

## Layered Sexism in *The Accused*

Annette Efendi<sup>1</sup>, Rasmus Budhyono<sup>2</sup>, Lestari Manggong<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Universitas Padjadjaran  
Indonesia

Corresponding author: [annette20001@mail.unpad.ac.id](mailto:annette20001@mail.unpad.ac.id)

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### ABSTRACT

This article aims to explore the racism portrayed in a movie directed by Jonathan Kaplan entitled *The Accused* (1988). This article is intended to identify how sexism is depicted in the behavior toward the survivor during the trial. With the main premise of seeking justice for a rape survivor, this movie highlights Sarah's experience to gain justice through a sexist masculine institution. Referring to the theory of sexism by Manne, this article aims to show how this movie shows sexist behavior toward the survivor during law enforcement. Dialogues that show sexism between characters are used in the analysis of the movie's plot, then used to discuss the portrayal of sexism in *The Accused* from a feminist point of view. From the dialog and the portrayal of layered sexism, we find that as a movie promoting human rights, *The Accused* still implies that a woman who does not meet the expected gender roles is undeserving of justice. As a result, a 'bad' woman as a victim whose experience is reduced is seen as a norm.

**Keywords:** lawyer, rape, representation, sexism, survivor.

### INTRODUCTION

*The Accused*, a courtroom drama film produced in 1988 and directed by Jonathan Kaplan, portrays the issue of sexism through a story of the gang rape of a young woman named Sarah Tobias (starring Jodie Foster) and its subsequent trial. *The Accused* aired at the same time when feminists shift their focus to rape survivor representation in the media and understanding the reality of rape. This article will analyze how *The Accused* as a movie that was made as one of a feminist movement in response to the feminist backlash in the 80's still presents sexism and still depicts the absence of the rape survivor's agency in the film. (Serisier, 2018) states that "[t]he Accused, in its remediation of the case, removes the invasive media harassment, and the aftermath of the victim's experience", while this movie sheds light on the issue of victim blaming, it also deals with the representation of a female lawyer named Kathryn Murphy (starring Kelly McGillis) in a legal institution

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that handles the case. Kathryn is presented as a lawyer who never loses a case, as a result of which she prioritizes her reputation over the victim. This depiction creates layers of sexism, which create a complex system of oppression that affects the flow of the case.

Previously in (Lucia, 2005) Lucia in her book entitled "Framing Female Lawyers" discussed *The Accused*, Lucia discussed important points in the film *The Accused* which she called the gray area. Lucia uses the term "stacked" to explain the complex class issues depicted when Kathryn assesses Sarah as an unreliable witness which causes Kathryn to plea bargain and have the sentences reduced. Although in line with Lucia's opinion in her book, we see that the book does not explore the character of Sarah as a victim and rather focuses on the female lawyer character instead, in this article we will focus on the victim portrayal to further examine the "stacked" area in the film which in this article we call as layers. Still about witnesses, (Silbey, 2009) in her book "A Witness to Justice" also discusses the credibility of one's witness. In her discussion of Sarah's vision, she describes how the camerawork closes the distance between the film and the audience. Focusing on camerawork only on the sexism scene that occurs with Sarah, Silbey does not discuss the other main characters in the film so that readers are not presented with how the lawyer, the chief of DA, and other actors shape the audience's perception of the issues discussed in *The Accused*. In this article, we will also elucidate how the interests of the other actors play in understanding the issue of sexism depicted in the film more clearly.

The issue of sexism in Hollywood films is a topic that has evolved and is continuously discussed among researchers. For example, a study by (Dowd et al., 2021) discusses the stereotyping of women in Hollywood romance movies. Dowd focuses on how romantic couples exhibit behaviors that are classified as 'masculine' or 'feminine' in the sociological and psychological literature by assessing how closely the central characters' behavior adhered to traditional gender role expectations. Dowd concludes that although some Hollywood movies defy gender stereotypes, most still perpetuate perceptions, and limit the roles of female characters. Related to women stereotypes in film, a study by (Yang et al., 2020) argues that although women's portrayal in films has improved, there is an indication that it is due to the increasing number of female screenplay writers. Furthermore, according to the data that the writers collected, they found that female directors and filmmakers who are instrumental in movies having better female representation are very low in percentages. Therefore, women stereotype in movies might not change significantly. Previous studies on women stereotypes in Hollywood movies manage to identify how sexism is still present in Hollywood movies through the portrayal of the female characters, this article focuses on how the film *The Accused* shows not only sexism but also the layers of sexism from a feminist point of view. Discussing sexism in this framework is important considering that *The Accused* is a PSA (Public Service Announcement) movie that was initially produced to tell a

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real-life story to encourage women as victims of sexual assault to speak up. The movie, however, also presents a victimized character who is still unable to achieve justice. By displaying an unreliable victim, the movie does not seem to serve its purpose. Therefore, by investigating layered sexism in this film, there may be certain criticisms that the film wants to convey regarding the representation of women lawyers, especially in cases of sexual violence.

## METHOD

The analysis employs qualitative methods, scene plot analysis is conducted to explore and categorize spoken material to identify themes related to sexism from the feminist point of view including factors that contribute to it. In doing so, dialogues of scenes displaying different degrees of sexism are observed. Several steps are taken in doing the analysis. Firstly, the movie is attentively watched and comprehended to identify which scene portrays the act of sexism towards the victim. Then, researchers also review articles that discuss sexism in Hollywood movies and take annotations from the articles to carry out the novelty of this article. Secondly, the film is re-watched and the dialogues of scenes depicting or relating to levels of sexism were collected to provide the data to support the arguments in the discussion. Thirdly, the dialogues are categorized into three layers that project various levels of sexism present in the film. The next step is to examine the portrayal of sexism in the literary works by showing the script and the dialogue from the scene. Lastly, after examining the data, we came up with three questions we would like to analyse in the article regarding the sexism depicted in the movie, which are: How sexism is portrayed by neglecting the victim? How does the film portray the victim? and How sexism is depicted by reducing the word rape?

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Sexism in *The Accused*

Sexism, in a general sense, can be defined as ‘the branch of patriarchal ideology that justifies and rationalizes a patriarchal social order’ (Manne, 2018) One might argue that sexism goes hand in hand with misogyny, as according to Manne, misogyny acts as “law enforcement” and has the function of enforcing its governing norms. (Manne, 2018) further argues that both misogyny and sexism aim to preserve or reinstate a patriarchal social structure term multi-layer or layered used in this research implies a theoretical acknowledgment to form or arrange in layers. We describe layering as means to weave stories within larger narratives that include the perspectives of many people, including those of the research subjects and the researcher. Therefore, the term layered sexism in this article is used to describe the layers of acts of discrimination from the feminist perspective where each of the layers affects the sexual assault survivor.

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The events in *The Accused* are inextricably linked to the representation of sexual assault victims and female lawyers. Through the representation of female lawyers, the film might want to empower women to pursue their careers in the legal path, as (Sumarsono & Masofa, 2022) states in their article that “[t]he empowerment of women will enable girls and women to attain gender equality.” However, (Law et al., 1999) write that the breakthroughs of female lawyers in legal films are exaggerated, unrealistic, and even insulting. In the box office Hollywood movie *Legally Blonde* (2001), for instance, Elle Woods is presented as having feminine traits with an exaggerated choice of fashion that is predominantly pink. The way she wins the case is rather unrealistic due to the fact that she knows a lot about hair-perming. *Legally Blonde* can be regarded as sexist because the case is associated with female beauty involving salons. In contrast, Kathryn Murphy in *The Accused* projects masculine traits, causing her to hate losing a case. According to how movies storylines used rape to elicit compassion for an unlikeable female character, stated: “[t]he *Accused* can be seen as a transitional film in this regard, splitting the issue between two characters—the female lawyer, whose sexuality is completely elided and who is meant to represent a kind of stereotypical feminist gain (Lucia, 2005). We agree with this to an extent because contrary to what she stated regarding female lawyers, we believe that sexuality is not completely elided in the portrayal of the female lawyer. Although *The Accused* does not associate Kathryn with feminine traits, unlike the other Hollywood legal drama during the era, Kathryn was depicted to be one of the reasons Sarah did not achieve justice through her masculine traits.

In *The Accused*, with or without the survivor named Sarah, Kathryn deals with winning regardless. In this regard, we will elucidate how the notion of winning and the layers of sexism could be both detrimental and beneficial for Sarah as a survivor of gang rape. To see the layers of sexism shown in *The Accused*, we must comprehend that law and court perpetuate sexist ideology and is a very masculine institute since historically the legal profession has long been dominated by males and influenced by traditional norms. In relation to this (Smart, 1995) adds an important note that: “the inherent power embedded in masculinity, and the ability to formulate law, institutions, and policy from this position of power, translates into gendered institutions and policy development” (Smart, 1995). Working under a masculine institute that holds a patriarchal ideology, Kathryn as Sarah’s lawyer is depicted to be showing the masculine stereotypes of a lawyer, and being played as an impersonal and competitive character is some of it. Related to this, (Salerno & Phalen, 2019) describe that many scholars have hypothesized that because the system promotes these masculine characteristics, the conflicting expectations for how a good lawyer and a woman should behave may hinder the advancement of women in the field. The failure to act masculine when acting feminine and the violation of gender stereotypes when acting masculine could result in sanctions against female attorneys. This depiction cannot be disregarded from the fact that this film was aired during the 80s

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feminist backlash, and before the movement women's ability in their career path was reduced, and women were seen as incompetent for more advanced or physically demanding work (Susanti, 2023). This "double bind" may make it more difficult for women in the legal profession to advance their careers because they are unable to satisfy both sets of conflicting expectations.

*"What happens if you lose? You'll look like an incompetent. If you win, you'll look like a vengeful bitch," (Kaplan, 1988. 45:20).*

The double bind shown in *The Accused*, for instance, can be seen in the scene where Kathryn consults with her chief to put the spectators of the rape in prison. This situation shows how the chief puts Kathryn in a no-winning situation. On the one hand, she wants to give justice to his client, but on the other hand as a subordinate, she must obey her superiors. Feminists argue that women are the group most victimized by sexist oppression that can be perpetuated by institutional and social structure. It might be argued that sexism experienced by female lawyers in a legal institution might exhibit a sexist image to their clients. Although Kathryn as a female lawyer also faces subtle sexism from her male counterparts, it is Sarah as the survivor who suffers from the worst consequences from the layers of sexism, portrayed in the movie throughout the law enforcement process.

### **Three Layers of Sexism in *The Accused***

*The Accused* shows that in the process to win the case, Kathryn as the lawyer, and the law itself have been very neglectful toward Sarah.

*"The question is, is it a winnable case?" (Kaplan, 1988. 25:29)*

This excerpt is from the dialog between Kathryn and her chief where Kathryn consults the chief of the district attorney, in the scene it is depicted that although Kathryn believed that Sarah got raped, Kathryn is more concerned whether she can win the case or not because she is unable to find a witness. Therefore, it suggests that Kathryn fails to prioritize the survivor, the act of overlooking the survivor to secure her career by winning indicates that Kathryn puts her career first before her clients. *The Accused* was aired after the post-feminism, and it affects the embodiment of Kathryn as a female lawyer. This film is believed to be more advanced in how it presents female lawyers. But behind the growth, we believe that Kathryn as a white middle-class woman is constructed as a masculinized career woman. Kathryn seems portrayed to achieve the feminist premise that women should be getting equal opportunities in the field of work. But, in our observation, it is portrayed in a negative connotation due to the masculinization of her character. Study proves that masculine traits are a consistent predictor of self-esteem for women who work in a male-dominated field. Thus, it can be argued that for

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Kathryn winning is a predictor of her self-esteem. These depicted actions follow the term secondary victimization mentioned by Hogan in his article, which describes secondary victimization as “-intrusive interrogation of victims by police and defense attorneys, invasive medical examinations, victim-blaming, and challenges to their honesty, morality, and soundness of mind” (Hogan, 2022).

We believe that there is a contraposition in Kathryn’s obsession with winning a case; firstly, it is her profession to be an assistant to the district attorney, and winning can be one of many ways to secure her career path. We suspect that winning the case becomes important to Kathryn, as at the beginning, the movie presents her character as unemotional and detached towards Sarah. The movie shows that during the interrogation while Sarah suffers from the assault that happened earlier that night, Kathryn proceeds to question Sarah regarding the rape and only focuses on her body. Even though Sarah is heavily injured, Kathryn acts very insensitively towards her. And just like her male companion, she fails to see Sarah as a whole and focuses merely on her body which overlooks Sarah’s mind and feelings. The movie presents the act of emotional neglect toward Sarah, which is shown during the examination. In the examination, Kathryn acts so detached from her client, that it suggests Kathryn’s lack of empathy towards Sarah. To see a woman merely from bodily experience and neglecting the trauma is arguably an act of sexism since it oppresses one’s mind and feelings. Sarah looks dazed and shaken.

*“I’m not a rape counselor. I’m a prosecutor, and I have to make a rape case” (Kaplan, 1988. 06:39)*

In excerpt of the dialog between Kathryn and the rape counselor shows that Kathryn does not seem to care with the state of Sarah’s feelings after the examination and chooses to focus with Sarah’s charts that show the high toxin and alcohol level in her body. Thus, the portrayal shows how Kathryn is indifferent and chooses to neglect Sarah’s emotions by trying to distance herself from the potential need for a deeper emotional connection.

The movie portrays Sarah as a helpless victim, whose body and feelings have been continuously neglected. This portrayal can be seen in the dialogue where Kathryn consults the case to her chief in a hockey game. The chief district attorney seems to be unbothered by the case and barely gives Kathryn profound suggestions, which is shown in the following line where he gives the suggestion during a hockey game, where it is showed that he is not even focused on Kathryn’s concern regarding the rape case because he is too focused on the game.

*“They can walk, just make a deal and put them away”, “go for rape 2”, “I don’t care if they only get 6 months in county, make a deal and put them away” (Kaplan, 1988. 26:02)*

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The excerpt from those lines gives the impression that in this movie imprisoning the rapist with the deserved punishment is never a priority. Feminists in the 1970s already expressed their concerns through a movement where the activist's focus is to put an end to victim-blaming and acknowledging that victims had been wronged, instead of contributing to a dehumanizing trope of helplessness. Unfortunately, *The Accused*, which was made from a true story to encourage rape victims to report, portrays how law enforcement seems to fail to see beyond Sarah's history and class background and thus points to a problematic way in which the effort to end victim-blaming might be misunderstood amongst the film audience. This depiction follows what (Yulistiyanti et al., 2020) describes as a contestation of ideologies, where “[t]wo opposites ideologies show their roles at the same time. The readers will not find the winner in it. The work is only the arena of two ideologies or more displaying what they have.”

The second layer of sexism is seen through the portrayal of the survivor. Sarah is presented as a working-class female who is challenged structurally in order to win the case. Sarah is presented as a woman who works at a diner and lives in a trailer with her abusive boyfriend. Made to overcome the problem of victim blaming, *The Accused* in fact still represents the victims as someone whose witnesses are not credible resulting in the survivor still experiencing victim blaming where in the end has not yet achieved justice. Women are more likely to be perceived as real rape victims if they are believed to do nothing to deserve the assault, according to research by (White Stewart et al., 1975) The latest article regarding the stereotype of ‘good’ rape victims stated that it should not be the only female character with authority. Siliman in her article concludes that “The trope of the “good victim” should not be the sole female figure with the right to claim being attacked. Women deserve to be “difficult” without that quality having anything to do with an attack perpetrated against them.” *The Accused* presents Sarah as a female who is difficult to win because she violates the expectation of traditional gender roles by presenting her bad images regarding her manners on the night of the rape, such as erratic behavior, going to a bar alone, and dressing provocatively.

*“I’d like to take that guy home and fuck him in front of Larry” (Kaplan, 1988. 54:57).*

The excerpt from the dialog between Sarah and her friend show what White describes as a bad victim and support the idea of the unreal rape because Sarah attitudes during the incident. Although Sarah says that it was a joke, it suggests that Sarah is a lustful woman, which in consequence presents her as a woman with a bad image that does not fit the idea of ‘good’ victim. This is because erotic dance moves seem to be the justification for the rapist that Sarah was “putting out a show,” and can be seen as consent. The idea

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that a woman with a "reputation" is less likely to resist sexual assault is an additional legal remnant in rape cases. Concerns for defending the defendant's rights and uncertainty about the truthfulness of the victim's testimony serve as justifications for the requirement of corroboration

*"If I take her to trial they're gonna destroy her. She walked in there alone, she got drunk, she came on to them, she's got a prior of possession" (Kaplan, 1988. 25:12)*

In the excerpt that shows Kathryn's statement and she argues that Sarah is an unreliable victim and does not conform to the good reputation and thus Sarah does not have a say in her oppression. These prejudices cause Sarah to be unable to testify at the trial. As an effect, Kathryn violates Sarah's right to speak.

A previous study conducted by (McCormack, 2008) which discussed *The Accused* from a law perspective argues that the witnesses in the movie hold some power in terms of influencing jurors' ultimate decision

*"How were you dressed? Were you dressed provocatively?" "Showing a lot of cleavages? See through blouse?" (Kaplan, 1988. 20:01) and "Why you didn't tell me you had a record?" (Kaplan, 1988. 20:19).*

The excerpt from the dialog between Kathryn and Sarah shows how Kathryn as a female lawyer is subjugated to the sexist and patriarchal social norms causing Sarah to be seen as invisible. Kathryn asks these questions to show that Sarah is not a reliable witness because of her choice of clothes and thus Kathryn chooses to silence Sarah

*"That is the kind of question that's gonna be asked on the stand, and I will object all those questions" (Kaplan, 1988. 21:07).*

The excerpt shows how Kathryn elaborates her question and tries to justify her wrongdoing by saying that the question she asked is what the judge will ask in the trial. These prejudiced questions that hide behind the term "a woman asked to be raped" is a rape culture in which sexual violence is a norm and the victims are the ones to blame. In line with this, (Ferreday, 2015) states that rape is the result of gendered, raced, and classed social relations that are central to patriarchal and heterosexist culture. Therefore, the term "rape culture" implies the importance of understanding rape as a cultural phenomenon, rather than a set of discrete criminal acts committed by a few violent individuals. Referring to Ferreday, with regards to rape culture, we see that in *The Accused* the layers can start from the law, judge, jurors, and the lawyer, whose relation forms a patriarchal culture.

Kathryn, as the lawyer, seems to have absolute power over her victim, and thus, she can determine whether her client is good enough for her career enhancement, resulting in her defensive acts toward Sarah (hooks, 1984)

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argues that '[b]etween women, male supremacist values are expressed through suspicious, defensive, competitive behavior', which aligns with the relationship between Kathryn and Sarah in *The Accused*. It is sexism that leads women to feel threatened by other women. In the movie, it is depicted that Kathryn is afraid that she will lose the case if she lets Sarah testify. In a way, it is Kathryn's career that is being threatened by Sarah's 'unreliable' testimony, causing Kathryn to act defensively. Kathryn is also trying to gain Sarah's trust by comforting her that she will object to all misleading questions, causing Kathryn to expect Sarah not to testify in court. After comforting Sarah, Kathryn says:

"Sarah, you are a witness and it's the defendants' job that you have a rotten witness because you have a rotten character" (Kaplan, 1988. 21:75)

This line proves that Kathryn will silence Sarah by not giving her the chance to testify in court because according to her judgment, Sarah projects a "rotten witness" through her rotten character

The third layer of sexism is on how the word rape is reduced. The movie shows that the rapists in the final trial are not prosecuted by rape charges and are instead charged with reckless endangerment. We also learn that Kathryn does not consult with Sarah regarding the plea bargain because Kathryn does not see Sarah's need to tell her story to the public, which is manifested as self-empowerment.

*"On one condition, I'll accept that on behalf of my client if the formal charge is changed to one without the sexual element. He's a kid in 22, he's an A student, he's got a future", "He won't plea guilty on sexual offense" (Kaplan, 1988. 29:07).*

In the excerpt the dialog show that how the word rape is reduced considering one of the rapist's future since he is still a college student. The dialog between Kathryn and the rapist's lawyers who ask her to reduce the charge from rape to assault shows that Kathryn is very adamant and disagrees with the idea. However, Kathryn is left with a difficult position since the case does not have a strong witness. Because of that, Kathryn must agree with the demand. If not, the perpetrator can walk free due to the weak testimony. (Ferreday, 2015) in her article that discusses the series *Game of Thrones* through the fandom response regarding the rape culture portrayed in the series, states that between the media portrayal and sexual violence, there is the need of feminist reaction. Ferreday continues by giving a real event example in 2012 where a high school girl was raped by his classmates. However, news outlets seem sympathetic to rapists due to their respect for their 'promising' future. Ferreday further argues that the justice system has interrupted the narrative of bright male futures. And this happens repeatedly. Thus, feminists feel the urgent need to question "whose stories are told, and whose future is at stake, and how rape culture is discursively constructed" (Ferreday, 2015: 22). The word rape that is reduced is arguably an act of sexism since the motive is to

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prioritize the future of the man suggesting that the patriarchy in a rape culture is still compelling, especially in a media and law institution.

In addition to the issue where the rapist's future is prioritized, we could not turn away from the fact that *The Accused* portrays Sarah's negative experience that is reduced by not recognizing her as a victim of gang rape. Sarah's experience has been discounted and not seen as it should, and scholars have discussed that there are many ways women's voices are censored. (Burnett et al., 2009) argue that "[w]omen have been muted in a multitude of ways, including the methods in which women tell stories, through male-controlled media, in ways women's bodies are portrayed and analyzed, and through censorship of women's voices". It can be argued that through the reduction in the word rape, in *The Accused*, the censorship of Tobias is an example of how a woman's voice is muted. The word rape that is censored and reduced by the court not only devalues Sarah as a woman, but it also results in Sarah's frustration. For Kathryn, on the other hand, to win is to do everything she could, even if it means silencing Sarah. For women, the word rape is very important, (Harris, 2011) states that "the label rape helped them remove self-blame, allowed them to mark the severity of their experience, and situated their own experiences in the context of broader social issues". Feminists believe rape as a mode of storytelling has a long history (Projansky, 2001). According to Projansky, the stories we make 'about' rape are flimsy; they reveal a lot about how society views gender, sexuality, violence, property, and family ties. At this historical juncture, it is especially fruitful to examine the relationship between "real" rape and representations of rape because media representations are intricately entwined with cultural practices, including the experience of residing in societies where the constant threat of sexual violence is lived alongside a proliferation of media images of violated female bodies.

Depicting the incident that happened to Sarah not as a "real" rape in *The Accused* causes Sarah to feel furious yet so powerless because although the perpetrator is finally imprisoned, the accusation invalidates her ill experience because it suggests that what happened to her is not seen as rape by the court. This leaves the survivor with the responsibility, which takes the focus off the rapist. The responsibility comes after the assumption that the rape happens because she is passively compliant. (Mardorossian, 2002) states that "self-blame occurs systematically, whether the victim fought back or not, whether the rape occurred or was thwarted, whether in fact she or he did try to subvert the sexual script or not." Mardorossian argues that the effort to overcome and educate society has shifted the focus off the perpetrator, resulting in the idea that women should know better than to not let themselves get raped. The exact issue emerges in *The Accused*, after the trial where the rapist's sentence was reduced and shown on TV. Sarah is portrayed to be minding herself in a music store when suddenly a man comes after her and flirts with her which she respectfully responds only to soon realize that he is one of the spectators who cheered during the incident. *The Accused* presents a scene

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where the man she met in the music store does inappropriate hand gestures and blocks Sarah's car with his, where then Sarah runs her car toward him and results in injuries on her face thus, she needs to be hospitalized. Knowing the accident that happened to Sarah, Kathryn rushes to the hospital and confronts the man.

*"I don't know her, she's a whore. Last time I saw her she was doing a sex show", "She put on a great show", "Raped? She fucked in a bar full of guys now she tries to blame them for it? Listen, lady, she loved it. She had her audience, it was a show of her life" (Kaplan, 1988. 41:45)*

This excerpt from the man dialogue shows how this depiction corresponds to (Serisier, 2018) arguments of the male tendency to subscribe to rape myths and normalize sexual violence. Through this depiction, Kathryn awakens from her blindness and sees Sarah's suffering. This part shows how he believed that Sarah should know better than to come to a bar full of guys where she gets raped, blaming her and suggesting that the accident is not a real rape. Thus, it is important to not misname rape as something that is not.

*"You told them that, I never got to tell nobody. You did all the talking for me" (Kaplan, 1988. 40:24).*

After the incident that happened in the parking lot, Sarah was left infuriated. This excerpt of Sarah dialogue shows that Sarah finally confronts Kathryn. After this scene, Kathryn realizes her blindness to Sarah's injustice, and it proves how the word rape is important to Sarah and she is wrong to not let the world know her story.

*The Accused* implies that Kathryn empathizes with her client only after the pain and weakness that Kathryn witnesses with her own eyes. Even when Sarah confronts Kathryn. Kathryn is not yet aware of her oblivion to Sarah's suffering all this time. The incident when Sarah was so seriously injured that she had to be hospitalized seemed to be the turning point for Kathryn's consciousness. Crossing an obvious boundary, although Kathryn has successfully won the case, the question regarding whether it is still a win for Sarah emerges. Kathryn feels remorseful to Sarah after she 'sold' her, and through the same legal corridor that has failed Sarah in the prior trial, Kathryn tries to bring justice to Tobias. Sustaining from the aforementioned reason for Kathryn's obsession with winning that we mentioned in the first layer of sexism portrayed in the movie, we believe her compulsion with winning is also to resist the layers of sexism that have already been experienced by Sarah by conducting the second trial to put away the spectators who cheer during the rape which is not approved by the chief of the district attorney. Even though Kathryn's turning point in becoming an ideal lawyer only occurred after Sarah's accident in the music store, in the end, Sarah can tell her

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testimony at trial and the trial is won according to the results she wants. The film ends with how Sarah becomes empathetic and removes herself from the maleness of the legal institute. Yet, instead of seeing this as a weakness, it can be regarded as a good connotation of a feminized portrayal of a female lawyer.

## CONCLUSION

Sexism in *The Accused* is being presented differently from the previous rape survivor and lawyer narrative, seen as a movie that is ahead of its time and does not present a male lawyer as a hero in the narrative, this film portrays a secondary victimization through the female lawyer instead. From the discussion of layered sexism, we find that as a movie promoting categorized as PSA, *The Accused* still suggests that a woman who does not conform to traditional gender roles is unworthy of justice. As a result, a 'bad' woman is a victim whose limited experience in achieving justice is viewed as a part of the social norm. Ultimately, by investigating Kathryn's obsession with winning concludes the contradictory outcomes for Sarah. The different intentions of winning can be seen where at first Kathryn's determination to win causes injustice for Sarah when the rapist is sentenced to reckless endangerment. However, later in the movie Kathryn's obsession with winning results in Sarah's ability to tell her story to the jury. Thus, for Sarah, it means that she can share her previously repressed traumatic experience. However, in the end, Sarah gains retaliation by testifying in court and being able to voice her oppression. All in all, we believe that it is still a win for Sarah, just because Sarah survives and she relies on herself.

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