



#MeToo Amplified:
Understanding
Reactions to the
Kavanaugh Hearings
Key Findings &
Recommendations

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Amplify: to expand something by the use of detail, illustration or closer analysis to make larger or greater (as in amount, importance, intensity) to increase strength or amount of

Introduction

On July 9, 2018, Judge Brett Kavanaugh, a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit, was nominated by President Trump for the Associate Justice vacancy on the U.S. Supreme Court. The Senate Judiciary Committee's confirmation hearings for Judge Kavanaugh began on September 4, 2018, and soon thereafter, allegations arose that Judge Kavanaugh assaulted Dr. Christine Blasey Ford in high school. The Senate Judiciary Committee paused the confirmation hearings until September 27, 2018 to give both Judge Kavanaugh and Dr. Blasey Ford the opportunity to respond to the allegations. During the pause in the hearings, Deborah Ramirez and Julie Swetnick also alleged that Judge Kavanaugh had sexually assaulted them. Judge Kavanaugh denied all the allegations.

Dr. Blasey Ford testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee on the morning of September 27th. She was questioned by the Democratic Senators on the Committee; Rachel Mitchell, a sex crimes prosecutor from Arizona, questioned Dr. Blasey Ford on behalf of the Republican Senators. Judge Kavanaugh testified on the afternoon of the 27th.

After being confronted by tearful sexual assault survivors following the hearing, Senator Jeff Flake convinced the Senate Judiciary Committee to delay the confirmation vote by a week to give the FBI a chance to investigate the allegations.

The full Senate voted on Judge Kavanaugh's nomination on October 6, 2018. Judge Kavanaugh was confirmed as a U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice by a 50-48 vote.

The media swiftly and expansively made the connection between Judge Kavanaugh's hearing and the #MeToo movement:

The Kavanaugh and Ford Hearings are a Moment of Truth for #MeToo (The Guardian, 09.27.2018)

Kavanaugh Battle Shows the Power, and the Limits, of #MeToo Movement (The New York Times, 09.29.18)

The Kavanaugh Hearings Are Hurting #MeToo (Politico Magazine, 10.02.18)

What's next for #MeToo after Kavanaugh's confirmation (CNN, 10.14.18)

The #MeToo connection also became a swift and expansive focal point of conversation between many women and men in workplaces. When people started reaching out to us with stories of "feeling triggered," "being too upset to work," and "I need help to get through this," we designed a short survey to capture people's experiences and perspectives in a way that can add to our continually growing awareness and understanding of the #MeToo movement and its impact on women and men in workplaces.

The survey was conducted in November/December 2018.

Summary Findings

The majority of all respondents followed the hearings very closely and daily with most people discussing the hearings primarily with their friends. Some general points of conversation were Kavanaugh's behavior and character, the dismissal of Dr. Blasey Ford's experience, the erosion of the judicial system, and tribalism. Many respondents indicated that their friends, families, and colleagues helped them the most to deal with the negative impacts. Several people indicated reading news sources that were aligned with their perspectives/points of view, connecting with others, and mobilizing politically were very important in dealing with the negative impacts of the confirmation hearings.

Summary Findings – Gender Differences

Women and men noted in large percentages that they closely followed the confirmation hearings and spoke to people in their lives about the hearings daily.

For women and men, the primary person or people they spoke to about the hearings were their friends, followed closely by their partner or spouse, and then colleagues or coworkers. Interestingly, social media networks were some of the least resources to be selected.

When asked what the main topic of conversation was, many women noted they talked in great length about the credibility of Dr. Blasey Ford's testimony and the sexual assault allegations. Women also said they were more likely to talk about the partisan standard of Kavanaugh's lack of experience and qualifications, his attitude, and qualifications. Men were more likely to talk about the political implications of the hearing. Many men noted they talked about the qualifications of Kavanaugh, the political angles, and partisanship. Some men discussed privilege, but, unlike women, few noted the words sexual assault in their comments.

Representative Comments: What people discussed with others

"Others' sexual assault stories, fraud, a federal judge misstating evidence, credibility and bravery of the victim, outrage."

"That I believed Dr. Ford; the conduct of Republicans in the hearings; my frustration with the lack of understanding of the difference between a trial and a senate committee hearing; the committee's apparent lack of interest in understanding what happened; the impact on the Supreme Court of this confirmation."

"Whether we believe he did the things accused of. How he testified and how Dr. Ford testified."

"His misogyny, his lies about everything from Roe to the meaning of his calendar entries, his transparent partisanship, his complete lack of judicial temperament, his contempt for all democratic institutions and disrespect for all those attempting to preserve them."

"How poorly done it all was."

"What a disgrace it was for the country that the process has stooped this low"

"Partisanship. Investigations. Senate hearings."

When asked what positive impact Justice Brett Kavanaugh's confirmation process had on respondents personally, a majority of women wrote "none." On the other hand, when asked about the negative impact women included words such as "fear", "disgust", "discouragement", "anger", and described feeling "despondent".

Representative Comments – Women's Comments on Impact of Hearings:

"None whatsoever."

"None that I can think of. It was depressing and infuriating at the same time."

"It further solidified my desire to become a public servant."

"I felt (feel) sad and I'm concerned about the future."

When men were asked about the positive impact of the confirmation process, many noted it did not have any positive impact, but some noted that it provided perspective or opened the door to have conversations about women and leadership. When asked of the negative impact, men used words such as "depressing", "despair", and "frustration". Men mostly discussed their respect for the justice system and its impact on the US citizenry.

Representative Comments – Men's Comments on Impact of Hearings:

"It motivated me to find ways to bring people together and diminish our tribalism. To find ways to listen and respect rather demonize and demean."

"Told me that the problem of people not believing women or not caring was worse than I thought. It's only positive because now I have resolved even more strongly to do something about it."

"Clarified my understanding of how our political system can be manipulated and how far we are from the ideal of government of/by/for the people."

Summary Findings – Race/Ethnicity Differences

Majority of all respondents followed the confirmation process closely, with majority respondents more likely to have followed the hearings and have talked with people about the confirmation process.

Both majority and minority respondents spoke with friends the most about the confirmation process with partners or spouses or significant others a close second, and then colleagues or coworkers. Interestingly, for minority respondents, professional acquaintances/networks were a significant source of people they spoke to about the confirmation process.

When asked what the topics of conversations were, majority respondents noted credibility and fit of Justice Kavanaugh. Many majority respondents talked specifically about the testimony, lying under oath, the impact of Kavanaugh's appointment and the impact on women's issues. Many also discussed sexual assault and harassment as a topic of conversation.

Representative Comments: Majority Responses

Examples of credibility and candidate's credentials quotes:

"Credibility of witnesses. Sad state of affairs of our political parties. Both broken. Media not relaying accurate information."

"Aspects of both of their testimony. Their credibility. Kavanaugh's anger and his treatment of women senators. Highly partisan approach to questioning. Using a prosecutor to question and how she was treated."

"His lying under oath and his partisanship."

"About how flawed a candidate he was and how sad it was the role politics played."

"How horribly unqualified he was and how the process was rushed."

"His demeanor. The credibility of Dr. Ford. The horrible response from GOP."

"How unfit Kavanaugh was, how misconstrued the process was, how off the rails Collins was."

Comments about sexual harassment:

"Who believes women talking about sexual assault; what qualifications/background would disqualify a Supreme Court Justice."

"The injustice of confirming him. How victims are not believed. How it triggers thoughts of my own experiences with assault."

"#MeToo movement, the credibility of both Ford and Kavanaugh, due process and the presumption of innocence."

Minority respondents also discussed the credibility of Justice Kavanaugh. Many noted they discussed this behavior and the double standard of the hearing. Minority respondents discussed the anger and "unprofessional" attitude of the hearing. Many also explicitly discussed sexual assault.

Representative Comments: Minority Responses

"Regarding his character and judicial temperament as well as his truthfulness."

"His lying, treatment of women questioning him. And his very obvious partisan views."

"Sexism, perjury, judicial temperament, impeachment, credibility, etc."

"Respect, demeanor, belligerent drunks, truthfulness, tribalism, projection, courage, cowardice, privilege, elitism, qualities needed in judges, politics, hate, anger, fear."

"His dishonesty and aggression. The ease with which he displayed anger. The heartbreaking, controlled and entirely credible testimony of Dr. Blasey Ford."

Both majority and minority respondents noted emphatically that there were little positive outcomes of the hearing. Many used words like "none".

Representative Comments:

"No positive impact, made me more depressed about our country."

"The only thing I can hope for is that more people are convinced that inequality exists and that they choose to fight for what's just."

In regard to negative impacts, both majority and minority respondents used words like disturbing, sad, and disheartening. For some, the experiences were triggering of past experiences. Both majority and minority respondents noted friends and family as support systems. Some noted therapy.

Representative Comments:

"That he will work to overturn women's rights, people of color rights and LGBTQ rights."

"The process needs changing, and I was sad at how women were/are treated throughout the hearings. We are very far from equality."

"The hearings were horrific, uncivil and hurtful. I found I got depressed because of all the hateful vitriol and the very transparent lying that went on."

"Embarrassed that we have allowed Supreme Court nomination to become politicized."

"It made me sad that we are in a state of such distrust, hate and division. It made me angry to hear projections about my motivations by opposing parties."

"Made me physically ill. Just can't understand why my country is going backwards rather than forward."

Summary Findings: Generational Differences

WWII Generation

The majority of the WWII Generation respondents followed the hearings closely either daily or frequently. Most spoke about the confirmation hearings with their friends and partners, spouses, and significant others.

WWII Generation respondents spoke about Kavanaugh's character and demeanor during the confirmation process.

Representative Comments:

"His misogyny, his lies about everything from Roe to the meaning of his calendar entries, his transparent partisanship, his complete lack of judicial temperament, his contempt for all democratic institutions and disrespect for all those attempting to preserve them."

While many WWII Generation respondents felt that there were no positive impacts of the confirmation process, respondents felt encouraged to vote and become politically engaged.

Representative Comments:

"...More determined to fight."

"Vote!"

WWII Generation respondents also noted that they were sad and disheartened with the confirmation process.

Representative Comments:

"Depression for several days."

"Dismay, disgust, sadness."

WWII Generation respondents noted that their friends, family, spouses, and media outlets helped them cope with the negative impacts.

WWII generation respondents also noted that they want more honest input from politicians, input from male members of the House and Senate, and more time to listen to dialogues.

Baby Boomers

The majority of Baby Boomers stated they followed the confirmation process very closely. The majority talked to people about the confirmation process daily. The majority spoke to friends primarily and colleagues/coworkers secondly.

Baby Boomers' discussions ranged from discussing Judge Kavanaugh himself, the media's coverage of the confirmation, the impact of the process on women and our government, and their own personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Representative Comments:

"Justice Kavanaugh's temperament/demeanor, anger, lying/dishonesty, and lack of respect."

"The way women are treated and dismissed, and how society does not believe sexual misconduct survivors."

"Tribalism"/"political bias"/"partisan politics."

Like the WWII Generation, many Baby Boomers felt motivated to become more politically engaged after the hearings.

Representative Comments:

"It motivated me to find ways to bring people together and diminish our tribalism. To find ways to listen and respect rather demonize and demean."

"I need to get involved - just need to figure out how / what to do. I need to encourage everyone to vote!"

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"The only positive message that I can draw from this is hopefully it will ignite more people to get out and vote. It is time for the whole lot of them to be ousted. My understanding is that the next SC candidate in line is even worse (politically), which could set back women for decades. (I realize this may be a bit off-topic, because we are really talking about the travesty of the confirmation hearings.)"

"His confirmation reaffirmed the process....and I now anticipate that he will have a distinguished career as a Supreme Court Justice....just as Clarence Thomas has done following the accusations made against him in an attempt to subvert the nomination."

"Commitment to continue fighting everything his confirmation represents. "

"None."

Many Baby Boomers expressed their disappointment in the process and stated that they expected more from the system. Many also indicated that the confirmation process and discussions around it put a wedge in some of their personal and working relationships.

Representative Comments:

"His confirmation last weekend gave me feelings of powerlessness and showed me that many things have not changed in decades among men in positions of power (and the women and men who enable them)."

"Women are no more respected today than we were 30 years ago - maybe worse. Elected officials do not represent their constituents. They represent their party and donors."

"The process was compromised and there is rampant hypocrisy on both sides."

"I am more concerned about the lack of collegiality among our leaders and the terrible example this sets for our country. I feel like I need to be very careful about what I discuss with neighbors, coworkers, and friends, for fear of ruining good and productive relationships if there is disagreement."

"Disappointed to see so many lack of curiosity for the detailed and complex factors involved in the scenario. Sad to see people not recognize that BOTH could be telling their truth or a lie. Tribal thinking led to incivility."

"It brought a lot of anger and frustration to the forefront. It put an even greater divide between me and many of my "friends." It exposed a lot."

"It reconfirmed my belief that there is a double standard in the US regarding how men's "truth" is viewed, versus how women's "truth" is viewed. It reconfirmed to me that Republicans misuse power. It reconfirmed to me that even women in the US do not believe other women who have the courage to tell their stories publicly."

Baby Boomers indicated that some of the available resources to them to cope with the negative impacts of the confirmation process were conversations with family and friends, SNL, faith & prayer, social media, mindfulness, and alcohol. Of those who indicated resources that would have been helpful to cope, many indicated dialogue or discussions.

Representative Comments:

"A community forum to discuss these issues."

"More opportunities for dialogue with people with whom it appears I disagree."

"Some true impartial dialogue--rather than ONLY partisan dialogue. I believe that in his mind, he did not assault Dr. Ford. Because he was too drunk, or he has denied it his whole life."

"A shrink."

Generation X

Gen X had the largest pool of survey responses. Interestingly, all of the Gen X respondents indicated that they talked to people about the confirmation process. The majority of Gen X



respondents indicated that they talked about the confirmation process daily and the most with friends and partners/ spouses.

There were many primary topics of conversation amongst Gen X respondents: the confirmation process, the probability of Judge Kavanaugh being confirmed, Judge Kavanaugh's character and judicial temperament, the credibility of Dr. Blasey Ford and Judge Kavanaugh, the state of the country, lying, assault/harassment, gender inequality, white male privilege, and their personal frustrations.

Representative Comments:

"How upset and angry I was; what it means to believe survivors (and what it doesn't mean); the epidemic of sexual assault in America, and why people don't report; the problem of protecting elite Americans even when they commit perjury."

"Initially, concern about his conservative leanings and the impact on the supreme court decisions, and later about his temperament, honesty and integrity."

"Concern, worry, disgust, angst over the current state of leaders and their lack of regard for women. the impact of the nomination on women's health and reproductive freedom. the #MeToo movement and the lack of belief in women and their stories - while at the same time priest sex abuse survivors speaking out decades later received no criticism. double standards. rape culture. white privilege and male privilege. white tears. cluelessness on the part of men. the hypocrisy of religious leaders."

"White male privilege, being a victim who was not believed, techniques to channel the feeling of re-victimization, sadness for my country, how to hide in plain sight, how to act in an office setting when those around me (specifically white men in positions of authority) talked about the poor treatment of poor B Kav."

"With my son we talked about consent, appropriate behavior with females, white privilege and entitlement, that the world will look at my Black son differently than white males who are powerful or are closely aligned with powerful people. With my husband we talked about our disgust, entitlement and that in elections, the courts, especially SCOTUS is the most important issue."

"My frustration with the process and the state of political affairs/discourse; my perspectives as to how certain individuals presented themselves during the hearing process; and (particularly with my children) my thoughts as to how what a person says and does matters and that things a person does earlier in life/school can impact him/her later in life."

"Belief that the alleged incident did occur, disbelief that the calendars were being given credibility, general discussions about sexual harassment, and discussions about Judge Kavanaugh's unprofessional conduct during the confirmation process."

"The horror of it all, the disgraceful behavior of Judge Kavanaugh and many of the senators. The complete lack of respect/appreciation of the humanity of women in this country."

"White privilege, make privilege, #MeToo, Clarence Thomas and history repeating itself."

More Gen X respondents indicated that the confirmation process had a negative impact on them personally than any other generation. Many used words such as "dismay", "disappointment", "despair", "stress", "depressed", and "hopeless" to describe how the confirmation process impacted them. Many of the comments discussed how it was another example of the division and tension in the US that is experienced in daily interactions with people and even close family and friends. Many Gen X respondents expressed their disappointment with the outcome of the confirmation process and their fear for future generations.

Representative Comments:

"It was emotionally draining and depressing. It was a negative distraction [...] Most importantly, it resulted in him being seated on the Supreme Court, where he will do enormous harm on a generational scale."

"Made me depressed and angry, fearful for the future."

"General depression and anxiety about the future of our country, treatment of women and especially survivors of sexual assault - inability to focus on other things that week. The hearings, etc. well all-consuming and stressful."

"It has left me grossly demoralized about the state of gender in America. The process reaffirmed that men can disrespect, abuse, and crap all over women without consequence. It has severely shaken my faith in the Supreme Court specifically and American democracy more broadly."

"Disagreement and tension within my nuclear family."

"It was very stressful to watch. It really impacted daily interactions, made me nervous to speak to some people, and had me on edge."

Family, friends, social media, the press/news, and voting were some of the top resources that Gen X respondents felt helped them cope with the negative impacts of the confirmation process.

Several Gen X respondents expressed the wish for a space where like-minded people could chat or engage in peer group discussions. Many Gen X respondents found comfort in social media and being able to voice themselves.

Generation Y ("Gen Y")

Most Gen Y respondents spoke about the confirmation process daily with their friends, colleagues, and partners/spouses equally. Similar to other generations, Gen Y respondents discussed Judge Kavanaugh's qualification and fit as a Supreme Court Justice. Many also discussed sexual assault against women and the impact of the confirmation on women.

Representative Comments:

"How could they vote him in? He blatantly lied under oath and was hostile. He showed his true character and it was not very judicial."

"Who was more believable? Was it possible to believe both of them? Should he have been disqualified regardless of the sexual assault claim because of being dishonest under oath and temperament?"

"The various accusations, how rare false accusations are, and how we felt it was important to take them seriously. How brave and compelling Dr. Ford was, and how frightening the anger displayed by Kavanaugh and GOP senators was during the hearing. After seeing the outcomes of the hearing and the mass reaction to it, my female and male friends are disheartened to witness the culture of victim blaming, and prizing men's entitlement over women's safety. It's upsetting to see Dr. Ford harassed."

"The validity of Dr. Ford's claims, Kavanaugh's fitness for the chair as justice/his partisanship, and sexual assault in general."

Gen Y respondents did not indicate many positive impacts of the confirmation process on them personally. However, several Gen Y respondents mentioned that the confirmation process prompted them to do their own research to understand the historical context of the hearings.

Similar to Gen X respondents, Gen Y respondents conveyed how inspired they were by Dr. Blasey Ford's testimony and believed it empowered sexual assault and harassment survivors to tell their own stories to raise greater awareness of the issue.

Representative Comments:

"I suppose I'm even more inclined than before to believe survivors of assault and take sexual assault very seriously. I also participated in a rally and that made me feel less alone. It probably also made me more politically motivated."

"It confirmed my thinking that the majority (not meaning white people, but rather the majority of the population) will have a very difficult time overcoming the structural difficulties of being heard in our system of government."

"It made me research/become familiar with the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill case, as well as SC nominee Brock, two cases from my early childhood for which I had no recollection."

"It once again catapulted me into a position of honing my opinions and beliefs. It also made me do some reading and research about the Supreme Court and it's justices."

Regarding the negative impact of the confirmation process, many Gen Y respondents indicated that it left them feeling "stressed", "anxious", "hopeless", and "disappointed". Several people felt triggered by the confirmation process and many Gen Y respondents concluded that the current men in power do not care about women.

Representative Comments:

"Large amounts of anxiety and dread, fear of future repercussions."

"It's been depressing to not only watch our government so eager to confirm someone so partisan, angry, and credibly accused of sexual assault by three women, but also to see the public reaction. I wasn't old enough to watch the Anita Hill hearings, but I thought we'd learned our lesson. This is the first time in my 35-year-old life that I'm worried that things will be worse, not better, for women 10 years from now."

"I was so triggered (unexpectedly) that I had to take a half day and go home. My trust in the legal system and congress has been harmed (what was there to begin with, anyway), and I've been hurt by the views people I love hold."

"Anxiety and fear for our country, especially for my daughter as she grows up in a world that still shames victims."

"Made me feel depressed, hopeless, disgusted, worried."

Some resources that Gen Y respondents used to cope with the negative impact of the confirmation process included friends, family, church, social media, yoga, mindfulness, and therapy. Many indicated that venting/talking helped them the most. While many Gen Y respondents generally wished for a better government and politicians, they also commented that having a space for public conversations would have been helpful.

Recommendations

Based on our analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data in this survey and the many phone calls and emails we received on this topic, there are three primary recommendations that we are encouraging workplaces to adopt in order to create more inclusive workplaces during moments of national or global crisis around subject matters that intersect with your diversity and inclusion efforts:

1. Distribute and use studies like this to increase awareness and spark dialogues of understanding. The goal of studies like this isn't to provoke discussions involving agreement or disagreement; studies like this can simply be portals into perspectives that are different from your own. Trying to understand perspectives other than your own is a critical part of the leadership and inclusion journey.

2. Recognize that there are three related but distinct arenas for diversity and inclusion work, and carefully assess where your gaps are and which arena requires your efforts. The three arenas and areas they cover are:

a. Compliance: legal framework, policies, protocols, consistent accountability, prevention of liability.

b. Culture: informal interactions, unregulated choices, systemic/leadership behaviors, awareness education and programming, leadership development, bystander behaviors, prevention of offense/exclusion/isolation.

c. Community: supportive dialogues, “affinity” models, safety nets for “triggered” reactions, safe spaces for connection and healing. The #MeToo Amplified study revealed that while many people felt that their workplaces had done an effective job of addressing diversity and inclusion issues through the Compliance and Culture arenas, people wanted more unstructured programming focused simply on creating Community and providing people with the opportunity to connect and heal.

3. In increasing Community opportunities within your organization and/or network, allow for identity or experience affinities in building Communities when particular identities and experiences are underrepresented in your organization.

