



A Critical Discourse Analysis of Sexual Harassment in *North Country* Movie

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Abstract

The current study employs a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to examine sexual harassment in the movie *North Country* (2005). The main objective is to explore how sexual harassment is discursively constructed through vocabulary, grammar, speech acts, and ideological frameworks. The study seeks to answer the following questions: (a) What lexical and grammatical features are used to represent sexual harassment? (b) How are speech acts employed to reflect interactional meanings and power relations? (c) What ideologies underlie the depiction of sexual harassment in the movie? The study adopts Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model (2001), which comprises description (focusing on textual features), interpretation (analyzing discursive practices such as speech acts), and explanation (examining sociocultural context and ideology), alongside Van Dijk's (1998) Ideological Square Theory. A qualitative approach is used to analyze selected scenes from the movie's dialogue. The findings show that sexual harassment in the movie is constructed through specific lexical and grammatical choices, power-laden speech acts, and discourse patterns that reinforce unequal gender relations. These linguistic features collectively reveal how interactional dynamics naturalize male dominance, constrain female agency, and reflect underlying patriarchal ideologies that normalize harassment and marginalize women.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Feminist Media Studies, Gender and Power, *North Country*, Sexual Harassment



تحليل ناقد لخطاب التحرش الجنسي في فيلم بلد الشمال

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المستخلص

تستخدم الدراسة الحالية منهج تحليل الخطاب النقدي (CDA) لفحص ظاهرة التحرش الجنسي في فيلم بلد الشمال (2005) North Country ويتمثل الهدف الرئيس في استكشاف كيفية تشكيل التحرش الجنسي خطابياً من خلال المفردات، والقواعد النحوية، والأفعال الكلامية، والأطر الأيديولوجية. وتسعى الدراسة للإجابة عن الأسئلة التالية: (أ) ما هي السمات المعجمية والنحوية المستخدمة لتصوير التحرش الجنسي؟ (ب) كيف يتم توظيف الأفعال الكلامية لعكس المعاني التفاعلية وعلاقات القوة؟ (ج) ما هي الأيديولوجيات الكامنة وراء تصوير التحرش الجنسي في الفيلم؟ تتبنى الدراسة نموذج فيركلو (Fairclough) ثلاثي الأبعاد (٢٠٠١) -الذي يشمل الوصف (التركيز على السمات النصية)، والتفسير (تحليل الممارسات الخطابية مثل الأفعال الكلامية)، والشرح (فحص السياق الاجتماعي والثقافي والأيديولوجي)- إلى جانب نظرية "المربع الأيديولوجي لـ"فان دايك" (van Dijk, 1998). كما يُستخدم المنهج النوعي لتحليل مشاهد مختارة من حوار الفيلم. وتُظهر النتائج أن التحرش الجنسي في الفيلم يُصاغ عبر خيارات معجمية ونحوية محددة، وأفعال كلامية مشحونة بعلاقات القوة، وأنماط خطابية تعزز عدم المساواة في العلاقات بين الجنسين. وتكشف هذه السمات اللغوية مجتمعةً كيف تعمل ديناميكيات التفاعل على إضفاء طابع طبيعي على هيمنة الذكور، وتقيد الفاعلية النسائية، وعكس أيديولوجيات أبوية كامنة تُطبع ممارسة التحرش وتهمس النساء.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل الخطاب النقدي، الدراسات الإعلامية النسوية، النوع الاجتماعي والقوة، فيلم بلد الشمال، التحرش الجنسي

1. Introduction

Artwork is a powerful way of communicating messages to target audiences. Among various forms of art, movies are particularly popular with the public. Movie creators usually embed moral lessons or values into their themes. One such theme is raising awareness against sexual harassment (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Sexual harassment can be defined as unwanted verbal, non-verbal, or physical sexual conduct that offends or violates a person's dignity; especially when it results in an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment (McGolgan, 2004). Moreover, sexual harassment may take place anywhere and affects anyone, regardless of gender. It is not only about physical actions but can also take verbal forms, such as telling offensive jokes, making inappropriate comments, or catcalling, as well as visual forms like displaying pornographic images or videos. This kind of harassment can cause trauma for victims, which makes them feel bullied, humiliated, and subjected to long-lasting stress (Burn, 2019).

The theme of sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the 2005 movie "*North Country*", directed by Niki Caro, is based on a true story that happened in Minnesota in 1975. Here lies the importance of selecting it for scrutiny. Additionally, previous studies on sexual harassment in the workplace environment have focused primarily on social, psychological, and legal impacts of sexual harassment with a specific focus on the female experiences, causes, and effects of sexual harassment (e.g., Fitzgerald, 1993; Berdahl, 2007; McDonald, 2012). Moreover, other linguistic studies have explored media and cinematic representations of discrimination, gender inequality, and other related concepts. Yet, little attention has been paid to how linguistic structures construct and reproduce power relations and ideologies within a male-dominated workplace. Thus, the current study is an endeavor to fill this gap in the literature by analyzing verbal sexual harassment in the *North Country* movie (2005).

In this study, Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) is employed as the method of analysis due to its suitability for achieving the study's objectives. CDA is a flexible and interpretive approach with many uses across various forms of discourse while preserving both analytical validity and reliability (Fairclough, 2001). It is expected that the results will reveal ideological elements

embedded in the movie's discourse and help provide a greater understanding of how cinema can (re)create and/or eliminate social inequalities related to gender and workplace harassment.

2-Theoretical Framework

This section provides an overview of sexual harassment and discusses the theoretical foundations of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), including key models proposed by Norman Fairclough and Teun A. Van Dijk, which underpin the analytical framework of the study.

2-1 Overview of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is considered an act of sex discrimination. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC, 2008), sexual harassment can involve "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature". Regarding a behavior being classified as workplace sexual harassment, it can be defined as any behavior that creates a hostile, intimidating, or offensive work environment; has an impact on an individual's employment; or unreasonably interferes with an individual's ability to perform their job duties.

According to United States federal law, there are two major classifications for sexual harassment: quid pro quo and hostile work environment (EEOC, 2015). Quid pro quo (QPQ) occurs when an employee's employment decision (such as hiring, firing, or promotion) depends on the employee's submission to sexual advances. In other words, the harasser provides benefits such as pay raises or better shift schedules to the individual for them to comply with the harasser's sexual request (EEOC, 2015). Opposed to QPQ, a hostile work environment occurs when there are unwelcome sexual behaviors that create a hostile or offensive work environment, resulting in an employee's performance being impacted (EEOC, 2015; Idris et al., 2012). Some examples of hostile work environments are inappropriate jokes, unwelcome physical contact, and sexually explicit materials. Welsh (1999) describes the legal nature of sexual harassment as how QPQ includes threats or bribes for sexual favors and how hostile work environments harm employees' performances and create a hostile or exclusionary working atmosphere.

According to Fitzgerald et al. (1995), there are three distinct but interrelated categories of sexual harassment: gender harassment,

which includes verbal and non-verbal behaviors that demean or insult women without any request for a sexual relationship; unwanted sexual attention, which is defined as any offensive behavior that is unwelcome and not reciprocated; and sexual coercion, which is defined as when an individual applies pressure on another individual to engage in sexual behavior in exchange for employment-related benefits. These categories serve to differentiate types of sexual harassment based on motivation and outcome.

Fitzgerald et al. (1997) incorporate these concepts into a larger framework that includes all forms of sexual harassment; gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention are part of a hostile work environment, whereas sexual coercion falls within quid pro quo harassment. This framework is currently utilized in today's literature on workplace harassment. Fasting et al. (2010) have also utilized this framework to classify sexual harassment into three categories: gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion. All forms of sexual harassment are derived from the same underlying principles, with the different forms of sexual harassment differing primarily in how they relate to each other and the different ways in which they are manifested through sexual harassment behaviors.

To provide a comprehensive understanding of the different types of behaviors that constitute sexual harassment, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has classified sexual harassment in three main categories: physical, verbal, and non-verbal. Physical harassment includes physical touch, such as hugging another individual or touching or making sexually suggestive gestures towards another person. Verbal harassment encompasses making a variety of comments, calling someone a "honey" or "baby", or spreading false information about an individual's sexuality. Non-verbal harassment, which can include looking at or stalking another person or making sexual advances towards another person by way of gestures such as winking, blowing kisses, and so on.

In the workplace context, Aman et al. (2016) note that harassment often occurs due to a lack of awareness about how to respond to it. If not properly addressed, sexual harassment can result in long-term psychological trauma for victims. Moreover, they explain that such trauma can severely impact various aspects of a woman's life, including her work performance, motivation, and even her mental health. In extreme cases, women may leave their jobs or experience such distress that it leads to self-harm or suicide.

2-2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

According to Wodak (1995), CDA is mainly concerned with the examination of both hidden and obvious structural connections related to dominance, discrimination, power, and control within language. In a later work, Wodak (2001) explains that one of the main objectives of CDA is to critically investigate how language and discourse express, indicate, create, and justify social inequality. Furthermore, CDA researchers assert that social factors and conditions shape discourse and that discourse is viewed as an incomprehensible object of power (Blommaert, 2001).

Most scholars widely agree that CDA is an analytical framework that investigates spoken and written language as forms of social practice. CDA aims to find out how and why certain forms of power, domination, inequality, and racism are discursively created, maintained, and upheld within specific social, political, economic, and historical contexts. Van Dijk (2001) argues that CDA is a type of discourse research that investigates how social power is abused, dominated, and inequitable, using both verbal and nonverbal forms of communication, within social and political contexts.

The approaches related to the current study are reviewed in the following subsections to promote the selection of the framework for data analysis.

2-2 Fairclough's (2001) Three-Dimensional Model

Fairclough views discourse as a major activity that simultaneously builds up and reconstructs knowledge, identity, social interaction, and power relations; however, these relationships are also affected by other social practices and institutions (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). He claims that the power of social structures determines all levels of discourse; at the broad level, social structures are influenced by class and social relations; at the more specific institutional level (e.g., law and education), and through the classification systems and various forms/regulations that exist in both the discursive and non-discursive realms. Thus, the relationship between social structure and discursive practice is constantly changing and evolving over time (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). To study language features associated with discourse, Fairclough (2001) proposed a three-dimensional model for doing discourse analysis. He also discusses the relationship between text production and text consumption in the analysis of discourse. Additionally, he states that

"a text is a product, rather than a process" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 20).

The first dimension, which is description, focuses on the textual analysis of linguistic elements such as vocabulary, grammar, pronouns, and textual organization that reveal embedded ideological functions (Fairclough, 1989). As Fowler (1991) notes, the linguistic structures of language also encode and reflect ideological structures that provide evidence of the distribution of power, identity, and belief. The analysis of vocabulary provides evidence of how language creates and sustains ideologies. In addition, Fairclough (2001) categorizes vocabulary into four types: experiential, relational, expressive, and metaphor; each representing a different ideological function. Experiential value of words provides the producer of discourse's worldview through the use of rewording, overwording, categorization, and establishing connections of meaning. Relational value of words aids the construction of linguistic social relations, and the expressive value of words communicates evaluative and emotional attitudes or stances. Finally, metaphors represent a strong form of encoding abstract ideologies using accessible language. As such, this research focuses particularly on rewording, overwording, categorization, and metaphor of vocabulary.

Grammatical structures reveal how agency and responsibility are linguistically constructed. Using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, Fairclough (1992; 2003) identifies transitivity and modality as key to ideological analysis. Transitivity denotes who performs actions upon whom, revealing social roles and power dynamics (Simpson & Mayr, 2009; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The six process types (i.e., material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential) demonstrate how ideology manifests through actors, goals, and circumstances. On the other hand, modality exposes speaker attitudes and degrees of certainty, obligation, or permission (Quirk et al., 1985; Fairclough, 1992), with modal expressions highlighting authorial commitment and ideological position.

The second dimension is that of interpretation. It indicates interpreting both the text and its context. Regarding speech acts (SAs), Fairclough (1989) argues that seeing the utterance as an action is crucial for interpreting texts within CDA's framework, where discourse is understood as social practice. Added to that, he explains that speech acts involve participants' meanings and situational interpretations (Fairclough). According to Searle (1979),

illocutionary acts fall into five categories based on the propositional content and direction of fit between words and the world:

1. Expressive—express psychological states without direction of fit or neutral fit (e.g., thanking and apologizing).
2. Assertive—commits the speaker to the truth of the expression (word-to-world fit), such as asserting or suggesting.
3. Declarations effect changes in the status of things within institutional contexts (word-to-world fit), e.g., firing, sentencing.
4. Commissive—commit the speaker to future actions (word-to-word fit), such as promising or threatening.
5. Directives aim to cause the hearer to act (world-to-word fit), including orders, commands, and requests.

The final stage in Fairclough's (2001) model is the explanation stage, which considers discourse as having a significant role to play in social struggle, power relations, and the representation of ideology. This stage serves as an important part of discourse analysis and has three main objectives: to expose hidden ideologies and demonstrate how they are conveyed; to inform people about these hidden ideologies and their purposes; and to reconstruct the text to create a different understanding for the audience. The explanation stage assumes that any discourse is either part of continuing social conflicts or shaped by existing power relations and patterns. Moreover, it is essential to examine social organization at three levels—the societal, institutional, and situational—as each influences the discourse or is influenced by it (Fairclough, 2001).

2-3 van Dijk's (1998) Ideological Square Theory

According to Van Dijk (1998), the ideological square is a key component within his socio-cognitive framework. The ideological square's focus is on how social groups portray themselves in a positive light compared to the way they portray other social groups in a negative manner. This ideologically square process is outlined by four major principles as described by Van Dijk (2000): (1) highlight the positive characteristics about us; (2) emphasize the negative characteristics about them; (3) reduce the negative characteristics about us; (4) minimize the positive characteristics about them. All four of these principles combine to create a general approach to presenting oneself positively and negatively portraying other groups.

Self-presentation involves revealing an individual's behavior

as a group member when expressing various ideological viewpoints. Positive self-representation stresses our group's favorable actions, while negative other-representation emphasizes the undesirable traits of the opposing group (Van Dijk, 2000). The ideological square seeks to identify and understand the basic ideological framework that drives both positive self-presentations and negative other-presentations, which can be found through the study of sexual harassment representations.

Van Dijk (1998) outlines a variety of methods used by those constructing discourse to reinforce the division between "Us" and "Them." In particular, this division is especially evident in ideological discourse, where the narrative often simplifies to "We are good, they are bad" (Van Dijk, 1998, p. 25). In sexual harassment discourse, the concept of "self vs. other" is clear, with male employees acting as the dominant "self" group while female employees occupy the marginalized "other" position. Female workers experience internal conflicts involving psychological struggles due to harassment, while external conflict arises when they, as "others", challenge the male-dominated societal norms maintained by the "self".

While Van Dijk's ideological square may be used as a high-level tool to conduct analysis, this research integrates it into Fairclough's (2001) three-dimensional model of description, interpretation, and explanation to provide a deeper level of analysis.

3- Methodology

This section outlines the methodological framework of the study, covering the data and its collection and description, the method of analysis, and the data analysis process.

3-1 The Data

The data is the movie *North Country*. It portrays Josey Aimes (played by Charlize Theron), one of the first women to enter an iron mine, as she embarks on a difficult journey. The movie takes place during a time when there was increased male violence in society, and many men felt a loss of power due to their economic circumstances (Hunnicut, 2009). Josey experiences continued verbal and physical abuse from male coworkers, which creates an environment of harassment and hostility at work.

3-1-1 Data Collection and Description

In this study, the data are drawn from four selected scenes from the movie *North Country* (2005); they are chosen due to their clear and vivid depiction of sexual harassment and gendered power relations within a male-dominated workplace environment. The selection of these scenes is purposive, as they represent key moments in the development of the movie's central themes, particularly workplace harassment, social resistance, and gender inequality. In other words, these scenes were selected because they contain the most relevant and linguistically rich instances of verbal interaction that reflect the study's objectives.

Although the scenes vary in length, they collectively capture critical interactions that illustrate the dynamics of power, control, and ideological conflict between male and female characters. The data consists of scripted dialogues, which serve as the primary linguistic material for qualitative analysis. By focusing on the language within these dialogues, the study aims to investigate how harassment is constructed and enacted in the selected scenes. However, it is important to acknowledge that the study is limited to verbal harassment only. Sexual harassment is a broader phenomenon that includes non-verbal and physical forms of abuse; these latter forms are out of the realm of this study.

3-1-2 Method of Analysis

This study adopts a qualitative approach grounded in Norman Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis framework (2001) and Teun A. van Dijk's Ideological Square Theory (1998) to examine how verbal sexual harassment is represented in selected scenes from the movie under analysis. Fairclough's framework is applied across the textual, discursive, and social levels, where linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, modality, and transitivity are analyzed at the textual level, and speech acts are examined at the discursive level to explore meaning construction and interactional power relations. Van Dijk's model is used to interpret the ideological positioning underlying the discourse, particularly the construction of in-group and out-group relations that sustain power asymmetries.

3-2 Data Analysis

This section presents the analysis of the collected data in accordance with the study's methodological framework.

Scene One

Male worker: Hey, Josey, how you like your new scratch-and-sniff wallpaper?

Josey: Was it him? Was it? I give a piece of my check to that union, like everyone else.

Ricky: You fucked up. What do you want me to say?

Bobby: Hey, lovebirds, wanna get to work? Or should I dim the lights for ya? Josey, get your ass down here. I got a job for you in the powder room. You're one crazy bitch, you know that?"

Josey: You said you had a job for me.

Bobby: You like that, don't you? You like that? To grab your pussy like that, don't you? Forgot you like it a little rough. You're gonna learn the goddamn rules. If I have to beat them into you myself. Damn you, Josey.

Description Stage

A. Vocabulary

Some experiential values of words are presented in this scene, one of which is overwording, where several interrelated demeaning and aggressive phrases are used to denote sexual harassment and power abuse. Examples include "*hey, lovebirds*", "*dim the lights*", "*get your ass down her*", "*I got a job for you in the powder room*", "*You like that, don't you?*", "*grab your pussy*", and "*beat them into you.*" These phrases show how the male workers reduce Josey to a sexual object rather than treating her as a co-worker. The categorization also reflects how the male workers position themselves as the dominant group, defining their identity as "us" while casting Josey as an outsider who does not belong to their male-dominated workplace. Phrases such as "*crazy bitch*" and "*grab your pussy*" go beyond normal insults; these phrases degrade Josey's dignity and reduce her to a sexual object. As a result, this creates a hostile environment and normalizes harassment as a means of exerting power. By categorizing Josey this way, the male workers reinforce control through the sexualization, isolation, and marginalization of women in a male-dominated space. Furthermore, the metaphor "*scratch and sniff wallpaper*" compares Josey to an object designed for sensory consumption, further diminishing her

identity to that of a sexualized commodity. Similarly, the phrase “*I got a job for you in the powder room*” serves as a metaphor in which “powder room” is used euphemistically to enact a private, sexualized setting, concealing the abusive intent.

B. Grammar

The first structure of transitivity is some phrases said by Bobby: “*Josey, get your ass down here*”, “*I got a job for you in the powder room*”, “*To grab your pussy like that*”, and “*Beat them into you myself*” are all material processes that highlight physical actions meant to command, intimidate, or threaten Josey. Also, a relational process exists in Bobby’s phrase “*You’re one crazy bitch*,” in which “you” is the carrier and “one crazy bitch” is the attribute. A mental process appears in Bobby’s phrases, “*You like that, don’t you? You like that?*” Here, “like” is the mental process of affection, “you” is the senser, and “that” is the phenomenon.

Modality is presented in Bobby’s phrase “*Wanna get to work? Or should I dim the lights for ya?*” the modal verb “should” conveys obligation, functioning sarcastically to mock Josey’s and Ricky’s interaction. “*You’re gonna learn the goddamn rules*” the semi-modal “gonna” (going to) expresses a prediction about a future event. Also, “*If I have to beat them into you myself*” the semi-modal “have to” also denotes necessity.

Interpretation Stage

Three speech acts are presented in this scene. The first is an assertive act in “*You fucked up*”. Likewise, a directive speech act appears in Bobby’s commands, “*Josey, get your ass down here*”, and “*I got a job for you in the powder room.*” Bobby’s threat, “*You’re gonna learn the goddamn rules. If I have to beat them into you myself*”, is a commissive act, expressing a threat and commitment to enforce authority through violence.

Explanation Stage

The scene shows a clear ideological division between the two groups. Bobby represents the dominant group (the “Self”), while Josey is placed in the weaker position (the “Other”). To put it simply, Bobby attempts to justify his aggressive behavior by asserting that he is applying “the rules,” thereby presenting himself as correct and legitimate in the workplace. At the same time, Josey tries to prove that she is part of the workplace, especially through the union, but Bobby rejects her. Bobby uses sexually charged and derogatory

language to depict Josey as an inferior and weaker individual, thus rendering her unable to hold a legitimate place within the workplace. In a clearer sense, this shows how Josey is treated as an outsider, while maximizing his own superiority as part of the dominant group. Bobby's behavior reflects a wider patriarchal societal norm in which men control power, and women are marginalized. In this way, the scene reveals hegemonic patriarchal ideology through a polarized "us and them" dynamic, where the dominant group naturalizes its own misconduct while delegitimizing the "other" to protect its social or economic interests.

Scene Two

Josey: Oh, God! Oh

Booby: Can you imagine falling down here? Nobody'd ever find ya. Two minutes, five tons of rock would be on top if you. Oh, man. I remember the first few times I came out here. Oh, I hated it. Then, I realized I could just stand out here, you know, and smoke a joint and what have you. Nobody'd be the wiser. I mean, we're totally fuckin alone. So, uh, what do you say, Josey? You wanna, I don't know... kiss and make up? Come on, just one kiss.

Josey: I'm going back.

Bobby: Hey, come on, what's the matter with you, Josey? It's not like... am I hurting ya? Hey, I ain't hurting ya, am I?

Description Stage

A. Vocabulary

In this scene, overwording is evident as Bobby repeatedly emphasizes how isolated and dangerous the place is. For example, phrases like "*Nobody'd ever find ya*", "*Two minutes, five tons of rock would be on top of you*", and "*we're totally fuckin alone*" highlight the loneliness and risk, making the setting feel even more threatening. That's to say, Bobby tries to create fear and dominate his power and control over Josey.

B. Grammar

"*Can you imagine falling down here?*" is a mental process which conveys a sense of fear and threat, in which "*you*" is the sensor, "*can imagine*" is the mental process, and "*falling down here*" is the phenomenon. Likewise, Bobby utters a relational process "*We're totally fuckin alone*" in which "*we*" is the carrier and "*totally fuckin alone*" is the attribute. Also, the scene contains

three material processes that appear in *"I came out here"*, where *"I"* is the actor, *"came out"* is the material process, *"here"* is the goal, *"I could just stand out here"* and *"Smoke a joint."* Bobby's question, *"So, uh, what do you say, Josey?"* is a verbal process, in which Bobby is the sayers, *"say"* is the process, and *"what do you say, Josey?"* is the verbiage. Modality is conveyed mainly through Bobby's question, *"Can you imagine falling down here?"* which uses *"can"* to express possibility, inviting Josey to consider an imagined scenario. The phrases *"Nobody'd ever find ya,"* *"five tons of rock would be on top of you"*, *"Oh, man"*, and *"Nobody'd be the wiser"* use *"would"* to imply a hypothetical or potential situation, showing prediction of an outcome. Bobby's statement, *"I could just stand out here and smoke a joint,"* uses *"could"* to express possibility.

Interpretation Stage

Three speech acts appear in this scene. *"Oh, man. I remember the first few times I came out here. Oh, I hated it"* is an expressive speech act in which Bobby shares his emotional response to the environment, revealing past discomfort and unease. Likewise, two assertive acts are present in Bobby's statements: *"Can you imagine falling down here? Nobody'd ever find ya. Two minutes, five tons of rock would be on top of you"* and *"We're totally fuckin alone"*. *"So, uh, what do you say, Josey? You wanna, I don't know... kiss and make up? Come on, just one kiss"*, functions as a directive act, in which he tries to persuade Josey of doing what he wants from her and exert subtle coercion.

Explanation Stage

In this scene, Bobby uses a strategy of positive self-presentation by minimizing his inappropriate behavior as something harmless, such as a social request, *"just one kiss,"* and by reducing or mitigating his aggression through questioning Josey's resistance, *"what's the matter with you?"* This demonstrates male entitlement, where the *"Self"* believes he has the right to control and pressure the *"Other,"* using *"five tons of rock"* as a form of environmental threat. Furthermore, the scene shows the naturalization of harassment; by treating Josey's refusal as something unusual, Bobby maintains his control and power as part of the dominant male group.

Scene Three

Arlen Pavich: There's dirt everywhere. Loud as all get-out. You'll be hauling, lifting, driving, and all sorts of other things. A woman shouldn't be doing that, if you ask me. But supreme court didn't ask me, didn't they? You must be Hank's daughter. You're late. Got your paperwork?

Josey: Yeah. Yes, sir. I got my consent form.

Arlen Pavich: Yeah, the doc says you look dam good under those clothes. Sense of humor, ladies. Rule-o numero uno. Okay, grab your gear and meet me outside. We're gonna take a tour.

Josey: What?

Sherry: What a homo!

Women worker: Well, they do

Arlen Pavich: cunts. Ear protection, ladies!

Description Stage

A. Vocabulary

This scene reveals several experiential values of words that construct sexual harassment and reflect unequal power relations. Arlen employs overwording to describe the perceived unsuitability of women for mine work, emphasizing that such labor is something “*a woman shouldn't be doing*” with phrases such as “*dirt everywhere*”, “*loud as all get-out*”, and “*hauling, lifting, driving.*” His repetition emphasizes a preoccupation with traditional gender roles and reinforces the idea that the mining industry should remain a male domain. Categorization is evident when Arlen dismisses Josey as an individual coworker, instead identifying her relationally as “*Hank's daughter.*” In doing so, he links her to her father, positioning her within a familial hierarchy rather than recognizing her as a mine worker. Likewise, the word “*ladies*” categorizes Josey and the other females as outsiders in the mining environment. He further dehumanizes the female workers through the hateful and misogynistic term “*cunts*”, creating gender-based hostility and categorizing them as sexual objects. Furthermore, rewording appears in this scene to normalize sexual harassment. For example, the phrase “*The doc says you look damn good under those clothes. Sense of humor, ladies*” reframes the doctor's inappropriate comment as a joke that the females are expected to find amusing. This attempt to naturalize and trivialize what essentially constitutes a form of sexual degradation, as Arlen replaces the socially unacceptable description of the doctor's behavior with a more benign, naturalized notion of

“humor” framing female compliance as “rule number one” for working there.

B. Grammar

Several transitivity processes are presented in this scene. “*There’s dirt everywhere*” is an existential process. Material process also appears in Arlen’s statements, “*You’ll be hauling, lifting, driving and all sorts of other things*”, in which “you” is the actor, “hauling, lifting, and driving” are the processes, and “all sorts of other things” serves as the goal. “*You must be Hank’s daughter*” functions as a relational identifying process, denoting a mode of identification. Similarly, “*You’re late*” is a relational attributive process, in which the implied “you” functions as the carrier and “late” is the attribute. Verbal processes appear three times in the utterances “*The doc says you look damn good under those clothes*”, “*A woman shouldn’t be doing, if you ask me*”, and “*But Supreme Court didn’t ask me, did they?*”. Modality appears in the sentence “*You’ll be hauling*” where the modal verb “will” expresses prediction, indicating that the action is expected to happen in the future. The modal “should” in “*A woman shouldn’t be doing*” expresses obligation, reflecting Arlen’s belief about proper gender roles. The modal “must” in “*You must be Hank’s daughter*” conveys necessity. Lastly, the phrase “*We’re gonna take a tour*” (colloquial for “*going to*”) expresses volition, indicating a planned action.

Interpretation Stage

Three types of speech acts are presented in this scene. Expressive speech acts appear in three statements said by Arlen: “*There’s dirt everywhere*”, “*A woman shouldn’t be doing that, if you ask me*”, and the hostile insult “*cunts.*” This reveals his negative attitude and hostility toward females in the workplace. Assertive speech acts are found in “*You’ll be hauling, lifting, driving, and all sorts of other things*”, “*You must be Hank’s daughter*”, “*You’re late*”, and “*Yeah, the doc says you look damn good under those clothes.*” Which states the facts or judgments to reinforce hierarchical and gendered roles. Arlen’s commands, including “*Got your paperwork?*”, “*Okay, grab your gear and meet me outside*”, and “*Ear protection, ladies!*” function as directives, aiming to control and reinforce power dynamics through verbal demands.

Explanation Stage

In the scene above, Arlen uses a strategy of negative other-representation by rejecting the presence of the “Other” and questioning their legitimacy in the workplace. His statement, “*But Supreme Court didn’t ask me, did they?*” shows that he presents himself not just as a worker, but as a moral authority who has the power to accept or reject others. This reflects both negative other-representation (against females) and positive self-presentation (of himself). Furthermore, this also implies that even if the law allows women to work in the mining industry, the social rules of the male group still exclude them. Added to that, this discourse reflects a wider patriarchal ideology, where power is controlled by male workers. The phrase “*Rule-o numero uno*” attempts to naturalize this ideology, as Arlen turns harassment into something normal or expected. In this way, females are forced to accept such behavior in order to be included. To put it another way, the shift from formal language, such as “*Got your paperwork?*” to offensive ones like “*cunts*,” indicates a clear change in discourse, which is used to remove women’s legal and professional status and return them to a marginalized position. Also, it demonstrates how language is used to represent hegemonic power to ensure the dominance of males.

Scene Four

Arlen Pavich: *We have taken to calling this area the powder room. Catchy, don’t you think?*

Especially since you girls will be the ones cleaning it.

Bobby: *So, Arlen, which one of these girls is gonna be my bitch?*

Arlen Pavich: *Ladies, meet Bobby Sharp. He runs the powder room, where they’re short one body.*

Bobby: *And we want a nice body. No fatties. Gimme the one on the right.*

Description Stage

A. Vocabulary

The above scene demonstrates sexual harassment through the use of overwording. It is depicted in the repeated and varied references to female bodies, such as “*my bitch*”, “*a nice body*”, “*No fatties*”, and “*short one body*.” These phrases focus on physical appearance regardless of other professional skills. As a result, the overuse of objectifying terms normalizes a hostile environment, where females are considered sexual objects rather than employees.

B. Grammar

The statement *"We've taken to calling this area the powder room"* represents a verbal process of saying. A material process appears three times: in *"You girls will be the ones cleaning it"* where *"you girls"* act as the actor, performing the action of cleaning, and *"it"* serves as the goal of that action; in *"He runs the powder room"* where *"he"* is the actor and *"the powder room"* is the goal; and in *"Gimme the one on the right"* which is also a material process. The clause *"Which one of these girls is gonna be my bitch?"* is a relational process denoting the process of identification. At the same time, in *"where they're short one body"*, *"they"* functions as the carrier and *"one body"* as the attribute. *"We want a nice body"* is a mental process in which *"we"* serves as the senser and *"a nice body"* as the phenomenon. Modality appears in the sentence *"You girls will be the ones cleaning it"*, conveying a sense of prediction, as Arlen asserts that females are designated for such a task. Additionally, the word *"gonna"*, a colloquial form of *"going to"*, appears in Bobby's question, *"Which one of these girls is gonna be my bitch?"* This expresses future intention or volition, highlighting Bobby's decision or desire regarding the future assignment of roles.

Interpretation Stage

Arlen's statement, *"We've taken to calling this area the powder room"*, is an assertive speech act that functions to trivialize a space designed for controlling and degrading women, euphemistically masking the underlying power imbalance. Similarly, *"He runs the powder room"* is another assertive speech act that explicitly establishes Bobby Sharp's dominance, categorizing the women as objects within this environment. Moreover, the directive speech act *"Gimme the one on the right"* embodies direct coercion and verbal aggression, manifesting male authority and sexually harassing demand by disregarding and conveying ownership over female bodies. Finally, Arlen's declarative *"Ladies, meet Bobby Sharp"* restructures the social order through a public introduction that positions Bobby as the controlling figure while implicitly subordinating the female employees.

Explanation Stage

This scene illustrates the ideology of sexual harassment that is deeply embedded in a male-dominated workplace. For instance, Arlen's statement, "*we've taken to calling this area the powder room*", shows how the euphemistic phrase "*powder room*" hides the degradation and the reality of sexual harassment experienced by female miners. Similarly, Bobby's question, "*which one of these girls is gonna be my bitch?*" clearly shows the objectification and control of female workers. In addition, the repeated focus on physical appearance in "*and we want a nice body. No fatties. Gimme the one on the right*" demonstrates how women are reduced to their bodies and judged according to male standards, which reinforces exclusion and harassment. Conversely, this discourse normalizes sexual harassment, dehumanizes females, and reflects a patriarchal ideology that maintains male dominance within the workplace.

4- Results and Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that verbal sexual harassment is primarily represented through lexical choices and systematic grammatical structures. At the lexical level, overwording appears across all scenes, where clusters of degrading, sexualized, and aggressive expressions are repeatedly employed. Phrases such as "*bitch*", "*grab your pussy*", "*my bitch*", and "*nice body*" function not only as insults but also as tools of objectification, reducing females to sexual commodities. Moreover, this reflects a high level of hostility and contributes to the normalization of verbal abuse in the workplace. Additionally, metaphorical and euphemistic expressions such as "*powder room*" and "*scratch-and-sniff wallpaper*" both conceal and reinforce harassment. These expressions operate ideologically by masking abusive intentions behind seemingly neutral or humorous language, thereby legitimizing such misconduct.

From a grammatical perspective, material processes dominate the discourse, particularly in male utterances such as "*get your ass down here*", "*grab*," and "*beat*." These processes encode physical action, threat, and coercion, emphasizing control over the female body. Relational processes, such as "*You're one crazy bitch*", assign negative attributes, constructing Josey's identity as deviant and inferior. Meanwhile, mental processes, such as "*You like that*", are strategically used to impose assumed consent, thereby distorting the victim's subjectivity. Furthermore, modality plays a crucial role in

reinforcing authority and inevitability. Modal verbs and semi-modals such as “*should*”, “*gonna*”, “*have to*”, and “*will*” express obligation, prediction, and necessity, thereby presenting harassment as institutionally embedded and normalized.

In addition to the above, speech acts are systematically employed to construct and reinforce asymmetrical power relations. Directive speech acts are the most dominant, particularly in the form of commands such as “*get your ass down here*”, “*grab your gear*”, and “*gimme the one on the right*”. These directives function coercively, positioning male speakers as authority figures and female characters as subordinates expected to comply without resistance. Alongside directives, assertive speech acts are also used to impose particular versions of reality that favor male dominance, for example, “*You fucked up*” and “*We’re totally alone.*” Likewise, commissive acts, particularly threats such as “*You’re gonna learn the rules*”, signal a commitment to future acts of violence, thereby indicating intimidation and control. In addition, expressive acts attempt to frame harassment in seemingly benign terms, such as “*just one kiss*,” thereby blurring the boundary between coercion and consent.

The analysis uncovers a dominant patriarchal ideology underpinning all four scenes. This ideology is constructed through a polarized representation of social actors, commonly conceptualized as the “Self” (male workers) versus the “Other” (female worker). Male characters position themselves as legitimate authority figures, while Josey is systematically marginalized, sexualized, and delegitimized.

5- Conclusions

This study has examined the representation of workplace verbal sexual harassment through an integrated analysis of textual features, discursive practices, and social practices. The findings indicate that harassment is discursively constructed through the interplay of linguistic features, interactional strategies, and underlying ideological structures.

At the textual level, language use reflects patterns of control and marginalization, while at the level of discursive practice, speech acts function to establish and reinforce asymmetrical power relations between participants. At the level of social practice, these patterns are shown to be rooted in a broader patriarchal ideology that

legitimizes male dominance and positions females as subordinate within the workplace context.

This integration of the three analytical dimensions demonstrates that sexual harassment is not merely an individual or isolated act, but a socially embedded practice reproduced through discourse. It further highlights the role of language as a mechanism through which power is enacted and normalized in everyday interaction.

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