

The #MeToo Movement: Its Strengths and Weaknesses, and its Potential Psychological Impact

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Abstract

The modern “Me Too” Movement has made waves for the movement against sexual assault, giving more publicity than ever before and shedding light on a much larger systematic issue. Sexual harassment and assault are ingrained in so many different aspects of society, from film to medicine, and perpetrators are finally beginning to be held accountable. However, with all the capacity of the recent #MeToo movement, there has still been a shortage of space and representation for minority groups and underserved populations that often face these issues the most.

Keywords: Psychology, #MeToo, privilege, sexual harassment, assault, representation, empathy

Introduction

There is so much to be said about the “Me, Too” movement, from its successes, to its dilemmas and ambiguities, to the mission behind it all. It cannot be stressed enough how important the topic is altogether, for the lives it has touched and for the lives it has yet to impact. The “Me Too” movement is actually already 20 years in the making, and there is still so much work left to do.

Tarana Burke founded the “Me, Too” movement back in 1997, after having a 13-year-old girl confide a horrific story of sexual abuse to her. With the “Me, Too” movement, Burke had been seeking to “empower through empathy” (Rodino-Colocino, 2018). It was a risky movement to start for many reasons, one of which being the very nature of the issue and the kinds of empathy it would attract. Burke was fearful of encouraging what she described as “passive empathy,” a kind of empathy which frustrates the social justice movement building process altogether, because it produces no direct action towards justice, but rather allows the individual to feel sorry for others without reflecting on any real connection they might have to the dilemma at hand (Rodino-Colocino, 2018). “Transformative empathy,” however, promotes listening, rather than looking at speakers as “others” or distancing themselves from the subject. Transformative empathy was the kind of feeling Burke was aiming to create amongst members of the movement, because it requires self-reflection and a potential transformation of one’s own assumptions, thoughts, and beliefs (Rodino-Colocino, 2018).

“Me, Too” became #metoo when actress Alyssa Milano sent out a post on Twitter, calling for everyone who had ever been sexually harassed or assaulted to post “me too” as a response to her tweet, which then went viral. The prompt on the post said that if every woman

who has been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote “me too” as a status, we might be able to give people a real sense of the magnitude of the problem. Half a million people responded to Milano’s tweet within the first 24 hours of its posting; after that, responses poured in and continued to do so for weeks to months (Thorpe, 2017). People shared various degrees of information with their postings, from just the words “me, too” to a description of the events that took place in their individual assault or harassment.

Gutting and Ruden (2018) mention a New Yorker article in which several victim stories were accounted. They write about how such stories are so impactful on the readers that it would seem impossible for someone with any inkling of moral awareness to be able to read them and fall short of understanding, and share the #metoo movement’s intense outrage against so many perpetrators.

Looking beyond the strength of the issue on a personal scale and the impacts it provides for those who listen and share stories, it is an urgent but difficult issue to tackle. What makes the problem so urgent and so difficult simultaneously is the very nature of the issue itself. Sex has a very particular and intimate nature, but also has a unique power to violate and damage (Gutting & Ruden, 2018).

The issues which the “Me, Too”, or #metoo movement stemmed from are still issues, and there is a lot of work left to be done. A great deal of intensity surrounding the problem of sexual assault and sexual awareness is due to the ways in which it is ingrained in or intertwined with so many different parts of our culture. That also means that parts of our culture will come to change with this new awareness and drive to do better. Things like medicine, film, politics,

prostitution, and workplace etiquette will be impacted by this tremendous movement, if they have not already.

Review of Literature

Due to the newness of the #metoo movement, the impacts that it has potential to achieve are not yet set in stone, however, several excellent sources can outline the impacts that are already visible, and offer some insight as to how the topic of sexual harassment and assault will be, or should be, considered in its various settings and capacities moving forward.

Writing about the fallout from the charges against producer Harvey Weinstein, Cobb and Horeck (2018) touch upon the ways in which male dominance has been long standing in Hollywood, and the ways in which film needs to change to accommodate the new awareness that the #metoo movement brings of the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment for women in the media industries. After the exposure of Harvey Weinstein, revelations about previous sexual misconduct from women in media came flooding in. It has become so widespread as it has now reached nearly every industry, from film to music, to literature, to media, to sports, to fashion, to food. Industries have become overwhelmed one at a time as a staggering amount of different accounts of predatory, abusive behavior have come to light (Cobb & Horeck, 2018).

Cobb and Horeck (2018) claim that the gender binarism of power has never been so starkly in view, and that if this is going to be a cultural turning point, what is most vital is carefully unpacking what they refer to as the “systematic and institutionalized histories” which continue to maintain the patterns and conditions for imbalances in gender power as well as oppression. The authors also point out that there are important differences in the ways in which cisgender women experience sexual assault and harassment, compared to the way transgender

women and gender non-conforming individuals do. The concepts of deploying an intersectional analysis to avoid exclusivity gestures, and taking a more global stance on the issue of gendered power and harassment in the media industries, are offered as possible points of production going forward, aiming to maximize the results from this new perspective inspired by the #metoo movement (Cobb & Horeck, 2018).

Cobb and Horeck (2018) offer a glimpse into the magnitude of the issue as it is ingrained in Hollywood and the media industries altogether, and a reality check regarding how widespread the issue of sexual harassment, assault, and gendered power differences is from one industry to the next. They also touch on, but do not really discuss, the difference between exposing individual men and exposing the issue of systematic oppression and power differences that exists in so many different industries. Zarkov and Davis (2018) touch upon this specific issue as well. They discuss the issue as a concern that visibility and exposure of individuals, or groups of individuals, could be misinterpreted and seen or taken as a solution for the tremendous problem that is sexual violence. Put another way, they hold the concern that making a person visible may be mistaken for making a problem visible – when in reality, the problem is much larger than individual or groups of men, and it stems from a much more deeply rooted place than simply powerful men letting their influence get to their heads. This brings about the concept of a “trial by media,” in which exposed men are publicly blamed and publicly shamed for their acts of sexual violence by the mere mention of their name, before any kind of fact check or investigation. This circles back to the idea that pointing out men could be confused with pointing out the bigger problem.

While Zarkov and Davis (2018) fell short of offering any solutions to the many dilemmas and ambiguities presented surrounding the #metoo movement, they certainly raised important points about the movement's overall effectiveness in regard to the variance in ability regarding speaking out and the entire movement. Many women who have spoken out and whose stories have had such great impacts on the movement are women who, for lack of a better word, are safe. Women of a certain security, whether it is in their financial status, job status, location, or in many different circumstances, have more power to speak out over women and individuals who are still living in a position of oppression. This is the issue of who speaks and who can speak versus who gets heard (Zarkov & Davis, 2018). Regardless of level of privilege, there is still a great deal of courage needed to #metoo, and that should not be undermined by any additional factor, not even the fact that it can be a platform for women confident enough to speak up and powerful enough to be heard. Rather, in addition to supporting these women who are able to speak up, it is important to think of the many women who still cannot. When powerful women speak, we cannot assume the effects will "trickle down" and affect less privileged or more silenced women. It is important to keep in mind throughout all of this that speaking out comes at a large price, and for women in so many different communities, the stakes are still too high and these can be prices they are not yet able to pay (Zarkov & Davis, 2018).

Tarana Burke spoke outside of Chicago Town Hall in October 2018, taking part in an event of speakers advocating to keep black women at the center of the movement:

"#MeToo does not have space for black girls," Burke said onstage at the School of the Art Institute. "It doesn't have space for black women, it doesn't have space for queer folk, it doesn't have space for disabled people, people of color, trans

people, anybody else that's other. ... #MeToo is about who is going to be taken down next — what other powerful, white, rich man is going to lose his privileges for a period of time.” (Greene, 2018)

Even the founding advocate has come to understand and advocate for her own movement to be brought back to its main focus, and pled to end the exclusion within its expansion.

Trans individuals are also among populations of people who could benefit a lot more from the Me Too movement if only it were more intersectional. In the latest United States Transgender Survey, 47% of individuals who participated had reported experiencing an incidence of sexual assault in their lifetime, and black trans individuals in the survey reported an even higher rate of experiences with sexual abuse, with 53% having faced an experience (Rodriguez, 2018). When Tarana Burke was speaking on the topic of marginalized populations in the movement, she described the discrepancies that can not be tolerated:

No matter how much I keep talking about power and privilege, they keep bringing it back to individuals. It would be very easy to get swept up and change directions and change the focus of this work, but that's not going to happen. 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. We need to talk about Native Americans, who have the highest rate of sexual violence in this country. So no, I can't take my focus off marginalized people. (Rodriguez, 2018)

For a movement as powerful and vast as #MeToo, it has become plain to see where the holes in such a powerful system are located, and how the movement cannot reach its full potential until they are patched.

Another position that should be considered in the midst of #metoo is prostitution (Farley, 2018). It seems simple from a distance that non-prostituted women must experience sexual violence differently than prostituted women, but it is not a discrepancy often considered, merely because it can be so difficult to consider. The everyday occurrences of a sex worker or a prostituted woman could be considered a non-prostituted woman's nightmare (Farley, 2018). Prostituted women understand in an entirely different depth what misogyny looks like and feels like at its most intense, and its psychological effects are staggering (Farley, 2018).

One woman who is a survivor from a strip club prostitution setting described for Farley (2018) what it is like (in short) to be assaulted every day, multiple times a day, and her words are gut-wrenching. She describes how it is internally damaging, physically and mentally, and emotionally. She said that after a while, you start to feel as though you are not yourself anymore but rather whatever they make you out to be, and that it is hard to understand how you could let yourself get to this place of why these people want to do these things to you (Farley, 2018).

Women who are trapped in positions of prostitution or sex work face dangerous and detrimental encounters every day, and there is not enough protection for these individuals because of what their job titles allude to. Non-prostituted women in regular jobs barely receive the protection they need from unwanted sexual encounters, so it is not difficult to imagine the utter lacking of protection for sex workers. White (2018) looks at the ambiguities of title VII and how women are not as protected from unwanted advances as one might assume under the law.

Under title VII, “merely offensive” encounters are not considered actionable, and the victim of such encounters is made somewhat accountable for stopping any further encounters before they escalate and become actionable, and for speaking out in a timely manner if things do continue to escalate. What this does not consider at all are power dynamics and settings which might not allow victims to put their foot down or speak out about the circumstances. No individual should have to endure an array of sexual assault just to maintain the privilege of keeping a job and returning to work, but workplace assault and harassment are so prevalent because this is a dynamic not often enough uncovered (White, 2018).

Take the medical field, for instance. There has been an overflow of women and girls bravely stepping forward in the midst of the #MeToo movement to reveal that they have been assaulted by their doctors, people whom which they are supposed to trust with their bodies and their health. From Olympians to physicians, to regular patients, sexual assault and harassment in medicine is much more prevalent than is currently being expressed. Jagsi (2018) recounts an instance at a hospital where a “talented physician and researcher” had been caught engaging in an act of sexual aggression with a trainee at a hospital. However, despite there being no ambiguity around what had happened and the case being cut and dried, two upper members, department chairs, in the perpetrator’s field had still decided to try and recruit him for his talent, despite his act of sexual misconduct with a hospital employee of a lower rank. Sexual conduct proceedings were underway at his home institution and the department chairs overlooked the incident as an honest mistake because this physician was such a “hot prospect” (Jagsi, 2018).

It is disheartening to see the prevalence of this issue in so many different lights, and see the severity of it in places one otherwise would not suspect. According to Jagsi (2018), hospitals

are (somehow, somewhat silently) notorious for being a hot spot for sexual misconduct, so much so that the term “field experiences” has been coined for the instances in hospitals, where there are easy access to beds and work is late-night, when halls are usually emptier and inhibitions could be lowered .

Interviews

Because there is such a discrepancy in the ways that the movement has taken an effect on different populations, it is important to consider the viewpoints of these many populations.

The following interview was conducted with a white woman, age 21:

How would you say that the “Me Too” Movement has been/was effective?

“I think it was effective in helping people who were really ignorant to the prevalence of sexual assault understand the scope of the issue, particularly men. I think many people thought they understood how serious the issue was/is, but they actually had no true sense of the variety of ways things like misconduct, harassment, sexual violence, and sexual assault present themselves. It’s not just rape, and I think this movement was effective in demonstrating that.”

How would you say that the “Me Too” Movement has been/was ineffective?

“I’m lucky enough to live in a liberal, self-aware area and be surrounded by people by whom I feel safe and protected. Outside of my bubble, I do not think that this “heightened awareness” brought on by the “Me Too” movement has actually changed any behaviors. People who choose to disregard their own actions and refuse to reevaluate the part they play in perpetuating rape

culture will continue to do so, despite having heard or learned about this movement. It does not encourage enough tangible change. Also, Asia Argento was accused of statutory rape herself. So what the fuck.”

Do you feel as though “Me Too” was successful in reaching a variety of audiences?

“No; I think my answer here is similar to my previous answer. It’s a self-selecting audience. People who want to support women will listen to their stories, traumas, and hardships, and people who do not, will not. We live in too divisive of an environment for there to exist something so far-reaching that political boundaries and personal biases do not stop it.”

Do you feel as though the “Me Too” movement was well catered to be accepting and/or applicable to populations aside from cisgender women?

“I think a movement that essentially started by a white woman stealing a black woman’s idea cannot be perfect. I think many people involved had good, real intentions of making it inclusive, but I don’t think the movement did enough to convey the differences in difficulties that women face based on race, sexual orientation, and gender identity. In a really sick way, if people are not going to listen to the most privileged of women (white cisgender women), they are certainly not going to listen to those who are already oppressed. So, white cis women have to be allies and not enough are, and that was apparent in this movement.”

What (if any) lasting impact do you foresee the “Me Too” Movement having in the future?

“I think that everything about this political climate will be recorded in textbooks, and the age of women coming forward with these experiences will be an important part of it all. Like I said, if nothing else, it has at least forced people to realize that the problem is real and wildly, terribly, indisputably common. I think it has paved the way for real change, if we are able to learn from its shortcomings and improve upon its foundation.”

If you had the ability, would you have changed anything about the framework of the movement?

“Certainly, I wished it were more inclusive. I wish it included trans women, femmes, and more women of color in a way that expressed the problem is not black and white, and it’s not binary. It’s not that someone’s been raped or they haven’t. I wish it were not based on an idea that was popularized by a white woman who stole it from a black woman. I wish one of the faces of the movement weren’t an actress accused of sexual assault herself. I wish it weren’t so many white celebrities. I wish it had addressed the problems that *most* women face. I recognize that it is a huge problem in Hollywood, but that makes it seem distant, when in reality it is much closer to home. It’s moms and next-door neighbors and friends and strangers and coworkers and daughters and it’s quiet people and it’s outspoken people and it’s more than what the movement showcased. I would want to give space to those people.”

As a cisgender, white woman, did you feel as though there was a place in the movement for other populations?

“Not enough, but some I guess.”

The following interview was conducted with a woman of color, age 21:

How would you say that the “Me Too” Movement has been/was effective?

“The Me Too Movement was effective because it was a mass showing of solidarity. People cannot underestimate the power of somebody simply being able to extend empathy rather than sympathy; to be able to stand with them rather than just beside them. The “Me Too” movement led to a feeling of inclusiveness, and invited people of all situations and stereotypes to recognize how many people are truly on their side. It’s so empowering.”

How would you say that the “Me Too” Movement has been/was ineffective?

“Ineffective is a very strong word – but it definitely highlighted some already existing complications. I think it has toughened the process of validating and defining what acts/situations fall underneath the movement and why. The widening of the spectrum that we use to define what is or isn’t assault is important, but as it expands; a lot of debate is being conducted about what is or isn’t valid. When people share their stories, and reveal themselves as survivors, it opens a Pandora’s box. Suddenly, some of their most valuable information is now up for analysis and judgement from others, which is very hard for those who chose to participate to go through.”

Do you feel as though “Me Too” was successful in reaching a variety of audiences?

“Yes, I definitely think so. Not only because of the examples of it that I’ve seen, but also because of the reactions that I’ve seen. Sometimes people get upset and react a certain way only because

change is happening, which is truly a signal of something positive, even if it may be rough or tense at the moment.”

Do you feel as though the “Me Too” movement was well catered to be accepting and/or applicable to populations aside from cisgender women?

“I think it was well intended, but the catering of it is completely up to the population. It’s become a viral phenomenon, rather than an organized/structured movement. As a result, it has become diluted and fitted to match the progressiveness of those who are voicing it. These voices are not always the most well catered or accepting to those whose identities are only now being viewed as possible. But I do believe they are trying.”

What (if any) lasting impact do you foresee the “Me Too” Movement having in the future?

“I love what it inspired within the entertainment industry. I feel, and hope, that the coming out of so many famous people will in turn change the way that television and media is produced. That would be an astounding impact.”

If you had the ability, would you have changed anything about the framework of the movement?

“I don’t think so. That’s a really hard question to answer, but as a movement, I think it’s as expansive and flexible as it needs to be right now. Spreading in the ways that it should, and encouraging/inspiring what it should be.”

As a woman of color, did you feel that you had a place in the movement?

“Not specifically, but I also didn’t feel an exclusion from it. Women of color are rarely ever given reserved spaces within movements designed for ‘women’ or ‘people of color’. They filter in and out of them, recognizing how and where they fit in or stick out. But ultimately, I felt that I was a part of the movement through my womanness more than my identity as a whole.”

The following interview was conducted with a woman in the LGBTQIA community, age 21:

How would you say that the “Me Too” Movement has been/was effective?

“I think MeToo was effective because it showed survivors that they were not alone, and that they had people who will stand with them and fight with them. Sexual assault is something that can make people feel so alone, and dehumanize them in many ways, it is helpful to see people who have been there, and encourage you to speak out, if that is something you choose to do.”

How would you say that the “Me Too” Movement has been/was ineffective?

“I think many people looked at MeToo as something that encouraged ‘false’ or ‘easy’ targeted allegations. Though I do not agree, I know that this is an idea that discredited many survivors.”

Do you feel as though “Me Too” was successful in reaching a variety of audiences?

“Although I do think that it was a movement that reached masses, there is no doubt that there is a bias. One person’s word may be held heavier than someone else’s depending on their class, sexuality, race, or gender. Some people will be more believed, and some people will be taken less seriously.”

Do you feel as though the “Me Too” movement was well catered to be accepting and/or applicable to populations aside from cisgender women?

“Although I’m sure the people who started MeToo had no intention of exclusivity, it definitely does not always cater to non cis-gender women. People have good intentions of helping women stand up for themselves, but they often fail to think about people outside of the heteronormative.”

What (if any) lasting impact do you foresee the “Me Too” Movement having in the future?

“I think that the movement, if anything, just created the idea that you can speak out, and there are people who will believe you, even when you feel like they won’t.”

If you had the ability, would you have changed anything about the framework of the movement?

“I think I would have made it so it was not just primarily for straight, white, cis women. When we, as women, rally and we assemble for protests, we need to stop portraying a woman the way we see them. We need to get rid of the ‘pussy hats,’ and protest posters with vaginas on them. People talk about ‘sisterhood,’ when they are really talking about ‘cisterhood.’”

As a woman in the LGBTQIA community, did you feel that you had a place in the movement?

“I never personally felt isolated by the MeToo movement, but also I am a straight passing gay woman. Nobody ever tried to isolate me. However, I’m sure there are more masculine presenting queer woman who may not have had the same invitation into the space that I had.”

The following interview was conducted with a man in the LGBTQIA community, age 22:

How would you say that the “Me Too” Movement has been/was effective?

“I think the Me Too movement has been effective because it finally got the general public to recognize this huge problem that’s been getting ignored for so long. I think it finally gave a voice to so many people who have been hurt and silenced. I think, especially with the amount of celebrities and prominent people talking about the movement, a lot of people have been empowered to share their stories. The movement has definitely started a conversation that needs to be had and allowed for more people to reach out for support.”

How would you say that the “Me Too” Movement has been/was ineffective?

“There’s definitely a small group of people who are vocal in the movement that only think about cis women. Cis women are probably the most affected by sexual violence and their stories are definitely valid and they deserve to be heard, but they often exclude a lot of people. There are so many voices in the movement that are inclusive and work for everyone, but as a whole I think it could be more intersectional.”

Do you feel as though “Me Too” was successful in reaching a variety of audiences?

“I do, especially with the amount of news coverage and celebrities getting involved and being vocal. I know a lot of people in my family have started having conversations because of the pop culture/social presence, and that’s exactly what needs to happen. When you can get people from

small conservative towns to start having these conversations and actually caring, you're doing a beautiful thing because you're letting survivors in these areas feel safe to share their story."

Do you feel as though the "Me Too" movement was well catered to be accepting and/or applicable to populations aside from cisgender women?

"As a whole, I think so but there's definitely ways it can be better. A few people who are very vocal in the movement can fall into 'white feminism' and only focus on cis/straight/white women. Their stories are just as important as everyone else's, but by not including LGBTQ+ people, people of color, and other more oppressed groups, you're contributing to silencing those survivors and missing the point of the movement as whole."

What (if any) lasting impact do you foresee the "Me Too" Movement having in the future?

"I hope that now more people are aware of this huge problem and are more comfortable having a conversation about it. The more vocal people are, the more they can uplift other people and let survivors know that they are believed and they have a voice, too. I hope everyone can come together and use our collective power and voices to change laws, get abusers out of positions of power, and generally make the world safer. On a smaller scale, I hope that people who aren't survivors can learn how to better support the people in their life who are. We need to be able to show that we're ready to show up for them and provide a space that's safe for them to share their stories."

If you had the ability, would you have changed anything about the framework of the movement?

“I think if anything I would make the movement a bit more intersectional. Women are the majority of survivors, but people who aren’t cis/straight/white/able-bodied are victims of violence too and have all these extra barriers to jump through or forces holding them down and keeping them silent. I think I would just want everyone to use whatever privilege they have to uplift people with less.”

As a man and a member of the LGBTQ community, did you feel that you had a place in the movement?

“At times I didn’t feel like I had a place in the movement, but I know that this movement isn’t about me, it’s about survivors and believing and supporting them and making their voices heard. A lot of men have definitely tried to make this about them in really problematic ways because they feel ‘attacked’ which is ridiculous to me. I think a lot of men misunderstand their place in the movement; especially men who aren’t survivors. I think men should understand that their place in the movement is to use their privilege to uplift and amplify the voices of survivors with less privilege than them. Cis/straight men also need to recognize and believe that queer and trans men are affected by sexual violence too and they need just as much support as survivors who are women.”

The following interview was conducted with a cisgender man, age 22:

How would you say that the “Me Too” Movement has been/was effective?

“I would say the “Me Too” movement has been effective in a multitude of ways. One massive effect has been the shedding of light on the sexual assault/abuse that occurs throughout the world. The movement has sparked conversation and encouraged people to seek support and talk about their experiences. The myriad of people sharing their stories has put a lot of spotlight on the perpetrators and has made some of them face retribution. I think some of these results have given those affected by sexual assault/abuse hope that their stories will be heard and not ignored.”

How would you say that the “Me Too” Movement has been/was ineffective?

“I wouldn’t say that the Me Too movement is ineffective. I think possibly a better wording is that there’s room for more improvement. As there is in all movements. I’ve seen articles where people state that the Me Too movement isn’t inclusive of all backgrounds. Some saying that the movement lacks diversity racially and economically. I can’t speak on the accuracy of these statements but if that’s true, the accessibility of the movement could be a possible point of ineffectiveness”

Do you feel as though “Me Too” was successful in reaching a variety of audiences?

“It seemed as though the movement was successful in reaching a variety of audiences. When it was covered highly on the media there were all different kinds of people being shown and interviewed. But others more involved with the movement say otherwise as stated prior. But I believe the existence of the movement and the continuation of its efforts is being seen all around the world by a variety of people possibly just at different rates or scale.”

Do you feel as though the “Me Too” movement was well catered to be accepting and/or applicable to populations aside from cisgender women?

“I think the movement was well catered to be accepting to other populations. Originally it seems to mainly be for cisgender women, but as it has grown it seems to be accessible to other populations, maybe just not as accessible.”

What (if any) lasting impact do you foresee the “Me Too” Movement having in the future?

“The impact of the Me too movement having on the future is not 100% clear, but because of the movement I believe that it will change the way we raise our kids as people are more conscious of the conversation now. I think businesses are talking about it more so it will affect the workplace, the question is how much and for how long. I think one of the largest impacts is the availability of support and the encouragement of people to come forward. I think the number of people coming forward about their experiences will increase more and more as the movement exists.”

If you had the ability, would you have changed anything about the framework of the movement?

“I think one thing that I would change about the framework of the movement based on others responses is intersectionality of it. Although it was accessible to many people, it seems that there are still people out there who feel as though they are not included. I understand there have been improvements, possible if they existed from the beginning.”

As a cisgender man, did you feel that you had a place in the movement?

“As a cisgender man I didn't feel that I had a place in the movement for a while. I heard the stories of those coming forward and I felt disgusted and ashamed to be a part of the gender that was behind all of the pain and trauma. I was surprised by all the stories, not by the fact that assault and abuse happened, but by the massive number of people who were coming forward. The movement set up a platform for so many different people to come forward but it didn't seem like a platform for men to come forward or even an environment where men had a place. I shortly realized that I do have a place in the Me Too movement but it's just not a role that I had been seeing, I found that my place in the movement was to be self reflective and be even more conscious about my actions, how I treat people, how I speak about the subject of assault/abuse and how I can support those affected. I felt that my place was the change myself to be better, be a clear supporter for those who need it and be outspoken when I see something that isn't right. As much as I feel like I have a place in the movement, I still don't feel like I belong at marches , or making speeches. There's still a large portion of guilt involved as I'm apart of the problem even if I've never assaulted or abused anyone, I'm sure there are instances in which almost every man has made a woman feel very uncomfortable.”

There is so much to take away from these interviews, as they give a brief glimpse into how the movement can be impactful in such different ways for different populations. These responses, although coming from different people in different circumstances, and offering different answers, still share a lot of commonalities in their interpretation of the movement. If so many of these individuals were able to point out the vastness of the movement whilst still

noticing the discrepancies in intersectionality, maybe the direction for where the movement needs to go next is obvious.

Discussion

With so much intensity, prevalence, and background surrounding the #MeToo movement, it can be very discouraging to think of what could possibly be done moving forward that could ever fully combat the issues of sexual assault and harassment in its many forms.

As more individuals come forward and speak of their experiences, and as more individuals come out in support of victims and in search of change, a greater foundation will be built to hopefully be able to withstand the pressures of such systematic oppressions. Celebrities and people with a great deal of power have stepped forward in large numbers. While, as discussed previously, speaking, although still requiring a lot of courage and facing of fears, is a platform celebrities have that many women and assault survivors are not granted. For this reason, many celebrities have stepped out of the role of “victim” or “survivor” and stepped into an advocate position (Larabee, 2018). Without the popular and trusted faces of celebrities, it is hard to know that this movement would have manifested so much momentum or reached such a large audience (Larabee, 2018). What is important now is that these individuals who have provided so much to the #MeToo movement’s mission stay consistent in the efforts to make change and to reach large audiences.

Mere exposure to the prevalence of the issue of sexual assault and harassment has created shifts in Hollywood already, as well as in different industries (although current progress has been

baby steps in comparison to the work that is left to be done.) The issue of prevalence in medicine has been addressed (again, with only minute force thus far) in the ways in which medical schools confront the issue of sexual assault in the curriculum (Antman, 2018). These spotlights are so small in comparison to the beam of light that needs to be cast on the issue in order to shock it in its tracks, but the fact that there are even small advances being made shows more effort than has been put into the issue in ages.

Whether or not #MeToo is prevalent globally, sexual assault and harassment is prevalent in every area of the world, which is why it is vital not to forget about the voices which we cannot yet hear. It is more than likely that the women who are still the most silenced face these issues with the most intensity and vulnerability.

Women in China follow a social media account called “Feminist Voices” which was shut down very early in the wake of the #MeToo movement, because censorship would not allow Chinese women to participate in #MeToo. Chinese women then came up with a secret, national code to participate and avoid censorship by using the hashtag #RiceBunny, followed by the emoticons for a bowl of rice and a bunny. “Rice Bunny” in Chinese is a homophone for “Me Too” in English, and women all over China used this to share their stories and show support for the global cause (Anderson, 2018). While this is remarkable, and it shows the agency and versatility as well as the sense of unity that the #MeToo movement has, it is still important that we consider the women living in rural China, and rural places all over the world who have still not even heard of the #MeToo movement or felt any of its various impacts.

This movement as a whole has so much potential impact, and has so much work left to be done, but in analyzing its successes and failures, and in looking at the ways it will and will not

change lives, the central message in Tarana Burke's original "Me Too" cannot get lost. This movement started in the United States two decades ago as activism by black women who had experienced sexual violence. The movement was created to let others know that they are not alone, and to create solidarity within a vast community of victims (Zarkov & Davis, 2018).

Empathy should be the driving force behind every action taken in the #MeToo age, as empathy is the driving force to help survivors feel seen and feel whole again. Sexual assault and harassment of any severity can have tremendous detrimental effects on its victims. Psychologically, mentally, emotionally, and physically, many would argue that there is nothing as dehumanizing as an act of sexual violence, so it is important now, more than ever, that empathy is spread to reach every victim and survivor, because practicing empathy is (thus far) the most effective way to help victims and survivors feel seen, heard, and whole (Rodino-Colocino, 2018).

While the #MeToo movement draws on an array of different emotions, outrage has been extremely common in dealing with the mess that is the sexual misconduct prevalent globally. However, in the midst of all the fire and fight, it is also vital that the issue itself is not overlooked in being angry about the issue. The outrage will fizzle out one day, and it is possible that in the storm of #MeToo, we could miss the true significance of the movement. We need to understand the stem of the harmful behaviors we decry, and the deep rooted issues themselves cannot be brushed under the rug (Gutting & Ruden, 2018). If women are victims of sexual crimes, testifying from an electronic distance or publicly shaming men who have done great deals of damage is not enough to stop the issue or make any real progress. The psychological power of #MeToo cannot be stunted by shouting about these issues from behind computer screens. For any real, substantial progress to be made and for any real, substantial healing to occur, there has

to be more. More accountability, more outrage, more action, more empathy, more empathy, more empathy.

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