

Honors Thesis Reflection

University Honors Program

Colorado State University

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Thesis Presentation Spring Semester of 2026

Introduction

Sexual harassment is an issue that affects individuals across a wide range of environments, yet it often goes unaddressed in everyday public spaces such as transportation systems. For many individuals, especially women, commuting to work, school, or social activities can involve experiences of discomfort, fear, or vulnerability due to unwanted interactions. Despite how common these experiences are, they are frequently minimized, underreported, or dismissed as a routine part of daily life. This normalization creates barriers to both awareness and action, leaving many individuals without clear guidance or support in the moment.

Due to the high prevalence of sexual harassment, its consistent underreporting, and the lack of accessible resources in Colorado, I chose to center my thesis project around an intervention. I was also personally motivated by my own experience as a woman who has encountered sexual harassment on public transportation and did not know how to respond in the moment. This experience highlighted a gap between awareness and action, reinforcing the need for accessible, immediate guidance. As a result, I developed both an informational poster and a presentation that work together to address this issue. My goal was to create a resource grounded in research on effective strategies for responding to and preventing sexual harassment, particularly in real-time situations. Throughout this paper, I will reflect on the process of designing my poster, the experience of presenting it, and the broader significance of this project within both my academic work and the larger community.

The Poster

My poster is the center of my thesis project. It is a proposed intervention that can be displayed on public transportation in Northern Colorado. The process of creating this poster

involved several stages. First, I conducted a literature review to understand the prevalence of sexual harassment, particularly in public spaces and transit systems. This included analyzing both national and state-level statistics, as well as reviewing reports from organizations focused on sexual violence prevention. Next, I examined existing interventions, including campaigns in other cities and countries. This step was particularly influential, as I noticed that many international transportation systems incorporate visible, accessible messaging about harassment. These observations helped shape my decision to use a poster as my primary medium.

After gathering research, I moved into the design phase. I explored principles of visual communication, including color theory, layout, and readability. I intentionally chose analogous colors to create a visually cohesive and attention-grabbing design without overwhelming the viewer. I also carefully considered how to organize information so that it could be quickly understood in a potentially stressful environment. Finally, I curated resources to include in the QR code. This required evaluating the credibility, accessibility, and relevance of different organizations and support systems. I prioritized resources that were free, widely available, and offered support in multiple languages.

While designing my poster, I initially included too much information, which required me to significantly reduce the amount of text presented. This became one of the most challenging aspects of the design process. I struggled to decide which information was essential, as much of what I wanted to include was highly descriptive and felt important. At the same time, I needed to balance clarity with visual appeal, organizing the content in a way that was both engaging and easy to read while still maintaining a formal tone. Originally, I planned to include a larger section dedicated to statistical data. However, I realized that statistics were not the most impactful component for this type of intervention. Instead, I shifted my focus toward emphasizing

actionable steps and clearly identifying behaviors associated with sexual harassment. This decision allowed the poster to become more practical and useful in real-time situations, rather than purely informational.

Overall, this process helped me better understand how to create a resource that not only informs but also advocates for a specific group of people. I gained insight into how information can be presented in a way that encourages awareness and promotes change. In the future, this poster could be displayed on buses, trains, and even within rideshare services, serving as a tool to increase access to resources and support individuals who may need them.

The Process of the Presentations

When it came to the process of developing my presentation, I encountered challenges similar to those I experienced while designing my poster; specifically when it came to how I would condense a large amount of information into a clear and effective format. I had a substantial amount of research, background information, and personal insight that I wanted to include, which made it difficult to decide what to prioritize. This required me to think critically about what content would be most meaningful and engaging for my audience, while making sure it made sense with the overall purpose of my project.

In addition to narrowing down the content, I was deliberate about ensuring that my slides did not simply repeat what I planned to say aloud. Instead, I aimed to design slides that complemented my verbal presentation by highlighting key points, being concise, and being visually appealing. This approach allowed me to avoid overwhelming the audience with excessive text while also keeping them engaged. To support this process, I created a detailed speech script that included everything I wanted to communicate. This script served as a

foundation, helping me organize my thoughts, maintain structure, and ensure that I conveyed my ideas clearly and effectively during the presentation.

The presentation itself was a positive and rewarding experience. I received a significant amount of encouraging feedback, particularly regarding the relevance and impact of my topic. I was able to achieve my goal of creating a project that was both engaging and informative, as audience members responded well to both the content and the way it was delivered. This feedback reinforced my belief that combining research with accessible forms of communication can be an effective way to raise awareness about important issues. In terms of delivery, I felt confident in my ability to present the material clearly. I maintained a steady pace throughout the presentation, which allowed me to communicate my ideas without feeling rushed while also keeping the audience's attention. It was also mentioned that my passion came through while speaking.

This experience strengthened my confidence in public speaking and highlighted the importance of preparation, organization, and audience awareness when presenting complex topics. This project has been both academically and personally meaningful. Through the process of creating my poster, I learned how to translate research so it can exist outside of an academic setting. I also developed skills in data analysis, visual communication, and critical thinking.

If I were to approach this project again, I would incorporate a method for evaluating its effectiveness, such as surveys or observational studies. I would also explore additional ways to increase accessibility, particularly for individuals without access to smartphones. The experience of presenting this project was equally valuable. I found it to be helpful preparation for future conferences and more extensive presentations, as it required me to clearly communicate complex

ideas in an engaging and structured way. Completing both the poster and presentation allowed me to feel a strong sense of accomplishment, as this was a detailed project that required significant time, effort, and thought. On a personal level, this project is deeply connected to my experiences and future goals. As someone who has encountered sexual harassment and has seen its impact on others, this work feels both relevant and necessary. It has reinforced my interest in working with women and children and has inspired me to continue pursuing advocacy and research in this area.

Significance

The significance of this experience lies in its ability to bridge the gap between academic research and real-world application. Through the process of creating and presenting my poster, I was able to move beyond simply understanding sexual harassment as a concept and instead engage with it as an everyday issue that requires practical solutions. This project demonstrated that research does not have to remain confined to academic settings, it can be translated into accessible tools that directly impact individuals and communities. By focusing on public transportation, a space that is often overlooked in discussions of safety, I was able to highlight an area where increased awareness and resources are critically needed. This experience reinforced the idea that even small interventions, such as a well-designed poster, can contribute to larger conversations about public safety, gender equity, and community responsibility.

The implications of this experience relate to both my future academic and professional goals. This project has strengthened my interest in advocacy work and has shown me the importance of creating resources that are not only informative but also actionable and inclusive. It has also emphasized the value of interdisciplinary approaches, combining psychology, research

methods, and visual communication to address complex social issues. Moving forward, I hope to build on this work by developing additional interventions, conducting further research, and potentially collaborating with organizations that focus on supporting women and improving public safety. On a broader level, this experience has shaped how I view my role within my community, not just as a student or researcher, but as someone who can actively contribute to creating meaningful change.

Conclusion

Overall, this project represents more than the creation of a poster; it reflects my ability to take research, personal experience, and interdisciplinary knowledge and transform them into a meaningful, real-world intervention. Through this process, I not only developed academic skills, but also deepened my understanding of how awareness, accessibility, and advocacy can work together to address complex social issues. I am proud of my efforts and the outcome.

This experience has reinforced my commitment to creating safer, more supportive environments, particularly for women in public spaces. While this project is only one step, it has shown me that change can begin with small, intentional actions. Moving forward, I hope to continue building on this work, using both research and creative expression to contribute to lasting and impactful change within my community and beyond.