

#MeToo Means Who?: Shining a Light on the Darkness

A Rhetorical Analysis of Inclusivity and Exclusivity Within the #MeToo Movement

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INTRODUCTION

*Defining moments shine a light on this or that group, this or that country, this or that event.
The problem with spotlights is the surrounding darkness.*

-Sohalia Abdulali, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Rape*

On October 15, 2017, Alyssa Milano thrust the world into one of these defining moments with a single tweet. In anguish and heartbreak over the recent allegations brought against Harvey Weinstein by Ashley Judd, she sent out a photo to her followers that read “Me too. Suggested by a friend: If all women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted write ‘me too’ as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem.”¹ She captioned the photo with a message encouraging her followers to do just that- reply to her tweet with “me too” if they had ever experienced sexual violence. Within hours, the hashtag “#MeToo” went viral. Thousands of women around the globe² posted on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, speaking out in solidarity that they too had been sexually assaulted or harassed at some point in their lifetime. Most of them had been silent for years, out of shame and the fear of repercussions if they were to speak out. But after Milano’s tweet, survivors were so moved by the mass response and solidarity they witnessed that they decided to make their stories known. This was revolutionary, considering the horrific prevalence of sexual violence across the globe and the historical silencing of victims who are often afraid to speak out. As the posts flooded the internet, making them impossible to ignore, the world watched on, hailing these women as the sparks that started the fire that fueled the #MeToo movement.

¹ Alyssa Milano’s Twitter page, accessed February 19th 2019, https://twitter.com/alyssa_milano/status/919659438700670976?lang=en.

² While I understand that the #MeToo movement has gone “global,” I will focus on the United States and American narratives in this paper. I have made this choice not only for reasons of space and scope, but also because of the power that the United States has over international discourse, particularly on the internet. As Abdulali (2018) points out, “conversations that start in the US are always differently weighted...while everyone can access the internet at least theoretically, the US dominates it in terms of content” (35). She also makes an interesting point here, critiquing the notion that the movement is “global,” reminding us that not everyone has access to the internet.

While Alyssa Milano did in fact turn these two little words into a defining moment and put a spotlight on sexual violence, the terminology of #MeToo actually came long before the tweets did. A Black³ woman named Tarana Burke coined the phrase “me too” more than ten years prior after hearing stories of sexual assault from young women of color who had few resources to navigate the healing process. In 1997, while working at a camp that mostly served youth of color, she met a young girl who told her a story of sexual abuse (Garcia 2017). At the time, Burke herself did not have the courage to tell this young teenager “me too.” Ten years later in 2006, as an effort to overcome this feeling of powerlessness and provide young women, like the camper she met, with the resources she did not have at the time, Burke began a non-profit named Just Be Inc. and called the movement behind it “me too” (Fessler 2018). Her organization aimed to assist survivors of sexual violence, specifically targeting women of color from low-income communities through various multimedia platforms and after-school programs. These programs furthered Burke’s idea of “me too” by emphasizing the power of shared empathy and its importance on the pathway of healing from trauma (Fessler 2018).

Despite her incredible passion and commendable efforts, Burke’s initial work never ignited the same kind of attention and response as Milano’s tweet. When Milano’s use of the hashtag did go viral, Burke instantly began to fear that her life’s work was about to be “co-opted and taken from [her] and used for a purpose that [she] hadn’t originally intended”

³ Many argue for the capitalization of Black as a proper name to denote a people. Therefore, in this paper I will capitalize Black, as I agree with these arguments and the importance of acknowledging this peoplehood. However, there is much more debate as to whether or not “white” should be capitalized. Some argue for capitalization to reject the dominant perception of white as the norm. Others argue that capitalizing it gives it unjust importance. Furthermore, some white supremacists, due to this perspective, have capitalized “white” to note importance, while refusing to capitalize “Black.” In this paper, I will not capitalize white. While I agree that “white” should not be considered a given norm against which all else is judged, I do not think capitalizing it is important in the same way capitalizing Black is, considering the historical and current racism in United States society.

(Garcia 2017). However, to Burke's surprise, Milano reached out to her within days of the initial tweet in order to credit her work and offer to collaborate moving forward (Garcia 2017). Burke stated that Milano was "very grateful and generous...I think it is selfish for me to try and to frame Me Too as something that I own. It is bigger than me and bigger than Alyssa Milano. Neither one of us should be centered in this work. This is about survivors" (Garcia 2017). Ultimately, neither Burke nor Milano initially sought commendation or recognition. Neither felt that the focus of this movement should be about who started it, but rather about giving voice back to survivors.

At the same time, this first incident of the revitalization is telling: the fact that a wealthy, famous, white woman had the power to popularize terminology coined by a Black woman years prior. Women of color across the nation expressed anguish and frustration when the media credited Milano with starting this movement, initially leaving out Burke. For instance, the digital media strategist April Reign who coined the #OscarsSoWhite⁴ hashtag spoke out after Burke's story came to light (Garcia 2017). She felt that this was just another instance of whitewashing feminism, where the stories of women of color are left out and they fail to be supported by white women. She pointed to the story of ESPN sports journalist Jemele Hill, a woman of color, who was suspended by ESPN for two weeks in October 2017 for speaking out against the NFL's treatment of peaceful protesters choosing to kneel during the national anthem at NFL games (Bogage 2018). Like in Burke's case, no white women

⁴ April Reign is a well-known journalist of color who coined this hashtag in 2015 when no actors of color were nominated for Academy Awards. The hashtag resurfaced in 2016 when the same thing happened, despite there being numerous movies with actors of color, and actors of color that *won* awards at other awards shows that are often precursors for winning awards at the Oscars (Idris Elba won at the Screen Actors Guild Awards, for example, and usually the winners of SAG awards are favored as winners for Oscars). Therefore, the fact that he was not even nominated was unusual and argued as racist. Reign has long been an advocate for representation in the media, and therefore advocated on behalf of Tarana Burke when she too was left out in the initial days of the #MeToo movement. In the weeks following #MeToo, the #MeToo hashtag was frequently discussed alongside the hashtag #OscarsSoWhite, as people drew parallels between the missions of both-to highlight a lack of awareness and representation of marginalized voices in Hollywood.

came to the immediate defense of Hill. “Women of color are demanded to be silenced and erased. Like with Tarana,” Reign stated (Garcia 2017). All of this goes to show that the popularization of the “me too” terminology took an entire convergence of forces and privilege- fame, fortune, and race. Without these factors, it is questionable whether the movement would have spread with so much attention.

Despite the spotlight that has successfully drawn attention to the prevalence of sexual violence, we begin to see here the darkness that this defining moment obscures. There have been about 19 million uses of the hashtag since 2017, but there are stories that are still not being told, and still not being heard even when they are told (Pew Research 2018a). The #MeToo movement’s spotlight only illuminates a fraction of the problem of sexual violence and the excitement around the spotlight itself has forced the realities of inequalities among survivors to be buried in darkness. The spotlight hides the fact that it took an unbelievable amount of power and privilege to spread this movement, and to topple powerful Hollywood men. It also hides the fact that we know so little about how this movement is helping women in less notable industries, those who do not have the power to take down their abusers. The spotlight illuminates some American narratives, particularly those who are prominent and famous, under the brightest of lights, while thrusting the stories of more marginalized survivors into the darkness, where their lack of power often continues their bondage of silence.

Of course, even among this darkness, there is little doubt that this movement is important. It has brought light to the prevalence of sexual violence in new ways, ways that are revolutionary in practice. It has forced some notable men, and a few women, to become examples of what it means to face the consequences of one’s actions when survivors speak

out despite their fears. The fact that conversation regarding sexual violence is public is itself a radical notion (Abdulali 2018:28). Through this powerful conversation, #MeToo has taught us that, whether written or spoken, words are more powerful than silence (Abdulali 2018:4). However, going forward, we cannot ignore these dynamics of power and privilege in storytelling, because although there is a conversation happening, “it doesn’t include everyone. Not yet” (Abdulali 2018:39). We cannot ignore that words, although powerful, are a luxury. No doubt, it takes courage for any survivor to speak up. But speaking up is different for a well-established survivor in Hollywood,⁵ compared with a working class survivor who cannot give up their job because they have to support their children. Or for the male survivor who will not be believed because our patriarchal society tells us that men are incapable of being raped. Or the survivor of color who fears mistreatment by police when reporting because of the color of their skin. Or the LGBTQIA+ survivor who thinks that nobody will believe them because of their sexual orientation. We must be aware of “the millions of people who don’t share our language, media access, and privilege...and who won’t wear pussy hats and march to have rights over their own bodies” (Abdulali 2018:39). We cannot ignore this darkness and what it hides. Going forward, if we want this movement to continue to mean something and to make more of a difference in our society, we have to address these issues. We must treat this movement as multifaceted as the problem of sexual violence is. As Abdulali (2018) puts it, “yes, we having defining moments, and they are very important. But they are never one-dimensional, they are always difficult, and they always exist in a context of messiness and confusion” (38).

⁵ I understand that there may be some people in Hollywood who still experience vulnerabilities to speaking out about sexual violence. As stated previously, it takes courage, and often great difficulty, for anyone to speak out. I only mean to point out here that those who are marginalized face extra barriers that make it more difficult to speak out. Acknowledging this is important in creating a movement with the most expansive reach of activism.

In this paper, I seek to examine this darkness, this messiness and confusion, and to uncover how far it stretches: how much it reveals and how much it hides. I understand that this is a complex project, and I understand that I will most likely only reveal a sliver of the darkness. Despite this reality, I hope that whatever darkness I do unearth is illuminating, and can provide a way forward for the #MeToo movement to become more inclusive of marginalized stories, and therefore enact broader, more impactful and systemic change. In order to begin expanding the spotlight of the #MeToo movement, I will focus on the following research question: In what ways are representations of the #MeToo movement inclusive and in what ways are they exclusive? What are the consequences of this inclusivity and exclusivity?

I will begin with a review of relevant literature, such as the social construction of gender, patriarchy, global gender violence, sexual violence, shame and stigma in reporting, and trauma narratives. I will then explain my methodology: a content analysis of *New York Times* (NYT) articles and the “me too” website. Lastly, I will begin my discussion and analysis before concluding. In this paper, I will argue that the #MeToo movement as it is portrayed in the NYT excludes the experiences of many marginalized groups. This is largely due to the fact that the NYT’s portrayal of the movement is dominated by Hollywood elites. In this way, the #MeToo movement presented in the media is at odds with the way Tarana Burke, the original founder, presents the movement through her work on the “me too” website. I will argue that these two discourses must align, adopting more of Burke’s portrayal of the movement rather than what is depicted in the NYT, in order to overcome this exclusivity and construct the most robust and expansive form of activism to address the roots of sexual violence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The #MeToo movement focuses on raising awareness about sexual assault and harassment, as well as holding perpetrators accountable in the process. The issue of sexual assault is part of the larger phenomenon of global gender violence, both of which are embedded in patriarchy and reflect and reinforce the social construction of gender that underlies patriarchal ideologies. Therefore, in order to understand the problem of global gender violence, and more specifically the problem of sexual violence, it is first imperative to understand the social construction of gender and how that perpetuates patriarchy.

Social Construction of Gender

Gender differences were historically explained as a result of natural sex, determined by biology that made men stronger and fit to dominate women. O'Toole (2007) argues that "age-old theories posit that superior strength and a variety of hormonal stimuli predispose men" towards certain behaviors, such as violence and control (3). On the other hand, women were believed to be naturally passive and submissive (O'Toole et al. 2007:3). This system of sex-based differences, once naturalized, became difficult to challenge because to go against these ideologies was to essentially "defy nature." A major feminist project has been to dismantle this notion that sex equates gender, and rather assert that gender is a socially constructed category used to create narrow norms of gender expression for all to abide by. This means that these categories do not exist because of biology, but rather arbitrary socially constructed ideas of how certain bodies are supposed to look and behave. Men are supposed to be strong, courageous, sexually dominant, intelligent, and rational. These characteristics become associated with what is known as "masculinity." Women are supposed to be submissive, weak, shy, chaste, and emotional. These characteristics become associated with

what is known as “femininity.” Because these categories were biologically naturalized, those who were biologically male were supposed to act and look “masculine” while those who were biologically female were supposed to act and look “feminine.”

The theory of socially constructed gender, however, deconstructs this notion. Judith Butler (1990) argues that “when the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one” (6). In this way, Butler (1990) provides her argument of gender as performative. When we say gender is performative, we mean that it has some effect. For Butler (1990), gender constitutes “the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing” (Butler 1990:25). Therefore, gender is something that is *done*, or performed, rather than something that *is*. A person who is “biologically male” is not male inherently, but performs gender through everything from normative actions, language, and ways of dress. Butler expands upon the implications of the idea of gender as performative, stating that,

The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body. In this way, it showed that what we take to be an “internal” feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts, at an extreme, a hallucinatory effect of naturalized gestures (Preface to the 1999 edition).

She also argues that sex itself is a socially constructed category. When we attempt to separate sex and gender, what then is our concept of sex? “Is it natural, anatomical, chromosomal, or hormonal, and how is a feminist critic to assess scientific discourse which purport to establish such ‘facts’ for us?” she asks (Butler 1990:6). Butler argues that sex has been discursively produced by such scientific discourses, often “in the service of other political

and social interests” (7). If something is discursively produced, as in it is produced in language, then it is not some inherent truth of the world. Contemporary sociological theorists acknowledge this as the “linguistic turn” in sociological theory, which posits that language constructs our social world and ways of knowing. There is nothing that can be prediscursive, such as the category of gender, or even sex. Therefore, “this production of sex *as* the prediscursive ought to be understood as the effect of the apparatus of cultural construction designated by *gender*” (Butler 1990:7).

Butler’s (1990) notion of the performative is compatible with Pierre’s Bourdieu’s (1983) account of the habitus and bodily hexis, another analytical framework that can illuminate gendered behavior. Bourdieu (1983) explains the habitus as a “set of dispositions which inclines agents to act and react in certain ways” (12). These dispositions are then embodied in actual ways of being for agents. The way an individual walks, stands, and speaks is profoundly influenced by the way they think and feel, and vice versa. The way we think and feel then contributes to the way we carry our bodies.⁶ This is the notion of the bodily hexis (Bourdieu 1983:13). Both the habitus and the bodily hexis are structured by the social conditions within which they are created. They reflect the social position of the individual, and become a sort of “second nature” to the one who possesses them (Bourdieu 1983:12). A person who prefers the taste of steak and lobster may think their preference is natural, due to some taste buds they have; however, Bourdieu would argue that this is a matter of the habitus, and the way in which this person’s social position (such as their socioeconomic standing) has influenced these specific (expensive) tastes. Similarly, we can say that individuals all have gendered habitus by virtue of being socialized into gender

⁶ It is also important to note that Bourdieu (1983) argues that these dispositions do not dictate or predetermine an individual’s actions, but just “‘orients’ their actions and inclinations” (13).

categories. A person raised as a “woman” will have certain dispositions structured by their gender category, dispositions that then influence how they speak, walk, and sit. For instance, a woman may be more likely to cross her legs on public transportation while a man may be more likely to spread his legs out, because women are socialized to take up less space. In this way, a person “performs” their gendered habitus.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a system that attempts to force individuals to abide by these normative categories of gender. Erving Goffman (1959) provides a way to understand the way patriarchy uses this pressure to regulate gendered bodies that builds upon Butler’s (1990) notion of the performative. Goffman would call this “doing” of gender a “presentation of self” in which one’s identity is something that is presented to others, analogous to a play presented for an audience. This audience then has the power to deem the performance legitimate or illegitimate, and thus the identity of the individual as accepted or stigmatized. For example, perhaps a Transgender man chooses to wear masculine clothing in order to present himself as a man. However, the audience to which he is presenting (let’s say a group of strangers) see other more feminine characteristics on his body such as body shape, and thus misgender him as a woman, maybe using she/her/hers pronouns to refer to him. In this way, the audience determines one’s identity through their determination of the validity of one’s performance. If the performed identity is not accepted, the audience rejects that identity, and can impute another identity (often one that is stigmatized or stereotyped) in its place. In this way, identity does not come from within, but rather comes through social interaction. This aligns with Butler’s notion that we perform our gender through acts, body language, and gendered “stylization” of the body in what we wear. As Goffman (1959)

would put it, individuals use various “sources of information” such as conduct and appearance, in order to garner information about the individual to be able to “define the situation...to know in advance what [the subject] will expect of [the audience]” (1). In this way, identity is not static, nor is it some essential “nature” that a person has. Identity is something that we *do*, constantly.

By understanding the self as a relationship with an audience, we can understand the pressure that individuals feel “to present [themselves] in a light that is favorable” to the audience, so that they are accepted, and thus the pressure individuals feel to conform to these gender categories (Goffman 1959:6). This is a function of patriarchy, which asserts that in order to be socially acceptable, individuals must present whatever gender is supposedly “naturally” derived from their biological sex. Goffman (1959) acknowledges that, as social beings, we crave acceptance into social spaces. To face ostracization and stigma, or a spoiled identity in which the presentation of self is rejected from society, is to face some level of social death (Goffman 1963). Although ideally gender should become what Butler (1990) calls “a free floating artifice” which can be performed in any way by any body, by virtue of it being socially constructed, we cannot ignore the sociohistorical factors behind its construction that fail to allow this fluidity without potential social consequence. Goffman’s (1959) analytical framework allows us to acknowledge this, noting that not everyone is aware that certain identities are socially constructed or have the potential to be fluid, therefore upholding social norms of who ought to be feminine and who ought to be masculine in order to avoid ridicule or disrupt the status quo. Bourdieu (1983) acknowledges that these social pressures help shape the habitus, giving individuals a certain level of what he calls “tact,” or “social competence” to navigate situations in a way that allows them to be perceived in an

acceptable light (55). Because of these norms, individuals feel pressured to behave in certain ways according to these categories which, although socially constructed, have a history of biological classification and naturalization.

Butler (2009) reinforces this notion of gender acting as a tool of oppression by patriarchy, stating that all identity categories “tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes” (365). Patriarchy, this particular regulatory regime, is often defined as “the system of male control over women” (O’Toole et al. 2007:3). Therefore, although forcing individuals to comply with a system of gender differences or else face ridicule is an important part of patriarchy, the system also focuses on hierarchizing gender categories, giving men more power than women. The characteristics posited as “inherently masculine” such as strength and control are not only constructed as categories that all men should have, but also as characteristics that are *better* than characteristics that are considered inherently feminine. Because women are not supposed to have masculine characteristics, they can never achieve these better qualities. If women appear “too strong” they are criticized, and only valued if they adhere to feminine values, although these values are not as valued as masculine ones. By rooting male dominance in gender categories that were originally based in biology, societies were able to naturalize patriarchy as a system of pre-determined sex-based differences between men and women, rather than a system socially constructed by humans in order to dominate women (Kimmel 2004:21). Kimmel (2004) argues that these rationalizations “tell us that these existing inequalities are not our fault,” that we cannot attribute blame to anybody because they are natural; we therefore “cannot be held responsible for the way that we act” (22). With little room for challenge,⁷ the construction of

⁷ Although we understand these constructions as fairly strict and regulatory, there has always been some room for accommodation and resistance as opposed to total conformity or rejection. Someone may be ridiculed for

gender categories as a supposed consequent of biological sex has long been a tool “used by patriarchy to keep women passive, disempowered, and subservient to men” (McHugh 2017:112).

These categories have become embedded into social structures, individuals’ values, perceptions, and expectations, and into social interactions. By embedding itself within all aspects of the social, patriarchy has infiltrated most areas of society, from the economic sphere to the political and social sphere. For instance, patriarchy has many different “sites” we can speak of that contribute to gender inequality and the oppression of women (Pease 2016:49). Pease (2016) discusses gender oppression in the *domestic sphere*, where the division of labor creates an environment where women produce the majority of household labor and men in the household benefit and take advantage of the labor. Outside of the home, there is *paid labor* where women are often shut out of higher paid positions that are reserved for men, face wage discrimination, or are segregated within the labor force. Next, he identifies *the state* as a site of patriarchy, in which the state prioritizes male interests, and subsequently male violence which is sanctioned by the state. The last two Pease (2016) addresses are *sexuality*, where heterosexuality is the only acceptable norm and where “sexual double standards reign,” (men are supposed to be sexually promiscuous, while women cannot as they are expected to be pure and “virgin”) and *cultural institutions* such as the media, education, and religious institutions that have historically devalued women (49-50).

Perhaps then, to expand on O’Toole’s (2007) definition, the “system” that oppresses women is not singular, but rather a set of complex institutions that operate in tandem to

straying slightly from the dominant notions of their gender category, but not face a completely spoiled identity. Or, they may have the space to achieve a certain level of fluidity without any criticism. However, it is still important to understand how strong these constructions are and how they can powerfully impact the way people present themselves.

uphold the subjugation of women. Patriarchy is thus “the systemisation of the oppression of women by social structures such as marriage, heterosexuality, laws, policies and even language” (McHugh 2007:94). This definition is closer to more modern conceptions of patriarchy, which attempt to address the intersectional nature of institutionalized patriarchy. When we say patriarchy is an intersectional phenomenon, we mean that is about more than a singular relationship of power between men and women, and rather a *set* of institutions that reinforce male control of women. Patriarchy is not only about institutions of gender, but also institutions of race, gender identity, sexuality, and class. As Cynthia Enloe (2017) states, “[patriarchy] is distinct but it feeds off both racism and classism” (49). In order to truly understand the impact that patriarchy has on a variety of groups in addition to women, as well as various social institutions and social relationships, it is crucial to understand these intersections.

Therefore, rather than just speak of “patriarchy,” some feminist scholars today speak of a cis-white-heteronormative patriarchy. By this, I mean that it is not just “men” in general who are most privileged in society, but a specific type of man, because men must navigate their own hierarchized scale that is raced, classed, and structured along other lines of inequality. For instance, white men arguably hold more privilege than black men based on their race; cisgender men hold more privilege than Transgender men by virtue of their gender identity; heterosexual men hold more privilege than LGBTQIA+ men due to their sexuality; wealthy men hold more privilege than men living in poverty because of their socioeconomic status. Each of these categories intersects with other identities: race intersects with other factors such as class, gender identity, and sexuality to complicate these levels of privilege.⁸

⁸ It is impossible to actually quantify amounts of privilege on some sort of scale. These intersections change notions of oppression and privilege in a complicated way. I do not mean to suggest here that there is some way

In this way, this system of male domination is much more than just control over women because it also places men in their own hierarchy. As Cynthia Enloe (2017) puts it, “patriarchy is a particular complex web of both attitudes and relationships that position women and men, girls and boys in distinct and unequal categories, that value particular forms of masculinity over virtually all forms of femininity” (49). The scale of masculinity is still related to the construction of femininity,⁹ because masculinity is “a rejection of everything that is feminine” (Newsom 2015). Therefore, the men subjugated on this scale are subject to more than hierarchies based off of race and class, but often the hierarchy that oppresses anything that is seen as “feminine.”

This definition of patriarchy as a system that values “particular forms of masculinity over virtually all forms of femininity” is important, because it provides an analytical framework for understanding patriarchy as more than a relationship of power between men and women alone. This lens of hierarchized masculinities and femininities that hold power dynamics amongst themselves, in addition to in relation to each other, allows us to see the ways in which patriarchy affects specific groups of individuals (including men themselves) in particular ways. This is the definition of patriarchy I use in this paper- a definition that emphasizes various constructions of masculinity and femininity rather than simply focusing

to calculate levels of oppression and privilege, or compare them in a concrete way (which is impossible due to their different and unique manifestations). I only mean to highlight the ways in which different groups are often privileged over others, because it would be impossible to examine all the ways in which these hierarchies are crosscut by other intersecting identities, as no person holds only one singular identity.

⁹ It is important to note that, under patriarchy, femininity is constructed similarly to masculinity: certain groups of women (cis-white-heterosexual-middle to upper-class) are privileged over other women who fail to meet any of these standards. Furthermore, women who abide by traditional constructions of femininity-passive, submissive, physically and conventionally beautiful- will be somewhat valued by a patriarchal society as they fit its definition of what a woman should be. However, at the same time, they are arguably not valued, because they will continue to be oppressed for failing to be a man, and will still fail to achieve the same status or power as men hold in a patriarchal society. In this way, we can also understand how women uphold patriarchy. Women police other women, often with regards to these behaviors, excluding those who do not fit these definitions. As Bourdieu (1983) would argue, being complicit in one’s own domination is not a completely active choice, but it is still important to note going forward if we want to deconstruct patriarchal frameworks.

on a vague, singular power relationship between “men and women.” I hope that this allows us to emphasize the unique, intersectional experiences of a variety of people who live within a patriarchal society.

These patriarchal ideologies are often internalized by individuals, affecting how they behave, act, and view others. The power dynamics begin to emerge with young children, when girls are made fun of for being “tomboys” as kids. Later in life, if they lose their “tomboy” clothes and become more physically feminine, they might be made fun of for being “too girly” and only appreciated if they are able to also “hang with the guys” and fulfill some norms of masculinity. There are endless examples here of the intricacies these gender performances can take and how these relationships enact specific power dynamics and gender constructions.¹⁰ Similarly, these performances also begin with young boys on the playground, when weaker children are called “sissies” and are continuously bullied as the “stronger” boys try to prove their masculinity through verbal and physical violence (Newsom 2015). This type of masculinity is often called *toxic* or *hegemonic masculinity*,¹¹ and is posited against “healthy” masculinity (Kimmel 2018:238-9).¹² These ways of behaving are

¹⁰ In a patriarchal society, women are often overly sexualized, and thus part of their social value is based off of their sexual value. Women may still be solely valued for being physically feminine, or partially downgraded for being “too girly” or weak.” At the same time, women who are not physically feminine but able to “hang with the guys” would not be as valued by men, because they fail to hold some sort of sexual value. I will discuss this concept sexualization later in this literature review more extensively and how it relates to sexual violence. I will not belabor the point here, or other examples of complicated relationships of gender performances, due to space and scope.

¹¹ There is also a term for dominant concepts of femininity, called *emphasized femininity* (Connell 1987, cited in O’Toole et al. 2007:8). However, this “ideal standard” for women “is not as controlling as the one prescribed for men” (Connell 1987, cited in O’Toole et al. 2007:6). Connell (1987) argues that in popular culture, women are privy to more flexibility in their gender expression than men. Women who act in more masculine ways often receive some social acceptance for their behavior. However, I argue that Connell (1987) fails to mention the ways in which women do act in masculine ways, but are belittled. We see this often in the political sphere or business world, where women act in masculine ways and are seen as “bossy,” “bitchy,” and “controlling” rather than “powerful,” or “aggressive” rather than “assertive” and “strong.” This is why I argue that although masculinity is always privileged over femininity, women cannot gain privilege simply by trying to act masculine. Sometimes, their “presentation of self” as Goffman (1959) would put it, still ultimately fails.

¹² Kimmel actually departs from the distinction between “toxic” and “healthy” masculinity in this piece. He has found in his work that, when discussing toxic masculinity with men, they do not respond to these terms. They

then reproduced in both men and women through socialization “in families and schools, through mass media images,” and through other gender dominated institutions (for men, the military and sports teams, for women nursing and motherhood roles such as nannying) (O’Toole et al. 2007:8). In this way, we can see that from an incredibly young age, children are indoctrinated with beliefs about how they *ought* to behave due to their supposed inherent gender, regulating them to these hegemonic, stringent, narrow, and often toxic definitions of gender. Both men and women are pressured into presenting a certain masculine or feminine self in order to be deemed “acceptable” under patriarchal standards, even though this severely limits an individual's gender expression and attempts to force all to abide by unidimensional definitions of normative gendered behavior. This social structure is toxic for all.

In this way, men who do abide by the hegemonic definition of masculinity are also to some extent, oppressed. As we know, those who fail to adhere to these strict constructions of hegemonic masculinity risk discrimination, oppression, and even violence. Therefore, men are oppressed to the extent that they face pressure to conform to this definition *or else* face violence. This forced submission and constant stress required in order to uphold these standards can be seen as a form of “violence against oneself” (Kaufman 1987:2). In *The Mask You Live In*, sociologist Michael Kimmel argues that the idea of being “a sissy,” is

feel that these dichotomous terms suggest that they’re “doing it wrong” and that they have to “renounce” an old form of masculinity and embrace a totally new one (denounce toxic for healthy). Rather, Kimmel has found it useful to ask men what it means to be “good man,” as opposed to what it means to be a “real man.” When he asked men about this distinction, they spoke about two very different masculinities, one that is considered “toxic” but some scholars (“real man”), and another that was what would be considered “healthy” by scholars (“good man”), although they were using different terminology. I think this distinction is important, especially considering the question of how to invite men into these conversations about masculinity and patriarchy in a way that allows them to engage with the topic without feeling attacked. However, in this paper I do not focus on inviting men into the conversation. Therefore, I will continue to refer to “toxic” masculinity as “hegemonic” or “dominant,” to indicate its prevalence and power, and occasionally use the term “toxic” to indicate its pejorative qualities.

something that “follows” men around for their whole lives, an idea that makes them feel that they have “to prove to other guys that [they’re] not girls...that [they’re] not gay” (Newsom 2015). He continues, stating that these hegemonic constructions of masculinity are not only damaging because they consist of narrow definitions that force boys to conform, but also because they require men to consistently “prove” themselves to other men, failing to “give young boys a way to feel secure in their masculinity” (Newsom 2015). In this way, masculinity is often frequently constructed in relation of men to other men, not only through the relationship of men to women, albeit still along the hierarchized scale of masculinity and femininity (Pease 2016:50).

When we are able to see that men are also controlled by patriarchy and are forced to perform and present themselves or be stigmatized, we understand that we must criticize patriarchy as an ideology and an institution, rather than only holding men responsible only at the individual level (McHugh 2007:62). Although we can acknowledge that men are complicit in upholding patriarchy and still hold them responsible for their actions, acknowledging the structural forces that also impact men are useful going forward as we attempt to enact systemic change (Pease 2016). Marilyn Frye’s (1983) birdcage metaphor is useful to further illustrate this point.

Cages. Consider a birdcage. If you look very closely at just one wire in the cage, you cannot see the other wires. If your conception of what is before you is determined by this myopic focus, you could look at that one wire, up and down the length of it, and be unable to see why a bird would not just fly around the wire any time it wanted to go somewhere. Furthermore, even if, one day at a time, you myopically inspected each wire, you still could not see why a bird would have trouble going past the wires to get anywhere. There is no physical property of any one wire, nothing that the closest scrutiny could discover, that will reveal how a bird could be inhibited or harmed by it except in the most accidental way. It is only when you step back, stop looking at the wires one by one, microscopically, and take a macroscopic view of the whole cage, that you can see why the bird does not go anywhere; and then you will see it in a moment. It will require no great subtlety of mental powers. It is perfectly

obvious that the bird is surrounded by a network of systematically related barriers, no one of which would be the least hindrance to its flight, but which, by their relations to each other, are as confining as the solid walls of a dungeon (12).

These frameworks allow us to acknowledge that patriarchy is something enacted at both the individual and the societal level. Therefore, in order to enact change, Pease (2016) argues that we must be able to criticize patriarchy at each of these levels (50). We must criticize each and every wire, along with its relationship to the other wires. If we only address one, the other will likely remain and continue to reproduce itself. No bird will ever fly free.

Global Gender Violence

Global gender violence is one of the most glaring symptoms of patriarchy. Rose (2013) defines global gender violence as all acts that “are part of a global pattern of violence against women, a pattern supported by education, economic, and employment discrimination” (2). Global gender violence refers to any number of acts of violence committed against women, from child marriage to breast ironing, mutilation to incest, and sexual violence to domestic abuse. Women across the globe face daily encounters with these types of violence, encounters that have severe physical, social, psychological, and emotional consequences. These consequences are often debilitating, if not deadly. “Among women aged between 15 and 44, acts of violence cause more death and disability than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents, and war combined” (Rose 2013:5). We call this violence gender based “because it derives in part from women’s subordinate status in society,” meaning that women are targeted *because* they are women (Rose 2013:5). We also call it gender based because women are oppressed in relation to their perpetrators, who are often men.

In this way, gender violence is based upon the foundation of patriarchy which upholds beliefs about women that “are deeply rooted in gender-based power relations,

sexuality, gender roles, and identity,” beliefs that are then “embedded in cultural values and institutional practices as well as individual beliefs and behavior” (Rose 2013:4). Because masculinity is a “rejection of everything that is feminine,” and part of being feminine is being “emotional,” men often lack outlets to express their emotions in a healthy way (Newsom 2015). Thus, they often turn to violence in order to express emotions, something that has become endemic in our patriarchal world. Furthermore, as patriarchy privileges masculinity, violence has been a useful tool for men to maintain their privilege and status over women, thus reproducing patriarchy, as acts of violence are ways for men to reproduce “a particular form of masculine self” (Pease 2016:50). This began in early societies, where “invading clans would kill adult males on the spot and enslave women and their children,” using various forms of physical and sexual violence to control these enslaved women (O’Toole et al. 2007:6).

While this is an early historical fact, it has happened as recently as white settler colonization of Indigenous lands in the United States. Some cite the high rates of violence against Indigenous women and women in the third world that we see today as a result of their “culture.” However, this ignores the painful colonial history that has greatly impacted these communities, cultures, and nations. Smith (2005) notes that an increase in violence against women occurred with colonization. During colonization of Native lands, white colonizers used rape as a tactic of warfare and genocide against Indigenous people to justify their colonization of land by constructing Native bodies (and thus Native land) as inherently violable (Smith 2005: 12). Indigenous bodies were portrayed as “dirty” and thus “rapable” because “the rape of bodies that are considered inherently impure or dirty simply do not count” (Smith 2005:12). This construction allowed colonizers to violate the bodies and

integrity of Native women with impunity, as they excused their own actions, committing genocide in the process by disrupting Native women's ability to both physically and culturally reproduce.

Rose (2013) expands upon this, using the example of Maori iwi and Native American peoples, noting that prior to colonization in these communities, "women's economic contributions and work were valued commensurate with men's" and "violence against women was not common" (93). When colonizers saw that these Native societies valued women highly, they realized that this conflicted with western ideologies of patriarchy and individualism (Rose 2013:93). Therefore, in order to control both white women and Indigenous communities, white colonizers imposed their patriarchal ideologies onto Native people through violence. These legacies live on today, as "both Native Americans and Maori have the highest rates of sexual and domestic violence in their respective countries" (Rose 2013:93). Cultural explanations for these high rates are damaging, because they refuse to acknowledge these socio-historical factors that have caused these issues. In order to combat global gender violence, we need profound systemic change, change that can only be implemented when we have this type of nuanced understanding of the roots of gender violence. Furthermore, these explanations are often used by Western nations to base critiques of gender violence "on what is happening in less developed, 'traditional' societies" in developing countries "rather than examining similar social pathologies close to home" (Rose 2013:96). By conflating patriarchal practices with culture, thought processes similar to the ideologies that underlie the biological construction of gender are furthered: that which is traditional to another culture should not be criticized or changed (a relativist model), and

whatever is happening in these “less developed”¹³ countries is cultural, and therefore not a problem in the Western world.

Regardless of geography and culture, global gender violence has a profound effect on women’s lives. Various forms of gender based violence, such as sexual violence, can profoundly impact “victims’ physical, psychological, social, and spiritual health,” causing “serious physical injuries, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, depression, suicidal behavior, ostracism, isolation, and posttraumatic stress disorder” (Rose 2013:8). These effects are not only felt by individual women, but also whole communities and societies. By affecting women’s health, violence affects their participation in society which causes all of society to suffer.

Because of this, there have been a variety of campaigns to help combat global gender violence. The United Nations identified the equality and empowerment of women as one of its Millennium Development Goals, intended to be accomplished by 2015 (MDG Gap Task Force Report 2015). Although the remaining seven goals do not explicitly mention women, they still “directly relate to violence against women across the lifespan...In order for the Millennium Development Goals to be achieved, violence against women must be addressed” (Rose 2013:106). Eradicating extreme hunger and poverty, ensuring universal primary education, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability, and reducing child mortality all relate to improving the overall status of women, who are too often disproportionate victims of all of these phenomena (MDG Gap Task Force Report 2015). The UN also holds yearly sessions of the Commission

¹³ I do not personally like the term “developing countries” because that term fails to encompass the reasons so many of these countries are considered “developing.” Many of these countries have been ruthlessly colonized, pillaged, and systematically destabilized, and their “developing” quality comes from their struggle to overcome the repercussions of these (often continuing) acts of violence and extraction (often at the hands of Western nations). I wish to acknowledge that here.

on the Status of Women (CSW). CSW is one of the main branches of the UN which promotes gender equality and women's empowerment. This is the UN's largest gathering on gender equality (UN Women).

In addition, the CSW has held four world conferences on women's issues. The first was held in 1975 in Mexico City. As a result, a World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year was drawn up, "offering a comprehensive set of guidelines for the advancement of women through 1985" (World Conferences on Women). The second occurred in Copenhagen in 1980, and consisted of a review of the progress made since the first conference, as well as introducing stronger measures to ensure women's rights (World Conference on Women). In 1985, the third conference occurred in Nairobi, and the most recent was held in Beijing in 1995.

In addition to these world conferences, the UN also adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 (UN Women). CEDAW outlines steps for states to take in order to combat and end discrimination against women, such as incorporating notions of equality into legal systems, ensuring women have the right to vote, access to education, and equal employment opportunity. It is "the only human rights treaty which affirms the reproductive rights of women," a very important issue in the context of gender violence (UN Women). States that ratify the treaty "are legally bound to put its provisions into practice" and are also required to "submit national reports, at least every four years" to prove that they have fulfilled this obligation (UN Women). The United States never ratified the convention.

Unfortunately, as gender roles are not only institutionalized but also internalized, so too are practices of violence. O'Toole (2007) argues that both "overt and covert forms of

violence” work over time to “characterize ‘normal’ gender relations, institutionally and interpersonally” (6). Once these forms of violence become “normal” they are sometimes even reinforced by women themselves. These practices “institutionalize patriarchy,” making it difficult to escape. Escaping internalized (or even non-internalized) institutionalized oppression requires more than just policy changes. Deeply held beliefs are difficult to challenge. Therefore, any attempts to eliminate gender violence must move beyond policy in order to “confront underlying cultural beliefs and social structures that reinforce and perpetuate it” (Rose 2013:4).

Sexual Violence

Considering the purpose of #MeToo, this paper will focus on the gender violence phenomenon known as sexual violence. Sexual violence is an umbrella term that can refer to any form of sexual violation against a person, from child sexual abuse, rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment. This paper will focus on the sexual assault, harassment, and rape, predominately of adults.¹⁴ Feminism has long argued that sexual violence is about power, or the dominance and control of another person specifically through the violation of their bodily autonomy. Sexual violence denies that a person’s body “is [their] own property and that no one should have access to it without [their] consent” (Sheffield 1994:110). Looking back to the examples about gender violence against Native American women, it is evident that sexual violence is about power, the power to dominate entire civilizations through rape. By raping

¹⁴ Although child sexual abuse is a form of sexual violence, the #MeToo movement does not claim to be a movement for all forms of sexual violence or gender violence. Furthermore, it predominantly aims at encouraging adults to speak out about their experiences. Many children do not have access to social media, and may not even know what the #MeToo movement is. Of course, we can hope that this movement, in affecting adults, would encourage them to educate their children about issues like these in the hopes that their children would tell them if they were abused in any way. Nevertheless, I argue that children are not a main audience of the movement, and will therefore not focus on them in this paper.

Native women, colonizers were also effectively raping Native lands, asserting their right to control Native bodies (Smith 2005).

Because sexual violence disproportionately affects women, it is also often defined as a manifestation of male power over women, or “the right of men to control the female body” which “is a cornerstone of patriarchy” (Sheffield 1994:110). While this definition is important, we must again remember that patriarchy affects more than just women and that power structures in sexual relationships can exist outside of heteronormative concepts of sexual encounters. Kauffman (1987) acknowledges that there are entire “social, economic, and political structures of violence” and that violence is “an institutional form encoded into physical structures and socioeconomic relations” (33). Therefore, sexual violence is not only about explicitly gendered power in a patriarchal world, but also economic power, political power, and other forms of social power. This shows how important an understanding of power is to complicate notions of sexual assault, because it provides an explanation for why a woman can still sexually assault a man or how sexual assault can manifest in non-heterosexual relationships. It depends on the specific power structures at play in individual relationships.

While the connection between sexual violence and power has been an important one to develop, we must acknowledge that sexual violence is also, at times, about sex. Abdulali (2018) discusses this in the context of sex education and affirmative consent policies, quoting the consent education Jaclyn Friedman who stated,

The basic principle at the heart of affirmative consent is simple: we’re each responsible for making sure our sex partners are actually into whatever is happening between us...if you’ve been raised to think of sex as a battle of the sexes, or a business deal in which men ‘get some’ and women either ‘give it up’ or ‘save it’ for marriage, it can still be a jarring idea, like suggesting to someone that there’s something they could breathe other than air...In the absence of comprehensive,

pleasure-based sex ed., we rely on media and other cultural institutions to model what sex should be like. Whether you turn to abstinence propagandists, mainstream pop culture, or free internet porn to fill in those gaps, you're likely to wind up with an incredibly narrow and bankrupt idea of how sex works, one that positions men as sexual actors, women as the (un)lucky recipients of men's desire, and communication of consent as lethal to both boners and romance...Teaching affirmative consent does something profound: it shifts the acceptable moral standard for sex, making it much clearer to everyone when someone is violating that standard...Affirmative consent, when taught well, also removed heteronormative assumptions from sex ed. If we're each equally responsible to make sure our partner is enthusiastic about what's happening, gender stereotypes-such as that women are passive and men are aggressive-about sexuality begin to break down...Consent education does something else transformative: it tells girls that sex is supposed to be for them (45-6).

Here, Friedman shows how sexual violence can be about sex because of how sex is constructed in dominant discourse. Of course, notions of power are present here, discussing how men feel entitled to sex and pleasure while women do not. However, we cannot talk about these power structures in the abstract without talking about how these structures manifest in real sexual encounters. Rarely is an "acceptable moral standard" established for sexual encounters. Sex education in schools seldom discusses pleasure at all, and sex becomes, as stated above, some sort of transactional business deal between men and women. Some who have no exposure to sex education turn to alternative platforms, such as pornography, which are often sensationalized or inaccurate, sometimes showing "incredible levels of normalized brutality and sexism that's associated with the sexual act" (Newsom 2015). Statistics show that "exposure to pornography increases sexual aggression by 22%, and increase the acceptance of rape myths (that women desire sexual violence) by 31%" (Newsom 2015).

Without more complicated notions of what sex is, what it could and should be, assault persists. In the future, affirmative consent policies need to include this type of education. Abdulali (2018) argues that it is not enough to only implement these policies, because

although progressive and important, the policies alone often fail to acknowledge that many teenagers rarely sit down together and have a frank conversation about what they are willing to do or not do in a sexual encounter (Abdulali 2018:45). This itself is another part of the problem. Asking for affirmative consent is often seen as a “buzzkill” or something that dampens the “mood.”

Statistically, Sexual violence is “notoriously difficult to measure,” due to a lack of streamlined data collection and vast underreporting (RAINN, Kelley and Stermac 2008: 31). Therefore, the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN) uses the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) which is annually administered by the Justice Department to compile a comprehensive list of statistics related to sexual violence. Through its use of interviews, the NCVS is able to offer some estimation even for crimes that are underreported. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that due to stigma, crimes of sexual violence are some of the most underreported.

RAINN states that every 92 seconds, someone is sexually assaulted in the United States. However, “only 5 out of every 1,000 perpetrators will end up in prison” (RAINN). Overall, RAINN finds that women are most at risk of being victims of sexual assault or rape. RAINN estimates that about 1 in 6 women in the United States have been the victim of either an attempted or completed rape. Specifically, young women are most vulnerable to sexual violence, making up 82% of juvenile victims and 90% of adult victims (RAINN). Young women in college (ages 18-24) are three times more likely than other women to experience sexual violence, and women of that age who are not in college are four times as likely (RAINN).

However, as patriarchy is more than a system that oppresses women, sexual violence also impacts other groups than women. Similar to women, men who are in college (ages 18-24) are five times as more likely to be victims of sexual violence than other men. Overall, it is estimated that 1 in 10 rape victims are male, and that 1 in 33 men have been victims of either a completed or attempted rape in their lifetime (RAINN). It is important to note that, due to the stigma many survivors face, these numbers are likely inaccurate to some extent. A vast number of sexual assaults go unreported for any survivor, regardless of their identity. There is still arguably more stigma for certain groups, as will be discussed in more depth in the following section.

Moreover, other groups, such as Transgender individuals, Indigenous women, incarcerated individuals, and people in the military all face even higher risks of sexual assault than the average American citizen. The DOJ estimates that “21% of TGQN (Transgender, genderqueer, nonconforming) college students have been sexually assaulted, compared to 18% of non-TGQN females, and 4% of non-TGQN males” (RAINN). Indigenous women in the United States are “twice as likely to experience a rape/sexual assault” compared to any other race (RAINN). Again, this is due to the complicated history of colonialism that used sexual violence as a tool of genocide against Native peoples. In prisons, an estimated 80,600 inmates each year experience sexual violence” while incarcerated, 60% of which is estimated to be “perpetrated by jail or prison staff” (RAINN).

Of course, the problem of sexual violence is more than a set of statistics. As a form of gender violence, it comes with profound consequences for the health and well-being of those who survive. Survivors can experience flashbacks, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, pregnancy, sleep disorders, eating disorders, sexually

transmitted infections (STIs), and suicidal thoughts (RAINN). These conditions can affect a person's ability to work, maintain their livelihood, and live a full life. However, these repercussions are not only felt by individuals, but also the societies in which they live. Because certain groups are disproportionately affected by sexual violence, such as women, society then misses out on their full participation in social life. C. Wright Mills (1959) defines this realization, this ability to see connections between “‘the personal troubles of milieu’ and ‘the public issues of social structure’” the sociological imagination (1). *Troubles* are that which occur for the individual in their limited social sphere. They are “private matters.” On the other hand, *issues* are “public matters,” or that which “transcends these local environments of the individual...the ways which various milieux overlap and interpenetrate to form the larger structure of social and historical life” (Mills 1959:9). Being able to imagine the connection between these two is to understand that “what we experience in various and specific milieux...is often caused by structural changes,” and that in order to change them, we must look to these structures (Mills 1959:10). If these are not individual problems, but rather social ones, we all have a responsibility to address them. Above all, however, the argument that society as a whole loses out due to the reduced participation of those affected by sexual violence should not be the only reason that people care. Those affected are *people*, and people should never have to go through these things. That notion alone should be enough to make this issue seem important and worth addressing.

Shame, Stigma, and Fear in Reporting

One of the most painful consequences of sexual violence is the profound shame many survivors feel. Shame is one of the largest barriers to reporting, because discussing uncomfortable and painful experiences can be terrifying for survivors. The shame many

survivors feel has to do with “internalized patriarchy” (Abdulali 2018:55). Socially constructed gender categories tell women that sex is shameful and dirty. Although these ideas have been deconstructed in many ways, they still persist and sex often remains a taboo topic in American society. It can be embarrassing for some to discuss, even when not attached to the trauma and pain of assault. For some, sex has become acceptable in the private sphere while not yet in the public. Publicly discussing these private matters can still feel shameful.

Shame also comes with the fact that survivors often “think it’s our fault for being available or vulnerable or clueless. All over the world, we blame ourselves...It’s easier to feel ashamed than to accept that someone violated us in the most viciously intimate way and we couldn’t do anything about it” (Abdulali 2018:17). If it were their own fault, why would anyone take legal action to give survivors justice? Abdulali (2018) makes the argument that part of this self-blame is likely a coping mechanism. She states, “sometimes it’s a convoluted way of making the whole thing less scary. The fact that this is delusional reasoning hardly matters...it’s easier to think that it wouldn’t have happened if you hadn’t worn that shirt than that people might just hurt you because they feel like it and there isn’t a damn thing you can do about it” (Abdulali 2018:55). Another common feeling, in addition to shame, that comes along with assault is a loss of control. In this way, blaming the self is a way for some survivors to reclaim some control over their situation. While she validates this coping mechanism, Abdulali (2018) also points out its illogical nature, arguing, “if you had your wallet stolen on a dark, deserted street, you might kick yourself for being out late, or having too much cash in it, or not looking over your shoulder, but you probably wouldn’t feel you deserved to be robbed and beaten...with sexual assault, that formula doesn’t work” (53).

Nevertheless, self-blame and shame are complicated emotions that survivors feel for many different reasons, all of which can be barriers to reporting.

Of course, as Abdulali (2018) points out, “this doesn’t justify *other people* blaming the victim” (55). Unfortunately, many do not share this awareness and victim blaming remains a profound barrier to reporting assault. When many report their assaults, they are asked degrading questions such as “well what were you wearing? Were you drunk? Did you initiate the encounter? Did you provoke the assailant?”¹⁵ These and other questions suggest to the survivor that the assault was their own fault. The absurdity that someone would provoke their own assault, or somehow “ask for it” is pointedly pointed out by Abdulali (2018):

Here we are in the twenty-first century, surrounded by miracles of our own making. We’ve figured out how to see each other on tiny little screens we carry around in our pockets. We’ve figured out how to make a seventeen-year-old heart break in a sixty-year old chest. How to track Monarch butterflies from Manitoba to Michoacan. How to map galaxies we can’t even see. As a species, we can be pretty awesome. So why is it so hard to...understand that nobody asks to be raped? (57-8)

Dismissive questions that suggest people’s complaints of sexual assault are invalid or made up contribute to what we call “rape culture.” Abdulali (2018) simply (but effectively) defines rape culture as “the totality of all the big and little things we do, say and believe that ultimately lead to the conclusion that it’s okay to rape” (133). Little things, because even the littlest things we say such as “boys will be boys,” that “chip away at women’s and girl’s self-respect, and gives boys permission to feel a little more entitled, a little more important, a

¹⁵ These questions center on the idea of consent. By suggesting the survivor provoked the assailant, or encouraged them based on what they were wearing, by asking them why they did not “try to escape or why they did not speak up before, during or after,” all blames them, and tells them that “they did consent” (Abdulali 2018:48). This points to the lack of awareness about more complicated, nuanced notions of consent. It also places all of the blame on the survivor and their actions, while failing to acknowledge that there is someone else in the picture who also has a choice: a [perpetrator], who can choose between decency and dominance” (Abdulali 2018:49).

little more as though they have a free pass to maraud through the world and take without thinking,” all contribute to rape culture just as much as bigger things, like actually committing rape or blaming survivors for their own assault (Abdulali 2018:133).

Often times, this stigma is even stronger for more marginalized groups, those who are even less likely to be believed. For example, victimhood itself is constructed in a profoundly gendered way. Predation is constructed as masculine, while victimhood is constructed as feminine (St. Felix 2018). In this framework, only men can be perpetrators and only women can be victims. This contributes to the idea that men cannot possibly be raped, an idea that also emerges out of imperatives of hegemonic masculinity that suggests that men always want sex. Because of this conception, men who are raped often face a high level of stigma when they report. Therefore, even though women make up the largest number of sexual assault victims and are frequently stigmatized as survivors, other groups are sometimes even more stigmatized due to this gendering of victimhood.

Victimhood and perpetrator identity, by being gendered in this specific way, is also constructed as heteronormative, excluding genderqueer and nonbinary experiences. Wakelin and Long (2003) attempt to explore this phenomenon by studying the ways in which not only the gender, but also the sexuality of a survivor, affects the amount of blame attributed to them (477). Their study, which corroborates previous scholarship on this topic, found that gay survivors “receive significantly more blame than do heterosexual victims,” and that in fact, gay male survivors who are attacked by another man will sometimes present themselves as heterosexual upon reporting, hoping they will be more likely to be believed (Wakelin and Long 2003:478). Not only does the sexuality and gender of the survivor matter, but also the gender of the perpetrator (especially in relation to that of the survivor). For instance, they

suggest that if a heterosexual man is attacked by a woman rather than a man, more blame may be attributed to him due to patriarchal constructions that heterosexual men always want (hetero) sex (Wakelin and Long 2003:479). On the other hand, if the perpetrator had been a man, the survivor may have received less blame. Each of these specific constructions regarding who can be assaulted and who can assault is, in this way, constructed in a gendered, heteronormative, patriarchal framework.

Similarly, Transgender survivors face additional stigma when reporting. Often times, their own identities are not taken as valid, never mind their reports of sexual assault. Abdulali (2018) reminds us that not only are Trans people's "chances of being sexually assaulted" about "fifty-fifty-but [their] chances of finding understanding and support, or justice, are far lower" (4). This means that not only are Transgender people more at risk than the average person to experience sexual violence, but also that the resources available to them to cope or seek justice are even fewer than those available to the "average" survivor. As Transgender people, they have different needs than other survivors of sexual violence, and thus need specific resources that address those needs. Similarly, there are often "insufficient" resources for "men and boys" who experience sexual assault (Abdulali 2018:68). These resources may be lacking for women, but they will often always be better than those available to men (Abdulali 2018:68). In this way, it is crucial to consider the experiences of more marginalized groups when combatting sexual violence. Different people are affected in profoundly unique ways, and in any attempt to ensure that each person has access to resources, these intricacies and nuances must be centered.

Credibility and Trauma Narratives

Not only do survivors of sexual violence face shame and stigma when reporting, they also often face fears of not being seen as credible. This is another major barrier to reporting. One of the main reasons for this lack of credibility is due to the fact that many stories of sexual assault can be seen as trauma narratives because sexual violence is a form of trauma. When people tell stories of trauma, they are not always told as other types of stories. “People who have survived atrocities often tell their stories in a highly emotional, contradictory, and fragmented manner” which then serves to undermine “their credibility” in a world that does not see truth in this type of storytelling (Herman 1992:1). This reinforces the silence around sexual assault, as those who survive would rather remain silent than not be believed by those they tell. Rose (2013) elaborates, stating that “the narrative is not static; it continues to develop over time and experience...the telling of a story is often a ‘slow, laborious process, a fragmented set of wordless, static images [that are] gradually transformed into a narrative with motion, feeling, and meaning’” (164). This is also often a painful process for survivors, as it takes time to process and heal from these complex emotions. Trauma survivors often face “the conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud,” a struggle for which there is rarely a space in the criminal justice system that operates on a superficial idea of what credibility in storytelling looks like (Herman 1992:1). This is why any instance of speaking out about sexual violence is brave and remarkable.

Furthermore, believing a survivor also often means acknowledging “the atrocities in our midst,” as well as acknowledging our role in standing by “as mute witnesses” (Rose 2013:84). Rose (2013) goes on to say that “to reveal the range and depth of perversion and abuse is to threaten...[community] order” (86). In order to save face, a sort of “presentation of

self” for the entire community, it can be difficult to acknowledge that the world allows profound suffering to happen, and that we should all be doing something to help fix this problem. In this way, believing a survivor requires that the listener or bystander “share the burden of pain. The victim demands action, engagement, and remembering” (Herman 1992:7-8). It would be easier to believe the perpetrator, who essentially asks “that the bystander do nothing,” appealing to the “universal desire to see, hear, and speak no evil” (Herman 1992:7). This demand for action and intense, emotional labor can also make people less likely to believe the survivor, or want to help them through their healing process.

Although most survivors fear not being seen as credible due to the ways their stories are told and the labor required to hear these stories, there are also a variety of socio-historical forces at work that make this fear different for certain groups. For instance, as discussed previously, historical colonial violence against Indigenous women has created a culture embedded with racist and sexist ideologies that has allowed police forces to normalize “the racist and misogynist views that Indigenous women and girls can be violated and exploited with little fear of persecution” (Palmater 2016:269). Police officers themselves often sexually assault Indigenous women who come to them for help, because the historical construction of native bodies as inherently “rapable” continues to be normalized by a criminal justice system that allows police officers to sexually assault Indigenous women with impunity. This means that Indigenous women not only fear being seen as not credible due to racist ideologies, but that they also fear the threat of more violence when they report to police. Palmater describes an incident in which an officer in Canada took a woman he arrested for “intoxication” home with him for his own “personal” uses. His superior officer said, upon learning this, “You arrested her, you can do whatever the fuck you want to do” (Palmater 2016:278). Although

this is not a case of a woman coming in to report sexual assault, it emphasizes the way that people view Native bodies, views that can affect whether or not a Native women feels safe coming into a police department.

This creates a cycle of intimidation, in which Native women fear more violence for reporting crimes committed against them, cannot report crimes committed by police because they fail to be held accountable, and then fail to report crimes altogether out of fear. Not only are they not taken seriously because the assault they experience is not considered a crime, but they are not taken seriously because Native bodies are culturally constructed as “deserving” violence. This ideology further exempts their perpetrators from prosecution and relates to cultural constructions about their racial identity. The presentation of Indigenous women in the media as undeserving of justice is based on racial constructs that create a “victim-blaming” discourse around Indigenous women and their ‘high-risk’ lifestyles,” such as prostitution and drug use (Palmer 2016:270). Drug users and prostitutes are also people that are considered “subhuman” and therefore “violable.” These lifestyles are considered choices, and ones of “high-risk,” which then places individual blame on these women for making their own decisions. Briggs (2017) discusses this phenomenon similarly, although in the context of the “welfare queen” construction that blames Black women in poverty for creating their own problems, and therefore unworthy of public assistance (50). Thus, this phenomenon can affect any person who is seen as living a “high-risk” lifestyle, although again, these ideas are often racialized.

Blaming systematic issues on an individual’s “character” or “lifestyle” simultaneously distracts from larger social problems and absolves institutional forces from a requirement to advocate on behalf of these women (Briggs 2017:50). These cultural

constructions ignore the “unequal socioeconomic context” that forces these women to participate in informal economies which put them at further risk of these unfair stereotypes and further contact with the criminal justice system (Palmer 2016:270). Gubrium (2016) argues that poverty is not the cause of social problems; rather, poverty is the context in which we must understand them (18). In this case, poverty, not culture, is the context of crime. Therefore, criminalizing these women for their “lifestyles” and claiming that they are an active, rational “choice” will not remove the “deep structural inequalities” that place them in these vulnerable positions in the first place (Gubrium 2016:18). These conditions create limited options for any “choice.” In addition to Indigenous women, Black women also often fear reporting due to systemic police violence against Black people in the United States, as well as not being seen as credible due to numerous similar stereotypes that implicitly (or explicitly) reside in the minds of many Americans.

In these cases, credibility interacts not only with gender, but also profoundly with race and class. As discussed in Wakelin and Long’s (2003) study, credibility also varies depending on the sexuality or gender identity of the person reporting assault. Philosopher Miranda Fricker (2007) provides an analytical framework from which we can understand these specific threats to credibility and how they exist along lines of inequality. Fricker (2007) argues that prejudice can affect the credibility afforded to a speaker, something called a credibility threat. When the credibility of a speaker is deflated, this is what she calls a credibility deficit. She refers to this as a specific type of epistemic injustice known as “testimonial injustice.” Testimonial injustice occurs when the speaker “receives a credibility deficit owing to identity prejudice in the hearer” (Fricker 2007:28). In this case, an identity prejudice is prejudice “for or against people owing to some feature of their social identity”

(Fricker 2007:28). For instance, if Person A has prejudice against another person, Person B, because they are a woman (say Person A think that all women are emotional and overdramatic), and does not believe an utterance Person B makes due to this prejudice (say, a claim of sexual assault), then Person B has experienced a testimonial injustice.

Therefore, largely due to shame, stigma, and the fear of not being seen as credible, sexual violence goes unpunished, and is “tolerated and suffered in silence by the society at large-social institutions, families, and individuals” (Rose 2013:12). Considering these barriers to speaking out, the bravery of those who do overcome this silence cannot be overshadowed. These barriers show how risky telling is. “Telling doesn’t always come with a reward: comfort, closure, justice....Sometimes, telling can cost you precious relationships...Sometimes you tell and you have to comfort the other person...Sometimes you tell and the other person says something appalling...” (Abdulali 2018:19). These potential outcomes mean that telling is a massive emotional labor, because the response from whoever being told is unpredictable. However, telling can be one of the most radical things a survivor can do to take back power and fight systemic abuse. As Abdulali (2018) acknowledges,

Telling has a high price. But so does not telling. Not telling means you don’t get physical or psychological help. You don’t get tested for pregnancy or HIV. You don’t get therapy. You don’t get to sit in the sun with your best friend and have a good cry. It takes effort to keep a secret. Sometimes remembering is too difficult and you bury it, but that doesn’t necessarily work. ‘You forget...until forgetting is more difficult than remembering.’ And that’s just the price survivors pay. Keeping quiet about rape has a whole other toxic effect: it lets abusers off the hook. I want to be very clear that it is never a victim’s obligation to speak up, or to report, or do anything but survive. Her first responsibility is getting through it. But we are all culpable in the silence around rape, a ‘vast international conspiracy’ if there ever was one (23).

Of course, no survivor has a responsibility to tell, and hopefully this section has shown that the riskiness in telling, although universal, is also highly stratified. But it is crucial to draw out the ways in which staying silent can not only hurt the self, but also the community. In this

way, each and every person has a role to play here. We need to call out abuse in our communities to protect ourselves, to heal, and to help others. But in order to do this, everyone needs to work to reduce the stigma so that more survivors feel able and comfortable to tell. In other, simpler words: believe survivors.

TERMINOLOGY

There is much debate over whether to use the term “victim” or “survivor” when referring to those who have experienced sexual violence. Some use different words for different instances. For example, RAINN differentiates between these two terms, using victim to refer “to someone who has recently been affected by sexual violence; when discussing a particular crime; or when referring to aspects of the criminal justice system.” On the other hand, RAINN chooses to use the word survivor “to refer to someone who has gone through the recovery process, or when discussing the short- or long-term effects of sexual violence.” Ultimately, each individual who has experienced sexual violence must be asked how they identify themselves. For the purpose of this paper, I will use the term survivor most often, as I will be referring to general survivors of sexual violence as opposed to specific cases or the criminal justice system, and I feel that the term survivor gives individuals in question the most agency.

I also provide definitions for the various terms I will use when discussing sexual violence. To start, I will use the term sexual violence to refer to any and all acts of sexual violence, from rape to sexual harassment to sexual assault to sexual abuse. Some use the word “sexual misconduct” to refer to a wide range of violent sexual acts. However, I argue that the term “sexual misconduct” diminishes and demeans the severity of certain acts of sexual violence. Zacharek et al. (2017) call this the “softening” of terms used to describe

incidents of assault and harassment. “‘Inappropriate behavior’ stands in for ‘harassment,’ ‘misconduct’ begins to be used in place of ‘assault,’ and ‘rape’ becomes downplayed as another form of ‘abuse’” (Zacharek et al. 2017). These acts are more than just improper or inappropriate behavior; they are very real acts of violence with profound consequences, and I will use language which reflects that.

I also believe that violence does not only manifest in physical forms which is why I choose to include sexual harassment under this umbrella term. Sexual harassment may include unwanted physical touch, but it also often includes taunting and unwanted sexual jokes and comments. Words certainly have the potential to constitute violence; therefore, in order not to demean the severity of sexual harassment, in this paper it will still be considered part of the term “sexual violence.” As Bourdieu (1983) argues, because language constructs our social world, every time we use language we are reproducing the social structures which make the meaning and use of language possible. This power to construct reality with language is what Bourdieu (1983) calls “symbolic power” (166). When someone is sexually harassed, even verbally, this language constructs a reality that demeans a person through language.

Bourdieu also takes this concept a step further by constructing the concept of “symbolic violence,” which occurs when “one class dominates another” by using symbolic power to construct certain realities that oppress other realities (Bourdieu 1983:167). Sexual harassment is a way to use language to construct a reality in which someone is objectified, or seen as less than and worthy of abuse. This is surely a form of violence. I also argue that, in a similar vein, we can consider sexual harassment a form of hate speech. Judith Butler (1997) argues that hate speech is speech that subordinates someone socially. Verbal sexual

harassment arguably does just that, subordinating somebody into the role as a sex object, dehumanizing them. I argue, for these reasons, that sexual harassment is still a form of violence.

While sexual violence is a useful word to encompass these terms together in an effective way, I also believe that any umbrella term can be damaging as it groups together very distinct experiences under the same term. Therefore, while I will use it at times for convenience purposes, at other times I will refer to the specific acts of sexual violence (such as rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment) in order to capture the full weight of these actions and all the consequences they hold. This is also to acknowledge that each of these acts is not the same, and that there are important distinctions, especially in legal cases, although some of the effects for the survivor may be similar. In this way, we must remember that while each of these words holds different specificities, one should not necessarily be taken less seriously than the others.

Sexual assault is often used as another umbrella-type term that RAINN defines as “attempted rape, fondling or unwanted sexual touching, forcing a victim to perform sexual acts, such as oral sex or penetrating the perpetrator’s body, or penetration of the victim’s body, also known as rape.” They acknowledge that “force” is not always physical, but can take the form of “emotional coercion, psychological force, or manipulation” to force the victim to engage in nonconsensual sex (RAINN). By this definition, rape is sexual assault, but not all sexual assault is rape. It is important to use both of these terms because they encompass a variety of instances, as well as because each individual calls their own experience by different names as they see fit. For its definition of rape, RAINN uses the FBI’s definition of “penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body

part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.” Legal definitions of rape still vary from state to state.

Sexual harassment is defined by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) as “unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature in the workplace or learning environment” (RAINN). The EEOC argues that sexual harassment does not always have to include comments or advances of a sexual nature, but can also include degrading comments about women as a group. Sexual harassment can take the form of “requests for sexual favors,” sexual jokes and verbal harassment, non-consensual physical touch, discussing sexual topics at work or school, exposing oneself in front of others, unsolicited sexual photos or messages, and “making conditions of employment or advancement dependent on sexual favors, either explicitly or implicitly” (RAINN). One of the main differences between sexual assault and sexual harassment is that sexual harassment is not always considered a criminal offense, although it “generally violates civil laws” that state that all people are allowed to work or learn without experiencing harassment (RAINN).

Lastly, I will use the word “accusations” instead of allegations. The word allegation implies that an accuser’s claim is not founded in evidence and lacks proof. The word accusation, on the other hand, makes no suggestion about the proof behind the claim being made. Therefore, I think it is more important to use this word to give all parties in a situation fair treatment, striking a balance between believing a survivor and taking their claim seriously, but not assuming guilt of anyone involved.

METHODOLOGY

Deciding on a method to study the #MeToo movement was challenging, as studying social movements is often not straightforward or simple. Social movements are dynamic, meaning they often change over time and fail to fit one model, making it difficult for there to be consistent methodology effective for studying them. Although there is a long history of the study of social movements, the #MeToo movement poses a new challenge as its activity is predominately expressed through social media. Many social movement scholars have looked to formal social movement organizations as objects of study. While there are formal organizations attached to the movement, such as *TIMES UP* and the actual “me too” website, most of the movement’s activism has occurred online through Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook rather than live protests or other events organized through these formal organizations. Due to this, the movement is very diffuse, meaning that because so many have been able to use the hashtag #MeToo and attach their names and stories to the movement, it becomes increasingly difficult to determine what exactly the movement “is”. This isn’t a traditional movement and it is not as easy to isolate who the actors and organizations attached to the movement are, or what people are referring to when they say “the #MeToo movement.” We can consider many different parts of “the movement:” for instance, all the people using the hashtag, Tarana Burke and her discourse, the “me too” website, or academic articles and news media talking about the movement. However, it seems impossible to claim any one of these things definitively as “the movement.” Therefore, in this paper, I will be cautious with my language, as I am not studying the “movement” itself because we, at the current moment, cannot accurately determine what “the movement” is. Rather, in my

analysis, I will be studying representations of the movement in dominant news media and Tarana Burke's "me too" website.

Due to the relatively new nature of studying modern social movements that rely heavily on social media, I will be very specific in the following explanation of my methodology. Going forward, I hope this can be a resource to others studying social movements, and I hope they can learn from what worked effectively for me, as well as from what did not.

Understanding Content Analysis

After speaking with many professors who had experience in studying social movements and performing sociological research outside of the more common qualitative/quantitative dichotomy, I settled on the method of content analysis. Before the information revolution and emergence of computer technology, content analysis was a tedious, labor-intensive task that required mass amounts of people in order to "collect, transcribe, and code textual data" (Krippendorff 2004:xiv). Therefore, its popularity varied, and many sociologists focused on other methods such as qualitative interviews and quantitative studies and surveys, which were more feasible. Even as online or computerized analytical tools increased the ease of performing content analysis, it has remained a less popular form of analysis, as it fails to interact with actual subjects, an important part of sociological research. Furthermore, content analysis poses a challenge at times due to the difficulty of accessing data. Not all data or public records are always available or easily gathered (Little 2014).

Little (2014) specifically defines content analysis as "a quantitative approach to textual research that selects an item of textual content that can be reliably and consistently

observed and coded, and surveys the prevalence of that item in a sample of textual output”

(2). This is a form of using secondary data, specifically textual analysis, in order to answer a research question. Often times, this textual analysis examines a form of media- newspapers, magazines, images or other media representations- that is then coded and analyzed by the researcher. It can also include the study of specific organizations and agencies, especially those that publish relevant studies, such as the World Health Organization (Little 2014).

Although this method does often include quantitative data, such as frequency counts of word occurrences in a given text, Krippendorff (2004) emphasizes the contextual element of these data, and the importance to analyze them in depth rather than rely on numbers. He argues that content analysis should focus on more than just the quantitative aspect, and rather emphasize “social phenomena that are both generated by and constituted in texts and images and, hence, need to be understood through their written and pictorial constituents” (Krippendorff 2004:xiii). These texts must not be removed from their historical contexts, especially if they become numerical representations. He also argues that this distinction between qualitative and quantitative itself is not always useful, stating that “ultimately, all reading of texts is qualitative, even when certain characteristics of a text are later converted into numbers” (Krippendorff 2004:16). This is one of the benefits of content analysis, as it has the ability to combine elements of qualitative and quantitative data in new and exciting ways. Although it does not involve actual subjects, we understand that media and texts profoundly represent and influence those that consume them. Therefore, analyzing these sources is a valuable way to understand how texts can influence and represent social behavior and thought. Krippendorff (2004) goes on to describe various methods of content analysis. The method that I will be focusing on is discourse analysis. Krippendorff (2004) defines

discourse analysis “as text above the level of sentences,” meaning that it focuses “on how particular phenomena are represented” (17). I will use discourse analysis in this paper in order to determine how the #MeToo movement is represented in different contexts, as I will discuss more later in this section.

Ultimately, Krippendorff (2004) concludes that content analysis has experienced an evolution over time, one that encompasses a variety of methods, but that has the ultimate goal of “[yielding] inferences” from many sources of data, from textual to pictorial to verbal. It often combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This is the approach I will personally take in this paper. Outlined below is the sample I have chosen, as well as the specific ways in which I approach my analysis in both a quantitative and qualitative way.

Choosing My Sample

As stated above, the #MeToo movement has been frequently represented by social media, where people can use the hashtag to speak of their experiences with sexual violence. However, in this paper I choose to analyze the representation of the movement in dominant news media and on Burke’s website, rather than social media. Rather than analyze the personal stories on social media, which are predominately stories of sexual violence from survivors, analyzing the ways in which news sources represent the movement will give better insight into how the movement is portrayed in terms of exclusivity and inclusivity, as well as how people get information about the movement. Plenty of people do not use social media and may only read about the movement through the news. If these sources only report certain stories, this could affect the overall image of what the movement is and who it is for.

Although a content analysis of news articles is the main focus of my analysis, I also supplement this sample by studying the rhetoric used on the movement’s official website,

metoomvmt.org. This will indicate how Tarana Burke,¹⁶ the original founder, presents the movement, and either juxtapose or corroborate the rhetoric seen in the news coverage, allowing me to examine how the inclusivity and exclusivity of the news representations either reflects or challenges Burke's representation of the movement. I chose to supplement the sample with this data because many news stories have specifically outlined Tarana Burke's criticism of how the news media has represented the #MeToo movement. She has been quoted stating that the movement has become "unrecognisable" to her because it has been portrayed as a "vindictive plot against men," or that there is still "so much more that needs to be discussed" because "the women of color, trans women, queer people-our stories get pushed aside and our pain is never prioritized. We don't talk about Indigenous women. Their stories go untold" (Wakefield 2018; Chan 2019). She elaborates in other articles, stating that "the No. 1 thing I hear from folks [Black, Hispanic, and Native American women] is that the #MeToo movement has forgotten us. Every day, we hear some version of that. But this is what I'm here to tell you: The #MeToo movement is not defined by what the media has told you" (Riley 2018). Here, she explicitly argues that how the media represents the movement is not in line with how she desires to represent the movement; even more explicitly, she argues that the media's representation excludes marginalized groups (Feloni 2019; Hoyd 2019). This is why analyzing her discourse as seen on the "me too" website will

¹⁶ Burke is still the face and voice of the current "me too" website. It is unclear if there are other contributors to the site; therefore, in my analysis I will be referring to the representations seen on the "me too" website as Burke's discourse about the movement, or her own representations of the movement. I hesitate to say that her website represents the "movement" itself because as stated previously, we still do not know what the movement really "is." As will be discussed later in this analysis, many people feel that "the movement," whatever it is, is excluding them. However, as will also be discussed later in the paper, looking at the representations on Burke's site would suggest that nobody, or very few people, would feel excluded by her discourse or activism. Therefore, arguably, these individuals could be considering some other representation of the movement as "the movement" itself. Due to discrepancies such as this, I will continue in this paper to refer to discourses and representations of the movement, rather than "the movement," as I have established that what exactly the movement "is" is difficult to define.

be useful in this paper, as I seek to examine the exclusivity and inclusivity of representations of the movement, and Burke suggests that there is a disparity in terms of this between her own representation and the media's representations of the movement.

Although the #MeToo movement has been covered nationally and globally in various news sources, I do not have the space to explore all of this coverage. Therefore, due to reasons of time and scope, I focus on *The New York Times* (NYT) coverage of the #MeToo movement for my content analysis, using it to represent “dominant” mainstream media discourse. By far, the NYT is one of the most circulated newspapers in the United States and is also widely circulated around the globe (Pew Research Center 2018b). Because it is more widely circulated than other major newspapers, such as *The Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, *The New York Post*, or the *Wall Street Journal*, among others, I have selected it for this study. Furthermore, because this study focuses on the #MeToo movement in the United States, I chose an American-based newspaper. Again, although selecting a single newspaper surely limits my analysis¹⁷ in many ways, it still allows for worthwhile data to be collected, and conclusions to be drawn about this specific, widely read, newspaper's coverage of the #MeToo movement, and the ways in which this coverage represents the movement in terms of inclusivity and exclusivity.

¹⁷ Not only does selecting a single newspaper limit my analysis, but so does the focus on this specific newspaper. I would like to acknowledge that the NYT is an elite newspaper. I am aware that #MeToo lives out on more informal news sites, ones that are often not seen as reputable or are not as well known. These sites may publish different stories and investigations than those that the NYT has chosen to publish. However, such sites are very difficult to sample from, and sometimes are not as reliable. Furthermore, as one of the most widely circulated newspapers, I think the data collected from the NYT certainly suggests how the movement is being portrayed in a main part of mainstream media and that this is something worth analyzing. I believe it will suggest how a dominant news source portrays the movement, and what consequences this portrayal has. As an elite newspaper with a reputable history, the NYT has a certain level of social power and prominence to be able to contribute to dominant discourse through its publications. Lastly, from my own reading experience and observations, many of the criticisms of the movement I found in my sample (that will be discussed later in this paper) are similar to those voiced in other news sources. These were criticisms I read about when first becoming interested in this project, and none of these articles that voiced these issues were originally from the NYT. Therefore, the fact that I still found similar themes means that I am willing to posit that the coverage of the NYT is not absurdly out of line with other coverage of the movement, even as an elite newspaper.

After selecting the newspaper I intended to search, I then decided on the methods of the content analysis I wished to use. I decided to begin initially with frequency counts, counting the number of articles the NYT published with the phrase “#MeToo Movement.”¹⁸ I recorded the overall count, as well as monthly counts beginning the month before, and all months following Alyssa Milano’s tweet. These counts allowed me to trace the trajectory of major movement events, seeing when coverage began and how it ebbed and flowed over time; for example, during particularly notorious events, such as the 2018 Golden Globes (when the Times Up initiative was announced) or the Supreme Court confirmation hearing of Judge Brett Kavanaugh, news coverage tended to spike.¹⁹

Following these frequency counts, I began to select my sample of articles that I would read and code to answer my main research question regarding the inclusivity and exclusivity of the NYT’s representation of the movement. First, I came up with words and phrases that stood in for certain concepts, ones that were either being excluded or included in the movement. These concepts were race, sexuality/gender identity²⁰, and socioeconomic status. I read NYT articles that discussed these topics in order to learn what words expressed these identities and concepts, and then tested these terms using trial and error to see which articles came up when I used these phrases. Again, this is part of the difficulty of this method- it requires patience, and often failure. Many times, search terms I hoped to use yielded poor results and irrelevant articles. For instance, I could not use the word “race” as one of my

¹⁸ I will discuss further in the “Nexis Uni” section of my methodology why I chose this term.

¹⁹ This is an example meant to illustrate my point here, specific data and frequency counts will be provided in the discussion and analysis section.

²⁰ I was interested to see if the movement was inclusive of individuals of both marginalized gender identities and sexualities. Originally, these were each separate categories. However, the terms I used to represent sexuality in my search yielded a very small number of articles; therefore, I decided to combine these categories into one search.

terms to test for racial inclusivity within the movement, because it yielded articles about unrelated topics such as political races and surfing competitions.

Once I worked through these issues and had the proper phrases, I used Boolean search terms²¹ in order to search for co-occurrences with these phrases and “#MeToo Movement.” For race, I searched “#MeToo Movement” AND (“Black Women” OR “Latina” OR “Women of color” OR “Asian women” OR “Native American women”). For socioeconomic status, I searched “#MeToo Movement” AND (“underprivileged” OR “factory” OR “poor” OR “blue-collar” OR “ordinary women” OR “poverty”). For sexuality and gender identity, I searched “#MeToo Movement” AND (“L.G.B.T.” OR “queer” OR “bisexual” OR “gay” OR “lesbian” OR “male victim” OR “Jimmy Bennett” OR “Terry Crews”²² OR “trans” OR “non-binary”).

The number of articles yielded by these searches was infinitesimal compared to the original frequency counts of just “#MeToo Movement.” This indicates that the experiences of those who hold the identities listed above may be underrepresented because they have less social power or value. This was a problem, as I had originally intended to construct a representative sample based off of what we know about sexual assault statistics and who is affected; however, due to this already apparent lack of representation, if I had constructed a sample representing the percentage of male victims, Black female victims, Trans victims etc. that we know are affected by sexual assault, the number of articles for each of these

²¹ Boolean search terms are a set of terms that allow a user to modify their search to yield the most relevant results. These are terms such as AND, OR, and NOT which can be used along with parenthesis and quotation marks to denote specific searches. For instance, when I search for race in the example above, I am searching for the word #MeToo Movement (as one phrase, denoted by the quotation marks) as it appears alongside (AND) *any* of the terms (OR) listed within the parenthesis.

²² I intentionally included Jimmy Bennett and Terry Crews in this sampling because it was difficult to find narratives of male survivors of sexual violence. However, these two male survivors are very prominent and have been in the news, particularly being associated with the #MeToo movement. Therefore, I wanted to see how their stories were portrayed and ensure that they were represented in the sample.

categories within my sample would become insignificant, as there are too few to analyze.

Therefore, in order to gain a deeper understanding of how these groups are represented in the NYT and what issues are addressed in articles about these groups within the context of the #MeToo movement, I decided to overrepresented them within the sample.

Furthermore, coming up with an accurate representative sample to encompass these categories would be difficult for other reasons. Research on the rates and reporting of sexual violence for many marginalized communities is lacking. There is little research on sexual assault that includes parameters of race, sexuality, and class, meaning we have few reliable statistics on how certain groups are affected (EROC). The most underrepresented groups in sexual assault surveys and data collection are survivors of color in general- female survivors of color, male survivors of color, and LGBTQIA+ survivors of color (EROC). White women are often disproportionately represented in survey samples, for instance within The Department of Justice's National Violence against Women Survey. To further illustrate the implications of this, we know that around eighty percent of rapes are reported by white women, but that women of color are at a higher risk of being sexually assaulted (EROC). Therefore, due to these many factors that would make creating a representative sample difficult, I decided to oversample articles encompassing marginalized stories in order to gain a better understanding of how the NYT represents these groups in its discourse about the #MeToo movement.²³

²³ Moreover, I also think, as I will outline in later sections of my discussion and analysis, that Burke's representation of the movement suggests that this movement seeks to end sexual violence for all, not just for women, who have historically been the focus of anti-sexual violence movements. While women make up the highest number of victims, other groups, such as women of color, and Trans women of color, are at a higher risk than the "average" woman of experiencing sexual violence. Therefore, in order to be "representative" in this case is complicated. However, not so complicated would be to more equally represent groups, something that would be in line with Burke's representation of the movement and its goals.

In addition to these articles covering marginalized groups, I also needed to include NYT articles within my sample that did not mention these groups. To accomplish this, I included a selection of #MeToo articles from the NYT 100 most read articles for the year, for both 2017 and 2018. In total, my sample included 102 articles. Within the sample, I did not distinguish between types of articles, such as opinion pieces or news analyses, which is something many media or newspaper analyses do. I made this choice because technology has drastically changed the way we consume newspapers. Many newspapers are now read online, meaning individuals can search for specific topics rather than read a newspaper page by page, or by specific section (such as opinion columns). Furthermore, many see news through third party websites, such as Facebook or Twitter, which use algorithms to suggest to their users “articles you might like” based on other media they consume. Therefore, distinguishing between what types of articles consumers read about #MeToo would be difficult, and it is likely that consumers today distinguish less between what “types” of articles they read, and focus more on topic. Furthermore, I argue that regardless of the type of article and differences between them, these texts still constitute the NYT’s presentation of the movement, and valid discourse worth analyzing, as they contribute to knowledge about the movement.

After gathering my sample, I read and hand-coded the selected articles for patterns and analytical themes. Meaning, I began reading articles and noticing common themes of word choice or ideas that came up in multiple pieces. I then used a “spiral” method of content analysis, meaning I read the articles, developed coding schemes, and returned to previous articles, re-reading them as new themes emerged. The sub-headings in my discussion and

analysis section represent a selection of these themes, ones that were most salient or common across my sample.

Nexis Uni

The most effective tool I could find to perform this analysis is *Nexis Uni*, a branch of *Lexis Nexis* that is available through Dickinson's Library as a university resource. I first learned of *Lexis Nexis* through both a professor and the sociology department's library liaison. *Nexis Uni* is an online tool that allows its user to search through hundreds of news sources for keywords or phrases, procuring not only the article that has those keywords but also counting the total number of articles with those keywords. As my project seeks to examine language and discourse usage, this was helpful for me to be able to search specific terms and phrases in association with the NYT presentation of the #MeToo movement, and then examine the presence (or lack thereof) and the usage of these terms within the sample.

Nexis Uni allows its user to limit searches using filters such as publication type, timeline, publication type, location, subject, industry, source, language, and others. During my search, I used keywords, source, and timeline as my main filters. The keyword tool allowed me to search specific terms and phrases. The source tool allowed me to limit my search to only the NYT. Lastly, the timeline tool allowed me to limit my search to specific time periods-years, months, even particular days.

Nexis Uni of course is not a perfect tool, and I must acknowledge that there is some level of error in the results I will present later in this paper. For instance, at times, the search fails to distinguish between article repeats. Although there is a feature to remedy this, it is not always reliable. Therefore, in general, there is some margin of error in the frequency counts. Moreover, because I had to select specific terms to conduct these searches as outlined above,

there may have been articles that expressed the concept I was attempting to search for while failing to have the words I used to search for these concepts. For instance, I used terms such as “Black Women” to get at the concept of racial diversity within the movement. Of course, there may have been articles without these specific terms that still expressed the concept of racial diversity. On the other hand, some terms in this case were impossible to include. As stated above, the term “race” itself, for example, yielded too many results with irrelevant topics that did not actually relate to the concept of racial identity. However, there surely could have been articles that were useful with that term in it, but it would have taken too long to sift through thousands of articles to find out which ones were actually relevant. Therefore, I had to make decisions on what terms to use based on what yielded the most accurate results, albeit at the expense of some accuracy.

Similarly, I used the phrase “#MeToo Movement” to search for articles about the movement. I chose the phrase “#MeToo Movement” because *Nexis Uni* does not recognize the “#” symbol. Therefore, if I merely searched #MeToo, every article in the NYT that had the phrase “me too” came up in the search. This means that I did miss articles that discussed the movement, but only used the phrase “#MeToo” rather than “#MeToo Movement.” This has been one of the challenges of this method- experimenting with the phrasing and Boolean style strategies that would yield the best results.

I would like to acknowledge that by using these search categories, I still fail to capture a large amount of diversity. Separating each of these categories unfortunately often hides where they intersect. Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) coined the term intersectionality, an analytical framework that understands each individual’s experience by illustrating the ways in which various systems of oppression and privilege work together in a compounding way to

affect an individual's life. In understanding oppression, silencing, and power structures, it is imperative to understand these intersections. Although the search terms I use in this analysis often seem to separate these identities (such as gender, race, and class), I hope that my following analysis continues to acknowledge the ways in which these identities intersect and influence ideas of inclusivity and exclusivity in the NYT's presentation of the #MeToo movement.

I would lastly like to acknowledge my own bias in this analysis. Krippendorff (2004) acknowledges that often times, "qualitative approaches to content analysis...are given the label interpretive," meaning that the researcher acknowledges that they are "working within hermeneutic circles in which their own socially or culturally conditioned understandings constitutively participate" (17). He chooses to use the word interactive, which I appreciate, as my own understandings and thought processes will interact with those that I find. I am a white, middle-class, cisgender, college-educated woman. I am also a person who can say "me too." I understand that these identities may contribute to biases I have while conducting this analysis. However, I also hope that as a sociology major, I have become acutely aware of these biases and the privilege I hold, and have developed a passion for social justice and understanding of the inequality in the world. Nevertheless, I recognize that interpreting texts requires engagement with not only the text, but with these understandings that I come to this analysis with.

Why Discourse Analysis?

An important concept within sociology is the idea that language constructs the social world, and thus knowledge about it. In the context of #MeToo, the different discourses surrounding the movement create knowledge about the movement and affect our

understandings of it. Therefore, it is useful to analyze both the discourse of the “me too” website to see how Burke represents the movement, as well as how the NYT presents the movement. Both of these discourses create knowledge about #MeToo, and it is vital to examine what type of knowledge they are creating, or reinforcing and reproducing.

In order to further illustrate how language constructs the social world by producing knowledge, I will outline here the analytical frameworks of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, two theorists that study the intersections between language, power, and knowledge production. For Foucault, language and discourse are some of the most important elements for explaining society because language structures our systems of thought, influencing what we are able to think and ultimately constructing reality. He argues that language has the ability to render something visible, thus creating reality (Foucault 1984:301).

Part of the way in which language makes something visible is through its constitution of knowledge. In the “Preface” to his book *Order of Things*, Foucault argues that language is one of knowledge’s “conditions of possibility” (Foucault 1994: xxii). When we speak about something using language, we create knowledge about it. For example, if a newspaper only discusses the #MeToo movement’s impact on Hollywood, it’s representation of the movement creates specific knowledge about what types of people the movement is able to help. Those that consume the newspaper are then influenced by this knowledge that the language creates. That which is rendered visible in language becomes the dominant understanding and knowledge about that topic, because language produces meaning by constituting knowledge. What is included in discourse is included in reality, is constituted into knowledge, but what is not defined within the dominant discourse is then either completely excluded from, or at least subordinated within, reality (Foucault 1984:316). Thus,

language and discourse have the power to construct our reality, our ways of thinking, and our ways of being.

Foucault then discusses the relationship “between the constitution of a knowledge (savoir) and the exercise of power,” and how this relates to language (Foucault 1991:150). He argues that “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute the same power relations” (Foucault 1984:175). For example, many institutions have had the power to construct knowledge about sexual assault. The criminal justice system, through its social power and legitimacy, has created knowledge about who gets to call their specific experience assault by defining sexual assault in a specific way. It had the power to construct knowledge about who was assaulted in the eyes of the law and who was not. There is no perpetrator, or victim, without these types of normative constructions and definitions. In this way, knowledge and power have a deep relationship in which they inform and constitute each other.

Because language is part of our everyday life, all people are constantly engaged in knowledge creation. However, as outlined above, this potential for knowledge creation is stratified by power. As a woman, in some situations, I do not have the same power as a man to create knowledge, due to our hierarchized social positions in a patriarchal society. Therefore, overall, “the exercise, production, and accumulation” of knowledge cannot be understood without understanding its connections with “the mechanisms of power” (Foucault 1991:164). For Foucault, the two cannot be understood in isolation from one another. This concept of language, power, and knowledge production is an important analytical framework

through which to understand the social world and the ways in which social reality is constructed.

Pierre Bourdieu expands upon this theoretical framework more concretely through his concept of symbolic power, emphasizing the ways in which these “power-knowledge regimes” as Foucault calls them can oppress entire social groups. Bourdieu defines symbolic power as “a power of constructing reality” (Bourdieu 1983:166). Bourdieu also takes this a step further by constructing the concept of “symbolic violence,” which occurs when “one class dominates another” by using symbolic power to construct certain realities that oppress other realities through language (Bourdieu 1983:167). Philosopher Miranda Fricker (2007) also expands upon this idea with her concept of “hermeneutical injustice,” an injustice which occurs when “some significant area of one’s social experience” is “obscured from collective understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource” (2007:155). Hermeneutics deals with interpretations of texts, speech, language, or even concepts. So, when Fricker states there has been a hermeneutical injustice, this means that a concept that is a collective hermeneutical resource has been misinterpreted by more powerful groups, preventing both themselves and the hermeneutically marginalized group (who has less power) from being able to understand that concept and experience. Fricker uses the example of sexual harassment to further illustrate this, acknowledging that before the 1970s, the term sexual harassment itself did not exist. Without the language to describe this experience, the concept of sexual harassment (and the term itself, the language necessary to describe it) became ignored as a collective hermeneutical resource. More powerful groups, such as men, have “unduly influenced” the interpretation of this concept, calling it simply “flirting” and stating that those who are not receptive to these advances are simply “lacking a

sense of humor” (Fricker 2007:153). Therefore, the actual experience described by victims of sexual harassment is obscured from collective understanding, because it was excluded in language and discourse.

Like Bourdieu and Foucault, Fricker understands this example as one that illustrates the fact that “the dominated live in a world structured by others for their purposes,” purposes that are not created by the dominated group and can actual be harmful to their entire existence (Fricker 2007:147). This reflects Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic power, the fact that one group has the ability to construct reality, and then also symbolic violence in which that group subjugates the reality of the other with their own reality (Bourdieu 1983:50-51). In this instance, victims of sexual harassment were subjugated by perpetrators, as their experience of reality was obscured by those who had the power to create reality for all groups. This is similar to Fricker’s understanding of the ontological manifestation of hermeneutical injustice, in which “the powerful somehow constitute the social world,” to some extent through language (2007:147).

In line with Foucault, she also understands this epistemically, where “the powerful have an unfair advantage in structuring collective social understandings” (Fricker 2007:147). Like Foucault, she understands that having a term for something also influences what we know about something. Language constructs knowledge for Foucault, and this is intertwined with power as we see that powerful groups have the power to construct knowledge while others do not. In the absence of language to describe a situation of sexual harassment, Fricker, like Foucault, acknowledges that there was also an absence of knowledge and understanding about sexual harassment itself. Therefore, if discourses around the #MeToo movement, for example, do not discuss the stories of marginalized groups or do not give an

accurate depiction of who is affected by sexual violence disproportionately, these experiences will be obscured from collective social understanding, affecting whether or not they are taken seriously in society as something to be dealt with. As Foucault states, language to some extent renders things “visible.”(Foucault 1984:301) Without the language to construct knowledge about a concept, how can that concept be taken seriously? How can people be made to change their behavior if it has not been problematized through language? As long as perpetrators and other powerful institutions have control over “power knowledge regimes,” the realities and experiences of these less powerful groups will be obscured from collective understanding, further marginalizing them.

All of this is to say that language and discourse are valuable tools of analysis in this paper. They will allow me to study the ways in which the language used on the “me too” website, as well as the language used by the NYT to present the movement, reinforce and reproduce ideas of inclusivity and exclusivity by constructing knowledge about the movement in a specific way. It will also allow me to explore the ways in which this is profoundly connected with social power. As language constructs our social world, this analysis will show the ways in which the language used to talk about the #MeToo movement creates knowledge about the movement-specifically about whose stories are being told and whose are not, and the consequences this brings.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

I will begin my discussion by examining the discourse of the “me too” website to understand how the original founder, Tarana Burke, chooses to represent the #MeToo movement. I will also consider Burke’s public statements about the movement as part of the way she constructs an image of the #MeToo movement. This is important, as it will allow me

to juxtapose this representation of the movement against my findings about how the movement is represented in the NYT. Next, I will outline a brief timeline of the #MeToo events, starting with Milano's tweet.²⁴ Within this timeline, I will include the frequency counts I conducted that reflect the trajectory of the NYT's coverage during important events. Lastly, I will begin my exploration of the themes I found within my sample regarding inclusivity and exclusivity within the discourse of the NYT coverage of the #MeToo movement.

#MeToo Movement Discourse

In this section, I will outline how the "me too" website creates specific representations of the #MeToo movement and what it aims to do.²⁵ To begin, on the homepage of metoomvmt.org, the first thing a visitor sees is the words "you are not alone." This speaks to one of the main goals of the movement as Burke presents it—a form of consciousness raising that ensures survivors know they are not alone in their experience, and that they are supported. This returns to the roots of second-wave feminism, which engaged in consciousness raising to help women realize that their personal experiences were more common than personal, exposing them to a sort of sociological imagination in which they connected their own lives to broader institutional and societal forces (Baxandall and Gordon 2000:13). Doug McAdam (1982), a social movement theorist who explored political process theory, cites Ross (1977) who calls this phenomenon the "fundamental attribution error," or the "tendency of people to explain their situation as a function of individual rather than

²⁴ I acknowledge that the more accurate "start" to the movement is Burke's work in 2006. However, Burke's story has already been outlined in the introduction, and will be elaborated upon later when discussing the discourse of the official #MeToo organization. The majority of what is considered to be part of #MeToo in the mainstream media is what happened following this tweet, and is more focused on the revitalization of the movement rather than Burke's initial work.

²⁵ To further emphasize why I am analyzing this separately, I will note here that the "me too" website is often not mentioned in news sources, at least not in my sample. Therefore, it is not used by the NYT to represent the movement, and is rather constructed as something separate from the movement that the NYT presents.

situational factor” (50). In order to overcome this, people need to engage in some sort of consciousness raising where people “jointly create meanings” (McAdam 1982:50). When this is accomplished, McAdam (1982) calls the result “cognitive liberation,” where individuals begin to challenge the legitimacy of social institutions that they have previously accepted as inevitable (48-50). This is crucial for mobilizing social movements and sustaining insurgency.

Through Burke’s work, it becomes apparent that for survivors, there is still a gap in collective social understandings about being a survivor, something that must be overcome to sustain activism around ending sexual violence. We know that sexual violence is systemic, yet many survivors clearly still struggle with feeling alone, suggesting that have been given undue power to contribute to hermeneutical resources about sexual violence and survivorhood, affecting their ability to understand their own experiences (Fricker 2007). Therefore, the language on her site that continuously reinforces that survivors are not alone works to break down notions of shame and stigma around being a survivor, as well as attempts to engage in consciousness raising so that individuals realize that their experience is not unique and can benefit from social activism. For Burke, it seems that this is the first step in her representation of the #MeToo movement: mobilizing survivors to realize they are not alone and begin to understand their experiences themselves, healing from trauma and eventually help others understand what it means to be a survivor of sexual violence.

Behind these words plays a video of people’s faces, presumably survivors. There are people who present as more feminine, some as more masculine, some more androgynous. There are older faces, younger faces, faces of people from a variety of races and presumably backgrounds and professions, based on their clothing. Essentially, there is a wide variety of

diversity in the people represented on the first part of this website people see. In this way, the website presents the #MeToo movement as a movement that is for everybody and anybody. Under the initial statement, the website has a place for email sign ups that state “join the movement. Support survivors and end sexual violence.” This use of the neutral term “survivor” makes no claim to a survivor’s gender, race, class, gender identity, citizenship status, or any other identity. This language also reinforces the universality of the movement that the website seeks to portray, along with the images a visitor sees. Furthermore, the fact that it encourages people to “support survivors” also shows that this movement, as portrayed by the website, is not only for survivors, but also for others who may not be survivors themselves but want to support others and be part of the change. The site also has an important safety feature, a “safety exit” that allows its user to immediately exit the site, easily, at any time. This protects survivors who may be researching for help in secret if they live with their abuser or do not have access to privacy.

Scrolling further down on the site, “me too” offers two main avenues for its users. There is a link for “survivors” and another for “advocates.” The description of the “survivors” link states, “find a comprehensive database consisting of local and national organizations dedicated to providing services and safe spaces for survivors of sexual violence, healing stories, as well as articles and a glossary of terms to help give voice to your experiences. You are not alone.” The fact that the website focuses on “terms to help give voice” to survivors experiences continues to suggest that many survivors lack the language or space to describe or understand their own experiences and be validated. This reinforces Fricker’s (2007) concept of hermeneutical injustice, suggesting that survivors themselves often fail to understand their own experiences because they have had not had influence over

terminology used to describe such experiences, or a lack of access to education and discourse about sexual violence and how to cope with trauma resulting from it.

Below this description are three further links, titled “healing,” “healing resources library,” and “glossary.” In this way, the website presents the movement as one whose goals are to center the experiences of survivors and give them the most effective pathway towards healing. For the movement represented on the website, this seems to be the first step for activism towards ending sexual violence. Before attempting other major steps such as focusing on holding people accountable, it seeks to educate survivors and allies about the experience of sexual violence through language and terminology, as well as access to resources for healing. By giving words to these experiences, survivors will begin to be able to understand their own experiences and contribute to collective social understandings about sexual violence and survivors. The website is an excellent resource for survivors as it provides both local and national resources, as well as community for survivors to be validated in their experience and be believed if they may not be in their immediate circles.

Furthermore, the specific resources offered to survivors in the resource library are broken down by groups of people that they serve. For instance, under national resources, there are specific resources listed for *survivors of color, male survivors, survivors with disabilities, LGBTQIA survivors, college students, domestic violence survivors, survivors in the military, workplace assault, undocumented survivors, incarcerated survivors, survivors of human trafficking*, as well as general and legal resources. When looking for local organizations, a user can input their location and filter their results with boxes such as *age, issue* (campus assault, workplace abuse, church sexual abuse, rape etc.), *type* (of organization, such as emergency, free, support group etc.), *ethnicity, disability, LGBTQIA,*

military status, gender, and housing. This setup and language further emphasizes the inclusivity of Burke's website, reinforcing her representation of a movement that is for all survivors, regardless of their social positions. By representing these groups on her website through language, Burke is constructing the knowledge that these groups are affected by sexual violence and deserve to be a focus of activism, breaking down notions that only women are affected by sexual violence. By separating out these resources, she is also acknowledging that different survivors have different needs when healing from trauma, and that sometimes these needs are related to their social identity. To recall, although women disproportionately make up those who are sexually assaulted, we know that other groups, such as women of color and Trans individuals are at a higher risk of sexual violence. In this way, Burke's website does not privilege any survivor over another. The inclusive language on the site reinforces a representation of the #MeToo movement as an anti-sexual violence movement for all people, rather than a women's movement.

The advocacy link also highlights this emphasis on survivors, trying to provide educational resources for advocates to become better able to serve the needs of survivors. The link states, "many of us are survivors, too; so we know that empowering others through empathy is often a part of our own healing journeys. Inside, you will find research studies on sexual violence, a database of regional and local laws addressing sexual violence, as well as sexual violence statistics" (me too). Below this are three further links, titled "advocacy," "advocacy resources library," and "glossary." These resources all focus on arming advocates with information so that they can best help survivors: specific laws about sexual violence which would be helpful to know when working with a survivor, as well as local and national organizations that they could inform people about. All of these resources and the language

the website uses effectively emphasize this main focus of the movement as Burke presents it: providing pathways to healing and justice for all survivors, whether through self-empowerment of these survivors or through advocates. The resources are listed similarly as the ones for survivors, by different groups of survivors and specific needs they may have, again reinforcing the inclusivity of Burke's representation of the movement.

Below these initial resources is a link to the "Survivor Stories Series," a new addition to the site. Burke announced this initiative in early January 2019 as a way to put the spotlight on survivors and their stories. There are currently four videos, all of which continue to emphasize both the universality of Burke's portrayal of the movement and the importance it places on survivor stories. Two of the videos are narrated by men and two are narrated by women. Each video begins with a "trigger warning," stating that the viewer is about to watch a "survivor's story" that "may be triggering for those of us who have experienced sexual violence. Don't feel obligated to watch, or to watch alone" (me too). This language is very inclusive: it deconstructs the us vs. them dichotomy, by saying "some of us," ensuring that the survivor knows that they are not alone in their experience of sexual violence, continuing to engage in a type of consciousness raising. Sexual violence itself, as a term, is also broad and could encompass a variety of types of abuse, therefore including all survivors who have experienced any type of sexual abuse. Furthermore, this language protects all viewers by warning them of the content they are about to watch, but also challenges them to confront their trauma and find strength by suggesting they not watch it alone. This gives space for someone to opt out if their pain is too profound, but also encourages people to try to overcome that pain, and to not do it alone but to lean on someone close or in their community. Again, this all reflects both the inclusivity of the website's portrayal of the

movement, as well as its emphasis on survivors and community-based organizing to provide pathways for healing. These representations on the website suggest that Burke's goal for the movement, first and foremost, is to empower survivors.

The first video spotlights famous actor and former NFL football player Terry Crews.²⁶ In his video, he begins by stating how the Harvey Weinstein story triggered memories of his own assault, where he was groped by another man at an industry event. He speaks to the frustration he felt seeing "so many men in particular that were calling these women [who accused Weinstein] liars, they were calling them opportunists." Once this happened, Crews states:

For me to remain silent...I would have felt like a fraud. Because when this happens to you, you are trapped. And you are not a victim that needs help you are a problem that needs to be eradicated. In the year that's gone by, I've learned that silence is violence. It's literally...they depend on you being quiet. My advice to any survivor, I will not be shamed. I did nothing wrong. And this is the thing, the difference between guilt and shame is crazy. Shame just says, it didn't say you did anything bad, it says you are bad. Like you feel like you did something to deserve this. And this is where-this is where the predator plays on this fact. Please, please, to any survivor out there, repeat that mantra over and over until you believe it.

The second video is of another man who remained anonymous and detailed his story of child sexual abuse committed by his father. His video focused on what it meant for him to be a survivor, and how that journey to becoming a survivor was different for everyone, but always one of profound internal growth.

²⁶ Burke's choice of having the first two videos highlight stories of male survivors is interesting. Some may argue that while male survivors need a voice in the movement, this emphasis could overpower the voice of female survivors. This would be problematic considering that women are disproportionately affected by sexual violence in comparison to men, and some argue, therefore should be given the spotlight. However, I think this is a powerful choice on Burke's behalf, and an intentional one. She ensures that male survivors, who are often particularly stigmatized, have a visible place in the movement. This helps break down power dynamics that suggest that men cannot be assaulted, opening up the conversation to how power plays a dynamic role in sexual violence. Her point here seems to be to give equal space to a variety of survivors, rather than a representative view of survivorhood, knowing what we know about who is affected by sexual assault. This further emphasizes that sexual violence is an issue that affects all and must be addressed by all, not just women.

The next video, a woman named Emily, speaks about her experience with sexual assault. She acknowledges the difficulty she had in realizing that she “didn’t have to hold responsibility,” and reinforced the idea to other survivors that “you are so not alone.” She stated that the most powerful thing about “Me Too” is that there are people who say “I will be there for you, I believe you and hold you.” She claims that “this is an opportunity for us to fight for our rights and continue to be heard. We won’t be silenced.” While her story focuses on hope and healing, the next woman begins her story by emphasizing the profound pain she experienced, crying throughout most of the video. Named Daniela, this woman is an undocumented migrant, and the video is in Spanish with English subtitles. She speaks about how she knows her abuser attacked her because he knew she would not tell, because of the fact that she is undocumented and “couldn’t speak the language,” as well as because she needed money. She ended the video, sobbing, saying how she did this “for other girls,” so that they would not feel as alone. Each of the videos ends with a graphic that says, “we see you, we hear you, we believe you,” followed by the “Me Too” logo. In Daniela’s video, the graphic is written in Spanish.

These four videos together reinforce the inclusivity of Burke’s portrayal of the movement as well as the emphasis this representation places on survivors and their stories. Too often in dominant discourse about sexual violence, victimhood is constructed as inherently feminine and predation as inherently masculine, suggesting that men cannot be assaulted (St. Felix 2018). Therefore, the fact that there are both male-identifying and female-identifying survivors is profoundly important, as it validates the identity of any survivor who may have otherwise felt excluded. Moreover, these videos tell stories of various types of assault- child sexual abuse, groping, and rape-validating them all as forms of

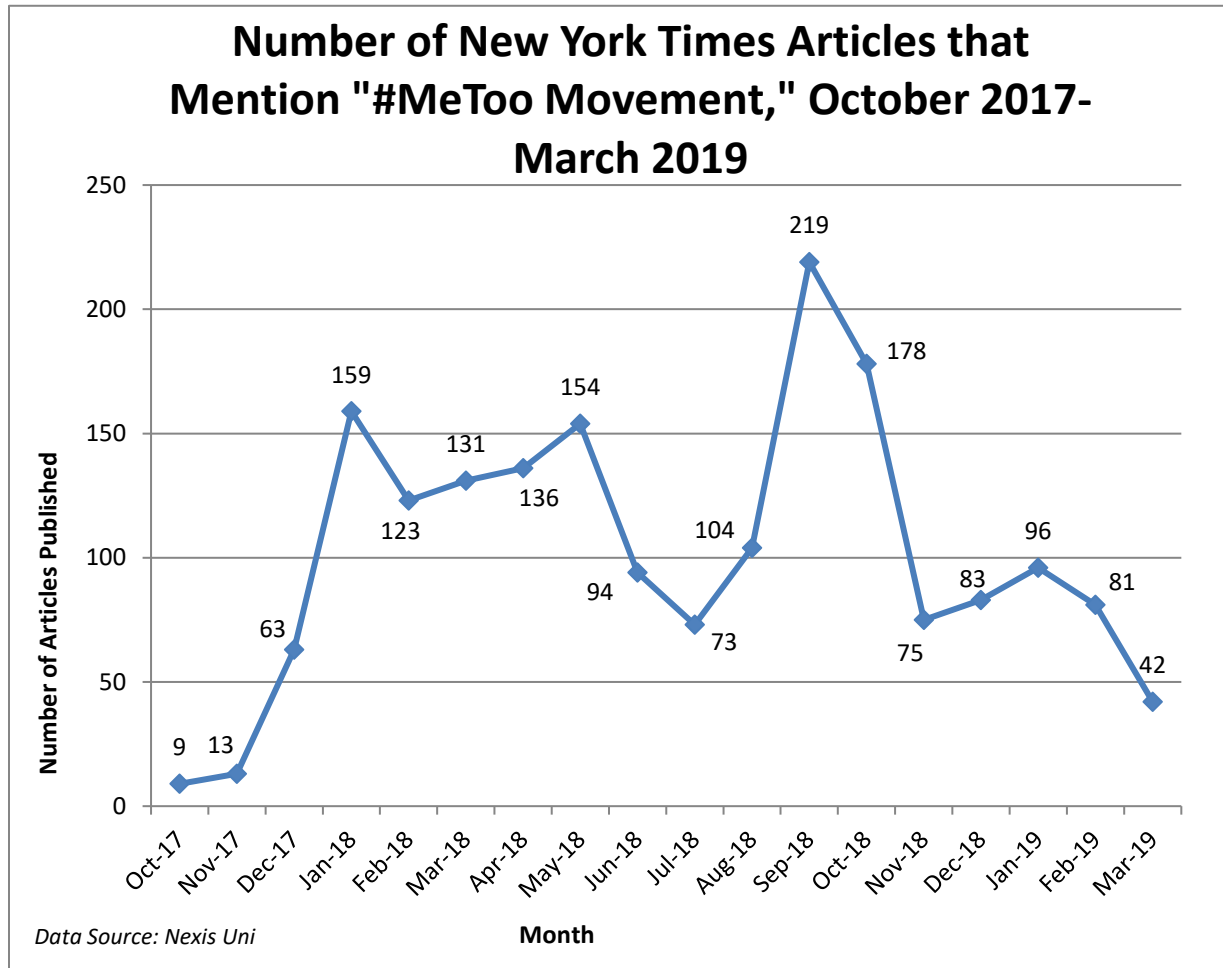
sexual violence that are encompassed by this movement. It is also crucial that they included a man of color, and a woman of color, specifically one who is undocumented. Undocumented women are arguably one of the most vulnerable populations in the country, as they face numerous legal and social battles trying to live their daily lives. This video is accessible to many of them who only speak Spanish, and tells them that their story does matter, regardless of their citizenship status. Also, in general, the videos all use the neutral term survivor, which can apply to anyone. Including these different voices allows everyone to engage in knowledge production about sexual violence, constructing knowledge that sexual violence affects many different types of people in many different ways, but that everyone's experience is valid and must be addressed under the #MeToo movement as Burke represents it.

Furthermore, their stories continue to emphasize "consciousness raising" where survivors are made to feel supported by each other and less alone.

Lastly, in Crews' video, when he discusses the influence the Weinstein story had on him, Weinstein's name is bleeped out, as if it were an expletive. This choice reinforces the emphasis this movement seeks to place on survivor stories. It says that there is no place for this man's name, or for any other abuser's name. As Foucault (1994) states, the way we talk about things creates knowledge about them. Refusing to talk about them and give them space in discourse reinforces Burke's representation of the movement which argues that the spotlight of the #MeToo movement should not be on abusers, it should be on survivors and their stories and their healing. In this way, the way that Burke represents the movement on her website challenges dominant conceptions about sexual violence and who is affected, deconstructing gendered notions of victimhood and highlighting the experiences of

marginalized groups at the center of her activism in order to create an image of an inclusive movement.

#MeToo: a Brief Timeline



As outlined in the introduction, #MeToo was revitalized on October 16, 2017 with a tweet from Alyssa Milano, reacting to the October 5 NYT piece that broke the big story about Harvey Weinstein, titled “Harvey Weinstein Paid Off Sexual Harassment Accusers for Decades” (Kantor and Twohey 2017). Between October 2017 and March 2019, a total of

1,848²⁷ articles have been published about #MeToo in the NYT.²⁸ This encompasses all articles since the initial tweet on October 16 2017. No articles were posted in the NYT that used the phrase “#MeToo Movement” before this date.²⁹ The chart above traces the trajectory of the coverage, which will be elaborated upon in this section.

In total, during 2017, 85 articles were published about #MeToo in the NYT. During the first month of #MeToo (which encompasses the roughly two weeks following the initial tweet on October 16), the NYT published 9 total articles about #MeToo. A few other important events occurred during this first month (besides the tweet) in the wake of the new movement. Later in October following Milano’s tweet, McKayla Maroney, an Olympic gymnast, came out with the story of her experience with sexual assault at the hands of their team’s doctor, Larry Nassar (Hawbaker and Johnson 2019). Hundreds of women who were also assaulted by Nassar followed suit (Hauser and Zraick 2019). Kevin Spacey was accused in October of sexually assaulting Anthony Rapp when he was 14, eventually leading to his termination from his television series *House of Cards* (Hawbaker and Johnson 2019).

In November, a total of 13 articles were posted about the #MeToo movement. A few more powerful men fell: famous comedian Louis C.K. and NBC’s *Today* show host Matt Lauer both faced career losses after they were accused of sexual harassment. Republican

²⁷ To put this in context, over 10,000 total articles have been published about #MeToo, according to *Nexis Uni* and the sources it searches. I have only included the number of NYT articles posted as part of my sample, but I think it is important to understand how much this movement has been talked about across multimedia news platforms (*Nexis Uni* searches blogs, news transcripts, and other widely read national and international newspapers such as the Guardian and the Associated Press).

²⁸ When I say that the NYT published articles *about* #MeToo, I really mean articles with the phrase “#MeToo movement,” as reflected in the title of this graph. As stated in my methodology, I acknowledge that this phrase could miss articles that had the phrase “#MeToo” without the “movement,” articles that are still arguably *about* #MeToo. This also means that I could have encompassed articles that mention the movement, but are not completely *about* the movement. However, this was necessary to maintain a feasible methodological approach.

²⁹ I attempted to search for “#MeToo” and “#MeToo movement” in the months surrounding Tarana Burke’s initial work starting the movement, hoping to compare any coverage that occurred at the time with the current news about the movement. However, *Nexis Uni* yielded no results. I also attempted to search Burke’s name, still finding no results. This shows that the movement was not covered or widely known about until Milano’s tweet in October.

Senate nominee Roy Moore faced a report that detailed a history of abuse of underage girls (Hawbaker and Johnson 2019). Garrison Keillor was fired from Minnesota Public Radio after facing accusations (Hawbaker and Johnson 2019).

In December, we see a large spike in news stories that covered #MeToo. The NYT published 63 articles about the movement, in comparison with only 13 in November. This spike is largely due to the December 6th announcement of the *TIME* Person of the Year (POY). *TIME* named as the 2017 POY winners those who revitalized the #MeToo movement, calling them the “Silence Breakers” (Zacharek et al. 2017).³⁰ Furthermore, many of the articles posted in December were yearly round-ups, or articles that reflected on the events of 2017. It was only natural that many of them discussed this new movement that had just emerged as we approached the New Year. In fact, as the New Year called for reflections, criticisms of the movement were already beginning to emerge.³¹ The movement was also starting to spread around the globe through social media, leading to more coverage on international #MeToo moments in other countries. In addition to these reflections, more dominos fell in December: U.S. Senator Al Franken and Chef Mario Batali both faced accusations, along with continued attention on old accusations against Woody Allen (Hawbaker and Johnson 2019).³²

³⁰ Interestingly, Donald Trump was the runner up. This was a massive juxtaposition for *TIME* to spotlight these survivors, rather than the very man who said, when discussing advances he wanted to make on a married woman, how he “moved on her like a bitch;” how he “doesn’t even wait” to start kissing women because “when you’re a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. Grab them by the pussy. You can do anything” (“Transcript” 2016). These statements also did not stop him from receiving the award in 2016.

³¹ Such as “When Me Too Goes Too Far,” (Stephens 2017) which criticized the movement for failing to distinguish between different types of abuse and foregoing due process for the accused, or “We’re Going to Need More Gabrielle Union,” (Krischer 2017) which criticized the movement for focusing on white women and leaving out Black women.

³² Woody Allen has faced accusations for years regarding child sexual abuse, but has remained an icon in the film industry, even receiving the Cecil B. DeMille Lifetime Achievement Award at the Golden Globes. One of the most notorious accusations came from his own daughter.

In 2018, the first full year of #MeToo, the NYT published 1,528 total articles about the movement. In January, there was a massive spike from what we saw in 2017. 159 total articles were published, more than double than what was published in December 2017. This is arguably because on January 1st, the *TIMES UP* initiative was announced, which thrust #MeToo into the spotlight (Hawbaker and Johnson 2019). Around 300 powerful Hollywood women announced that they had used millions of their own dollars in order to start the nonprofit *TIMES UP*, “a legal defense fund, to be administered by the National Women’s Law Center, to provide subsidized support to women and men who have experienced sexual harassment, assault or abuse in the workplace” (Stevens 2018). Their message: “Time’s up. The clock has run out on sexual assault, harassment, and inequality in the workplace. It’s time to do something about it” (“Time’s Up”). Specifically, they aimed to draw awareness to more marginalized women that work in industries other than entertainment, such as “janitors, nurses and workers at farms, factories, restaurants and hotels” (Buckley 2018a).

Although they announced the fund at the New Year, the visibility of the organization was most prominently thrust into the spotlight a week later at the 75th Annual Golden Globes on January 7th. Actresses wore all black in solidarity with survivors, and many men wore “Time’s Up” pins to also show their support for the cause. Several women brought activists as their guests, such as Michelle Williams who brought Tarana Burke along to the event and Meryl Streep who brought along the Director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance, Ai-Jen Poo (Spanos 2018). It was a night of witty jokes made by host Seth Meyers who used the #MeToo movement to fuel his monologues rather than take the safe way out and ignore it, as well as a night of empowering speeches (by women who won awards, not by men); particularly, Oprah’s speech when she accepted the Cecil B. DeMille Lifetime Achievement

Award, which acknowledged how inspired she was by the #MeToo movement, as well as recognized that this is an issue that affected many more industries besides Hollywood (Spanos 2018).

Also during this month were the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Awards and the Grammys, where Hollywood actresses and musicians used their platforms to discuss #MeToo and draw awareness to sexual assault. Later in January of 2018, following these awards, more famous men found themselves in the #MeToo spotlight: James Franco faced accusations (Hawbaker and Johnson 2019). The second annual Women's March also occurred. This was also the month when the infamous article was posted on Babe.net, accusing Aziz Ansari of sexual assault. The woman, who remained anonymous and was given the pseudonym "Grace," received some of the most intense backlash of any accuser during this movement, due to the argued "gray zone" nature of her encounter with Ansari.³³

In February, the NYT remained fairly consistent, publishing 123 articles about #MeToo. *TIMES UP* still dominated much of the news cycle, as well as other stories and activism coming from Hollywood. For instance, Uma Thurman joined the host of women who had accused Harvey Weinstein, finally being interviewed for a piece in the NYT after months of staying silent and processing her anger over the event (Down 2018). The month of March, when 131 articles were published, brought the 90th annual Academy Awards which, like the Golden Globes, became a platform for #MeToo activism. Like Meyers, host Jimmy

³³ Grace detailed a "date" she went on with Ansari in the piece, which ended in sexual assault. She accuses Ansari of coercing her to have sex and forcing her to do things that she did not want to do. However, her cues were sometimes more non-verbal, although others were verbal. This was what led to the "gray zone" nature of the encounter, as many critics argued that she never failed to give consent and that it was her responsibility to have left the situation or more assertively say no at times during the assault. Others also argued that he had no powerful influence over her career so the assault could not have been an abuse of power, at least in the same way other cases like the Weinstein one were. The situation became a long debate about whether or not she gave consent during the encounter, or whether or not it was even sexual assault, and whether or not abuses of power in sexual interactions were only present when an abuser had power over the victim's career (Way, 2018; Weiss 2018).

Kimmel acknowledged the movement and used it as material for his monologues. Actress Frances McDormand called for the activism to stretch beyond the theatre where the event was being held (Hawbaker and Johnson 2019). The Bill Cosby re-trial also began during this month, receiving massive coverage as it was predicted to indicate how the movement could affect a criminal verdict.

April was another consistent month when 136 articles were published. During this time, the Cosby trial yielded a guilty verdict, which many suggested was at least partially due to #MeToo. During this month, Stan Lee was also accused of sexual assault (Hawbaker and Johnson 2019). Cosby's story continued on into May, when there was a slight spike in articles posted, back up to 154. Spotify pulled R. Kelly's music from their streaming platform in the wake of accusations against the artist, and Harvey Weinstein turned himself into the NYPD after being charged for various crimes of sexual assault and rape (Hawbaker and Johnson 2019).

Over the summer, the NYT saw a substantial drop in the number of articles posted. Only 93 were posted in June, despite there still being some famous stories. Larry Nassar was indicted this month on charges³⁴, and Weinstein entered a plea of not guilty. July saw even fewer, about 73 articles, with the one major event being an investigation into the CEO of CBS, Leslie Moonves, for sexual harassment in the workplace (Hawbaker and Johnson 2019). August saw a slight increase, to 104 articles, potentially due to both the Avita Ronnell and Asia Argento cases. Ronnell, a renowned female-identifying feminist professor at New

³⁴ The Nassar case is an excellent example of how these accusations have not only affected perpetrators directly, but also spilled over to affect others involved. For instance, the accusations against Nassar forced the longtime president of Michigan State (where Nassar was a professor of medicine), President Lou Anna K. Simon, to resign on his day of sentencing. Several other affiliates of the college also resigned following the accusations because gymnasts who accused Nassar had told police and university officials years prior about the abuse, and were not helped (Gillispie 2018). Therefore, we can see that entire cover-up schemes are being implicated in these accusations, not only individual perpetrators.

York University was accused by one of her former male-identifying graduate students, Nimrod Reitman, of sexual assault (Greenburg 2018). Asia Argento, a female-identifying actress who is one of Weinstein's accusers and a notable name in the #MeToo movement, was also accused of sexual assault by Jimmy Bennett, a male-identifying actor, who was 17 at the time of the assault (Severson 2018a). Not only was she accused, it was also revealed that she had supposedly paid him off to cover up the incident. These two instances were particularly notable because both perpetrators accused were women. Also during this month were new developments in the Weinstein case and Louis C.K.'s return to comedy.

September brought a large spike in articles, with 219 posted by the NYT, almost double the amount of the previous month and the largest count since the start of the movement. This is likely due to the September 16th accusations of Dr. Christine Blasey-Ford against the Supreme Court Nominee Brett Kavanaugh (Hawbaker and Johnson 2019). Of the 219 articles posted during this month, 161 were posted between September 16th and September 30th, with Dr. Ford's testimony at Kavanaugh's confirmation hearing occurring on September 27th. Also occurring during September was the resignation of Leslie Moonves of CBS, who was originally investigated in June, after more women accused him of harassment (Hawbaker and Johnson 2019). Bill Cosby was sentenced, making him the first celebrity conviction post-#MeToo.

October continued with a high number of articles, 178 total, continuing to cover the aftermath of the Ford-Kavanaugh hearings. Despite her testimony, he was confirmed and sworn in on October 6th. October also brought the official one year anniversary of the accusations against Harvey Weinstein (October 5th) and one year since Milano's tweet and the rebirth of #MeToo (October 16th) (Hawbaker and Johnson 2019). This brought many

articles that reflected on the first year of the movement, such as the compilation published in the NYT of nine reflections of #MeToo, titled “This Moment Turned Out to Be Fleeting.” Burke spoke at a “town hall” event in Chicago titled “Keeping Black Girls at the Center of #MeToo” to celebrate the anniversary (Hawbaker and Johnson 2019).

Following the big anniversary, the NYT saw a drop in reports, down to only 75 in November, and only 83 in December, with only a few major cases here and there. Going into 2019, the first major case of the year centered around R&B Singer R. Kelly who had faced accusations of sexual assault for years. He was criminally tried several times in the past, but always acquitted. However, a new documentary titled “Surviving R. Kelly,” coupled with the #MeToo movement, finally brought a spotlight to his abuse that people took seriously. In January, 96 articles were posted about the movement, many of which focused on Kelly and his abuse. In February, 81 were posted, remaining fairly consistent with January, but a notable drop from the numbers seen in October and November of 2018. These articles also largely focused on Kelly, who was “charged with 10 counts of aggravated criminal sexual abuse,” almost “10 years after being acquitted on child pornography,” charges related to a video that supposedly showed him having sex with a minor (Hawbaker and Johnson 2019). In March 2019, the number decreased to one of the lowest since the initial days of the #MeToo revitalization, with only 42 articles posted. After the rush of 2018, it is now time to see how popular the movement will continue to be, and whether or not it will stay strong and forge ahead chasing systemic change.

Validating All Survivors: A Preface to My Discussion and Analysis

In the following sections, I will argue that the NYT presentation of the #MeToo movement excludes marginalized voices, largely due to Hollywood co-optation. When I

criticize Hollywood for dominating the conversation, this is not to discredit the stories of any survivor, even if they are an incredibly prominent or privileged individual. Their pain is valid, undeserved, and just as raw as anyone else's is. Furthermore, we can also acknowledge the ways in which celebrities are particularly vulnerable in their own ways. Gabrielle Union, an actress and rape survivor, points out that “no one understands how much female celebrities are physically touched and grabbed and shoved and fondled” (Krischer 2017). Celebrities are often subject to more unwanted touching than the average individual because of their prominence in the public eye.

However, celebrities still hold a significant amount of power and privilege, and there is a fine line here between validating someone’s trauma while also understanding how this privilege can affect their pathways to healing and justice. Yes, all pain is valid and important and should be addressed, “but words are also a luxury” (Abdulali 2018:25). Not all individuals have the same resources or social positions that allow them to tell their story in a relatively safe way. Abdulali (2018) goes on to point out,

For many, many women, speaking up is lethal. For every woman, it takes guts. An established, rich, white Hollywood star deserves Kudos for speaking out. A maid in a Mumbai apartment who is counting on her salary to support her children has to think a lot harder about outing her employer if he comes into her room at night (25-26).

For every woman, it takes guts, because even prominent women face repercussions.

However, what Abdulali (2018) points out is that different survivors have different resources to overcome these repercussions. When Dr. Blasey-Ford received threats as she spoke out against Judge Brett Kavanaugh, she had the financial stability to be able to move and pay for a private security detail (Taub 2019). This does not mean that she “had it easier,” but it is something that must be acknowledged. Pretending all survivors have the same ability to

navigate pathways to justice and healing does not help the survivors who face extra barriers.

Taub (2019) points this out, specifically in the context of Dr. Ford's case:

Following in [Dr. Ford's] footsteps hardly looks appealing to anyone. But for women with few resources, who could not afford to leave their homes or take other expensive measures to stay safe, it may look utterly impossible. A single mother working a factory job, considering whether to speak out against harassment by a supervisor, might see little possibility of surviving that kind of backlash. Underprivileged women in many developing countries may be even more vulnerable to the costs of a damaged reputation.

This is the tension that I wish to draw out in this paper. I do not criticize any survivor for speaking out, for telling their truth, and working hard to bring awareness to sexual violence.

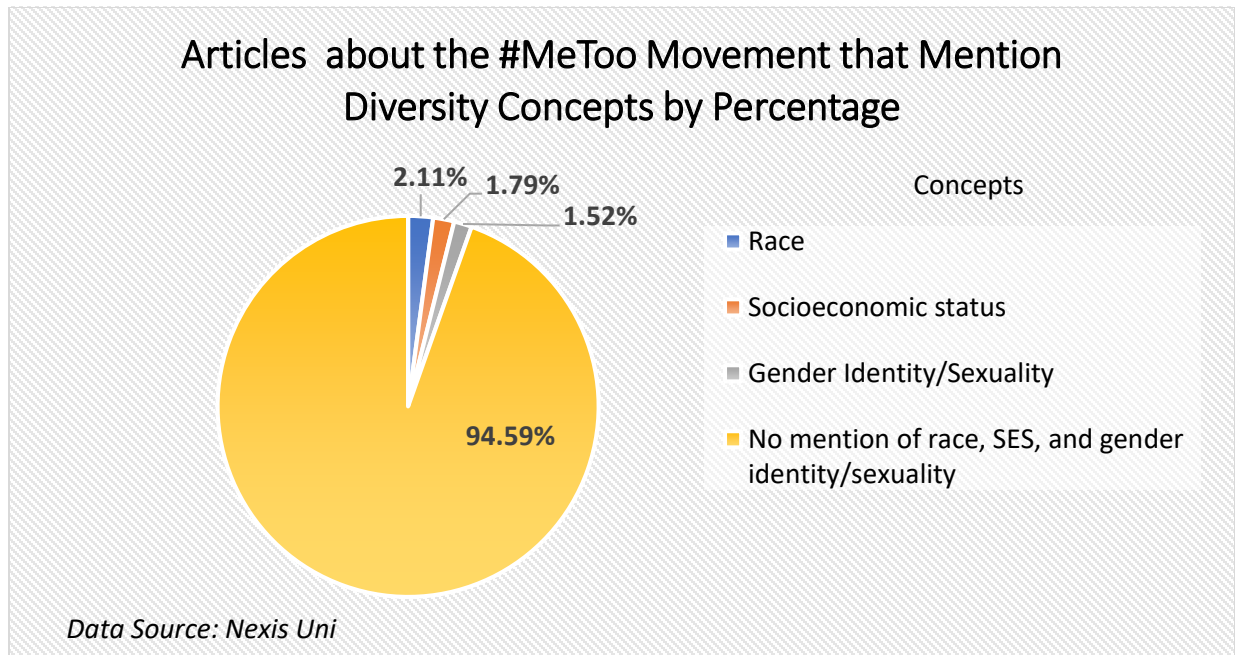
This feat is crucial and commendable. However, in these defining moments, we must also look to the shadows they cast, to the darkness that these spotlights hide. We must illuminate them in order to move forward and do better, to help those who do not have the power to contribute to discourse and knowledge production about the movement or about their experiences with sexual violence. We have to help those who still do not have the same power as others to speak and be heard. To elaborate, Rose (2013) states, "in all cases, power and control are involved. Physical, psychological, political, and cultural power shape who is able to exercise their will, and who is seen as credible and who is seen as less credible" (43). Therefore, as Abdulali (2018) points out, the fact that we are having these conversations is important, but we still have to work hard to include more voices and enact more change.

In the US, for all the spilled ink, we don't have too many passionate twitter debates about the fact that Native Americans are more than twice as likely to be raped or otherwise sexually assaulted as any other race...In the US, more than ninety percent of people with developmental disabilities are sexually assaulted. It goes on...we've started talking about rape, and these big dramatic moments are merely highlights in the ongoing discourse. They are markers along a very long journey towards what scholar and lawyer Catherine Mackinnon calls 'shifting gender hierarchies tectonic plates.' Breakfast conversations, random tweets, stories in the Metro section-it is all part of the conversation, and it all matters. But the conversation doesn't include everyone, not yet. Let's keep talking (Abdulali 2018:39).

So, without further ado, let's talk.

Exclusivity Within NYT Coverage

While the #MeToo website signals inclusivity through its discourse, the NYT's coverage of the movement indicates exclusivity of certain stories and groups, as seen in the chart below.



My search for articles that encompassed racial diversity only yielded 39 useful articles, out of the total of 1,848, or 2.11% of the total articles. For socioeconomic status, my search only yielded 33 useful articles out of the total 1,848, or 1.79%. For gender identity/sexuality, only 28 resulted in the search, out of the total 1,848, or 1.52%. In comparison, the other 94.59% of article with the phrase “#MeToo Movement” did not mention any of the terms I used to indicate these types of diversity. This shows that more marginalized stories are not part of the dominant discourse about #MeToo, specifically the NYT.

This exclusivity is more than numerical. When I oversampled for the experiences of marginalized communities, most of the articles that discussed these groups did so in the

context of discontent with the movement and how they felt excluded. These stories reinforce the frequency counts which suggest that marginalized stories are not represented in dominant news coverage about the #MeToo movement, as represented through the NYT.

But we now need a global effort-by rich and poor nations alike-to make the #MeToo principles truly universal (Kristof 2018).

Most women do not have the wealth or power of successful Hollywood actresses (whose power, of course, is nowhere near that of men in the industry that can force this sort of new consensus about right and wrong). So although #MeToo spread broadly around the world, reaching, for instance, actresses in India's Bollywood film industry, it has failed to help many ordinary women. If an American factory worker or a Mexican victim of sexual assault tries to call out an individual perpetrator, and maybe even a broader culture of abuse, she cannot count on powerful women and allies to come to her aid. Often, the abuse goes unpunished and the broader culture of harassment unchanged (Taub 2019).

The #MeToo movement is absolutely essential. It has raised a great deal of awareness. But a lot remains to be done for ordinary women, because for them, things aren't yet changing, and there's a lot of catching up to do (Nayeri 2018).

By suggesting that the movement needs to be made universal going forward, Kristof (2018) points out that it is currently not universal, in other words, exclusive. Similarly, Taub (2019) and Nayeri (2018) suggest that the movement³⁵ has done little to help "ordinary women."

The word ordinary, while vague, could refer to women of lower socioeconomic statuses, or generally women who do not have the same fame and social notoriety of those in Hollywood, who have been the face of the movement thus far. While these authors also recognize that the movement has accomplished many important things, they ultimately reinforce the ideas that

³⁵ As stated previously, whatever the movement "is" is difficult to define. However, these personal testimonies and perspectives suggest that the movement, whatever it is, is exclusive. This seems to come from however these people are seeing the movement represented. I cannot prove through my research and sample that these individuals are referring to representations specifically in the NYT. However, I will argue in this paper that representations in the NYT are exclusive of many stories, and therefore reflect an exclusive representation of the movement, one that is in line with some of the issues raised by these testimonies. In some areas of this section, I will still say "the movement" because that is what people are referring to, and I cannot know from this analysis what representations they mean. Therefore, for convenience purposes, I will use the same language they are using. However, in the rest of my analysis, I will be referring to discourses about the movement, which is what I am analyzing.

whatever the movement has done has not been enough, as it has excluded many marginalized voices.

Other articles within the sample identify more explicitly which groups, such as working class survivors and male survivors, have been left out.

Even as women around the world are speaking out against sexual misconduct, migrant women on the border live in the shadows of the #MeToo movement (Fernandez 2019).

In recent months, as women have spoken out about harassment-at media companies and technology start-ups, in the entertainment industry and on Capitol Hill-they have spurred quick action, with accused men toppling from lofty positions, corporations pledging change and lawmakers promising new protections. But much less attention has been focused on the plight of blue-collar workers, like those on Ford's factory floors. After the #MeToo movement opened a global floodgate of accounts of mistreatment, a former Chicago worker proposed a new campaign: '#WhatAboutUs' (Chira and Einhorn 2017).

[Terry Crews was] a rare male voice in the midst of countless women revealing stories of sexual harassment and assault in Hollywood (Hauser 2018).

In some sense, what separate Ohio State's abuse scandal from others are the victims: Young adult men, and many of them muscular wrestlers, left to grapple with pain and anguish they believed they were not entitled to. Having built their identities around traditional notions of toughness and stoicism, many are struggling with a new identity-#MeToo, or in their case, #UsToo (Edmondson and Tracy 2018).

I³⁶ tried to seek justice in a way that made sense to me at the time because I was not ready to deal with the ramifications of my story becoming public. At the time I believed there was still a stigma to being in the situation as a male in our society (Severson 2018c).

Here, we see that migrant women have been excluded, as they are seen as living in the "shadows" of the #MeToo movement. This is especially problematic because the discourse on the #MeToo website constructs the image of a movement that is for everybody, and especially for those who are less privileged. Migrant women are at a heightened risk for sexual violence, as we know that "one in three women are sexually assaulted on the

³⁶ This is a quote from Jimmy Bennett, a male actor who accused Asia Argento, a famous actress, of sexually assaulting him when he was 17 years old. She was in her 30s at the time.

dangerous trek up through Mexico” (Fernandez 2019). This is a higher rate than the average woman in the United States, where about one in six women will be victim of an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime (RAINN). Migrant women also often have limited English language capabilities, affecting their capacity to report violence they experience.

Furthermore, their undocumented status puts them at great risk during any interaction with law enforcement. This reinforces arguments made by Gubrium (2016), Briggs (2017), and Palmater (2016), who argue that Black women and Indigenous women face extra barriers when reporting sexual violence to law enforcement due to historical racism and oppression they have faced by police. They argue that these populations are often constructed as “deserving” of violence due to dehumanizing stereotypes. Migrant women often face similar constructions, due to their undocumented status. Without legal status, they are often seen as “deserving” whatever happens to them because they broke the law by illegally migrating, making them especially vulnerable to sexual violence and meaning they often fail to get justice for what happens to them.

Working class women are also a vulnerable population. The fact that working class women had to come up with their own hashtag, #WhatAboutUs suggests that they feel left out of #MeToo. These women have their own unique barriers to seeking justice when experiencing sexual violence and these stories must be taken into consideration by any activism that aims to end sexual violence. With fewer economic resources, it can be difficult for working class survivors to leave situations of abuse or afford legal aid when reporting.

Men similarly came up with their own hashtag- #UsToo. This suggests that they feel excluded by #MeToo, creating their own addendum. Hauser (2018) reinforces this, calling Terry Crews a “rare” male voice in the #MeToo movement. Jimmy Bennett also seems to

agree when he says that he specifically believed that there was still a large amount of stigma attached to being a male survivor which prevented him from coming forward, even under the new spotlight of #MeToo. This reflects gendered constructions about victimhood and predation in our patriarchal society (St. Felix 2018). In order to maintain a presentation of a masculine self, these male survivors had to think about coming out as a survivor of sexual violence, something that challenges hegemonic, socially accepted norms about masculinity and what it means to be a man. These examples together ultimately show that whatever representations of #MeToo that these individuals consume are not including their experiences, and are thus reinforcing dominant conceptions about sexual violence and who it affects. In doing so, these representations also reproduce notions of stratified credibility regarding who can speak out and be taken seriously regarding their experiences with sexual violence.

Another major group that has expressed feelings of being left out of the movement has been survivors of color.

I'm sure the #MeToo movement made many survivors of sexual violence feel less alone, but what about people like me? Does the #MeToo movement stand for me too? The woman who started #MeToo, Tarana Burke, says there is no 'model survivor,' but you wouldn't know that by reading the news. I'm not a beautiful white actress. I'm a young, black, queer, non-binary person with an office job... It's been an incredibly lonely experience... I'm sure the #MeToo movement made many survivors of sexual violence feel less alone. I hope one day people who look like me can start feeling that way too (Miranda 2018).

In the great awakening around sexual harassment [the Hill-Thomas hearings], race was politely ushered offstage. That problem persists. We are still ignoring the unique vulnerability of black women (Crenshaw 2018).

I³⁷ think the floodgates have opened for white women (Krischer 2017).

³⁷ A quote from actress Gabrielle Union, a Black actress.

The fury and the work and the organizing, much of it born out of anger and at injustice, which was done by women of color, is so often erased in the retelling (Howard 2018).

Well if you look at the women's march, the origins are with white female organizers who originally tried to call it the million women's march without acknowledging that it has been the name of an event staged by black women in Philadelphia years earlier. I³⁸ agree that one of the projects of a contemporary women's movement is to correct that. You can see the same with #MeToo. Tarana Burke is the person who developed the #MeToo movement, which was originally supposed to be about telling the stories of sexual predation and assault specifically for women and girls of color. Now, in some circles, #MeToo is understood to have been invented by white women in Hollywood (Howard 2018).

Have you noticed that the experiences of black women and girls have been ignored in the #MeToo movement? (Proulx 2019)

Social justice movements rarely center, for any meaningful period, on black girls, or anyone who has survived sexual violence. That's because black girls experience racial, gender, and economic oppressions all at the same time, a phenomenon the law professor Kimberle Crenshaw calls intersectionality. As a result, their voices and experiences do not neatly fit into a single-issue narrative of gender or race (Tillet and Tillet 2019).

Even today, as #MeToo continues to dominate headlines, black girls have been invisible in the movement. Instead, the media has primarily focused on white Hollywood actresses who have come forward with their accountants of systemic abuse and harassment (Tillet and Tillet 2019).

Here, we see that Black³⁹ women in particular have felt ignored by #MeToo. Union points this out by suggesting that, while it is important that the movement has helped white women, it is problematic that the floodgates have opened *only* for these women and not others. Tillet and Tillet (2019) comment that Black women, due to their experiences of both racial and gender-based oppression (among other, individual intersecting systems of oppression that work in individual Black women's lives), often fail to be encompassed in "single narrative movements," suggesting through this claim that representations of #MeToo present the

³⁸ A quote from author Rebecca Traister.

³⁹ As stated previously, I capitalize Black in this paper. Black is not capitalized in these quotes because they are direct quotes, and Black was not capitalized in these articles.

movement as one that is largely singular in its message and activism. As evidenced by this selection of quotes, whatever representations of the movement these individuals are referring to are not only singular in terms of race, but also gender identity, sexuality, and often socioeconomic status. This is a major issue, considering that sexual violence is anything but singular in how it manifests and who it affects. In fact, it often disproportionately affects the very groups that feel excluded by the movement, as seen in these examples. Sexual violence is an intersectional issue that requires an intersectional movement. This lack of intersectionality and inclusivity shows that whatever representations of #MeToo these people are consuming is exclusive in many ways.

Hollywood Cooptation

The above section outlines the ways in which the NYT coverage of marginalized voices in the #MeToo movement is lacking. It also shows that whenever these narratives are included, they mostly serve to express discontent with how they see the movement being represented, arguing it fails to take into account their lived experiences. In this section, I argue that this is at least partially explained by the fact that dominant news discourse about the movement, as represented here by the NYT, discursively constructs a very narrow representation of the #MeToo movement which excludes the stories that lie outside of this discourse. One of the main ways it does this is by defining the movement through its relationship with Hollywood. Outlined in a few quotes above, Miranda (2018), Howard (2018), and Tillet and Tillet (2019) point out that #MeToo has become defined itself by its association with Hollywood, stating that “the media has predominately focused on white Hollywood actresses,” or “#MeToo is understood to have been invented by white women in Hollywood.” By defining the movement through its connection to Hollywood, the NYT

discourse about #MeToo alienates those who do not fit this definition, those who are not part of Hollywood. I also argue that, in this way, there are essentially two #MeToo discourses: Burke's discourse seen through her statements and "me too" website, and the discourse the NYT uses to present the movement, one that is dominated with stories from Hollywood. The narrative from the "me too" website suggests that the movement's main intention is to provide pathways of healing for all survivors, regardless of their social status or identity, something completely at odds with this exclusivity seen in the NYT. This was a reality across the board in my sample as most articles, when defining the #MeToo movement, define it through its connection with Hollywood. Here are several other examples of how the NYT represented #MeToo through its association with Hollywood:

In light of the #MeToo movement, which has shaken Hollywood, politics, and other industries... (Yoon-Hendricks 2018).

The #MeToo movement has brought a reckoning to some of the most powerful men on earth, from politicians and movie magnets in the United States to business titans and Bollywood legends in India (Taub 2019).

#MeToo movement has brought down many powerful men over accusations of sexual misconduct that were once swept under the rug" (Baker and Hulse 2018).

"I saw the #MeToo movement taking shape online. Every day it seemed, there were new allegations of sexual misconduct being brought against prominent men in entertainment-actors, agents, producers (Baig 2018).

[the NYT article about Weinstein] hit like a meteor, drastically altering the landscape around how sexual misconduct is perceived, sending the #MeToo hashtag viral and, in turn, triggering an avalanche of accusations against powerful men (Salam 2018b).

Many celebrities have shared stories of past abuses, many powerful figures are facing consequences for their actions (Miranda 2018).

All of these definitions suggest that the #MeToo movement has centered on Hollywood, both in terms of accusers and perpetrators. This is also reinforced by the fact that

the most read articles about #MeToo published in the NYT have been articles about famous actresses. In 2017, the top #MeToo articles had titles such as “NBC Fires Matt Lauer, the Face of ‘Today,’” “Harvey Weinstein is My Monster Too,” written by actress Salma Hayek, “Harvey Weinstein Paid Off Sexual Harassment Accusers for Decades,” “Louis C.K is Accused by 5 Women of Sexual Misconduct,” “Gwyneth Paltrow, Angelina Jolie, and Others Say Weinstein Harassed them,” and “Lupita Nyong’o: Speaking Out about Harvey Weinstein” (Gabler et al. 2017; Hayek 2017; Kantor and Twohey 2017; Ryzik et al 2017; Kantor and Abrams 2017; Nyong’o 2017). In 2018, the top titles were “This is Why Uma Thurman is Angry,” “Aziz Ansari is Guilty. Of Not Being a Mind Reader,” and “Asia Argento, a #MeToo leader, Made a Deal with Her Own Accuser” (Down 2018; Weiss 2018a; Severson 2018a). These articles all focus on famous Hollywood stars, and are the most widely read articles about #MeToo published in the NYT.

This emphasis on celebrity stories shows that #MeToo has been co-opted by elites, and that these elites now dominate the way #MeToo is represented in the NYT. In terms of social movement theory, co-optation is complicated. Meaning, it is undeniable that this movement would not have faced the same revitalization if it was not for the social power of Hollywood actors and actresses. Piven and Cloward (1977) argue that “poor people’s movements,” or movements advocating on the behalf of marginalized groups in society, often rely on elites to gain legitimacy. However, through this often necessary association, these movements are vulnerable to co-optation. They argue that “elites...will try to quiet disturbances...by making efforts to channel the energies and angers of the protestors into more legitimate and less disruptive forms of political behavior, in part by offering incentives to movement leaders or, in other words, by coopting them” (Piven and Cloward 1977:30).

Gamson (1990), another social movement theorist elaborates on the results of co-optation, providing a rationale for why it is problematic. He argues that co-optation occurs when a movement achieves legitimacy, or social acceptance, but no “new advantages,” meaning that it fails to achieve change through its activism (Gamson 1990:384). This analysis fits the trajectory of the #MeToo movement. Years ago, when Burke began her work, she did not have enough resources or association with elites to project her work onto the national stage; however, now, with Hollywood, #MeToo was able to gain a different level of legitimacy. This legitimacy, however, has come with co-optation, meaning these elites now dominate the narrative of the movement in the media, co-opting it for their own interests,⁴⁰ focusing on their own stories which results in many groups feeling excluded.

This is further complicated by the fact that many of these elites are also survivors themselves; yet, as stated previously, by focusing on their stories and failing to acknowledge the extra resources elites have when addressing their experiences of sexual violence, the NYT discourse constructs specific knowledge about the #MeToo movement, suggesting it predominately helps certain people (Hollywood stars). As seen through RAINN and EROC statistics, we know that working class people, people of color, and the Trans community are all at higher risk of experiencing sexual violence, and have a harder time seeking justice due to systemic barriers and oppression. However, rather than reinforce this knowledge, the NYT discourse defines the #MeToo movement by its association with Hollywood, hiding these other stories and further silencing them.⁴¹ As Foucault (1984) states, words have the ability

⁴⁰ I don't think the co-optation here is necessarily intentional or malicious. However, it is damaging. Burke has been outspoken about how she feels that the current movement is now far away from what she originally intended, partially due to the media's emphasis on Hollywood. Hollywood has not responded to these critiques and has failed to ameliorate the problem. Therefore, although not intentional, I do still think that Hollywood has a responsibility to use this social power to shift the narrative back to Burke and back to survivors.

⁴¹ The role of celebrity activism in social movements and the international stage has been studied by many scholars. Most acknowledge that “celebrity activists...exercise significant discursive power by setting global

to construct knowledge, to “render” something “visibly present” (301). Here, by focusing on Hollywood and hiding these stories, the NYT discourse about the #MeToo movement fails to make these marginalized stories present, committing symbolic violence, subordinating them in reality by subordinating them in language, and ultimately reinforcing the oppressive forces that already hide these stories. As Piven and Cloward (1977) state, “once protest erupts, the specific forms it takes are largely determined by features of social structure” (36). Therefore, the NYT rhetoric reinforces social structures already in place that silence the narratives of oppressed groups.

Furthermore, co-optation is also complicated in this situation because the legitimacy attached the movement through elites has helped it make undeniable change. The EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) “saw about 7,500 harassment complaints filed from October 2017 to September 2018, a 12 percent increase compared to the previous year” (Chiwya 2018). The EEOC also “reported that it had seen its web traffic triple since #MeToo took hold” (Salam 2018b). In addition, one of the vice presidents of the National Women’s Law Center, Emily Martin, announced that in its first year, Time’s Up “has raised \$22 million in donations and assisted 3,500 women and men from all 50 states” (Chiwya

issues and problems on the agenda, influencing the terms of discussion, crystallizing possible alternatives and stimulating global debate” (Tsaliki et al. 2011:198). They are able to do this through their social power in the public sphere. However, some have criticized the role of celebrities as activists, stating “that while celebrity power may bring public attention to global issues, it is limited in affecting real change” (Tsaliki et al. 2011:198). This poses other issues here, regarding the sustainability of the #MeToo movement. If representations of the movement center on celebrities, but celebrities do not have the power to enact real change, the movement could be at risk of faltering and losing insurgency. Furthermore, other findings suggest that “celebrity activists might be more interested in constructing their own image than the cause they take up, and that activism might be more a question of egoistic branding than an altruistic attempt of doing something good” (Tsaliki et al. 2011:199). Activism may be a way for celebrities to remain in the spotlight at times when they are not actively involved in a movie or project (Tsaliki et al. 2011:196). Even if a celebrity’s motives are altruistic, when they become involved in popular social movements or activism, “the attention generally ends up being focused on the celebrity him/herself, with the issues to which the celebrity is trying to draw attention, remaining in the background” (Tsaliki et al. 2011:200). Thus, we should take the role of Hollywood co-optation of the #MeToo movement seriously. It could present a serious threat to the reach of the movement, as well as its sustainability going forward.

2018). This is significant because Time's Up specifically seeks to assist women in less notable industries.

There is also something to be said for taking down such powerful men. *The New York Times* posted a study that suggests that over 200 powerful men have fallen in the first year of #MeToo (in comparison with only 30 falling the year before due to accusations of sexual assault or harassment), and that forty-three percent of their replacements are women (Carlsen et al. 2018). Considering the historical silencing of women, and the credibility deficits suffered by survivors of sexual violence, this shift is certainly monumental. As Rose (2013) states, "most gender violence not only goes unpunished but is tolerated and suffered in silence by the society at large-social institutions, families, and individuals" (12). The fact that #MeToo presents a shift away from silence, one that is successfully holding some perpetrators accountable is crucial. One article reads, "one of the lessons from the #MeToo movement is that accountability starts at the top, and that top management should make clear that sexual violence, harassment and other forms of discrimination will not be tolerated" (Goldscheid 2019). This is also an important point, that holding the most powerful in our society accountable can set an example for other industries that this is a serious matter. Often, these powerful individuals are seen as "untouchable" because of their social, economic, and/or political power, as seen below:

An investigation into the workplace culture of New York Public Radio and its flagship station WNYC found that incidents of bullying and harassment were not reported to senior managers, in part because of fear of reprisals, a lack of confidence in how reports would be handled, and the perception that the station's stars were 'untouchable' (Chen 2018).

However, while important, this success should not be praised in place of criticizing the impact of co-optation. Discourse that emphasizes prominent industries, abusers, and

accusers as revolutionary stories of success ignores nuanced understandings of the role of social power in these accusations. Without this notoriety and social pressure behind these highly publicized stories, men would arguably not have been taken down, or at least not as easily. A survivor working as a hotel maid would not have the same social power to take down their abuser.⁴² They would not be able to rally behind a Twitter feed full of listeners who idolize them or get *The New York Times* to throw their story into the spotlight. Even with the power of social media, if an “ordinary” survivor had tweeted the same tweet as Milano, their social network would have been significantly smaller and their story perhaps less believed, affecting how far their tweet would have spread. Furthermore, because these perpetrators are held in such high esteem socially due to their professions, they are also held to different standards. It’s hard to imagine people we idolize to be “monsters” who have covered up sexual assault for decades. On the other hand, we may be more likely to expect stories of sexual violence from others or from people we do not know.

This relates back to Fricker’s (2007) idea of hermeneutical injustice, in which can be “the dominated live in a world structured by others for their purposes” (147). In this case, the social power behind Hollywood stars gives their stories more weight in dominant discourse, reinforcing dominant ideas of who gets to speak and be heard when telling their survivor story. Marginalized groups are not given the opportunity to engage in the same knowledge production about the #MeToo movement in dominant discourse, affecting what knowledge is constructed about the movement. When “the powerful have an unfair advantage in structuring collective social understandings,” the lived experiences of marginalized groups

⁴² Again, I would like to emphasize that every survivor faces risks when speaking out about sexual violence. Any survivor risks their reputation, personal relationships, and safety. However, some survivors have resources to overcome these challenges. They may have financial security that would prevent them from losing their livelihood, or the ability to protect themselves in ways others cannot. These factors are crucial to recognize in order to come up with the broadest spectrum of activism and to reach the most vulnerable populations.

who have less power are excluded, ultimately limiting how much we can address the roots of sexual violence (Fricker 2007:147).

Burke has criticized this emphasis on Hollywood in dominant media discourse and its consequences, stating,

You know how many people say, ‘The #MeToo movement-well Hollywood’s got it.’ Fuck Hollywood. Every time somebody asks me how I feel about them taking my movement, I say, ‘You can’t take shit that’s mine.’ This is not about Tarana Burke owning something. This is about a community I have lived in, worked in, given my blood sweat and tears to. This is our movement. Stop opting out of it (Riley 2018).

Overall, the NYT discourse constructs victimhood and advocacy around elite identity. This is at odds with the discourse Burke uses to present the movement, one that portrays a movement that helps all survivors, regardless of their identities, but also *particularly* those who are more marginalized and lack access to resources, as seen in the quote above.

Emphasis on Abusers

In addition to defining the movement around Hollywood, the quotes above also show how the NYT discourse has defined the movement through its association with powerful men and ability to take them down. This is further illustrated in other examples from my sample:

The #MeToo movement ended the careers of Matt Lauer and Charlie Rose (Grynbaum and Koblin 2017).

#MeToo movement has brought down many powerful men over accusations of sexual misconduct that were once swept under the rug (Baker and Hulse 2018).

What’s happening now is bigger than this case. Harvey Weinstein’s arrest represents an era of new accountability (McKinley Jr. 2018).

By defining #MeToo through its association with taking down prominent perpetrators, the NYT discourse constructs #MeTo as a movement that focuses on abusers and their stories rather than on survivors. As seen in examples above, almost every definition of #MeToo in the NYT articles from my sample focuses on the movement’s ability to take down powerful

men. By defining the movement through this lens, in addition to defining it through its association with Hollywood, the NYT has constructed a narrow narrative about what #MeToo's purpose is- in this case, to take down abusers. Again, if we consider the analytical frameworks of Foucault and Bourdieu, the way we talk about something constructs knowledge about it. If the NYT represents the movement as a movement to take down abusers, that discourse will construct knowledge about the movement in that way. This is problematic, because while taking down abusers can be a crucial part of justice and healing for survivors, it is not crucial for others. Therefore, by defining the movement through its association with abusers, the NYT representation of the movement privileges abusers over survivors, and excludes survivors who do not seek to take down their abusers.

The articles in my sample privilege abusers over survivors by frequently outlining abuser's accomplishments in a way that centers their experiences over that of survivors. For instance, several articles in my sample studied the story of Junot Diaz, a man accused of sexual assault. Instead of focusing on the survivors of this story, the article described Diaz as a "Pulitzer prize winning novelist," accused of forcibly kissing one of his graduate students (Alter 2018). It went on to describe how "the fallout was 'swift'" as events he had scheduled were cancelled and some booksellers took his books off their shelves. The main focus of this piece? The fact that M.I.T. decided to keep him on their faculty. "While some applauded the university's decision, others saw it as a setback for the #MeToo movement that might discourage others from speaking out about sexual harassment" (Alter 2018).

In this instance, the article focused more on Junot Diaz's story and the fallout he experienced from the accusations, rather than the stories of his accusers, or the fallout they experienced from the actual assault. As we know from Rose (2013), Abdulali (2018), and

Herman (1992), sexual violence produces trauma that can have profound consequences, such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, eating disorders, and even suicidal thoughts. Rather than work to construct knowledge about these painful consequences for survivors, this discourse emphasizes the difficulty abusers face when accused, such as losing their job or social ridicule. Mind you, survivors often face the same consequences, except not because they did anything wrong, but because society often blames survivors for their own assaults (Abduali 2018). In this way, an emphasis on survivors also reinforces the notion that perpetrators are not to be held accountable; rather, they should be pitied for all the hardships they face when accused, or continue to be praised for all they have previously contributed to society in spite of being an abuser.

This is ultimately at odds with the discourse outlined by the “me too” website, which aims to focus on survivors. Of course, as sexual violence is a problem of patriarchy, and because patriarchy hurts men in many ways, there needs to be some space to understand how abusers can also be victims in some ways. As outlined previously, patriarchy privileges masculinity, and violence has been a useful tool for men to maintain their privilege and status over women, thus reproducing patriarchy, as acts of violence are ways for men to reproduce “a particular form of masculine self” (Pease 2016:50). Rather than emphasize the pejorative qualities of these hegemonic, toxic constructions of masculinity that pressure men into a certain “presentation of self,” these articles emphasize how career fallouts harm these men, which should not take center stage at the expense of survivor’s stories. The former would be a more productive lens to take when critiquing the roots of sexual violence, something that should be emphasized in representations of a movement that seeks to end sexual violence.

Other articles continue with this theme, emphasizing how accusations have damaged the careers of perpetrators, some with more disdain than what was seen with Diaz. Trump, when quoted about Brett Kavanaugh stated that he was “one of the finest people that I’ve ever known...never had even a little blemish on his record” (Baker and Hulse 2018). The same article quotes former Republican⁴³ Senator John C. Danforth who states, “I just feel so terribly sorry for Kavanaugh and what he’s going through...here’s a man who’s had just a marvelous reputation as a human being and now it’s just being trashed. I felt the same way about Clarence” (Baker and Hulse 2018). These articles spotlight the troubles of the accused, while failing to take the same time to discuss the ways in which Dr. Ford’s life has been drastically altered by the assault she experienced.⁴⁴ One senator was quoted in her defense, while three were quoted in Kavanaugh’s. In this way, the NYT discourse, by focusing on abusers, emphasizes their story over the stories of survivors, something that undermines the representation of the movement as seen on the “me too” website, which centers the experiences of survivors.

This emphasis on abusers has also opened up an avenue for people to criticize how perpetrators are treated. For instance, regarding Stephen Henderson, Pulitzer-Prize winning

⁴³ Specifically with political cases, it is fascinating how credibility becomes constructed along partisan lines. Meaning, accusers are seen as credible (at least partially) by different parties depending on the party allegiance of the accused. If a survivor accuses a republican (senator, representative, judge etc.) of sexual violence, they are often believed by the Democratic Party and not by the Republican Party, and vice versa. This came up in several stories discussed within the sample, such as the Ford-Kavanaugh Hearings, Hill-Thomas Hearings, and Meredith Watson’s public accusations against the Virginia Lieutenant Governor (Eligon 2018). Also interestingly, beliefs about #MeToo and sexual violence in general are more divided along partisan lines than by gender. A study published by NPR suggests that “on whether alleged victims of sexual assault should get the benefit of the doubt, 85 percent of Democrats agree, compared to 67 percent of Republicans” (Smith 2018). This gap is almost twice the size of the gender gap in opinion. Furthermore, with regards to whether or not false accusations are common, the partisan gap is four times the gender gap with 77 percent of republicans believing they are common, compared to only 37 percent of democrats (Smith 2018). Although I do not have the space to devote an entire section to the ways in which credibility is stratified by political allegiance or how opinions on the movement differ based on political affiliation, I think it is worth mentioning.

⁴⁴ I would also like to note that many of the NYT articles that covered the Ford-Kavanaugh hearings did not mention #MeToo and did not discuss the hearings in the context of #MeToo. Therefore, few articles discussing the hearings appeared within my sample, meaning that there may have been some articles that did come to her defense that are not represented here.

Detroit Free Press columnist and editorial page editor who was fired for reports of “sexually themed conversations” and “rejected passes at a woman working in another department” all which happened many years prior, Stephens (2017) wrote, “does this behavior really merit professional decapitation? Wouldn’t the apology, plus, say, a monthlong suspension, have sufficed?” For Stephens (2017), sexual harassment is not a serious enough offense to take down an “honorable” man, something he establishes through listing Henderson’s credentials. He goes on to write,

Should Harvey Weinstein and Al Franken be punished the same way? Should George H. W. Bush be subjected to the same obloquy as Louis C.K.? Don’t we have the moral capacity to distinguish between aggressive sexual predation and run-of-the-mill romantic bungling-between a pattern of abusive behavior and a good man’s uncharacteristic bad moments? It will not serve the interests of women if #MeToo becomes a movement that does as much to wreck the careers of people like Henderson as it does to bring down the Weinstein’s of the world. Now will it do much to convince men that #MeToo is a movement that is ultimately for them if every sexual transgression, great or small, vile, crass, or mostly clumsy is judged according to the same Procrustean standard (Stephens 2017).

Stephens (2017) has a point here, as it is of course crucial to discuss the differences between perpetrators’ actions; but this discourse constructs #MeToo as a movement that calls for all accused people to be treated the same regardless of differences in their actions, which is not the discourse we see on Burke’s site. Rather, her site suggests that #MeToo is a movement claiming that no sexual violence is acceptable, and that it is unfair to try and rank them all in some hierarchy. As we know from RAINN and Rose (2013), many survivors of different forms of sexual violence face the same physical and psychological consequences. It is also unfair to downgrade a perpetrator’s actions based on their supposed “honorable character.” Their character does not ameliorate what happened to a victim; it does not lessen their trauma. Suggesting that this man’s “honorable character” is worth more than the victim’s

character, or that it should excuse his behavior is another continuation of patriarchal privileging of men and their actions.

Furthermore, these are still cases of an abuse of power. While an unwanted kiss is surely different than sexual assault, if both are in the context of a professor threatening their student's grades or a celebrity trading sexual favors for career advancements, both need to be addressed as just as wrong. Sexual violence "is fundamentally about power and control, and control over the actions and movements of others" (Rose 2013:116). Therefore, efforts to end sexual violence should address this issue through discourse. Currently, the NYT discourse about #MeToo is not emphasizing this issue. Focusing on perpetrators and what we should do with them depending on what exact sexual violence they committed becomes counterproductive at drawing out conversations about power relations, all while sacrificing important conversations about how we can help survivors seek healing, justice, and be able to speak out about their experience with sexual violence.

Defining Justice Through Legal Frameworks

The NYT's discursive emphasis on taking down abusers has not only taken the spotlight away from survivors, but also constructed legal frameworks as the dominant pathway to justice and healing for survivors, further narrowing the NYT's representation of the #MeToo movement. This is evident by the NYT's focus on "due process," a term regarding legal proceedings in cases of sexual violence:

We need a justice system that treats both accusers and the accused fairly, and affords both due process (Eligon 2019).

The sheer duplicity of her conduct is quite extraordinary and should demonstrate to everyone how poorly the allegations against Mr. Weinstein were actually vetted and accordingly, cause all of us to pause and allow due process to prevail, not condemnation by fundamental dishonesty (Stevens and Severson 2018).

Our current situation-guilty because accused...is absolutely terrifying to me. And it should be to anyone that cares about justice and due process (Bennett 2018).

However as allies to the victim and voyeurs of an event, we should find a better way to balance support of the victim with due process for the accused (Stevens 2018).

These sentiments suggest that many feel that the accusers are being believed without any proof, thus violating the principle in the United States legal system of “innocent until proven guilty.” However, these concerns refuse to acknowledge that they too violate this sentiment, by assuming survivors are guilty (of lying about experiencing sexual violence) until proven innocent. Therefore, they fail to acknowledge the fact that the goal of “believe survivors” is to discredit the proliferated trope of the lying, deceitful accuser by giving survivors credit, rather than assuming guilt without any proof. Statistically, this trope is not founded in evidence. Research shows that false reporting only occurs somewhere between 2% and 10% of cases (“False Reporting” 2012).

Furthermore, because the NYT discourse has defined the movement by its ability to take down prominent men, specifically in this legal way, it constructs knowledge about the dominant pathway to justice that survivors should take- accusations actualized through the criminal justice system. This is evident by the NYT’s focus on what “due process” means in these cases, a reference to legal proceedings. Without an emphasis on abusers and taking them down, it is unlikely so many articles would emphasize this question of due process. This then becomes problematic because,

if they fail to create a reckoning for perpetrators, they can send a somewhat discouraging message: that there is little appetite for systemic change among those in power, and few consequences when they fail to do so...that may push women out of the public sphere-further reducing their influence over public norms (Taub 2019).

Here, Taub (2019) echoes the same concern Alter (2018) expresses, wondering if this lack of action indicates that the accusations “failed” in some way. This concern can discourage

survivors from speaking out even more. This shows how it is problematic to rely on a legal system that is unstable and unreliable, specifically in cases of sexual violence, where we know that “only 5 out of every 1,000 perpetrators will end up in prison” (RAINN). Furthermore, as seen in this quote from Taub (2019), the NYT’s discourse about the movement suggests that the only way to achieve justice is “creating a reckoning” through a systemic, legal framework. In other words, a survivor must speak out and hold their perpetrator accountable legally in order to find any form of justice. Again, if we understand the analytical frameworks of Foucault (1994) and Bourdieu (1983), we know that by representing movement goals in this singular way the NYT’s discourse about the movement constructs knowledge about the movement in a narrow way, one that only focuses on legal accountability. Foucault also argues that because language constructs reality, what is not defined within the dominant discourse is then either completely excluded from, or at least subordinated within, reality (Foucault 1984:316). Therefore, this emphasis on the legal system by the NYT’s representation of #MeToo obscured knowledge about other pathways to finding accountability and justice.

This is crucial, because as Rose (2013) states, “it is clear that one’s position of power in society (marked by ‘race,’ class, gender, age, sexual orientation, etc.) influences whether one is seen as credible and authoritative” (83). This means that some individuals, especially those whose social positions have been historically oppressed through institutions such as the legal system, may desire to seek accountability and justice outside such a system. As Karasek (2018) argues,

There are other models out there. Black survivors, who are often reticent to report sexual assaults to the same officers who criminalize their family and friends, and Native American survivors, who are often barred from pressing criminal charges against non-Native perpetrators in tribal courts, have long argued for alternatives.

Specific stories about seeking accountability outside of the criminal justice system is something we might see with more narratives from people of color, something that is largely absent in the NYT's coverage of #MeToo. We see that here, where Karasek (2018) points out that marginalized groups have historically looked for pathways outside of the traditional legal system. She goes on to outline examples of alternative avenues towards finding justice outside the criminal justice system, two of which specifically came from women of color.

[Mary Koss, an academic at University of Arizona] piloted a program called Restore that uses a framework in which the harm-doer takes responsibility for what happened and a formal plan is developed for the person to make amends and change his behavior. The approach also involves community members along with family and friends (Karasek 2018).

In 2016, Black Women's Blueprint, an organization that advocates for black women who are survivors of sexual violence, convened a Truth and Reconciliation Commission conceived by its members. The four-day commission gave 15 survivors the space to share their stories and be publicly affirmed by the community. It also created space for individuals, whether hard-doers or those who enabled them, to take responsibility...some men in attendance said that they had sexually harmed women and offered apologies, which took the burden off survivors to initiate reconciliation (Karasek 2018).

Other Black feminists have long argued for other reasons to work outside the criminal justice system. Angela Davis (2005) acknowledges that dismantling the prison industrial complex should be an intersectional feminist project, as it upholds damaging, racialized, capitalistic structures. We also know this from Michele Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*, and the documentary *13th*, which both trace the ways in which the modern prison-industrial complex is a legacy of slavery, one that disproportionately targets people of color and feeds into capitalistic enterprises with for-profit prisons (Alexander 2010; DuVernay 2016). Moreover, prisons do not successfully rehabilitate people, are spaces that reinforce hegemonic masculinity, and are often sites of widespread sexual abuse. Therefore, feminists, and feminist movements to end sexual violence, should struggle with the idea of throwing

more people in prison at will, even abusers. Prisons can end up reinforcing the underlying issues that contribute to widespread sexual violence.

In this way we see that understanding the experiences of more marginalized groups is crucial for transforming dominant understandings of how we deal with sexual violence. The NYT's discourse does not emphasize these transformative notions, reinforcing dominant understandings by focusing predominantly on legal pathways to justice. We can see here how Black survivors and Native American survivors have particular needs when it comes to seeking justice, specifically avenues outside of the traditional legal system. Due to the exclusivity in the movement as portrayed by the NYT, these issues are not taking center stage in the NYT's representation of the movement.

Burke acknowledged the emphasis that the news media places on abusers and the legal system herself, citing it as one of her main reasons for creating the "Survivor Story Videos" seen on the "me too" website. Quoted in one of the NYT articles from my sample, she states that her intentions were to "place the focus back where it belongs: the dignity, humanity and healing of all survivors" (Harris 2019). Burke's language here further separates her representation of the movement from the NYT's representation of the movement, suggesting that the focus of the movement as it is portrayed in the media,⁴⁵ up to this point, has not been on survivors, necessitating these videos to redirect this focus. An article in the *LA Times*, linked on the "me too" website and announcing these videos, corroborates this, mentioning that "while the #MeToo movement has shed light on the ubiquity of sexual harassment, assault and rape, a majority of that spotlight has centered on the assailants: their

⁴⁵ While she only vaguely references the "media," and not specifically the NYT, her comments mimic themes evident in my sample. Therefore, I am willing to assume the NYT discourse is included as a target for her criticisms.

horrific crimes, numerous cover-ups, eventual oustings and, sometimes, professional resilience” (Lee 2019).

The NYT had a chance here, in Harris’ article covering these videos, to mimic the *LA Times* and acknowledge this disparity. However, it ultimately failed, as evidenced even by the title and other discourse in the article. The title of the article is, “Terry Crews and Other Sexual Violence Survivors Narrate New ‘Me Too’ Videos.” This title continues to focus on the famous actor who made a video, relegating the others to the status of nameless, “other survivors.” While the article does mention that two videos are narrated by men and two by women, it fails to delve into the intricacies of the videos, such as Daniela’s citizenship status or the variety of experiences each survivor went through. It does however, describe Crews’s assault, which was the subject of several other articles published in the NYT, reinforcing the focus on “prominent” survivors. Overall, rather than detail the survivor stories, the article continues to define #MeToo by its ability to take down abusers, stating the movement has “knocked men who were accused of abuse from positions of power” (Harris 2019). This language reinforces the NYT’s emphasis on Hollywood and on abusers representing the movement as one that exists for Hollywood and for taking down abusers legally.

In this way, we can see how centering the needs and experiences of survivors transforms understandings of how to approach activism. Many survivors still do not have the desire or comfort to be able to speak out, and others have experienced oppression in certain spaces, such as the criminal justice system. When we center the needs of survivors, we see this and understand that some need alternative spaces for justice that acknowledges these needs. For example, some survivors need spaces where perpetrators can take the burden of telling away, such as those outlined by Karasek (2018). Furthermore, alternative spaces such

as those she outlined invite wrong-doers in, asking them to take responsibility and have discussions about how sexual violence is perpetrated, without condemning them to the criminal justice system. In looking to end sexual violence, these are steps that can get us there, steps that address the roots of the problem and invite perpetrators into the conversation to take responsibility for their actions and to learn how to not perpetuate them. As Pease (2016) argues, in addressing patriarchal issues, we cannot only focus on the individual or the systemic levels; we must integrate both into our activism to ensure that these issues are addressed and not reproduced at either level. Karasek (2018) agrees, arguing that we need to go beyond the criminal justice system which cannot fully account for cultural forces that help reproduce sexual violence. “#MeToo has made clear, sexual injustices, from harassment to rape and assault, are deeply ingrained in American society, involving people from all walks of life. *We cannot jail, fire or expel our way out of this crisis.* We need institutional responses to sexual harm that prioritize both justice and healing, not one at the expense of the other” (Karasek 2018, my emphasis).

Judith Butler (1997) elaborates on the insufficiency of criminal justice frameworks, arguing that every time a person uses speech (she specifically focuses on hate speech) they invoke other instances of that speech, ones that have occurred throughout history (Butler 1997:49-50). For example, when a perpetrator dismisses a survivor’s complaints about sexual assault and does not take them seriously, or in fact continues to insult them or make advances on them, the perpetrator is invoking a history of such actions and utterances. They are not the first to utter those words or to act in that way, and there is therefore no origin to their act or speech that can be pinpointed. To this, Butler asks, how do we prosecute an unprosecutable history? When we prosecute an individual for their utterances (or even their actions), are we

not trying to then prosecute some origin that does not exist (Butler 1997:49)? She doesn't argue that this means that we should not prosecute individuals for these incidents, but rather wants to shed light on what we are truly trying to do when we prosecute such actions, and how impossible that task actually is. If this history of repeated utterances is responsible (at least to some extent) for current utterances, and yet we cannot prosecute this history, how do we enact change? How do we address this history? This is another flaw in our legal system, especially considering its failure to rehabilitate those who enter it-it ceases to address this unprosecutable history, something that can only be addressed through education and cultural changes. These questions point to the fact that the NYT discourse about the #MeToo movement should have a more critical, nuanced approach to dealing with perpetrators, one that acknowledges the role that these problematic social institutions play and one that does not emphasize the criminal justice system as the main avenue towards justice. Conversations about these issues are not easy, but they are important.

It is important to acknowledge that this emphasis on perpetrators is at least partially due to historical developments in the women's movement and anti-sexual violence movements. For years, sects of the women's movement (especially movements to end domestic violence) emphasized providing resources to victim-survivors, helping them to find healing from trauma and remove themselves from dangerous situations. However, around the 1970s, a combination of "women's rights groups" and "lawsuits accusing police of negligence" in domestic violence cases began to impact legislation on the issue (Hirschel 2008:4). Mainly, these activists attempted to give police officers the ability to make arrests in cases of domestic violence without a warrant through the introduction of mandatory arrest laws. This redirected part of the women's movement towards an emphasis on holding

perpetrators accountable in these instances of abuse.⁴⁶ In addition, the emergence of masculinity studies, largely beginning with R.W. Connell's 1995 book *Masculinities*, shifted academic focus within the field of gender studies to men and how masculinities have been constructed in damaging ways that have contributed to sexual violence. These perspectives reinforced the emerging viewpoint that perpetrators should be held accountable and men, both as perpetrators and as allies share the burden of speaking out about sexual violence, rather than placing the responsibility and burden solely on survivors (typically but not always women). While empowering survivors to speak out and ensuring that they were heard was still an important frame of activism, but this emphasis on holding abusers accountable became an important focus for anti-sexual violence movements.

While I acknowledge this historical shift and the importance of holding perpetrators accountable, I argue that the way that the NYT emphasizes perpetrators in its discourse about #MeToo continues to perpetuate the patriarchal entitlement of perpetrators over those who they commit violence against. By focusing on their stories over that of survivors, the discourse constructs knowledge that their stories are more important. Furthermore, because the focus has been on such prominent men, the discourse constructs the idea that a survivor's story is only worth telling if their abuser is prominent. The worth and weight of their

⁴⁶ Mandatory arrest policies have a complicated history. While these policies vary from state to state (some laws require mandatory arrest, others "prefer" arrest, and others leave it to the officer's discretion), they have long been criticized as leading to dual arrests, rather than successful holding solely perpetrators accountable. In fact, some studies suggested that in some cases, officers were actually more likely to arrest women, either instead of their abusers or in dual arrest cases (Hirschel 2008:5). However, as Hirschel (2008) points out through a National Institute of Justice (NIJ) study, many previous studies that suggest this were limited by small sample sizes. Nevertheless, there are many theories as to why women often get arrested in these cases, such as "the fact that officers want to make fair, unbiased arrests," therefore choosing "to arrest all violent parties in a domestic dispute" (Hirschel 2008:5). This again shows that focusing on the criminal justice system as a dominant pathway for justice can be problematic, as it can end up placing victims in more contact with the criminal justice system than necessary. As stated previously, there are many marginalized groups, such as people of color, who fear the criminal justice system and its historical legacy of racism. These policies, while attempting to focus on perpetrators, can actually end up harming victims through the added trauma of arrest, or make them fear reporting all together knowing how the criminal justice system has historically treated their communities.

accusation, to some extent, becomes defined through the notoriety of their abuser. In these discourses, if we wish to both acknowledge this historical shift but still support survivors, we need to seek more of a balance in how we talk about perpetrators and victim-survivors. The fact that the NYT is focusing on holding perpetrators accountable is not inherently problematic; it is more about *the way in which* it focuses on perpetrators through discourse-emphasizing their accomplishments and the struggles they have due to these accusations, as well as by solely focusing on legal frameworks as the dominant pathway towards healing, which ignores how many marginalized groups have experienced painful oppression by legal institutions.

Emphasis on Serial Abusers

The NYT's discourse about the #MeToo movement has focused not only on abusers in general, but also on specific types of abusers. First of all, as argued in the previous section, the emphasis has been on particularly powerful abusers, in terms of fame, social, political, and economic power. This creates knowledge that the only newsworthy cases or cases that merit justice are those that involve powerful abusers. In addition to focusing on prominent men, the NYT discourse has also predominantly focuses on serial abusers. Harvey Weinstein is the most prime example of this case, as he was accused by hundreds of women of sexual assault and harassment (Kantor and Twohey 2017). In addition to Weinstein, Larry Nassar faced hundreds of accusers (Edmondson and Tracy 2018). Others may not have faced hundreds, but still faced multiple, such as Bill Cosby (Tuerkheimer 2018b), Matt Lauer (Grynbaum and Koblin 2017), and Louis C.K. (Barnes and Buckley 2018). Even articles published about more marginalized groups, such as working class women that work at Ford, rely on the narrative of a serial abuser (Hsu 2018; Chira and Einhorn 2017). Williams (2018)

discusses this phenomenon, arguing that one of the main reasons Nassar's case specifically was so successful was because he "had left behind far too many victims for people to simply ignore." She goes on to explicitly say that "the most powerful cases are where there are multiple accusers...but what we don't know is what impact #MeToo would have on a single accuser" (Williams 2018). In this way, she argues that mainstream media has not sufficiently addressed the impact #MeToo would have on a single abuser. This goes back to Foucault's (1984) argument, that what is included in discourse is included in reality, is constituted into knowledge, but what is not defined within the dominant discourse is then either completely excluded from, or at least subordinated within, reality (Foucault 1984:316). In this way, by focusing on serial abusers, the NYT's discourse about #MeToo constructs knowledge that credible cases of sexual violence are those with serial abusers, subordinating knowledge about what would happen with single-abuse cases.

While the emphasis on serial abusers accomplishes this, the NYT has reported on some cases of one-time assaults, ones that show the impact an emphasis on serial abusers can have. These cases show that those making single accusations still struggle for credibility, arguably at least partially because the NYT's discourse about the movement constructs credibility around the necessity of corroboration. For example, a major reason Dr. Ford's credibility was attacked during the hearings was because there was no one to corroborate her story. Anita Hill faced the same issue during the Hill-Thomas hearings. In addition, Bennett (2018) profoundly criticizes the accuser of Aziz Ansari, who details one incident in which he assaulted her, attacking her credibility and judgement in calling her experience assault. Williams (2018) elaborates on these attacks of credibility, specifically within a legal context, stating,

There are also some concerns that juries may come to expect strong evidence of a pattern, the same way they have come to expect advanced forensics like DNA testing, even though it is not always available. If it's the case where there are 60 accusers and six come forward-and that's the only way a case is brought-that's a problem...there's the appearance that for women to be believed, it couldn't just be one, it had to be many.

In this way, we can see specifically how the serial abuser narrative in the NYT begins to construct notions of credibility around the establishment of a pattern.⁴⁷ In these cases, the NYT's representation of #MeToo constructs credibility along the lines of multiple accusers whose acts become too numerous to ignore. This also feeds off of the NYT's focus on a legal context for finding accountability. Criminal justice discourse argues that the accuser must have some concrete proof and corroborating accounts. In the absence of such proof, their credibility is diminished. We have long known that seeking credibility within the criminal justice system, particularly for single accusers of sexual violence, is often difficult. This is another reason why legal frameworks can be damaging. Rather than root its activism and validation of survival stories within the criminal justice system, the NYT discourse should align with Burke's representation of the movement which focuses on validating survivors with community resources and promoting healing within both that context and within the self. While the legal system can be an important avenue for justice, first empowering survivors and validating their stories through other, more stable means can promote more

⁴⁷ This also feeds into patriarchal constructions about women. Women are often "suspected of gaming a system where sex is a powerful lever," and thus portrayed as conniving liars making up claims to ruin someone's life (Chira and Einhorn 2017). This stereotype further reinforces the notion that accusers need corroborating evidence. "How do you know the woman is telling the truth and she didn't get her buddies together to come up here and say this" (Chira and Einhorn 2017)? This is also supported by the belief in the United States, "innocent until proven guilty." However, this belief fails to acknowledge that in these cases, these accusers are seen as guilty-of lying-just by the fact that they are women. All of this is to say that the necessity for corroborating accounts is problematic in cases of sexual violence, and the fact that the NYT discourse about the #MeToo movement focuses on serial cases of abuse that *do* have corroborating evidence fails to create space for discussions about this nuance and other cases without this evidence.

healing in the long run and help strengthen their resilience in the face of a difficult system to work within.

Overall, the language in the NYT coverage of the movement ultimately constructs perpetrators as only serial abusers, reinforcing legal discourse about sexual violence cases and excluding more nuanced understandings of justice and single-abuse cases in the process. As Foucault (1984) and Bourdieu (1983) argue, that which is ignored in discourse is then subjugated within reality and knowledge production. Therefore, the failure to also incorporate and validate claims of single acts of abuse within the dominant NYT's discourse about the movement produces the knowledge that abusers are those who commit acts of sexual violence multiple times and are accused multiple times.

Gendered Abusers

Not only does the NYT's discourse construct the image of perpetrators as only those who are serial offenders, but it also constructs an image that suggests that perpetrators can only be men. This reinforces dominant, gendered constructions about victimhood and predation (St. Felix 2018). However, as Rose (2013), Sheffield (1997) and Smith (2005) argue, sexual violence is ultimately about power and control, and not just about men and women, and therefore sexual violence can hypothetically occur in any relationship where there is some sort of power imbalance. This means that women too can be abusers, and that abuse can happen in non-heterosexual relationships. I argue that this is another reason many individuals feel excluded by representations of #MeToo movement, because some representations of the movement in mainstream media discourse, as shown in the NYT, have not allowed space for non-binary individuals, non-heterosexual cases of sexual violence, and female abusers.

Because the NYT discourse about the movement focuses on abusers as “powerful men,” when there *were* two incredibly prominent cases of women being accused, the NYT discourse portrayed the movement as ready to erupt. Jimmy Bennett, an actor, accused Asia Argento, a famous actress, of assaulting him when he was 17. Bennett claimed that following the attack, he suffered from anxiety and depression which impacted his ability to work and earn money. He cited differences in his earnings in the five years before the attack (which totaled in the millions of dollars), compared with his current earnings of only around \$60,000 a year (Weiss 2018). Therefore, he sued Argento, arguing she owed him money to make up for this lost income.

Documents showing that Ms. Argento had arranged to pay \$380,000 to Mr. Bennett, after he notified her last November that he would sue over their May 2013 encounter in a California hotel room. She acknowledged that she had paid Mr. Bennett...she said the payment was intended to help Mr. Bennett out of his financial troubles...upon the condition that he would no longer suffer any further intrusions into our life (Severson 2018b).

When the story broke, many feared the #MeToo movement was in jeopardy. Argento had been a leading voice in the movement as one of Weinstein’s accusers. Many felt similarly when Avita Ronnell was accused, as she was a vocal feminist. In both cases, other feminists flocked to these women’s defenses, citing their acclaimed backgrounds and accomplishments as reason that they should not be demonized. Rose McGowan, another leader in the #MeToo movement argued that “we ought to reserve judgement. We ought to take seriously the ruining of a person’s reputation and career until we have all the facts. We ought to consider the context of the accusation” (Weiss 2018). However, as Weiss continues, that advice is “a bit rich” coming from a person (McGowan) who has insisted that “anything less than immediately believing accusers is moral cowardice. It is a bit confusing coming from someone who has advocated mercilessness toward alleged sexual harassers” (Weiss

2018). McGowan's logic is the same logic that #MeToo advocates have been using to demonize all male abusers, the same logic that reinforces rape culture by saying that ruining someone's career is somehow more serious than sexual assault (Abdulali 2018:133). Weiss acknowledges this, pointing out,

A young up-and-comer blows the whistle on a powerful mentor who wielded control over his career. Entrenched interests rush to the defense of the accused, venerating the powerful and actively smearing the character and motivations of the accuser. It's a repeat of the sexual harassment stories we've spent the past year reading about, only with the genders flipped (Weiss 2018).

A similar defense was presented for Avita Ronell.

Avita Ronell, a feminist star professor, has been accused by her former graduate student, a man named Nimrod Reitman, of sexually harassing him over the course of three years. After an 11-month Title IX investigation, the university decided to suspend Professor Ronell for the coming academic year. Believe survivors right? Not so fast. In a letter signed by some of academia's biggest feminist luminaries, including Judith Butler and Gayatri Spivak, Mr. Reitman is accused of waging a 'malicious campaign' against the professor. The signatories 'testify to the grace, and keen wit, and the intellectual commitment of Professor Ronell and ask that she be accorded the dignity rightly deserved by someone of her international standing and reputation.' Apparently, dignity is a privilege reserved for the tenured (Weiss 2018).

In this way, these male survivors faced some of the same stigma that other survivors of sexual violence face, arguably because victimhood is feminized. Patriarchal constructions about women lead to them to being "suspected of gaming a system where sex is a powerful lever," and thus portrayed as conniving liars making up claims to ruin someone's life (Chira and Einhorn 2017). If victimhood is feminized, and thus these men become somewhat feminized when coming out as survivors, they face similar constructions about victimhood that female sexual violence survivors face. These men were accused of "gaming the system" in order to get money, in Bennett's case, or smear the name of a powerful, feminist professor, in Reitman's case. This also relates back to patriarchal constructions about hegemonic masculinity, which suggest that men always want (hetero) sex (Newsom 2015). Wakelin and

Long's (2003) data from their study reinforces this, as their results suggested "if a heterosexual man were to be attacked by a woman rather than a man, more blame may be attributed to him due to patriarchal constructions that heterosexual men always want (heterosexual) sex (479). On the other hand, if the perpetrator had been a man, the survivor may have received less blame. In this way, these two examples are more than just examples of male survivors, but of the specific constructions male survivors face when the perpetrators in the case are women.

Many critiques, specifically of these cases with female perpetrators, suggested that this blatant hypocrisy of defending female abusers would bring down #MeToo movement, discrediting its work to reinforce the credibility of women because now women were being accused. Burke countered this claim with her more inclusive discourse, stating, "people will use these recent news stories to try and discredit this movement-don't let that happen. This is what movement is about. It's not a spectator sport. It is people generated" (Salam 2018a). She explicitly addressed what this case meant for her vision of the movement, asking, "what does it mean for #MeToo that Asia Argento, a very public face of the movement, reportedly made a deal with her own accuser? It means that #MeToo is working as it should" (Salam 2018a). Burke went as far as to say that this was actually positive for what she thinks the goals of the movement are.

It's become clear that the movement, like most, is a complex entity that has grown and changed as more survivors, especially men, have stepped forward. These are positive developments, Ms. Burke said, praising these men on Twitter... in a tweet, she said, "the #metooMVMT is for all of us, including these brave young men who are now coming forward (Salam 2018a).

In this way, Burke's discourse presents the #MeToo movement as an anti-sexual violence movement, rather than a "woman's movement." Many would argue that these two should be the same thing, but Burke's representation suggests that we need to separate these

two ideas out to an extent. As an anti-sexual violence movement, Burke's portrayal of #MeToo seeks to break down patriarchal constructions about sexual violence in ways that transform our dominant understandings, including gendered ideas about victimhood and predation. This means that discourses about the movement must include these types of stories that challenge our perceptions, such as those of male survivors who have been attacked by female perpetrators. These stories uproot power relations in transformative ways that are crucial to understand if we seek to enact social change going forward. Addressing the roots of sexual violence means addressing patriarchy in a way that breaks down these constructions patriarchy has built for us to believe and follow.

Nevertheless, the fact that so many feared a derailment of the movement in face of these accusations against women shows how the dominant discourse in the NYT has reinforced singular perceptions of gendered abusers and simplistic power relations with regards to sexual violence. Weiss (2018) argues that this is because the idea of "Believe women" only works as a rule of thumb when all women are good." However, on the contrary, "Women are hypocrites. Women are opportunists. Women are liars. They are abusers and bullies and manipulators. They are capable of cruelty, callousness and evil. Just like men. No gender has a monopoly on hypocrisy or harm" (Weiss 2018). It can be difficult to see women as abusers if we buy into socially constructed gender categories that posit women as weak, shy, and chaste while portraying men as strong, assertive, and violent (O'Toole et al. 2007:3). On the contrary, delegitimizing socially constructed gender categories tells us that women are complex, social beings immersed in profoundly dynamic power relationships just as much as men are, and that neither men nor women have to abide by such strict

constructions about gendered behavior and performance. As Butler (1990) argues, gender is “a free-floating artifice” that is open to fluidity (6).

Failing to acknowledge this can only limit our potential for shifting power dynamics in the future. These cases of female abusers deconstruct one-dimensional constructions of women and sexual violence, which Tarana points out, quoted by Weiss, “sexual violence is about power and privilege. That doesn’t change if the perpetrator is your favorite actress, activist or professor of any gender” (Weiss 2018). Going forward, Weiss argues that

We need a feminist movement that is robust enough to survive women who have preyed on others without trying to justify their behavior or maligning their victims...the patriarchy has bent over backward to protect its predators for centuries; the last thing the feminist movement should do is start making the same mistake. Any attempt to make excuses for women that would never fly for men undermines that goal” (Weiss 2018).

This is why the inclusion of marginalized stories in discourses about the #MeToo movement is crucial if this movement seeks to combat sexual violence. Sexual violence is about power, not only about men. Cases like these that challenge our dominant understandings of gender and power relations illuminate these complicated intricacies. It is crucial to first understand these intricacies if we are to deconstruct them.

Reinforcing Dominant Constructions of Male Survivors

Not only does the treatment of female perpetrators complicate our notions of power relations and illuminate larger problems we must address when advocating to end sexual violence, but so does the treatment of the male survivors involved. The NYT’s representation of male survivors in its representation of the #MeToo movement reinforces and reproduces beliefs regarding whether or not men can be sexually assaulted, thus also reinforcing patriarchal beliefs about hegemonic masculinity.

In addition to the Argento and Ronnell cases, there was one other particularly notable instance of male sexual abuse in my sample.⁴⁸ Hundreds of Ohio State wrestlers came forward in the wake of #MeToo going viral and accused their (now dead) team doctor of sexual abuse. While watching the survivors of Nassar's abuse recount their harrowing tales, a former wrestler, Mr. Nutter realized, "Hey, it can happen even to guys" (Edmondson and Tracy 2018). This statement shows that some male survivors themselves do not know that they experienced sexual assault, because victimhood and predation are such gendered concepts (St. Felix 2018). Constructions of hegemonic masculinity tell men that big, strong, traditionally masculine men should not be victims because victims are supposed to be "weak," a characteristic tied to femininity. As we know, masculinity is to some extent, "a rejection of everything that is feminine" (Newsom 2015). Therefore, to be a victim would, for these men, mean separating from their identity that aligns with hegemonic masculine ideas, and potentially mean they could face stigma from a spoiled identity (Goffman 1963).

In telling the story of the wrestlers, Edmonson and Tracy (2018) play off condescending stereotypes that reinforce these hegemonic constructions about masculinity. They claim that Mr. Nutter rationalized the abuse by stating,

⁴⁸ These three cases differ in many aspects, one of which being that the abuser in the Ohio State case is male. In the previous section, I focused on how acknowledging the role of female abusers deconstructs gendered notions of power relations, as well as patriarchal gender constructions. I will argue similar things in this section, although focus more on the representation of the male survivors, rather than the previous section where I predominately focused on the impact of stories of female abusers. However, it is important to note that the gender of the abuser does play a role in terms of credibility, as shown in Wakelin and Long's (2003) study. Their study suggests that men who are sexually abused by another man may receive less blame for their assault, as being assaulted by another man violates hegemonic masculinity's compulsory heterosexuality (479). In this case, however, it seems that the masculinity of these men still came into question, as they were often blamed for not fighting off their attacker, as big strong men. Therefore, in all of these cases although the gender of the abuser varied, the masculinity of the survivors was still called into question in some way, although different (in Bennett's and Nimrod's cases, they faced stereotypes about how men must always want sex which was constructed in relation to the gender of their abusers, while in this case these survivors faced stereotypes about how masculine men must fight off their attacker because they are big and strong men). Another interesting departure in this the fact that the Ohio State case is a case of serial abuse, and a case where the perpetrator is not as well known as Ronnell or Argento. This brings up questions of how credibility is constructed along lines of corroborating evidence and notoriety of the abusers; however, I will not elaborate on these aspects of the cases as I have discussed these ideas in other sections.

‘He’s a doctor, I’m sure he’s got a reason to be doing it.’ But that was precisely the reasoning that so many female victims of Mr. Nassar had used, and now they were coming forward-many of them half his size but with seemingly so much more courage (Edmondson and Tracy 2018).

This suggests that a man “of his size,” and more specifically “an all-American heavyweight wrestler at Ohio State turned professional martial arts fighter” should have had the courage to challenge his abuser. This is the same stereotype that women face when bringing forth accusations, although portrayed in a slightly different way. Women are often asked why they did not fight off their attacker, suggesting that they consented if they did not outwardly fight or show that they did not want the assault to happen. These are questions and assumptions that contribute to shame and stigma for survivors, something that often prevents them from speaking out and ultimately contributes to rape culture by suggesting the victim is at fault for their own assault (Abdulali 2018:133). The men in this case face these same questions here, although in the context of their masculinity. They should not only have fought him off because they did not want the assault to occur, but also because they are big strong men. “In weighing in how to respond at the time, many of his victims fixated on the fact that Dr. Strauss was much smaller and older than them. And critics have raised the same question: Why didn’t these wrestlers fight back?” (Edmondson and Tracy 2018) Here we can see that these survivors also faced backlash for the very stereotypes that this article is reinforcing through the way it portrays the survivors, constantly referring to their size and muscular qualities. In response, Mr. Nutter claimed,

I read on the internet, people saying ‘Why didn’t they just punch him in the face?’ I’m not a violent person. I’m honestly a quiet person. It wasn’t that easy. And in hindsight I wouldn’t have punched him anyway. I don’t hate the guy. He had some demons (Edmondson and Tracy 2018).

Edmonson and Tracy (2018) continue to argue that their gender is what separates them, reinforcing hegemonic constructions about masculinity through word choice and imagery about physically masculine men.

In some sense, what separate Ohio State's abuse scandal from others are the victims: Young adult men, and many of them muscular wrestlers, left to grapple with pain and anguish they believed they were not entitled to. Having built their identities around traditional notions of toughness and stoicism, many are struggling with a new identity-#MeToo, or in their case, #UsToo.

The use of the word entitled here is interesting and suggests that these survivors were not entitled to this pain *because* they are men. However, this begs the question, are others entitled to this pain? Those who are "supposed" to be victims of sexual violence? In this way, this language used by the NYT further reinforces gendered constructions of victimhood.

Another survivor, Steve Snyder-Hill brings to light the importance of including the stories of male survivors, which can have the same effect as discussing female perpetrators. He states that "I think it has everything to do with power. Someone has power over you, and it doesn't matter what gender you are" (Edmondson and Tracy 2018). Here, he complicates dominant notions of power relations in a way that challenges constructions of who can be sexually assaulted. This provides a pathway for critiquing the complex structures at play here, more accurately getting at the root of sexual violence in a transformative way. This is why including these stories in dominant discourse about the #MeToo movement is crucial, because these accounts provide platforms for challenging conversations about how patriarchy and socially constructed notions of gender are the roots of sexual violence, often reinforcing the silence surrounding it. We must, as Foucault (1984) argues, render these stories visible in language, and include them in our reality if we are to challenge the roots of sexual violence.

How Race Complicates #MeToo: Male Survivors

Another male survivor of sexual assault, Terry Crews, discusses facing similar dominant constructions of masculinity. However, he also discusses how race profoundly interacted with his identity as a male survivor and affected how he responded to the incident. Unlike Mr. Nutter, his first reaction to being groped *was* violence. He wanted to attack the man who assaulted him. However, his wife stepped in and calmed him down, “ultimately, saying he had feared being ostracized or arrested himself if he reacted violently, he ‘let it go’” (Hauser 2018). Part of the reason he feared being ostracized or arrested was because of his race. While testifying at senate hearings regarding a bill to protect the rights of survivors of sexual violence, Chokshi (2018) writes that “during the sometimes emotional testimony, Mr. Crews said he had suppressed an initial impulse to respond to the groping by fighting back.” In response, Senator Feinstein of California asked him, “You’re a big powerful man. Why didn’t you” (Chokshi 2018)? Terry Crews responded, “Senator, as a black man in America, you only have a few shots at success. You only have a few chances to make yourself a viable member of the community” (Chokshi 2018). Here, Crews provides an important insight as to how race is important in cases of sexual violence because it can affect how a survivor would react, and the possible other negative repercussions they would face. As a Black man, Crews faces extra scrutiny from police, and the fear of being categorized as the “angry Black man,” who is hyper-violent. He had to navigate these social constructions of his own identity and the stratified power relations in a racist society, while also navigating the pain of being a survivor. Again, as we know, patriarchy and the social construction of gender are more than just singular institutions. Patriarchy is not only about institutions of gender, but also institutions of race, gender identity, sexuality, and class. As Cynthia Enloe

(2017) states, “[patriarchy] is distinct but it feeds off both racism and classism” (49). The NYT’s representation of #MeToo needs more stories like this to highlight intersectionality and the ways in which multiple forms of oppression can act on survivors all at once. To recall, only 2.11% of NYT articles about the #MeToo movement covered topics of race. However, when I oversampled for these stories to see what they illuminate, I found that these stories illuminate the ways in which Black survivors have to navigate their journeys as survivors in unique ways. Without these stories at its center, the NYT discourse surrounding the movement will continue to reinforce dominant knowledge about who sexual violence affects.

How Race Complicates #MeToo: Black Female Survivors Accusing Black Male Perpetrators

In addition to Terry Crews’s story, the stories of Black women can further illuminate the complicated ways that multiple systems of oppression particularly disadvantage Black female-identifying survivors of sexual violence. Again, only 2.11% of the NYT articles about the #MeToo movement covered stories of marginalized racial groups, but when I oversampled for these stories, such as those of women of color, I gained insight into how they were represented in the NYT’s discourse about the movement. The narratives of women of color as represented in the NYT predominantly served to draw attention to where their stories could transform dominant perceptions about Black women as a whole, as well as the numerous challenges they face if they are survivors of sexual violence.

For example, Meredith Watson publicly accused VA lieutenant governor of rape and “spurred fresh conversations about how society treats black women who say they have been sexually assaulted, particularly when their accused perpetrator is a Black man” (Eligon

2018). Watson stated that she feared reporting because “as a black woman...you’re not supposed to betray your race” (Eligon 2018). She claims that

after she came forward...a black male friend told her that he could not believe that she was ‘going to do this to a black man.’ On social media, strangers described her as opportunistic, dismissed her as a pawn to take down Mr. Fairfax and equated her to the white woman who falsely accused Emmett Till of flirting with her, leading to his lynching in 1955 (Eligon 2018).

This use of the word lynching has been a common weapon used against Black women accusing Black men of sexual harassment and rape. Clarence Thomas, during the Hill-Thomas hearings denounced Ms. Hill’s testimony as ‘a high-tech lynching’” (Crenshaw 2018). Even more recently, R. Kelly’s “team likened the campaign to a hate crime,” saying “we will vigorously resist this attempted public lynching of a black man who has made extraordinary contributions to our culture” (Coscarelli 2018). In this way, some Black men have “used racial solidarity as a tool to politically coerce these women into silence” (Alcoff 2018).

Gabrielle Union, a Black actress, echoes this exclusivity experienced by Black women in representations of the #MeToo movement, stating that “women of color haven’t been heard as enthusiastically” in this new “public discussion around sexual assault” (Krischer 2017). She states, “I don’t think it’s a coincidence whose pain has been taken seriously. Whose pain we have showed historically and continued to show. Whose pain is tolerable and whose pain is intolerable. And whose pain needs to be addressed *now*” (Krischer 2017). Here, she argues that the representations of the #MeToo movement that she sees in dominant discourse reinforce notions of who gets to speak and be heard. As Abdulali (2018) notes, we must acknowledge that for some, “words are a luxury” (25). These stories highlight this inequality, as well as show the unique experience of Black women navigating

the world as survivors. They face multiple institutions of regulations here: respectability politics and racial solidarity that coerce them into silence. White feminist frameworks fail to acknowledge their unique needs as Black women, while anti-racist frameworks fail to acknowledge their unique needs as women, which are overshadowed in favor of racial unity. As Tillet and Tillet (2019) argue, single-narrative movements thus fail to encompass their experiences and therefore exclude them in their activism. Yet, as this paper has hopefully shown, single narrative movements fail many groups. Sexual violence is not a single narrative issue. It does not only affect women. Men are not the only perpetrators. It affects people of color and Trans individuals disproportionately. When these stories are excluded in #MeToo discourse, for example in the NYT, we lose out on these insights, and thus fail to create a representation of the #MeToo movement that encompasses these unique needs into its activism.

This idea of centering the experiences of the most marginalized is not new, and is best shown through the reproductive justice movement. “In June 1994, twelve black [sic] women working in the reproductive health and rights movement gave birth to the concept of reproductive justice, creating a paradigm shift in what women of color termed their work to end reproductive oppression” (Leonard 2017:39). In this instance, the experiences of Black women were crucial to transform activism and reproductive health frameworks. For example, in this context, many white women were focusing on abortion as the main site of their reproductive health activism. On the other hand, women of color wanted to focus on the broad “injustices of the current health system that denied women of color full services due to compounded issues of race, class, and gender” (Leonard 2017:40). They did not just want reproductive rights, they wanted *access* to these rights, and their access to these rights was

limited by their social positions, necessitating special activism to address this issue. Those who began the movement stated “our focus was on centering black women within the debate, moving our voices from the margins to the center of the discourse” (Leonard 2017:46). Stickler and Simpson (2017) elaborate on why this was important, stating that Sistersong (one of the first reproductive justice advocacy organizations) centered the experiences of the most marginalized, because by “*constantly shifting the center to communities that face intersecting forms of oppression, we gain a more comprehensive view of the strategies needed to end all forms of violence*” (53, my emphasis). This is the mantra that all #MeToo discourse needs to adopt, including the discourse in the mainstream media, if it truly seeks to combat all forms of sexual violence. By challenging the structures that oppress the most marginalized in our communities, we can also address those with more privilege that still face oppression. Centering the experiences of Black women will still help white women; centering the experiences of Black men will still help other men. It will help everyone by addressing the roots of all violence, thus hopefully ending all violence. This is the discourse the movement needs going forward. All representations of #MeToo need to reflect Burke’s inclusive discourse as seen on the “me too” site, in order to more wholly enact systemic change around sexual violence.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, while exploring elements of inclusivity and exclusivity within the #MeToo movement, I found two main discourses are at odds with each other. The NYT’s representation of the #MeToo movement does not align with the representation of #MeToo on the “me too” website. The website, along with its founder, Tarana Burke’s rhetoric, suggests that #MeToo is for all survivors, regardless of identity, and focuses on centering the

stories of survivors and providing pathways towards healing and justice. On the other hand, the NYT's discourse excludes the stories of more marginalized groups, focusing on Hollywood and accusations towards elites, as well as the stories of particular types of abusers. This constructs definitions of victimhood, credibility, and types of perpetrators around a very narrow image that limits the potential for inclusivity within the movement. By constructing a limited definition of what the movement is, what it does, and who it is for, the narrative in mainstream media, specifically the NYT, has alienated many survivors from #MeToo who do not feel represented in these definitions. In doing this, the movement as portrayed in the NYT has also failed to create a space for more complex, nuanced conversations about who is affected by sexual violence and how sexual violence must be addressed by examining the foundations of patriarchal power that allow sexual violence to perpetuate. Instead, it has reinforced dominant, patriarchal constructions regarding who is affected by sexual violence (women, specifically powerful women), who perpetuates sexual violence (men, specifically powerful men and serial abusers), as well as excluded stories that acknowledge that many marginalized groups (people of color, Trans people, migrants etc.) are disproportionately affected by sexual violence. Even when I oversampled for some of these stories, stories of male survivors and female abusers reinforced dominant patriarchal constructions, rather than challenging them.

Of course we cannot create a movement that includes absolutely everybody. However, I argue that the discourses surrounding the #MeToo movement should be making a conscious effort to center experiences of marginalized communities because understanding their experiences and how they disproportionately face sexual violence and extra barriers to seeking justice can transform the movement's activism in the broadest way. The question

then becomes, how do we align the different discourses? How do we keep Burke's ideas front and center, as the focus of representations of the movement? This will be crucial to answer going forward.

I do not have concrete ideas for how this would work or be accomplished. However, I will say that somehow, the mainstream media discourse should shift its focus to Burke's work and the #MeToo website, emphasizing survivor stories. It should use media platforms, such as the "me too" website to amplify the experiences of people who are most marginalized, specifically drawing awareness to the disproportionate rates of sexual violence they experience, and the institutions and structures that reinforce these rates and barriers to reporting. This could include video campaigns such as more Survivor Stories videos, highlighting personal narratives of survivors. Furthermore, while doing this, news outlets could also emphasize resources for those fighting battles against sexual violence. They could advertise the *TIMES UP* initiative, linking their website for those looking for legal aide. Or, again, simply referring to Burke's website as a place with resources would be useful. However, ultimately, we cannot rely on news sources or other forms of media for all of #MeToo activism. The #MeToo movement will need many forums and approaches if it seeks to dismantle such complicated institutions that help perpetuate sexual violence.

For example, Burke's website and other organizations attached to the name "#MeToo movement" should begin to direct serious resources to education efforts. Sexual violence is ultimately a problem of a patriarchal society that socializes children into sex-based gender categories that emphasize toxic forms of hegemonic masculinity and femininity. While holding individual perpetrators accountable is important, addressing the roots of sexual violence means putting the whole patriarchy on trial. Therefore, in order to truly address the

problem, we need gender socialization education to break down these binaries and toxic constructions. We also need to reform sex education to teach children about sexual violence—not just teach girls how to protect themselves, but to instill in others how to not sexually assault a person (because apparently, it is not obvious). Part of this includes more pleasure-based sex education. Most sex education paints a picture of sex as a business transaction between a man and a woman. Jaclyn Friedman, an affirmative consent educator, states “whether you turn to abstinence propagandists, mainstream pop culture, or free internet porn to fill in those gaps, you’re likely to wind up with an incredibly narrow and bankrupt idea of how sex works, one that positions men as sexual actors, women as the (un)lucky recipients of men’s desire” (Abdulali 2018:45-6). By emphasizing a more pleasure based sex education, one that emphasizes affirmative consent, we break down these barriers and help teach young adults about healthy sexual encounters. Friedman states,

teaching affirmative consent does something profound: it shifts the acceptable moral standard for sex, making it much clearer to everyone when someone is violating that standard...Affirmative consent, when taught well, also removed heteronormative assumptions from sex ed. If we’re each equally responsible to make sure our partner is enthusiastic about what’s happening, gender stereotypes—such as that women are passive and men are aggressive—about sexuality begin to break down (Abdulali 2018:45-6).

By empowering all in the situation to ask for what they want, vocalize what they do not want, and by showing them what that should look like, we empower them to fight against normative constructions of sexual encounters that can lead to sexual assault. Furthermore, education like this breaks down heteronormative constructions about sex, included the LGBTQ+ community in sex education as well as acknowledging that consent and sexual violence can also be an issue in non-heteronormative relationships.

While this education can be part of campaigns and resources provided by some educational entity, on a more basic level, popular representations of the movement can begin to incorporate these ideas and lessons into its discourse. To this day, literature about masculinities and femininities and the social construction of gender still remains largely secluded in the academic world. News media discourse presents a potential platform to amplify these ideas and knowledge, breaking down such constructions in dominant discourse that the average person may be reading. Therefore, this education does not only have to take place in educational institutions, but can take place in households or in news discourse as well.

Many have argued that #MeToo's focus on women specifically, for example as seen in the discourse in the NYT, is justified, stating that movements to end sexual violence *should* focus on the experiences of women because they are often disproportionately affected. However, if we look to Burke's discourse, she argues that #MeToo movement is first and foremost an anti-sexual violence movement, "not a women's movement" (Vagianos 2019). She argues the language of a "women's movement" further reinforces gendered notions of victimhood and perpetrators, something that is counterproductive to her goals for the movement, which seek to break down traditional notions of sexual violence regarding who is affected. As she stated in a TED Talk at the end of 2018,

To be clear, this is a movement about the 1 in 4 girls and the 1 in 6 boys who are sexually assaulted every year and who carry those wounds into adulthood. It's about the 84 percent of trans women who will be sexually assaulted this year. And the Indigenous women who are three and a half times more likely to be sexually assaulted than any other group. Or people with disabilities who are seven times more likely to be sexually abused. It's about the 60 percent of black girls like me who will be experiencing sexual violence before they turn 18. And the thousands and thousands of low-wage workers who are being sexually harassed right now on jobs that they can't afford to quit (Vagianos 2018).

These are the groups that need the most help, the most activism, and they should be the focus of discourses surrounding the movement, as they are often the most marginalized in society and are not the subject of much dominant discourse about sexual violence. As the NYT's coverage of the #MeToo movement has shown, many survivors still face backlash; they still are unable to tell their stories in a relatively safe way. Although this is starting to change, it is not yet a reality. Before we can focus totally on accountability, we need to first empower people to speak up, and empower people to listen and believe those who do. This is what we need to create an environment in which survivors are believed, before we can successfully begin to hold many perpetrators accountable. Centering survivor stories in discourse surrounding the movement could accomplish this. This goes back to what Burke's goal on her website seems to be-consciousness raising and encouraging marginalized groups to reclaim hermeneutical resources that have been unduly interpreted by more powerful groups. This is the first step moving forward in creating a world where survivors are believed, in changing dominant knowledge about sexual violence.

When I say that survivor stories should be centered and amplified, let me be clear. I understand that this vulnerability makes centering survivors difficult. When I say "center survivors," I do not necessarily mean that every survivor needs to go public with their name or their face. I understand this is risky. What I mean is that representations of the movement should be centering their unique experiences, discussing and focusing on the disproportionate barriers we know that people of color and LGBTQIA+ survivors face when reporting, or the unique stigma male survivors face. Highlighting these disparities illuminates the complicated institutions in place that marginalized these groups and can ground our activism going

forward so that we can create the most robust and widespread methods of reform and revolution.

Ultimately, however, we will always be left with the question of how to focus responsibility in cases of sexual violence. Prioritizing survivors will still eventually lead us back to this question. The profound pain and trauma that comes with experiencing sexual violence demands to be felt, and demands to be accounted for; but in a social world where the self is a series of socially constructed relationships, where can we find moral responsibility? In *Giving An Account of Oneself*, Judith Butler asks this very question. She argues that there is no “I,” there is no essential origin or self that any of us can pinpoint because we are all an ever-changing product of our social relationships. Each time we invoke the “I,” or the self, we are creating a new self, a new interpellation. We are all “formed in the context of relations,” to each other, to social institutions, to our different selves, our different “I’s” (Butler 2005:20). “If it is really true that we are, as it were, divided, ungrounded, or incoherent from the start, will it be impossible to ground a notion of personal responsibility?” (Butler 2005:19) She argues no, although does not give a clear account of how we can find this responsibility. This is our next task-to admit to ourselves where we are complicit in structures of domination, in institutions of silencing, in narratives of exclusivity; to find it within ourselves to admit responsibility and to pursue social transformation; to uproot these power structures that trap both men and women, and everyone in between; to hold perpetrators accountable, but also acknowledge their own struggles with the narrow “I’s” the social world creates for us all; to remember that words will always be more powerful than silence; to find peace, healing, and forgiveness in all this, even when it feels impossible.

EPILOGUE

I don't remember the first time I heard the word rape. I do know that it definitely wasn't during my childhood, my adolescence, maybe not even until high school or college. Sure, I got "the talk" from my mother about menstruation and pregnancy (with a touch of sex thrown in there, although I mostly learned about that from a book she gave me). But rape was never part of that education. The threat I now understand as all too close and too real was never taught to me.

I did learn about the dangers of being a girl, and a woman in this world at a young age. But it was always so subtle. "Mom! I want to walk up the street to go get Del's!" I would yell at my mother, yearning for an ice-cold frozen lemonade from the local Rhode Island company amidst the searing heat of the baseball field my brothers played at. "No. You can't go alone. Only if you get one of your brothers to go with you." "But you let them go alone!" The frustration was endless, and as a child I didn't understand that I couldn't go alone because of my vulnerability as a girl living in a patriarchal world. It took me years to reflect and understand the ways in which I was raised differently. That I wasn't allowed to wear shorts, or I always had to cross my legs in public, and be "ladylike." We teach our young girls all about these things, how to fit into the molds society has created for them. But we don't teach them about the pain, about the hurt of being a woman in this world.

As an adult, something about that doesn't feel right to me. The statistics tell us that one in every four women is likely to be raped in her lifetime. That this is a reality for more than 25% of us. And yet we don't hear the word. And when we do, it has a specific nature. That it's violent, or must be by a stranger, an attack in the night when we're walking home. We too often don't hear that it's not always violent, at least in the traditional sense. That it's

not always by a stranger. That it can be the boyfriend who removes a condom without your permission. Or the other one that pressures you into sex to a point when you feel like you can't say no. That yes it can be violent, but it can also be something that you know feels so wrong, but you can't put your finger on why, and then you think that nobody else would be able to either. That nobody else would believe you, that it's all your fault. That you deserved it.

These thoughts are not foreign to a survivor. They are all-too-real. And we need to talk about this with our children. As Abdulali (2018) states, "if we can expose our children to talk of genocide, racism, bikini waxing, and the inevitable melting of the planet, why should we leave out sexual abuse?" (3). We need to educate our sons, our daughters, all of our children, so that they are more prepared if it happens to them, and they know what it looks like. So that they have the words to speak of it, and others have the minds to understand and listen. So they don't perpetrate any form of rape. So that they know what consent looks like, that it's a healthy part of a relationship rather than a buzzkill. So that they *know*- how to avoid sexual violence, how not to do it, how to protect themselves and each other.

We are at a unique crossroads: the #MeToo movement is here. It has given us the space to talk about sexual assault and harassment, to put a spotlight on the pain people have suffered for years as a result of these crimes. But we all have to do more. The spotlight casts shadows that are still surrounded by darkness. We must continue to strive to illuminate this darkness, to render these stories visible through language. We have to engage in these difficult conversations. We have to be vulnerable, to listen to people's stories, to believe them. We have to find forgiveness, or at least a way to move past the pain and trauma that haunts so many of us. And it starts with ourselves-we cannot rely on perpetrators for this

healing. We have to find a way to start educating ourselves and the future generations about how we can fix this. The time has always been now, but we are currently faced with a unique opportunity of heightened awareness, and we must take advantage. We can't let this movement, or this issue, take a backseat. We must immerse ourselves in challenging conversations about what consent means, how to move on or find forgiveness, acceptance, finding your voice again, and re-discovering the beauty of life after something so painful. We must work to create a world in which we do fail to hear #MeToo, but only because it is no longer necessary; because it no longer makes sense in our vocabulary; because it will never happen again.

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What is the movement exactly? Hard to define. But what I am interested in is the discourse about the movement through the media

More on methodology-more careful attention to methodological choices

Places in thesis where I am conflating the analysis I did with blah blah

Frame what I did more carefully –how does the NYT represent the metoo movement and also how does the metoo movement present itself –make it more clear that I am presenting data about these two things—be more careful about using the phrase the “me too movement” and be more nuanced

If time-make more conceptual contributions

Maybe more about dat history