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An Examination of Pervasive Language Around Sexual Harassment Through the Lens of Anita Hill, Christine Blasey Ford, and #MeToo

Elizabeth Theriault

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AN EXAMINATION OF PERVASIVE LANGUAGE AROUND SEXUAL

HARASSMENT THROUGH THE LENS OF ANITA HILL,

CHRISTINE BLASEY FORD, AND #METOO

by

Elizabeth Theriault

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for a Degree with Honors
(Journalism and Political Science)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the hypothesis that the #MeToo Movement and Twitter have contributed to the changes in language used by individuals to describe sexual harassment and the survivors that come forward with their stories. To do so, this thesis identified common themes derived from language used in *New York Times* articles published during the Hill and Thomas hearings of 1991, as well as Tweets published between the dates surrounded the Blasey Ford and Kavanaugh hearings, September 25, 2018 and September 29, 2018, to create a comparable platform for language used in similar settings 27 years apart. It contains a literature review that discusses a brief history of sexual harassment, the history of the #MeToo Movement, and the role Twitter plays in the advancement of social justice movements. The goal of this thesis was to advance the understanding of how society talks about the #MeToo Movement and sexual violence. Using the Framework Method, this thesis analyzed words and phrases in over 200 tweets and 30 *New York Times* articles. The findings of this thesis suggest that the #MeToo Movement and Twitter have shifted society away from using language that immediately places the burden of proof and responsibility on the survivor of sexual violence. This research serves as an introductory baseline understanding that Twitter reflects some change in perception of sexual harassment in society, that can be used in future studies as a stepping off point.

DEDICATION

"Me Too became the way to succinctly and powerfully connect with other people and give people permission to start their journey to heal."

Tarana Burke

For all survivors, everywhere.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The four years leading to the conclusion of my undergraduate career have been anything but typical. As each year sent new challenges my way, life provided me with the right friends, confidents, and mentors to help me succeed. I'm grateful for this space to personally thank all of those who have supported and guided me through this process. I would like to express my sincere gratitude for Dr. Jennie Woodard, my thesis advisor, for her mentorship, advice, constructive critiques, enthusiasm and endless support through this thesis and beyond. I would not have been able to complete this research without her warm encouragement and kind partnership. I would like to thank Dr. Rob Glover, for his advice, guidance and time given to me for my reading list and the data portion of my thesis. I am also very grateful the endless support from the University of Maine's Honors College Associates and staff. Their undisputed care is clear in the academic and emotional support they offered me over the last four years.

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CHAPTER I

THE CROSSROADS OF HISTORY, TWITTER, AND #METOO

Introduction

On October 2, 2019, the Augusta Civic Center provided a room barely big enough to hold the mass of individuals gathered to listen to guest speaker Tarana Burke. The Maine's Women's Lobby Economic Summit gathered the group of scholars, activists, politicians, and citizens—myself included— to listen to the motivations and experiences of the founder of the Me Too Movement. Many who sat in that room already shared many connections; the belief for justice for survivors, the understanding that women's issues are prevalent around the world, and a deep desire to find solutions. But then, as Burke explained the founding of her movement, she said: "There is a part of me that is hardwired to respond to injustice," (Burke, 2019). With those words, Burke solidified the universal reason the crowd gathered there today: to tap into our hardwired activism and respond to the injustices we saw in the world.

It can be easy to feel distanced from bigger social justice issues in our everyday lives. The everyday routine of school, work, and social responsibilities can push the activist in me to the sidelines. But as I sat in the same room as the leader and founder of the #MeToo Movement, the activist in me felt validated and energized. For I as well feel a part of me that is hardwired to respond to injustice. Since a young age, my family has discussed the news around the dinner table, stood together at town hall or school board meetings to strongly voice our concerns, and extend our hand to those in need. From this

upbringing, I developed the desire to inform myself of injustices, stand with victims and survivors, and speak out whenever I can.

This desire can be overwhelming as I often feel lost in the immensity of the social justice issues our world faces, and insignificant in my efforts to aid in developing the road to progress. Yet Burke reassured myself and many others when she spoke earnestly about the importance of humanity, empathy, healing, and perseverance. A wave of inspiration fell over the room activists, legislators, concerned citizens, students, and individuals. Together, welt felt motivated to work towards a world where sexual violence has ceased to exist because of her strong words.

The #MeToo movement is one that supports survivors—but the blueprints to what surviving looks like aren't always clear. At the Women's Economic Summit, Burke spoke on the lifecycle of a survivor. As a survivor, Burke stated that the validation of a person's trauma comes through the act of reliving and retelling the goriest, hardest parts of a survivor's experience. Doing so evokes empathy and sparks motivation in others. Every day, "survivors cut and bleed over and over again, on the internet [and] in public testimonies" for others to "have any empathy for the fact that I am holding this trauma," (Burke, 2019). To enact change, Burke states that survivors must perform the highest and deepest levels of their trauma. To prove that sexual violence is a systemic issue plaguing our society, the lifecycle of a survivor requires the reliving the hardest moments of their life. To convince the public of how serious sexual violence is, or to urge politicians to create or support laws that aide survivors, survivors must continuously tell the story of their darkest details of their trauma. The responsibility lies on these survivors

to convince society that the trauma they endured was horrific enough to deserve empathy and support.

To make change, establish news laws, fund social programs, and work towards ending sexual violence, Burke understands that there is a need for a change in the way society views and connects with survivors. To connect, we need to feel empathy—but a form of empathy that is not combined with pity or separation. Instead, we must be empathetic with the dignity and humanity that each survivor has, as these are universal characteristics through which all can connect. Not everyone has experienced sexual violence or intense trauma, but everyone has dealt with issues that connect to some of our deepest values, like the need for respect from others, a feeling of self-worth, autonomy and privacy. Instead of forcing survivors to carry the weight of telling and re-telling the worst parts of their stories, society should respond to any survivor who simply states "I am hurting," without justifying a level of empathy or support in correlation to the severity of the sexual violence they endured.

Tarana Burke spoke extensively of everyday lives of survivors, and the ways in which their personal socio-economic make up uniquely impacts their experience. Kimberlé Crenshaw, an American lawyer, civil rights advocate, and professor at the UCLA School of Law and Columbia Law School coined the term "intersectionality" in 1989 to describe the ways some individuals experience double or combined discrimination from a myriad of factors. She compares the intersectionality of individuals to traffic in an intersection. Traffic flows in all four directions, and represents discrimination. When or if an accident occurs in an intersection, it can be caused by cars travelling from any of the four directions, from a combination of the direction, or

sometimes from all of them. Similarly, if an individual is injured in an intersection, they could be harmed by any of the four directions that represent different forms of discrimination: sex, race, class, sexuality, etc., or from a combination of those forms. Crenshaw goes on to explain that legal protection against discrimination is like an ambulance that arrives on the scene of the intersection accident. The ambulance can only help the injured individual if they can identify which road the accident occurred on. Yet, if the accident occurred directly in the middle of the intersection, the ambulance was unable to help. This represents how court systems in the U.S. are prepped to protect against discrimination of race, sex, or other factors only if they are mutually exclusive, but not if they exist simultaneously (Crenshaw, 1989).

The intersectionality of survivors, such as race, gender, class standing, religious affiliations, sexual orientation, others, must be considered when developing support for survivors. Burke stated that "sexual harassment does not discriminate, but the way in which we respond to it is where we need to focus," (Burke, 2019). It is imperative that a close eye remains on the importance of the intersections of each survivor and how society hosts a conversation about their story or subsequent treatment.

To make these changes, we must understand where society stands on sexual violence. As the organization has formed into a societally recognized symbol for sexual harassment and violence across the globe, I intend to focus on the use of language around the #MeToo Movement. This thesis will examine the disparities or commonalities of language used in news articles and by key leaders both around the time of the Anita Hill and Justice Clarence Thomas testimonies in 1991 and the Christine Blasey Ford and Justice Brett Kavanaugh testimonies of 2018. Through an examination of language

between the two periods, this thesis will provide a base level for future research to attempt to understand how society conceptualizes sexual harassment.

This thesis will examine common themes derived from language used in *New York Times* articles published during the Hill and Thomas hearings of 1991, as well as Tweets published between September 25, 2018 and September 29, 2018 to correspond with the dates surrounding the Blasey Ford and Kavanaugh hearings. I hypothesize that this examination will reveal the ways in which the #MeToo Movement and Twitter have changed the language used by individuals to describe the testimonies, the accusers, the accused, and sexual harassment in general. Additionally, this thesis will discuss a brief history of sexual harassment, the history of the #MeToo Movement and the role Twitter plays in the advancement of social justice movements. This thesis will advance the understanding of how society talks about the #MeToo Movement and sexual violence. In a culture of silence, it is crucial that to understand how the ways in which #MeToo is discussed as it pertains to sexual violence to work towards justice for all sexual violence survivors.

<u>Literature Review</u>[1]

Sexual harassment in the workplace has long been a place of controversy. After decades of a lack of legal coverage, and years of court located disputes over definitions and courses of action, sexual harassment is now illegal under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (MacKinnon & Siegel, 2003). A historical understanding of sexual harassment in the workplace will provide a platform to ask "fundamental questions about the nature of the practice, the terms in which it has been contested, and the rules and rhetoric by which law constrains—or enables—the conduct in question," (MacKinnon & Siegel, 2003). Understanding the history of sexual harassment will allow a deeper understanding through a connection to the historical context of the time period of which that language was used.

Sexual harassment has been intertwined with labor and work for centuries, and is defined by Reva Siegel, a Professor of Law at the Yale Law School, as "unwanted sexual relations imposed by superiors on subordinates at work," (MacKinnon & Siegel, 2003). This definition highlights the inequalities and power discrepancies in a workplace, which coincides with Siegel's expertise in the history of inequalities within American law. Alongside a theoretical definition of sexual harassment, the action is a form of sex discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The EEOC legally defines sexual harassment as "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature [...] when submission to or

[1] Disclaimer: This literature review references the term "women," or "woman," often in place where a genderless term such as survivor or individual should be placed. This occurs as many historical sources and past laws in place used the gendered term women or woman. However, women are not the only individuals who are subject to sexual abuse, assault, or harassment. Sexual violence impacts all gender and non-binary identities.

rejection of this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment," (Title VII of Civil Rights Act, 1964).

Chattel slavery and domestic servants of the seventeenth-century were repeatedly subjected to sexual harassment and violence which became an entrenched component of everyday life for African-American women. The experiences of enslaved individuals are historically significant and deserve recognition even though their experiences do not fall under a "workplace" harassment category. Enslaved individuals had no legal protections against sexual violence, and were often assumed to be promiscuous and sexually experienced by nature, thus justifying in the minds of the eighteenth-century society, a reason to sexual violence against them (King, 2014). Enslaved women who resisted any sexual advances were punished privately and publicly. In one instance, a slave girl named Celia warned her owner, of the name Newman, that she would attempt to hurt him if he tried to force himself upon her while she was pregnant. When he ignored her warnings, she fatally struck him with a stick. Celia's lawyers attempted to defend her basing their arguments upon the 1845 Missouri Statute that declared "any woman" had a right to defend themselves and a separate 1845 Missouri Statute that protected an act of defense to prevent great personal injury "justifiable homicide," (King, 2014). Despite her lawyers' attempt, the judge encouraged the jurors to find Celia guilty of murder. Regardless of the lawyers' intent, the judge refused to accept the plea to include Celia in the "any woman" clause. Instead, he encouraged jurors to find Celia guilty of murder. Because Celia was viewed as "chattel" that did not possess the legal right to protect herself, she was found guilty and sentenced to death.

It was cases such as these that contributed to the socially learned fear of enslaved women that kept them from speaking out against sexual harassment. Harriet Jacobs, an African-American writer born into slavery, recounts in her text "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl," the terrible ways in which her master would sexually abuse her and many others while she was a slave. Jacobs spoke of the social expectations of enslaved women to accept themselves as property that must abide to all wishes of their masters, with the fear of death lingering over them if they were to refuse or speak out (Jacobs, 1862). After Jacobs escaped enslavement and found freedom in the North, she took a job at Fredrick Douglas's newspaper *The North Star.* Eventually Jacobs would publish "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl" in 1862, shining a ground breaking and important light on the sexual harassment and violence endured by slaves.

Understanding sexual harassment through the lens of men is a recurring narrative and societal understanding of a woman's place in the world. Today, and throughout history, society has been trained to see women's bodies as valuable if they are providing a service for, or belong to, men. Through slavery, African American women were tied to their owners. In marriage, white women belonged to their husbands. The legal systems of America provided little to no rights to women concerning their own bodies.

Free women who worked in manufacturing or domestic jobs were also susceptible to harassment in the workplace throughout the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, free women also found themselves with no legal avenues to report their endured workplace harassment (Lareau, 2016). One example of a legal system that failed to protect women of the 1800's was the case of Hester Vaughn, a woman impregnated by her employer (MacKinnon & Siegel, 2003).

In 1868, Vaughn was tried and found guilty of infanticide, and sentenced to death. After becoming impregnated by her employer, Vaughn later gave birth alone, sick, and in the cold, and was found with her dead infant by her side. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony publicized the case with "an analysis that started with the gender and class restrictions that drove Vaughn to domestic service, and the sexual vulnerability her economic dependency engendered," (MacKinnon & Siegel, 2003). Vaughn's case serves as an early example of the intersectionality of sexual harassment cases. Vaughn's gender, economic dependencies, class restrictions, and other characteristics of her identity directly impacted her experience and outcome of her sexual harassment trauma. Further, it impacted her ability to survive.

Rape was punishable by law in the nineteenth and twentieth century, yet required such a high burden of proof and was defined in such a restrictive manner that most women had little motivation to seek legal action due to the small probability of succeeding in obtaining legal ramifications, especially if their attacker was white. Sharon Block, the executive director of the Labor and Work Life Program at Harvard Law School explained the legal process of early American rape charges and their racial influences in her book "Rape and Sexual Power in Early America." Block articulates that in early America the British influence on legal systems established a right to a jury trial for those with the legal rights to press charges against their attackers, which included only white women. Jurors involved in these cases historically were more willing to convict a black man charged with sexual assault or rape than a white man, due to the racial stereotypes of the times that assumed white women would not willingly have

sexual relations with black men, and that white men were sexually privileged to have sexual relations with whomever they choose (Block, 2006).

Further, early American courts relied heavily on character judgements of both the accuser and the accused. A Pennsylvanian judge in 1812 stated that a defendant's good character, "which though of no avail when the fact [of a sexual assault] is proven, is of consequence in a doubtful case," arguing that if a man's lifelong actions indicate his guilt or innocence (Block, 2006). Additionally, court testimonies of the 19th century revealed a flood of commentaries on the accusing woman's sexual habits, using any previous known instances of elicited sex to place doubt on her claims of resisting and refusing a man's actions.

In the twentieth century, the common law in which rape was examined under expected a "highly scripted showing that sexual relations were nonconsensual," and that the woman pressing charges had "succumbed to overpowering physical force despite exerting the 'utmost resistance,' (MacKinnon & Siegel, 2003). Economic coercion or most instances of physical resistance did not meet the requirements under the definition for utmost resistance. This resulted in a judicial system that failed to protect women and favored the accused. Further, common law was "only recognized insofar as it inflicted an injury on a man's property interest in the woman who was assaulted,'" (MacKinnon & Siegel, 2003), essentially dehumanizing a woman down to her physical body, which only required protection by the law if that body was the property of a man. In this sense, sexual harassment only existed under the understanding that harm caused was felt by a man, because damage had been done to his property.

That same common law also established the provision of legal exemption for men accused of raping their wives (Ross, 2015). A seventeenth-century treatise written by Chief Justice of the King's Bench, Matthew Hale, first outlined the legal impossibility of rape in a marriage by stating that within the bounds of marriage, men had the right to any and all sexual relations with their wives. This exemption traveled into the early American courts, and remained in place until 1977, when Oregon became the first state to remove common law martial rape exemptions (Ross, 2015).

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, public and governmental concern over the rising violent crime rates, particularly violence against women, helped set the development of the Violence Against Women Act in motion. As grassroots movements began to stress the need to address the rising violence against women in the 1970s and 1980s, the public and the criminal justice system alike began to view family violence as a crime, shifting away from the traditional belief that it was a private family matter (Sacco, 2019). Through this perspective shift, society took one of its first steps towards enforcing accountability. This meant that the public no longer looked away from the violence against women, but instead turned to their government to find and implement a solution.

In 1994, Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). When signed into law by President Clinton, the act increased and strengthened the investigations and prosecution of sex offenses. It also created new programs that addressed violence against women through the angle of law enforcement, public and private entities and service providers, and victims of crime. The law expanded the awareness of settings where violence against women could occur, and set new rules and regulations into place to combat perpetrators and support survivors.

Although the act was approved with bipartisan support of 226 sponsors in the House and 68 in the Senate, VAWA has faced stubborn opposition for much of its lifespan, and still does today. Led by Chief Justice William Rehnquist, opposition of several judicial organizations argued that since VAWA served as a private civil rights remedy, it "would bring large numbers of family disputes into the federal courts and overwhelm the system with matters that did not belong there," (History of VAWA). This argument is consistent with the societal belief of the time that sexual harassment and abuse was a private issue that did not deserve to be solved in public court systems.

The 2019 VAWA, which has since expired and is awaiting reapproval in the House, defines sexual assault as "any nonconsensual sexual act proscribed by Federal, tribal or State law, including when the victim lacks capacity to consent" (Sacco, 2019). This includes intimate partner violence as assault, incorporates binary male or female victims or offenders, and covers instances of assault where consent is not able to be given due to temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity (Sacco, 2019).

VAWA has been reauthorized on four different occasions: 2000, 2005, 2012, and 2019. With each reauthorization, Congress added additional coverage for underserved populations, immigrants, same-sex couples, and Native Americans (Sacco, 2019). Additionally, with each reauthorization came opposition. In 2005, the Supreme Court ruled part of VAWA that allowed victims of gender-based violence to sue their attackers was unconstitutional. When VAWA expired in 2011, two years of legislative battles over the act ensued. Legislators on the right opposed the bill's proposed expansion to include "visas for abused undocumented immigrants, funds for victims in same-sex relationships and provisions strengthening American Indian courts," (Rueb & Chokshi,

2019), suggesting that many lawmakers still believed that only certain identities deserved government protection in times of sexual harassment and assault.

Deliberation within court cases around sexual harassment occurred for many years after the conception of the McKinnon and Farley's theoretical framework of sexual harassment in the workplace as a form of discrimination on the basis of sex. Sexual harassment as discrimination on the basis of sex was delineated into "quid pro quo" and "hostile environment" harassment. Finally, in 1980, the EEOC published a "Guidelines on Discrimination Because of Sex," which included the following working definitions of the two types of sexual harassment: "(1) Harassment on the basis of sex is a violation of Sec. 703 of Title VII. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decision affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment," (Lareau, 2016).

Despite the historical pervasiveness of sexual harassment in the workplace, it took decades of work from theorists, activist, lawyers, and others to install protection by law against sexual harassment for women at work. This is because sexual harassment has become ingrained in society as part of the "political economy of heterosexuality, a social order that situates sexual relations between men and women, an order in which marriage and market play reinforcing roles in the reproduction of women's social subordination as

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a class," (MacKinnon & Siegel, 2003). The "political economy of heterosexuality" reinforces the idea that a woman's body is required by society to be subjected to the desires of men. This culture of submission occurs on levels of economics, class, and politics. As many believed sexual harassment was simply men acting upon their right to a woman's body, it has been difficult for activists and theorists to build support for sexual harassment law.

A close examination of this history allows us to develop a deeper understanding of the nature of sexual harassment, how it has occurred, in what ways it has been challenged, and the rules and language in which the law prosecutes sexual harassment claims (MacKinnon & Siegel, 2003). The language used in this history is imperative, as it builds the "conceptual filter," history is viewed through. Society frames their understanding of the past through the language used to describe it and builds the foundation of their own interpretation. Therefore, the language used throughout the history of sexual harassment informs how society presently thinks and characterizes sexual harassment.

Lindsay Ems, PhD student at the Media School of Indiana University, argues that social movements are intersectional in nature (Ems, 2014). When analyzing social movements, and the language used to discuss them, it is important not to limit that analysis. Because of this, solely analyzing Twitter would limit the scope of understanding of the language used around the #MeToo Movement. In addition to looking at Twitter, this thesis will provide a historical analysis, using Anita Hill as a case study, of sexual harassment, to develop a deeper understanding of the timeline of #MeToo. This thesis will engage in a qualitative content analysis of tweets on Twitter around time of Blasey-

Ford and Kavanaugh, including various news articles that accompany the #MeToo Movement tweets.

These ideas are connected through the theme of dialogues and conversations. The #MeToo Movement was formed as an awareness campaign, and to create public dialogues that break the culture of silence that burdens survivors. They are conversations that have been happening, and need to continue to happen. A close examination of all the ways in which the language surrounding #MeToo is being used will provide a basis for understating whether those critical conversations will continue to happen.

For these conversations to happen, there needs to be safe spaces. The concept of safe spaces first originated in the twentieth century women's movement, to provide a space for individuals to "speak and act freely, form collective strength, and generate strategies for resistance," (Kenney, 2001). Kantor and Twohey exemplified that when they created a safe space of trust between themselves and their sources to encourage the women harassed by Weinstein to put their names on the record. Counter publics are formed when the public sphere locks out marginalized identities, who then form their own space to share their experiences and connect through empathy. Twitter is one innovative example of the new shapes counter publics are taking, as users take to Twitter to engage in public dialogue. The core of the #MeToo Movement is fostering empathy, which can only happen in a safe and supportive environment.

<u>Recent History of Sexual Harassment and #MeToo Movement</u>

On October 6, 1991, two reporters, Timothy Phelps of Newsday and Nina Totenberg of National Public Radio broke a story that revealed Yale Law Professor Anita Hill's accusations of sexual harassment against at the time Supreme Court Judge Nominee Clarence Thomas. In the month prior, Thomas' initial hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee had already begun, and the Judiciary Committee had approached Hill to provide background information as she had worked with him in the past. On September 12, 1991, Hill revealed to the Judiciary Committee her allegations of sexual harassment, but asked her name not be used. Days later, on the 23rd of September, Hill agreed to an FBI investigation into her allegations, which lasted only three days. At the conclusion of the FBI investigation, a report was submitted to and reviewed by the White House and the Judiciary Committee, and it was determined that "the allegation was unfounded," (Liptak, 2018). At that time, the Judiciary Committee seemingly dismissed the charges and planned to continue on with the Thomas hearings. This only changed after the release of the NPR story on October 6, which caught the attention of the nation. After facing immense pressure from the press and constituents, the Judiciary Committee postponed the final confirmation vote for Thomas after Hill agreed to testify in front of the Judiciary Committee.

On October 11, 1991, Anita Hill sat before the all-male, all-white, Senate Judiciary Committee and recounted the uncomfortable and traumatic experiences she endured while working for Thomas at the Education Department and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The allegations included Thomas' frequent

requests to take Hill out on dates, along with inappropriate comments about sex and pornography.

For four days, Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas sat in front of the Judiciary Committee with Thomas outwardly refusing any and all claims of sexual harassment made by Hill. It is estimated that the hearings reached an estimated 27 million homes across the nation through live cable, network TV, and radio broadcasts (Rucinski, 1993). Immediate opinion polls found that a slim majority of Americans believed Thomas over Hill, but reports from political elites and the media suggested that an even larger majority of the American people believed Thomas over Hill.

As a result of the depiction of the Hill versus Thomas narrative, four media frames emerged: the "real" Anita Hill and the "real" Clarence Thomas in terms of Hill or Thomas motifs (Robinson & Powell, 1996). Under the Hill motif, the "real" Clarence Thomas was depicted as a sexual persecutor, a "bully boss," and a repeat offender, while the "real" Hill was an innocent victim of sexism, a reluctant witness, and a reserved American woman. Under the Thomas motif, the "real" Thomas was an innocent victim of racism and an ideal candidate for the Supreme Court, while the "real" Hill was a political and racial persecutor, a "pawn of liberal conspirators," (Robinson & Powell, 1996) and a habitual liar.

These framings are important, as they influenced the public perception and understanding of the Hill/ Thomas hearings. Thomas framed his testimony around suggesting Hill's accusations as equivalent to "southern white racist fabrications of criminal sexuality and rape," (Fraser, 1992) and referred to the testimony as a "high-tech lynching," (Black & Allen, 2001). Nancy Fraser, a critical theorist, feminist, and

professor of philosophy at the New School in New York City pointed out in a 1992 article for the University of Chicago Press that after Thomas made these claims, no one in the mainstream mass media, nor an individual who was in a position to be heard in the hearings dictated the "historic vulnerability of black women to sexual harassment in the United States" or about the "use of racist-misogynist stereotypes to justify such abuse and to malign black women who protest." This narrative thus limited the allegations to either a gender struggle or a race struggle, and removed the possibility that the two could intersect. As a result, black women were forced to choose between defending a man of their own race, or taking a stand against the injustices done to them as women (Fraser, 1992). This inability to highlight a perspective that integrated sexual harassment and race issues potentially influenced public opinion of Thomas and Hill.

Further, the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee also made attempts to reframe Hill's testimony into something that could be easily dismissible (Gilmore, 2017). During the questioning portions of Hill's testimony, various Senators reinterpreted Thomas' conduct and Hill's recounting of the events as "her fantasy, her mistaken impression, or her fabrication," suggesting issues of credibility on Hill's character and therefore her testimony (Gilmore 2017). By dismissing Hill as a woman who lives in fallacy, Senators discredited her claims of sexual harassment and removed the responsibility of holding Thomas accountable from their shoulders. As the nation watched, they too saw the dismissal of Hill and either subconsciously or consciously developed an understanding for how instances of a survivors coming forward with their story should unfold and be dealt with.

Whether the nation developed a positive or negative opinion of either Thomas or Hill, the 1991 testimony still brought sexual harassment into the public dialogue. With over 27 million homes watching, public perception of sexual harassment as an issue dramatically increased. From that moment on, discussions of sexual harassment looked to Anita Hill and her testimony as a transformation point, towards a greater awareness of the issue, both socially and legally. After Hill's testimony, Congress passed a new civil rights law in 1991 that "expanded the scope of possible remedies available to victims who prove sexual harassment," and increased the amount of maximum monetary damages to $300,000 for large companies (Black & Allen, 2001). That same year, the Supreme Court adopted a "reasonable woman" standard in the 1991 Ellison v. Brady decision for defining hostile work environments.

Even though Hill stood in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee and the nation, Thomas was still confirmed to the Supreme Court, and the nation continued on. Fast forward to 2006, when Tarana Burke first coined the phrase "Me Too", and started her nonprofit Just Be Inc. in order to achieve "empowerment through empathy," (Rodino-Colocino, 2018). A young girl's personal sexual harassment story inspired Burke, who felt shame in her inability to extend empathy to the girl, to spread a message of empowering both ourselves and others through the extension of empathy (Rodino-Colocino, 2018). Burke herself defines empathy as "a feeling of sharing an experience," (Rodino-Colocino, 2018) which comes in all forms; art, music, creation, storytelling, activism, and more.

Burke started her non-profit Just Be Inc. with a goal to help women of color in underprivileged communities, because she found that women of color were often barred

from conversations or full group membership of political and social movements. Yet the perspectives and voices of women of color are vital, as they experience higher rates of exploitation, sexual abuse, assault, and harassment than white women (Gieseler, 2019). Women of color are subjected to racial discrimination, police brutality, inadequate healthcare, poor education, and more socio-economic forms of discrimination at place them at higher risk for enduring any form of violence.

Carly Gieseler argues in her book "The Voices of #MeToo; From Grassroots Activism to a Viral Roar," that when women of color both organize and participate in grassroots activist practices, they are viewed as "a site of study," which creates a "false dichotomy between scholarship and activism, between thinking and doing," insinuating that the only involvement women of color have in movements is when their efforts are examined by members of academia (Gieseler, 2019). Instead of viewing women of color as key leaders and important actors in grassroots movements, society often labels them as anomalies, because their experiences are not viewed as mainline or universal. This undermines and delegitimizes women of colors' contribution to social movements.

Yet history tells us this is not the case. Tarana Burke, a black woman, started the #MeToo Movement. Michelle Vinson, a black woman, was the plaintiff in the first Supreme Court case credited with recognizing a "cause of action" until Title VII for a hostile work environment created by sexual harassment (Gieseler, 2019). Anita Hill, a black woman, revolutionized the way the United States conceptualized sexual harassment and thrust the topic from the shadows into the limelight of the public sphere.

In 1991, Hill's testimony in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee brought the topic of sexual harassment to the television screens of millions of homes across the U.S

(Rucinski, 1993). Her allegations of sexual misconduct and harassment against at the time Supreme Court Justice Nominee Clarence Thomas caught the attention of the nation, and the media. Popular news organizations covered the four-day-long testimonies, and their writings, along with the testimony of Hill herself, began to equip the nation with the language and framing needed to hold conversations around sexual harassment.

Though black women and other women of color were the creators of the #MeToo Movement, it only received a place in the spotlight in 2017, when white actress Alyssa Milano took to Twitter with #MeToo. On October 15, 2017, Milano tweeted "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet." The tweet came with an image attached of another portion of text that read: "Me too. Suggested by a friend: 'If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too.' As a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem" (Alyssa_Milano, 2017).

Milano brought #MeToo to the center of the public's attention. After only twenty-four hours, Facebook reported that 4.7 million individuals around the world had engaged in 'Me Too' conversations (Clair et. al, 2019), and on Twitter, Milano received 850,000 responses in the first 12 hours (Burke, 2019). After Milano's tweet caught the nation's attention, Burke and other activists also took to Twitter to make efforts to contextualize "#MeToo as part of a broader counter-white-supremacist-patriarchal movement," (Rodino-Colocino, 2018) in order to combat centuries of oppression and foster a dialogue, as the media did not originally credit Burke for the phrase "Me Too". These efforts shed light on treatment of women, especially further intersectional marginalized

women, unite stories of survivors across the globe into a unified voice that spreads empathy, and create agency and accountability for perpetrators of assault.

On October 5th, just ten days before Milano's tweet, two *New York Times* reporters, Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey published, "Harvey Weinstein Paid Off Sexual Harassment Accusers for Decades." The article revealed Harvey Weinstein, a former highly successful film producer and co-founder of the entertainment company Miramax, had been allegedly engaged in a decade long pattern of paying off sexual harassment complaints. And although Milano's experiences with sexual harassment are not directly linked with Weinstein, the actress's choice to join and use her platform to amplify the conversation around Weinstein reflects how when windows of opportunity for survivors to come forward and be supported appear, dialogues are created and change is fostered.

Two years later, Kantor and Twohey published *She Said: Breaking the Sexual Harassment Story That Helped Ignite a Movement,* a book recounting their investigative efforts and journalistic processes of breaking the Weinstein story. In short, the book outlines the influence of power in sexual harassment situations and subsequent complaints and cases. The journalists already published the major details of the Weinstein story, and instead focused their book on revealing the entrenched power structures that are in place to protect powerful perpetrators like Weinstein. Additionally, at a deeper level, Kantor and Twohey reveal the importance of developing relationships and fostering trust and empathy between a survivor and the receiver of their story through their methods of collecting information.

The journalists followed the legal and financial trails of lawyers hired, settlements signed, and money paid to silence the women Weinstein allegedly assaulted and harassed.

These trails led the journalists to both high ranking celebrities and lower level employees alike, who were all understandably apprehensive about coming forward, after Kantor and Twohey managed to get a hold of them through relatives listed in public phone records or networked connections.

Slowly, through on and off the record discussion with Miramax employees, lawyers, and others involved, Kantor and Twohey slowly find evidence that Weinstein paid numerous settlements to over twelve women after they signed gagging clauses; which barred them from ever speaking about or coming forward with their allegations against Weinstein. These settlements added fear of financial retaliation on top of the additional risk of public humiliation, threats to their physical safety, and the rights to a normal life that survivors everywhere must calculate when considering pressing charges against their perpetrators.

Kantor and Twohey were able to coax women, starting with Ashley Judd, to agree to be on the record. In the book, the reporters describe their efforts of text messages, and setting up personal meetings and visits across the nation and around the world to develop personal relationships with potential sources. As Kantor and Twohey conducted hundreds of interviews and reviewed thousands of pages of documents, they began to recognize certain patterns involving Weinstein in a hotel room, bathrobes, an invitation to his room, massages, inappropriate comments or questions, and a subsequential nondisclosure agreement binding the women to silence after they articulate their complaints against Weinstein. The striking similarity in experiences and repetition of actions by Weinstein revealed to the journalists, and the readers of the text, that there was little possibility that every woman could invent lies that were so similar, and therefore

must be telling the truth. The stories also reveal that sexual harassment does not discriminate. Even though Weinstein preyed on high ranking celebrities, many lower level employees within his company, Miramax, experienced the same harassment, and were critical to the breaking of the *New York Times* article.

One employee, Laura Madden, left Miramax after Weinstein invited her to his hotel room and proceeded to masturbate in front of her. One difference in her story, however, was a lack of a nondisclosure agreement binding her to silence. Madden's portion of the text carries a heavy weight. Kantor and Twohey relay the feelings of guilt Madden described experiencing years after she left Miramax; "I carried the weight of feeling responsible for the assault and that I should have outright turned him down and never taken the job," (Kantor & Twohey, 2019). This statement directly addresses why understanding conversations around sexual harassment is so urgent: survivors should never be the ones responsible for carrying the guilt of their trauma on their shoulders. The culture of victim blaming and shame that society has allowed to persist must be stopped.

Madden was also faced with another responsibility—speaking out: "[Madden] began to wonder if she had the responsibility to speak because others couldn't," (Kantor & Twohey, 2019). As Tarana Burke stresses, sometimes survivors who are able to open a dialogue about their pain and trauma help to foster an environment of empathy that inspires other survivors. Madden did just this; stepping forward and placing herself at risk in order to help those who could not.

Throughout their investigation, Kantor and Twohey have heard the stories of celebrities Ashley Judd, Gwyneth Paltrow, Rose McGowan, as well as company employees Zelda Perkins, Rowena Chui, and Laura Madden. However, through the

duration of the book, Twohey and Kantor also spoke to women outside of the reign of Weinstein, including Rachel Crooks, a woman who shared her experience of being forcibly kissed by President Trump at Trump Tower in New York City 2005, and Kim Lawson, who led a nationwide walk out against McDonalds for their failure to enforce sexual harassment training in their restaurants (Kantor & Twohey, 2019). As iterated before, Kantor and Twohey were more determined to expose the power structures in place in our society today, and not just re-write their Weinstein exposé. By including incidences other women experiencing sexual harassment or assault from powerful individuals, Kantor and Twohey paint the picture of the expansive scope of sexual harassment women face every day.

Kantor and Twohey also reveal that when men are in danger of being revealed as harassers, they will engage in incredible intimidation tactics in an attempt to silence the sources. Once Weinstein heard word of the story, he hired agents from a security firm, Black Cube, to try to halt the publication of the story. *The New York Times* was threatened with a lawsuit from Weinstein and his team of lawyers. Weinstein stormed the offices himself on numerous occasions to yell at Twohey, Kantor, their editors and anyone who would listen. Lawyers—including Lisa Bloom, a civil rights attorney known for her work in the cases of sexual harassment accusations that resulted in the firing of Fox News' Bill O'Reilly—worked with Weinstein to coach him in discrediting his accusers as well as working to deny any and all accusations (Kantor & Twohey, 2019). The two *New York Times* reporters revealed through this recounting of intimidation the ways in which institutions and power structures enable persecutors.

Kantor and Twohey recall that in the weeks that followed publication they were contacted by so many additional women with Weinstein stories, including actresses Angelina Jolie, Cynthia Burr, Katherine Kendall, Dawn Dunning, and Judith Godrèche, and others, that the reporters had to enlist other *New York Times* employees to aide in recording all the stories (Kantor & Twohey, 2019). Their empathetic reporting and prioritization of creating a safe space for survivors to confide in them created a reputable and influential outcome that inspired more women to reach out to the team. This reflects the ultimate end goal of the #MeToo Movement, where survivors are empowered through the extension of empathy by others.

At the end of the book, Kantor and Twohey write: "in our world of journalism, the story was the end, the result, the final product. But in the world at large, the emergence of new information was just the beginning—of conversation, action, change," (Kantor & Twohey, 2019). News articles can act as informers and influencers of conversation and dialogue, which in turn gives way action and change. It is the responsibility of journalists to find, collect, verify, and share important information that society needs to host discussions and create change. Kantor and Twohey were the gatekeepers of the Weinstein story, and although their work was finished at publication, all of the information they released was new to the public and vital for starting conversations.

Journalists need to be transparent on how they conceptualize the subjects in which they are writing about, the language they choose, and the ethical practices they follow in reporting. When they are transparent, they reinforce trust with their readership and develop reputability. When a reader is able to understand the practices journalists follow

to write their articles, it aids in their understanding and conceptualization of what they are reading about. This is important, because society gains access to the language they use in conversation in some part through the language and methods used by journalists and news outlets. In this instance, Kantor and Twohey's *New York Times* article, "Harvey Weinstein Paid Off Sexual Harassment Accusers for Decades," followed shortly by the Milano tweet, were the conversation starters and language indicators our society required to have the spotlight placed on the #MeToo Movement.

The majority of the book is spent narrating the complex process of breaking the Weinstein story and the structures in place to protect perpetrators. However, the concluding portions are dedicated to the time around the 2018 Senate Judiciary Committee Hearings where Christine Blasey Ford testified that Supreme Court Nominee sexually assaulted her when they were in high school together. Kantor and Twohey paint the timeline of Blasey Ford's internal struggle to come forward with allegations against Kavanaugh in the summer and fall of 2018.

Deborah Katz, who was working as the attorney for at-the-time-still-nameless accuser of Kavanaugh, mentioned to the journalists that someone had come forward with allegations against Kavanaugh from when the two were in high school. Kantor and Twohey recount how that first moment summarized some of the most "complicated and unresolved issues in the #MeToo conversation," including how to deal with painful incidents of the past, the challenges of creating a fair and just process for both sides to be heard, and the towering debates on the extent of accountability.

Kantor and Twohey trace the events through numerous interviews with Blasey Ford herself after her testimony. They relay how Blasey Ford agonizingly

contemplated her choices for handling the situation: who she could trust with the information, if she should come forward and risk embarrassment and danger for herself and family, and if it was her duty to do so anyways. The feelings she shared with the journalists were not novel. Many survivors often struggle with coming forward because of a paralyzing fear of not being believed, or fearing for their lives because of death threats from angry strangers. Yet Blasey Ford had another factor to consider, because her attacker was being considered for one of the highest positions in the United States judicial system, where, if appointed, he would hone the power to seriously impact and change the future of America.

In the end, the responsibility Blasey Ford felt to her country, and the persistence of those asking her to testify, persuaded Blasey Ford to tell her story in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Blasey Ford herself told the journalists that through the entire process, she did not consider whether her actions would affect the #MeToo movement, or even the outcome of the confirmation hearings. Instead, Blasey Ford was concerned with ensuring that she shared pertinent information with those in power so that they can make the most educated decision in terms of Kavanaugh's confirmation. In this way, she met her responsibility she felt as a citizen and fulfilled her civic duty. This has implications into Blasey Ford's motivating factors and what that means in relation to the #MeToo Movement that further research could explore.

As Blasey Ford slowly gave permission for her information to be released to the public, she gave the "okay" for a *Washington Post* story to reveal her allegations and sent a signed letter to Senator Dianne Feinstein. Instead her attorneys lied to news organizations and stated that Ford was willing to testify in front of the Senate Judiciary

Committee. However, Kantor and Twohey reveal that Blasey Ford did not make that decision herself until September 22, just five days before the actual testimonies took place.

During her testimony, Blasey Ford stated: "I have had to relive this trauma in front of the world, and have seen my life picked apart by people on television, on Twitter, on social media, other media, and in this body, who have never met me or spoken with me," (Christine Blasey Ford Testifies on Kavanaugh Allegation, 2018). She continued on saying: "I am an independent person and I am no one's pawn. My motivation in coming forward was to be helpful and to provide facts about how Mr. Kavanaugh's actions have damaged my life, so that you could take into serious consideration as you make your decision about how to proceed." This quote from Blasey Ford summarized how the world had thrust Blasey Ford into the spotlight as a symbol of #MeToo— either a hero or a tyrant, depending on political opinions. Yet Blasey Ford was still only concerned with sharing what she knew and fulfilling her responsibility in the confirmation process.

Katz argued that the #MeToo Movement is what opened the door for Blasey Ford to come forward at all. Socially, the #MeToo Movement has encouraged sympathy for and honesty from survivors. Yet, Katz also qualified her statement by saying that "things have qualitatively changed. The institutions have not changed. The Senate has not changed. The power of this country is aggregated in the White House and in the Senate," (Kantor and Twohey, 2019). Here, Katz summarizes a common feeling for many who watched Blasey Ford's testimony unfold: a feeling of confidence that Kavanaugh would not be confirmed, and then watching in disbelief as the Senate confirmed him despite

Ford's testimony. Kantor, Twohey, and their quote from Katz correctly suggests that although #MeToo has made some societal and cultural changes, change within the government and power structures of America is still yet to be seen.

The #MeToo Movement works towards eradicating the culture of shame and estrangement that burden survivors every day. Dr. Rituparna Bhattacharyya, an independent researcher in India who specializes in sociology, social work, and women's studies, articulates the social and physical challenges survivors face when they come forward with their stories. When a woman speaks out publicly against her attacker, many face the embarrassment of being labelled "characterless" or "bad women," accused of lying, risking their careers and livelihood, and possibly fostering threats from their perpetrators (Bhattacharyya, 2018).

The practice of victim blaming is one the #MeToo Movement hopes to end by countering "cruelty with empathy," (Rodino-Colocino, 2018). PennState professor Michelle Rodino-Colocino, argues that #MeToo offers a "transformative" form of empathy rather than a "passive" form. Passive empathy removes any connection between a survivor and their audience; where people "recognize that 'I am not you,'" which "enables oppressors, and even oppressed people, to project feelings of commonality, understanding, as well as fear and guilt rather than do the work of being self-reflexive," (Rodino-Colocino, 2018). Passive empathy results in an engagement in social performance instead of social action. This could exist in the form of using the #MeToo on Twitter as a way to perform a certain identity that appears to support the movement, while failing to act in a way that progresses the movement. This is not to say that passive empathy is entirely wrong or negative, but transformative empathy encourages stronger

results. Transformative empathy "promotes listening rather than distancing or looking at speakers as 'others'" (Rodino-Colocino, 2018). #MeToo creates a dialogue that supports the form of empathy that engages society in listening and understanding from a survivor's perspective, instead of feeling guilty or bad for an individual experiencing a form of trauma that others have not experienced in their lifetime.

A collective of communication professors, researchers, and authors argue in "#MeToo, sexual harassment: an article, a forum, and a dream for the future," published in the *Journal of Applied Communication Research,* that the power of sexual harassment comes from the dehumanization of survivor's bodies. Sexual aggression turns a female individual into a hyper-feminized body, that is being overtaken and submitting to a hyper-masculinized body. In most sexual harassment narratives one body is seen as weak and the other is seen as powerful; losing all aspects of humanity. When talking about sexual harassment and relaying what happened, society often conceptualizes the attacker as the one with all the power, which undermines and delegitimizes the power and humanity that lies within the survivor. But the #Me Too Movement "reanimates the rich humanity of the human body," and "strips away the illusions, reveals the hidden discourse and makes public" that which had been dehumanized by traditional narratives (Clair et. al, 2019).

Forming a new language and dialogue around the #MeToo Movement is important because it challenges traditional, confining, narratives. The overall importance of the #Me Too Movement centers around fostering change through conversation; "this involves listening to every story and bringing continued validation of internal scripts for those who are suffering at the hands of their abuser and society's cultural scripts," (Clair

et. al, 2019). Every time a survivor comes forward, they are asserting their personal testimony over the language and story proliferated by their abuser and/ or society, which often includes minimizing the harm done and dismisses the survivor from regaining their power and humanity. Society must place more weight and validation on those internal and personal scripts over those assigned to survivors by society, in order to create positive change.

Through a degree of various expressions, it is plausible to bring forth a "validation of internal scripts" for survivors is plausible in many ways. A particular common form of validation is the sharing of #Me Too stories on Twitter. A few days after Blasey-Ford's broadcasted testimony, one individual took to Twitter and wrote: "News flash: Dr Ford is trying to SAVE our judicial system. [...] We victims need to support each other rather than tearing us down. It's what 'they' would like #MeToo I'm very surprised how triggered I am. I survived being sexually abused twice. I've never told my evangelical family about the decade long abuse from one of their honored Christian men. I am preparing to do that now. Thank you, Dr. Ford. Your courage is contagious. #MeToo," (ladeyday, 2018). This tweet exemplifies how individuals can see countless others sharing their stories and feel validated by them. When a survivor feels validated, they are encouraged to come forward to their families, friends, and even to the law, bringing society one step closer to ending sexual harassment.

Twitter as a Counter Public Space: Fostering #Me Too Dialogue

In 1964, German theorist Jürgen Habermas published an article on the idea of the public sphere. Habermas defined the public sphere as "a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed," and a space that "mediates between society and state, in which the public organizes itself as the bearer of public opinion," (Habermas, Lennox & Lennox 1974). The public sphere is where "discursive interactive processes" on various beliefs, values, and opinions on political, economic, and social ideas reside (Dahlgren, 2005). A collective made up of individuals is formed through conversation, discussions, and compromises. Public spheres are where those conversations exist, but are often dominated by the majority, mainstream ideas and beliefs, and exclude anything that does not fit the accepted mold. Historically, this includes but is not limited to, ideas of minorities such as people of color and the LGTBTQ+ community.

The idea of a public sphere that contains beliefs that are popular incites the idea that there are spaces that contain "unpopular" beliefs. As Nancy Fraser pointed out in 1990, since Habermas assumes that there is only one public sphere, it leaves no room for other types of publics to exist. Fraser's critique of Habermas' public sphere also notes how it is a space that is "overwhelmingly male," as Western society is still dominated by white, heterosexual, and patriarchal norms (Renninger, 2015). However, it is not only white, heterosexual males that exchange ideas and create public opinion. The individuals that break the norm of this identity—women, homosexuals, transgender individuals, people of color, and all other forms of identities— create their own public, which Fraser

dubs as "subaltern counterpublics," by finding other individuals similar experiences, beliefs, or values, (Renninger, 2015).

These counterpublics are formed through different cultural perspectives and assumptions on cultures, and they engage with the "noncompliant practices of intervening, and the formation of new social and cultural structures," (Renninger, 2015). Historically, the counterpublics were formed where identities convened, such as through journals, film, or video, are at bookstores, publishing companies, and small, local meeting places. Today, the internet has opened the door for a new location of counterpublics, connecting people and ideas without the previous restrictions of access and location. Twitter serves as a prime example of a counter public space, as it fosters dialogue between like-minded individuals who can share stories, experiences, beliefs, morals, values, et al.

Data and dialogues on Twitter are "short, easily searchable, digestible and extremely public," (Ems, 2014), since they appear as tweets with 280 characters on less. Users can share support, express interest, and spread information with other users around the world with a click of a button. Users can also add meaning to their tweets with pictures, links, and hashtags.

Hashtags serve both a semiotic and clerical function (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015). The use of a hashtag can help the Twitter algorithm search certain events, ideas, and words by the hashtag users who are tweeting about the same thing, but they can also act semiotically, by adding an intended significance or meaning to a tweet. This allows users to frame their tweets and connect with certain audiences based on the hashtags they use.

The #MeToo Movement is one example a hashtag that users add to their tweets when discussing events, news, arguments, ideas, or their own sexual harassment stories online.

If users do not want to write their own messages, or want to spread the message written by others, then they can engage in retweeting. Retweeting is the practice of copying and rebroadcasting an article, posted idea, or message, and users can either preserve or adapt those messages, (Boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010). Preservers can retweet a tweet with no additional context, while adapters can add their own message or hashtag to add additional meanings and frames while contributing to the conversation. Retweeting is a way to validate and engage with conversation: "whether participants are actively commenting or simply acknowledging that they're listening, they're placing themselves inside a conversation. Even when they are simply trying to spread a tweet to a broader audience, they are bringing people into a conversation," (Boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010). Retweeting spreads an initial message to a new audience the original tweeter might not have access to, thus bringing new people into a conversation. By expanding the conversation, retweeters are still engaging and contributing to the conversation.

Before the time of the internet, counter publics existed in physical locations, such as churches or private homes. Counter public spaces could also be found in the form of texts. But with the development of social media, and the practice of communicating with others around the world through creating profiles, posting, and messaging, counter publics now exist in the digital field. Twitter itself forms counterpublics by creating a platform where users can easily search out topics, read others' conversations, and share their experiences on issues, beliefs, or values that might be expelled from the public

sphere by mainstream society. In this way, users find one another, foster empathy and trust, and develop ways to break their own stories into the public sphere.

For this research, a thorough understanding as a place for counterpublics is vital. The movement began its second wave when Milano took to Twitter to spread her message, and tweets with "#MeToo" are still being sent every day. Conversations around #MeToo are happening on Twitter, and to understand the language being used by users, an understanding of the platform is required.

Socially, individuals who experience sexual harassment but do not have the language or cues to label it as such are far less likely to report inappropriate behavior (Jaschik-Herman & Fisk, 1995). Hill's broadcasted testimony served as a foundational display of what the language and cues around sexual harassment could be. Newspaper polls taken at the time of the hearings, and again a year later, examined in a 1992 study, depicted a 50% increase in the number of sexual harassment charges filed (Jaschik-Herman & Fisk, 1995). This could be the result of multiple hypotheses, including an increase in the rate of sexual harassment, or that women became more aware of what "constitutes sexual harassment," and were "more likely to report it when it occurs," (Jaschik-Herman & Fisk, 1995). The same study reported seeing an increase in sensitivity to harassment behaviors when two groups of college women, one in 1989 before the testimony, and another in 1992, watched the same videos of inappropriate workplace behavior.

It is important to avoid over generalizations, but various research, and the continuation of journalists and academics turning to Anita Hill as a valued source to weigh in on issues of sexual harassment, have proven that the 1991 testimony of Anita

Hill has had a resounding impact on social perceptions and legal practices around sexual harassment. However, the impact of the certain language surrounding the topic of sexual harassment and assault used by members of the Senate Judiciary Committee during the testimonies, other political elites, and the media is still mostly unknown. This thesis hopes to identify the ways language around sexual harassment and assault has or has not changed after the development and proliferation of the #MeToo Movement by comparing the foundational understanding of the Hill/ Thomas hearings to the public reaction displayed on Twitter right before, during, and after the Blasey-Ford/ Kavanaugh hearings of 2018.

Christine Blasey Ford and Brett Kavanaugh

On July 9, 2018, President Donald Trump announced Brett Kavanaugh as his Supreme Court Justice Nomination choice to replace the retiring Justice Anthony Kennedy. Only three days before, on July 6, Christine Blasey Ford, a professor of psychology at Palo Alto University, reached out to her California representative, Representative Anna Eshoo, with concerns about the possibility of Kavanaugh's nomination. The reason for concern was concretely laid out on July 30, when Blasey Ford sent a letter to her California Senator, Dianne Feinstein, alleging that Kavanaugh physically and sexually assaulted her while they were both in high school in the early 1980's. In the letter, Blasey Ford described Kavanaugh pushing her into a bedroom at a Maryland house party, pinning her on a bed, and attempting to remove her clothes while covering her mouth to prevent her from screaming.

The Senate Judiciary Committee began their initial confirmation hearings for Kavanaugh on September 4, 2018, and proceeded to question Kavanaugh and hear testimonies related to his nomination until September 7. Less than a week later, Blasey Ford's allegations were made public in an interview with *The Washington Post* on September 16. The very next day, Kavanaugh released a statement denying any and all of Blasey Ford's allegations. Soon after, the Senate Judiciary Committee postponed its confirmation vote for Kavanaugh and asked both Kavanaugh and Blasey Ford to testify in front of the committee.

Before the scheduled testimonies could occur, however, two additional women, Deborah Ramirez on September 23, and Julie Swetnick on September 26, came forward with their own statements of sexual misconduct allegations against Kavanaugh. Ramirez interviewed with the New Yorker, who published her accusations of sexual misconduct against Kavanaugh while they were students at Yale, while Swetnick had her attorney, Michael Avenatti, release a sworn declaration alleging that Kavanaugh was present when she was gang raped at a party, and participated in drugging girls' drinks.

Neither of these two women were called to testify, and as a result, many dismissed their stories and continued to question the credibility of the accusations against Kavanaugh. But on September 27, both Blasey Ford and Kavanaugh testified on the sexual misconduct allegations in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Since Blasey Ford's testimony and accusations emerged after the proliferation of the #MeToo Movement on Twitter and other social media platforms, there was an expectation testimony would be taken seriously, that Kavanaugh would not be confirmed, and that the wrongs faced by Anita Hill during her own hearings back in 1991 would be

righted (Gilmore, 2019). On the day of her testimony, Nielsen data estimated that roughly 20.4 million people watched on six broadcast and cable networks, not including millions more that streamed the event online, or watched in public places (Reuters, 2018). An NPR, PBS Newshour and Marist poll conducted on October 1, 2018, found that out of 1,183 adults contacted through randomly selected telephone numbers, 45% claimed to believe Blasey Ford over Kavanaugh, with only 33% stated that Kavanaugh was telling the truth (Montanaro, 2018).

However, on September 28, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted to send Kavanaugh's confirmation to the Senate floor. That very morning, survivors of sexual harassment and assault confronted and cornered Senator Jeff Flake in an elevator. They asked Senator Flake to reconsider his intention to vote to confirm Kavanaugh. One woman was heard on the live CNN broadcast of the interaction saying "you're telling all women that they don't matter, that they should just stay quiet … you're telling me that my assault doesn't matter, that what happened to me doesn't matter." (2018, September 28). After this confrontation, Senator Flake requested a week-long investigation by the FBI into the allegations of sexual assault before the vote would proceed to the Senate floor. On October 6, 2018, Justice Brett Kavanaugh was sworn into the Supreme Court with a 50-48 vote confirmation—one of the slimmest in history. In 1991, Thomas was confirmed on a 52-48 vote.

As the nation watched the testimony and confirmation hearings unfold, there were obvious and undoubted parallels between the Blasey Ford and Kavanaugh hearings with that of Hill and Thomas in 1991, including media coverage. Before 1991, the media largely avoided any reporting of sexual misconduct in US politics, but the Hill and

Thomas hearings opened the door for heavy and influential discussion on that very topic (Hinternesch, 2019). From that point forward, much of the media viewed the private lives of politicians as relevant, including any instances of sexual misconduct. Additionally, with the recent development of the #MeToo Movement, news coverage related to any sexual harassment, assault, or misconduct allegations has been heavily amplified (Hinternesch, 2019). A study conducted by Miriam Hinternesch, a student of Communication Science at the University of Twente in the Netherlands, analyzed the framing choices of CNN and Fox News articles surrounding the accusations of Blasey Ford and the subsequential testimonies of both she and Kavanaugh. Hinternesch argues that through journalistic frames, the media gives meaning to news and influences the levels of priority the general public places certain topics on their agenda. In her study, Hinternesch found ten common frames among the articles as follows:

1. Support for Kavanaugh

2. Support for Blasey Ford

3. Opposing Kavanaugh

4. Opposing Blasey Ford

5. Discrediting Kavanaugh

6. Discrediting Blasey Ford

Hinternesche also identified different focuses, including partisan or ideological focus, and focus on the confirmation or hearings and investigations (Hinternesch, 2019).

The purpose of Hinternesch's study was to establish an understanding of how different frames utilized by different sources can produce contradictory depictions of the same event or topic. Yet an examination of these identified frames with intent to

highlight sexual harassment reveals that none of the articles analyzed by Hinternesche produced a frame around sexual harassment. As Hinternesche states herself, media frames influence the levels of importance the general public places on topics: if the media is not prioritizing discussing the Blasey Ford hearings in terms of sexual harassment, but instead in terms of political partisanship or motivations, society is influenced to place sexual harassment lower on their lists of priorities.

The Language Expectancy Theory (LET), developed in 2002, examines the way the credibility and persuasiveness of an article are impacted by the linguistic choices of the author(s). LET implies that different social groups have different language expectations that are dependent on social and cultural standards. These language expectations influence the linguistic and framing choices of the author of an article. LET suggests that journalists use certain language and write about what they expect their audience to view as credible and persuasive (Burgoon, Denning, and Roberts, 2002). If journalists and media outlets are not framing news articles about the topic of sexual assault, LET implies that the media has either a conscious or unconscious understanding that the public may not be as interested or involved with the topic of sexual harassment.

Because of this understanding, the media represents sexual assault, harassment, and violence in a way that fosters a distortion in public discourse around the same topic. Instead of placing responsibility on social systems and patriarchal attitudes to fix the persistence of sexual violence, media coverage supports much of society's tendency to tolerate, ignore, or justify sexual violence (Pollino, 2019). Feminists delineated this societal idea through the term rape culture in the 1970s, to describe the ways in which the dominate culture normalizes sexual violence rather than addressing it as an issue.

As Hinternesche found in her study, Blasey Ford's testimony and allegations were equated with a political tactic in many news articles that attempted to discredit her. Pollino argues that this media practice reinforces the idea that sexual violence is not a problem, and promotes a mentality of doubt whenever a survivor comes forward with their story (Pollino, 2019). Instead of media consumers understanding sexual violence as an issue, they are presented with the frame in which sexual violence is used as a pawn for political gain, and thus they discredit the accusers.

Understanding how the media frames public discourse is an important factor in investigating the language used on Twitter. The rise of #MeToo has increased the amount of survivor testimony and experiences in the public sphere, and has continued to provide people with the understanding the language needed to discuss sexual harassment, assault, and violence.

A focus on the semantics and languages and their influence on continuing to foster conversation and dialogue is critical for the future of understanding the effectiveness and success of #MeToo. Therefore, I hypothesize that an examination of common themes derived from language used in *The New York Times* published during the Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas hearings of 1991 and Tweets published between September 25, 2018 and September 29, 2018 (the dates surrounding the Christine Blasey Ford and Brett Kavanaugh Hearings) will reveal ways in which the #MeToo Movement has changed the language used by individuals use to describe the testimonies, the accusers, the accused, and sexual harassment in general.

CHAPTER II

TESTIMONIES 27 YEARS APART REVEAL A HINT TOWARD SOCIETAL
CHANGE

Research Design and Methodology: Tweets

This research examines language used by Twitter users during the 2018 Blasey

Ford and Kavanaugh hearings and language used in New York Times articles published

during the 1991 Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas hearings, and will result in a

comparison of generalized themes. This comparison will reveal the ways in which the

#MeToo Movement has provided a platform for more inclusive and beneficial language

around the issue of sexual violence.

Over 200 tweets were analyzed for frames and language usage, and from these

analyses, themes were produced that represent the general public's understanding of the

Ford/ Kavanaugh hearings, #MeToo Movement and sexual harassment during this time

period. This collection of tweets serve as an indication of the language used surrounding

the topic of the #MeToo Movement and sexual harassment as they relate to the Christine

Blasey Ford and Brett Kavanagh testimonies before Senate Judiciary Committee in 2018.

As mentioned in this thesis previously, Twitter serves as a counter public space where

individuals express their values and beliefs through posting original content, commenting

on others' posts, and retweeting. As users are engaging in conversation around #MeToo

and the Blasey Ford/ Kavanaugh hearings, the language they use is reflective of their

personal understandings and conceptions of all actors involved, including sexual

harassment, Blasey Ford, Kavanaugh, or others.

Tweets were chosen based on content and time of publication. An advanced Twitter search displayed tweets with the #MeToo, that also included the word "Ford" and/ or "Kavanaugh." This method was chosen to ensure that tweets analyzed included references to the testimonies as well as the #MeToo Movement as a whole to correctly collect data that would satisfy the three criteria of the 44hypothesis: (1) the Blasey Ford and Kavanaugh testimonies, (2) the #MeToo Movement, and (3) sexual harassment perceptions. From this Twitter search, Tweets were collected from the "Top" category of search results, in order to obtain a data set that was both manageable in time allotted for completion of this thesis and representative of ideas, language, and thoughts that received the most engagement. As the testimonies of both Blasey Ford and Kavanaugh transpired on September 27, 2019, two additional days were added on either end of the testimony date to expand the data pool to produce a more in depth understanding of the time period as a whole. For this reason, tweets with time-stamps between September 25, 2018 and September 29, 2018 were collected for analysis. These search qualifications resulted in a data set of 291 tweets available for qualitative analysis.

After the initial collection of tweets, tweets were organized and analyzed by timestamp. The first analysis of the qualitative process included identification of words, phrases, and hashtags of interest within each tweet. Irving Seidman, professor emeritus of qualitative research at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, identifies this first step as a process of close reading plus initial judgement (Seidman, 2006). Words, phrases, and hashtags of interest were identified by their correlation to the research question, as well as the general topics of the testimonies, the #MeToo Movement, and sexual harassment.

Using the Framework Method, the words, phrases, and hashtags of interest were analyzed for codes. The Framework Method allowed me to approach the data through a thematic analysis and qualitative content analysis lenses (Gale et. al., 2013). As coding is often referred to a decision-making process dependent on the context of individual research (Elliot, 2018) this approach will allow for the identification of commonalities and differences in my data before establishing relationships between codes that draw description conclusions in the form of generalized themes.

These important words, phrases, and hashtags identified in the initial reading of tweets were analyzed for codes. These codes serve as the method of categorizing the perceived ideas and beliefs represented in each tweet, which creates a pivotal link between collected data and the ability to develop a theory which explains said data (Chun Tie, Birks, & Francis, 2019).

Words and phrases were coded for tone, historical meaning, societal held stereotypes, and interpreted personal beliefs to reveal the underlying messages. As I entered the data collection and analysis process with no previous expectations of themes I would find, I employed an inductive approach in my methods which allowed for the data to create the codes and themes throughout the process.

After the initial identification of important text, tweets were analyzed to identify their status within three categories: (1) support or oppose the #MeToo Movement, (2) support or oppose Ford, and (3) support or oppose Kavanaugh. These categories serve as an important indication for whether users on Twitter engaging in these discussions use their support or opposition for Ford, Kavanaugh, or the #MeToo Movement to influence their perceptions on the topics of the research questions.

After completion of code creation, codes were grouped into overarching themes using a latent approach of the Framework Method. A latent approach prioritized analyzing the subtext and underlying messages in the data that would reveal the assumptions and social context associated with the analyzed tweets. The Framework Method was originally developed in the late 1980s, by researchers at the National Centre for Social Research in the United Kingdom for large-scale policy research. This method often involves qualitative research centered around analyzing interview transcripts, although it has been adapted for other types of textual data such as documents, meeting minutes, diary entries and field notes (Gale et. al., 2013).

Results: Tweets

These themes serve as the connecting threads between user's tweets to form a generalized understanding of the language and frames used in the online Twitter discourse between September 25th and 29th. These themes represent the ways in which users approached the topic of the Kavanaugh and Ford testimonies.

An analysis of the multiple codes each tweet presented resulted in 11 common themes:

1. The Kavanaugh/ Blasey Ford testimonies as representative of #MeToo's and society's progress towards ending sexual assault;

2. Users share news articles or quotes from another individual to contribute to conversation;

3. Some users prioritize the confirmation hearing process and/or F.B.I investigation;

4. Race and privilege were seen as influential to the hearings process or in;

5. The Blasey Ford/ Kavanaugh hearings and #MeToo were connected to President Trump;

6. Users discussed credibility of Blasey Ford, Kavanaugh, the #MeToo Movement or other political elites to contribute to the conversation;

7. Users expressed solidarity, emotions, and empathy through tweets;

8. Users framed tweets as separating the issue of sexual assault and the #MeToo Movement by gender;

9. Tweets serve as a space to perform calls to action.

10. Connections were drawn between Hill/ Thomas hearings and Kavanaugh/ Blasey Ford hearings.

11. Blasey Ford, Kavanaugh, and #MeToo were seen as operating under political or partisan motivations.

TABLE 1 Emergent themes among #MeToo and Ford/ Kavanaugh Tweets

Theme	Description	Sample Codes	Sample Tweet
The Kavanaugh/ Blasey Ford testimonies are representative of #MeToo's and society's progress towards ending sexual assault.	As the hearings occurred almost one year after Alyssa Milano's viral "me too" tweet, users looked to the Blasey Ford and Kavanaugh hearings, and their subsequent results, as a symbol for where society stood on issues of sexual harassment.	• Hearings will have impact on #MeToo movement • Hearings are a deciding factor on whether accusers will be believed • Hearings will decide if reputations outweigh accusations	"The Kavanaugh nomination is a referendum on the #MeToo movement— on whether the goodness of successful men should be taken for granted, and whether the women who have suffered abuse should remain silent lest they sully sterling reputations."
Users share news articles or quotes from another individual to contribute to conversation.	News organizations choose what topics to cover, and the prevalence of news articles covering the Blasey Ford and Kavanaugh hearings represent a societal understanding of sexual harassment as a serious issue.	• News • Adding general knowledge	"Christine Blasey Ford is set to testify. #Metoo activist and actress Alyssa Milano is in the hearing room. Follow live. https://cnn.it/2IoRgiU"

TABLE 1.a Emergent themes among #MeToo and Ford/ Kavanaugh Tweets Cont.

Theme	Description	• Sample Codes	Sample Tweet
Some users prioritize the confirmation hearing process and/or F.B.I investigation.	References to the F.B.I Investigations, process of hearings, and requests for politicians to vote certain ways suggest that sexual assault and harassment is an issue that can be at least partially solved by government actions.	• F.B.I reference • Focus on hearings and process	"Flake's call for an FBI investigation into Brett Kavanaugh is a huge moment for the #MeToo movement. It is one of the first times a feminist victory has been defined by a demand for deeper inquiry and further 'due process', not a perceived bid to circumvent it.
Race and privilege were seen as influential to the hearings process or in.	Racial prejudices influence who is believed in times when survivors come forward and accuse their perpetrators. As Kavanaugh and Blasey Ford are both Caucasian, race is not widely discussed. This reflects how when both involved are of Caucasian descent, race is not seen as one of the more pertinent frames and topics for consideration.	• #MeToo and sexual harassment as a race issue • White boys have sexual privilege over men of color	"White boys will be boys: Kavanaugh, #MeToo and race https://religionnews.com/2018/09/28/white-boys-will-be-boys-kavanaugh-metoo-and-race/ @RNS"

TABLE 1.b Emergent themes among #MeToo and Ford/ Kavanaugh Tweets Cont.

Theme	Description	• Sample Codes	Sample Tweet
The Blasey Ford/ Kavanaugh hearings and #MeToo were connected to President Trump.	President Trump is an influential topic often discussed whenever issues of sexual harassment arise. Connection of the hearings to Trump perpetuate this understanding and connect hearings to larger issues of sexual harassment and the government.	• Instigating Trump as part of the larger problem • Trump as a bigger problem than Kavanaugh or sexual harassment	"Yeah, he really said this. Really. Defending Kavanaugh, Trump laments #MeToo as 'very dangerous' for powerful men http://a.msn.com/01/en-us/AAAHpb3?ocid=st"
Users discussed credibility of Blasey Ford, Kavanaugh, the #MeToo Movement or other political elites to contribute to the conversation.	As the Blasey Ford and Kavanaugh hearings unfolded, individuals created their own beliefs on who to believe. They expressed these beliefs on Twitter by discussing their ideas of credibility online.	• Crediting or discrediting Blasey Ford • Crediting or discrediting Kavanaugh • Crediting or discrediting #MeToo • Crediting or discrediting politicians or organizations	"Note to Kavanaugh: Your anger betrays your guilt. #StopKanavaugh #KavanaughHearings #IbelieveChristine #ChristineBlaseyFord #CountryOverParty #MeToo"

TABLE 1.c Emergent themes among #MeToo and Ford/ Kavanaugh Tweets Cont.

Theme	Description	• Sample Codes	Sample Tweet
Users expressed solidarity, emotions, and empathy through tweets.	The #MeToo Movement was created on the idea of fostering empathy to support survivors. Twitter serves as a new platform for users to share their own stories and offer solidarity/ empathy/ and support reflects changes in the way society understands and reacts to sexual harassment.	• Showing solidarity for women • Sharing of sexual harassment story • Public showing of support for Blasey-Ford • Hearings as emotional and difficult to watch	"This is my story. Today I stand with and by Dr. Ford. #WhyIDidntReport #BelieveSurvivors #KavanaughHearings #MeToo #Timesup"
Users framed tweets as separating the issue of sexual assault and the #MeToo Movement by gender.	#MeToo and sexual harassment is often discussed through the lens of gender, equating women with survivors and men with perpetrators, which reflects societies understandings of #MeToo and sexual harassment.	• The time for dominant male control will be challenged by women	"Women Rally in Support of Brett Kavanaugh, Warn of "Weaponizing" #MeToo Movement http://bit.ly/2DCxktW #KavanaughHearings #KavanaughConfirmation"

TABLE 1.d Emergent themes among #MeToo and Ford/ Kavanaugh Tweets Cont.

Theme	Description	• Sample Codes	Sample Tweet
Tweets serve as a space to perform calls to action.	Many users added hashtags or phrases that asked their audience members to vote, call, or think certain ways.	• Urging readers to vote along party lines • Urging readers to vote for or against politicians • Reference to act in upcoming midterm election • Call for senators to delay confirmation vote	"Self-medicate tonight. Tomorrow, call call call: -Susan Collins 202-224-2523 -Bob Corker 202-224-3344 -Jeff Flake 202-224-4521 -Lisa Murkowski 202-224-6665 and tell them to vote no on confirming angry, belligerent, unhinged Brett Kavanaugh."
Connections were drawn between Hill/ Thomas hearings and Kavanaugh/ Blasey Ford hearings.	Users discussed Anita Hill as reference to her hearings in 1991, as well as a source for quotes / reputable input to go alongside news articles.	• Hill testimonies as an influencing historical event • Hill as a source of comment for news on sexual harassment • Relating Blasey-Ford / Kavanaugh hearings to Hill/ Thomas hearings	"A full-page advertisement this morning in the NYT features the names of 1,600 men with a banner message saying: "We believe Anita Hill. We also believe Christine Blasey Ford," in a #MeToo era twist on a stand taken 27 years ago."
Blasey Ford, Kavanaugh, and #MeToo were seen as operating under political or partisan motivations.	Sexual harassment was often diminished in tweets discussing political motivations of Blasey Ford, Kavanaugh, or #MeToo. Users discussed political parties or politicians manipulating key actors to result in desired political outcomes.	• #Metoo as a political ploy • Democrats having corrupt ulterior motives, using #MeToo for own good	"The Kavanaugh Circus Could Destroy the #MeToo Movement The Me Too movement has morphed into a movement that makes salacious claims w/o verification w/no interest in the truth. Their very existence is in question because of the Dems politicizing it."

Discussion/Analysis: Tweets

The Kavanaugh/ Blasey Ford testimonies are representative of #MeToo's and society's progress towards ending sexual assault.

Chosen tweets for this theme included language that indicated users' personal beliefs for why testimonies occurred, connections between testimonies and the #MeToo Movement, and thoughts on moving forward after the testimonies. Altogether, the tweets of this theme encapsulated how users connected the testimonies to their opinion of the success or failure #MeToo Movement. It is crucial to understand how individuals are talking about #MeToo and the hearings, and whether or not they equate the two together, and this theme provides that understanding.

If users discuss the hearings without relating them to #MeToo, then the movement has not established a societal or cultural understanding and set of language to be included in the discussions. When people connect #MeToo with the hearings, they are showing that they understand what #MeToo attempting to do, whether that understanding is correct, they have still taken time to recognize the movement's role in society and form an opinion on it. As this movement is new, and didn't exist before, it is bringing sexual assault to the attention of the general public, so when people take time to think about the #MeToo Movement, they are taking time to think about sexual assault.

If individuals are using the hearings to gauge whether or not #MeToo has made a difference that means they have expectations for #MeToo and for society. Individuals create their expectations based on the world around them, different socio-economic factors, and their experiences. Some tweets revealed their expectations for the outcome of

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the Kavanaugh confirmation process and equated that with their expectations for how the #MeToo Movement has made progress over the years. Individual's looked to the outcome of hearings as reflective to whether their expectations for #MeToo were met:

> "The Kavanaugh nomination is a referendum on the #MeToo movement—on whether the goodness of successful men should be taken for granted, and whether the women who have suffered abuse should remain silent lest they sully sterling reputations." (NewYorker, 2018)

It is also important to identify the connection between the hearings and #MeToo movement to understand the negative associations with #MeToo. Some users use the hearings as an example of how they believe the movement has gone too far, and is unfair for Kavanaugh.

This theme is important because it also reflects how some society conceptualizes survivors who come forward whether or not sexual assault is viewed as serious of an allegation as the #MeToo depicts it as. If users discredit the #MeToo movement by equating with the unfair sexual assault hearings, they are explaining why some portions of society have not evolved their original opinions on sexual assault and why there is still progress that needs to be made.

Users share news articles or quotes from another individual to contribute to conversation.

This theme was created to represent the number of users who tweeted quotes from political elites, celebrities, or other individuals, or shared / published news articles on the topic of the Kavanaugh / Blasey Ford hearings and or the #MeToo movement. This theme is important to identify because it represents an entire section of the public sphere; the mainstream media. They present shareable ideas that are geared to provide knowledge to the general public on a myriad of topics involving the hearings, including the process,

who is involved, what prominent individuals have said, the #MeToo movement, relative laws or rules, historical context, etc.

One user tweeted "Christine Blasey Ford is set to testify. #Metoo activist and actress Alyssa Milano is in the hearing room. Follow live. https://cnn.it/2IoRgiU" (cnnbrk, 2018). This tweet came from the account "CNN Breaking News," and serves as just one example of news outlets covering the testimonies and sharing general information with the public via Twitter. Further, they even provide a link for access to their news website that links to more coverage and information about the testimonies. This is important, because in order for people to fully understand the implications of the sexual harassment charges and the hearings, they need to be well informed.

It is important to take note of these tweets because they present perspectives, language, and information needed for other users to understand and form their own beliefs and opinion on the issue. Additionally, the fact that the news continues to cover issues of sexual assault accusations and the #MeToo movement depicts how society has evolved to choose to cover these issues as important topics.

Some users prioritize the confirmation hearing process and/or F.B.I investigation.

Many individuals chose to discuss the hearings with a focus on the general process or FBI investigations. Because of this, this theme is crafted of the tweets that mentioned the hearings as a process, the F.B.I investigation, and the Senate Judiciary Committee. This themes also encapsulates multiple perspectives on Kavanaugh, Blasey Ford, or the #MeToo Movement, as users discussed the fairness of the hearings, the need for an FBI investigation to look into Blasey Ford's allegations, or the entire process as a form of a "witch hunt."

Users also discussed their satisfaction with the hearings proceedings as a way to express their belief in what result the hearings should produce. If users discuss their dissatisfaction with the hearings because they believe it is unfair to Kavanaugh, then they may be expressing their belief that Kavanaugh is innocent. However, if a user claims they are dissatisfied with the hearings because the Senate Judiciary Committee is failing to call for an FBI investigation, they may be instigating that they do not believe Kavanaugh is telling the truth and needs to be investigated. This also suggests a focus and reliance on the government to correct a wrong the user sees in society. For example, one user tweeted:

> "Flake's call for an FBI investigation into Brett Kavanaugh is a huge moment for the #MeToo movement. It is one of the first times a feminist victory has been defined by a demand for deeper inquiry and further 'due process', not a perceived bid to circumvent it," (KateMaltby, 2018).

In this case, the user praised the decision for an FBI investigation that would investigate Kavanaugh, because they equated a desire for "deeper inquiry" was moving the standards of dealing with sexual harassment claims in the right direction. Other users took to Twitter to tag senators or discuss politicians and ask them to do what the user believes is the right way to move forward in the proceedings. In this way, users are suggesting that sexual assault and harassment is an issue that can be at least partially solved by government actions. This is an important understanding for who society decides is responsible for fixing issues like sexual assault and harassment.

<u>Race and privilege were seen as influential to the hearings process.</u>

While not many individuals decided to frame their tweets through race, the few that did still deserve examination. Racial prejudices often hold weight when individuals choose whether or not to believe survivors who come forward and accuse their perpetrators. As Kavanaugh and Blasey Ford are both Caucasian, race is not widely discussed. In this instance, when both involved are of Caucasian descent, race was not seen as one of the more pertinent frames and topics for consideration.

Yet some still took the time to point out the privilege they believed Kavanaugh experienced, throughout his whole life and the testimonies, because of his race: "White boys will be boys: Kavanaugh, #MeToo and race https://religionnews.com/2018/09/28/white-boys-will-be-boys-kavanaugh-metoo-and-race/ @RNS," (ThomasReeseSJ, 2018). This user related race and privilege into the common phrase "boys will be boys," that insinuates gendered privilege. By taking it one step farther and including race, this user pointed out the multiple layers of privilege Kavanaugh, and many other white men, experience, especially in terms of sexual harassment accusations.

<u>The Blasey Ford/ Kavanaugh hearings and #MeToo were connected to President Trump.</u>

Many users took to Twitter to discuss the hearings through the lens of President Trump. This reflected their feelings of Kavanaugh and the hearings themselves. By talking about President Trump, and his own past of sexual accusations, "locker room talk" and other quotes, many users equated Kavanaugh and Trump as the same: a predator. This also reflects the position of privilege white men of significant political power hold over others, similar to the previous theme, without direct references to race:

"Yeah, he really said this. Really. Defending Kavanaugh, Trump laments #MeToo as 'very dangerous' for powerful men http://a.msn.com/01/en-us/AAAHpb3?ocid=st," (WisePaxCat, 2018). When Trump referenced #MeToo as "very dangerous" he is saying that the powerful men affected by the movement are innocent victims. This user expressed their displeasure with Trump's statement, and his actions of defending Kavanaugh. This is a prime example of how users integrated Trump into the Kavanaugh and Blasey Ford hearings.

Both Kavanaugh and Trump have been accused of sexual harassment and abuse, yet neither have faced serious consequences because their actions were deemed typical male behavior and released of any negative associations. As Debrah Katz mentioned in Kantor and Twohey's "She Said," this hearing reflected how even though a level of society change has occurred, there are still institutional barriers within the government preventing real change. The privilege experienced by both Kavanaugh and Trump exemplifies this.

Even if users did not directly discuss Trump, many used #MAGA as a way to frame their tweet or break into the portion of Twitter dedicated to Trump discourse. In this way, users brought the subject of sexual assault and the hearings to other users who may have been discussing Trump for other, unrelated reasons.

Further, by discussing Trump through the lens of the hearings, users connected the hearings to larger issues of sexual assault or the government. This solidifies the previous finding in the process or FBI investigation theme, that many users turn to their government to correct any wrongdoings they see in society, or to follow fair and just processes. By relating the hearings and the issue of sexual assault to the president of the

United States, users tie in the president's role to either fixing or perpetuating stereotypes of sexual assault in the U.S. The actions of the president, as arguably the single most politically powerful individual in the U.S., are typically held up by society as standard accepted behavior. If the president is condoning sexual harassment, or even is a perpetrator himself, it sends the message that sexual harassment is acceptable and the experiences of survivors are unimportant and dismissible.

Credibility of Kavanaugh, Blasey Ford, or #MeToo

Some of the most commonly identified codes in the analysis of the tweets depicted a concern for the credibility of those involved with the hearings. Because of this, credibility serves as a major theme identified as a connecting idea between many users. As this issue of sexual assault played out in the form of a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing and testimonies, the frame of credibility was amplified, as both the nation and the senators responsible for listening to the testimonies form their opinions and decide who they believe. Many users made their beliefs well known on Twitter, as they used their tweets to either credit or discredit Kavanaugh or Blasey Ford. This was conducted through discussing behaviors during the hearings, previous reputations and life actions, quotes, and possible ties to intended government corruption.

For those discussing the credibility of Blasey Ford in a positive way, there were frequent ties to the #MeToo Movement and other survivors of sexual assault. Those who took to Twitter to express their belief in Blasey Ford often used the hashtags #IbelieveHer #BelieveChristine and #BelieveSurvivors to frame their tweets in a way to show their support. Connecting Blasey Ford to other survivors and calling for others to believe her reflects a cultural change where more individuals in society are turning their

backs on societal norms that perpetuate sexual perpetrators and opting to place more faith in believing survivors.

Other users took to Twitter to de-credit Kavanaugh instead of discussing the credibility of Blasey Ford. This included users equating Kavanaugh with persecuted sexual assaulters such as Bill Cosby, connecting Kavanaugh to a corrupt Republican party or discussing Kavanaugh's inappropriate and angry behavior during the hearings: "Note to Kavanaugh: Your anger betrays your guilt. #StopKanavaugh #KavanaughHearings #IbelieveChristine #ChristineBlaseyFord #CountryOverParty #MeToo," (DrGJackBrown, 2018). By discussing Kavanaugh's credibility over Blasey Ford's, users switch their focus away from the issue of sexual assault. Many users discussed Kavanaugh's behaviors as reasons for him being unfit for the Supreme Court. By focusing on his behavior instead of his alleged actions, users diminish the prevalence of the topic of sexual assault. This depicts a culture that cares less about sexual assault and its survivors and more about men's reputations and their jobs.

Further, users who discussed Blasey Ford's credibility in a negative way often additionally portrayed negative associations with the #MeToo Movement. Users discredited Blasey Ford on her actions, her believability, her timing for coming forward, or her connection to a corrupt Democratic party. When Blasey Ford was connected to the #Metoo Movement by the same users, the movement was often also discredited as a political ploy, "hypersensitive," "hysterical," or as going "too far." This reveals a portion of users who view Blasey Ford as a symbol representative of the #MeToo Movement and choose not to believe or support either of them.

<u>Users framed tweets as separating the issue of sexual assault and the #MeToo Movement by gender.</u>

Gender is another theme that encapsulates the topics of many tweets. Primarily, users who discussed gender framed their tweets as separating the issue of sexual assault and the #MeToo Movement as a men's or women's issue. Users discussed survivors or other instances of sexual assault by using gendered terms: equating sexual assault survivors with women and perpetrators with men. For example, the hashtag #BelieveWomen frames tweets in a way that shows support for the #MeToo Movement and Blasey Ford, while also perpetuating the idea that only women are survivors of sexual assault and that the #MeToo Movement is only for women.

Additionally, users who oppose the #MeToo movement sometimes displayed that opposition by stating that the movement was unfair to men, or that women were "weaponizing" the movement: "Women Rally in Support of Brett Kavanaugh, Warn of "Weaponizing" #MeToo Movement http://bit.ly/2DCxktW #KavanaughHearings #KavanaughConfirmation," (LifeNewsHQ, 2018). This against reiterates the idea that #MeToo only works for women, and is something that is a threat to, or dangerous towards men. Yet women are not the only survivors of sexual harassment and violence; the issue impacts men as well (Walters, Chen, & Breiding, 2013). The CDC estimates at 14.9 percent of men have experienced "severe physical violence" by an intimate partner, and the Department of Justice reports that one in every ten rape survivors are men (Sacco, 2019 & Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics, 2020). It is important to note that most of the tweets discussing gender do not reflect this understanding. Future work by #MeToo

Movement could focus on developing language and campaigns to combat these ideas and improve their efficiency in extending empathy to male survivors as well.

Users expressed solidarity, emotions, and empathy through tweets.

As users watched the testimonies and shared their thoughts on Twitter, many expressed how hard it was to watch Blasey Ford recount her experiences and endure questioning from the Senate Judiciary Committee. The difficulty of watching the testimonies was relayed through language that involved commenting on emotions, or sharing empathy by recounting their own experiences with coming forward with sexual abuse allegations. This theme encapsulated what the #MeToo Movement stands for. When Blasey Ford shared her story with the world, it encouraged other survivors to come forward.

Another heavily identified code was the idea of expressing solidarity for Blasey Ford and other survivors of sexual assault. At the end of many tweets, users added hashtags such as #IbelieveChristine, #WhyIDidntReport, and #IstandWithDrFord to express support. For example, one user tweeted "This is my story. Today I stand with and by Dr. Ford. #WhyIDidntReport #BelieveSurvivors #KavanaughHearings #MeToo #Timesup," (Urlocalgaysian, 2018). By creating an environment of both solidarity and empathy, other survivors are encouraged to come forward and change is inspired on social and political levels.

The theme of solidarity, emotions, and empathy is of importance, because Tarana Burke founded the #MeToo Movement on the idea of fostering empathy as a way to support survivors. Individuals on Twitter are discussing the #MeToo Movement, the emotions the hearings create, and sharing empathy with Blasey Ford and other survivors

serve as evidence that the #MeToo Movement is changing the way society talks about sexual harassment.

Tweets serve as a place to perform calls to action.

This theme identifies Twitter as a space for individuals to collect and mobilize in the name of certain beliefs. Not only are users discussing the hearings and #MeToo on Twitter, but they are attempting to mobilize their colleagues, friends, and society for an idea or value they believe in. In this way, Twitter provided a platform for political engagement, as users are able to reach out to senators, people in power, friends, or followers and ask them to participate in a movement they believe in.

One user even went so far as to call for their followers to call senators, and then provided their numbers for easy access: "Self-medicate tonight. Tomorrow, call call call: -Susan Collins 202-224-2523 –Bob Corker 202-224-3344 –Jeff Flake 202-224-4521 – Lisa Murkowski 202-224-6665 and tell them to vote no on confirming angry, belligerent, unhinged Brett Kavanaugh," (dcpoll, 2018). This user joined the conversation by stating their opinion, and urging others to take action to stop Kavanaugh. They aided in mobilization, and relayed a sense of urgency and importance around the hearings and the issue of sexual harassment in general.

Many users ended their tweets with a call to action represented by hashtags. These calls to action came from all points of the political spectrum and both sides of the Blasey Ford / Kavanaugh debate. After discussing other frames, such as credibility, the hearings process, or even gender, users added a hashtag such as #VoteNoOnKavanaugh, #PostponeTheVote, #VoteThemOut, #VoteBlue or #VoteRed. Hashtags framed towards the Kavanaugh hearings themselves resulted in calls to action towards encouraging an

F.B.I investigation, or a call for senators to oppose Kavanaugh's confirmation. Hashtags framed towards voting followed more politicized calls to action, where users blamed either the Democratic of Republican party and encouraged others to vote accordingly in the at-the-time upcoming midterm elections of 2018.

Blasey Ford, Kavanaugh, and #MeToo were seen as operating under political or partisan motivations.

Some discussions around the hearings were centered around political alignments. Users either accused Kavanaugh or Blasey Ford as acting as political pawns, or took to Twitter to express their disdain for the ways the Republican or Democratic party has handled the hearings or the #MeToo Movement. By dividing the hearings and the #MeToo Movement along political lines, users also divide sexual assault and harassment along political lines. One user accused Democrats of politicizing the movement:

> "The Kavanaugh Circus Could Destroy the #MeToo Movement. The Me Too movement has morphed into a movement that makes salacious claims w/o verification w/no interest in the truth. Their very existence is in question because of the Dems politicizing it," (RealMAGASteve, 2018).

In this tweet, the user states that the #MeToo Movement is simply a Democratic ploy, that makes false accusations and is so reckless that it is in danger of damaging itself. This discredits the movement, and draws a political line between those who support #MeToo and those who oppose it.

If society identifies sexual assault and #MeToo as something that only the Democratic party concerns itself with, that severely limits the efficiency towards ending sexual assault and harassment. Additionally, if members of the Republican party feel as if

they cannot identify as survivors or support the #MeToo Movement because of their

party, survivors of sexual assault may be forced to remain isolated in their trauma.

Further, by discrediting #MeToo or Blasey Ford as political pawns, users discredit

the severity of sexual assault and harassment. When accusing Democrats as using sexual

assault for political gain, it diminishes the impact sexual assault has on survivors every

day. Survivors see themselves as invalid or corrupt, and see an entire political party

poised and determined to silence them.

Connections were drawn between Hill/ Thomas hearings and Kavanaugh/ Blasey Ford
hearings.

While not as apparent as solidarity or credibility, some users did discuss the

connections between the Blasey Ford / Kavanaugh hearings and the Hill / Thomas

hearings of 1991. Users connected what they saw in the Blasey Ford and Kavanaugh

testimonies to the outcome and process of the Hill and Thomas testimonies. Commenters

used the Hill / Thomas hearings to urge senators to prove that society had changed since

1991 in how they handle sexual assault and harassment accusations. This solidifies

research that has suggested the hearings of 1991 were a landmark symbol for society's

understanding of sexual harassment. A professor at UC Berkeley tweeted:

> "A full-page advertisement this morning in the NYT features the names of 1,600
> men with a banner message saying: We believe Anita Hill. We also believe
> Christine Blasey Ford,' in a #MeToo era twist on a stand taken 27 years ago,"
> (Helenhs, 2018).

This tweet connects the themes of gender, news, and Anita Hill references. The

tweet references a news article that features names of only men, combatting the

stereotype that society perceives men as less likely to believe women. Then, the user

mentions that the hearings between Blasey Ford and Kavanaugh were a "#MeToo era twist" on something that already happened to Hill in 1991, linking the experiences of Hill and Blasey Ford.

Anita Hill was also quoted by news organizations or other individuals, who looked to her for input on language or information for how to handle sexual assault allegations. Before Hill, many news organizations or other members of the public sphere did not have the language or expertise to speak about sexual harassment. However, during the Blasey Ford and Kavanaugh hearings, Hill, along with Tarana Burke and even Ruth Bader Ginsburg, were sought after as experts with valued input.

Research Design and Methodology: New York Times Articles

The New York Times articles published around and during the 1991 Hill and Thomas hearings provided a second data source of codifiable language to foster a means of juxtaposing language. Like the coding of tweets methodology, the analysis of language from New York Times articles will result in a list of generalized themes which will be compared to those generated from the tweet analysis, to advance the hypothesis that #MeToo and counter public spaces on Twitter are changing the ways in which society speaks about sexual harassment.

Articles were accessed through *The New York Times* online Historical Database. An advanced search result for news articles containing the words "Anita Hill" from the date range October 10, 1991 to October 12, 1991 revealed thirty articles, which were coded for frames and language usage. From these analyses, themes were produced that represent the general public's understanding of the Hill/ Thomas hearings and sexual harassment during this time period.

A difference in data sources appears when analyzing *The New York Times* articles as accessibility for who is able to have their writings published is severely limited compared to the nature of Twitter where all who create an account are free to publish their thoughts and join conversations. However, included in the articles were several opinion/ editorial pieces, of which their nature represented the thoughts, values, and arguments of writers outside of *The New York Times* direct institution. This group of authors serves as a smaller case study of generalized public opinion. Further, news articles are tremendously influential in shaping public thought and language (Lukin, 2013). Therefore, this thesis will also analyze the language presented to readers in the 1991 *New York Times* articles, to further an understanding of how readers build their perceptions of Hill, Thomas, and sexual harassment.

After an advanced search through *The New York Times* Historical Database online, thirty articles were downloaded with content required to satisfy the two criteria of the hypothesis: (1) the Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas testimonies, and (2) sexual harassment perceptions. As the testimonies of both Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas occurred on October 11, 1991, one additional day on either end of the testimonies date expanded the data pool to produce a more in depth understanding of the time period. The expansion was not as large as the one utilized in collecting the tweet data set, as the length of *The New York Times* articles compensated for the fewer total number of articles collected in comparison to the shorter, more abundant tweets. These search qualifications resulted in a data set of twenty news articles available for qualitative analysis.

After the initial collection of articles, articles were organized and analyzed by timestamp. The first analysis of the qualitative process included identification of words,

phrases, and hashtags of interest within each tweet. Words and phrases of interest were identified by their correlation to the hypothesis, as well as the general topics of the testimonies and sexual harassment.

Using the Framework Method, the words and phrases of interest were analyzed for codes. The Framework Method allowed me to approach the data through a thematic analysis and qualitative content analysis lenses (Gale et. al., 2013). As coding is often referred to as a decision making process dependent on the context of individual research (Elliot, 2018) this approach will allow for the identification of commonalities and differences in my data before establishing relationships between codes that draw description conclusions in the form of generalized themes. The development of codes serve as the method of categorizing the perceived ideas and beliefs represented in each article, which creates a pivotal link between collected data and the ability to develop a theory which explains said data (Chun Tie, Birks, & Francis, 2019).

Words and phrases were coded for tone, historical meaning, societal held stereotypes, and interpreted personal beliefs to reveal the underlying messages. As I entered the data collection and analysis process with no previous expectations of themes I would find, I employed an inductive approach in my methods which allowed for the data to create the codes and themes throughout the process.

After completion of code creation, codes were grouped into overarching themes using a latent approach of the Framework Method. A latent approach prioritized analyzing the subtext and underlying messages in the data that would reveal the assumptions and social context associated with the analyzed tweets.

Results: New York Times Articles

These themes serve as a generalized understanding of language used to describe the Anita Hill testimonies and sexual harassment between October 10th and 12th of 1991. These themes represent the ways in which article authors understand and conceptualize sexual harassment:

1. Authors discussed credibility throughout their articles.

    a. Credibility factors were defined as reputation, past work, upbringing.

2. When authors discussed gender, they categorized sexual harassment as solely a women's issue.

3. Many articles focused on the process of the hearings, and continuously referred to them as dramatic or performative.

4. Authors addressed how the hearings represented a social shift of sexual harassment moving from the private sector to a public one.

5. When articles addressed sexual harassment directly, they referenced it through the lenses of power, privacy, patterned behavior and the law.

6. Many articles took aim at political elites to discredit their behavior, or lever charges of corrupt political motivation against the hearings.

7. Articles discussed who was to blame and whether Hill or Thomas was the real victim in the hearings.

8. Common language used among articles included references to a war or violent battle between Hill and Thomas.

9. References to President Bush only occurred when discussing his choice to nominate Thomas for the Supreme Court seat.

10. Some articles included a strict news lens that only provided general knowledge to the public and no bias or opinion.

11. Authors discussed race as it related to credibility, public perceptions, and outcomes.

12. Authors expressed emotional responses and shared stories through articles.

13. Articles served as space for authors to publish a call to action for readers and political elites.

14.

TABLE 2 Emergent themes among Anita Hill New York Times articles

Theme	Description	Sample Codes	Sample Quote
Authors discussed credibility throughout their articles. a. Credibility factors were defined as reputation, past work, upbringing.	On the dates before, during, and after the hearings, authors of articles relayed information about Hill and Thomas that provided background information about their life, upbringing, past work, and reputation for readers to make judgements on the credibility of Hill and Thomas.	• Crediting/ Discrediting Hill • Crediting/ Discrediting Thomas • Credibility of political elites • Reputation as a factor of credibility • Upbringing as a factor of credibility • Previous work as a factor of credibility	"[Anita Hill's] statements and actions in my presence during the time when she alleges that Clarence Thomas harassed her were totally inconsistent with her current descriptions and are, in my opinion, yet another example of her ability to fabricate the idea that someone was interested in her when in fact no such interests existed."

TABLE 2.a Emergent themes among Anita Hill New York Times articles

Theme	Description	Same Codes	Sample Quote
When authors discussed gender, they categorized sexual harassment as solely a women's issue.	In all discussions of sexual harassment in the articles, authors categorically referred to women as survivors/ victims and men as perpetrators. This represented a disconnect between public understanding and the true range of sexual harassment.	• Women make call for what sexual harassment is • Women as victims, men as perpetrators • Influence of men on female perceptions of case • Men not understanding severity of sexual harassment	"If a test of whether this is sexual harassment rests exclusively on the view of the man, much of that the woman finds offensive will be permitted. If liability were to rest on the woman's opinion, much of what the man does in all innocence would be condemned."
Many articles focused on the process of the hearings, and continuously referred to them as dramatic or performative.	The Hill and Thomas hearings were one of the first instances of a publicized sexual harassment case, exposing the public to language and the reactions of the accused and accuser on a national platform in what was perceived as a dramatic and shocking way.	• Calling for a delay in confirmation vote • Hearings as a spectacle • Hill and Thomas as performers • Hearings as inducing drama	"The event was by turns seamy, surreal and stunning, and was carried on all major networks in its entirety."

TABLE 2.b Emergent themes among Anita Hill New York Times articles cont.

Theme	Description	Sample Codes	Sample Quote
Author's addressed how the hearings represented a social shift of sexual harassment moving from the private sector to a public one.	Discussions of sexual harassment were commonly understood as a private matter until only a few years before the hearings. The public display of the Hill and Thomas case exemplified to authors that this shift to the public sphere was securing itself in society.	• Hearings increasing awareness of sexual harassment • Shift away from it being a "men's' world" • Sexual harassment as a serious issue • Sexual harassment hearings as important • Sexual harassment accusations on public display	"The hearing capped a week in which Professor Hill's charges became the leading topic in offices and on university campuses, in restaurants and on street corners, with many women applauding public discussion of a frequently private subject and many men wondering about their own conduct."
When articles addressed sexual harassment directly, they referenced it through the lens of power, patterned behavior, and the law.	Sexual harassment was discussed through legal avenues of addressing and solving the problem. Authors disseminated that sexual harassment was an individual issue solved through law, even though inappropriate behaviors were considered pervasive.	• Mentions of other sexual harassment cases • References to lawyers, court proceedings, or challenges accusers face • Burden of proof on women • Women enduring threats from men for refusing advances	"But I'd like each man to really think, think back to each and every sexual encounter and tell himself he wasn't playing power politics, he wasn't under the influence of a culture that says anything goes for men and women are the objects of the game."

TABLE 2.c Emergent themes among Anita Hill New York Times articles cont.

Themes	Description	Sample Codes	Sample Quote
Many articles took aim at political elites to discredit their behavior, or lever charges of corrupt political motivation against the hearings.	As the hearings unfolded a scale directly involving politicians and the government, authors floated charges that Hill was put in place to disrupt the traditional political system, thus diminishing the allegations of sexual harassment. Further, some authors expressed dissatisfaction with the ways Senators reacted to and handled Hill's accusations.	• Questions of motivations • Hill acting as a political ploy • Insinuation of political agenda • Focus on political elites • Accusing Senate Judiciary Committee of mishandling situation	"Or alternatively, was it possible that [Hill] could have some political agenda or emotional disturbance that would lead to such carefully crafted lies?"
Articles discussed who was to blame and whether Hill or Thomas was the real victim in the hearings.	Thomas was perceived as the victim of a ruthless attack on his reputation, while others argued that Hill was subjected to inappropriate behavior and a biased Senate Judiciary Committee.	• Thomas or Hill as victim • Hearings as damaging for Thomas or Hill • Hurt reputations of Thomas or Hill	"The argument is made that society blames the victim, and the victim of power-leering is a helpless little person, fearful of the spotlight in taking on a big shot. But in today's environment of burning hostility to nominees and candidates, it is the famous political figure who is most helpless— his or her reputation vulnerable to the little person allied to the interests of a powerful, publicity-hit opposition."

TABLE 2. d Emergent themes among Anita Hill New York Times articles cont.

Theme	Description	Sample Codes	Sample Quote
Common language used among articles included references to a war or violent battle between Hill and Thomas.	Authors described Hill and Thomas' actions through the metaphors of stark opposites, fighting to emerge victorious in terms of credibility and results of subsequent hearings.	• Pitting Hill and Thomas against one another • "War" • "Clash" • Thomas and Hill as polar opposites	"Thus did two compelling interesting people clash in the first round of overtime Senate Judiciary Committee hearings. Their stories could not be more opposed, though more needs to be learned on both sides and from corroborating evidence. One or the other is not telling the truth."
References to President Bush only occurred when discussing his choice to nominate Thomas for the Supreme Court seat.	Articles mentioning President Bush only examined the legitimacy of his choices for Thomas as his Supreme Court Nominee or through relaying Bush's statements of support of Thomas in the face of the accusations.	• Questioning President Bush's actions • Reference to President Bush's support or Thomas • Equating White House support for Thomas with President Bush • Focus on President Bush	"I've got strong feelings, but they all end up in support for Clarence Thomas," said Mr. Bush, who drew Judge Thomas out of the seclusion in which he had been weathering the sudden storm over his nomination and brought him to the White House for a high-profile meeting.

TABLE 2.e Emergent themes among Anita Hill New York Times articles cont.

Theme	Description	Sample Codes	Sample Quote
Some articles included a strict news lens that only provided general knowledge to the public and no bias or opinion.	The New York Times is first and foremost a news organization with responsibility to inform the public of political events. Objective articles from the news sections therefore included key dates and times of hearings.	• Objective framing • Providing general knowledge for the public	"The Senate Judiciary Committee's confirmation hearings on Judge Clarence Thomas's nomination to the Supreme Court will begin at 10 A.M. today."
Authors discussed race as it related to credibility and privilege.	As both Hill and Thomas are black, articles included notes on skin color and the possibility of impacting the public and the Senate Judiciary Committee's perceptions of credibility because of privilege or racial biases.	• Focus on race • Race as a point of privilege • Race as a credibility factor	"Professor Hill showed that it is perfectly plausible for a young black woman, her job and future far from secure, to avoid rather than report an obnoxious superior."
Authors expressed emotional responses and shared stories through articles.	Articles served as a platform for authors to share either their own experiences of sexual harassment or stories of other women of or of who they knew personally.	• A show of solidarity • Personal story of • sexual harassment • Sexual harassment as pervasive and effecting many women • Reference to emotional response or difficulty watching hearings	"I knew what she had felt, what she was afraid she would feel if she testified, because I could feel it too. I felt soiled by the time they broke for lunch."

TABLE 2.f Emergent themes among Anita Hill New York Times articles cont.

Theme	Description	Sample Codes	Sample Quote
Articles served as space for authors to publish a call to action for readers and political elites.	To sway public or political opinion, authors used articles as a platform to suggest or advise action they believed needed to be taken.	• Calling for Thomas to step down • Calling for a new judge to be nominated • Calling for Senate to act a certain way	"Is the United States Senate capable of meeting its responsibility and going what we ought to do? I urge the Senate to defer the vote on Judge Thomas's nomination."

Discussion/ Analysis: New York Times Articles

Authors used factors of reputation, past work, and upbringing to discuss credibility of Hill and Ford.

The credibility of either Hill or Thomas was discussed heavily in most the articles examined for this study. This idea connected authors of all opinions and sides of the hearings, and served as the major thematic finding of the analysis. Sexual harassment is often discussed through the lens of figuring out who to believe, and just like the Blasey-Ford and Kavanaugh hearings, credibility was amplified as both senators and citizens chose who they thought was the credible source.

Articles with a more objective lens recounted the past work and upbringing of Thomas and Hill to relay themes of credibility to their audience. Friends, former co-workers, and family members were asked by *The New York Times* to provide quotes on Hill and Thomas' past behaviors, work ethics, and political beliefs, so that as readers learned more about Hill or Thomas, they could use that information to inform their credibility decisions.

Like the credibility discussions of Blasey-Ford and Kavanaugh, the credibility theme was split into crediting or discrediting Hill, as well as crediting or discrediting Thomas. Those who attempted to credit Hill spoke of her past work, her previously stated comments involving her discomfort around Thomas, and her schooling; while those who wrote to discredit Hill cited her past ability to fabricate narratives, her apparent admiration and closeness with Thomas, and the timing of her coming forward. One author in an attempt to discredit hill stated:

> "[Anita Hill's] statements and actions in my presence during the time when she alleges that Clarence Thomas harassed her were totally inconsistent with her current descriptions and are, in my opinion, yet another example of her ability to fabricate the idea that someone was interested in her when in fact no such interests existed," (Doggett, 1991).

Again, by arguing that Hill was skilled in fabrication, and that they perceived her allegations as inconsistent, the author makes arguments that discredit Hill and presents them to an audience.

Those who credited Thomas often took the approach of citing his reputation, his past work with other women, and his employment at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, of which handled work place sexual harassment claims. Those who discredited Thomas focused on his inadequate qualifications, harsh past statements about women, and behavior in college.

Focusing on how credibility is discussed is important, as sexual harassment cases often unfold on a legal stage, where one individual is declared guilty or not guilty of the accusations brought against them; for that charge to be set, a judge and the jurors need to be convinced of credibility. Although Hill's accusations against Thomas didn't unfold in front of a formal court, the Senate Judiciary Committee resembled a judge, and the

watching American citizens acted as the jurors, basing their perceptions on credibility.

Senators and citizens alike took sides, influenced by cultural understandings of sexual

harassment, reliance on past reputations, and ultimately what is presented to them in the

news.

When authors discussed gender, they categorized sexual harassment as solely a women's issue.

When articles addressed sexual harassment directly, women constituted every

reference to a victim and men made up the references to perpetrators. Whether the

connotations around sexual harassment were dismissive or relaying the seriousness of the

issue, all authors referenced sexual harassment in a gendered way. This reflects the

societal understanding at the time that only women are victims to sexual harassment and

only men are perpetrators.

When authors took it one step farther to dismiss sexual harassment, they often

discussed the ability for women to manipulate what they called the "innocent" acts of

men and turn them into dangerous accusations that would ruin a man's reputation.

Authors discussed the fear men felt in approaching women due to possible sexual

harassment allegations, instead of focusing on how the actions and gendered expectations

of men perpetuate a culture of sexual harassment.

In articles that stressed sexual harassment as a serious issue, authors still

referenced sexual harassment as a women's' issue. However, they framed the topic

around how many women must unfairly endure inappropriate behavior in the workplace.

Further, some argued that men, including the men serving on the Senate Judiciary

Committee, are incapable of understanding the true implications and consequences of

sexual harassment, due to gendered implications:

> "If a test of whether this is sexual harassment rests exclusively on the view of the
> man, much of that the woman finds offensive will be permitted. If liability were to
> rest on the woman's opinion, much of what the man does in all innocence would
> be condemned, (Cohen, 1991).

This author indicated that perceptions of sexual harassment differ dramatically based on

gender, where men excuse their behavior, and women condemn it, demonstrating exactly

the gendered divide that splits the understanding of what sexual harassment looks like.

This theme is important to note as it encapsulates a stereotype that has since been

negated by the #MeToo Movement and other feminist efforts. Sexual harassment and

violence are not only women's' issues, but impact the lives of men every day; the 2010

National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence survey found that 40.2 percent of gay

men, 47.4 percent of bisexual men, and 20.8 percent of heterosexual men reported

enduring sexual violence at one point in their life (Walters, Chen, & Breiding, 2013). In

comparison, #MeToo tweets that were analyzed referenced survivors of sexual

harassment as binary "men and women" on a number of occasions, symbolizing the shift

towards broader understanding of sexual harassment.

<u>Many articles focused on the process of the hearings, and continuously referred to them as dramatic or performative.</u>

Like the Blasey-Ford and Kavanaugh hearings, comments in articles that focused on the testimonies and the overall process often indicated that the televised hearings appeared performative and dramatic. One key difference between the time periods, however, is the factors that contribute a performative aspect. In the case of Blasey-Ford and Kavanaugh, the emotions, outbreaks, and reactions of key figures throughout the hearings sparked discussion of performance and drama. In the case of Hill and Thomas, the televised hearings exposed American citizens to language around a topic that was previously private: sexual harassment. The hearings appeared dramatic to viewers because most had never seen a sexual harassment story unfold in such a public way, in which both Hill and Thomas had to fight for their credibility and reputation. Discussing sex and sexual harassment in such a serious and high level setting was a new phenomenon, and thus appeared, as one author described it: "... by turns seamy, surreal and stunning, and was carried on all major networks in its entirety. (Quindlen, 1991). Conversations around sexual harassment were transforming from private, secretive events, i.e. "seamy" and "surreal" and therefore made the hearings appear dramatic or "stunning" to viewers.

References to the process in the case of Hill and Thomas focused much less on the F.B.I investigation of the time, and more on the actual testimonies. When the federal agency was mentioned, it was often in reference to writers criticizing political elites or the Senate Judiciary Committee for not acting effectively enough. This could be due to how an initial F.B.I. investigation had already been conducted by the time the analyzed

articles were published, and therefore writers turned their focus towards an issue they viewed as more pertinent at the time, which was the behavior of senators and the subsequent way they influenced the process of the hearings.

Other articles discussed how senators agreed to postpone the original confirmation vote for Thomas to hold hearings for Hill to testify in front of the Committee. In one instance, it was reported that Democrats threatened to vote against confirming Thomas if the Republicans on the Committee did not agree to a hearing. In this way, the process theme captures the politicized way sexual harassment often plays out, with opposing sides, often formed along party lines, attempting to get their preferred ruling. In this case, that meant Democrats securing a place for Hill to testify, reflecting the party's inclusion of sexual harassment as serious in their platform.

<u>Author's addressed how the hearings represented a social shift of sexual harassment moving from the private sector to a public one.</u>

As discussed earlier, sexual harassment was previously understood as a private issue, and it wasn't until the 1970s and 1980s it began to shift to the public sphere (Sacco, 2019). As this hearing occurred in 1991, it was one of the first instances of American citizens seeing the reality of this cultural shift. The hearings were televised on easily accessible sources such as C-SPAN, NBC, CBS, PBS, the Cable News Network, and the Courtroom Television Network. The accessibility of the hearings meant Americans across the nation tuning in to a public conversation.

Additionally, articles referenced discussions of Hill and Thomas occurring in very public spaces:

"The hearing capped a week in which Professor Hill's charges became the leading topic in offices and on university campuses, in restaurants and on street corners, with many women applauding public discussion of a frequently private subject and many men wondering about their own conduct," (Gross, 1991).

This quote, like many others, connected multiple themes, including gender and private discussions turning public. The author felt it important enough to note that conservations about Hill and her accusations were happening in places such as offices, campuses, restaurants and more, because they are settings in which discussions of sexual harassment had never happened before. The public display of Hill's accusations served as an example of this shift in understanding. This opened the door for individuals to discuss sexual harassment as a truly serious and pervasive issue, that can and should be dealt with on a legal and social scale.

When articles addressed sexual harassment directly, they referenced it through the lens of patterned behavior and law.

Articles that spoke explicitly of sexual harassment fell under a myriad of categories. Directly related to the hearings, some articles referenced Hill's accusations or Thomas' patterned behavior with other women. Other articles that spoke about sexual harassment commented on other legal cases of sexual harassment, and the hardship placed on women to come forward and prove their allegations.

When discussing frequency of sexual harassment, articles relayed the persistency of sexual harassment as a real issue to readers. Polls taken by *The New York Times* and used in articles featured statistics on how many women had endured sexual harassment in their lifetime, as well as how many individuals had reported their encounters and had something done about it. One article, titled "A Case Study of Sexual Harassment"

reported that in 1990, the E.E.O.C. only filed suit in 50 of 5,694 received sexual harassment complaints. This reflects how sexual harassment was often handled through private mediation, where women are asked to sign non-disclosure agreements in exchange for a fiscal retribution. This shows that sexual harassment perpetrators continue to live on with little to no consequences outside of financial payment. Framing sexual harassment in a legal sense portrays to readers that sexual harassment is solved through court cases, not societal change.

Other articles that focused less on the legal consequences of sexual harassment commented on the perpetual objectification of women's' bodies for the pleasure of men:

> "But I'd like each man to really think, think back to each and every sexual encounter and tell himself he wasn't playing power politics, he wasn't under the influence of a culture that says anything goes for men and women are the objects of the game," (Warrock, 1991).

Some authors expressed their dissatisfaction with the status quo by referencing how the men make such frequent comments on the clothes and appearance of women in the workplace that women "better get used to it." By citing patterned behavior of men, the authors of the articles inform their readers that they believe sexual harassment is pervasive and serious.

Many articles took aim at political elites to discredit their behavior, or lever charges of corrupt political motivation against the hearings.

The Hill and Thomas hearings did not play out in a traditional manner. The testimonies were broadcasted and brought to a committee, instead of a judge. It was expected for discussions of the political elites involved to occur, as their decision to confirm or reject Thomas was the projected end result of the entire hearings. Yet some

articles were framed entirely around discrediting the senators involved or making charges of corrupt political motivations.

One author stated: "Or alternatively, was it possible that [Hill] could have some political agenda or emotional disturbance that would lead to such carefully crafted lies?" (Gross, 1991). This quote is one example of how Hill faced accusations by some to be working under the influence of political figures attempting to use her as a tool to secure an outcome without a confirmation for Thomas. These claims discredited her, and by extent, sexual harassment. By dismissing Hill as a political ploy, authors minimized the credibility of Hill's accusations and mitigated potential for her sexual harassment claims to be taken seriously.

Additionally, by focusing on the actions of the political elites, including President Bush and the senators on the Senate Judiciary Committee, authors took the responsibility of sexual harassment off the publics' shoulders. By framing articles around what senators should have done or should do, readers might interpret that sexual harassment claims are only settled by those in higher power, and that as long sexual harassment only exists on their television, they do not have to be concerned. Instead, society should know that the way they discuss sexual harassment, their own beliefs, and even who they choose to believe privately impact the future of sexual harassment in our culture.

Articles discussed who was to blame and whether Hill or Thomas was the real victim in the hearings.

Beyond discussing Hill and Thomas through their credibility, articles also commented on which of the two testifiers was the victim of a harmful turn of events. The hearings were repeatedly referred to as damaging for all parties involved, because they

hurt the reputations and livelihoods of both Hill and Thomas. Thomas faced a potential

ruining of his career, while Hill faced death threats. Some writers chose to discuss

whether they believed Thomas or Hill was the innocent victim undeserving of

consequences.

Those who viewed Hill as the victim of the situation referenced the repeated

sexual harassment behaviors in society, and cited Hill as an honest and undeserving

woman. Those who argued Thomas was the victim viewed Hill as a political ploy, or an

example of women taking sexual harassment claims too far, attempting ruining the career

and reputation of an honorable man. One author stated:

> "The argument is made that society blames the victim, and the victim of power-
> leering is a helpless little person, fearful of the spotlight in taking on a big shot.
> But in today's environment of burning hostility to nominees and candidates, it is
> the famous political figure who is most helpless— his or her reputation vulnerable
> to the little person allied to the interests of a powerful, publicity-hit opposition,"
> (Safire, 1991).

This author dismissed the idea that Hill was the "helpless little" victim society

was making her out to be. Instead, Thomas was the "famous politician" who was helpless

because his reputation was being ruined for something that was "publicity-hit."

In addition to viewing Hill or Thomas as victims, authors this theme also highlighted

large amounts of assigning blame. Authors in favor of Thomas accused Hill of coming

forward at a suspicious time, and blamed her for bringing ruin to her reputation as well as

Thomas'.

This theme had the potential of damaging the overall reputation of sexual

harassment claims and the survivors who come forward. Authors conveyed to the reader

that when survivors come forward with their stories and accusations of sexual

harassment, that society, and those who are supposed to be in positions of power to help

them, may not inherently be on their side, and instead may seek out a way to blame the survivors themselves. In fact, when authors blamed Hill, they discouraged other survivors from acting or speaking out against their own endured harassment.

<u>Some articles included a strict news lens that only provided general knowledge to the public and no bias or opinion.</u>

Just like with some tweets analyzed for the Blasey-Ford and Kavanaugh portion of this study, some articles analyzed served only an objective news purpose. This included articles that stated the television channels that were scheduled to show the testimonies, released the names of other accusers of Thomas, and described how the Senate Judiciary Committee agreed to delay the vote to make time for Hill and Thomas's testimonies. An example of this includes: "The Senate Judiciary Committee's confirmation hearings on Judge Clarence Thomas's nomination to the Supreme Court will begin at 10 A.M. today," (TV Coverage of Thomas Hearings, 1991).

These articles are important, because they informed readers about key information related to the hearings, so that readers could form opinions on their own. It is the responsibility of the media to keep society informed of pressing and important issues, and the coverage of the Hill and Thomas testimonies proves that both the news media and society viewed the hearings as important and influential enough to be covered at a wide extent.

<u>Authors discussed race as it related to credibility and privilege.</u>

Race served as distinguishing and credibility factors in the 1991 Hill and Thomas hearings. Articles noted Hill's time as one of the only black students in her class studying

law at Yale, and her ability to rise through the work environment as a black woman. Some articles noted how Thomas himself used race as a credibility factor to boost himself above the committee and Hill, by claiming that her accusations resembled a "lynching," a term laced with racial implications.

Articles discussed race when discrediting the Senate Judiciary Committee or men who sexually harass women. Articles noted how "white men" were not able to understand the seriousness of Hills' and all other accusations of sexual harassment. This theme of race privilege highlights the understanding at the time that sexual harassment not only considerably impacts women, but women of color.

<u>Authors expressed emotional responses and shared stories through articles.</u>

Expressions of solidarity and emotion differed slightly from those discussed in the analysis of tweets around Blasey-Ford and Kavanaugh. Article writers discussed solidarity through describing the common ways in which women endure sexual harassment, validating the experiences of women through examples of other sexual harassment cases, language that described men's actions, and vague details about their own experiences of harassment in the workplace. One article wrote in her op-ed submission: "I knew what she had felt, what she was afraid she would feel if she testified, because I could feel it too. I felt soiled by the time they broke for lunch," (Quindlen, 1991). Her commentary provided an example of solidarity, of mutual feelings of discomfort from sexual harassment. By discussing the perceived normalcy of sexual harassment, authors drew attention to the discomfort endured by women while others accepted the inappropriate behavior of men as normal workplace behavior.

When discussing emotions, most authors relayed the emotional behavior or reactions of Thomas and his family members during the testimonies. Authors noted how Thomas felt personally victimized by Hill's accusations, and the threat on his reputation. Authors also relayed the harm Thomas' family felt, through all of the negative attention received in association with the testimonies. By discussing these emotions, writers humanized Thomas and framed him as a victim of an unjust attack.

In this way, the theme of emotion and solidarity represent a wide spectrum of beliefs shared through the articles. While solidarity was used to increase awareness of sexual harassment and validate the claims of Hill, discussion of the emotional turmoil Thomas endured validated him and his supporters.

Articles served as space for authors to publish a call to action for readers and political elites.

The New York Times articles featured much less instances of calls to action in their language. In one of the most obvious cases, an op-ed submission called for Thomas to step aside and for President Bush to nominate another judge for the Supreme Court seat. This obvious call to action mentioned very little about sexual harassment and instead focused on discrediting Thomas by pointing out his lack of pertinent qualifications. Oher call to actions looked the same, lacking a mention of sexual harassment but nevertheless asking for Thomas to be dismissed: "Is the United States Senate capable of meeting its responsibility and going what we ought to do? I urge the Senate to defer the vote on Judge Thomas's nomination," (Comments by Senators on Thomas Nomination, 1991). Many of the other calls to action were along the same lines; articles quoted senators or other political elites who were calling for the Senate Judiciary

Committee to delay the confirmation vote or act a certain way on other parts of the confirmation process.

None of the articles examined that focused on the topic of sexual harassment included a direct call for action for citizens of political elites to follow. Instead, they made their point clear that sexual harassment was a pertinent issue, and that the Senate Judiciary Committee should have acted a different way. And it can be argued that the Senate Judiciary Committee heard these complaints, as just three years later, Congress passed the Violence Against Women that strengthened the investigations and prosecution of sex offenses.

<p style="text-align:center;">A Comparison of Credibility</p>

To enhance the findings and analysis of this study, the most common theme of credibility was quantified to act as a juxtaposition factor between the Blasey-Ford/Kavanaugh and the Hill/Thomas data. The comparison of language and codes across such different platforms implies that differences in deeper meanings of themes could be related to the structures of each media: publishing tweets on Twitter is open to all with an internet connection and an account, while journalists and op-ed contributors have to develop connections and work with *the New York Times* in order for their articles to be published. To combat this, a quantitative analysis of the occurrence of credibility codes in both data sets of tweets and New York Times articles.

This study seeks to understand if the #MeToo Movement and Twitter have displayed an observable difference in language usage around sexual harassment to help understand how societal conceptualizations of sexual harassment have or have not changed. By comparing the occurrence of the credibility codes: "discrediting Hill/

crediting Thomas, discrediting Thomas/ crediting Hill, discrediting Blasey-Ford/ crediting Kavanaugh, and discrediting Kavanaugh/ crediting Blasey Ford," this study is able to deduce a primary conclusion of how the #MeToo Movement has instigated change.

Data

The Blasey-Ford and Kavanaugh data set included 291 publically available tweets found from an advanced Twitter search from September 25, 2018 to September 29, 2018 that included the word(s): "#MeToo," "Ford," and/or "Kavanaugh." Of the 291 tweets, 23 tweets featured one or more codes of discrediting Ford or crediting Kavanaugh, while 73 tweets included one or more codes discrediting Kavanaugh or crediting Ford.

The Hill and Thomas data set included 30 articles published in *The New York Times* between October 10, 1991 and October 12, 1991 that included the words "Anita Hill." Of the 30 analyzed articles, 19 articles included codes crediting Thomas or discrediting Hill, while 14 articles featured codes crediting Hill or discrediting Thomas.

TABLE 3 Quantitative results of "credibility" code analysis

Data Set	Codes	Prevalence	Total percentage of articles featuring codes
Tweets	Discrediting Blasey-Ford/ Crediting Kavanaugh	23 of 291	7.9%
Tweets	Discrediting Kavanaugh/ Crediting Blasey-Ford	73 of 291	25.09%
NYT Articles	Discrediting Hill/ Crediting Thomas	19 of 30	63.33%
NYT Articles	Discrediting Thomas/ Crediting Hill	14 of 30	46.67%

The codes discrediting Blasey-Ford or crediting Kavanaugh constituted 7.9% of the total tweets analyzed, while codes of discrediting Kavanagh or crediting Blasey-Ford made up 25.09%. Together, these codes represented 32.99% of the total tweets analyzed for this study. The other 67.01% of the tweets consisted of a combination of the other codes discussed earlier. In contrast, the codes of discrediting Hill or crediting Thomas amounted to 63.33% of articles, while codes of discrediting Thomas or crediting Hill were found in 46.67% of articles.

Results indicate that the tweets from 2018 do not include more references to crediting Blasey-Ford or discrediting Kavanaugh than references to crediting Hill or discrediting Thomas in the 1991 *New York Times* articles on percentage basis. However, the occurrences of discrediting Blasey-Ford or crediting Kavanaugh were much less frequent in the 2018 tweets than instances of discrediting Hill or crediting Thomas in the 1991 articles. This indicates that since 1991, public language and understandings have shifted away from solely crediting or believing the man involved in sexual harassment, or blatantly dismissing the female who brings her story forward. The decrease in discrediting the female accuser or crediting the male accused dropped by 55.43%. This reflects new behavior of accepting and believing survivors who come forward with their story.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

This study sought to understand the influence #MeToo and Twitter has on the public's language surrounding sexual harassment or violence. Past research has suggested that Twitter can serve as a counter public space, where users are able to share their messages and find other like-minded individuals to contribute to a movement's momentum. In this case, Twitter served as a space for survivors of sexual harassment, supporters of #MeToo, and others to discuss their beliefs around the Blasey-Ford and Kavanaugh testimonies of 2018. These Twitter users discussed credibility, gender, race, and the government; shared their own stories of harassment in a display of solidarity; expressed emotions; shared news articles; and wrote calls to action to fellow Twitter users and politicians.

Many of these themes were found in the language published in *The New York Times* in 1991. Authors used their articles to discuss sexual harassment, credibility, and gender; provide the public with general knowledge of the hearings; note the shift in societal standards around sexual harassment; and called the hearings dramatic spectacles.

The data collection of the two mediums demonstrated themes evident in two contrasting mediums. *The New York Times* is an exclusive platform, that does not publish every submission they receive and therefore does not share all messages and perspectives as easily as Twitter. On the other hand, Twitter is open to the public, where any who make an account can comment and share messages, yet they represent many similar

themes. Authors in *The New York Times* and Twitter users both highlighted the ways they saw society shifting around the respective hearings as the topic of sexual harassment was brought from the sidelines into the limelight of public discussion. Both data sets reflected a gendered perspective on sexual harassment; the 1991 articles used heavily gendered language to label sexual harassment as a strictly women's issue, in terms of sexual harassment being a practice women must endure. In contrast, the 2018 tweets used gendered language to reflect a time of women uprising and challenge to the status quo of sexual harassment, where women demanded accountability and found strength in numbers.

In both data sets, the hearings were tied into other time-period relevant political events, with articles referencing President Bush and tweets featuring comments on President Trump. One difference in that category, however, was the frequent comparison between Trump and Kavanaugh as perpetrators, a connection not present in any *New York Times'* articles. That issue alone reflects an entire subcategory of potential future research examining President Trump's influence on sexual harassment perceptions in America.

The data comparison also revealed an increase in call to action performances on Twitter in 2018 in comparison to the 1991 articles. Authors of articles rarely made suggestions or claims on how they believed citizens or politicians should respond to the hearings, while in contrast, many Twitter users joined the #MeToo conversation around the 2018 hearings by publishing phone numbers of senators or using hashtags to urge others to believe women or believe Blasey-Ford. This could be due to professional journalistic factors that limit the author's ability to be biased and state a call for action in

their articles. However, other authors, such as those who wrote opinion pieces, had free reign to make these calls but did not at the same scale of users on Twitter. While this study is unable at this time to provide concrete evidence that #MeToo and Twitter were the only influencing factors in this shift; further research could examine those discrepancies and find further answers.

Finally, more language discrediting Hill, the survivor of the sexual harassment, was distinctly present over language discrediting Thomas in the 1991 *New York Times* articles. During this time, on that platform, this normalized standard of language added to the burden of proof survivors faced when coming forward with their stories: not only did survivors need to convince judges or senators, but they needed to convince the entire nation that they endured trauma. This places a heavy burden and responsibility on survivors, who have already endured too much.

Later, on Twitter, language discrediting Blasey-Ford was still present. A quantitative analysis revealed that *The New York Times* articles consisted of proportionately more language crediting Hill than that of language crediting Blasey-Ford on Twitter. Yet, the amount of language discrediting Blasey-Ford / crediting Kavanaugh was predominately less on Twitter in 2018 than that of language discrediting Hill / crediting Thomas in the 1991 articles.

Therefore, this preliminary data comparison between the 1991 articles and 2018 Tweets points to a societal shift away from immediately placing the burden of proof on the survivor. Instead, society looked to the qualifications and credibility of the perpetrator, and demanded the same amount of accountability. This preliminary conclusion is fuel for further research, where an increased amount of time and less

limitations could explore the extent to which society has in fact shifted on a more detailed level. This research serves as an introductory baseline understanding that Twitter reflects some change in perception of sexual harassment in society, that can be used in future studies as a stepping off point.

The length of this study limited the amount of data that was able to be analyzed, and therefore only produced an introductory hypothesis of the ways #MeToo Movement on Twitter has shifted the narratives around sexual harassment. Further research could expand on this hypothesis, to continue to analyze the millions of #MeToo Tweets that exist today, as well as an understanding of language used around sexual harassment prior to the #MeToo Movement. Building from these preliminary findings, further research could analyze separate socio-economic factors that may have contributed to society's narrative shifts to fully understand the extent of Twitter's and #MeToo's influence.

The #MeToo Movement and Twitter have opened a platform and mindset for this change to occur. Twitter has evolved into a space for individuals to share their stories, and the 'MeToo' hashtag has provided an organizational tool for users to see each other's stories, extend empathy, and find solidarity amongst others in a new way. In the case of Anita Hill, thousands of men, women, and survivors took time out of their day to write and send cards, letters, and telegrams to Hill at her University of Oklahoma Office. Hill recounts the letters containing topics of expressing gratitude for her testimonies, threats upon her life, and sharing their own stories of sexual harassment or class, race, and gender inequalities. In a submission to TIME magazine in 2011, Hill describes that since 1991, she had received more than 25,000 letters (Hill, 2011). Hill notes that some were critical of her and her actions, and some letters even contained threats. Yet most the

letters offered support, expressed gratitude, or contained personal stories and experiences of other sexual harassment survivors. This is substantial, and incredibly important; Hill's testimony was powerful enough for spark the same reaction of extending empathy and solidarity that #MeToo is attempting to foster. The key difference between Hill's letters and the public space Twitter provides, is that those who share their stories, or express their gratitude, are sharing with more than just one individual person. They are sharing with their entire online community as well as complete strangers. This provides more opportunity for inspiration, empathy, and healing.

The #MeToo Movement has projected and supported the stories of survivors, encouraging empathy and sparking validation for survivors of sexual harassment everywhere. As this validation spreads, I hypothesize that this demand for persecutor accountability will grow, and support for survivors coming forward will pair with judges, politicians, and civilians believing stories without requiring an unfair burden of trauma performance and responsibility on the survivor.

For this to happen, language must continue to evolve and conversations must be reframed to foster inclusive, empathetic discussions of sexual violence and its survivors. A shift in language away from blaming survivors and towards holding perpetrators accountable will provide individual survivors a means of access to healing while also stimulating society to disrupts systems that allow for sexual violence to persist. By tackling high levels of unemployment, domestic violence laws, mental health and general health care access, and other areas, society limits the factors that create violent behavior (Risk Factors, n.d.). An increase in vocal survivors and allies will hold lawmakers

accountable, put issues of sexual violence into political discussions as an important and pressing topic to address.

Everyone, including academics studying sexual harassment or the #MeToo Movement, politicians, activists, and citizens must be introspective about the language they are using when discussing sexual harassment. Who are they placing the blame on? What are they asking of the survivor? What do their words mean in terms of reflecting a larger cultural understanding? These questions are vital if the language around sexual harassment and #MeToo is going to continue to change for the better, to support survivors and work towards ending sexual violence.

This research demonstrates how Twitter can work as a platform to accelerate these changes. Burke wrote in a Twitter post: "[…] The movement didn't' *create* the concept of speaking out. It just allowed people to hear us better as a chorus and not a solo," (TaranaBurke, 2018). By connecting survivors, hosting messages of empathy, and linking messages from around the world, Twitter serves as a stage for that chorus to sing for all to hear.

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