other side of the coin is holding media platforms accountable for following these guidelines, to which I have no answer. We can advocate for a greater diversity of survivors to be reflected in mainstream media, for them to be paid adequately, and handled with duty of care, but there is no incentive for a media platform or producer to follow these guidelines, beyond the ethical one. And in a profit-driven industry, ethics often suffer.

To take a step further back, the media and culture is just one piece of the puzzle in which many institutions – among them, criminal justice, public health, education – play a central part in failing to eliminate sexual violence. Arguably, each of these institutions is in need of reform around this issue. If we look at where to concentrate our efforts, is it more important that we advocate for paying a handful of mediated rape survivors — or more important to reform our deeply flawed criminal justice system in handling sexual violence — or even more directly, to attack a root of the problem by improving education around sexual consent and healthy relationships? I suppose the answer is that we need advocates in *all* of these areas. Which works because as individuals and activists, we all have our specialities and areas of expertise. I just wish the onus to bring the change did not always rest on the shoulders of survivors, because the emotional labor, as I have tried to argue, is immense.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The sampling for my interviews was only seven survivors, and while deep and multi-layered, my auto-ethnography only reflected the experience of one individual, myself. There is obviously scope for a much broader range of future research. Indeed, there are public sexual violence survivors who come from younger and older demographics than my sample, from more diverse races and ethnicities, from working-class backgrounds, from LGBT communities, who are men. Each of these intersectional categories brings a different experience of survivorhood and, of *mediated* survivorhood. These experiences are definitely deserving of future research.

While my research focused on the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of survivors when collaborating with mainstream media platforms, I have not delved much into their relationship (real or imagined) with their audiences, their publics, and, to use a much-lauded word, their *community* (real or imagined) of other survivors. The relational labor that I mentioned in Ch 2 is a significant aspect of public survivorhood, which can be both emotionally exhausting and inspiring. And it is the connection with other survivors which often keeps survivor-activists 'in the game,' even when we are tempted to drop out.

Interview-based research on any of the above topics would be especially intriguing when paired with an analysis of media texts featuring the interviewed survivors, to gain an understanding of the gap between the 'front-stage' and the 'back-stage' (Goffman, 1959) of mediated survivorhood. Hewa (2023 and forthcoming) has been conducting important research with journalists who interview sexual assault survivors, and it would be equally important to gain an understanding of media strategies and practices around this topic from higher up the corporate ladder inside the media industries.

Finally, future research on this topic must always be undertaken with an ethics of care and self-care in mind, especially if the researcher is a survivor. Rebecca Campbell's (2009) framework for 'emotionally engaged research' provides helpful guidelines for interviewing sexual violence survivors, but there is that additional, unavoidable layer of emotional labor when the researcher is also a survivor. I would love to see a framework of ethical self-care for this specific scenario: for researching sexual violence when you yourself are a survivor. And yet, so many of us are drawn to engaging with this topic because of our own personal experiences. The emotional conundrum that results is a question I have been wrestling with for years, and I do not think I have found the answer.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

As a survivor, as an activist, as a researcher, as a writer, it often feels like the work can be neverending. But somehow we need to put an end to it, if only temporarily.

When discussing endings, I was heartened by my interview with Emily, who had taken a step back from her media visibility in 2019; she had been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, but she

also felt close to burn-out after several intense years of media labor and activism as a public survivor. She reflected upon this:

> I feel like I've done enough, if that makes sense. I feel like I don't need to prove myself and do more. I don't need to be in another documentary. I don't need to be on the news. I don't need to write any more unless I want to. So now I just feel like I will make more choices about what I want to and what I think is the right thing, rather than what I think I'm obligated to do. I think there's a lot of obligation went into it [my media work]. But now I think I've done it. And it's okay. It's enough. It's a lot more than lots of people do. And I've sent out a lot of ripples from doing it, that is good, and put some good into the world. And that's it. That's enough. (Emily Jacob interview, May 2021)

Her feeling of pride and having 'done enough' is maybe an emotion I can draw upon. Emily had drawn a line under her media work and considered that ledger settled.

As for me, when I began this research in 2015, I was single (and had been for a long time), child-free, unpublished as a writer and thus creatively unrealized, and much more financially precarious. I doubt that my own focus on money and compensation in this research would have emerged if I hadn't worried about it so much myself. Today in 2024, I am partnered, a mother of a young son, twice published as a novelist, financially more secure, with a considerably more public profile. Each of these factors has brought both certain freedoms and certain restrictions, specific satisfactions and specific responsibilities. And yet, having experienced trauma once in my life, I know most of these factors can change at any given moment, through a simple twist of fate.

The work, at least, will always remain.

Perhaps that is my own, maybe misguided belief in the personal, intellectual, and creative rewards of work, despite less-than-ideal financial compensations. Or to reframe it slightly, a belief in the intellectual, creative, and epistemological *value* of my work, despite the emotional and personal costs to the individual.

Because at heart, I think so much of my willingness to self-exploit has been about trying to make up for lost time, the years of my life, the direction and the drive that went missing after my rape. And there is a sadness, too, with the fundamental realization that none of us – none of the countless feminist scholars, researchers, writers, counsellors, therapists, social workers, advocates, activists who have come before – would even be doing this work if it weren't for the perpetrators. What would we be able to achieve, if we didn't have to expend our resources on redressing and addressing the harms caused by other people's crimes? So that is the fundamental

injustice that underlies any work addressing sexual violence, and it is an injustice that can never be righted.

And now what?

Do I want to be a professional and public rape survivor for the rest of my life? Or would I like to move on?

In the early days immediately after my rape, friends (usually men) would say encouraging platitudes like: 'You will not let this define you.'

Yet in choosing to go public as a rape survivor, I have.

And that's fine. That has been my agentic decision, and like many of my interview participants, I have not regretted it.

But maybe not everything we do needs to be viewed as a ledger, to be levelled off by a fair exchange of labor, money, and feelings. Some ledgers will always remain unequal, and that is just something we have to learn to be ok with. Or maybe the *metaphor* of the ledger is what constrains us in the end. The thought that labor deserves a wage, that the pay-off always needs to be commensurate. Maybe I am the one who has imposed an economic mindset to the experience of surviving trauma and speaking about it. Because there is no pay-off that can truly be commensurate to what we have experienced.

Maybe it's enough just to have done the work, to have put it out in there, and to trust that it will pay back in its own way. The benefits may not necessarily come to you. But trust that one day someone else – another survivor, another victim, another scholar or writer – will find your work and find it to have worth.

That is the best we can do with what we are given.

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APPENDIX A: Interview Participants and Key Details

Name	Demographic Information	Type of Survivor	Mainstream Media Experience	Website	Interview Date
Bonny Turner	40s, Mixed race Northeast Asian/white, expat Australian in London	Date rape (multiple incidents)	National & int'l TV, radio, online, print, web videos, written op-eds	https://taplink.cc/bonnyturner1212	12 March 2021
Holly Dillon	50s, White American, mother of two grown children, expat in Northern Ireland	Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) within the family	Local radio, podcasts, TEDx talk	https://recentre.uk/	17 March 2021
Michelle Duffy	40s, White, Northern Irish, mother of three	CSA (long-term, multiple abusers)	Local newspapers, podcasts	https://creativehealingni.co.uk/	19 April 2021
Emily Jacob	40s, White, English	Date rape	National TV & radio, Profiled in TV doc, print, web videos, written op-eds & articles	https://reconnected.life/	8 May 2021
Imogen Butler-Cole	40s, White, English	Acquaintance rape (multiple incidents)	Performed one-woman show, local newspapers, web videos, podcasts	https://www.imogenbutler-cole.co.uk/	30 June 2021
Rowena Chiu	40s, Chinese-British, mother of four, expat in the USA	Workplace sexual assault	National & int'l TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, web videos, written op-ed, podcasts, film adaptation portraying her case (*She Said*)	https://www.instagram.com/chiu_rowena/	19 July 2021
Madeleine Black	50s, White, English, living in Scotland, mother of three grown children	Gang rape in adolescence, date rape in adolescence	Published memoir, national TV & radio, local newspapers, TEDx talks, podcasts	https://madeleineblack.co.uk	22 Sept 2022

Myself:

Winnie M Li	40s, Chinese-American, ex-pat in England, mother of one	Stranger rape	Published novels, profiled in TV documentary, national & int'l TV & radio, print, written op-eds, web videos, TEDx talk, podcasts	https://www.winniemli.com/

APPENDIX B: Interview Guide

Media Engagement by Rape Survivors: An Interview Guide

Opening Questions

Let's start with the present — and why you agreed to be part of this research. Why were you interested in participating in this interview?

How important is it that you know I am a rape survivor, too? Did that affect in any way your decision to participate in this interview?

And how would you describe yourself right now, in terms of your identity, your career, your place in life. If you had to list 5 things that you are right now (i.e. I am a writer, I am a Londoner, I am a mother, etc), what are the first things that come to mind?

Can you think back to the person you were twenty years ago, in 2000. Where were you in life then? Was that before or after your experience of sexual trauma?

Would you like to tell me a little bit about your experience of rape or sexual assault, if you think that will give me a better understanding of your decision to speak out? (A brief summary is fine, or a more thorough account, or anything in between.) We can also come back to this question later.

How and when did you start to tell other people about your trauma? How did telling people make you feel? How did you first describe your experience to other people? Did your description of it change over the years?

What reactions did you get when you told your story to other people? How did those reactions affect you? Did they change the way you thought about your experience?

The Journey

What first prompted you to 'speak out' more publicly, through the media or in public spaces? How did that come about?

Was it a difficult decision for you to make? What were some emotions or thoughts going through your head at the time?

Were you driven by any feelings of injustice, or trying to increase public awareness?

How did you feel afterwards, after your first experience of sharing your story publicly?

How did people react to you sharing your story? And how did those reactions impact you?

What was your next public experience of sharing and how did you feel about that?

Tell me about the rest of your journey with the media and with public spaces.

Over time, how did your thoughts and feelings **change** about engaging with the media or public audiences about this issue?

Were you ever paid for these interviews or speaking engagements? Or did you ask to be paid? What is your attitude now towards being paid?

Do you consider yourself to be an activist? Is there any aspect of speaking to the media or the public that you see as activism?

What do you enjoy about these interviews or other forms of media engagement?

What have you gained through speaking publicly about this issue? How has your life changed as a result? What have you learned about yourself?

Do you see yourself as professional in any way now, when it comes to telling your story in public or to the media?

Do you work with a publicist, agent, lawyer or other professionals around your media engagement? Did you learn from anyone? Or how did you learn?

Negatives

Do you regret any aspect of speaking out publicly? Do you think you lost anything, or suffered in anyway as a result of speaking out publicly? How do you feel about this?

Have you had any negative experiences with the media or public audiences when it comes to sharing your story?

How did you tell your friends or family about your media appearances? How do you think they feel or felt about them? Did it change your relationship with them — or with work colleagues, acquaintances, the wider world?

Is it emotionally tiring to engage with the media or public audiences around your story? How did you deal with the exhaustion?

Do you think other people realize how exhausting this kind of work is? Do you see it as work?

At some point, did you feel that you no longer wanted to keep engaging with the media — or you wanted to reduce the amount of engagement? What prompted this change in attitude?

Do you think people look at you differently, now that your story has been featured in the media?

How do you feel now about your entire journey with the media?

What made it possible

Twenty years ago, would you have ever thought it was possible that you'd have had this journey — and also spoken publicly about it?

Was it always part of your personality to want to talk about something like this publicly?

Would you say you're someone who always told stories?

How did you recover from your trauma? Did any aspect of speaking out help you recover?

What things or people or situations in your life have made it possible for you to have engaged with the media around your experience?

If you lived fifty years ago, do you think this journey would have been possible?

Do you ever get tired of it all and say: I'm done talking about rape. I want to do something new.

What keeps you going? What inspires you?

What kind of self-care do you practice?

Would you say it's become part of your career identity now?

How do you feel when you read another survivor's account of their experiences?

Do you feel other survivors really understand your experience, or will there always be a difference in what people went through?

In what ways are you affected when you see representations of rape or sexual abuse in the broader media? (i.e. news reports, public comments by politicians, films or TV) What do you think about these representations?

Do you feel there is a need for victims and survivors to 'speak out' publicly and give their account of what happened?

Are you trying to bring about change in some way? Do you think sharing your story will change things or has changed things, either for you or for those who hear your story?

The Future

In an ideal world, how would the media treat survivors and present these stories to public audiences?

Do you hope to continue speaking out in the media around your story? Do you have future projects lined up or envisioned that deal with this issue?

Do you want this to always be part of your public identity? Will it always be part of your own identity to yourself?

APPENDIX C: Informed Consent Form and Information Sheet for Participants

Informed Consent Form

Interview agreement

Interview conducted by Winnie M Li, PhD Candidate, Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science

Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed for my PhD project at LSE. My research explores how rape survivors engage with the media to talk about their experiences of sexual trauma and its aftermath. The aim of this interview is to listen to you and to learn from your perspective. There are no right or wrong answers.

The purpose of this form is to clarify the commitments that I, as a researcher make to you, as a participant in my project. If you are happy with these, you may give your consent to participate. **Please read the form below, tick the boxes accordingly, and sign and date, if you agree.**

I agree to take part in an interview for Winnie M Li's research project about media engagement by rape survivors to share their experiences. ☐

I am happy to put forward my views and share from my experience as invited by the researcher. ☐

I understand that my online interview will be recorded and later transcribed. Even though this is a video interview where we can speak 'face-to-face,' only an audio file (without video) will be used to generate the transcription. ☐

I understand that if I wish so, I can be sent a PDF of the transcription or an audio file of the recording. ☐

In addition, I understand that recordings and transcripts will only be handled by the researcher (Winnie M Li), who will use automatic transcription software to transcribe the interview. The researcher will abide by high standards of confidentiality and anonymity. ☐

I am aware that the integrated findings of this project will form part of researcher's PhD thesis and may also be reported in future research publications and presentations. I also understand that anonymized quotes taken from the interview might be used in such reports. The data reported will be anonymous and will not enable one to trace my identity and personal information. ☐

I understand that I can drop out of this interview at any point, choose not to answer specific questions, or later request to have my interview (or part of it interview) included in her PhD thesis. I will need to inform her by 31 December 2022 if this is the case. ☐

I understand that the topics addressed during the interview might provoke emotional stress or sadness, and I confirm that in such a case I have someone to go to for emotional support. ☐

For any further questions, thoughts or clarification related to this project and my participation in it, I may contact the researcher, Winnie M Li, by email: W.Li29@lse.ac.uk or phone: 07884 077720. I understand I will also be given a card with her details during this interview. ☐

I agree to participate in this study. ☐

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Information for Participants

Introduction
Thank you for agreeing to participate and contribute to my PhD project.

I am researching how sexual trauma survivors are engaging with forms of media to share their experiences with the public. As a rape survivor myself, I have had mixed experiences with radio, television, and print interviews, and I have also been active on social media platforms around the topic of sexual violence. I am curious to know how other individuals feel about being identified and visible as rape survivors in the media. These interviews are designed to be open and casual conversations, and there are no right or wrong answers. Even though I am a survivor myself, I realise everyone's experience of sexual trauma and its aftermath is unique — and your perspective can contribute a great deal to our collective understanding.

My commitment to you
As a PhD candidate, I am committed to LSE's ethical guidelines. This means that:

- **Your anonymity will be kept at all times** - All participation in this research will be kept strictly confidential. Once data is collected, it will be safely stored. The only person with access to this data is myself. In the process of analysis as well as any form of report regarding this research, all personal information of participants will be eliminated.
- **You may withdraw at any point** – if at any point during the research process (and before its publication) you have a change of heart, for whatever reason, you may withdraw from participation, no questions asked. You may also choose not to answer a specific question.
- **You may review your transcripts or listen to your recorded interview** - If you wish to have either of these, the electronic file will be sent to you via email. Please note that while you are welcome to add further information or clarification you feel needed, it is not possible to amend in any way the transcriptions.
- **You are welcome to raise any questions or concerns directly** – If at any point you find yourself with questions or concerns related to your participation in my research project, you may contact me directly and share these questions / concerns with me.

How to prepare for the interview?
The interview will focus on your own experience with the media as a survivor of sexual trauma. While the focus will be on engaging with the media to address this issue, there will also be room for you to talk directly about your experience of rape or sexual trauma, should you wish to. However, this is by no means required of you as a participant. If it makes you feel more comfortable, I can also tell you briefly about my own experiences. Because of the experiences involved, it is possible that our conversation might trigger strong emotional reactions. It is important to be aware of this possibility. I

recommend that you make sure you have someone to talk to, in case of sadness or distress following the interview. This someone can either be a close friend or family member, a therapist or other professional, or any other person you feel comfortable sharing such feelings with, whom you trust, and who can support you in such moments. If possible, I would also recommend for you to schedule something pleasant or relaxing to do following the interview.

How to contact me
If at any point during your participation in this research project you wish to contact me for further information, questions or concerns related to your participation in the project, I am reachable at: W.Li29@lse.ac.uk or [PHONE NUMBER].

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Thank you again for participating in my research project.
Best wishes,
Winnie M Li

APPENDIX D: Further Participant Consent Form Regarding Anonymity, 2024

I, [NAME INSERTED], consent to have my identity revealed as a research participant and attributed to quotes taken from my interview, in the PhD dissertation written by Winnie M Li, 'The Emotional Labor of Sexual Violence Survivors in Mainstream Media: A Study via Auto-Ethnography and Interviews. I have been able to choose between remaining anonymous and revealing my identity, and I would like to be named.

Signed (electronically) and dated:
[NAME and DATE]

APPENDIX E: *The Belfast Telegraph* front page and page 3, 2 January 2020

Belfast Telegraph

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Lindy McDowell on why it's no big surprise Hillary Clinton is QUB's new Chancellor

PAGE 8

Officer's terror as shotgun murder bid fails

PSNI man 'badly shaken' after facing masked gunman on doorstep at 2am

BY DAVID YOUNG

A PSNI officer has been left traumatised after he was confronted on his doorstep by a masked man aiming a shotgun at him.

The terrifying incident occurred in the middle of the night in Kesh, Co Fermanagh.

A senior detective believes "organised criminal elements" may be responsible.

Police Federation chairman Mark Lindsay said: "I spoke with him earlier today and, understandably, he has been left badly shaken by the shocking experience."

Full story, see page 6

Winnie M Li with her son Tiwa, who was born in London last month

Belfast rape victim Winnie M Li writes exclusively... on the joy of her first baby after fearing she'd never be a mum, and how it has been a healing experience for her

READ THE FULL ARTICLE ON PAGE 3

Foster warning over 'sticking plaster' deal

DUP leader Arlene Foster has warned that any deal to restore power-sharing must not be a "sticking plaster", but Sinn Fein have insisted an agreement can be reached "very, very quickly"

Politics, pages 4&5

Tributes after sudden death of RTE 'legend'

RTE broadcaster Marian Finucane (right) has been remembered as a "true broadcasting legend". Following her sudden death at the age of 69, Ms Finucane, who became a household name through her Liveline radio programme, passed away at her home in Dublin yesterday. Taoiseach Leo Varadkar led tributes, saying: "Ireland will miss her voice. Weekend mornings will never be quite the same again." Northern Ireland broadcasters and journalists also spoke of their deep sadness.

Full story, see page 9

Y ANDREW MADDEN

N American woman who was
ped during a visit to North-
n Ireland today reveals the full
ory of her journey to mother-
od following the birth of her
rst child.

Showing off her son Timo in
hotographs she shared with the
elfast Telegraph, Winnie M Li
41) said that four years ago she had been so fearful of meeting someone with whom to have a baby that she had taken the step of having her eggs frozen.

But happily, in the past year, she met her partner, Sam Grove. And on December 7, the delighted couple became proud parents to son Septimus. He will be known as Timo. Sharing photos of her new arrival, she said she is "delighted to have him in my life".

Winnie M Li was attacked in Colin Glen Forest Park in Belfast in 2008.

Aged 29 at the time, she attended University College Cork under the Mitchell Scholarship programme, which is designed to introduce and connect future American leaders to Ireland.

She was in Belfast for a reunion to coincide with the anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement when she was brutally attacked by 15-year-old Edward Connors. He was sentenced to eight years in jail.

At the time of the attack Winnie M Li was a successful film producer, but afterwards she suffered from severe anxiety and depression and was unable to work for two years.

She spent five years undergoing therapy and wrote a novel inspired by her ordeal in 2017 in a bid to deal with the trauma.

Now, over a decade on, she has announced the birth of her first child.

Writing in today's Belfast Telegraph, she describes how life can take "unpredictable turns, some bad, some good".

"And within the past year, I somehow, unexpectedly, met my partner Sam. And even more unexpectedly, I became pregnant. And now at the start of 2020, at the age of 41, I find myself the mother of a content and healthy four-week-old son named Timo, who looks at me every morning with his still-developing eyes, full of utter trust and hope, unaware of the violence that can exist in this world."

Winnie M Li now lives in London and often speaks out on issues relating to rape victims.

She said she plans to finish her second novel this year and hopes to visit Northern Ireland.

Winnie M Li on how baby's arrival changed so much for her

It's impossible to erase the past, but this is such a welcome step in the lifelong process of healing

Winnie M Li with baby Timo (also right). Top right, with partner Sam and their son

A year ago, if you'd told me I'd be holding my newborn son in my arms at the start of 2020, I'd never have believed you. And 11 years ago, if you told me this, I'd have outright scoffed at the suggestion.

Because 11 years ago, I was deeply traumatised and nearly suicidal, dreading a return to Belfast for the trial of my rapist, who violently assaulted me in Colin Glen Forest Park, one spring afternoon in 2008.

In the years since then, I've written and re-written the impact of that afternoon on my life countless times: in my novel Dark Chapter, in radio and TV interviews, think-pieces and public talks.

As each year in my life went by, I gradually healed from the original violence, but would discover new, unexpected ways in which that single assault still affected me: in my reluctance to walk down a street alone at night, or in my general attitude towards dating, men, and relationships.

I especially doubted if I'd ever become a mother, as the long tail of the trauma disrupt-

I was 29: that I'd never get to bear a child of my own? Often single and increasingly hopeless, I froze my eggs at the age of 37.

But life can take unpredictable turns, some bad, some good. And within the past year, I somehow, unexpectedly, met my partner Sam.

And even more unexpectedly, I became pregnant.

And now at the start of 2020,

There is something about that infant innocence which promises to make things anew, even though I know it's impossible to erase the past entirely.

Rape and voluntary motherhood are not experiences you'd imagine to be closely connected. But as women we are so often still subject to the limitations

so accustomed to the negative aspects of female biology — our vulnerability towards assault — that motherhood has thankfully reminded me of this positive aspect: our ability to create another human being in the space of 40 weeks. And our chance to have a family, to raise a child, to have a 'normal' life that I never thought I'd have as a rape sur-

Now, tasked with the responsibility of motherhood, I see the need for raising a boy-child who will be considerate and understanding, respectful of gender equality, a positive contributor to our society.

Here is another opportunity to re-write our traumas of the past.

Has becoming a mother helped me heal? I think as rape survivors, we face a lifelong process of healing. But any life

ing to Belfast to run a series of literary events using writing to address experiences of gender-based violence, thanks to a literature grant from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

I'm also looking forward to finishing my second novel soon and to new writing projects. In fact, this very morning, I didn't expect to be writing the piece you're reading now.

So, we never know what the future holds. This year, we can

APPENDIX F: *The Belfast Telegraph* first-person opinion piece, 2 January 2020 – Full Text

by Winnie M Li

A year ago, if you'd told me I'd be holding my newborn son in my arms at the start of 2020, I'd never have believed you. And eleven years ago, if you told me this, I'd have outright scoffed at the suggestion. Because eleven years ago, I was deeply traumatized and nearly suicidal, dreading a return to Belfast for the trial of my rapist, who violently assaulted me in Colin Glen Forest Park, one spring afternoon in 2008.

In the years since then, I've written and re-written the impact of that afternoon on my life countless times: in my novel Dark Chapter, in radio and TV interviews, think-pieces and public talks. As each year in my life went by, I gradually healed from the original violence, but would discover new, unexpected ways in which that single assaulted still affected me: in my reluctance to walk down a street alone at night, or in my general attitude towards dating, men, and relationships. I especially doubted if I'd ever become a mother, as the long tail of the trauma disrupted my career and finances, the places I lived, my social circles, and — I feared — my chances of ever meeting someone suitable before my child-bearing years came to an end.

Would that be the long-lasting legacy of my rapist's actions that spring afternoon, when I was 29: that I'd never get to bear a child of my own? Often single and increasingly hopeless, I froze my eggs at the age of 37.

But life can take unpredictable turns, some bad, some good. And within the past year, I somehow, unexpectedly, met someone. And even more unexpectedly, I became pregnant. And now at the start of 2020, at the age of 41, I find myself the mother of a content and healthy four-week-old son, who looks at me every morning with his still-developing eyes, full of utter trust and hope, unaware of the violence that can exist in this world.

There is something about that infant innocence which promises to make things anew, even though I know it's impossible to erase the past entirely. Rape and voluntary motherhood are not experiences you'd imagine to be closely connected. But as women we are so often still subject to the limitations of our biology: how our bodies can be cruelly used by others, or become requisitioned in the process of pregnancy. As a survivor and activist against sexual violence, I'd been so accustomed to the negative aspects of female biology — our vulnerability towards assault — that motherhood has thankfully reminded me of this positive aspect: our ability to create another human being in the space of forty weeks. And our chance to have a family, to raise a child, to have a 'normal' life that I never thought I'd have as a rape survivor.

Chance would have it that my newborn is a boy. My rapist was fifteen when he attacked me, and to this day, I wonder how he grew up to be so a violent at such a young age. Now, tasked with the responsibility of motherhood, I see the need for raising a boy-child who will be considerate and understanding, respectful of gender equality, a positive contributor to our society. Here is another opportunity to re-write our traumas of the past.

Has becoming a mother helped me heal? I think as a rape survivors, we face a lifelong process of healing. But any life experience that can lessen the memory of our trauma, that can put distance between what happened then and where we are now — anything like that is a welcome step towards building a new, brighter life.

Later in 2020, I'll be returning to Belfast to run a series of literary events using writing to address experiences of gender-based violence, thanks to a grant from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. I'm also looking forward to finishing my second novel soon and to new writing projects. In fact, this very morning, I didn't expect to be writing the piece you're reading now.

So we never know what the future holds. This year, we can hope for the best. And even if that doesn't happen, we can know that a better year will come along, sometime in the unmapped future.

Winnie M Li is the author of ***Dark Chapter*** *(Legend Press, £ 8.99)*