Institutions Recognition of Female Graduate Learners' Voices and the Mediating Influences of the #Me-Too Movement

Constance M. Carpenter
Kansas State University

Abstract: The researcher framed the #Me-Too social justice activist movement as a plausible mediating variable influencing organizations' and subordinate evaluators' recognition of students during the portfolio learning assessment (PLA) process. The researcher's findings indicated when correlating evaluators ratings to academic years and the apex of the #Me-Too movement's viral social media event, male and female evaluators significantly (p=<.05, p=<.01) demonstrated a pattern (73%) of assigning higher ordinal ratings to male learners' portfolio submissions in comparison to ratings assigned to female learners' portfolio products. The paper highlighted the disparities women in education faced when seeking recognition for their voices and academic works. While the researcher was unable to generalize the paper's findings, the researcher posed implications for further research.

Keywords: women in education, portfolio learning assessment, #Me-Too movement.

Stanton (1996) defined voice as the connected tissue that links knowing and thought. Hall (1999) described voice as an "expression of one's experiences as valid and different from the dominant myth, at the risks of being silenced" (p.89). Belenky et al. (1986) and Collins (1998) highlighted the barriers women in academia faced when seeking recognition for their voices and academic works. Rossiter (1993) presented academic and research institutions norms and scripts fostered the silencing of women's contributions to academia and to science as a call for action where "the sexist nature of much of women's systematic under-recognition should be acknowledged, noted, and even highlighted in the sociology of knowledge or science, as a named 'effect'." (p. 337).

The purpose of the paper was to investigate the research question: *Did a correlation exist between the viral apex of the #Me-Too social activist movement and changes in institutions and their subordinate evaluators behavioral-norm-congruence when recognizing male and female graduate learners' voices?* First, I presented literature regarding the PLA process as a platform for the marginalization of female learners' written products. Second, I provided a brief history of the #Me-Too movement, focusing on the social media viral event in 2017 and the subsequent onset of organizational changes in behavioral-norm-congruence scripts. Finally, I described the research design, findings, and discussion.

Literature Review

The paper correlated three variables in the study of academia's under-recognition and silencing of female graduate learners' voices within the PLA process. First, evaluators' assessment of male and female learners' portfolio products served as the independent variable. Second, female and male graduate learners' portfolio submissions were the dependent variable. Third, Yin (2018) and Marks, Mathieu, and Zaccaro (2001) described the value of examining the temporal influence of time-spaced events as the data provided the investigator additional insight into patterns of organizations and subordinates social context. The time-space of the #Me-Too movement's viral event and social media communications served as the mediating variable where the researcher investigated the implications of the apex of the event on changes in organizations and evaluators' behavioral-norm-congruence.

Institutions and Evaluators Use of the PLA Process

Female graduate learners experiencing evaluator's marginalization during the learning assessment process served as a microcosm of what later expanded to a systemic effect of marginalization throughout the women's academic career pipeline (Gilligan & Richards, 2018). Despite numerous attempts by institutions to instill measures to reduce evaluator's biases within the PLA process, literature demonstrated raters systematically scored privileged male learners' submissions superior to female graduate learners' submissions (Adams & Zuniga, 2016; Collins & Carpenter, 2019). Female graduate students' fears of under-recognition often led learners to silence their voices by conforming their portfolio submissions to organizationsal scripts (Ghaye, 2007; Ng et al., 2015). Brookfield (1993) presented female learners endured a higher level of critique than their male counterparts with the women facing the "dark underbelly of the inspirational rhetoric of critical reflection" (p. 215).

The #Me-Too Feminist Activist Movement Social Media Viral Event

Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2020) stressed the importance of identifying mediating events that may influence the social context of a problem set. The authors suggested when searching "for causation in qualitative data, extend beyond the quantitative paradigm's linear cause and effect" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2020, p. 223). In 2017, actress Milano tweeted her silence regarding being a victim of sexual assault (Corrigan, 2019). The tweets and follow-on media attention propelled the #MeToo movement into the forefront of international social justice engagements. Within a day of Milano's posting, 4.5 million Facebook users posted 12 million reactions (Lang, 2019). Modrek and Chakalov (2019) estimated up to 34 million Twitter users read first-person accounts of individuals whom they followed. Later in 2017, *Time* magazine selected the #MeToo collective movement as *'Person of the Year' (*Alter et al., 2017*).* Lang (2019) posed the #MeToo activist movement "demonstrated the power of embodied structural information to effect change in the public sphere" (p. 18). Brookfield (1986) and Cerulo (1997) presented social movements, and the resultant media attention framed institution's scripts and learners gender constructionism.

Framing and Reframing Organizations Behavioral-norm-congruence

Bolman and Deal (2017) described framing and reframing as viewing a problem set from multiple perspectives to gain new insight and clarity into a perceived organizational failure. Silard (2018) and Van Kleef, Homan, and Cheshin (2012) posed behavioral-norm-congruence as the interaction between the imposed organizational scripts and subordinates' emotion-related behaviors. As the months progressed after the viral event, institutions reframed their behavioral-norm-congruence, professing a call to action in recognition of sexist power and the silencing of women's voices. Authorities launched investigations regarding sexist power and women's victimizations (Gibson et al., 2019). Institutions revamped their sexual harassment and assault policies and programs and designated counselors within their organizational structure to hear the voices of victims. However, Roth-Cohen, Ne'Eman-Haviv, and Bonny-Noach (2019) proposed patriarchal institutions, evaluators, and male learners tended to react indifferently or negatively to the digital cascade of the #Me-Too movement. Patriarchal institutions and privileged males viewed the directionality of the movement's accusations of male sexist power as being primarily negative.

<div align="center">

Research Design

</div>

The researcher's design sought to answer the research question: *Did a correlation exist between the viral apex of the #Me-Too social activist movement and changes in institutions and their subordinate evaluators behavioral-norm-congruence when recognizing female graduate learners' voices?* The researcher analyzed learners' portfolios prior to, during, and after the social media apex of the #Me-Too activist movement. The 5-year period of research was academic years (AYs) 2015/2016 through 2019/2020. The population under study consisted of female and male graduate students attending a mid-western university. While the rubric's requirements did not change during the study period, the institution changed the learning assessment process where in AY 2019/2020 administrators removed students' names from portfolio submissions.

The researcher applied a sequential, quantitative approach consisting of two descriptive statistical tests: the Kruskal-Wallis H-test and the Mann-Whitney U-test. The researcher used a stratified, random representative sample set of 75 students from a population of 412 learners' portfolios. The sample set was divided into five subsets: male (n=15) and female (n=15) students from each AY for 150 portfolios. Of the seven student learning outcomes (SLO) within the portfolios, the investigator focused the paper on SLO 3. The SLO 3 rubric requirement encompassed learners demonstrating an understanding of social issues affecting adult learning. Each student submitted two artifacts and one critical essay. Evaluators rated students' submissions based on a Likert scale of 1 to 4. The rubrics requirements defined the ordinal ratings as unsatisfactory (1), basic (2), proficient (3), and distinguished (4). Up to six evaluators rated the students' portfolios, where two randomly selected raters reviewed each product.

Findings

First, the researcher conducted a two-tailed Kruskal-Wallis H-test. The researcher applied a 95% confidence level. The researcher proposed the null hypothesis as the median ratings across the five academic periods were equal. The alternative hypothesis was at least one of the five academic years differed in median ratings. The researcher depicted the test findings in Table 1. Of the five academic years, the statistical test indicated a statistically significant result where the null hypothesis was rejected for two conditions: male evaluators rating female learners' portfolio submissions and male evaluators rating male students' portfolio submissions. The test indicated the medians of the evaluator's ordinal rankings of the four groups within the five academic years were unequal. This means it was plausible over the longitudinal period that evaluators changed their rating behaviors and valued students' portfolio submissions differently when comparing academic years and students' genders.

Table 1
Case study quantitative findings using the Kruskal-Wallis, H-test

Variables		n	H	p
Evaluators[a]	Students[b]			
Female	Female	75	4.0947	.39334
Female	Male	75	5.4839	.24115
Male	Female	75	10.194	.03727*
Male	Male	75	14.980	.00474**

Note. Evaluators' genders were assigned as independent variables—learners' genders were assigned as dependent variables.
*p<.05. **p<.01

A limitation of the Kruskal-Wallis H-test was the findings did not indicate if the rejection of the null hypothesis occurred before, during, or well after the apex of the #Me-Too movement's viral social media event. The researcher furthered the research by applying a two-tailed Mann-Whitney U-test using the previous sample set. The null hypothesis was the medians of the academic year pairings were identical. The alternative hypothesis was at least 1 of the 20 academic pairings differed in medians. The researcher applied a 95% confidence level. The null hypothesis was rejected for 11 of the 20 AY pairings. Figure 1 depicts the test results outlining the AY pairings, z-scores, p-values, and U-values for the 11 significant sample groupings.

The researcher formed several observations regarding the findings. First, all significant z-score values were negative, indicating that the mean of the 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 sample subsets was below the mean of other academic years. Second, the researcher found when correlating ratings before, during, and after the apex of the # MeToo movement event, male evaluators demonstrated a higher rate of change in their behavioral-norm-congruence while rating students. This was especially true for male raters rating
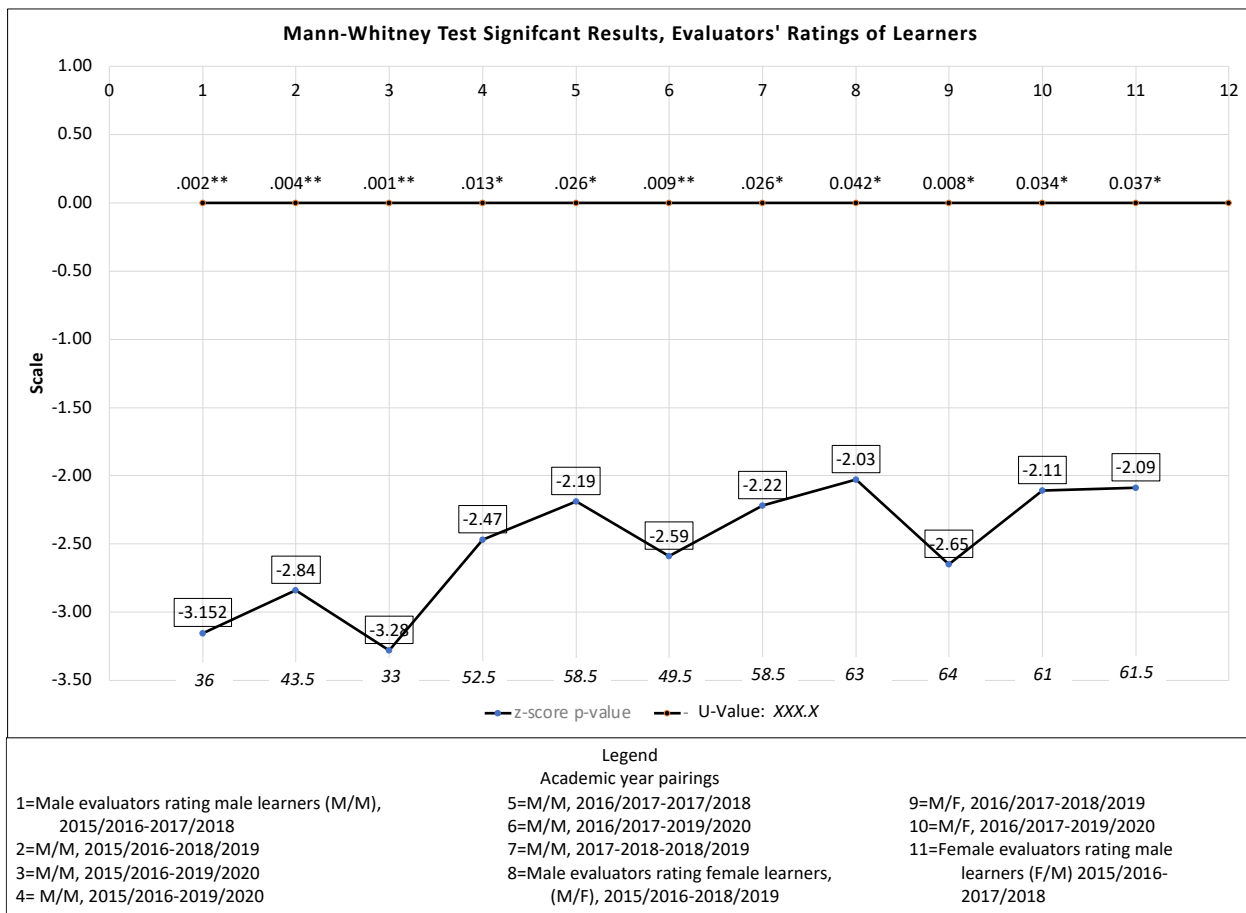
male learners' (M/M) portfolio products. Of the ten significant (p=.05, p=.01) findings, male evaluators demonstrated higher ordinal ratings in 7 M/M pairs. Third, female evaluators demonstrated a much lower rate of changes in their behavioral-norm-congruence, whereas the raters demonstrated a significant increase in 1 M/M pair.

Discussion

The researchers' rejection of the null hypotheses in the Kruskal-Wallis H-test and Mann-Whitney U-test demonstrated inequalities with male and female evaluator's rating assessments over the paper's longitudinal period. The paper's findings presented implications that existed in organizations and evaluators' behavioral-norm-congruence during and after the #Me-Too movement's social justice viral event. This was especially true where male and female raters recognized a higher percentage (73%) of ratings increases for male learners' portfolio products versus ratings increases for female learners' portfolio products. The data indicated disparities in organizational behavioral-norm-

Figure 1

Case study's statistically significant quantitative findings using the Mann-Whitney U-test

Mann-Whitney Test Signifcant Results, Evaluators' Ratings of Learners

Legend
Academic year pairings

1=Male evaluators rating male learners (M/M), 2015/2016-2017/2018
2=M/M, 2015/2016-2018/2019
3=M/M, 2015/2016-2019/2020
4= M/M, 2015/2016-2019/2020

5=M/M, 2016/2017-2017/2018
6=M/M, 2016/2017-2019/2020
7=M/M, 2017-2018-2018/2019
8=Male evaluators rating female learners, (M/F), 2015/2016-2018/2019

9=M/F, 2016/2017-2018/2019
10=M/F, 2016/2017-2019/2020
11=Female evaluators rating male learners (F/M) 2015/2016-2017/2018

congruence post Me-Too Movement where raters placed higher values on recognizing male students' voices while under-recognizing female learners' voices. A plausible explanation for the disparities was raters reacted indifferently or negatively to the #Me-Too movements messaging (Roth-Cohen, Ne'Eman-Haviv, & Bonny-Noach, 2019).

The researcher could not generalize the #Me-Too movement's influence on organizations and the evaluator's administration of the PLA process. Further research, such as a qualitative analysis of evaluators' reactions to female graduate students' voices as the learners expressed their portfolio critical reflections. The paper provided a new perspective on organizations' use of the PLA process and the #Me-Too social justice activist movement, mediating evaluators' recognition of female graduate learners' voices.

References

Adams, M. & Zuniga X. (2016). Getting started: Core concepts for social justice education. In M. Adams, L. A. Bell, & P. Griffon (Eds.), *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (3rd ed, pp. 95-130). Routledge.

Alter, A, Schrobsdorff, S., Lansky, S., Samuelson, K., Rhodan, M., & Steinmetz, K. (2017, December). Person of the year: The silence breakers, the voices that launched a movement. *Time Special Series.* *https://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-2017-silence-breakers/*

Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J.M. (1986). *Women's way of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind*. Basic Books.

Bolman L.G. & Deal T. E. (2017) *Reframing Organizations* (6th ed.). Jossey-Bass

Brookfield, S. (1986). Media power and the development of media literacy: An adult educational interpretation. *Harvard Educational Review,56*(2),151–171. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.56.2.6601402174824253.

Brookfield, S. (1993). Breaking the code: Engaging practitioners in critical analysis of adult educational literature. *Studies in the Education of Adults,25*(1), 64–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/02660830.1993.11730583.

Cerulo, K.A. (1997). Identity construction: New issues, new directions. *Annual Review of Sociology, 23(1)*, 385–409. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.23.1.385.

Collins, P.H. (1998). *Fighting words: Black women and the search for justice*. University of Minnesota Press.

Collins, R. A. & Carpenter, C. M. (2019, October 8-11), *Gender, social construction assessment: Analyzing bias within portfolio assessments of a graduate level program* [Paper presentation]. American Association for Adult and Continuing Education Conference, Saint Louis, MO, United States.

Corrigan, L. M. (2019). The #MeToo moment: A rhetorical zeitgeist. *Women's Studies in Communications*, *42*(3), 264–268. https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2019.1652528.

Ghaye, T. (2007. Is reflective practice ethical? (The case of the reflective portfolio). *Reflective Practice ,8*(2),151– 162. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623940701288859.

Gibson, C, Davenport, S., Fowler, T., Harris, C.B., Prudhomme, S., Whiting, S. & Simmons-Horton, S. (2019). Understanding the 2017 'Me Too' movement's timing. *Humanity & Society, 43*(2), 217–224. https://doi.org/10.1177/0160597619832047.

Gilligan, C. & Richards, D. (2018). *Darkness: Patriarchy resurgence and feminist resistance*. Cambridge University Press

Hall, R. & Sandler, B. R. (Principal Investigators). (1982). *The classroom climate: A chilly one for women?* (Project No. G008005198) [Grant]. Project on the status and education of women. Association of American Colleges. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED215628

Lang, H. (2019). #MeToo: A case study in re-embodying information. *Computers and Composition, 53*, 9–20. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2019.05.001.

Marks, M.A., Mathieu, J.E., & Zaccaro, S. (2001). A temporally based framework and taxonomy of team processes. *The Academy of Management Review, 26*(3), 356–376. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2001.4845785.

Modrek, S., & Chakalov, B. (2019). The #MeToo movement in the United States: Text analysis of early twitter conversations. *Journal of Medical Internet Research, 21*(9), e13837. https://doi.org/10.2196/13837.

Miles, M.B, Huberman, A.M, & Saldana, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications, Ltd.

Ng, S. L., Kinsella, E. A., Friesen, F. & Hodges, B. (2015). Reclaiming a theoretical orientation to reflection in medical education research: A critical narrative review. *Medical Education, 49*, (5), 461–475. https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.12680.

Rossiter, M. W. (1993). The Matthew Matilda Effect in Science. *Social Studies of Science, 23*(2), 325–341. https://doi.org/10.1177/030631293023002004.

Roth-Cohen, O., Ne'Eman-Haviv, V. & Bonny-Noach, H. (2019). #MeToo empowerment through media: A new multiple model for predicting attitudes toward media campaigns. *International Journal of Communication*, *13*, 5427–5443.

Stanton, A. (1996). Reconfiguring teaching and knowing in the college classroom. In N. Goldberger, J. N.

Goldberger, J.M. Tarule, B. Clinchy, & M. Belenky (Eds.), *Knowledge, difference, and power* (pp. 25-56). Basic Books.

Silard, A. (2018). Emotions for a cause: How the emotion expressions of nonprofit leaders produce follower engagement and loyalty. *Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *47*(2), 304–324. https://doi.org/10.1177/2041386612454911.

Van Kleef, G. A., Homan, A. C., & Cheshin, A. (2012). Emotional influence at work: Take it EASI. *Organizational Psychology Review*, *2*(4), 311–39. https://doi.org/10.1177/2041386612454911.

Yin, R.K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.1177/2041386612454911