

**Contextualizing Gender**  
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**Lecture - 40**  
**The Legacy of #MeToo and Time's Up Movements**

Welcome dear friends. In the previous module we had analyzed some of the important theoretical dimensions that help us to understand the origins and functioning of a social movement. We also saw how a postmodernist approach to social movements, can be inclusive of cross-cultural heterogeneous participation of people from all walks of life.

In this module, we will look at the MeToo movement and how the strong digital presence became a powerful force, where women around the world found space to speak freely about sexual harassment and abuse in order to find support.

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**#MeToo as a Moment of Reckoning**

- On 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017, the hashtag #MeToo spread across the world.
- The movement came alive after American actress Alyssa Milano tweeted a request to her followers: “If you’ve been sexually harassed or assaulted write ‘me too’ as a reply to this tweet.”
- The response to this post on Twitter was overwhelming. Within 24 hours, her tweet generated thousands of replies, comments and retweets, and inspired thousands more original posts on social media, with women and men from around the world sharing personal stories.

Source: Twitter

1:17 PM · 15 Oct 2017

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The hashtag #MeToo spread across the world on 15th of October 2017. It came alive after American actress Alyssa Milano tweeted a request to her followers; “if you have been sexually harassed or assaulted write MeToo as a reply to this tweet.” The response to this post on Twitter was overwhelming. Within a span of 24 hours her tweet generated thousands of replies, comments and retweets and inspired thousands more original posts on social media with women and also men from around the world sharing personal stories.

The celebrities who immediately responded include Lady Gaga, Viola Davis, Reese Witherspoon and Evan Rachel Wood, but many women who were not household names also spoke out. Nurses, teachers, engineers, florists, waitresses, students, mothers and daughters, sisters and wives, people from all background.

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- Some opened up for the first time about being raped. Others shared their experiences of fending off aggressive co-workers and losing jobs.
- In the weeks after Milano's tweet, the #MeToo movement, which the activist Tarana Burke had originally created more than a decade earlier, became a widespread battle cry for those seeking to show that sexual harassment is not an isolated incident, and nor is it rare in any part of the world.
- The results were far-reaching — dozens of powerful men accused, many of them toppled, and a handful were criminally charged.

Alyssa Milano  
Source: bgr.com/entertainment

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Some opened up for the first time about being raped. Others shared their experiences of fending off aggressive co workers and sometimes even losing their jobs. In the weeks after Milano's tweet the MeToo movement, which the activist Tarana Burke had originally created more than a decade earlier, became a widespread battle cry for those seeking to show that sexual harassment is not an isolated incident and nor is it rare in any part of the world.

The results were far reaching - dozens of powerful men accused, many of them toppled and a handful were criminally charged. The flood of participation in MeToo movement reaffirms publicly just how widespread sexual assault and harassment actually are. Most victims and survivors know the offender and significantly, most also feel that such experiences are routine and unfortunately normalized. Such a response is indicative of the continued failure to hear and to take the survivors seriously when they speak out.


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- Sexual violence is an incredibly polarizing subject. \*
- On the one hand, sexual violence can incite outrage and moral indignation from the public and politicians alike. On the other hand, survivors who speak out about sexual violence routinely face scrutiny from their friends, family, police and the public.
- Many are accused of lying about their experiences, and others for not being 'authentic' victims or traumatized enough.
- Some are blamed for being assaulted: that they were 'asking for it'. (Loney-Howes, 2019)

\* Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019. Mapping the Emergence of #MeToo. In *#MeToo and the Politics of Social Change*. Palgrave Macmillan.



Source: The Guardian



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Sexual violence is an incredibly polarizing subject. On the one hand sexual violence can incite outrage and moral indignation from the public and politicians alike and on the other hand survivors who speak out about sexual violence routinely face scrutiny from their friends, family, police and the public.


Many are accused of lying about their experiences and others for not being authentic victims or traumatized enough. Some are blamed for being assaulted that they were somehow 'asking for it.' Feminist scholars have long sought to challenge these views along with the assumptions or claim that rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment are the products of random acts of individual men who are regarded somehow as sick or social deviants.

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- Milano's post on Twitter came in the wake of a string of sexual harassment allegations against high-profile Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein.
- This news story was published by journalists Meghan Twohey and Jodi Kantor in *The New York Times* in 2017.
- Along with same post, Milano also said: "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" (Milano, 2015).
- #MeToo later drove the development of more tangible activist movements around the world.



From Kantor and Twohey's article on NY Times.  
Source: Mark Lennihan



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Milano's post on Twitter came in the wake of a string of sexual harassment allegations against high profile Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein. This news story was published by journalists Megan Twohey and Jodi Kantor in The New York Times in 2017. Along with same post, Milano also asked "if all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote MeToo as a status we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem."

MeToo later drove the development of a more tangible activist movement around the world. In the Weinstein case over 80 women in the film industry accuse the American film producer Harvey Weinstein of sexual abuse. Shortly afterwards he was dismissed from the Weinstein company and expelled from the academy of motion picture arts and sciences.

In February 2020, he was found guilty of 3rd degree rape and of criminal sexual act and was sentenced to 23 years in prison. The following video shows Alyssa Milano's reflection on the emergence of MeToo movement and the impact, it has had around the world.

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On Speaking Out

- Milano's interview held in 2019 with *The View*.
- It describes how she publicly shared her experience of being sexually assaulted at a movie set.

Source: [The View \[YouTube\]](#)

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This interview describes how she has publicly shared her experience of being sexually assaulted at a movie set.

“Yesterday mark the 2-year anniversary of the MeToo hashtag.

And you helped that to go viral, but yesterday you told I am sorry on Monday you told the story for the first time on the podcast about being sexually assaulted on a movie set.

Yes.

This is the first time you have told that story, what made you want to tell the story now?

I think for a lot of reasons first of all I think.

And you are very brave for telling that story by the way.

Thank you. I think it's very I think it's important for us in positions where we can speak on a platform to show that coming to terms with this and discussing these issues of sexual assault are very hard and they take a lot of years. I mean this has been 25 years this is.

Yeah.

25 years ago, and so much goes into the thought of admitting this not only to the world, but to yourself. And, I have never really been ready for that where I am ready to go inside my own soul and deal with my own sexual assault and the beautiful thing that happened from MeToo is that I have women from all over the world who see me and come over to me and share their stories of sexual assault.

And they have given me the courage to not share only share my stories, but to dive deep inside myself and figure out what that means, to heal and to grow and to continue on the path of moving this movement forward. So, that we can ensure that our children's generation of women and men who are sexually assaulted never have to deal with this again. And, so part of this for me was very personal. But also, what I felt like I needed to do for the women that have shared their stories with me.

That is what MeToo is all about. And the hashtag it does not you do not have to name your accuser, you do not have to say exactly what happened to, you just have to stand in solidarity with other women that have faced this horrible reality.”

She stresses the importance of being ready with one's own self to acknowledge and share the pain. She also says that it is not binding on the survivor to name the abuser nor to detail the incident, but the importance lies in showing solidarity with other women who had to face similar trauma.

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- Milano's initial tweet did not ask women to describe their experiences: instead, it simply asked them to write 'me too' as a status update.
- However, a large number of people chose to add descriptions of their experience/s of sexual harassment or assault.
- This, therefore, leads to the question of why people felt compelled to share their stories, rather than simply posting the #MeToo hashtag.
- Sharing individual experiences allowed women to relate to one another and the resulting collective consciousness helps to reframe one's understanding of the world. (Gleeson & Tuner, 2019)



Alyssa Milano on The View  
Source: The View Talk Show (ABC)



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Sharing individual experiences allowed women to relate to one another and the resulting collective consciousness helps to reframe one's understanding of the world. One major reason for this is that reading or listening to individual experiences encourages more survivors to speak out. Their vulnerability with feelings of pain and confusion becomes shared with a resounding "Me Too."

This call for accountability is supported by an element of safety in the online space because by tagging the post on social media with #MeToo, a person is not the first to share their story, they are both comforted and protected by the words of others.


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**#MeToo as a Digital Feminist Campaign**

- The #MeToo movement initiated an online 'call-out-culture' prompting discussions on feminists using digital media technologies.
- Scholars highlight the importance of discursive actions online which can transform power relations and social structures in the context of gender (Mendes & Ringrose, 2019).
- The hashtag movements were initially disregarded as "easy", "banal" or "low-intensity" forms of resistance that cannot impact 'real-world' changes. But this is quickly challenged by extensive research which highlighted tangible and 'visible' transformations. (Keller et al., 2018)



Source: alamy.com



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The MeToo movement initiated an online call out culture prompting discussions on feminists using digital media technologies. Scholars highlight the importance of discursive actions online which can transform power relations and social structures in the context of gender.

The hashtag movements were initially disregarded as easy, banal or low intensity forms of resistance that cannot impact real world changes. But this is quickly challenged by extensive research which highlighted tangible and visible transformations. MeToo has resulted in initiating widespread conversations on topics such as the need for consent, sex education, and masculinity, all of which are shown to have material consequences on women's lives.

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- What began as an outrage and a sense of anger at the pervasiveness of rape culture eventually questioned and challenged the basic social structures that deny recognition for many survivors.
- So it is important not merely to investigate what people are contributing to the hashtag, but their experiences of participation itself. (Mendes & Ringrose, 2019)
- An affective turn in contemporary scholarship and discussions on gender demonstrate the impact of being vocal in the online platforms.
- Therefore, while #MeToo alone will not end sexual violence, it is part of the combat that challenges normative gender and sexual power relations offering new possibilities.

Tarana Burke  
Source: chicagotribune.com

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What began as an outrage and a sense of anger at the pervasiveness of rape culture eventually questioned and challenged the basic social structures that deny recognition for many survivors.

So, it is important not merely to investigate what people are contributing to the hashtag, but their experiences of participation itself. An effective turn in contemporary scholarship and discussions on gender demonstrate the impact of being vocal in the online platforms.


Therefore, while MeToo alone will not end sexual violence it is part of the combat that challenge normative gender and sexual power relations offering new possibilities. In other words, MeToo played a critically important role in making visible the structural connections of sexism and violence, making them impossible to ignore with the persistence of continued consciousness raising.




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### The Politics of the Personal

- When second-wave feminists declared that ‘the personal is political’, they were exposing the previously concealed reality based on the subjugation of women. (Loney-Howes, 2019)
- This famous statement would go on to redefine the meaning of what it means to be political and its role in bringing about social change.
- Voicing the encounter with sexual violence provides recognition of personal experiences and an opportunity to articulate the impact of sexual violence.
- Sexual violence is at once deeply personal and intrinsically political, as it is a product of underlying patterns of gender inequality rather than an isolated experience.



Source: medium.com



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When second wave feminists declared that ‘the personal is political,’ they were exposing the previously concealed reality based on the subjugation of women. This famous statement would go on to redefine the meaning of what it means to be political and its role in bringing about social change.

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According to Linda Martin Alcoff, a Latin American philosopher the idea of breaking the silence has been historically a prevalent strategy of anti-rape movements worldwide. Speaking out has been and continues to be considered as the best strategy to educate society about the personal costs of violence.

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- Historically, the tendency of law and order narratives and policing practices were to systematically conceal the political nature of sexual violence. (Mendes, 2015)
- Feminist thinkers were particularly vocal about sexual violence in the 1960s and 1970s.
  - As a result, marital rape became a criminal offence in most Western jurisdictions in the following decades.
  - Another significant gain was the development of rape crisis centers and other sexual assault support agencies.
- The focus on the trauma of sexual violence was significantly enabled by the incorporation of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the American *Diagnostic and Statistics Manual* in 1974. (Herman, 1997)



Source: medium.com



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Historically the tendency of law-and-order narratives and policing practices were to systematically conceal the political nature of sexual violence. Feminist thinkers were particularly vocal about sexual violence in the 1960s and 70s. And as a result, marital rape became a criminal offense in most Western jurisdictions in the following decades. Another significant gain was the development of rape crisis centers and other sexual assault support agencies.


The focus on the trauma of sexual violence was significantly enabled by the incorporation of post-traumatic stress disorder in the American *Diagnostic and Statistics Manual* in 1974. These major changes plays the importance on the interiority or personalization of violence and voicing it in public is transformative, when the personal experience is framed in political terms.

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- The tremendous response to Alyssa Milano's tweet proves that the work of second-wave feminists to make the personal political was far from complete.
- The #MeToo movement resulted in a renewed attention to the intricacies of the interplay between the personal and the political. (Loney-Howes, 2019)
- Its disruptive potential lies in its ability to both challenge the silencing of women's experiences of violence and to redraw the boundaries that determine what is publicly permissible to say about those experiences.
- In this sense, in order for speaking out to be an effective agenda for social change, it must challenge the ways in which public knowledge about sexual violence is constrained.



Source:  
wellcomecollection.org



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The tremendous response to Alyssa Milano's tweet proves that the work of second wave feminists to make the personal political was far from complete. The MeToo movement resulted in a renewed attention to the intricacies of the interplay between the personal and the political. Its disruptive potential lies in its ability to both challenge the silencing of women's experiences of violence and to redraw the boundaries that determine what is publicly permissible to say about those experiences.


In this sense, in order for speaking out to be an effective agenda for social change, it must challenge the ways in which public knowledge about sexual violence is constrained. These constraints are reinforced or contained through political, legal, psychological and cultural institutions.

But within the same political space there are also organizations which aid and empower the survivors of sexual violence. The 'Time's Up' movement was born out of the widespread revelations of the MeToo hashtag and it is primarily aimed at combating workplace sexism at its foundations.


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### #MeToo and Time's Up

- As the #MeToo movement started public conversations about women's issues around the world by elevating a global consciousness on gender, a major cultural shift has been palpable.
- Time's Up is an independent, nonpartisan, non-profit organization that aims to fight gender-based discrimination in the workplace and beyond.
- The group was founded on January 1, 2018, by female Hollywood celebrities in response to 'the Weinstein effect' and the #MeToo movement.
- It was launched with an open letter as a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times*.



Source: timesupnow.org



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As the MeToo movement started, public conversations about women's issues around the world by elevating a global consciousness on gender, a major cultural shift has been palpable. Time's Up is an independent, non-partisan, nonprofit organization that aims to fight gender-based discrimination in the workplace and beyond. The group was founded on the 1st of January 2018 by female Hollywood celebrities in response to the 'Weinstein effect' and the MeToo movement.


It was launched with an open letter as a full-page advertisement in The New York times. Early signatories of this open letter include American television producer and writer Shonda Rhimes, painter Kate Capshaw, actress Reese Witherspoon, Emma Stone and Natalie Portman among other high-profile women from Hollywood entertainment industry. In the open letter, Time's Up stated that its goal was to protect working class women from becoming victims of sexual misconduct.

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- Time's Up collaborated with the American National Women's Law Center to create the Time's Up Legal Defense Fund (TULDF), which provides legal and media support to individuals who have been subjected to workplace sex discrimination.
- The organization appealed to the female celebrities to wear black at the 75<sup>th</sup> Golden Globe Awards in support of the survivors.
- Tarana Burke, who created the MeToo movement in 2006, attended the awards as a guest of honor.
- The phrase "time's up" highlights the 'urgent need' for more sustained engagement with gender inequality.



75<sup>th</sup> Golden Globe Awards, 2018  
Source: Associated Press




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Time's Up collaborated with the American National Women's Law Center to create the Time's Up Legal Defense Fund (TULDF) which provides legal and media support to individuals who have been subjected to workplace sex discrimination. The organization appealed to the female celebrities to wear black at the 75th Golden Globe Awards in support of the survivors.

Tarana Burke who created the MeToo movement in 2006, attended the awards as a guest of honor. The phrase "time's up" highlights the urgent need for more sustained engagement with gender inequality. In the next slide we shall look at a video on the Time's Up movement and its role in the legal battles against sexual harassment. The video is taken from the documentary titled 'MeToo: How it's Changing the World,' produced by The Economist in 2018.

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Time's Up and Legal Battles

- The video is taken from the documentary titled "MeToo: How it's Changing the World" produced by *The Economist* in 2018.

Source: [The Economist \[YouTube\]](#)

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Following the Harvey Weinstein's scandal, over 300 public figures have donated millions of dollars to the time's up legal defense fund.


Women have united to claim that time is up.

At these small unassuming headquarters in Washington DC, giant steps are being taken.

We have got farm workers, retail, hotel workers, nail salons, poultry workers.

American women can apply to the fund for free legal support, if they have been sexually harassed or assaulted at work.

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Time's Up and Legal Battles

- The video is taken from the documentary titled "MeToo: How it's Changing the World" produced by *The Economist* in 2018.

Source: [The Economist \(YouTube\)](#)

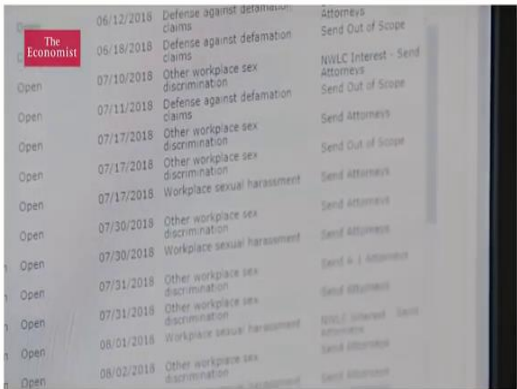
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So, far there have been over 3,500 applications mainly from women in low wage industries.

Could I get your first and last name?

It's up to interns like no to field the rising number of calls.

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Time's Up and Legal Battles

- The video is taken from the documentary titled "MeToo: How it's Changing the World" produced by *The Economist* in 2018.

Source: [The Economist \(YouTube\)](#)

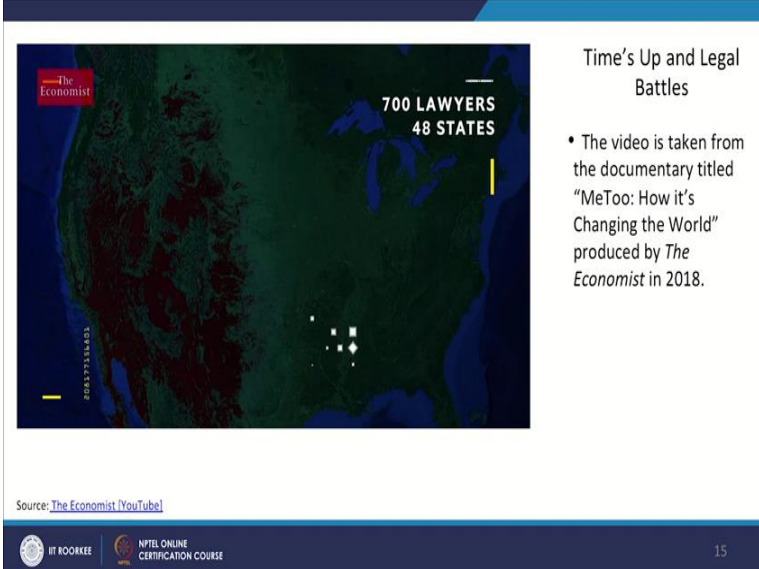
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These are the list of intakes that we are going to be sending attorneys to. We have it listed as you know workplace sexual harassment, other workplace sex discrimination. There is probably at least 30 or 40 here just for today.

Some of the claims stretch back decades.

The most memorable case I had to deal with was a woman in the military, she was sexually harassed by her superiors by the people around her and it kind of destroyed her life. She told me you are the first person I have ever told this to.

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The slide displays a map of the United States with the text "700 LAWYERS 48 STATES" overlaid. The map is dark green with white outlines of the states. The text "700 LAWYERS 48 STATES" is in white. The slide title is "Time's Up and Legal Battles". A bullet point states: "The video is taken from the documentary titled 'MeToo: How it's Changing the World' produced by The Economist in 2018." The source is cited as "Source: The Economist [YouTube]". The slide footer includes logos for IIT ROORKEE and NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE, and the number 15.

Applications vetted here in Washington DC are passed through a network of 700 lawyers working across 48 states. The fund has already filed claims against McDonalds, the US postal service and Walmart. They hope this will prompt other major organizations to change their own rules about sexual harassment.



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The video thumbnail shows a woman with curly hair, identified as Fatima Gross Graves, co-founder of the Times Up Legal Defense Fund. The text on the thumbnail reads: "FATIMA GROSS GRAVES CO-FOUNDER, TIMES UP LEGAL DEFENSE FUND". The logo for "The Economist" is visible in the top left corner of the video frame.

Time's Up and Legal Battles

- The video is taken from the documentary titled "MeToo: How it's Changing the World" produced by *The Economist* in 2018.

Source: [The Economist \(YouTube\)](#)


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Employers have an opportunity to lead right now, they do not actually need to wait for new laws to pass, they can right now today decide that they are going to put this issue at the center of their organization.”

This documentary highlights the relevance of the Time's Up Legal Defense Fund particularly for survivors who cannot afford legal support. Following the Harvey Weinstein's, scandal over 300 public figures have donated millions of dollars to the Time's Up group.


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- This volunteer-led, leaderless initiative addresses the systemic inequality and injustice in the workplace that have kept women as an underrepresented group from reaching their full potential.
- The Time's Up official website describes the movement as:
  - A unified call for change from women in entertainment for women everywhere. From movie sets to farm fields to boardrooms alike, we envision nationwide leadership that reflects the world in which we live.
- It's legal defense fund provides a network of lawyers and public relations empowering the survivors to speak out and name the abuser, and fight them legally.



The logo for Time's Up features the words "TIMES UP" in a stylized font. Below it, the slogan reads: "Time's up on silence. Time's up on waiting. Time's up on tolerating discrimination, harassment and abuse." The hashtag "#TIMESUP" is displayed in red.

Source: Time's Up Organization



A small portrait of a woman with glasses and a dark top, likely a representative of the organization, is shown in the bottom right corner of the slide.

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This volunteer-led, leaderless initiative addresses the systematic inequality and injustice in the workplace that have kept women as an underrepresented group from reaching their full potential. The Times Up official website describes the movement as “a unified call for change from women in entertainment for women everywhere - from movie sets to farm fields to boardrooms alike, we envision nationwide leadership that reflects the world in which we live.”

It’s legal defense fund provides a network of lawyers and public relations empowering the survivors to speak out and name the abuser and also to fight them legally. The group also advocates for a significant increase of women in leadership across all industries which they say would foster a healthier work environment.

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**#MeToo and Missing Minorities**

- The #MeToo campaign was started by a black activist (Tarana Burke) in 2006 as a grassroots movement to support young women who were sexual assault survivors in underprivileged communities.
- In this sense the ‘movement’ predates its online popularity.
- It was only after white, privileged heterosexual celebrities voiced their experience did social media and popular news media chose to pay extensive attention. (Cowan, 2019)
- Recently, the #MeToo movement has received astute criticism for the exclusion of women who are without access to impactful social media presence.



Source: The Economist


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The MeToo campaign was started by a black activist Tarana Burke in 2006 as a grassroots movement to support young women who were sexual assault survivors in underprivileged communities. In this sense, the movement predates its online popularity.


It was only after white privileged heterosexual celebrities who voiced their experience did social media and popular news media chose to pay extensive attention. Recently the MeToo movement has received astute criticism for the exclusion of women who are without access to impactful social media presence. Furthermore, activists have pointed out the eraser of poor informally educated, low paid, disabled, LGBT and non-urban women of color from the MeToo movement.

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- Given this context, it is vital to specifically consider if and how the #MeToo movement can be a space for marginalized communities.
- This includes transgender women and women from indigenous communities who are disproportionately subjected to fatal violence. (Human Rights Campaign, 2018)
- This is pertinent because for minoritized women, it is not sufficient to speak of violence only as a gendered phenomenon.
- Other systems of inequality such as racism, classism, and discrimination based gender identity and geographical location also need to be taken into account when engaging with the nature of violence.



Source: Getty Images



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Given this context it is vital to specifically consider if and how the MeToo movement can be a space for marginalized communities. This includes transgender women and women from indigenous communities who are disproportionately subjected to fatal violence. This is pertinent because for minoritized women, it is not sufficient to speak of violence only as a gendered phenomenon.


Other systems of inequality such as racism, classism and discrimination-based gender identity and geographical location also need to be taken into account with engaging with the nature of violence. A nuanced understanding of different women's lived experiences explores the way in which various forms of operations intersect to produce specific experiences.

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- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA) people have largely been absent from the #MeToo movement.
- The conversations and media reporting largely focused on heterosexual assault, where both the abuser and victim are cisgender. (Ison, 2019)
- LGBTQIA people face many unique issues on the account of their gender and sexuality.
- While #MeToo has many complexities, it must take steps to be more inclusive of the issues faced by queer people.
- The predominance of heteronormativity often ignores violence that can occur within queer relationships.



Source: Vectorstock.com



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It is also said that from the MeToo movement lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual people (LGBTQIA) have been largely absent. The conversations and media reporting largely focused on heterosexual assault where both the abuser and victims were cisgender. LGBTQIA people face many unique issues on account of their gender and sexuality.

While MeToo has many complexities, it must take steps to be more inclusive of the issues faced by queer people. The predominance of heteronormativity often ignores violence that can occur within queer relationships. In a world dominated by heterosexuality, conversations around queer sexual assault or queer consent are sidelined.

Therefore, it is important for the MeToo movement to create a space for queer experiences which shall provide acceptance and recognition to queer communities.

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- In August 2018, Tarana Burke called for a shift from 'talking about individuals' to 'begin to talk about power'. Such a shift would demand meaningful recognition and incorporation of gender minorities facing sexual violence.
- This approach will be inclusive of people from different walks of life with different backgrounds and identities, who may not have access to formal complain procedures or human resource departments in their workplaces.
- Burke also underlines the need for minorities to unite and organize together at the intersections of different oppressions to find holistic and supportive strategies for safety and liberation. (Kagal & Cowan, 2019)



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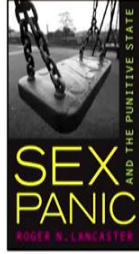
In August 2018, Tarana Burke called for a shift from talking about individuals to begin to talk about power. Such a shift would demand meaningful recognition and incorporation of gender minorities facing sexual violence. This approach will be inclusive of people from different walks of life with different backgrounds and identities who may not have access to formal complaint procedures or human resource departments in their workplaces.

Burke also underlines the need for minorities to unite and organize together at the intersections of different operations to find holistic and supportive strategies for safety and liberation. By expanding one's outlook and by building stronger communities, MeToo can begin to support survivors and whole perpetrators to account more effectively.


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### #MeToo as Sex Panic?

- #MeToo has prompted several big companies and organizations to introduce new measures to deal with sexual harassment.
- But it has also provoked several instances of backlash, particularly in the form of panics around sexuality, with a tendency to vilify all men. (Mathews, 2019)
- If the allegation against a particular individual turns out to be false or fabricated, one is risking a public lynching of personality aided by social media.
- Some of the backlash is being fueled by the anxieties of men forced to think about their behavior in ways they never had before.



Source: University of California Press



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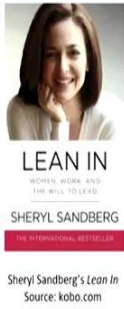
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MeToo has prompted several big companies and organizations to introduce new measures to deal with sexual harassment. But, it has also provoked several instances of backlash particularly in the form of panics around sexuality with a tendency to vilify all men. If the allegation against a particular individual turns out to be false or fabricated one is risking a public lynching of personality aided by social media.

Some of the backlash is being fueled by the anxieties of men forced to think about their behavior in ways they had never done earlier. It is welcoming when strict policies are introduced to prevent sexual harassment, but as a negative counter movement many men in leading roles limited or altogether avoided their interactions with female colleagues and subordinates.

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- Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Facebook, and one of *Fortune* magazine's Most Powerful Women in Business, Sheryl Sandberg, is a leading supporter of the #MeToo movement. But she also cautions about how some of the reverberations from the movement can be counter-productive.
- She thinks that MeToo is an opportunity to “get rid of behavior that never should have happened in the first place. But we have to make sure that this does not have ‘negative’ consequences”. (Sandberg, 2018)
  - In her book *Lean In* (2013, co-authored with Nell Scovell), she draws on her own experience of working in some of the world's most successful businesses and looks at what women can do to help themselves. Encouraged by the book's success, she founded a women's empowerment foundation 'Lean In'.



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Sheryl Sandberg chief operating officer of Facebook and one of Fortune magazine's Most Powerful Women in Business is a leading supporter of the MeToo movement. But she also cautions us about how some of the reverberations from the movement can be counterproductive.


She thinks that MeToo is an opportunity to get rid of behavior that never should have happened in the first place. But we have to make sure that this does not have any negative consequences. In her book 'Lean In' which was coauthored with Nell Scovell published in 2013 and immediately it had become a bestseller, she draws on her own experiences of working in some of the world's most successful businesses and looks at what women can do to help themselves. Encouraged by the success of the book, she founded an empowerment foundation for women with the name 'Lean In.'

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- In early 2018, a survey conducted by 'Lean In' organization found that #MeToo had an adverse effect on gender relations. (*The Economist*, 2018)
- Sandberg notes that following #MeToo, senior male managers are increasingly hesitant and nervous about having a one-on-one meeting with a junior female colleague. This inversely affects equality and healthy relations at workspace.
- The public narration of #MeToo movement brings to light a worrying assumption about consent to sex: an ideology which states true consent is never really possible because of women's inescapable entanglement in social structures of male domination. (Halley et al., 2018)



Source: evoke.org



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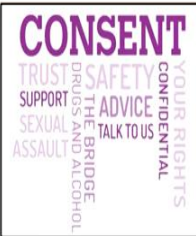
In early 2018, a survey conducted by Lean In organization found that MeToo had an adverse effect on gender relations. Sandberg notes that following MeToo, senior male managers are increasingly hesitant and nervous about having a one-to-one meeting with a junior female colleague. This inversely affects equality and healthy relations at workplace.

The public narration of MeToo movement brings to light a worrying assumption about consent to sex, an ideology which states true consent is never really possible because of women's inescapable entanglement in social structures of male domination. Many contemporary critics find this ideology a result of a sex panic surrounding the MeToo movement.




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- Australian clinical psychotherapist and sexologist Cyndi Darnell argues that the #MeToo movement should be seen as an opportunity to rethink and deconstruct the idea of sexual consent.
- She notes that it is important to think beyond the legalistic 'yes-no' binary to account for elements of coercion, manipulation and mental vulnerabilities in gender and sexual relationalities. (Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019)
- A binary approach to sexual consent makes it difficult to analyze the affective weaving and folding, and the relational creation of meaning in highly ambiguous sexual moments.



Source: Unity Sexual Health



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Australian clinical psychotherapist and sexologist Cyndi Darnell argues that the MeToo movement should be seen as an opportunity to rethink and deconstruct the idea of sexual consent.


She notes that it is important to think beyond the legalistic 'yes-no' binary to account for elements of coercion, manipulation, and mental vulnerabilities in gender and sexual relationalities. A binary approach to sexual consent makes it difficult to analyze the affective weaving and folding and the relational creation of meaning in highly ambiguous sexual moments.

Therefore, it is necessary to challenge opinions that view MeToo as constituting a sex panic because they can potentially reinforce conservative sexual politics.


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### #MeToo and Masculinities

- Men's responses to #MeToo, and other forms of feminist advocacy on sexual harassment, range from enthusiastic support to hostile backlash.
- Masculinity is implicated directly in men's perpetration of sexual harassment and in widespread inaction or complicity in the face of violence against women.
- At the same time, #MeToo has prompted valuable public scrutiny of the narrow and dangerous ideals of masculinity. (Flood, 2019)
- #MeToo demands men to take collective action to address the social and structural roots of men's violence against women.



Source: ips-dc.org



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Men's responses to MeToo and other forms of feminist advocacy on sexual harassment range from enthusiastic support to hostile backlash. Masculinity is implicated directly in men's perpetration of sexual harassment and in widespread inaction or complicity in the face of violence against women.

At the same time MeToo has prompted valuable public scrutiny of the narrow and dangerous ideals of masculinity. MeToo demands men to take collective action to address the social and structural roots of men's violence against women. Anti-sexist and anti-violence men's group began amid the second wave of feminism in the early 1970s and there is now a wide range of national and international men focused organizations and networks to support women.

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- Men can contribute to social change, both by challenging other men and by contributing to wider efforts to shift the systemic gender inequalities that form the foundation of sexual harassment and abuse. (Flood, 2019)
- The #MeToo movement has prompted some men in Western countries to question the traditional notions of masculinity, and what it means to be a man in society today.
- Stereotypes of hypermasculinity persist in the popular imagination, and this has severe implications as it influences the ways by which different notions of masculinities are produced.
- Efforts to define 'healthy masculinity', which teaches men to be more open and communicative, effectively challenge the presence of 'patriarchal hypermasculinity'. (Cover, 2019)



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The MeToo movement has prompted some men in Western countries to question the traditional notions of masculinity and what it means to be a man in society today. Stereotypes of hyper masculinity persist in the popular imagination and this has severe implications as it influences the ways by which different notions of masculinities are produced.

Efforts to define healthy masculinity which teaches men to be more open and communicative effectively challenge the presence of patriarchal hyper masculinity. MeToo invites men to be in pro social roles who can take action to prevent and reduce harm by strengthening the conditions where new masculinities incorporate gender equity.

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**Conclusion: Towards an Ethics of Care and Vulnerability**

- The momentum generated by the #MeToo movement energized discussions around sexual violence, consent and gender.
- Far from becoming just another hashtag, #MeToo has engrained itself in popular discourse as an important way to positioning oneself as a survivor and to act in solidarity with survivors.
- Although #MeToo has been successful at putting sexual harassment on the public policy agenda, raising consciousness alone does not equate to social, cultural and political changes.
- #MeToo should continually and self-reflexively negotiate its parameters of inclusion/exclusion, thereby deconstructing the power structures and inequalities which limit the recognition of survivors.



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The momentum generated by the MeToo movement energized discussions around sexual violence, consent and gender. Far from becoming just another hashtag, MeToo has engrained itself in popular discourse as an important way to positioning oneself as a survivor and to act in solidarity with survivors. Although MeToo has been successful at putting sexual harassment on the public policy agenda.

Raising consciousness alone does not equate to social, cultural or political changes. MeToo should continually and self reflexively negotiate the parameters of inclusion as well as exclusion, thereby deconstructing the power structures and inequalities which limit the recognition of survivors.

This can be achieved with a renewed sense of inclusion empathy, and care, an acknowledgement of universal human relationality and interdependency. This will also empower a rethinking of all gender relations and pave the way for acknowledging the experiences of not only heterosexual women, but also the members of LGBT communities.

In our discussion of MeToo, we also saw the importance of understanding and differentiating between different types of masculinities. Scholars like RW Connell contributed immensely to the study of social construction of masculinity and we shall analyze this aspect of gender in the coming week in detail. Thank you.

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