"You Need a Thick Skin": Working-Class Women's Attitudes to Sexual Harassment

Lauren Foulkes[1]

Loughborough University, UK

Abstract

Sexual harassment is a prevalent problem that impacts the lives of nearly every woman in the UK. However, not every woman experiences these issues in the same way. Specifically, working-class women experience sexual harassment more frequently and severely. The dissertation explored how this unique experience shapes the groups' perspectives on this issue. The study featured a qualitative methodology, using semi-structured interviews with 10 working-class women of various ages. More specifically, the sample consisted of two participants in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, and early 60s. A thematic analysis of the interview transcripts identified four key themes. These themes were perceptions of normalisation, perceptions of harm, perceptions of the legal system, and perceptions of working-class tolerance. The findings concluded that class had a significant impact on perceptions of sexual harassment. Working-class women displayed a tendency to normalise sexual harassment (especially if they were from an older age group). They were also likely to have a negative perception of the legal system and consider themselves able to tolerate more harassment. The dissertation was an initial starting point to fill the gap of an underrepresented voice in research.

Key Words: *working class; women; sexual harassment; thematic analysis*

[1] **Publication based upon dissertation research conducted in partial fulfilment for the BSc (Hons) Criminology and Sociology degree at Loughborough University (2025).**

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context of the Project

Approximately 97% of women in the United Kingdom (U.K.) have experienced at least one incident of sexual harassment in their lifetime (Choudhury, 2021). The prevalence of this problem suggests that it is a universal aspect of womanhood for nearly every woman in the country (Women and Equalities Committee, 2018). During the 1980s, the development of the continuum of sexual violence revolutionised academic understandings of this issue (Kelly, 1987). The continuum of sexual violence argues that sexual harassment links to other forms of sexual violence like sexual assault and rape (Sowersby et al, 2022; Williams et al, 2023). As a result, these issues need to be understood as interconnected rather than distinct individual problems (Brown & Walklate, 2011). However, broader social movements have also influenced social perceptions of sexual harassment. Specifically, the recent #MeToo movement provided a watershed moment wherein women shared their experiences of sexual harassment online to reclaim their voices (Hillstrom, 2018). Despite this, these movements and theories have been criticised for ignoring the role of intersectionality.

The term intersectionality refers to understanding how different social categories, such as race, sexuality, and class, intersect to create a unique experience of discrimination (Runyan, 2018). Regarding sexual harassment, this is relevant as not all women experience sexual harassment in the same way or to the same extent (Thornton et al, 2024). For example, existing evidence suggests that working-class women experience sexual harassment more often and to a more extreme degree (Slabbert, 2017). Various explanations exist for this trend, including the racial diversity of the working class, their employment types, and their previous experiences of victimisation (Slabbert, 2017; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). However, limited research exists on the subject as academics and social movements often overlook the voices of marginalized groups. Instead, most studies around sexual harassment have only focused on the perspectives of white middle-class women. Their perspectives are assumed to be generalisable beyond class boundaries (Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019). The absence of working-class voices is especially concerning, as it is likely that this unique experience of sexual harassment would result in a unique perspective on this issue.

Intersectional feminism will be the theoretical framework for this dissertation to account for this intersectionality. Originating from the black feminist movement, intersectional feminism explores inequalities through how they interact and exacerbate one another. As mentioned, intersectionality suggests that a person can experience multiple forms of discrimination concurrently (UN, 2020). Within this study, the theoretical framework will be utalised to understand the influence of gender and class on perceptions of sexual harassment. A person's race can also significantly influence their experiences of the above discrimination (Liska, 2015). Unfortunately, the current study is limited to a white working-class perspective due to practical restrictions.

1.2) Aims and Objectives

The current study will aim to begin to fill the aforementioned gap regarding working-class women's perspectives of sexual harassment. It will do this by answering the following research questions:

- What are working-class women's attitudes towards sexual harassment?
- How does a woman's class background impact their perceptions of the harm of sexual harassment?
- How does class affect perceptions of the possible legal outcomes in sexual harassment cases?
- How do attitudes towards sexual harassment vary for working-class women of different ages?

A qualitative approach will answer the above questions through semi-structured interviews with ten working-class women from various age groups. Transcripts of these interviews will be analysed thematically to identify central themes in working-class women's attitudes to sexual harassment. The above approach is justified as it allows participants to share their opinions in their own words. The study will represent a voice that has thus far been missing in perspectives-based sexual harassment research.

1.3) Key Definitions and Chapter Outline

Before proceeding to the remaining chapters, it's essential to define two key terms used consistently throughout this dissertation: class and sexual harassment. As both concepts are

complex, the literature review provides a deeper exploration. However, in this dissertation, sexual harassment can be broadly defined as unwanted sexual behaviour that either fosters an offensive environment or violates a person (Fitzgerald, 1990). In this dissertation, class is defined as people from the same social or economic background. More specifically, being working class is understood through self-identification and common markers of socio-economic disadvantage. The usual markers of socio-economic disadvantage include types of parental employment, parental access to higher education, and being a childhood recipient of free school meals (Social Mobility Commission, 2021).

The following chapter will contain a literature review that further explores the concepts of class, sexual harassment, and intersectionality. The methodology chapter will then discuss the methodological approach used for the data collection and analysis. Next, the findings chapter will identify the key themes and discuss how they relate to the existing literature. Finally, the dissertation will conclude with a discussion of the implications of these findings and consider avenues for further investigation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review chapter will explore perceptions of sexual harassment against the backdrop of class identity. It will consider how the unique experiences of the working-class shape how they view and understand incidents of sexual harassment.

2.1) What is Class?

To understand the intersection between class, gender, and sexual harassment, we first need to consider what it means to be working-class in the UK. As mentioned, class can be defined as a group of people in the same social and economic position. However, this simplistic definition does not account for the nuance required to separate one class from another. It also provides no criteria for what grants a person membership to a specific class. Historically, membership in the working class was determined by a person's employment type and access to the means of production. According to Marxist theory, the working class or proletariat sold their labour to the upper class or bourgeoisie (Marx & Engels, 2019).

Generally, the working class provided services in job roles such as manual labour or low-level administration. These traditionally working-class job roles can result in an individual experiencing more instances of sexual harassment (Yassour-Borochowitz, 2020). Despite this,

Marxist determinants of class have become less relevant as society has moved away from the means of production towards knowledge construction. For example, society relies less on natural resources and instead focuses on intellectual property like technology (Gildea, 2021). The above changes have transformed the types of service and employment the working class engages in.

The above societal changes have contributed to an ongoing debate about the definition of the working class. Currently, there are two primary approaches to the problem: using determinants of socio-economic disadvantage and asking people to self-identify (Pilgrim-Brown, 2023; Skeggs, 2004). Determinants of socio-economic disadvantage include a person's occupation, access to goods, and capacity for social mobility. It is these determinants that can also shape how an individual experiences harm and justice in cases of sexual harassment (Cheek et al., 2023). For larger organisations, the aforementioned factors provide clear, reliable criteria to establish a working-class background (Pilgrim-Brown, 2023). The Social Mobility Commission subscribes to this approach. The Social Mobility Commission is a public body in the United Kingdom that focuses on creating greater mobility between classes. They use markers such as parental level of education, parental employment type, and childhood access to free school meals (Social Mobility Commission, 2021). The issue with this approach is that socio-economic markers are not generalisable beyond their original context. For example, accessing free school meals can only be a marker of disadvantage in areas where this service is available (Rubin et al., 2014).

On the other hand, self-identification involves establishing a person's class based on the identity they assign to themselves (Francis, 2023). Self-identification differs from socio-economic markers by accounting for less measurable aspects of class, such as being unappreciated, lacking networks, and feeling undervalued (Pilgrim-Bown, 2023). The approach views class as, at least partially, an extension of culture; it is more than a person’s economic status or education level. For example, a working-class identity involves an intrinsic relationship to specific language codes, a unique community, and distinct hobbies (Pilgrim-Bown, 2023; Skeggs, 2004). However, a notable weakness of this approach is that it is inconsistent. People’s assumptions can skew results; for example, people may believe they are working- class if they can only go abroad once a year (Francis, 2023). As both approaches have limitations, studies have begun to combine these approaches to gain a broader overview of a person’s class (Rubin et al., 2014). Essentially, class as a concept is widely contested and needs to be understood in

terms of both lived experience and socioeconomic factors. Therefore, the current study will incorporate this combined approach when identifying participants' class backgrounds. Ultimately, despite the disagreement on how class is determined, there is an agreement that class defines Britain's society in the same way that sexual harassment is a defining part of womanhood (Jones, 2020).

2.2) Definitions and Perceptions of Sexual Harassment

Having defined class, it is now essential to explore the concept of sexual harassment. Initially, sexual harassment was a problem without a name (MacKinnon, 1979). However, since the latter half of the 20th century, academia and feminist movements have revolutionised society's understanding of what sexual harassment is. A recent example is the #MeToo movement, which provided a stronger voice to this hidden epidemic (Bondestram & Lundqvist, 2020). Despite this, these social movements and academic studies have regularly been criticised for ignoring intersectionality by overlooking victims from minoritised groups. Sexual harassment has always been considered an issue that predominantly affects women, but consideration has rarely been given to the impact of social identities on these experiences. race, sexuality, and, most relevant to this study, class can all have an effect (Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019). An example of this issue is #MeToo's focus on sexual harassment within higher- or middle-class employment types over lower-income professions like service work (Ditowsky, 2019). The failure to highlight underrepresented voices contributes to the lack of a universally agreed-upon definition of sexual harassment.

As outlined in the introduction, the simplest definition of sexual harassment is unwanted sexual conduct that either violates a person's dignity or creates an offensive environment. These simplistic definitions are practical as they are easily accessible and generalisable (Fitzgerald, 1990). However, the above definition does not offer a criterion for what acts constitute sexual harassment. Alternatively, psychologists such as Fitzgerald and Drasgow provided definitions that suggested three factors form sexual harassment (Fitzgerald & Drawgow, 1995; Fitzgerald et al., 1988). These factors are sexual coercion, unwanted sexual attention, and gender harassment (Goh et al., 2022; Conroy et al., 2024). These definitions have remained reasonably consistent over time and successfully provide more guidelines around what behaviour constitutes sexual harassment. Despite this, aspects of these definitions are still open for interpretation, such as the lack of clarity regarding the acts that constitute unwanted sexual

attention. One reason sexual harassment may be challenging to define is due to the confusion around the intentions behind these behaviours. Although often perceived as being motivated by sexual desire, sexual harassment generally stems from hostility toward women (Goh et al., 2022). As such, some behaviours could be considered harassment or a compliment depending on the individual (Rothgerber et al., 2021). For example, catcalling is frequently dismissed as flattering (Di Gennaro & Ritschel, 2019). An act that may appear relatively harmless to one person may seem harmful to another. As there are so many different perceptions of what acts count as sexual harassment, it inevitably leads to disagreements.

Several factors can influence a person's perspective on what constitutes sexual harassment. For example, their background, identity, and exposure to incidents can all have an effect. Koller-Alonso (2021) explored this concept through a survey that asked people to define sexual harassment; there were 579 responses. The key finding was that no consistent perception existed within the sample as to what sexual harassment was. There was an agreement by 91.7% of participants that the black-and-white example of sharing sexual images was an act of sexual harassment. However, grey areas were more divisive. For example, only 57.6% of participants would classify staring as sexual harassment. Kollor-Alonso's (2021) study suggests that the less extreme an act of harassment is, the more difficult it can be to categorise. However, Kollor-Alonso's (2021) focus was the influence of gender on perspectives of sexual harassment, not class. For this reason, despite using similar question types, the results of the current study may differ from those outlined above. In addition, Koller Alonso's (2021) methodology can also be criticised for not allowing any expansion on why respondents selected their answers. A participant not labelling an act as sexual harassment does not tell us if they perceive the behaviour as inappropriate or acceptable. The first research question, 'What are working-class women's attitudes towards sexual harassment?', will attempt to fill the above gap and ask similar questions in an open-ended fashion to resolve this issue of clarity.

2.3) Working-Class Women as Victims

Throughout this chapter, we have begun to discuss the links between class and experiences of sexual harassment. The following sections will explore this intersection in more depth. Victims of sexual harassment are disproportionately women, with 97% of women in the UK having experienced at least one incident (Bongiorno et al., 2020; Choudhury, 2021; Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018; Goh et al., 2022; Metson, 2024). For this reason, feminists have historically

seen sexual harassment as a consequence of patriarchal systems that allow men to exert sexual power over women (Rosependa et al., 1998). However, not all women experience sexual harassment in the same way. Working-class women have even less power than women of other classes. Therefore, they are generally victimised more frequently and more severely than middle or upper-class women (Slabbert, 2017; Lindsay et al, 2023; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). These working-class victims are also more likely to be mistreated or neglected by legal and support agencies on a global level. They face substantial barriers when accessing this support and turn to informal sources of aid more frequently (Ditowsky, 2019; Slabbert, 2017). An example of this type of barrier is that when encountering sexual harassment in the workplace, lower-wage employees have less bargaining power than those in a better financial position (Ditowsky, 2019). They are also often in less secure and more precarious employment, which restricts a victim's ability to report (Wood, 2024). These negative interactions will likely reduce working-class women's trust in these agencies and shape their perceptions of institutional responses, which is concerning as working-class women tend to have a lower level of faith in social institutions overall (Foster et al., 2017). Due to the above, the third research question asks, 'How does class affect perceptions of the possible legal outcomes in sexual harassment cases?'.

The above unique experience of sexual harassment and institutions is likely to influence working-class women's perceptions of harm. Traditionally, sexual harassment is considered significantly harmful to victims, with research suggesting that it can cause negative emotions like anger, humiliation, and depression (Bongiorno et al., 2020; Collinsworth et al., 2009; Holland & Cortina, 2013). Additionally, sexual harassment can create a 'fear of rape', which leads victims to change their behaviour to avoid further incidents (Madriz, 2023; Ioannides, 2023; Vera-Grey, 2016). However, there is a debate within the literature as to the degree of distress that working-class victims experience in incidents of sexual harassment. The first argument is that working-class women experience less harm from sexual harassment as they have other priorities that take precedence. These priorities are often linked to their precarious financial positions (Ditowsky, 2019). Bresnahan (1997) provided one of the only first-person accounts of this perspective, suggesting that working-class women had 'seen these things before'. Specifically, Bresnahan believed that in the workplace setting, these people were forced to accept sexual harassment as they needed jobs so desperately that they were trapped in them. These perspectives contradict the aforementioned widely accepted perceptions of the

harm of sexual harassment, arguing that these incidents were a normal part of life (Fray et al., 2022; Scarduzio et al., 2018). Appraising incidents of sexual harassment as ordinary can reduce victim harm as rather than being focused on, the incident is dismissed or ignored by the person. Various factors influence the likelihood of a victim appraising an incident of sexual harassment in this way, including their history of victimisation, attitudes, and resources, such as their financial security (Collinsworth et al., 2009). The above argument supports the idea that working-class women are more likely to normalise sexual harassment due to their financial situation.

The above implies that the working class, according to Bresnahan, is thicker-skinned. Their social and economic circumstances result in them being less affected by sexual harassment as they are more dismissive of incidents. However, the other side of this debate contradicts this by arguing that the working class is no more thick-skinned than any other class. Instead, they believe that a thick-skin bias exists in society wherein people from a lower socioeconomic background are incorrectly seen as less in need of support (Cheek et al., 2023). Therefore, the thick-skin bias would reinforce the structural barriers that prevent working-class victims from seeking help (Ditowsky, 2019). It has even been suggested that working-class victims may suffer more harm due to their precarious situations, which Bresnahan suggested made them less vulnerable (Cheek et al., 2023). Although this argument does not contradict the idea that a person's background affects their appraisals of harassment, it instead focuses on the complexities involved. Three factors influence the appraisals of sexual harassment: frequency, duration, and intensity (Fitzgerald et al., 1997). For example, several factors determine the intensity of incidents, including the number of perpetrators, the victim's ability to escape, and whether the incident was physical (Salisbury & Dominick, 2004). As working-class women experience sexual harassment more frequently and intensely, this could suggest that they are indeed more harmed (Slabbert, 2017). If this argument is correct, working-class women would perceive sexual harassment as more harmful when compared to the appraisals of other classes. The second research question attempts to resolve this by asking, 'How does a woman's class background impact their perceptions of the harm of sexual harassment?'.

2.4) Explanation of Trends

There are various possible explanations for working-class women's exposure to sexual harassment. As mentioned, intersectionality provides a vital framework for understanding the

relationship between class, gender, and sexual harassment. However, several other aspects of social identity can also influence this dynamic, including age and race (Slabbert, 2017; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). The fourth research question will consider the former of these: 'How do attitudes towards sexual harassment vary for working- class women of different ages?'. Attitudes towards sexual harassment have changed drastically across different generations. For example, women over the age of 55 are more likely to consider unwanted advances and touching as acceptable (YouGov, 2018). These differences in attitudes could potentially be reflective of differences in exposure. Overall, working-class women have more frequent and intense experiences of sexual harassment (Slabbert, 2017).

Nevertheless, regardless of class, young women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine are significantly more likely to experience sexual harassment than older women. Women in this age group are more likely to be in zero hour low-paid job roles that exacerbate sexual harassment (Adams et al., 2020). They also tend to be the age group attending late-night venues such as bars and clubs wherein sexual harassment is rife (Fileborn, 2016). At a late-night venue, young working-class women specifically often attract this attention due to cultural expectations that encourage them to adhere to hyper-sexualised ideals to gain recognition or status (Hennell et al., 2022). It has been established that exposure to sexual harassment can change the way victims appraise incidents. Therefore, a woman's age is likely to change their appraisal of the harm caused by sexual harassment (Collinsworth et al., 2009). Interestingly, young people being exposed to sexual harassment more but normalising it less contradicts previously established theories on the subject. Finally, age can also impact a person's perception of the legal system. Research has shown that older individuals tend to have greater faith in institutions, potentially due to trust increasing with age or older generations having more trust due to the social norms of their youth (Pickering et al., 2024). Either way, this suggests that age will significantly impact the perceptions of the current sample.

Other factors beyond age can also increase a working-class woman's vulnerability to sexual harassment. For instance, certain types of employment can increase exposure. One example is service work, often poorly paid, undervalued, and reliant on part-time hours (Wood, 2024). It also frequently involves interacting not only with managers and colleagues but also with the public; this increases the possible sources of exposure to sexual harassment. Yassour-Borochowitz (2020) found that 12% of women in these positions had experienced sexual

harassment within the last year. They concluded that service work creates an environment that tolerates and actively encourages sexual harassment. These cultures, sometimes called gendered workplaces, are formed in two main ways. The first is through the design of the workspaces, such as shops featuring exposed women in advertisements. The second is the view that a workplace is a male area, such as petrol stations not welcoming female attendees (Yassour-Borochowitz, 2020). In addition to the above, the service industry can also require staff to play into a feminine persona and tolerate sexual harassment to get tips or continue their employment. Mutari (2018) called this 'doing gender'. For some individuals in these roles, sexual harassment is not considered noteworthy; it is a routine part of their job, like using a till (Mutari, 2018). The result of all the above factors is an environment that surrounds working-class women with sexual harassment.

2.5) The Missing Voice

Overall, the review of the literature revealed a concerning trend regarding the absence of marginalised voices in research; few studies explored working-class women's perspectives on sexual harassment in their own words. When voices are not highlighted in research, they tend to be relegated to a footnote. "Ending sexual violence and harassment will require every voice from every corner of the world, and it will require those whose voices are most often heard to find ways to amplify those voices that often go unheard" (Burke, 2017, as cited in Ouwuachi-Willig, 2018). As this quote suggests, it is the responsibility of academics to highlight the voices of those who cannot speak for themselves. It is a responsibility they are failing to achieve for working-class victims. One reason for this failure is that research frequently assumes that the generic woman is white, educated, and middle-class (Baptist & Coburn, 2019). The above is not an issue exclusive to academia; feminist movements also often fail to highlight the voices of the working class, instead focusing almost entirely on the middle-class experience (Ditowsky, 2019; Liska, 2015). The above gap justifies the current studies' focus on gaining the first-hand perspectives of working-class women.

It is reasonable to assume that working-class women will have a different perspective on sexual harassment than those of other classes because a person's background, identity, and experiences shape how they perceive the topic (Collinsworth et al., 2009; Kollor-Alonso, 2021). On a global level, working- class women tend to have more frequent and severe exposure to sexual harassment that is likely to impact their perceptions (Cheek et al., 2023). Unfortunately,

the absence of this voice in the literature makes it hard to predict what these perceptions will be. Koller-Alonso (2021) found that exposure to sexual harassment can change how a person defines and labels these behaviours. The apparent normalisation among the working class may mean that they dismiss more of these actions as acceptable (Scarduzio et al., 2018). In addition, this normalisation could mean that working-class women also believe sexual harassment is less harmful (Bresnahan, 1997). However, if a thick-skin bias is present, the population may perceive it as more damaging due to the lack of support (Cheek et al., 2023). Either way, these attitudes are a product of a specific class context and identity. It is a distinctive outlook that needs an updated investigation.

2.6) Summary

To summarise, this review provided definitions for the key concepts of class and sexual harassment. It also attempted to identify the unique lived experiences of working-class victims, how this impacted their perceptions of harm, and why these trends occurred. Finally, the chapter identified the gap around the lack of class-centric investigations into perceptions of these topics. The next chapter will showcase the methodology designed to explore this.

METHODOLOGY

3.1) Qualitative Rationale and Interpretivist Philosophy

The dissertation will apply a qualitative interpretivist epistemological approach to working-class women's perceptions of sexual harassment. The justification for using qualitative methods is that it allows the study to explore the subjective aspects of participants' perspectives and how the context around them impacts this (Capper, 2018). In this way, the approach will enable a more complex and nuanced investigation of the topic. Specifically, it can help identify any subtle influences that class can have on sexual harassment (D. Gennaro & Ritschel, 2019; Hammarberg, Kirkman, & De Lacey, 2016). The following chapter will discuss this methodology and justify the sampling methods, data analysis, and data collection. Finally, it will consider the role of ethics at each stage of the process.

3.2) Sampling

Participant recruitment will occur through a combination of snowball and purposive sampling. Snowball sampling is a form of non-probability sampling that relies on networking; a

researcher's initial contacts recommend other people potentially interested in participating. Essentially, the method uses social networks to create links. On the other hand, purposive sampling is a method of non-probability sampling that selects participants based on specific characteristics (Parker et al., 2019). For example, purposive sampling may ensure that a sample reflects the age, race, and background required by a researcher for their study.

Both sampling methods offer advantages that benefit one another when combined. An advantage of snowball sampling is that it can successfully reach less obtainable populations (Parker et al., 2019). As the literature review highlighted, there is an absence of working-class perspectives within existing research, which suggests that they may be a challenging population for academics to access (Baptist & Coburn, 2019). Once snowball sampling has granted access to this population, purposive sampling ensures that the sample meets the characteristics required for the research (Parker et al., 2019). Although, it's worth noting that results generated from these sampling methods are not generalisable to the entire population of interest (Sharma, 2017).

The use of purposive sampling is justified in this study as it will ensure the sample adheres to the characteristics required to answer the research questions. As mentioned, self-identification and frequent markers of socio-economic disadvantage will be combined to establish a working-class background. While working-class women are the population of interest, practical limitations have narrowed this focus to 10 white cisgender women to ensure a consistent background within the sample. However, the fourth research question, 'How do attitudes towards sexual harassment vary for working-class women of different ages?', asks how age intersects with other factors to influence perceptions. Therefore, the sample will consist of working-class women of different ages with the exact age criteria outlined below.

Table 1: Composition of Sample by Age Group

Number of Participants	Age Group in Years				
	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-65
	2	2	2	2	2

3.3) Data Collection

The previous chapter highlighted a methodological gap within existing research wherein working-class women's perspectives are rarely explored, especially using qualitative methods. The current study will fill this gap through open-ended semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview consists of predetermined questions, with deviation allowed for follow-up questions based on participant responses (Clark et al., 2021). The main advantage of this method is that it can provide the rich data essential when exploring an issue as complex as sexual harassment. However, the depth involved in a semi-structured interview prevents their usage with a large representative sample (Segal et al., 2006). Semi-structured interviews were chosen over other interview types because they allow flexibility while ensuring that all key points are discussed in a comparable way (Adams, 2015). These same advantages are not present in unstructured or structured interviews.

Each interview will be conducted for approximately one hour, online or in person, based on participant preferences. These options are provided as the location of an interview can have a notable impact on the comfort of participants and the quality of the answers they provide (Petrescu, 2017). Facilitating a participant's comfort can also help to build rapport. Rapport refers to the supportive and understanding relationship that can be developed between participants and researchers (Horsfall et al., 2021). Having a good rapport with your participants supports the development of open and honest communication; if participants feel they can trust the researcher, the interviews are likely to take on a more conversational tone (Gagne, 2004).

In addition to the above, researcher reflectivity is also significant in this study’s data collection. Reflexivity refers to the practice of a researcher examining their position and the influence it may have had on the research (Starfield, 2013). In this study, the researcher has insider status as they are a part of the target population being sampled (Bukamal, 2022). Being a white woman from a working-class background will likely shape how the researcher interacts with participants and the formation of the interview questions. Although, this can be a strength if professional boundaries are maintained. A shared social identity between researchers and participants can aid the development of rapport as power dynamics appear equal. The participants can relate to the interviewer and may feel more comfortable providing honest answers (Yates, 2013).

3.4) Data Analysis

The method of data analysis used in this study will be thematic analysis. Thematic analysis uses text- based data, like interview transcriptions, to uncover and identify key themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The current study will use Braun and Clarke's six stages of thematic analysis to achieve this. The six stages are familiarisation, generation of codes, generation of themes, review of themes, definition and naming of themes, and then writing up (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The main advantage of thematic analysis is that it is systemic and explicit without sacrificing the depth needed to uncover complex and subtle ideas. However, thematic analysis can result in researcher bias when identifying themes (Bruan & Clarke, 2023). The researcher being aware of this risk is the best way to mitigate it as they can ensure their data analysis is evidenced by what is there, not what they hoped to find (Javadi & Zarea, 2016).

When engaging with a topic as complex as sexual harassment, thematic analysis is suitable as it can determine the presence of any reoccurring perceptions. The interview transcripts for this study will be naturalised, which means that the transcription focuses on the unfiltered details of an exchange, including hesitations, colloquialisms, and pauses (Darlics & Clifton, 2023). The above is essential when conducting research with working-class participants as it allows for the reflection of non-verbal cues and the group's unique language code. Historically, it has been well established that different classes access different language codes. For example, working-class people typically use more colloquialisms (Bernstein, 1964). Due to the absence of working-class voices in research, it is even more crucial to accurately represent this unique way of speaking.

3.5) Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines will be adhered to during every stage of the above methodology. Before consenting to participate, each participant will sign an informed consent form outlining the purpose of the research, the risks involved, and the commitment required from them (Nijhawan et al., 2013). The form is essential as it ensures participants are aware of the sensitive content in the study, allowing them to make an informed choice about their willingness to be involved. Requiring informed consent also ensures that there is no researcher deception. Participants will also be advised of their right to withdraw their consent at any point in the study (Schaefer & Wertheimer, 2010).

The study will also take steps to reduce the capacity for emotional harm. Discussing a sensitive topic like sexual harassment has the potential to cause psychological distress to participants (Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998). The interview questions will be perspective-based rather than experience-focused to reduce this risk. Perspective-based questions prevent participants from needing to disclose painful memories. The risk of emotional harm will also be mitigated by regularly reminding participants to take breaks and skip any questions if they are uncomfortable. More generally, safety risks have been considered through a signed risk awareness form that identifies any hazards involved in the study.

Beyond participant well-being, it is also essential to ensure participant anonymity by avoiding identifying information (Wiles et al., 2006). For this study, participants' names will be pseudonyms with their ages next to them as a range. For example, one of the participants will use the pseudonym and age group of 'Lucy 30's'. Additionally, no identifying details will be requested for the questions on participants' education and employment background (Wiles et al., 2006). If identifying information is mentioned, it will be removed from the transcription. However, contact details will need to be collected to facilitate interview arrangements. Although, after the transactions are complete, the recordings and identifying information will be deleted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As outlined above, the study's methodology featured a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. The current chapter will identify the key themes uncovered during this process. These themes are perceptions of normalisation, perceptions of harm, perceptions of the legal system, and perceptions of working-class tolerance. The chapter will consider the implications of these findings for the study's research questions and consider how these relate to the existing literature, highlighting any connections or contradictions.

4.1) Perceptions of Normalisation

The first theme, 'Perceptions of Normalisation' refers to the idea that acts of sexual harassment can be perceived as complementary and an ordinary part of life. As mentioned, people each have unique criteria for what behaviour constitutes sexual harassment. An action can be sexual harassment to one person and a compliment to another (Rothgerber et al., 2021). The current

section explores the frequency of the latter perception with the working-class sample and considers why this may be the case.

Most of the sample believed that 'honking' and 'catcalling' were a compliment. Specifically, 8 out of 10 participants expressed this view, as evidenced below:

> *'I used to think oh I must look nice that I'm getting honked at and whistled at by strangers.' - (Jade 50's) 'I actually like that cause it's a feel-good factor.' - (Kat 40's)*
> *'... because it made me feel good.' - (Rose 40's)*
>
> *'... you got a whistle or a honk, you felt good about yourself.' - (Lola 60's)*

Building on the above, one participant in the sample disclosed that during nights out, she would intentionally attract the acts of sexual harassment that she considered complimentary, as shown below:

> *'If I'm honest, when I used to go on nights out with my friends and we were all done up; if we went on the whole night out and no boy had tapped our bum or asked us for a drink or asked to buy us a drink or made a flirtatious comment, I would have probably felt a bit pooped' - (Lucy 30's)*

The participant's identification of 'honking' and 'catcalling' as complimentary aligns with the existing research, as these are the behaviours most frequently dismissed in this way (Di Gennaro & Ritschel, 2019). Nearly every participant believed that these acts were a complimentary ordinary part of life, which supports the notion that working-class women normalise sexual harassment to a greater extent than other classes (Scarduzio et al., 2018). However, Lucy's account transcends this standard normalisation as she shared that she deliberately attempted to attract this attention. Although often incorrect, there is a consistent perception that acts of sexual harassment are motivated by genuine romantic interest or sexual desire (Goh et al., 2022). Lucy's account supports this idea as she considers this behaviour a reflection of the man's interest and a direct response to the effort she put into her physical appearance. Through a class-based lens, we can understand this behaviour as the result of a specific working-class culture that expects women to adhere to 'ladette' and hyper-sexualized

ideals. Receiving this attention is seen as a desirable result of a 'proper' night out (Hennell et al., 2022). Essentially, within this context, working- class women are taught that this behaviour is normal and should be the goal of their activities.

However, class is not the only aspect of identity contributing to normalisation. From an intersectional perspective, it is apparent that age also influences whether working-class women perceive acts of sexual harassment as mundane. Only the two youngest participants disagreed with the above perceptions, as shown below:

> *'So, you try to tell someone about it and their like 'oh, take it as a compliment' or 'They're just trying to be nice'.' - (Gabbie 20's)*

> *'Society kind of just acts as if it's normal. It's become a bit normalised.' - (Hannah 20's)*

Gabbie and Hannah objected to the normalisation of sexual harassment, arguing that these perceptions would negatively impact victims. Gabbie specifically suggested that dismissing instances of sexual harassment as complimentary could lead to the dismissal of the harm experienced. The distinct difference between the younger participants and the other age groups implies that age is highly influential in shaping perceptions of sexual harassment, which supports the consensus from the literature (Slabbert, 2017; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Exposure could explain this as young women, especially young working- class women, are exposed to sexual harassment more than any other age group (Adams et al., 2020).

However, in this case, the increased exposure of these two participants has not resulted in them normalising sexual harassment. Instead, they outright refuse this trend, potentially due to their age and the attitudes of their generation. The participants themselves showed an awareness of these changing generational attitudes, as shown below:

> *'I come from an era where it happened. It's probably not the same for you young girls now (Laughs), you probably look at it as such' - (Leah 60's)*

> *'I never used to think it was but now I think it's because some people don't like it, and they feel that it's sexual harassment.' - (Jenny 50's)*

According to Leah and Jenny's reflections, they understood that younger generations appraised behaviours differently. They recognised that behaviours once viewed as ordinary were now less acceptable. The participants support Collinsworth et al's (2009) argument that victims' appraisals of sexual harassment were dependent on various factors, including their history and resources. In this case, age and class both impacted the participants' appraisals, with participants changing how they appraised behaviour over time. The findings within this theme answer the first research question, 'What are working-class women's attitudes towards sexual harassment?' and the fourth question, 'How do attitudes towards sexual harassment vary for working-class women of different ages?'. Working-class women appear to normalise sexual harassment and accept acts as complementary unless they are of a younger age group. The above suggests that age may have a more pronounced impact on participants' appraisals than their class.

4.2) Perceptions of Harm

The second theme, 'Perceptions of Harm' refers to the belief that acts of sexual harassment have an adverse negative effect on victims. Sexual harassment is widely accepted as causing emotional harm, such as anger, humiliation, and depression (Bongiorno et al., 2020; Collinsworth et al., 2009; Holland & Cortina, 2013). The current section considers the consistency of this perception within the sample and identifies factors that may contribute to the extent of harm experienced by victims.

Every participant believed that sexual harassment was harmful to victims, as evident below:

> *'It can make you more shy, it can make you more self-conscious, make you worry' – (Kat 40's)*

> *'I know if it was me, I wouldn't be able to put it out of my head. It would always lay in there in the middle of the night. You can't sleep, it'll go round and round. Ruin the rest of your life.' - (Leah 60's)*

> *'... whether it's physical or emotional or mental, however you want to characterise it. It most likely will even if they don't let on' - (Hannah 20's)*

> *'Mental, physical, emotional, financial... I could keep going...everything.' - (Keria 30's)*

Building on this, some participants also suggested that the harm of sexual harassment could result in victims changing how they behave; they may avoid nights out, change their physical appearance, or avoid romantic relations, as shown below:

> *'You don't want to have relationships with other men'- (Leah 60's)*

> *'Um, perhaps not feeling safe to go out or not wanting to wear certain clothes through being afraid of what attention they might get and how to deal with that attention' - (Lucy 30's)*

> *'It could leave you not wanting to go out, not being able to communicate with people, not wanting to meet new people, not wanting to try and like, socialise.' - (Rose 40's)*

The above accounts reflect the consistent view within the sample that sexual harassment is significantly harmful and that it can lead victims to make drastic changes to their behaviour. These perspectives align closely with the existing research (Bongiorno et al., 2020; Collinsworth et al., 2009; Holland & Cortina, 2013) and support Vera-Gray's (2016) assertion that victims of sexual harassment experience a 'fear of rape'. The fear of rape then leads them to take steps to avoid incidents; these include the types of changes mentioned by Leah, Lucy, and Rose. However, this finding may contradict Bresnahan's (1997) idea that working-class women see sexual harassment as less harmful. All participants unanimously agreed that these acts were damaging. Despite this, the impact of class on these perceptions is difficult to determine. Kollor-Alonso (2021) has established that people have different perceptions of what acts classify as sexual harassment. The current study supports this, as there was no consistent agreement among participants that any specific act would be sexual harassment. For example, when asked, 'Do you believe it is inappropriate to pressure someone into a relationship? Could this be considered harassment?' participants were divided. Therefore, it is likely that participants were thinking of different behaviours when asked the interview question, 'Does sexual harassment cause harm to the person experiencing it?'. Therefore, any comparisons

drawn from participants are less conclusive as some may have been thinking of more extreme forms of harassment rather than more common types, like catcalling.

Another notable finding within this theme was the suggestion from participants that various factors could contribute to the extent of harm a victim of sexual harassment experienced, as shown below:

> *'If your being sort of sexually harassed in your workplace by somebody and you've gotta keep going to work and you've got keep trying to deal with it. I think that's probably quite hard' - (Jade 50's)*

> *'If you are physically touched or hurt in any way then you've got those physical markings, you've got that reminder there as well as the mental' - (Kiera 30's)*

> *'Putting your hands on someone you know being...doing that is bad sexual harassment.' - (Jenny 50's)*

The two most common suggestions from participants were that sexual harassment was more harmful when an incident was physical, such as unwanted touching, and when the victims could not escape, such as in a workplace. The existing research on harm and sexual harassment supports these suggestions. Fitzgerald et al. (1997) argued that the frequency, duration, and intensity of an incident of sexual harassment have an impact on the extent of victim harm experienced. As the participants stated, physical incidents were seen as more intense, while exposure to sexual harassment was seen as more frequent and had a longer duration within a workplace setting (Salisbury & Dominick, 2004). The influence of class and age on these perspectives appears to be minimal. There was no difference between the participants' ideas and those found by Salisbury & Dominick (2004) and Fitzgerald (1997) in their non-class-based research. As these ideas remain consistent, the perception of exacerbating factors in the harm of sexual harassment appears to be generalisable beyond class boundaries. As mentioned, there were also no significant differences in the suggestions given by participants of different age groups. Ultimately, the answer to the second research question, 'How does a woman's class background impact their perceptions of the harm of sexual harassment?' is uncertain.

4.3) Perceptions of the Legal System

The third theme, 'Perceptions of the Legal System,' refers to people's lack of faith in the legal system's response to sexual harassment. It has been established that working-class women have poorer experiences and outcomes with these institutions (Ditowsky, 2019). The current section will consider how this experience shapes their perceptions.

When asked the interview question, 'How do you believe the legal system handles cases of sexual harassment?' most participants believed the response was poor and frivolous, as shown below:

> *'I know that no matter how you respond to it it's probably gonna be left behind and forgotten anyways.' - (Gabbie 20's)*
>
> *'It doesn't really tend to go anywhere.' - (Hannah 20's)*
>
> *'I think it's terrible. I think that they don't take cases seriously enough and can let things go too far' - (Rose 40's)*
>
> *'... you'd just get, you know, 'there's not a lot we can do about that sorry', because you've got no proof.' - (Jenny 50's)*

The above participant accounts echo victims' common concerns regarding the legal system. Individuals often fear that if they report their complaints, they will not be taken seriously (Allen, 2022). The above belief appears to be especially prevalent among those who experience additional barriers and poorer outcomes with the police. Victims from a low socio-economic background have historically been restricted from accessing this formal support (Cheek et al., 2023; Ditowsky, 2019; Slabbert, 2017). The consistent lack of faith among the current sample illustrates the above, as it shows that negative perceptions of the legal system are rife within this working-class sample. In fact, 7 out of the 10 participants were critical of the police's responses to sexual harassment. However, it is worth noting that the prevalence of these negative perceptions within the working class may not be exclusive to the issue of the responses of the legal system to sexual harassment. Those from a low socio-economic background generally tend to have poorer perceptions of social institutions (Foster et al., 2017). From this, we can infer that the sample's negative perceptions may be at least partially due to their class background.

Despite this, the extent of this influence is unknown, as other factors in the participants' history may also contribute to this belief.

Interestingly, some participants expressed the view that the legal system should not be involved in some incidents of sexual harassment. They felt that less severe incidents should be handled without requiring the involvement of law enforcement, as shown below:

> *'I would say that unless it's a severe form of sexual harassment that is affecting the girl or the woman, then I wouldn't see it as necessary to get the police involved because I think they've got a lot more serious crimes, maybe to be investigated.' - (Jade 50's)*

> *'I do think sometimes going to the police can be a bit extreme, if all they've done is text you or something like that.' - (Kat 40's)*

The above perspectives are significant as they reflect a unique reality regarding victims' decisions around incident reporting. Fitzgerald & Cortina (2018) found that reporting sexual harassment was often a last resort only taken by victims when their attempts to manage the incidents were unsuccessful. Incidentally, working-class victims were more likely to turn to informal sources of support rather than official organisations (Ditowsky, 2019; Slabbert, 2017). The above finding could suggest a new explanation for this trend; working-class women may potentially be less likely to see sexual harassment as deserving of a police response. However, this mentality can potentially be harmful to victims and bystanders who are dissuaded from reporting due to the trivilisation of sexual harassment (Fielding et al., 2021). The above trivialisation is apparent in Kat and Jade's accounts, as they see certain forms of sexual harassment as minor or insignificant. The above dismissal of seemingly less severe sexual harassment as not police business could be another hurdle for working-class women to overcome when choosing to report.

Only 1 participant contradicted the negative perceptions of the legal systems responses to sexual harassment, as shown below:

> *'I think they probably do deal with it very well...more so these days. I think there's a better system set up to be believed for women or a man, to be believed.' - (Leah 60's)*

In Leah's account, she provides a positive perspective on the legal system, believing that institutional responses to sexual harassment have improved over time. Leah's age may have influenced these perceptions, with research showing that older individuals have greater faith in institutions (Pickering et al., 2024). However, Leah was the only participant expressing this view. The data from the other older participants contradicts Pickering et al. (2024), suggesting that age may have a minimal influence on perceptions of the legal system. The third research question asked, 'How does class affect perceptions of the possible legal outcomes in sexual harassment cases?'. Ultimately, the answer is that being working- class likely decreases a person's trust in the legal system and their responses to sexual harassment. A working-class background may also impact the level of police involvement accepted, potentially lessening support for victims from this background.

4.4) Perceptions of Working-Class Tolerance

The final theme, 'Perceptions of Working-Class Tolerance' refers to the belief that working-class women's lived experience results in them being more tolerant of sexual harassment. Research has consistently shown that women from this background experience sexual harassment more frequently and severely (Slabbert, 2017; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). The current section will identify how this unique lived experience impacts tolerance levels and suggest why this may be the case.

Multiple participants suggested that working-class employment types and the associated lack of income forced working-class women to tolerate sexual harassment. We can see this reflection below:

> *'Being working-class means, you've got to put up with it more for some weird reason like if you wanna keep your job' - (Gabbie 20's)*
>
> *'You're hanging on the edge of having food for the table or not.' - (Gabbie 20's)*
>
> *'I don't know how to explain it. I mean I have had comments from customers, yeah, but you just (shrugs shoulders) go okay whatever.' - (Kiera 30's)*

> *'I think that flirting with men that you don't particularly find attractive or allowing them to flirt with you is part of the job; You get better tips that way, even with waitressing I would find I would get better tips from men when I would perhaps be a little flirty or smile at them or give them a look because it helped with the job. It was just... it's not like it's said it's part of the job's role, but it definitely helped in order to keep your job and get good tips.' - (Lucy 30's)*

These suggestions support Bresnahan's (1997) account of the relationship between working-class employment and sexual harassment. Bresnahan argued that working-class women's jobs exposed them to frequent sexual harassment, and their economic strain prevented them from leaving. Additionally, these jobs are often less secure, leaving victims unable to report (Wood, 2024). Gabbie and Kiera's accounts reflected this as they shared that sexual harassment was a part of their jobs that they had to tolerate to keep their income and employment. In Lucy's account, she shared previous job roles wherein performing a specific persona for customers was expected; she had to act flirtatiously to earn tips and maintain her employment. The above exemplifies Mutari's (2018) idea of 'doing gender'; Lucy had to put on a specific feminine personality as a mundane and routine part of her role.

As exemplified above, both the current findings and a portion of the existing literature suggest that working-class women are forced to tolerate sexual harassment due to situational factors beyond their control. However, another common suggestion was that working-class women were more tolerant of sexual harassment because they were less affected by it, as shown below:

> '*Whereas I feel like in working class backgrounds, a lot of these behaviours, obviously not all of them, but a lot of these that are maybe more than on minor scale for us when compared to some more severe harassment, are almost quite normal and socially these things do happen quite often and perhaps we wouldn't view them as very serious - (Lucy 30's)*

> *'Um I think that growing up in, you know, a working class background and going to a local comp school, you probably have a thicker skin than you would, if you'd been more molly*

> *coddled and I don't know gone to an all-girls school um may be been more prim and proper that you'd find things more shocking than I would' - (Jade 50's)*

> *'We're working-class and being from a working-class background I think that we are naturally tougher than other classes' - (Rose 40's)*

The above evidence has connotations for the previously outlined debate as to whether those from a low socio-economic background are thick-skinned or victims of a 'thick skin bias' that expects them to be.

The accounts provided by Lucy, Jade, and Rose support Bresnahan's (1997) argument that working-class women do indeed have thicker skin when it comes to sexual harassment. Bresnahan believed that working-class women trivialised sexual harassment as they have more significant concerns, often related to money. As mentioned in Gabbie's account, individuals from a low socio-economic background usually struggle to afford necessities. Experiencing this type of deprivation then makes sexual harassment seem less pressing as a concern. Other participants reflected on these ideas as they suggested they were 'naturally tougher' and had 'thicker skin' than other classes. Essentially, they shared that sexual harassment was an ordinary aspect of their lives that they did not consider serious. In theme 1, the above perspective was discussed in connection with the normalisation of sexual harassment. The current finding suggests that working-class women may be aware of their tendency to normalise sexual harassment (Scarduzio et al., 2018). In the context of the thick-skin debate, the current finding does little to support the opposing side; there was no mention of a 'thick-skin bias' or similar concepts. However, we could also interpret these findings to suggest that this population expects one another to be thicker-skinned in the face of sexual harassment (Cheek et al., 2023). As this section has made apparent, there is a general attitude among some participants that working-class women are and should be more resilient to this issue. The prevalence of this belief could inadvertently then lead to members of this group assuming that victims from their background are less impacted or in need of support. They may perpetuate a bias that harms them.

4.5) Summery

To summarise, this chapter explored the key themes identified from the data analysis. These were perceptions of normalisation, perceptions of harm, perceptions of the legal system, and perceptions of working-class tolerance. The remaining chapter will provide a detailed summary of these findings. It will also discuss the limitations of the dissertation and suggest recommendations for further research.

CONCLUSION

5.1) Research Objectives and Summery

The main aim of this dissertation was to begin to fill a gap within research by exploring the specific perspectives of working-class women on sexual harassment in their own words. The current project achieves this aim by answering four research questions, reiterated below:

- What are working-class women's attitudes towards sexual harassment?
- How does a woman's class background impact their perceptions of the harm of sexual harassment?
- How does class affect perceptions of the possible legal outcomes in sexual harassment cases?
- How do attitudes towards sexual harassment vary for working-class women of different ages?

The research established the prevalent attitudes among the working-class sample and considered how these perspectives differed from those of other classes. Overall, the most conclusive finding related to the first research question. Working-class women appeared to trivialise and normalise sexual harassment to a significant degree. The sample consistently dismissed incidents as complimentary, tolerable, and insignificant compared to other issues. The study also found that a notable portion of the sample believed working-class women were more 'thick-skinned' than other classes. They expected people from their background to be able to tolerate more harassment. However, this perception could be caused by an internal 'thick-skin bias' that individuals in this group possess and perpetuate.

The findings related to the second research question were less conclusive. Class did not appear to influence perceptions of harm or the factors that could exacerbate the harm experienced.

However, the limitations of the dissertation prevented a more complete investigation into this topic. Despite this, the findings for the third research question suggested that class may impact the perception of the legal system. The sample had an overwhelmingly negative perception of the legal system's response to sexual harassment. Although, the findings also suggested that working-class women may be more likely to believe that sexual harassment did not warrant police involvement, potentially due to the aforementioned normalisation. Finally, the findings related to the fourth research question explored the influence of age on the above perceptions. Age appeared to have little, if any, impact on perceptions of harm and the legal system. Nonetheless, age had a profound effect on the degree to which a person normalised sexual harassment; younger participants did not normalise sexual harassment to the same extent.

The study was unique in its attempts to allow working-class women to share their perspectives in their own words. A qualitative methodology facilitated this through semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, allowing the study to achieve its aim in its entirety. However, as mentioned, the dissertation had several limitations.

5.2) Limitations and Recommendations

As mentioned, the study effectively gained an initial insight into an underrepresented perspective in sexual harassment research. However, the sample size of 10 participants limited the generalisability of the findings. These participants cannot represent the perspectives of the entire population of working-class women in the UK. Another limitation of this study was the sample composition of only working-class women. As the aim was to reflect the perspectives of this group, their insights were essential. Nevertheless, the lack of representation of other classes prevented the study from forming direct comparisons. A comparative element would have enhanced the class analysis. Ultimately, this was not achievable within the practical time restrictions of the current study. A final limitation of the dissertation was the inability to question participants on their experiences of sexual harassment. Due to ethical requirements, the methodology was limited to perspectives-based interview questions. However, a person's experiences shape their perspectives, and being able to follow this line of questioning would have provided the study with more depth. Experience-focused questions could have further explored how working-class women’s exposure and experiences impacted their perspectives of sexual harassment.

Future research could build upon the knowledge gathered in this study and address the limitations in various ways. Firstly, applying quantitative methods with a larger sample size could address the issue of generalisability. Gaining a truly representative sample of the perspectives of working-class women would require this type of methodology as it does not require the same depth as qualitative methods. However, further replications of the current methodology would also be beneficial to continue to explore these underrepresented perspectives. Additionally, further research could improve the class analysis by completing a comparative study with a working and middle-class sample. Implementing this methodology would determine more apparent similarities and differences from the perspectives of different classes. The last recommendation would be to complete further perspective-based studies with more intensive and thorough interview questions that allow for the discussion of experiences when relevant. Ultimately, this study was a starting point for further research to fill the gap that fails to consider the voice of working- class victims of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment impacts everyone, and until we reflect on each unique intersectional experience and perspective, the issue can never be resolved.

REFERENCES

Adams, W. C. (2015). Conducting semi-structured interviews. *Handbook of practical program evaluation*, 492-505. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119171386.ch19

Adams, L., Hilger, L., Moselen, E., Basi, T., Gooding, O., & Hull, J. (2020). 2020 Sexual Harassment Survey Government Equalities Office IFF Research. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/60f03e068fa8f50c77458285/2021-07-12_Sexual_Harassment_Report_FINAL.pdf

Allen, K. (2022). VAWG in public spaces: Barriers to reporting and impacts on women and girls. B*ritish Society of Criminology Summer Newsletter*, (89), 9-13. https://www.britsoccrim.org/wp- content/uploads/2022/05/BSCN-Summer-2022-VAWG-in-public-spaces.pdf

Baker, C. N. (2004). Race, class, and sexual harassment in the 1970s. *Feminist Studies*, *30*(1), 7-27. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3178552

Baptist, J., & Coburn, K. (2019). Harassment in public spaces: The intrusion on personal space. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, *31*(2-3), 114-128. https://doi.org/10.1080/08952833.2019.1634178

Bernstein, B. (1964). Elaborated and restricted codes: Their social origins and some consequences.
American anthropologist, *66*(6), 55-69. https://www.jstor.org/stable/668161

Bondestam, F., & Lundqvist, M. (2020). Sexual harassment in higher education–a systematic review. *European Journal of Higher Education*, *10*(4), 397-419. https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2020.1729833

Bongiorno, R., Langbroek, C., Bain, P. G., Ting, M., & Ryan, M. K. (2020). Why women are blamed for being sexually harassed: The effects of empathy for female victims and male perpetrators. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *44*(1), 11-27. https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684319868730

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2023). Toward good practice in thematic analysis: Avoiding common problems and be (com) ing a knowing researcher. International journal of transgender health, 24(1), 1-6. https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2129597

Bresnahan, E. (1997). Putting your body on the line: a meditation on" hostile environment" sexual harassment in working-class perspective. *NWSA Journal*, *9*(2), 64-69. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4316506

Brown, J., & Walklate, S. (Eds.). (2011). *Handbook on sexual violence*. Routledge.

Bukamal, H. (2022). Deconstructing insider–outsider researcher positionality. *British Journal of Special Education*, *49*(3), 327-349. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8578.12426

Butler, N., Quigg, Z., & Bellis, M. A. (2020). Cycles of violence in England and Wales: the contribution of childhood abuse to risk of violence revictimisation in adulthood. *BMC medicine*, *18*, 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-020-01788-3

Cheek, N. N., Bandt-Law, B., & Sinclair, S. (2023). People believe sexual harassment and domestic violence are less harmful for women in poverty. *Journal of experimental social psychology*, *107*, 104472. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2023.104472

Choudhury, N. (2021). *Research finds that 97% of women in the UK have been sexually harassed*. Open Access Government. https://www.openaccessgovernment.org/97-of-women-in-the-uk/105940/

Clark, T., Foster, L., Bryman, A., & Sloan, L. (2021). *Bryman's social research methods*. Oxford university press.

Collinsworth, L. L., Fitzgerald, L. F., & Drasgow, F. (2009). In harm's way: factors related to psychological distress following sexual harassment. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *33*(4), 475-490. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2009.01525.x

Conroy, E., Willmott, D., Murphy, A. & Widanaralalage, K. (2024). Does Perpetrator Gender Influence Attitudes Towards Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)? Examining the Relationship between Male-Perpetrated and Female-Perpetrated IPV Attitudes Among a Sample of UK Young Adults. *Mental Health and Social Inclusion, 28*(5), 617-627. https://doi.org/10.1108/MHSI-05-2023-0057

Darics, E., & Clifton, J. (2023). Data: Access, Transcription, Analysis. In *Organisation, Communication and Language: A Case Book of Methods for Analysing Workplace Text and Talk* (pp. 17-33). Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-30199-5_2

Di Gennaro, K., & Ritschel, C. (2019, July). Blurred lines: The relationship between catcalls and compliments. In *Women's Studies International Forum* (Vol. 75, p. 102239). Pergamon. Cite https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2019.102239

Ditkowsky, M. (2019). # UsToo: The Disaparate Impact of and Ineffective Response of Sexual Harassment of Low-Wage Workers. *UCLA Women's LJ*, *26*, 69. 10.5070/l3262045668

Fairchild, K. (2023). Understanding street harassment as gendered violence: past, present, and future. *Sexuality & Culture*, *27*(3), 1140-1159. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-022-09998-y

Fielding, L., Tzani-Pepelasi, C., Ioannou, M., & Artinopoulou, V. (2021). Sexual harassment on public transport in England: Prevalence, experiences and barriers to reporting. *Assessment & Development Matters*, *13*(3).

Fileborn, B. (2016). *Reclaiming the night-time economy: Unwanted sexual attention in pubs and clubs*. Springer.

Fileborn, B., & Loney-Howes, R. (2019). Introduction: Mapping the emergence of# MeToo. # *MeToo and the politics of social change*, 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-15213-0_1

Fileborn, B., & O'Neill, T. (2023). From "ghettoization" to a field of its own: A comprehensive review of street harassment research. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, *24*(1), 125-138. https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380211021

Fitzgerald, L. F., Shullman, S. L., Bailey, N., Richards, M., Swecker, J., Gold, Y., ... & Weitzman, L. (1988). The incidence and dimensions of sexual harassment in academia and the workplace. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 32, 152-175. https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791(88)90012-7

Fitzgerald, L. F. (1990). Sexual harassment: The definition and measurement of a construct. *Ivory power: Sexual harassment on campus*, *21*(22), 24-30. State University of New York Press.

Fitzgerald, L. F., Gelfand, M. J., & Drasgow, F. (1995). Measuring sexual harassment: Theoretical and psychometric advances. Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 17, 425-445.https://doi.org/10.1207/s15324834basp1704_2

Fitzgerald, L. F., Swan, S., & Magley, V. J. (1997). But was it really sexual harassment?: Legal, behavioral, and psychological definitions of the workplace victimization of women. (Ther is less on category other than frequency. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1996-98843-001

Fitzgerald, L. F., & Cortina, L. M. (2018). Sexual harassment in work organizations: A view from the 21st century. https://doi.org/10.1037/0000060-012

Flouli, A., Athanasiades, C., & Deliyanni-Kouimtzi, V. (2022). Words that pierce: Discursive constructions of catcalling. *Hellenic Journal of Psychology*, *19*(1), 53-68. https://doi.org/10.26262/hjp.v19i1.8362

Foster, C., & Frieden, J. (2017). Crisis of trust: Socio-economic determinants of Europeans' confidence in
government. European union politics, 18(4), 511-535. https://doi.org/10.1177/14651165177234

Francis, R. M. (2023). A class act: The problem with 'identifying' into a class. Journal of Class & Culture, 2(1), 11-25. https://doi.org/10.1386/jclc_00020_1

Fray, C., Powell-Booth, K., Nelson, K., Harvey, R., Reid, P., Wager, N., Willmott, D., Mason, S., Jones, A. (2022). The Prevalence and Impact of Children's Exposure to Domestic Violence in Jamaica. *Caribbean Journal of Psychology, 15*(2) 132 - 162. DOI: 10.37234/CJP.2022.1502.A005

Gagné, P. (2014). Getting In and Getting On: Entrée Strategies and the Importance of Trust and Rapport in Qualitative Research. In *Controversies in Criminal Justice Research* (pp. 103-115). Routledge.

Gildea, R. (2021). 10-Minute Talks: The miners' strike of 1984-85. Gillard, A. (Ed.). (2014). *Sexual Harassment*. Greenhaven Publishing LLC.

Goh, J. X., Bandt-Law, B., Cheek, N. N., Sinclair, S., & Kaiser, C. R. (2022). Narrow prototypes and neglected victims: Understanding perceptions of sexual harassment. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *122*(5), 873. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000260

Guy, L. (2006). Re-visioning the sexual violence continuum. *Partners in Social Change, Fall*.

Hammarberg, K., Kirkman, M., & De Lacey, S. (2016). Qualitative research methods: when to use them and how to judge them. *Human reproduction*, *31*(3), 498-501. https://academic.oup.com/humrep/article/31/3/498/2384737#google_vignette

Hennell, K., Limmer, M., & Piacentini, M. (2023). A 'proper night out': a practice theory exploration of gendered drinking. *Sociological Research Online*, *28*(2), 355-372. https://doi.org/10.1177/13607804211055488

Hillstrom, L. C. (2018). *The# metoo movement*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Holland, K. J., & Cortina, L. M. (2013). When sexism and feminism collide: The sexual harassment of feminist working women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *37*(2), 192-208. https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684313482873

Horsfall, M., Eikelenboom, M., Draisma, S., & Smit, J. H. (2021). The Effect of Rapport on Data Quality in Face-to-Face Interviews: Beneficial or Detrimental? *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(20), 10858. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182010858

Ioannides, A. & Willmott, D. (2023). Do Psychopathic Traits, Sexual Victimisation Experiences and Emotional Intelligence Predict Attitudes Towards Rape? Examining the

Psychosocial correlates of Rape Myth Beliefs among a cross-sectional community sample. *Polish Psychological Bulletin, 54*(3), 217 - 228. DOI: 10.24425/ppb.2023.148054

Javadi, M., & Zarea, K. (2016). Understanding thematic analysis and its pitfall. *Journal of client care*, *1*(1), 33-39. https://doi.org/10.15412/J.JCC.02010107

Jones, O. (2020). *Chavs: The demonization of the working class*. Verso books.

Kavanaugh, K., & Ayres, L. (1998). "Not as bad as it could have been": Assessing and mitigating harm during research interviews on sensitive topics. *Research in nursing & health*, *21*(1), 91-97. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1098-240X(199802)21:1<91::AID-NUR10>3.0.CO;2-C

Kelly, L. (1987). The continuum of sexual violence. In *Women, violence and social control* (pp. 46-60).

London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-18592-4_4

Kelly, L. (2002). The continuum of sexual violence. *Sexualities. Critical Concepts in Sociology*, *2*, 127.

Koller Alonso, P. (2021). Define to Defeat: Perceptions of Sexual Harassment. Subtitle: If we only define "Sexual Harassment" in the way we have until now, we will never be able to defeat it. *Academia Letters*, Article-1369.

Lindsay, J., Willmott., D. & Richardson, E. (2023). Football Culture and Domestic Violence: Dissecting the Link among a Focus Group of Non-abusive Youth Football Fan's. *Youth,* 3(3), 1078-1100. https://doi.org/10.3390/youth3030069

Liska, S. (2015). Talking back to White feminism: An intersectional review. *Liberated Arts: a journal for undergraduate research*, *1*. https://ojs.lib.uwo.ca/index.php/lajur/article/view/7244/5923

MacKinnon, C. 1979. *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Madriz, E. (2023). *Nothing bad happens to good girls: Fear of crime in women's lives*. Univ of California Press.

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (2019). The communist manifesto. In *Ideals and ideologies* (pp. 243-255). Routledge. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780429286827-43/communist- manifesto-karl-marx-friedrich-engels

Mellgren, C., Andersson, M., & Ivert, A. K. (2018). "It happens all the time": Women's experiences and normalization of sexual harassment in public space. *Women & Criminal Justice*, *28*(4), 262-281. https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2017.1372328

Metson, J., & Willmott, D. (2024). Victim Care or Defendant Rights? Assessing Public Attitudes towards Special Measures Designed to Support Vulnerable Witnesses at Trial. *Social Sciences, 13*(4), 198. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci13040198

Miranda, M., Molla, E., & Tadros, E. (2019). Implications of foster care on attachment: A literature review. *The Family Journal*, *27*(4), 394-403. https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480719833407

Mutari, E. (2018). MeToo in the hospitality sector: How sex, gender, and class intersect when workers routinely face sexual harassment. *Dollars & sense*, *336*, 12-17.

Nijhawan, L. P., Janodia, M. D., Muddukrishna, B. S., Bhat, K. M., Bairy, K. L., Udupa, N., & Musmade,

P. B. (2013). Informed consent: Issues and challenges. *Journal of advanced pharmaceutical technology & research*, *4*(3), 134-140. 10.4103/2231-4040.116779

Onwuachi-Willig, A. (2018). What about# UsToo?: The invisibility of race in the# MeToo movement.

Yale LJF, *128*, 105.

https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/yljfor128&div=6&id=&page=

Parker, C., Scott, S., & Geddes, A. (2019). Snowball sampling. *SAGE research methods foundations*. https://eprints.glos.ac.uk/6781/

Petrescu, S. H., Lazar, A., Cioban, C., & Doroftei, I. (2017). Semi-structured interview. *Qualitative Research in Regional Geography: A Methodological Approach*, 37-50.

Pickering, S., Dorussen, H., Hansen, M. E., Reifler, J., Scotto, T., Sunahara, Y., & Yen, D. (2024). London, you have a problem with women: trust towards the police in England. Policing and Society, 34(8), 747-762.

Pilgrim-Brown, J. (2023). What does it mean to be working class? Exploring the definition of a social class identity through the eyes of working-class professional services and administrative staff in Russell Group universities. *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, *8*(2), 51-68. https://doi.org/10.13001/jwcs.v8i2.8401

Rospenda, K. M., Richman, J. A., & Nawyn, S. J. (1998). Doing power: The confluence of gender, race, and class in contrapower sexual harassment. *Gender & Society*, *12*(1), 40-60. https://doi.org/10.1177/089124398012001

Rothgerber, H., Kaufling, K., Incorvati, C., Andrew, C. B., & Farmer, A. (2021). Is a reasonable woman different from a reasonable person? Gender differences in perceived sexual harassment. *Sex Roles*, *84*, 208-220. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-020-01156-8

Rubin, M., Denson, N., Kilpatrick, S., Matthews, K. E., Stehlik, T., & Zyngier, D. (2014). "I am working- class" subjective self-definition as a missing measure of social class and socioeconomic status in higher education research. *Educational Researcher*, *43*(4), 196-200. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X1452

Runyan, A. S. (2018). What is intersectionality, and why is it important?. Academe, 104(6), 10-14. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26606288

Salisbury, J. C., & Dominick, B. K. (2004). *Investigating harassment and discrimination complaints: A practical guide*. Pfeiffer.

Scarduzio, J. A., Sheff, S. E., & Smith, M. (2018). Coping and sexual harassment: How victims cope across multiple settings. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *47*, 327-340. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-017- 1065-7

Schaefer, G. O., & Wertheimer, A. (2010). The right to withdraw from research. *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, *20*(4), 329-352. 10.1353/ken.2010.a413517

Segal, D. L., Coolidge, F. L., O'Riley, A., & Heinz, B. A. (2006). Structured and semistructured interviews. In *Clinician's handbook of adult behavioral assessment* (pp. 121-144). Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012343013-7/50007-0

Sharma, G. (2017). Pros and cons of different sampling techniques. *International journal of applied research*, *3*(7), 749-752.

Skeggs, B. (2004). Class, Self, Culture. Psychology Press.

Slabbert, I. (2017). Domestic violence and poverty: Some women's experiences. *Research on social work practice*, *27*(2), 223-230. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731516662321

Social Mobility Commission. (2021). Socio-economic diversity and inclusion Employers' toolkit: Cross- industry edition.

Sowersby, C., Erskine-Shaw, M. & Willmott, D. (2022). Masochist or Murderer? A Discourse Analytic Study Exploring Social Constructions of Sexually Violent Male Perpetrators, Female Victims-Survivors and the Rough Sex Defence on Twitter. *Frontiers in Psychology. 13*: 867991. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.867991

Starfield, S. (2013). Researcher reflexivity. The encyclopedia of applied linguistics, 1-7. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sue-Starfield/publication/261768012_Researcher_Reflexivity/links/59ffdfbdaca272347a2afde3/Researcher- Reflexivity.pdf

Tjaden, P., & Thoennes, N. (2000). Prevalence and consequences of male-to-female and female-to-male intimate partner violence as measured by the National Violence Against Women. https://doi.org/10.1177/10778010022181769

Thornton, G., Willmott., D., Richardson, E. & Hudspith., L. (2024). Examining the Immediate and Enduring Psychological Impact of Street Harassment on Women's Mental Health. *Mental Health and Social Inclusion. 28*(5), 734-744. https://doi.org/10.1108/MHSI-07-2023-0080

UN women. (2020). Intersectional feminism: what it means and why it matters right now. UN Women; United Nations. https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/6/explainer-intersectional-feminism- what-it-means-and-why-it-matters

Vera-Gray, F. (2016). *Men's intrusion, women's embodiment: A critical analysis of street harassment*. Routledge.

Walker, H. E., Freud, J. S., Ellis, R. A., Fraine, S. M., & Wilson, L. C. (2019). The prevalence of sexual revictimization: A meta-analytic review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, *20*(1), 67-80. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838017692364

Wiles, R., Crow, G., Heath, S., & Charles, V. (2008). The management of confidentiality and anonymity in social research. *International journal of social research methodology*, *11*(5), 417-428. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570701622231

Williams, S., Willmott, D. & Murphy, A. (2023). The Court of Social Media Opinion: Examining How Twitter Users Respond to the Retrial of Footballer Ched Evans. *Internet Journal of Criminology,* 1-24.

Women and Equalities Committee, 2018. Sexual harassment of women and girls in public places [online]. Available at: https://committees.parliament.uk/ committee/328/women-and-equalities- committee/news/102169/sexual- harassment-in-public-places/

Wood, R. C. (2024). *Working in hotels and catering*. Taylor & Francis.

Yates, P. M. (2013). Before, during, and after: Identity and the social construction of knowledge in qualitative research Interviews. https://journals.ed.ac.uk/hydra/article/view/192

Yassour-Borochowitz, D. (2020, January). “It's a total embarrassment”: Service work and customer sexual harassment. In *Women's Studies International Forum* (Vol. 78, p. 102323). Pergamon. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2019.102323

YouGov. (2018). Attitudes to Sexual Consent Research for the End Violence against Women Coalition. https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/1-Attitudes-to-sexual-consent- Research-findings-FINAL.pdf