POWER DYNAMICS & SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IN THE WORKPLACE

THE ISSUE
With accusers coming forward against notable figures in recent months, sexual misconduct is more prevalent than ever. There is an apparent issue with power dynamics between the victim and the assailant, which adds to the difficulty a victim faces to report.

98% of women in the entertainment industry reported some form of experience with sexual misconduct.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
- Is there a general lack of knowledge on what is considered sexual misconduct?
- Is there always a power dynamic involved in cases of sexual misconduct?
- Do perpetrators understand the severity of punishment for sexual misconduct?
- Which industry leads the way in terms of legislation and policy when combating sexual misconduct?
- Could education be a possible resolution to sexual misconduct? When and where should this education take place?

GOAL & DELIVERY
The desired outcome of this inquiry is to educate and bring awareness to the issue of sexual misconduct and power dynamics with the hope of ultimately reducing the number of sexual misconduct cases in the distant future.

Our intended client is the Office of the General Counsel at Ithaca College, who can implement training within the institution. We hope that our design would change thinking and behaviors that lead to sexual misconduct within Ithaca College, setting a precedent at institutions of higher ed, which eventually extends into corporations and nonprofits.

COLLABORATORS
Our team determined an educational strategy that would be a realistic and impactful contribution. We want to incorporate storytelling and personal testimonies since we believe our most influential, impactful experience result from mandatory training or e-learning. Existing training, specifically Every1 (used by Ithaca College) lacks incentive for dialogue or personal connections.

To combat this, we designed a simulation experience, bringing employees face-to-face with an incident of sexual misconduct in their own workplace. Trainees are encouraged to discuss how it could be prevented.

How it works: Trainings would be labeled as general operations training — anything from I.T. reminders to parking lot instructions could be discussed. During the meeting, something inappropriate would occur and those delivering the training. This could be any act that qualifies as non-consensual and undesired, from a discriminatory comment to a lingering touch. If, as is the hope, someone at the meeting forwards or addresses the action, the meeting would be adjourned and a dialogue about preventing sexual misconduct and workplace etiquette would begin. If the action is not addressed, following the end of the meeting, the play would be revealed and dialogue would ensue.

FINDINGS
“Sexual violence is a crime of power.” —Laure Hamburger, 2018

“Perpetrators of these crimes often do not victimize an individual once, but often with repetitive acts over a period of time. Currently the criminal justice system deals with most crimes as isolated incidents, which establishes a significant burden on the survivor.” —Johnna Pike, 2018

“Title IX (all universities in the US) and Article 129.8 (NY) lead the way in investigating cases of sexual misconduct.” —Lora Francesco, 2018

CAUSATION MODEL

POWER DYNAMICS

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

The lack of knowledge of perpetrators and those who participate in sexual misconduct is the belief that behavior is acceptable.

LACK OF PUNISHMENT

Organizations that do not punish perpetrators of sexual misconduct or allow it to continue are complicit.

ALTERNATIVE DESIGNS

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN
Our team began this inquiry with the assumption that the general public knows sexual misconduct is bad, however, we have found there may be a lack of awareness about the severity of the problem. Those who abuse their power and harm others, especially in sexual ways, may not realize it is wrong to do so. To combat this, an awareness campaign, mostly through social media, should be implemented to create this awareness.

TRAINING FOR ORGANIZATIONS
Through the training, employees will learn what consent is and is not, how to identify appropriate behavior and the importance of boundaries. The development of this training will ensure that the issue is addressed and the inquiry would never have happened.

CURRICULUM FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS
The first preliminary idea is to create an educational program to implement in public school systems. This education would be adapted from Maggie Wetter’s “consent curriculum.” It would teach students about consent beginning in middle school. From our group’s personal experiences, as well research, we have found that many public schools do not do an adequate job of teaching sexual education, and rarely discuss consent.