Advancing Women’s Rights in the Age of Social Media

An Analysis of the #MeToo Movement

Gaudi Delgado Falcón

K3 | School of Arts and Communications

Communication for Development Master’s Thesis

15 ECTS | Spring 2019

Supervisor: Ronald Stade
“Movements are not occasional emergencies in social life located on the margins of the great institutions...In complex societies, movements are a permanent reality”

Alberto Melucci, 1994

“Collective action is always structured by the forms of communication responsible for ‘setting the scene’ for its display”

Paolo Gerbaudo, 2012

“When strides are made toward equality—as when women and minorities gaining rights and social status—the result is often a backlash. For instance, in response to the women’s liberation movement of the ’60s and early ’70s, there was a strong attack on Roe v. Wade and the Equal Rights Amendment. Those who fear change react by focusing new energy into maintaining their privilege. In doing so, they prevent progress. The recent flood of sexual assault allegations against politicians, comedians, journalists, and artists cast a spotlight on gross misconduct by men in power”

Hope Reese and Stephanie Coontz (2017)

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1 Thomas Tufte, in his Communication for Social Change: A Citizen Perspective (2017) noted that while a growing interest in social movements amongst a growing number of social scientists, we should recall the approach to social movements that Alberto Melucci argued. (Tufte, 2017, p.80)

2 This, Tufte asserts, speaks explicitly to a communicative intentionality, where a strategic aim informs the communicative practice of a social movement (Tufte, 2017, p.101).

Abstract

In 2017, the Me Too campaign, founded ten years earlier to help women of color from low-income communities who were survivors of sexual violence, became a viral social media movement following allegations on Twitter by actress Alyssa Milano of sexual harassment and violence against the powerful Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein. Using the hashtag #MeToo, Milano unwittingly mobilized millions of women to share their stories via social media, and the #MeToo movement subsequently helped to illuminate both the structural and individual aspects of sexual harassment and abuse by men against women within virtually all aspects of society. As the #MeToo movement swept the globe, millions of women shared stories of sexual harassment and abuse through social media platforms, and indictments of the “inappropriate behavior” against women gained center stage. To understand this movement today and how media made it possible, this study analyses the discussion about online media and social movements surrounding the 2019 World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland. In doing so, this research sheds light on the achievement and impact of the movement. Employing a mixed-method approach providing a feminist epistemological perspective on elements drawn from discourse analysis, comparative discourse analysis, content analysis, and critical discourse analysis, this thesis analyses a sample of ten online reports on how online mass media, and particularly social media, shapes movements for social change. It shows that online media is of great significance in constructing movements for social change because it facilitates the construction and dissemination of a social change discourse and influences how we determine which situations and actions constitute “sexual harassment.” This analysis further shows that feminist principles of gender equality, women’s sexual self-determination, and empowerment no longer define the politics of sexual harassment in the digital age.

Keywords: #MeToo, sexual harassment, social movements, social media, women’s rights, social change, media, communication, sexual abuse, Twitter
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Introduction

Advancing Women’s Rights in the Age of Social Media

In October 2017, the #MeToo movement became a global phenomenon for illuminating sexual harassment and violence against women. Investigating the origin, progress, and impact of the #MeToo movement, this study develops a theoretical framework through which to analyze the significance of social media practices for contemporary social movements. It begins by critically assessing the dominant understanding of social media use, how social movements develop and their importance to social change, as well as the elements of the media and communication process. This study focuses on the role of social media in mobilizing collective action. In doing so, I draw on authors like Gerbaudo (2012) and Tufekci (2017) to explain my approach to the study of social media and social movements. While these scholars have provided important examinations of the Egyptian uprising, Spanish Indignados, and Occupy movements, they have overlooked the #MeToo movement—despite the fact that this powerful social justice movement has helped mobilize other collective actions, such as the women’s march. In addressing this gap, this research sheds light on the creation of the #MeToo movement and what has changed since it become a viral movement via Twitter in October 2017.

More specifically, I examine the construction of discourse centered on the #MeToo movement during the 2019 meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF). In doing so, this study addresses broader issues regarding the relationship between social media, social movements, and social change. As communication for development centers on the sharing of knowledge (Servaes, 2006), this study seeks to initiate a new discussion of how social movements create a sense of community emerging as a result of social media networks, as well as how they engage in the
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construction of meaning through media. As such, this exploration of the ramifications of the relationship between social movements and social change is situated within the wider debate regarding education, gender, and work during the 2019 WEF summit.

The WEF summit serves as the present study’s frame of analysis because it is a highly mediated event that brings together the heads and representatives of over a hundred governments, top global companies, and international and non-governmental organizations, as well as prominent cultural and religious leaders, social activists, and media representatives. The event is also attended by members of WEF initiatives, namely, the Forum Young Global Leaders, Global Shapers, and Technology Pioneers. These global leaders meet to define the priorities of global industries and to shape regional agendas. As such, the WEF plays a significant role in shaping the discussion of and approach to education, gender, and work around the world.

This study analyzes the discussion of #MeToo during the 2019 WEF summit—an enquiry facilitated by the official WEF website, which provides news articles published during the summit. More specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions: How did the media, through online news, construct and contribute to a new discourse through reporting on the #MeToo movement during the 2019 WEF summit? Do the texts reflect a change in the #MeToo era? What trends have emerged? Has the #MeToo movement changed anything? What is next? In doing so, this study argues that media and social movements play an important role in social change.

The subject of #MeToo has already attracted some academic attention. As sufficient empirical material lies beyond the scope of this study, this investigation focuses on the origins of the movement, its relevance, how the surrounding discourse has evolved, as well as the positive and
negative outcomes. In order to understand the role of mass media in society—and in the #MeToo movement—I draw upon the work of Lasswell (1948), who identifies five factors in the communication process: sender, message, means, recipient, and effect. Indeed, one of the strengths of Lasswell’s model is that it can be applied to various forms of communication. Following Lasswell’s argument that each of these factors is equally important, this study provides a detailed content analysis of articles published during the 2019 WEF meeting regarding #MeToo.

The primary source of information for this research consists of digital sources published by the World Economic Forum 2019. This study conducts a meta-analysis of articles dedicated to #MeToo in order to determine the overall trends. Other sources of information include articles published by different news outlets reporting on the #MeToo movement. The strength of these mediums is their international content. As such, the use of the Internet to locate primary and secondary data was not only appropriate but also necessary. The selected period for the sample articles is October 2017 to April 2019—that is, before, during, and after the 2019 WEF summit. To narrow down on the sample, I only chose articles using #MeToo as a keyword. The primary reason for focusing on the outcomes, that is, the texts of the 2019 WEF summit—the agenda that was “Shaping the Future of Education, Gender and Work”—rather than other texts from news outlets, is because these texts are more relevant to this specific period.

Chapter 1: Theory and Methodology

A Feminist Epistemological Approach

According to Harding (1987), methods are particular procedures used to frame the way in which research is conducted: procedures are based on broad principles regarding the way in which
the research is conducted and the application of theory, as well as epistemology as a theory of knowledge. Accordingly, quantitative and qualitative methods refer to specific research procedures, while a feminist methodology or feminist perspective refers to a broader conception of how feminist research ought to be conducted. As such, a feminist methodology can exist without a particular feminist method (Epstein & Stewart, 1992)—resulting in a plethora of approaches. As Stanley and Wise (1983) note that the idea that there is only “one road” to the feminist revolution, and only one type of “truly feminist” research, is as limiting and as offensive as male-biased accounts of research that have gone before.

The #MeToo movement concerns various factors affecting the relationships between men and women, including socio-economic factors. Therefore, different approaches should be considered to analyze this movement, its relationship with the media, and its impacts. To this end, this research illustrates how a feminist perspective on culture can challenge dominant ideologies—even those regarding feminism itself. In adopting a feminist lens and feminist concerns—such as women’s status, equality, and social justice—in analyzing #MeToo, this study integrates typical epistemological concerns (such as what constitutes knowledge and how it is constructed) with core issues in feminist theory.

Indeed, while there are multiple complex discourses on feminist epistemology, they are similarly rooted in the consideration of the role of gender in determining how knowledge is constructed, by both individual knowers and socio-cultural groups of women and men. A common theme of such discussions is how power relations based on gender—as well as other social categories like race, culture, and social class—shape what counts as knowledge (Tisdell, 2012). As such, feminist scholars have been debating the use of quantitative versus qualitative methods in
social research. Much of this debate (Epstein & Stewart, 1991) has concerned the claim that quantitative research techniques that involve the translation of individual experiences into categories predefined by researchers distort women’s experiences and result in the silencing of their voices. Rather than individual experiences, this study focuses on the role of social structures and power relations in shaping knowledge production in the form of media content.

As Tisdell (2012) notes, cultural and standpoint feminist theories highlight how a researcher’s race, culture, and gender relative to that of the research participants influences the means by which they access those participants, their relationship with the participants, as well as the data collection and analytical processes. As a Peruvian-born woman, I believe that my perspective is enriched by my experience of living in many different countries—including Spain, Hong Kong, Denmark, and Sweden. In analyzing the #MeToo testimonies of women and the texts for this study, I recognized that I am a part of what I am studying, and that my awareness of the problem of sexual harassment makes a difference to how I understand the problem. Like Tisdell (2012), I believe that feminist research can serve the interests of women, contribute to an understanding of gender relations, and elucidate the processes through which knowledge is constructed via research.

Analytical Approach

In order to pursue this analysis, this study employed multiple methodological approaches, namely, feminist epistemology (noted above), discourse analysis, comparative discourse analysis, content analysis, and critical discourse analysis (CDA). This combination of approaches will enable an understanding of how interrelationships are constantly produced, reproduced, challenged, and transformed (Hodkinson, 2017). The emphasis here is on using methods that can best answer the research questions of this particular analysis. The combining of methods—also referred to as
“triangulation” (See Denzin, 1978; Jick, 1979)—allows researchers to capture a more complete, holistic, and contextual portrayal of the analyzed subject, as Jick (1979, p.603) puts it, “the effectiveness of triangulation rests on the premise that the weaknesses in each single method will be compensated by the counterbalancing strengths of another” (Jick, 1979 in Jaggar, 2007, p.47). The goal in utilizing triangulation is to align the methodological approaches so that they complement each other, as well as compensate for their narrower, more particular focus. According to Denzin (1978), methodological triangulation ‘within-method’ and ‘between-method’ the goal of this strategy is: “To summarise, methodological triangulation involves a complex process of playing each method against the other so as to maximize the validity of field efforts” (1978:304). Therefore, triangulation is aimed at “deepening and widening one’s understanding” (Denzin 1978, p. 179).

Commonly used in the analysis of news in its various formats, as well as other forms of media, discourse analysis is concerned with the way in which broader beliefs, worldviews, and social structures are embedded in and reinforced through verbal or written communication (Fairclough 1995; Kress and Hodge 1979; Talbot 2007). This approach draws upon linguistics and the post-structuralist theory developed by Michael Foucault (Hesmondhalgh, 2006). Foucault repeatedly emphasized that the realities we experience are constructed by the discourses through which we describe and understand them. Crucially, such discourses are closely intertwined with the

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4 In social research the term “triangulation” is used to refer to the observation of the research issue from (at least) two different points (Flick, Ernst von Kardoff & Steinke, 2004, p.178-179). According to Denzin (1978) initially understood triangulation as a validation strategy and distinguished the following four different forms: Triangulation of data which combines data drawn from different sources and at different times, in different places or from different people; Investigator triangulation, characterised by the use of different observers or interviewers, to balance out the subjective influences of individuals; Triangulation of theories, means approaching data with multiple perspectives and hypotheses in mind... Various theoretical points of view could be placed side by side to assess their utility and power (Denzin 1978, p. 297) Finally, Denzin’s central concept is methodological triangulation ‘within-method’ and ‘between-method’ mentioned above.
relations of power (Hodkinson, 2017). Rather than understanding individual texts in isolation, discourse analysis attempts to place them in context.

No discourse is not produced in a vacuum; therefore, a discourse cannot be understood without considering the context in which it emerged. Discourses are always connected to other discourses produced earlier, simultaneously, and subsequently (Fairclough & Wodak, 1995, 1997). As such, it is necessary to employ comparative discourse analysis, which combines discursive analysis with historical research. Researchers compare the experiences of individuals from different societies, as either contemporaries or past and present. According to Walliman (2005), culture and society are heavily reliant upon what has gone before, and often use references from the past to justify the present. The comparative study of differences helps reveal the origins and development of social phenomena. We can also learn by making comparisons with both the past and experiences elsewhere in the world. As Walliman (2005) argues, it would be foolish for politicians to introduce changes without carefully studying the effects of such changes in the past and other situations.

In addition, CDA sheds light on how discourse in news/articles can create certain angles, impressions, and worldviews (Hodkinson, 2017). In accordance with Jäger’s conception of CDA (2001), data analysis is performed at three levels: textual, discursive practice, and social practice. At the discursive practice level, this study analyzes the statements used to represent women and those used to represent men. At a social practice level, this study examines policy and legislative changes concerning the protection of victims of sexual harassment, abuse, and violence in the wake of the #MeToo movement. This includes cases from countries such as Peru, Argentina, Chile, and some European countries such as Sweden, which have enacted legislation that could encourage other
governments to recognize both workplace sexual harassment and pervasive sexual harassment in the streets as social problems that need to be addressed through legal measures and education.

As such, by focusing on the use of language, production of texts, and construction and use of discourse, discourse analysis draws attention to the processes through which the social world is constructed and maintained (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Consequently, the methods used in this study illuminate a particular discursive structure in the discussion of sexual harassment. This study considers individual, systemic, and gender equality discourses. In doing so, it conducts a discourse analysis of the #MeToo movement, how it has evolved, how it has influenced the media, as well as how some brands have sought to keep up with the times. For instance, a recent Gillette advert\(^5\) spurred a fair amount of debate by addressing toxic masculinity and the #MeToo movement. In analyzing the particular language, concepts, and categories in which sexual harassment is generally discussed, this study identifies the practices through which this discourse is reproduced and how these can be changed. Moreover, an examination of the #MeToo movement as a signifier\(^6\) reveals that it is a matter of both sexual harassment and gender inequality. As a result, this analysis illuminates both the structural and individual aspects of men’s sexual abuse of women within virtually all societies.

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\(^6\) One of the best known approaches to the study of media texts is semiology pioneered in the writing of Ferdinand de Saussure (1974) and Charles Peirce (1931-48) and developed in relation to mass media texts by European theorists such as Roland Barthes (1968), semiology regards all communication, from speech to images. According to Saussure, all signs are made up of two core elements—as signifier, which is the means of representation, and as signified, which is a concept which is represented. (in Hodkinson, 2017, p.58-59)
Chapter 2: Social Movements in the Age of Social Media

Social Movements and Creating a Sense of Community

Like the #OccupyWallStreet movement—a protest against social inequality—the #MeToo movement was also sparked via social media. Such movements have gained a particular narrative in the mainstream media. As one Reuters report noted of #OccupyWallStreet:

It all started innocuously enough with a July 13th blog post urging people to #OccupyWallStreet, as though such a thing, Twitter hashtag and all, were possible. It turns out with enough momentum and a keen sense of how to use social media, it actually is (Berkowiths in Gerbaudo, 2012).

Commenting on the enthusiastic adoption of social media, Gerbaudo (2012) notes that pundits and journalists have readily embraced expressions like “the Facebook revolution” and “the Twitter revolution.” However, Matonni (2012) argues, “This celebration of the emancipatory power of communication technologies has not been much help in understanding how exactly the use of these media reshapes the repertoire of communication.” (Mattoni, 2012 in Gerbaudo, 2012, p.2) Affirming that the uses of social media in activism are almost as diverse as their venues, (Gerbaudo, 2012) focuses on their use as a means of organizing collective action, particularly in mobilizing people to take to the streets, which is a crucial aspect of collective action.

Others have been less positive in their appraisals. For instance, Gladwell argues that “social media at best provides weak ties and is therefore unsuitable for revolution action” (Gladwell in Gerbaudo, 2012, p.8) Such criticisms appear to underestimate the power of social media for
networking and community creation. Like Gerbaudo (2012), Tufekci (2017) contends that digital media has enabled protesters in different locations to interact directly. Facebook is used to form groups—both covert and overt—thus facilitating the establishment of strong but flexible connections. Meanwhile, Twitter is used for real-time organization and news dissemination (Mason in Gerbaudo, 2012), while YouTube is a powerful means of disseminating video content. These platforms are central to the social media revolution. Moreover, according to Tufekci (2017), the culture of protest and its intersection with digital tools in its creation, practice, and dissemination are of great significance in understanding how protests materialize. While each country has specific influences and every movement has its particular features and grievances, there are commonalities across different movements, resulting from a number of factors, including contemporary global cultural shifts (Tufekci, 2017). In light of these arguments, this section examines the characteristics of social movements and the role of digital media in contemporary protests. In doing so, it argues that social media was integral to the development of the #MeToo movement.

The #MeToo movement prompts the question of why women protest in the first place. Such a question serves to illuminate how contemporary political protest culture operates, as well as how a sense of community is created in such movements. It is no coincidence that the #MeToo movement occurred at the time it did. Shortly after The New York Times and The New Yorker published their initial investigations into allegations of sexual harassment and abuse perpetrated by Harvey Weinstein, a powerful Hollywood producer, actress Alyssa Milano urged women to share their experiences of sexual harassment using a particular twitter hashtag: #MeToo. Soon, millions of women took to Twitter to share their testimonies. In addition to the desire for a voice and for sharing their experiences of workplace sexual harassment, women were motivated by the fact that they had an accessible medium through which to speak. With twitter as their platform, the #MeToo
hashtag became their microphone. While these sentiments are not new, digital technologies have made the expression of sentiments and the development of protest culture connect in unprecedented ways. Consequently, oral social movements like #MeToo present diverse intersections of class, ethnicity, religion, and so on—thereby demonstrating the pervasiveness of the problem. As such, social media enabled this serious threat to a patriarchal society that enables the predatory behavior of men.

The #MeToo movement also reflects the culture of social movements, which values individual voice and develops a sense of community. The movement developed without any formal organization that may have imposed an ideological framework and homogeneity (Tufekci, 2017). Indeed, evaluating the movement’s collective, Tufecki (2017) notes its ability to achieve social change, rather than solely measuring available benchmarks. In addition to spreading the word, social movements provide their own explanation and what should be done about it. As such, social movements are driven by two core goals: getting attention and convincing people of the veracity of their narrative. These goals shape the social movement at every stage (Tufekci, 2017). As Tufekci (2017) explains:

Almost all movements, the environmental movement, the African American civil rights movements, and the women’s movements must first convince people that their issues are important and that their stance and demands are legitimate. Persuading people do not mean only targeting those outside an interest group to join the cause. Activists must also persuade people inside the movement to undertake the initial, often painstaking work of early movement formation as women did in the 1960s when they held ‘consciousness-
raising’ groups with other women to discuss and deepen their understanding of feminism.

(p.193).

Even if a group is large enough to create a social movement, they can encounter difficulty in gaining broader social acceptance for their version of the issue because, as feminists have argued, women are not considered and treated as equal members of society.

In order to understand #MeToo, we need to consider the #MeToo protesters. As Tufekci (2017) notes, for protesters, digital tools and street protests are part of the same reality. While social media allows protesters to share information, they also allow the creation of a counter-narrative and culture that go beyond immediate physical boundaries. In protesting inappropriate behavior in response to the allegations against Weinstein, Milano contributed to transforming individual sentiments by instigating the sharing of such experiences using social media. In doing so, a collective identity was formed in the birth of a social movement.

According to Castells (2015), social movements are typically triggered by emotions derived from a meaningful event that helps protesters overcome their fear and challenge the prevailing attitude, despite the danger inherent to their actions. Drawing on neuroscience research, Castells (2015) asserts that social change involves an action, that involves an individual and/or collective reaction to an emotional impetus. In the case of #MeToo, fear was overcome by “sharing and identifying with others in a process of communicative action” (Castells, 2015, p.247). I agree with Castells, that social change results from communicative action involving a connection between networks through communication networks.
Social media was integral to the #MeToo movement. The significant aspects of social media include the ability to create a powerful sense of camaraderie—one that crosses geographic, socio-cultural, and racial borders. As Tufekci (2017) notes:

Digital media enhance the visibility of a cause and can assist the breakdown of pluralistic ignorance, but what is less noticed is how connectivity also supports a sense of camaraderie and community—then, even a hashtag storm can create a sense of belonging. Digital connectivity can help create, set, and maintain a mood in a protest, even if it is completely decentralized otherwise. Digital media create an umbrella that envelops the protest and at the same time reaches out to people, potentially millions, who feel that they are part of the movement (p.111).

Similarly, Castells (2015) demonstrates that occupy spaces—the networked space—create community. Thus, by constructing a free community in a symbolic place through social media sites like Twitter, social movements create a public space with the potential to become a political space. As such, the autonomy of communication is the essence of social movements because it allows the movement to be formed (Castells 2015). Considering how communication has changed with the daily use of social media, Castells asserted that movements often become the raw materials of ideological experimentation, which is tenable. Of course, this is also the case when they are used by conservative groups to attack civil rights.

As such, the use of the Internet and mobile communication networks was essential to the development of contemporary social movements. However, the networking for is typically multimodal. In contrast with other social movements, #MeToo used a specific social network,
Twitter, as a medium through which to share women’s sexual harassment testimonies. Milano’s tweet inspired women around the world to share their stories, foregrounding the pervasiveness of sexual harassment. Despite its origins in the now recognized work of Tarana Burke, #MeToo only became a global movement through Twitter.

Protests and Movements

According to Tufekci (2017), protests have a strong expressive side that appeals to people’s sense of agency. Finding meaning in rebellion is not a new concept, but one dating back to the earliest days of modern protests. Such meaning making even occurs in massive events like revolutions (Tufekci, 2017). Analyzing several anti-corruption movements that occurred in 2011—namely, the Egyptian Uprising, Spanish Indignados, and Occupy Wall Street—Gerbaudo (2012) suggests that while these national movements necessarily reflect their specific national culture, they share remarkable commonalities. This is similarly true of the #MeToo movement. As such, Gerbaudo (2012) calls for the development of a situational analysis of social media practices while paying attention to their interaction with other forms of communication.

In contrast, Della Porta and Diani (2006) argue that associating expressions like “global justice movement” with unitary, homogeneous actors is misleading. Initiatives against neoliberal globalization are heterogeneous and not necessarily connected to one another. The initiatives address a ranging from the use of child labor by global companies, to deforestation and human rights abuses in developing countries. They also take myriad forms—ranging from individual verbal protests to mass collective action—and adopt diverse perspectives. In analyzing social movements, scholars tend to focus on individuals, organizations, or events, often attempting to capture the interdependence between these factors (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). While scholars like Tufekci
(2017) and Gerbaudo (2012) focus entirely on what they assume to be “popular” movement—that is, movements that appeal to the “people” (Laclau, 2005)—the study of the #MeToo movement should concern anyone who cares for the majority of the population.

Chapter 3: Protesting Sexual Harassment

Examining Sexual Harassment

While sexual harassment is hardly a new issue, it remains a controversial one. One of the questions raised by the issue of sexual harassment is what kind of participation is most significant if women wish to overcome the system—specifically that in which harassment and the silencing of female victims is normalized. In The Women’s Movements Against Sexual Harassment (2018), Baker examines the controversies that emerged in establishing sexual harassment as a topic of public discourse in the United States in the early 1970s. Resistance to sexual harassment emerged in the form of several lawsuits filed under Title VII of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964. Sexual harassment litigation was a battleground on which traditional notions that women belonged in the private sphere and entered the public sphere at their own risk fought against feminist arguments that women were entitled to participate fully and safely in the public sphere.

Drawing on comparative feminist theory, gender and welfare state regimes, and social movements, Zippel (2006) shows how sexual harassment has become a global issue. Beginning in the United States and spreading to the European Union, the evolution of sexual harassment policies demonstrates the important role of transnational movements and advocacy networks in promoting social change at a global scale (Zippel, 2006). According to Zippel (2006), mobilizations against

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7 See the case of Sweden https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/arende/betankande/enny-sexualbrottslagstiftning-byggd-pa_H501JuU29

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sexual harassment “emerged from multiple feminisms—the grassroots activism of diverse groups of women—and the resulting public policy reflected this diverse participation” (p.3). As such, one of the more interesting questions raised by the work of Baker (2018) and Zippel (2006) concerns the interaction between legislative and regulatory frameworks and movement activism.

While a significant body of literature has emerged on the issue of sexual harassment over the last three decades, the conception of sexual harassment and scholarly focus has changed. Before 2007, harassment studies primarily focused on the narrowly defined issue of heterosexual harassment of females by males. For instance, studies confirmed the pervasiveness of sexual harassment behaviors, as well as how they had been normalized in schools. Using multiple case studies, Meyer (2019) indicates that forms of sexual harassment persist from school to adulthood, and that the majority of harassers are male peers, with appropriate action seldom taken against offenders—particularly in adulthood. This indicates that sexual harassment against women is normalized among men at an early age, often perpetrated by their school peers, and later, by their work colleagues.

While Meyer (2019) focuses on how pervasive sexual harassment is in schools, Saguy (2003) examines how sexual harassment is represented in media. Comparing the media coverage of sexual harassment in terms of volume, topic, and framing in the United States and France, Saguy (2003) finds that the US media tend to focus on high-profile political scandals. In contrast, the French media is less likely to present sexual harassment as a scandal or specifically as a women’s

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8 See for instance Tithy Bhattacharya’s “Socializaing Security, Unionizing Work #MeToo as our moment to explore possibilities (2018)

9 Further reading on the issue of sexual harassment: What is Sexual Harassment?: From Capitol Hill to the Sorbone where Saguy shows a remarkable mastery of different social and legal cultures.
issue. Indeed, French articles demonstrated a tendency to frame sexual harassment as a matter of the abuse of power, violence, morality, and financial compensation (Saguy, 2003). As such, Saguy (2003) argues that the understanding and response to sexual harassment is contextual, often differing from one society or period to another.

Saguy’s (2014) work is particularly relevant to the present study because her findings show that the mass media’s discussion of sexual harassment framed the discussion of the phenomenon so that it created a relatively new concept. According to Saguy (2014), frames are important because they draw attention to certain aspects of a problem and shapes the overall perception of an issue, often in a dramatic way. Certainly, we have already seen evidence that the mass media have influenced the laws governing and the attitudes toward sexual harassment. A particularly well-known example is Bill Clinton, who fielded accusations of sexual harassment by multiple women, including Paula Jones, and most notoriously, Monika Lewinsky (Saguy, 2003).

As noted, sexual harassment has been covered varyingly by the mass media over the last three decades, shaping different opinions about the issue. Conscious-raising articles framed sexual harassment as a social problem. As Saguy (2003) suggested, in the 1980s, the mass media corroborated the existence of sexual harassment as a problem. As one article warned, “It may be as subtle as a leer and a series of off-color jokes, or as direct as grabbing a woman’s breast.”10 However, articles could also discredit sexual harassment victims, often suggesting that they were motivated by economic greed.

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In the discussion of how laws define sexual harassment, a controversial issue has been how media framing serves to evoke different notions of what the problem of sexual harassment is about and how to solve it. Zippel (2006) argues that gender plays a role in how we conceptualize sexual harassment, either as miscommunication or as a reflection of deeply embedded unequal gender relations. How we determine which situations and actions constitute “sexual harassment” is based our assumptions of how women and men should behave, what “normal” interactions in the workplace should be, and whether sexual harassment is predominantly an expression of desire in an appropriate context or of dominance fueled by the abuse of power.

In *Sexual Shakedown* (1978), Farley refers to the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidelines\(^\text{11}\) in arguing that sexual harassment became defined as quid pro quo sexual harassment. The concept of quid pro quo (Latin for “this for that”) sexual harassment refers to the provision of a job or educational opportunity in exchange for some kind of sexual favor. The guidelines published by the Employment Opportunity Commission in 1965 recognized two forms of sexual harassment. The first, as noted, is quid pro quo sexual harassment. The second is the creation of a hostile work environment through sexist and abusive treatment in the workplace. As such, sexual harassment is not limited to conduct of sexual nature but includes situations in which the demeaning or derogatory treatment of women—such as telling misogynistic jokes—can create a hostile work environment. According to Farley (1978), there is an important distinction between quid pro quo sexual harassment and a hostile environment: where the former usually involves a one-on-one relationship in which the perpetrator has control of employment- or educational-related rewards or punishment, the latter can involve multiple perpetrators or targets. Moreover, in a

hostile environment, coworkers often exhibit a pattern of hostile sexist behavior toward multiple targets over an extended period of time (Holland and Cortina, 2016).

Cartoonist Riana Duncan captured the sexist atmosphere of the committee or the boardroom: indeed, this well-known deafness is nicely parodied in the following *Punch* cartoon:

![Punch cartoon](https://twitter.com/LRB/status/933064258585354241)

As Beard (2017) noted, there is hardly a woman who has opened her mouth at a meeting and not had the “Miss Triggs treatment” at some point or another. The representation of women in Duncan’s cartoon represent how women’s voices have not been heard in the public sphere, as well as the prevailing misogyny (Beard, 2017). As Beard (2017) reported, the fact that even women who have not been silenced are still required to pay a very high price for being heard indicates the complex
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reality and history of gender relations and sexual harassment in society\textsuperscript{12,13}. As such, Beard (2017) argues for the adoption of a long view on the historically tense relationship between women’s voices and the public sphere of speech making, debate, and comment. Thus, Beard (2017) reminds us that through Twitter, the #MeToo movement represents a moment in which women found a space to be heard and that there is no going back. Moreover, it is important to recognize that sexual harassment is a gender issue. It is not merely a problem encountered by women; it is a problem of masculinity in a heteronormative culture (Zippel, 2006).\textsuperscript{14} Along the same lines, reiterating what is now a common feminist understanding, as Linda Gordon (2018) puts it, sexual harassment is an assertion of power or entitlement. That Donal Trump, for instance, could brag about harassing women matches his well-documented propensity for lying: both warring the message “I am so powerful that I can do or say anything I want, and others must acknowledge that power defer to it” (Gordon, 2018, p.104). One can agree that this message has spread.

Me Too and #MeToo

The Me Too campaign was founded by Tarana Burke in 2006 to help survivors of sexual violence, particularly young women of color from low-income communities, to be heard regarding their experiences. From the outset, the movement sought to address the lack of resources for survivors of sexual violence and build a community of advocates driven by survivors to develop solutions for sexual violence in their communities (\url{metoomvmt.org}). Years later, on October 15, 2017, actress Alyssa Milano unwittingly turned the movement viral. “If you’ve been sexually

\textsuperscript{12} In Women & Power: a Manifesto (2017), Mary Beard asks: if women aren’t perceived to be within the structures of power, isn’t it power that we need to refined?

\textsuperscript{13} On the issue of the Voice of Women, read \url{https://www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n06/mary-beard/the-public-voice-of-women}

\textsuperscript{14} Studies of normative heteronormative masculinity have investigated how sexual harassment serves to establish hierarchies among men. See Gruber and Morgan, 2005; Connel, 2005.
“harassed or assaulted,” she tweeted, “write #MeToo” as a reply to this tweet.” With more than 66,000 direct replies, the hashtag instantly expanded the movement in terms of both its geographical scope and focus. Where Burke’s campaign focused on the survivors of sexual violence, particularly women of color, #MeToo expanded beyond sexual harassment and assault, the workplace, and the US. Indeed, the #MeToo movement has become a global phenomenon that placed sexual impropriety and women’s rights under the spotlight, mobilized thousands of women, and inspired women’s marches protesting misogyny and gender inequality around the world.

How did the #MeToo movement reach so many women? According to Tufekci (2017), narrative capacity constitutes a movement’s ability to articulate itself, have its voice heard, and be regarded as legitimate in response. This prompts the questions of how we may measure the power of #MeToo. Again, according to Tufekci (2017), the strength of social movements resides in their capacity to set the narrative, influence electoral or constitutional change, and disrupt the status quo. One such capacity is narrative capacity, the ability of a movement to frame and disseminate its story on its own terms. We might think of this capacity as both persuasion and legitimacy—key ideological pillars of any social movement (Tufekci, 2017).

Of course, a key question is why Me Too gained the momentum to become a movement following Milano’s tweet, rather than Burke’s activism. The work Burke had been doing for years in establishing the Me Too campaign is referred to as direct practice (McKensie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2014)—another arena in which listening is a necessary precursor to assisting women. To illustrate this, in an interview for The Nation, Burke maintained that Me Too “started very hands on, working directly with younger people or adults doing workshops or having conversation on sexual violence” (Adetiva, 2017). Upon learning that the white Hollywood elite had taken up the #MeToo cause, Burke claims she was not worried that her original intent—for the voices of marginalized
women to be heard—would be “whitewashed.” On the contrary, she also recognized the need to claim the movement and align it with her campaign’s goals. However, she noted:

If I had not said anything or started inserting myself into the conversation, then that would’ve left me, next April, trying to announce our new website and documentary and people responding, “Oh, but they already did #MeToo six months ago” I would have diminished the world I had devoted my life to. (Adetiva, 2017).

Burke admits to fearing that the conversation was being redirected and the focus altered by the movement becoming a viral social phenomenon linked to the highly mediatized indictments of particular men. As Burke noted:

The conversation is largely about Harvey Weinstein or other individual bogeymen. No matter how much I keep talking about power and privilege, they keep bringing it back to individuals…it defeats the purpose to not have those folks centered—I’m talking black and brown girls, queer folks. There’s no conversation in this whole thing about transgender folks and sexual violence. There’s no conversation in this about people with disabilities and sexual violence. So no, I cannot take my focus off marginalized people. (Adetiva, 2017)

Referring to people’s frustration with #MeToo due its lack of strategy or a plan for “what comes next,” Burke insisted:

I didn’t start Me Too as a hashtag, and had I had the opportunity to, I probably wouldn’t have done it that way. I think that what has happened subsequently has been beautiful to watch, but what concerns me is what all of these survivors are going to do now. We’re looking at mass disclosure across social media, and if you are still struggling with coming to terms with disclosing, you may not have been ready for it. (Adetiva, 2017).
Burke repeatedly emphasized the need to illuminate the abuse and silencing of marginalized women, reiterating that “many marginalized people stay silent on sexual violence due to distrust of law enforcement” (Adetiva, 2017).

In contrast to Burke’s original intention, the #MeToo movement transformed into a viral call to indict the perpetrators of sexual harassment and abuse. For instance, in France, women used the hashtag #balancetonporc—or “denounce your pig.” Of course, some of Burke’s issues resonate across geographic and racial borders. In Italy, actress Asia Argento coined #QuellaVoltaChe, or “that time when…” for women to share the issues they have faced when reporting sexual assault to the police. As one woman shared, the response she encountered was “Madam, are you sure? You know that reporting it makes it a big deal?” noting that “afterward nothing happened.”15 Referring to reporting sexual assault, Burke notes,

There are a series of emotions that most survivors go through after disclosing. It starts with feeling great, like the weight on your shoulders has been lifted, and then you’re alone with your thoughts, like, “Why did I do that?” (Adetiva, 2017)

This prompts the question of why not all women are heard. Arguably, it was only when prominent actresses like Ashley Judd, Taylor Swift, Rose McGowan, and Alyssa Milano among others began sharing their stories of sexual harassment in Hollywood that the issue gained mainstream attention—also highly mediatized court cases. There is a persistent racial element here,

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15 Tweet translated from Italian: “#quellavoltache denunciatene misi dissero: “Signora e sicura? Lo sa che la denuncia e una osa seria?” E in seguito non accadde nulla.”
as Judd, Swift, McGowan, and Milano in particular are all white women as well as prominent celebrities.

As *TIME* noted in 2017:

Finally, in October—when Judd went on the record about Weinstein's behavior in the New York Times, the first star to do so—the world listened. (Weinstein said he "never laid a glove" on Judd and denies having had nonconsensual sex with other accusers.)

“When movie stars don’t know where to go, what hope is there for the rest of us? ”What hope is there for the janitor who's being harassed by a co-worker but remains silent out of fear she'll lose the job she needs to support her children? Judd asks.

Certainly, celebrity spotlight helps amplify the voice of other sufferers on the world stage (Chouliaraki, 2013). After all, celebrities have “considerable opportunities not only to formulate but to sell their initiatives, targeting not only to the public but to selective stated leaders” (Cooper in Chouliaraki, 2013, p.86). This is certainly true of Milano, who—unaware of Burke’s campaign—unwittingly turned Me Too into #MeToo. Milano is now the personification of #MeToo, ultimately promoting an unconditional solidarity with Burke’s work. Irrespective of who began or continues the Me Too/#MeToo movement, both movements should be treated as part of a broader effort in the fight against sexual harassment. In sum, #MeToo was the culmination of years of advocacy.

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Chapter 4: Mediating #MeToo

Mass Media, Mass Opinion

This study examines #MeToo media texts as part of the 2019 World Economic Forum’s Education, Gender, and Work Agenda. Needless to say, the development of a detailed understanding of the role of media in relation to the various features of the broader social and cultural environment in which we live is far from a simple task. Some approaches regard media as constructors or shapers, arguing that the content they distribute has the power to influence people and affect the future of society.\textsuperscript{17}

As noted, media texts are a dominant feature of our environment, often going unnoticed because they are always there. Taken for granted, media texts are often treated uncritically. Media texts are intended to engage people, convey some kind of information, and produce reactions among readers that justify their continuing production. As such, media texts actively produce meanings in the minds of the audience (Burton, 2005). According to McLuhan (2001), the medium is the message. In this regard, media texts—the medium in this case—show how certain events like the World Economic Forum influence people’s opinion.

As Hodkinson (2017) notes, most people would probably agree that the news does not always present a balanced and truthful reflection. Accusations of bias or lack of balance in coverage often steams from academics, as well as members of the public, politicians, or interest groups. According to Hodkinson (2017):

\textsuperscript{17} “Society,” is a closely related, but somewhat broader term, which refers to the whole social world in which we exist or the body of institutions and relationships within which a relatively large group of people live (Williams, 1988)

[N]ews can *never* constitute an unbiased mirror of the world. Although based upon real events and controversies, the content of newspapers and bulletins are manufactured and constructed in particular ways according to prevailing cultural values, audience expectations, and institutional priorities. What we read, view, or listen to comprises not a neutral account of the world, but one or more versions or representations of that world. (p.120).

Hodkinson (2017) reminds us that media essentially refers to the means through which content is communicated between an origin and a destination. Nonetheless, the development of a detailed understanding of the role of media in relation to these various features of the broader social and cultural environment we live in is far from a simple task. Some view media as significant shapers of the opinions and society. Considering the approach of this study, it is important to note that the representation of women (and minorities) can increase the marginalization of such groups within society. Accordingly, arguments that political or moral bias in the media may lead to the dominance of certain groups among Audiences is also significant, particularly insofar as the general quality of media content in a given society may affect how informed, engaged, or creative a population is. Such perspectives focus on the ways in which media may be affecting or influencing society.

Other approaches focus on the way in which media reflects or mirror society. According to this view, the primary role of media is to reflect events, behaviors, identities, social relations, or values that are already important. According to Hodkinson (2017), if the media is dominated by misogynistic gender biases—as noted in Robbins’ article—then the society that produces such a media is one in which these attitudes prevail. The prominence of particular opinions or values in media content reflects their existing currency (Hodkinson, 2017).
Examinations of media bias often focus on the way in which news providers report and shape stories. However, before deciding how to report a given story, outlets must select which events, topics, or controversies to cover. In making such decisions, news organizations act as gatekeepers with the capacity to affect what we know, care, and talk about. This power to shape public priorities is known as agenda setting—a term associated with the research of McCombs and Shaw (1972), who identified a correlation between the amount of news coverages devote to an issue, and the importance attributed to it by the public (Hodkinson, 2017).

Galtung and Ruge (1973) identified twelve criteria governing the likelihood of an event being covered. One criterion is that it relates to elites—that is, stories about powerful or famous people are generally more newsworthy than those about the poor or unknown, because the actions of the former are liable to be of greater consequence or interest. Indeed, celebrity stories have become particularly valuable because they encapsulate extraordinary levels of wealth, power, and influence while having proximity and relevance to the lives of ordinary people (Galtung & Ruge, 1973). As such, in addition to offering greater insight into themes related to women’s experiences before, during, and after #MeToo went viral, research on #MeToo can challenge assumptions regarding what has been taken for granted as common and established knowledge.

What the Media Say About #MeToo

This study analyzes the discussion of #MeToo during the 2019 WEF summit. As mentioned above, it seeks to answer the following questions: How did the media, through online news, construct and contribute to a new discourse through the reporting on #MeToo during the 2019 WEF summit? Do the texts reflect a change in the #MeToo era? What trends have emerged? Has the

Read about the WEF impact here: https://www.weforum.org/our-impact

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#MeToo movement changed anything? What is next? In doing so, this study argues that social movements play an important role in social change. Content analysis of articles that were published during the 2019 WEF summit reveals several categories of analysis, namely: women and leadership, leadership and men, corporate culture, unexpected consequences for women at work regarding sexual harassment, a culture of accountability, and recognition.

In the article *One year on from the #MeToo movement, what exactly has changed?* published for the 2019 WEF summit, Hass (2018) emphasized the need to maintain the momentum of the #MeToo movement. While acknowledging Burke’s role and intent, Hass (2018) focused on surveying the movement in the year since Milano’s tweet. In doing so, Hass noted several surveys conducted in the wake of #MeToo. For instance, a YouGov survey of 1,000 urban citizens in India found that 76 percent of respondents believed that sexual harassment is a serious problem. Meanwhile, in countries like Iran and Egypt, women have been pushing for new dialogues on women’s rights for decades. Nonetheless, Hass notes, society remains deeply divided about how to respond to sexual assault and gender-based violence.

On behalf of *The Economist*, YouGov conducted a survey on victim blaming in September 2018—the results showing a “small but clear shift against victims.” Indeed, results show that in less than one year, the percentage of adults in the US who agree that men who sexually harassed women at work twenty years ago should keep their jobs increased from 28 percent to 36 percent. Consequently, Hass (2018) concludes that there is growing concern and suspicion regarding

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20 All articles analysed can be find in the Appendix 1.

21 Gender-based, as noted by UN Gender Focus, is a form of sexual harassment. See https://news.un.org/en/audio/2018/11/1026621

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#MeToo. Nonetheless, she reminds us that there is no going back. Indeed, Hass argues, the momentum needs to be maintained, so that companies are forced to engage in #MeToo dialogue at all levels.

Familiar themes emerge in the sample articles. The most prominent theme concerns the representation of women, notably the fact that few women hold senior leadership roles. In an article entitled “What does real leadership look like in the #MeToo era?” (2019), the author asserts that “we” are caught in a circular conversation about why there are not more women in leadership. Indeed, a well-known joke points out that there are fewer women in top leadership ranks than there are people named John. Significantly, the ideological influence of news organizations has not been limited to audiences alone; it can expand to politicians and other powerful figures due to their perceived ability to affect public opinion. According to this article, this capacity should be utilized to influence opinions about women in leadership. As such, the author argues that the world leaders preparing for the WEF summit—the majority of whom are men—should be asking what lessons can be learned from recent case studies in leadership malfunction, particularly those occurring amid the #MeToo era. The article concludes by noting that #MeToo had already taught that, “few things are more significant in the career of any leader than to maintain a positive reputation. It takes years to amass a good image, but a few minutes to destroy it.” Indeed, the author adds, “for all the negative press that the Internet and social media receives, one of the greatest benefits it has introduced is the ability to crowdsource and monitor leaders’ reputations, punishing those who misbehave and rewarding those who do things right.”

Robbins (2019) discusses the role of employers in the #MeToo era, noting that 2018 was a year of both progress and setbacks for women. As Robbins (2019) shows, the global gender gap showed only marginal improvement, with the WEF predicting that it will take 108 years to close the
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gap at the current rate of progress. While 2017 was the year of the “silence breakers,” 2018 was one in which a growing number of men reported being uncomfortable or afraid to work alone with a woman (Robbins, 2019). In fact, reports show that the numbers of men who are uncomfortable mentoring women has tripled since #MeToo\textsuperscript{23}. Some reports have gone as far as to say that men are avoiding women altogether in the workplace—from excluding female colleagues in business travel to avoiding one-on-one meetings. Again, the representation of men as occupying positions of power and women as victims is reflected in sentences like “The top jobs in finance are dominated by men” and “Men are avoiding women altogether in the workplace”—something that not only is detrimental to women’s careers but also classifies as discriminatory behavior (Robbins, 2019).

Another recurring theme in the #MeToo texts is recognition. In an article entitled “Why #MeToo is the beginning of a culture of accountability? (2018), Marcus—the founder and CEO of BBC News—focuses on how #MeToo has put increasing pressure on men in power to at least acknowledge the added obstacles that women face, from workplace harassment to the persistent gender wage tag. According to Marcus (2018), high profile movements like #MeToo have amplified women’s voices and inspired others to come forward with their own harrowing stories of abuse. Recognition—represented in the line “acknowledgement is not enough; nor is punishing one powerful abuser at a time”—can be regarded as a positive outcome of the #MeToo movement. As Marcus notes (2018), the public’s tolerance toward sexual advances against women is clearly running thin. Indeed, other articles from 2017 point out that harassment is one of many factors

\textsuperscript{23} As Linda Gordon (2018) puts it in \textit{The Politics of Sexual Harassment with an introduction: Power, Harassment, and Sexism Today} (2018), sexism remains a massive problem that intersects with sexual harassment in complex ways. When Vice President Mike Pence responded to harassment allegations by describing his rule not to meet along with any woman, thereby removing women from equal participation in politics and governing, his “solution” to harassment punished victims and confirmed male dominance. Pence proposal, insists Gordon (2018), also illuminated his Underlying premise—that he is not responsible for controlling his aggression or horniness. His stance is a continuation of the victim-blaming Victorian directive ordering women to stay in “safe” places. (p.107)
contributing to the gender gap in the workplace. However, in this particular case, Marcus identifies a persistent hegemonic discourse as harmful to women—the discourse on the male sex drive (Hollway, 1984, 1989). This discourse “absolves men of their responsibility and agency for sexual aggression, attributing it instead to their uncontrollable sexual drives” (Anderson & Doherty, 2008). Marcus (2018) discussed the prevailing cultural narrative on “hostesses”:

In some cases, social events have been designed to enable such behavior. An undercover investigation by the Financial Times recently revealed that the “Presidents Club” was hosting annual men-only charity fundraisers, secretive gatherings where British business, government, and entertainment figures would raise money for worthy causes. But these were also social events, where attendees drank, caroused, and sexually harassed skimply clad hostesses, who had been required to sign non-disclosure agreements (Marcus, 2018).

Highlighted here is a Foucauldian notion of power, whereby misogyny is reproduced through the reference of the hostesses. As Foucault (1976) argued:

[Ours is] a society which has been loudly castigating itself for its hypocrisy for more than a century, which speaks verbosely of its own silence, takes great pains to relate in detail the things it does not say, denounces the power it exercises, and promises to liberate itself from the very laws that have made it function (pp. 8-9)

Certainly, the effect of communication regarding #MeToo has taken the movement’s gains from social media forums into boardrooms. In an article entitled “#MeToo won’t end sexual harassment but here’s what will, experts say,” Thomson (2019) gives a more frank expression to
what many have begun observing regarding the #MeToo movement, as she discusses the post of
Sheryl Sandberg (2017), the COO of Facebook, who claimed to “have already heard the rumblings
of a backlash.” Recalling how the 1992 presidential race was summated in the barb, “It’s the
economy, stupid,” Sandberg wrote in a Facebook post as, “Today, as headlines are dominated by
stories about sexual harassment and sexual assault at work, a similar phrase comes to mind: It’s the
power, stupid.” To this Sandberg added:

At 48 years old, I’m lucky that I’ve never been sexually harassed or assaulted by anyone
I worked for. The fact this could be considered lucky is a problem in itself, but based on
the numbers, I am lucky. I’ve only ever worked for men, and all of my bosses have been
not just respectful, but deeply supportive. (Appendix 2)

However, in the same post, Sandberg notes, “like almost every woman…I have experienced
sexual harassment in the form of unwanted sexual advances in the course of doing my job.” Thus,
this post presents an interesting situation of a woman who was sexually harassed, until she gained a
more senior position—that is, when she gained more power, incidences of sexual harassment
became less frequent. As such, Sandberg concluded, sexual harassment is a matter of power.
Accordingly, we should look at the abuse of power by women in power, as well as those who
tolerate such behavior.

The most recent articles focus on how to advance the #MeToo movement. One such article
concerns Chile and how it deals with sexual harassment on the streets. A new law could “encourage
other governments to recognize pervasive street sexual harassment as a social problem.” (Moloney,
2019). This kind of content communication mirrors a positive outcome of the #MeToo movement.
Indeed, the elements of Laswell’s model—Who? What? How? To Whom? To what effect?—can be observed in such articles. Take Moloney’s (2019) article for example:

(a) Who? The author, Molony, is the sender.

(b) What? The message (what?) is that Chile will soon start punishing rampant street sexual harassment against women and girls with fines and terms. However, “getting victims to speak up will be a significant challenge.”

(c) How? The channel is the WEF website.

(d) To whom? The recipients of the message are predominantly WEF summit participants, as well as the broader readership.

(e) To what effect? From this perspective, the effect refers to communicating how countries in Latin America have recognized the need to end systematic sexual violence occurring in public spaces. Following Peru, Chile is the second country in Latin America where street sexual harassment has been given a legal definition, making it a punishable crime. Argentina followed suit in 2018.

According to Hodkinson (2017), just because we cannot hope to understand the role and significance of media by focusing on the content alone does not mean that we should ignore it. News articles and a plethora of other content can be understood as representing the world in partial and particular ways, although while limiting the range of likely interpretations or uses. This implies that content may have the capacity to influence the thoughts and lives of users and the broader ways of life and social relations of which the analyzed articles are part.
Meanwhile, author Kende-Robb (2018) argued that the question of #MeToo is not about whether we need a global treaty, but why one does not already exist. Such opinions highlight the need for a global convention to end workplace sexual harassment. Of course, #MeToo has revealed that sexual harassment does not only occur in the workplace, but transcends borders, income levels, and levels of job security. Kende-Robb (2018) notes that as Secretary-General of Care International in 2018, she engaged in the UN’s sixteen days of activism against gender-based violence aimed at “galvanizing action to end violence against women and girls around the world.” The conclusion is clear, “without an international agreement we cannot adequately address prevention nor provide appropriate support for survivors.” As such, Kende-Robb (2018) argues that conventions can help accelerate the development of national legislation and regulation, as well as mobilize authorities, business, and the public to address this widespread problem. Indeed, according to a study presented in the article, more than a third of the world’s countries have no laws against sexual harassment at work, leaving nearly 235 million women vulnerable.

**Chapter 5: The Pursuit of Recognition**

The #MeToo movement is used as an example to illustrate the pursuit of recognition by various groups. For this purpose, this study focuses on the theory of recognition developed by Axel Honneth (1995), a moral philosopher. Indeed, Honneth’s theory of recognition is central to our social interaction. Certainly, history shows how women’s experiences have received varying degrees of recognition depending on the society and era. This struggle for recognition manifests differently according to private, public, and cultural contexts—all of which are interesting in placing the #MeToo movement within a larger context.
According to Honneth (1995), various forms of social injustices correspond to different types of social denial of recognition. In defining social recognition and denial, Honneth refers to the relationship between two types of recognition: recognition as a fundamental expectation of individuals, and recognition produced by institutions. Honneth’s theory of recognition is also intended to be a sociopolitical one; that is, a theory of the struggle against social injustice that identifies the social processes and structures responsible for such injustices. As a political theory, it describes the various types of injustice produced by institutions, particularly insofar as the negative experiences that incentivize struggle against social injustice occur within some institutional framework. However, as a social theory, the theory of recognition seeks to elaborate upon intermediary concepts in the social sciences to describe the various ways in which recognition and the denial of recognition are socially constructed. Accordingly, intentional life itself appears socially instituted. As Nancy Fraser, an American philosopher, notes, “recognition designates an ideal reciprocal relation between subjects in which each sees the other as its equal and also as separate from it…one becomes an individual subject only by recognizing, and being recognized by, another subject” (Fraser in Altmeyer, 2018, pp.416–428). As such, according to this socio-political point of view, a shift to institutional analysis is necessary in order to advance #MeToo (Renault, 2011).

24 “Recognition,” comes from Hegelian philosophy, specifically the phenomenology of consciousness. In this tradition, recognition designates an ideal reciprocal relation between subject in which each set the other as its equal and also as separate from it.

25 As Butler (2004) puts it in her Giving an account on oneself (2004), as Hegel would have it, recognition cannot be unilaterally given. In the moment that I give it, I am potentially given it, and the form by which I offer it is one that potentially is given to me. In this sense, one might say, I can never offer it, in the Hegelian sense, as a pure offering, since I am receiving it, at least potentially and structurally, in the moment, in the act, of giving. We might ask, as Levinas surely has, what kind of gift this is that returns to me so quickly, that never really leaves my hands. Is it the case that recognition consists, as it does for Hegel, in a reciprocal act whereby I recognize that the Other is structured in the same way that I am, and I recognize that the Other also makes, or can make, this very recognition of sameness? Or is there perhaps an encounter with alterity here that is not reducible to sameness? If it is the latter, how are we to understand this alterity? On the one hand, the Hegelian Other is always found outside, or at least it is first found outside, and only later recognized to be constitutive.
Fraser and Honneth explore the paradigms of recognition in *Redistribution or Recognition, a political-philosophical exchange* (2003). According to Fraser (2003), recognition has been assimilated to identity politics, which equates with the struggles over gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, and race. However, Fraser (2003) argues that these common associations are misleading for two reasons. First, they treat recognition-oriented trends within feminist, anti-heterosexual, and antiracist movements as the whole story, rendering invisible alternative currents dedicated to righting gender specific, “race”-specific, and sex-specific forms of economic injustice that traditional movements ignored. Second, as Fraser puts it, they obscure the recognition dimensions of class struggles. (Fraser, 2003, p. 11–12). Accordingly, Fraser suggests suspending these common associations. Instead of aligning recognition with identity politics, one should treat this paradigm as expressing a distinctive perspective on social justice, which is applicable—at least in principle—to any social movement. Essentially, Fraser (2003) argues that the paradigm of recognition can encompass more than just movements seeking the reevaluation of unjustly devalued identities.

The recognition paradigm targets injustices that it views as cultural and presumable, and rooted in the social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication. According to Fraser (2003), such injustices can include:

[C]ultural domination (being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture); nonrecognition (being rendered invisible via the authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practices of one’s own culture); disrespect (being routinely maligned or disparage in stereotypic public representations and/or in everyday life interactions). (pp.11–13)
In response, Honneth (2003) claims that by acknowledging the everyday dimension of moral feelings of injustices makes it clear that what is called injustice in theoretical language is experienced as social injury by those affected. Honneth (2003) thus contends that Fraser’s argument over-generalizes the American experience, noting that numerous reports and interviews evidence the existence of overwhelming daily misery beyond the perceptual threshold of the political public sphere, including the feminization of poverty, immigration of the rural economy, and everyday privations of large families. Each of these social crises is accompanied by a series of exhausting activities for which the concept of social struggle would be entirely appropriate. As such, Honneth (2003) argues that normatively orienting a critical social theory toward the publicly perceptible demands of social movements has the unintended consequence of reproducing political exclusion.

What becomes immediately clear here is that recognition cannot evolve in a vacuum as interpersonal relations, but only in sociocultural contexts as in the context of the #MeToo movement. This study shows, to use Butler’s (2005) argument, that “if the social theory of recognition insists upon the interpersonal operation of the norm in constituting recognizability, a critique from another direction demands a rethinking of singularity” (Butler, 2004, p.24). Interestingly, Butler (2004) asserts that in living “my life as a recognizable being, I live a vector of temporalities, one of which has my death as its terminus, but another of which consists of the social temporality of norms by which my recognizability is established” (Butler, 2004, p.126). As Butler puts it, there is an operation of a norm, invariably social, that conditions what will and will not be a recognizable account.

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27 According to Butler, there is the operation of a norm, invariably social, that conditions what will and will not be a recognizable account. And there can be no account of myself that does not, to some extent, conform to norms that govern the humanly recognizable, or that negotiate these terms in some ways, with various risks following from that negotiation.
A Culture of Accountability

This paper critically engages with the discourse of recognition, while exploring a conceptual framework for analyzing the role of social media in the process of social awareness and mobilization. The #MeToo movement has been meaningful in mobilizing action, and persuading women to publicize their testimonies, thus placing the issue of sexual harassment into the public sphere. As Castells (2015) asserts, occupied spaces have played a major role in the history of social change, as well as in contemporary practice.

Gerbaudo’s (2012) reflections on the process of mobilizing collective action offer some useful insights, particularly insofar as the process of assembling acquires different dynamics in each social movement, depending on the spatial distribution of the constituency being mobilized. Drawing on Arendt’s work (1958), Gerbaudo (2012) suggests that the public space is not a datum or material venue, but a form of experience resulting from the process of gathering and recomposition of prior socio-spatial dispersion—that is, the interaction between society and infrastructure—in the process. Ultimately, such arguments resonate with what this paper aims to show: that Twitter provided the perfect platform for the #MeToo movement to emerge, providing a space in which the process of gathering was possible, which raises a broader issue regarding the “democratization” of the public sphere via social media.

Ultimately, when it comes to stopping harassment, as Gordon (2018) asserts in her interesting analysis of power, harassment and sexism today; it requires not only legal remedies but fundamental social and economic change. The change we need includes reducing inequality and, particularly putting more women in position of power. I concede the need of putting more women in position of power is important, but most importantly in stopping harassment it also require us to
create a culture of sexual respect as Gordon puts it: “stigmatizing harassment so strongly that perpetrators feel shame and humiliation” (p.107).

Conclusion

This study provides an overview of the origins of the #MeToo movement, as well as the key role played by social media in its mobilization. A significant theme of this study is how the news media significantly influences people’s opinion. The second part of the study examines a sample of online articles published as part of the WEF’s 2019 annual summit regarding the #MeToo movement. Published before, during, and after the summit took place, these articles tended to focus on how the movement has influenced attitudes, and what leadership looks like in the #MeToo era. In doing so, this study explores how media, in the form of online articles, constructed and contributed to the #MeToo discourse, whether these articles echoed the consequences of men’s actions, how the narrative changed as a result of #MeToo movement, and what kind of social change this discourse reflects. As a result, this study raises broader questions regarding the processes that translate and transform contentious feminist issues into laws, workplace policies, rules, regulations, and awareness programs. As such, this study demonstrates that online media is of great importance when constructing discourse.

Moreover, in the discussion of how laws define sexual harassment, a controversial issue has been how media framing serves to evoke different notions of what the problem of sexual harassment is about and how to solve it. Zippel (2006) argues that gender plays a role in how we conceptualize sexual harassment, either as miscommunication or as a reflection of deeply embedded unequal gender relations. How we determine which situations and actions constitute “sexual
harassment” is based on our assumptions of how women and men should behave, what “normal” interactions in the workplace should be, and whether sexual harassment is predominantly an expression of desire in an inappropriate context or of dominance fueled by abuse of power.

The evolution of sexual harassment policies demonstrates the importance of transnational movements such as #MeToo and alternative feminist discourses, including a range of perspectives and sophisticated forms of transnational expertise based on social sciences and legal research (Zippel, 2006). Indeed, #MeToo has seen the politics of sexual harassment evolved in various countries, including Chile, Argentina, as well as EU countries. Although, feminists instigated such policy changes, and they were able to influence laws and policies to varying degrees, however, as Zippel (2006) points out, feminists on both sides of the Atlantic have been shut out of the implementation processes. As such, feminist principles of gender equality, women’s sexual self-determination, and empowerment no longer define the politics of sexual harassment.

Finally, when conducting a study, it is important to have a sufficient sample size to conclude a valid research result. Although the texts sample analyzed in this study may seem too small, they are representative of the aim of these analyses. However, some limitations should be noted. First during the process, I faced the issue of having limited access to the World Economic Forum reports, something that was solved by registering and waiting for access approval. The second limitation concerns the amount of reports from the WEF that focused on its agenda of providing a broader perspective of its initiatives in shaping the Future of Education, Gender, and Work, which seek to ensure that talent is developed and deployed for the utmost benefit to the economy and society (WEF). These interesting initiatives may make it difficult to narrow down the scope of this analysis.
In short, conducted from a feminist perspective, this study offers a range of issues to be explored in future research regarding advancing feminist goals, such as ending sexual harassment. In seeking to understand why women revolt, this study finds that one of the main reasons may be that when protesters achieve their goal, the resulting benefits can be enjoyed even by those who did not participate.
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Works Cited


B. Berkowitz, ‘Occupy: From a Single Hashtag a Protest That Circled the World’, Reuters, 18 October 2011; Retrieved from HUFFPOST


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https://doi-org.proxy.mau.se/10.1080/17405904.2018.1427121


http:// www.dphu.org/uploads/attachements/books/books_89_0.pdf


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https://doi-org.proxy.mau.se/10.1057/eps.2002.49


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Retrieved from Malmö University Library


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Appendix 1

A sample of online reports facilitated by World Economic Forum website:


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Further Reading

#MeToo coverage by different news outlets:


http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/me-too-movement-2019/


https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-12-03/a-wall-street-rule-for-the-metoo-era-avoid-women-at-all-cost


https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/18/occupy-wall-street-hashtag_n_1017299.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer_us=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_cs=2kmzAT30KYp37iSBDBgFzQ


https://metoomvmt.org/category/in-the-press/page/2/


https://www.facebook.com/sheryl/posts/10159569315265177

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https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/29/us/metoo-men-women-mentors.html?smid=fb-nytimes&smtyp=cur&fbclid=IwAR2i6ITvj7K7fay0yiPuxL04sf9oBEe2C_LY6ZH70YsZ1Iun_qDYoc7l3pA

https://leanin.org/mentor-her

https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/me-too-movement-2019/
