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## #MeToo, sexual harassment: an article, a forum,<sup>1</sup> and a dream<sup>2</sup> for the future

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### ABSTRACT

#MeToo has breathed new life into the women's movement and especially into understanding and rectifying sexual harassment, abuse and assault. It has galvanized activists around the globe. And it has placed thousands of stories of the harassed in full view of the public. Sexual harassment, abuse and assault may occur within the organizational context or beyond; but sexual harassment, in particular has been legally labeled an organizational phenomenon. With this in mind, Robin Clair frames the early part of this article around the most recent organizational communication theories (see the appendix for an overview of these theories). Following the essay is a forum, in which invited scholars address questions related to the #MeToo movement.

Keywords: #MeToo, sexual harassment, organizational communication, politics of gender

### An historical (and organizational) definition of sexual harassment

Sexual harassment, a practice of nearly untraceable origin<sup>3</sup>, steeped in power relations, has been formally defined in the U.S. as a workplace phenomenon. The workplace definition evolved from quid pro quo to include hostile environment, from limiting the victims to women by adding men, from heterosexual to same-sex orientations, from a singular phenomenon to one of intersectionality, from first party injury to include third parties as collaterally damaged individuals. Even with these expansions the definitions have been restricted to *the organization*. This contextual constraint may have been extremely useful in making initial advances against sexual harassment. For instance, the work of feminists such as Farley (1978) and MacKinnon (1989) were crucial to establishing laws against sexual harassment in the workplace. And such a perspective may continue to be useful in this regard, but it should also be explored as a contributing factor to the reasons why sexual harassment continues to be so pervasive in society. In other words,

this article and forum respects and addresses the current container metaphor, but also explores an extended contextualization (Smith, 1990; Smith & Turner, 1995; see appendix) and subsequently an expanded conceptualization of sexual harassment.

### Including and escaping ‘the organization’ definition of sexual harassment

Sexual harassment as an organizational phenomenon has yielded laws and policies associated with workplaces and educational institutions (see Bingham, 1994; Clair, 1993a; Dougherty & Goldstein Hode, 2016; Kreps, 1993). #MeToo steps outside the organization, which may expand scholarly thinking. For instance, Hochschild’s (1983) early work on emotional labor explored how workers’ emotions are exploited in the workforce. Organizational communication scholars continue to apply it to the workplace (Deetz & Eger, 2014 – see appendix), even though it can move beyond. For example, it is emotional labor for some victims of sexual abuse to get out of bed in the morning, according to Tarana Burke (2018), the founder of the #MeToo movement. How does one regain one’s sense of self, self-esteem and purpose in order, literally, to get out of bed, she asked? Working with young women, teenage girls, who are at risk of sexual abuse gave Burke that strength and sense of purpose. But it did not immediately give her, her own voice. When counseling these girls, she did not know what to say at times, and even though at other times, she wanted to say, ‘Me, too,’ it took her years to do so. What counts as legitimate work in society rarely includes the amount of labor required to overcome the effects of sexual trauma.

Second, we need to expand the legitimate definitions of work in society, not only to demonstrate respect for what has been labeled as ‘women’s work’ within the workforce, but also beyond. Feminist scholar, Christine Delphy’s (1984/2016) contributions illuminated the work that women did inside and outside of organizations, especially from a feminist materialist metaphysics. Drawing from this perspective, Clair and Thompson (1996) found the closer the association of workforce jobs with that done domestically by women, the more likely the pay was to be lower. But what about sexual harassment? If it is defined as an organizational phenomenon, then what happens when it occurs outside of those parameters? Albeit the following story is extreme, it can be useful in understanding the legitimacy of sexual harassment in relation to the legitimacy of work (Clair, 1996). It is one of my stories.

I was a teenager and new at my high school when a girl I barely knew asked if I could babysit in her place since she had been invited to a party. I asked my mother, she said yes, but insisted that I wear a dress as she was tired of seeing me in blue jeans. The other girl had her driver’s license, picked me up, and dropped me off at the house. The husband put the baby to bed and left to join his wife. Making a long story short, he returned, without his wife. The details are too difficult, too painful to write, or to speak, but I will say, that my spirit left my body and I heard my own screams, from across the room.

Have organizational communication scholars explored ‘babysitting’ as work? Have they considered how this form of work is a means of gender organizing? Have they asked, how does this *work*? This example decenters *the organization*.

Third, we need to do more with regard to the interplay of organizations. For instance, how do our courtrooms support patriarchy or challenge it? My story from the 1970s is compared below to a story from the 1990s and then to what is happening today.

Did I report it? Unlike many others, with the help of my parents, I did. One of the comments by the judge was, 'If you had not been wearing a short dress, this might not have happened.' This I am sure broke my mother's heart. My father did most of the speaking and agreed with the judge that probation was a fair sentence for the man. My father must have carried a great deal of guilt with him for that decision as before his death, he said to me, 'I should have done more.' It was the only thing he wanted to apologize for to me before he died.

I told this story publicly for the first time as a keynote speaker for 'Take Back the Night' march at Purdue University in 2018 having been strengthened by the discourse of a movement called #MeToo. I never did tweet the message, but the words have been spoken, the story told.

In 1995, a judge heard a case about a man abusing the woman he was dating and the judge sentenced the man to nine months of probation and ordered him to marry the woman he abused ('Woman beater', 1995). 'A loud outcry' from the 'National Organization of Women (NOW)' forced the judge to rescind his mandate, demonstrating that one organizational voice (i.e. NOW) can speak to another (i.e. the court system) (Clair, 1998, p. 188). Courts have varied widely, from the sentencing of Larry Nasser by Judge Aquilina to 40–175 years for his sexual abuse of Olympic gymnasts, in which she said, 'I have just signed your death warrant' (Cacciola & Mather, 2018, n.p.) to the confirmation of Judge Kavanaugh to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1994, I helped to expand the stories of sexual harassment by including one man's story (Clair, 1994). At the onset of the #MeToo movement I received a phone call from the man I had interviewed; he was reliving his experience. He said that people still did not believe him—that a man could be sexually harassed. He asked for a copy of my article. Later, during the week of the Kavanaugh hearings, I was working with a student when I looked up to see this same man standing in my office doorway. He needed to see me – someone who believed him. As Professor Ford's story aired on television many relived their pain and sought support from others. Reliving such pain is similar but different from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Soldiers are generally believed, generally honored. Victims of sexual harassment/abuse are often not believed, nor honored. Recurring sexual trauma needs its own name.

Another comment from the judge who heard my case went something like this, 'Or if your skin weren't the color of cream, this wouldn't have happened.' I know a few African-American women who would disagree. These men are equal opportunity predators. And minority women are placed in even more vulnerable positions. Kimberle Crenshaw's (1989) work on intersectionality provided a crucial angle from which to view sexual harassment. And Burke recommends listening to all with empathy (Burke, 2018; Clair et al., 2016).

Finally, past studies of sexual harassment narratives indicated a prevalence toward 'sequestered stories' (e.g. Clair, 1991, 1993b, 1998). A raging silence encircled the crime. Indeed, even I, as a researcher who had collected numerous stories, had never shared my own story, until now. Past research has explored the power of shared narratives (Clair, Chapman, & Kunkel, 1996; Wood, 1992). But sharing also opens wounds of the past and fears of retribution. Sharing stories is simultaneously painful and supportive.

Such experiences, including the relived trauma, is usually the province of psychologists, yet communication scholars have much to offer. How does the support speak to and of coping with abuse through narratives (Clair & Kunkel, 1998)? What happens when the simultaneous opposite appears in relation to such stories (Clair, 1994, 1998)? That is, when someone like Prof. Ford is both believed and not believed simultaneously? Given credibility while being discredited, receiving supportive messages and death threats.

### ***Back to the organizational models***

The organizational communication models discussed in the appendix work to expand the views of ‘the organization’, basically taking a more sociological perspective. They also need to cast a wide net when conceptualizing communication. The focus of Smith and Turner’s (1995) Social Constructionist Metaphor Analysis (SCMA) turned to metaphor to understand the dynamic relationship between organization and communication and that was appropriate for the analysis the authors conducted, but the metaphor is not the only trope or the only form of expression that can be analyzed.<sup>4</sup> Although the term *discourse* was popularized by Foucault to demonstrate that the material world always holds a symbolic aspect, some have argued that materiality gets lost in the mix (Dougherty, 2011). Perhaps another term can rectify this side of the dialectic.

**Expression** may be a more encompassing term. It not only opens to multiple forms of communication (e.g. metaphors, narratives, policies, talk), it also quells the arguments that discourse has marginalized materiality, as it is also defined as a manifestation, bringing something into physical being, we express or manifest ourselves in many ways (e.g. the hug is an expression of love, the painting is an expression of the artist’s thought).

Expression is both praxis and product. Organizations, structures, and policies are all expressions, expressing meaning and manifesting materiality, simultaneously. The product, whether it is policy or organization is both the expression of (e.g. discourse) and expression in itself (e.g. manifestation). Likewise, the expression and expressive activity and materiality is/are dynamic.

It may be worth the challenge to cast aside ‘the organization’ identity in order to do justice to the exploration of serious issues, such as sexual harassment. But we should not lose sight that working within the organization is also valuable. Plus, there is a middle ground as expressive acts following the #MeToo movement have shown. Two examples follow:

In September 2018, McDonald’s workers staged a protest against sexual harassment that crossed state lines after being inspired by the #MeToo movement (Crary, 2018). This work strike expanded the way of speaking out about sexual harassment and it expanded the parameters of the organization, as sexual harassment had previously been dealt with at an individual restaurant level. In a similar vein, technology workers added their voices to the clamor for change. By the thousands, Google employees went global in their demands to end sexual misconduct and the protection of predators (MacMillan, Minaya, & Sun, 2018).

An even bolder example comes from France in the wake of the #MeToo movement, President Macron responded to the movement and results of several studies of sexual harassment by expanding the context from organizations to the streets, the transits and public places. The laws took effect in September 2018 and the courts will fine harassers found

guilty of creating a hostile environment, (e.g. catcalling, touching, unwanted kissing) anywhere in public. Harassers will be fined up to 750 Euro (\$876.00 US). In addition, previous definitions of rape, especially of children, were sorely wanting in France. Now, rape will be redefined as ‘abuse of vulnerability’ and the statute of limitations for reporting child molestation will be increased to 30 years (‘France approves ...’, 2018). We might consider adding to our definitions of abuse – laws against ‘base and unwarranted sexual entitlement,’ under the advice of legal experts who might better judge if such language could be too easily used against the oppressed.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Essential and appropriate theory***

The #MeToo movement is an organizational communication phenomenon. The expression and all its meaning *is* organizing people, expressing concerns, raising creative solutions, and so much more. It has also been a reminder to make marginalization a part of all models. It was Tarana Burke, an African-American, professional working woman, who said, ‘#Me, too.’

#MeToo is an expression of gender, racial and class inequality. It is Burke’s story of abuse and finding a secret sharer in Maya Angelou’s book, *Why the Caged Bird Sings*; it is a powerful testament to the fact that it is not just white women of means from Hollywood who are suffering. However, actress Alyssa Morreno’ retweeting certainly helped to spur the movement forward (Burke, 2018). #MeToo, is an expression that galvanized and materialized a movement for the oppressed.

#MeToo is a discourse that speaks of the organization of society in multiple ways. It has opened a dialogue on how, especially women, have been treated *in organizations* but also *how sexual harassment organizes* gendered discrimination (Clair, 1991, 1993b, 1998; MacKinnon, 1989). It held out its hand to all victims of sexual harassment/abuse/assault and acted as a support; that is, it organized the marginalized through identification with one another. It gave birth to other organizations (e.g. #TimesUp).

According to Burke (2018), the issue is one of empathy, equality, dignity, justice and recovering joy. #MeToo, is expansive, expressive and unrelenting in its organizing. An expression that is a manifestation. Expressing and manifesting, organizing and communicating, simultaneously. Dismantling and rebuilding as it dynamically unfolds. Dialectically realizing, that it is expressing what exists while materializing a world that might come to be. One with dignity and respect. And we are all a part of it.

We enter the dialogue, all of us, even if we are silent as that speaks as well; we enter the conversation, and doing so we become part of both the expressing and expressions of society, the communicating and the organizing – the praxis and the products. It is a dialectical, dynamic, activity that communicates and organizes. It demands something from us. It also raises questions. And begs us to engage. The following forum is based on the notion that #Me,Too asks us to ask ourselves questions and to pursue answers.

I invited several colleagues to join me in this forum (Debbie Dougherty, Patricia Geist Martin, Paaige Turner) and then we invited others (Hannah Delemeester, Tyler Sorg, Nadia Brown and Bill Gorden). I posed questions that would give rise, I hoped, to a variety of perspectives because perhaps being open to all views, and especially an expanded view, may provide alternative ways of seeing, and solving sexual harassment, abuse and assault.

## #MeToo sexual harassment: A Journal of Applied Communication Research forum

Authors:

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### **Question 1: How does the discourse #MeToo expand conceptualizations of social movements and materialize into organizational practices?**

**Patricia:** The #MeToo movement has expanded across borders and professions to bring public awareness to the widespread prevalence of sexual assault and harassment. Other hashtags that were in use before #MeToo include #MyHarveyWeinstein, #YouOkSis, #WhatWereYouWearing, and #Survivor Privilege. But it was social activist, community organizer, and sexual assault survivor Tarana Burke who first used the phrase ‘Me Too’ in 2006. In her words today, ‘It’s not about a viral campaign for me ... It’s about a movement ... [a movement] that began in the deepest, darkest place in my soul’ (Santiago & Criss, 2017, para. 1).

The movement took off on 15 October 2017, when Alyssa Milano reignited ‘MeToo’ with the tweet, ‘If you’ve been sexually harassed or assaulted write ‘me too’ as a reply to this tweet’ (Stevens, 2017, para. 2). A week earlier, two other events occurred in the timeline of the #MeToo movement. Actress Ashley Judd accused Hollywood executive Harvey Weinstein of sexual harassment and producer Isa Hackett accused Roy Price, head of Amazon Studios of lewd behavior and propositions (Johnson & Hawbaker, 2018). Facebook said that in less than 24 hours after Milano’s tweet, 4.7 million people around the world had engaged in the ‘Me too’ conversation, with more than 12 million posts, comments and reactions. According to Facebook, more than 45% of people in the United States are friends with someone who has posted a message with the words ‘Me too.’ (Santiago & Criss, 2017).

In the short time since this movement was reignited through the stories that women and men have told of their harrowing experiences with sexual assault or harassment, organizing of all kinds has occurred. And as a result a wide range of conversations are occurring through these practices: creating new related movements, passing new or revised bills, organizing marches, collaborating on supportive actions among nonprofits and for profits, and identifying perpetrators that lead to expulsions, firings and convictions.

Here are a few examples:

- Times Up Movement with the motto ‘The clock has run out on sexual assault, harassment and inequality in the workplace. It’s time to do something about it.’ <https://www.timesupnow.com/>
- Producers Guild expels Harvey Weinstein and creates task force to research and address sexual harassment within the entertainment industry (Yamato, 2017).

- The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences expelled Harvey Weinstein and will establish standards of conduct for its members (Robbins, 2017).
- States throughout the U.S. have amended or added new legislation related to sexual harassment. ‘It is unlawful to harass a person (an applicant or employee) because of that person’s sex. Harassment can include ‘sexual harassment’ meaning unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature’ (Johnson, 2018).

### **Question 2: How does #MeToo demonstrate materialization?**

**Debbie:** Communication scholars have long recognized that sexual harassment is a discursive phenomenon (Bingham, 1994; Clair, 1991, 1993b, 1998). As a result, we have done a good job of articulating how sexual harassment is centered in meaning that is drawn from larger discourses. For example, we know that sexual harassment feminizes the target, even when the target identifies as a male (Clair, 1994). We know that sexual harassment is about power, but men and women tend to conceptualize power differently (Dougherty, 2006). We also know that the historical act of naming sexual harassment gave targets a way to resist predatory sexual behavior (Wood, 1992). However, we have done less well at uncovering the ways in which sexual harassment discourse is wrapped in material notions of the human body. Part of what makes sexual harassment an effective form of power is that it discursively turns a strong and competent female body into a hyper-feminized body that only has value in submission to the hyper-masculinized body that enacts power through sexual aggression. Although one body is seen as powerful and the other as weak, in reality both bodies are reduced to a caricature of the human that animates that body. The discourse that drives sexual harassment becomes hidden in the caricature of the dehumanized body. In this way, as Clair (1991, 1993a, 1993b) noted, sexual harassment becomes hidden and privatized, making effective remediation difficult, if not impossible. Into this morass comes the #MeToo movement. This movement reanimates the rich humanity of the human body. It strips away the illusions, reveals the hidden discourse, and makes public that which had been considered private. I recall the first time I saw #MeToo appear on my facebook feed. I knew immediately what it was about, prior to reading the post that went with it. My emotional reaction included anger, fear, frustration and something new. I experienced hope. There is a powerful elegance in the simple narrative – #MeToo. It tells the entire story while reconnecting targets with their larger communities.

### **Question 3: How has the #MeToo movement demonstrated a complexity of voices?**

**Hannah:** ‘I’m so sorry you were so alone,’ are words written to Monica Lewinsky from one of the women leading the #MeToo movement (Lewinsky, 2018, para 25). Lewinsky in the February *Vanity Fair* article tells us that she was swimming in a sea of aloneness that was terrifying and that for the past 20 years she has been unpacking and reprocessing what happened to her, ‘over and over and over again’ (para 27). She also speaks to the ‘internal script’ (para 29) that leaves little room for evaluation. While the internal scripts focus on the assault against the spirit that has paralyzed the trusting, empowered and self-loving person (Kieser, 1995), the cultural scripts focus on the event, the abuse and the actions of the perpetrators. These scripts clash with each other, sustaining a silence that limits self-advocacy and support.

The #MeToo movement brings thousands of voices into dialogue about the brokenness, silence and trauma, as well as the agency to tell the complicated stories of the assault on the spirit that people are confronting in the years, even decades that follow. #MeToo breaks the silence by opening spaces for voices to speak, validating the internal scripts and connecting the individual story to collective action. While the predominant focus and association of the #MeToo movement has been about the voices of those engaging in disclosure, #MeToo also brings in a complexity of other voices through the reactions to such disclosures. The discussions following the movement have not all been supportive, but it is the combination of these voices that has aided in a progressive conversation about where society goes from here.

Tarana Burke describes #MeToo as the first point on the ‘trajectory for healing’ (D’Zurilla, 2017, para 6). What lies ahead, then, calls for a compilation of such healing points. 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. Those who are further along the trajectory of healing may mentor others who are not yet at the same point as they are (Thomas & Hall, 2008) and offer support in all aspects of survivors’ lives. Lastly, collective action can be achieved by stepping away from neutrality and denouncing behavior that perpetuates the destructive cycle of abuse.

**Robin:** Elizabeth Smart (2018) said that if she had not gone through her ordeal she might very well have blamed a woman, any woman, asking, ‘what was she wearing?’ Instead, she says, no victim should be blamed, ‘not a 14 year old ... not a woman walking the streets.’ She now tries to help others. As for her own life, the kidnapping and rape, she says, she is ‘concerned, but not consumed’ by it.

**Tyler:** Though unwanted within organizational culture, sexual harassment finds its way into an organization, sustains and prospers, and seldom leaves. How is it that something so unwanted and detrimental to organizations and its members can survive within organizational cultures and withstand efforts at resistance and removal? Perhaps, looking at sexual harassment discourse as a narrative process that is used to favor dominant groups within an organization could provide an answer (see Clair, 1991, 1993a, 1993b, 1998 and see Clair, McGoun, & Spirek, 1993 for how women engage powerful narratives of resistance against sexual harassment). Although we know sexual harassment is a discursive behavior that can lead to cultural normality (Bingham, 1994; Clair, 1991, 1993b, 1998), and we know that narrative has been a part of this, we have not explored at length the ways in which these narratives contribute to the concept of normality beyond Clair’s work on hegemony.

Alvesson and Karreman (2000) discussed discursive properties and how they formulate building blocks of information within an organization. If we look at sexual harassment narratives as building blocks of information, we can see the discursive power that is created within an organization that allows sexual harassment to go unchecked. These narratives are pulled from larger social discourses that contribute to the regulation of cultural norms (Keyton, Ferguson, & Rhodes, 2001). The narratives serve as catalysts of normality. Drawing from Giddens’ (1979) concept of reification, and MacKinnon’s (1989) discussions of harasser’s excuses, Clair (1993b, 1998) explored whether the narratives of sexual harassment included an acceptance of sexual harassment as normal (e.g. boys will be boys). But surprisingly, Clair found that few women accepted this frame. Perhaps, men used such ‘normalizing’ narratives as justification. In light of that finding,

more work should have explored the harassers' narratives to see how they contributed to the dismissal of sexual harassment. On the other hand, the continuing contribution of victims' narratives, especially those refusing to accept sexual harassment as normal, act as building blocks of change. Ultimately, the culture begins to adapt, changing to adhere to the discursive suggestions that are presented through narratives of resistance.

As mentioned, the discourse surrounding an event can build into a cultural norm, overtime, allowing behaviors to emerge, sustain, and go unnoticed or unaddressed. This leads into development of what becomes normal within the organization. This normality is done by deflecting sexual harassment as something other than what it truly is. In organizations, once harassment occurs, the reception of the event is usually projected and reshaped into something different. For example, we see that some harassment is framed as trivial or temporary (Clair, 1993b). In this way, the building blocks of discourse lead to narratives that illustrate the behaviors as being non-sexual harassment, silencing the target of the behavior (Clair, 1998), and in turn, perpetuating the occurrence within the organization.

Moving forward, if we take the same properties of discursive development, it seems possible that sexual harassment can be removed through narrative. This narrative process would recreate what is viewed as normal within the organization by focusing on resisting the existing norms. For example, if we look at the #MeToo movement, we are seeing an avalanche of resistance that is picking up momentum by creating narratives around sexual harassment. The narratives not only create discursive power of resistance, but define and target sexual harassment once it surfaces within an organization. Movements such as #MeToo give new meaning to behaviors, resistance to dominance, and a narrative power that may rid sexual harassment from an organization.

**Question 4: Whether we are talking about the 'destructive cycle of abuse' or the 'building of normality,' how do various forms of organizing, organizations or institutions feed the cycle?**

**Bill:** Since the breaking news on Harvey Weinstein, the #MeToo movement has raised voices across multiple industries (Griffin, Recht, & Green, 2018). This is a time changing moment for women and the rest of us. 'March 8, 2018 was International Women's Day, and 2017, could be called the Year of Women. And people are starting to listen. TIME magazine names the silence breakers the person of the year' (Langone, 2018, n.p.; also see Zacharek, Dockterman, & Sweetland Edwards, 2017). Women, and men, from across all kinds of organizations are speaking up. Years ago, I wrote an article, well before #MeToo and Time's Up, for the *Cleveland Examiner* titled 'Faith & Doubt' in which I discussed the role of religion, especially Judeo Christian religions, that purport stereotypes of women as inferior, then I recently wrote a blog (Gorden, 2018), a version of this appeared as Women Know the Truth. They do. And they will be silenced no longer.

**Robin:** The Four Flow Model (FFM) would be an especially useful model for understanding the connections between organizations and cultural institutions. The Politically Relational Attentive Constructionism (PARC) model would be useful in exploring the political grip that such institutions as the Catholic Church have and which have allowed them to escape accountability for decades of sexual abuse. A feminist theory like that proposed by Mary Daly would indeed be useful. Daly critiqued the Catholic Church for its abuse of women via its mythological origin stories, stereotyping women and placing them in inferior positions. On another note, new forms of empowerment are surfacing that challenge 'the organization' as the place to define (and restrict) sexual harassment. McDonald's

employees crossed state lines to strike against sexual harassment (Zetlin, 2018). This is crucially important. It moves sexual harassment complaints from 'the individual in one franchise' to 'the group across multiple places of employment.' This provides a new and expanded form of support. It extends accountability in every way. These McDonald workers had been partially emboldened by #MeToo (Zetlin).

#### **Question 5: How have 'bystanders' been characterized?**

**Debbie:** Last year, as I was doing consulting work on sexual harassment, I started thinking more about the role of the bystander in sexual harassment. After all, we already have bystander intervention for sexual assault, and we know that it can be effective at stopping the behavior. Why not just transfer what we know about bystanders into work settings? However, a few weeks ago we learned about predatory behavior in the Catholic Church in Pennsylvania. We discovered that over the years 300 priests had abused over 3000 children. Further, we learned that an entire support system had formed to support this predatory behavior, from parishioners to bishops. In other words, bystanders were already actively engaged in intervention, just not in the constructive way I had visualized. I am not sure why I was so surprised. My research over the years has been focused on bystanders. Instead of just looking at the dyad, or just at the targets of the behavior, I explored the ways in which discourse by organizational members made sexual harassment possible (e.g. Dougherty, 2006). I discovered that there is no such thing as an innocent bystander. We all actively construct what sexual harassment means, which means that at some level we all contribute to how sexual harassment is engaged in our various organizations. Bystanders can be both constructive and destructive to predatory sexual behavior. I can think of three ways in which bystanders are destructive. First, bystanders normalize predatory sexual behaviors. If a behavior is common and normal, then people will be unlikely to pull it out of the flow of daily interactions as something worthy of sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Second, bystanders often treat predators as too important to sanction. Larry Nassar was excused for his predatory behavior toward gymnasts because he was a 'gifted' doctor, the only person who could effectively treat young women gymnasts. There is an implied cost-benefit analysis. The individual is more important than the targets, more important than even the organization itself. This conclusion fits with the Western tendency to discursively gift individuals with heroic qualities. Finally, bystanders tend to treat targets as villains in the organization. They are treated as irrational, fragile and evil (Dougherty & Goldstein Hode, 2016). In essence, the predator is treated as a hero and the target is treated as a villain. The real question here is not, 'why don't targets report the behavior?' The real question is, 'why would targets report the behavior?'

And yet, the #MeToo movement has given me hope for organizational bystanders. For the first time in my career I have been repeatedly asked, 'what should we do if we see or hear about sexual harassment?' This question suggests a shift in bystander engagement. Whereas historically they have been part of the problem, they are now seeking to be part of the solution. My answer to these people is that, if they have courage and if it is safe to do so, they can stop the behavior, report the behavior, or support the target. Stopping the behavior means intervening when harassment is observed. This can be subtle, such as by distracting the harasser, or more directly, such as by confronting the harasser. Reporting is essential, especially given the power imbalance created through sexual harassment. Remember, targets who report are often treated as the villain. It is essential that responsibility for reporting is placed on bystanders to prevent the double victimization

of targets. Finally, offering support to the target is key. In particular, it is important to remind the target that they are not at fault. They did nothing wrong (High & Young, 2018). Given the multiple forms of power imbalance in organizations, productive intervention will need to be engaged differently than training for social-sexual violence such as rape. That said, the two basic engines for constructive bystander intervention remain the same. People need to confront their fear and they need to engage their courage.

**Question 6: How has the #MeToo movement helped to change the political landscape?**

**Paige:** The expression ‘the personal is political’ emerged during the second-wave feminist movement in the late 60s and 70s to foreground that the personal issues women face are part of a large systemic system of oppression, that those issues are worthy of political inquiry, and that personal choices have political consequences. The #MeToo movement once again challenges the false dichotomy between the personal and political. The #MeToo movement presences (de Beauvoir, 1961/1949; Derrida, 1982/1972) the violence against women and the exclusion of their voices. In response, women are struggling to voice (hooks, 1989) how their personal experiences are political assets.

In the last U.S. election, a record number of women ran for seats in the U.S. House (Kertzleben, 2018). Support for organizations, such as Women for Tennessee’s Future (<https://womenfortnfuture.org>), Emily’s List (<https://www.emilyslist.org>) and She Should Run (<https://www.sheshouldrun.org>) has expanded exponentially. These organizations work to level the playing field by creating a pipeline, sharing ‘how-to’ information regarding fundraising/campaigning, offering endorsements and providing mentors. These organizations are often premised upon the belief that women need to be identified and asked to run by others. This premise both replicates the cultural systems that discourage women from self-promoting while challenging the belief that politics requires individuals who are self-promoting, blurring the personal and the political.

While the presence of women may diversify the pool of political candidates, the #MeToo movement is also challenging what counts as political expertise and due process. Traditionally politics is masculine, a zero-sum game, and relevant personal experience is limited to ‘pulling yourself up by your bootstraps’ and ‘a supportive family.’ Alternatively, women are saying that personal experiences, including those of sexual discrimination and abuse, are the very things that define political expertise. For example, Major MJ Hegar’s (2018) (Texas’ 31st Congressional District) campaign ad ‘Doors’ describes the doors she has passed through in her life including sexual discrimination at the hands of the U.S. military and government. Ms. Sol Flores (2018), (Illinois’ 4th congressional district) shares the story of her abuse in her childhood home and ends the ad with what has been described as the cry of the #MeToo movement: ‘I’ll fight as hard for you in Congress as I did to protect myself.’ Simultaneously, men’s personal, sexual experiences are being defined as relevant to their political expertise. Former Senator Al Franken and Representative Trent Franks resigned over accusations of sexual misconduct. Dr Christine Blasey Ford’s allegations of then Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh’s sexual assault spurred heated public discussions about whether his behavior 35 years ago was relevant to his nomination to the Supreme Court. These voices are challenging the marginalization of alternative meanings of political strength. These voices are also being challenged as others claim the #MeToo movement’s articulation of personal experience is being used as a weapon that truncates the political system and due process. Hence,

the expression the ‘personal is political’ has become a discourse that both challenges and reinforces the current political systems.

**Robin and Nadia:** Epstein (2018) reported that the current diversity of candidates running for political office in the United States is unprecedented. Female gubernatorial nominees include women, women of color and LGBTQ women. Epstein interviewed political scientist Nadia Brown who said, ‘The political climate has mobilized people ... This, hopefully should be a wake-up call for the political parties’ (n.p.). This kind of organizing communicates powerful messages. And it should be noted, that judges are also sending powerful messages. Judge Rosemarie Aquilina sentenced Larry Nassar, the gymnast predator doctor to 175 years (CNN, 2018) after Aly Raisman and her teammates, and others, reported the abuse.

Serious social commentary raises consciousness, but we are not limited in our means of expression. Smart social satire can make similar points and bring a smile or a laugh to the surface:

I’m not a man, but some conditioner squirted onto my stomach in the shower and I felt so powerful I wanted to take away my own rights. (Calle Hack, October 12, 2018 Tweet)

We can feel joy in our supportive satirical political commentaries. We can laugh again as we tackle these issues, especially if we have smart female comedians, like Calle Hack, reaching out to us.

**Question 7: How has the #MeToo movement come to life ‘within organizations’ or disciplines like political science or communication, across various universities and associations? How might the expanded approach promote alternative interventions?**

**Nadia Brown:** The discipline of political science is the study of power. The #MeToo movement within the discipline provides a unique opportunity for political scientists to examine and reflect on how power is deployed, often in shifting and nuanced ways, to oppress scholars. The Women’s Caucus for Political Science (WCPS) hosted a short course/pre-conference on Wednesday, 29th August 2018, titled #MeTooPoliSci before the American Political Science Association’s annual meeting. The WCPS was awarded \$25,000 through an APSA special grant and had the full support of the APSA leadership to hold the short course. The short course was amazing! We enjoyed panels hosted by the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center and The Greene and Hafer Law Firm as well as more academic themed roundtables and workshops. Jenn Jackson, a graduate student at the University of Chicago, facilitated a panel on how to garner the power of collective practice to transform the university. This interactive session pushed participants to develop a set of recommendations that would produce radical equality and equity on our campuses. Rather than searching for ways to address the problem of sexual harassment, she urged participants to focus on addressing patriarchy, sexism, homophobia as the root cause of the problem. If political science, like other disciplines, does not directly deal with the structures that enable and promote sexual harassment, we will create policies that merely operate as a Band-Aid on a tumor.

We were empowered, refreshed and fortified inside of the short course and within the supportive WCPS network. However, reality soon hit. We had hoped that political scientists would be able to recognize the inherent power inequities in academic structures and institutions rather than seeing sexual harassment as isolated incidents by a few bad actors or baseless accusations by disgruntled feminists. We unfortunately faced significant and

persistent backlash from prominent members of the discipline immediately after leaving the short course and for the remainder of the annual meeting. For example, one of the editors of the *American Political Science Review*, the association's flagship journal, cited Bill Jacoby – the disgraced editor of the *American Journal of Political Science* – as having one of the best practices for coercing reviewers to submit timely reviews of manuscripts. Professor Bill Jacoby was forced to resign from his journal because of sexual harassment and for using the journal to exert power over would-be-authors (he propositioned a member of the WCPS and noted that if she slept with him that she'd be published in the journal). Another example of the pervasiveness of sexual harassment at the annual meeting occurred at a reception with a majority of racial and ethnic minority scholars. Two junior women of color, assistant professors, reported incidents of sexual harassment by a senior man of color to WCPS leadership. The women noted that these incidents were also tied to publishing opportunities as co-authors or research assistants on a particular project. Lastly, junior women reported feeling unsupported by senior women who referred to some forms of sexual harassment as merely microaggressions. These senior women used the term 'silly season' to refer to implicit sexual overtures. Of course, these senior women were well-meaning and prefaced their comments by noting the kinds of overt sexual harassment they endured in the early 1980s as part of the first large cohort of women political scientists. But the junior women felt belittled and unsupported. Indeed, the junior women were effectively silenced because they felt as if they could not speak with certain mentors about their experiences with sexual harassment if it differed in severity from their predecessors.

I point to these three examples that happened at the annual meeting in the days following the short course to illustrate that although the WCPS has the unwavering support of the APSA leadership in our attempt to curtail the pervasiveness of sexual harassment in the discipline, to point to the need for institutional change within the academia. The short course was a wonderful tool to empower the participants and call attention to a broader problem within the discipline. But hard work still remains. APSA as an organization has to acknowledge that power inequities are what enable sexual harassment to run rampant in the discipline. It is the editors that tie publishing to sexual favors, senior researchers who couple sex with co-authorship, and mentors who ignore and belittle the experiences of sexual harassment of junior women who are part and parcel of a culture that continues to marginalize less powerful scholars. The WCPS will continue to challenge the discipline from within and agitate for change. The #MeToo movement is ongoing. Until power inequities are addressed, sexual harassment will be pervasive. Ridding the discipline of known 'bad actors' or developing policies that address certain sexually harassing behaviors will only shift the problem to other individuals (those who have yet to be caught) and/or will lead to the creation of 'acceptable' forms of harassment that fall outside of the purview of the university. An alternative approach, as advanced by the WCPS, is radical and transformative change that requires that disciplines and universities remove the structural barriers that create underclasses of individuals who are less powerful than others.

## **Conclusion: Just the beginning**

#MeToo is a discourse alive with meaning and materiality, expressing the pain and organizing the resistance to sexual harassment. It is all too clear that society is still plagued by

sexual harassment, abuse and assault, but a new energy to fight has been found in the discourse, #MeToo, which brings hope for a brighter future. The phenomenon of sexual harassment has been legally defined as an organizational issue, and dealing with it as such has been helpful, but expanding conceptual parameters of ‘the organization’ also allows for the expansion of definitions of sexual harassment that in turn may generate alternative and creative solutions. A new organizational communication model has been proposed based on the aforementioned areas of communication, reality, expressive activity, and materialization with essential related theories being incorporated, resulting in a model titled, DREAM—dialectically, discursively and dialogically-driven (D), as studying how the realization or reality (R) comes about through expressive activities (EA) and manifests or materializes (M) into expressions that create, sustain, resist, challenge or change the world in which we live (DREAM). The contributors to this forum have worked with the DREAM model; they have expressed their outrage as well as their empathy, they have offered information, personal stories, advice and alternative solutions. They have spoken for us and with us concerning the dream to make serious change. Let us dare to hope that the advances that have taken place due to the #MeToo movement will bear fruit and flourish. As Tarana Burke (2018) suggested, we must find a way to strive for joy. Allow me to add to her voice, we must dare to dream.

## Notes

1. This article and forum are drawn from an earlier version presented at the National Communication Association (November, 2018) ‘We’re NOT playing: #Me Too, #Time’s Up, and #the game IS changing.’ The original contributors were Robin Patric Clair (Ed.), Nadia E. Brown, Hannah Delemeester, Debbie Dougherty, Patricia Geist Martin, and Paaige K. Turner.
2. The DREAM model, see the end of the appendix and endnote 6.
3. Clay tablets, dating to 2100 BCE, speak of a self-serving despot – Gilgamesh. In the first half of the story, the people pray to the heavens to send relief from Gilgamesh’s preying ways, especially his raping of young brides (Epic of Gilgamesh, 2018). These assaults are often marginalized by scholars who focus instead on the second half of the story, the theme of achieving everlasting life through legendary contributions, like building a wall. Fisher (1984) never mentions Gilgamesh’s assaults.
4. Equivalency organization and communication are ‘Equal in force, amount or value’ as in ‘a square equivalent to a triangle’ (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/equivalent>).
5. This is a case brought forth in Tippecanoe County, Indiana of a man who snuck into a woman’s room, pretended to be her boyfriend and had sex with her. He blatantly admitted to the act and said it was not against the law because she never said, no. The local prosecutor is calling for a law that will make ‘rape by deception’ illegal.

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## Appendix

### *Expanded approaches to organizational communication*

For those not familiar with this expanded definition of organizational communication, I provide the briefest of overviews. First, it is often discussed in contrast to a functionalist perspective which sees the organization as a container with goals of members achieving efficiency and effectiveness. Metaphorically, communication flows through a conduit, according to the container model and depicts communication as mechanical with *breakdowns* that are perceived as easily *fixed* – resulting in an oversimplification (Axley, 1984). Second, theories from the expanded perspective see organization not only as physical place (material) but also a discursive practice, and one of **equivalency**. Third, the expanded perspective promotes a **dialectical, social constructionism, or constitutive approach**, meaning discourse creates materiality and materiality feeds the discourse (Clair, 1996; Clair & Thompson, 1996; Dougherty, 2011).

The equivalency in the expanded models sees the relationship between organization and communication without privileging either term– communication <- -> organization– was promoted by Smith (1990) and Smith and Turner (1995), what others discuss as dialectical, which can be dated to the fragments of Heraclitus which were rediscovered by Nicholas of Cusa, who named the self-contained or simultaneous opposites, *coincidentia oopistorum* (Clair, 1994). Smith (1990), however, drew from post-structuralists and Russian theorists. Later, Smith and Turner (1995) couched equivalency in a social constructionist model (Social Constructionist Metaphor Analysis – SCMA) as that was perhaps closer to home for reviewers at the time, but the conceptualization originally drew heavily from Russian theorist's Lev Vygotsky's activity theory (Smith) in which individuals and cultural structures are seen as actively creating each other, are grounded in historical and political formations, contribute to cognitive development of individuals and to the creations of meaning and society. Vygotsky was influenced by Marx and challenged himself to apply Marx's social critical theory to the psychological development of individuals. (also see Activity Theory, 2018 and Vygotsky [1978/1930]).

More recently, organizational communication theorists have drawn (directly or indirectly) from Vygotsky's work to develop Actor-Network Theory (ANT), and from Smith's contributions to develop the FFM, Structuring Activity Theory (SAT), Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) and most recently PARC (see Putnam & Mumby, 2014). Briefly, ANT explores the agency of not only humans but also the structures, organizations, and even technologies in a

network that creates a phenomenon. FFM, the second model mentioned above, drew directly from Smith's work as well as critical and post-structural theory, suggesting that organizations can be understood as part of a flow of communicative activity 'integrating people as members,' creating 'structures' that can replace communication as they become accepted norms, recognizing coactivity, and 'positioning the organization in larger social systems' (McPhee, Poole, & Iverson, 2014, p. 80). SAT, similar to FFM, called upon Giddens' (1979) work. It incorporates a nuanced understanding by moving toward discursive activity and addressing policies, but has some limitations, like not focusing on how structuring and structures keep people from being able to respond or resist (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009). This is especially important when discussing bureaucracy and sexual harassment (Clair, 1993a). CCO, which was initiated by James Taylor, and has been continued by the Montreal School, drew directly from Smith's work and fundamentally adheres to Smith's ideas, but has the potential tendency to slip into a view of organization as limited to 'organizations.' For instance, CCO has historically leaned toward understanding how communication or discourse creates and sustains organizations with less focus on how organizing influences discourse or plays out at the macro-level. As Deetz and Eger (2014) suggest CCO has focused 'on only one half of a co-constitutive process' (p. 33) that Smith called for in her co-production model. Likewise, FFM somewhat privileges *the organization* as it looks at member negotiation (members of *organizations*) or reflexive restructuring of *organizations* or relationships between *organizations* and *institutions*. Deetz and Eger found these models wanting in political attentiveness and proposed an extension of what Smith and others developed by adding phenomenological, critical, and post-modern theories in the area of the political (e.g. my work on 'a real job' explores the political construction of labor via the colloquialism, 'a real job' – and incorporates the equivalency aspect by suggesting the grand narratives contribute to the design of the workforce (both in socializing and legitimating work, and the everyday talk/discourse both influences and is influenced by the grand narratives– Clair, 1996; Clair, McConnell, Bell, Hackbarth, & Mathes, 2008. In other words, communication and organization exist in a circular dialectical exchange.). Like the other expanded models, PARC is also subject to ideological slippage of privileging 'the organization.' For example, PARC begins with 'Politics of Authenticity' which is exemplified by the authors through emotional labor 'in organizational life' (Deetz & Eger, 2014, p. 35), but emotional labor need not be set within the context of the organization, to do so is to place a constraint on it. As mentioned within the text of this paper – Tarana Burke's emotional labor came in the simple act of getting out of bed.

Sexual harassment/assault and abuse represent an issue that is both discursive and material. It exists within and beyond organizations. It sends a message at a macro-level, that reinforces an inferior status for marginalized members of society. It threatens, victimizes, and traumatizes individuals at the micro-level. It expresses and manifests itself in dialectical fashion.

It is an organizational communication phenomenon, but not one that is limited to the organization. #MeToo has resurrected the focus on sexual harassment. It is up to scholars, activists, and individuals to come together to study it from expanded approaches that include a dialectically, discursively and dialogically-driven (D) model that addresses the realization or reality (R), the expressive activities (EA), and the manifestations or materialization (M) that enter the exchange process into expressions (discursively material manifestation as discourse and discourse as material manifestation) that create, sustain, resist, challenge or change the material world in which we live (DREAM). The DREAM model of organizational communication calls for a focus on the marginalized and the means to make the world, if not ideal or utopian, at the very least a better place.