"I DON'T WANT TO BE TOUCHED ALL THE TIME" STREET HARASSMENT AND THE INDIAN WOMAN

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION THROUGH INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS AND DISPOSITIVE ANALYSIS

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Preface

This thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy entitled "'I don't want to be touched all the time' - Street harassment and the Indian woman: A qualitative exploration through dispositive analysis and interpretative phenomenological analysis" is based on work conducted by the author at The University of Derby between the years 2016 and 2019.

All the work recorded in this thesis is original unless otherwise acknowledged in the text or by references. None of the work has been submitted for another degree in this or any other University.

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The soul of this research is my participants. I am extremely grateful to the eight women who trusted me unquestioningly with their experiences of street harassment and shared their innermost thoughts with so much dignity and courage.

A million thanks to my wonderful husband Kunal, whose quirky sense of humour and enthusiasm to eat junk food made the PhD journey so much more easier and fun.

Last but not the least, I must mention Fiona's cat who made a grand appearance during our intense Skype discussions; I believe this august presence has had a positive effect on the thesis.

Abstract

Street harassment is the gender-based sexual harassment of individuals in public spaces by strangers. Studies have shown that the majority of victims of street harassment are women and the perpetrators are men. Despite its serious implications on women's quality of life and psychological well-being, street harassment remains an understudied area and has not been included in the wider 'violence against women and girls'(VAWG) research and discourse. This research aimed to position street harassment as a distinct form of VAWG by exploring Indian women's sense-making of their lived experiences of street harassment.

The research was structured into two parts: Part 1 – The 'Sociocultural Study' implemented dispositive analysis of three recent Bollywood films of romantic genre to explore the construction of sociocultural discourses on Indian womanhood. Part 2 – The 'Experiential Study' explored the lived experiences of street harassment of adult Indian women by using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The participants included four single women (aged 25-35) and four mothers (aged 35-50) to teenage daughters. The Sociocultural Study provided the cultural context for the Experiential Study.

The findings of the Sociocultural Study indicated that the concept of womanhood is constructed by the Indian male gaze—the virginal *sanskari* (traditional) Indian woman is considered the symbol of Indian womanhood, whereas the "westernised" vamp is the morally corrupt temptress of men. These patriarchal constructions were rooted in deeply ingrained sexism, sexual objectification, and rape myth acceptance, proposed as the 'triad' of core mediators of street harassment by this research. The 'triad' featured significantly in the meaning-making of the participants in the Experiential study. The participants interpreted their experiences in themes of disempowerment, emotional isolation, loss of sense of agency, identity conflicts, and stress in family relationships.

The findings aligned with UN's definition of 'violence against women'. Recommendations for future research include better theoretical developments to explain street harassment; investigation of potential long-term effects of street harassment in women such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); designing studies with more male participants to explore an 'insider' view into harassment; and finally, development of new standardised quantitative instruments to measure various aspects of street harassment.

Someone will rub their penis on your ass, that happens. But we have gone beyond. We are only concerned that we shouldn't be raped. Rest we'll deal with it. If you stay in the city, if you are an ordinary woman, you get to deal with it each day, from public transport to everything. But first and foremost thing is you shouldn't get raped. Don't get raped. That's how we function in day-to-day life – Durga, participant.

Chapter 1: Introduction

On the night of December 31, 2016, several women who were out on the streets of Bangalore, India to usher in the New Year were harassed and molested by unruly gangs of men (BBC, 2017). The next day, one of my Indian male acquaintances texted me saying that he was reminded of my research subject when he saw the news, and demanded to know why these "modern" Indian women thought it was okay to "put themselves in danger" and then "act surprised" when they are molested. He proceeded to explain that this was the effect of "western feminism without common sense" because nothing could change the "biological nature of men". He asked me to include this 'insight' in my thesis (which I just did). I am now inured to these reactions; indeed, I'm often asked about my research topic, and I've noticed that the reaction from Indian men when they heard 'street harassment' ranged from polite disinterest to irritation—my top three memorable questions are – "What is it?"; "Does it still happen? I thought it stopped in the 80s"; and, (my favourite) "Did you not find anything positive about India for your research?" On the other hand, the reactions from my Indian women friends were uncannily unanimous—many asked if they could participate because "you can fill up many theses".

These conversations, frustrating to me as they were, only strengthened my conviction that my research subject was critically important. I found solace in the fact that many iconic feminist scholars before me have faced similar passive/aggressive resistance whenever they discussed any women-centric issues including street harassment. Their steadfastness and strength have been a constant source of inspiration in my research journey. This manuscript is a homage to all these strong women who chipped away at the wall of silence surrounding harassment to let the light in, so that women's experiences could also be illuminated.

This chapter gives a contextual introduction to 'Violence Against Women' (VAW) in general and street harassment in particular and enlightens why this research is important not just to me as an (Indian) woman, but also in the larger social context of gender equality.

1.1. Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Street Harassment

It is widely acknowledged by scholars and researchers that women and children endure different forms of violence in all societies worldwide, and that this violence has been habitually ignored, normalised or worse, sanctioned by sociocultural/political institutions (Garcia-Moreno, et al., 2015; Michau, et al., 2015). The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2013) estimated that over 35% of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence. Thanks to the persistent efforts of many feminist organisations, scholars, and individuals, violence against women and girls is now accepted as a grave social problem that can no longer be ignored. The term 'Violence Against Women' was officially used in the United Nations (UN) 'Declaration on Eliminating Violence against Women' (UN, 1993). Article 1 of this Declaration defined 'VAW' as gender-based violence inflicted on women resulting in their physical, sexual, and/or psychological harm (UN, 1993). This definition was recently reinforced and reiterated by UN's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) as

> "Violence against women" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women and girls, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (UN, 2013, p. 2)

Article 2 of the Declaration further enumerated the different forms of such gender-based violence as follows:

Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:

(a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;

(b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;

(c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs (UN, 1993, p.3)

Figure 1 (adapted from Ellsberg & Heise (2005) and Watts & Zimmerman (2002)) shows the various forms of violence women potentially experience throughout their lifetimes. Describing this range of violence as a "continuum of sexual violence", Kelly (1987, p. 46) proposed that sexual violence is not a discrete experience, but a range of experiences that women undergo throughout their lifetimes, where the form of the violence, women's sense-making of the violence, and its impact on them varies over time.

Figure 1: Forms of VAWG (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002)
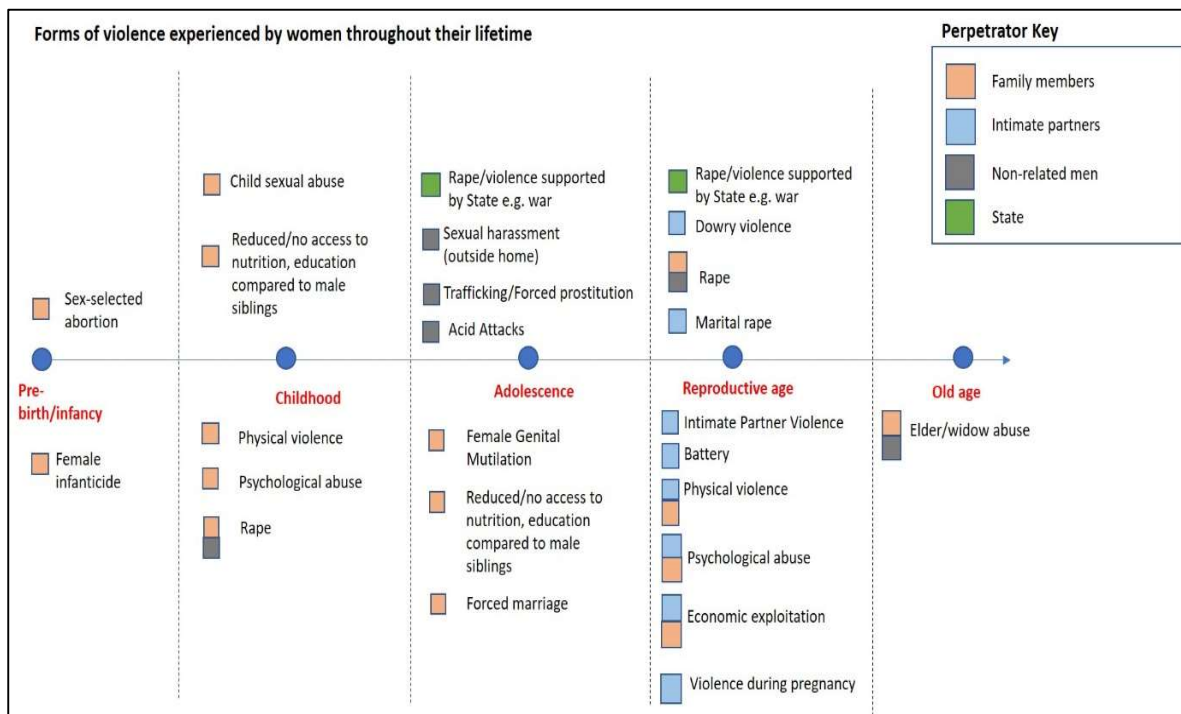
The forms of violence mentioned in the above Figure 1 is indicative in nature; VAWG can manifest in different forms in different sociocultural contexts (UN, 2013). Whatever is the nature of manifestation, they all have common outcomes of inflicting physical and psychological harm and infringing on basic human rights of women (Garcia-Moreno, et al., 2015; Michau, et al., 2015; UN, 2013).

One of the forms of VAWG that does not find an explicit mention in the UN Declaration (UN, 1993) or CSW ratification (UN, 2013), or indeed any of the important foundational VAWG research (Brownridge, 2008; Burgess & Crowell, 1996; DeKeseredy; Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002) is street harassment. Street harassment, also known as stranger harassment, is defined as the sexually motivated harassment of women in public places by men who are strangers (Bowman, 1993; di Leonardo, 1981; Gardner, 1981). The public space was defined as, "those sites and contexts that our society understands to be

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open to all; our characteristic behavior and appearance for public places do and are meant to vary from those for private dwellings" (Gardner 1995, p.3). A more precise definition of street harassment was proposed by focusing on the nature of the interaction, the actors in this interaction, and the sites where such interactions took place:

> Street harassment occurs when one or more strange men accost one or more women whom they perceive as heterosexual in a public place which is not the woman's/women's worksite. Through looks, words, or gestures, the man asserts his right to intrude on the woman's attention, defining her as a sexual object and forcing her to interact with him (di Leonardo, 1981, p. 51).

This definition was further refined by abstracting the distinct characteristics of harassment – 1) the victims are female 2) the harassers are male 3) the harassers are not known to the victims 4) the harassment is a face-to-face encounter, and 5) the harassment occurs in a public space (Bowman, 1993). A study commissioned by Stop Street Harassment (SSH) in the USA which involved 2000 participants - 1000 male and 1000 female, found that both men (25%) and women (65%) experienced street harassment (SSH, 2014). In the majority of the cases men were the harassers of both men and women (SSH, 2014). The study concluded that women, people of colour, and individuals who identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) faced more street harassment than their heterosexual counterparts. This study led to the evolution of a gender-neutral definition of street harassment:

> Gender-based street harassment is unwanted comments, gestures, and actions forced on a stranger in a public place without their consent and is directed at them because of their actual or perceived sex, gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation (SSH, 2015, para 3).

However, the definitions proposed by Bowman (1993) and di Leonardo (1981) have a wider prevalence in academic research as well as in popular discourse globally, where 'street harassment' connotes the harassment of women by men in public spaces. This was evident when a search for news articles in the Psych articles database using the term "street harassment" resulted in newspaper reports from different countries, all focusing on women's experiences. Likewise, a literature search for studies on street harassment (discussed in detail in Chapter 2) indicated that a majority of the studies focused on women's experiences as victims of street harassment perpetrated by men.

It can be noted that street harassment is different from sexual harassment referred to in the VAWG literature, where the latter is defined as -

> Creation of a hostile workplace that is sexualised in such a way that the general experience of working there is offensive, or where a situation of power implicitly or explicitly creates a situation in which a fellow worker must engage in or endure sexualised behaviour to retain their job status, or make career progress, or prevent a loss of status (Brown, 2011, p
>
> .162).

Thus, whereas street harassment takes place in a public space, sexual harassment takes place in a semi-private space; street harassment is perpetrated by strangers and is an opportunistic act, whereas sexual harassment is perpetrated by men known to the woman, is premeditated, and is often a sustained act (Brown, 2011; Bowers & O'Donohue, 2010).

Street harassment includes a range of perpetrator behaviours such as cat-calling, staring, passing sexual comments about the woman, exhibitionism, masturbating in view of the woman, and touching the woman by force in the form of groping or pinching (Bowman,

1993; di Leonardo, 1981; Fileborn, 2013; Gardner, 1995; Kissling, 1991; Laniya, 2005; SSH, 2015).

The next section discusses some of the harmful effects of street harassment and makes a case to position street harassment as a form of violence against women and girls.

1.2.   Positioning street harassment as a form of VAWG

Findings of studies on street harassment indicate that it negatively affects women in a variety of ways including psychological harm, physical harm, and restriction of basic rights, thus conforming the criteria of UN's (1993) definition of VAWG. First, it was posited that a significant social impact of street harassment on women was that it infringed on their fundamental right to freedom of movement because women often self-regulated their agency in order to avoid street harassment (Bowman, 1993; di Leonardo, 1981; Gardner, 1995, SSH 2014, Sweeny, 2017; Silva & Wright, 2009). This was illustrated by the results of a survey of 3813 women respondents of New Delhi—it was found that "70 percent of the women reported that they avoided going to secluded places, another 50 percent keep away from crowded places, while 43.5 percent avoid wearing 'certain kinds' of clothing. 40 percent avoid going out alone after dark" (Jagori & UN Women, 2010, p.29). In this regard, street harassment was considered a strategic attempt by men to "ghettoize" women to the private realm, which is the four walls of the home (Bowman, 1993; di Leonardo, 1981, p.54).

Second, it was proposed that street harassment increased women's dependency on men to access certain public places, where men were "used as women's visas into the public space" (Silva & Wright, 2009, p. 750). This dependency reinforced men's patriarchal control on women, which in turn disempowered women (Silva & Wright, 2009).

Third, it was posited that street harassment was "sexual terrorism"—a strategy adopted by men to establish and emphasise their power and dominance in the public space by objectifying and inducing fear in women (Bowman, 1993; Gardner, 1995; Kissling, 1991, p.455; Koskela, 1999).

Fourth, the psychological effects of street harassment on women were found to be debilitating and included heightened fear of sexual assault, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, anger, feelings of shame, and self-objectification (Bowman, 1993; DelGreco & Christensen, 2020; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; Macmillan, et al., 2000; Lord, 2009). Researchers found that women experienced street harassment from a young and potentially vulnerable age when their physical bodies and sexual identities begin to change and evolve; the impact of experiencing harassment at a young age was described by Bowman (1993) as, "For a very young girl, it is one of her first lessons in what it means to be a sexual being – a confusing and shame-producing experience" (p. 531). An aftermath of this persistent exposure to street harassment is that women are preoccupied with the fear of being raped (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; Gardner, 1995). One of the reasons for this heightened fear was attributed to a male practice known as "rape-testing" whereby rapists selected their victims by initially harassing them in order to assess their vulnerability (Bowman, 1993, p. 536).

Another negative impact of street harassment is the sexual objectification of women (Bowman, 1993; Lord, 2009; Macmillan, et al., 2000). Sexual objectification has been implicated as a common component of various types of sexual violence against women (Gervais & Eagon, 2017; Vasquez et al., 2017). Sexual objectification was also found to increase aggression in men towards women they have objectified (Vasquez, et al., 2017). In the case of street harassment in the public space, sexual objectification implies that a woman is stripped of her innate personal and psychological identity and is viewed by the man only as a sexual object that can be touched and assessed based on her physical appearance

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(Macmillan, et al., 2000; Morris, Goldenberg & Boyd, 2018). This sexual and appearance-based objectification has been classified as animalistic dehumanisation and mechanistic dehumanisation respectively (Morris, et al., 2018). Both types of objectifications resulted in women being viewed as less of thinking, feeling human beings (Morris, et al., 2018). According to the objectification theory proposed by Fredrickson & Roberts (2007), constant exposure to sexual objectification resulted in the internalisation of the objectification i.e. self-objectification, where women constructed themselves based on how others viewed them. Self-objectification has multiple direct and indirect psychological repercussions such as anxiety, shame, body surveillance, sexual dysfunctions, depression, and eating disorders (Fredrickson & Roberts, 2007; Morris, et al., 2018).

It can be surmised that street harassment has complex and life-altering impact on women's lives, forcing them to "modify their lives and attitudes, their opinions about themselves, their appearance, even their bodies by, for example, plastic surgery" (Gardner, 1995, p.10). Therefore, it can be argued that street harassment must be considered as a form of VAWG, similar to sexual assault, rape, or IPV, and included in VAWG policies and literature.

When I commenced this research, I wanted to address two crucial gaps in street harassment literature. First, it was observed that despite its sinister impact on women's lives, street harassment is an understudied area; for example, little is known about its impact on women's health or its sociological implications (DelGreco & Christensen, 2019; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; SSH, 2014,). Second, during the course of my literature review on street harassment (presented in detail in Chapter 2), I observed that from an intersectional perspective the foundational body of work on street harassment largely has a western (especially American, and to a certain extent British), white feminist worldview – for example, Cynthia Grant Bowman (Bowman, 1993); Micaela di Leonardo (di Leonardo, 1981); Carol Brooks Gardner (Gardner, 1995); Kimberly Fairchild and Laurie Rudman (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008);

Elizabeth Arveda Kissling (Kissling, 1991); and Fiona Vera-Gray, (Vera-Gray, 2016) to name a few. My intention behind this observation is not to undermine the important and critical work by these feminist scholars, but to point out the lack of voices of women of colour. For example, amongst the important foundational work on street harassment of the 1990s emerging from USA, there was only one publication by Davis (1994) which focused on Black women's experience of street harassment and its cultural import, given the history of slavery of Black peoples. As Davis (1994) demonstrated in their essay, it can be argued that women's experience of street harassment goes beyond the individual's cognitive reactions, and carries the burden of sociocultural, historical, and political positionings of women in that society. These observations have strongly influenced my research objectives as a woman of colour interested in the experiences of harassment of fellow women of colour.

In addition, having researched the wider VAWG related studies, I have identified that the third crucial gap in street harassment research is its almost complete absence from VAWG discourse. Through this thesis, I aspire to demonstrate why it is imperative to position street harassment as VAWG similar to sexual assault, IPV, and battery, so that the formulations of pertinent laws, policies, and social, psychological, and health support to survivors of harassment can be accelerated.

1.3.   What this research means to me – Personal reflexivity

I was born and raised in Bangalore, India. As a young girl and later as an independent adult, I was always deeply disturbed by the code of silence about street harassment in the Indian society. Like all my female friends, my first experience of street harassment was as a pre-teen, when I was groped in a crowded bus on the way to school. I remember crying, unable to process why I felt ashamed. Suddenly, life was no longer about Tintin's adventures, or about solving mysteries in Enid Blyton's world. Despite my closeness with my mum, I never spoke to her about the incident. There was a vague realisation that perhaps this happened to

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everyone, and the thought that someone could do this even to my mum and little sister horrified me.

By the time I attended college years later, I was a veteran at spotting potential harassers. Of course, by then all my female friends discussed harassment incessantly—this shared knowledge within a sisterhood made coping a lot easier. We exchanged strategies and safe routes to remain unmolested. None of us explicitly spoke about talking to parents or even discussing the matter with them. A friend of mine was relentlessly stalked by a young man. We discussed if we should speak to her parents. She said they would stop her from going to college; she would rather put up with the stalker than stop her education. So, our group ensured she never travelled alone to college, even if it meant one of us had to take a detour and take two extra buses to pick her up from home and double-back to college.

When I started my job, things got a lot easier because my firm provided transport, and subsequently, I was able to buy my own two-wheeler, a popular vehicle in India. However, a woman driving on the roads of Bangalore brought its own brand of attention. I was often accosted at traffic signals by men on bikes who would pass sexual comments or attempt to follow me.

When I moved to the UK ten years ago, it took me more than a year to re-programme my reflexes. It was impossible for me to consider getting into a crowded tube whenever I visited London, for example. I found myself tensing up whenever I had to walk alone on the streets. I remember walking on a narrow cycle trail by a river in one city. There were a couple of joggers and dog-walkers along the path. I froze when I saw four men approaching me from the opposite direction. They were all carrying fishing rods and the rational part of my mind was urging me to relax, but my muscles did not cooperate. My muscle memory, honed in the crowded streets of Bangalore, urged me to move aside, or even turn around and simply retreat quickly. In Bangalore, I would have gone inside any open doorway—I remember stepping

inside a men's salon much to the shock of all the patrons, and the barber, who was lathering up a gentleman's chin informed me, "Oh madam! Gents-only". But on that jogging trail, there was no place to step aside, unless I wanted to jump into the river. The poor men probably found the whole thing strange—an Asian woman who seemed transfixed, blocking their way. They politely made their way around me mumbling good-evenings. In a way this incident triggered an extended period of introspection in me; I reflected on the amount of anxiety I had internalised over the years that I wasn't even aware of, and how many of my practices in public places (which I thought was some form of social anxiety) was really a learned reaction to potential street harassment.

It was these reflections that led me down this path of a PhD. My MSc Psychology dissertation also considered street harassment of Indian women. I interviewed three Indian women who were residents of UK (at the time of interview). I thought I knew what to expect when I drafted the semi-structured interview questions, but what they revealed to me was eye-opening. One of them revealed how harassment had modified her personality beyond repair. As an extrovert, she loved travelling and meeting people, but she spoke about transforming into this sulky, suspicious, angry person whenever she visited India. Another interviewee spoke about how all her life choices were altered because of the existence of harassment—she was not allowed to go to a college for a course of her choice because it involved travelling a distance. Her parents were afraid of "untoward" things happening which would ruin her reputation, and her chances of a good arranged marriage. She vehemently believed that had she been a man, she would have been more successful in life. One interviewee spoke about how harassment had deeply affected her parenting. She wondered if she was turning her daughter into a "coward" by being over-protective, even though they were here in the UK.

These revelations made me reflect further on street harassment, and how insidious its effects are on individuals. The MSc gave me a foundation of understanding on street harassment from which I developed my PhD ideas, enabling me to engage with women living in India and to explore their experiences.

At the time of commencing my PhD three years ago, gender issues in India were no longer cloaked in silence. From street harassment to the MeToo movement, women's voices have been resisting all forms of subjugations and demanding change. However, the louder the women spoke, the more they were silenced. For example, when several women complained that they had been molested during 2016 New Year's Eve celebrations on the streets of Bangalore, the women were victim-blamed on social media as well as by state representatives. The then Home Minister of Karnataka state (of which Bangalore is the capital) gave a statement, "They tried to copy the westerners, not only in their mindset but even in their dressing" (Safi, 2017, para 16). On social media, the hashtag #NotAllMen began to trend in response to the international coverage of this news (Amarnathan, 2017). A petition was started by an Indian male on a popular petition website addressed to National Commission for Women (NCW), the newspaper Bangalore Mirror which broke this news, and other celebrities for allegedly shaming Indian men (The Male Factor, 2017). The petition author alleged, "As Indian men we are constantly reminded that any rogue media or woman can take the entire country at ransom based on their imaginary rape or molestation story" (The Male Factor, 2017, para 3).

Whilst the feminist activist voices on all platforms are extremely important to drive change, I also believe the measured, evidenced-based academic findings within which women's experiences are highlighted and 'given voice', are equally important. It is this evidence that will drive changes where it matters – in policies, laws, and cultural discourses.

Speaking to my participants has been cathartic for me. I have been moved by their dignity, their fighting spirit, their fierceness in protecting their freedom, and their vulnerability. Above all, I am deeply touched and humbled by the unquestioning trust they put in me as they shared their experiences, some of which affected me in a very deep way. It has made me reflect on my identity as woman, the vulnerability that is always a part of me as a consequence of my gender, and the privileges that are at my disposal to contribute towards a positive change, however miniscule, in other women's quality of life.

These introspections and my reading around the topic, which revealed a dearth of studies that gave Indian women's perspectives a chance to be heard, drove me to formulate the aim of this research, and subsequently its methodology and methods.

1.4.   Aim of this research

It was clear to me that this research into street harassment had to be participant-led rather than researcher-led. I did not want to don the mantle of the superior researcher who would prod and examine an experience like a medical student dissecting a frog. I was clear about my role, which was to merely be a conveyor of women's voices; an interpreter of their experiences with all its cultural and gender burdens and use my privilege to support their experiences being heard. I was keen to refocus discussions regarding harassment on the woman's meaning making of the harassment experience, rather than the harassment itself. I wanted to explore the woman's thought processes, her navigation in her internal and external worlds, and her sense of self both psychologically and spatially, instead of harassment-centric questions such as, how many times it took place, how did the man behave, where did it take place?

Therefore, the aim of this research was to explore the meaning-making of lived street harassment experiences by Indian women living in India and consequently, if and how street harassment impacted upon their daily lives and sense of identity.

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1.5. Summary

This chapter introduced the subject of violence against women and girls (VAWG) and explored the dynamics of street harassment by analysing its definition and some of its negative impacts on women's lives. Gaps in street harassment research were identified. The chapter positioned street harassment as a form of VAWG. The aim of the research was articulated.

Chapter 2: Literature Review – Street Harassment

2.1. A historical perspective of VAWG and Street Harassment research development

The definition and ratification of VAWG by the UN (1993) (see chapter 1, section 1.1) provided the necessary impetus for academic research into gender-based violence and for governments to frame appropriate laws and policies to address different forms of VAWG. For example, in the USA the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was enacted in 1994 under which the following forms of violence were included—domestic violence, intimate partner homicide, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking (Congressional Research Service, 2019). Similarly, in the UK the following forms of violence were classified as VAWG: domestic abuse; coercive or controlling behaviour in an intimate or family relationship; stalking and harassment (note: harassment here refers to acts targeted at an individual causing them distress, for example, spreading malicious rumours about the person); rape and serious sexual offences; honour-based abuse and forced marriages; female genital mutilation; child sexual abuse; and human trafficking (Crown Prosecution Service, 2017). However, recently the Women and Equalities Committee (2018), UK, published an exclusive report on street harassment and recommended this be included as a part of future VAWG strategies.

Academic research on VAW has historically focused on the forms of violence that have received mention in the Declaration (UN, 1993) and in local laws, especially because some of the foundational research was sponsored by governmental bodies. For example, as an action point of the Violence Against Women Act legislation, the US Congress directed the National Research Committee to draft a comprehensive research framework on VAW, clearly outlining the scope and definitions of various forms of VAW (Crowell & Burgess, 1996). One of the aims of this exercise was to bring research on VAW under one umbrella, and as far as possible, standardise definitions of violence (Crowell & Burgess, 1996). For example,

it was observed that research on different forms of violence up to that point was being conducted as independent threads where "studies on rape and sexual assault are distinct from those on intimate partner violence, which is distinct from the nascent study of stalking" (Crowell & Burgess, 1996, pp.8). Therefore, in this foundational manuscript, the authors discussed VAW in two categories – fatal and non-fatal violence; fatal violence involves homicide of the woman, and non-fatal violence includes rape and sexual assault, intimate partner violence (IPV), and stalking (Crowell & Burgess, 1996). Although psychological violence was recognised as a form of violence, it was concluded that there was very little research (at that point in time) to include it as a distinct form of violence; instead, psychological violence was considered as an element of other forms of violence such as IPV (Crowell & Burgess, 1996).

The report by Crowell & Burgess (1996) provided the impetus for further research into VAW in terms of developing relevant psycho-sociological theories, research methodologies and instruments. For example, Heise (1998) proposed the "integrated, ecological framework" which explored the causal factors of VAW from a multidisciplinary lens where sociocultural factors, family dynamics, and individual traits all influenced the propensity of men's violence towards women to varying degrees (p.262). Heise's (1998) framework has since been widely and globally adopted to study VAW in different settings (Ahmad, et al.,2019; Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; Fulu & Miedema, 2015; Heise, et al., 1999; Mcllwaine & Evans, 2020; Michau, et al., 2014). In subsequent years, the types of violence covered in VAW literature expanded from sexual assault, rape, IPV to more complex crimes such as human trafficking, female genital mutilation, child sexual abuse, forced marriage, honour killings, war-related rape, female foeticide and infanticide, psychological abuse and control, and all forms of sexual coercion (Garcia-Moreno, et al., 2015; Heise, et al., 1999; Renzetti, et al., 2018). However, it was noted that street harassment has not been included under this umbrella of VAW in the

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majority of VAW literature with the recent Women and Equalities Committee (2018) report in the UK being the only exception.

Two reasons can be put forward for this exclusion of street harassment from VAW discourse – first, research into different forms of violence on women up to the 1990s was taking place as distinct, independent threads (Crowell & Burgess, 1996). This was the case with street harassment too, as elaborated in the subsequent sections of this chapter. Second, the term 'violence' has traditionally been interpreted to imply physical harm (Crowell & Burgess, 1996; WHO, 2002). Violence is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2002) as:

> The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation (pp. 5)

Thus, acts like rape, homicide, or assault which result in a physical injury on one's body could be unambiguously classified as 'violence'. For example, the act of rape is clearly defined in the 2003 UK Sexual Offences Act as "Intentional penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth with the penis without consent" (Horvath, 2011, pp.163). In contrast, street harassment involves a range of non-physical behaviours such as catcalling, sexual comments, ogling or leering and physical behaviours such as groping (Bowman, 1993; Gardner, 1995; SSH, 2014). Unlike the other forms of violence which leave behind a physical/forensic trail on the victim's body i.e. there is a physiological and visual evidence of the violence, the aftermath of street harassment on the victim can be invisible because it manifests largely in the form of psychological and emotional trauma (Kissling, 1995; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; DelGreco & Christensen, 2019). Also, street harassment was normalised as male social behaviour in many societies, and therefore it was not constructed as a crime in sociocultural

and legal discourses (Bowman, 1993; Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014; Fileborn & Vera-Gray, 2017; SHH, 2014). Therefore, it can be posited that in the early years of VAW discussions in the 1990s, street harassment was not considered to be a similar form of violence against women in the true sense. Consequently, the discourse and research on street harassment has taken shape as an independent thread, almost in parallel to the body of work on VAW, though not at the same pace. The following Table 1 gives an indicative snapshot of how the research into VAW and street harassment developed as mutually exclusive topics.

Table 1: Research development of VAW and Street Harassment - A comparative timeline

	VAW	Street Harassment
1980s	Independent research on different forms of violence	di Leonardo (1981) – essay on street harassment Packer (1986) – quantitative study on street harassment
1990-2000	1993 – UN Declaration on VAW 1994 – VAWA legislation in USA 1995 – VAW Journal is launched to specifically publish research related to VAW 1996 – National Research Committee sets out scope, definitions and research frameworks for VAW 1998 – Heise (1998) develops the pivotal ecological framework theorising VAW Commencement of publication of edited books dedicated to VAW -	Independently researched legal and sociological essays on street harassment (Bowman, 1993; Davis, 1994; Kissling, 1991; Koskela, 1999; Thompson, 1994; Tuerkheimer, 1997).

	examples - Rethinking Violence Against Women (Dobash & Dobash, 1998); Violence Against Women – Philosophical perspectives (French, et al., 1998)	
2001-2010	Ellsberg & Heise (2005) through WHO - publish research guidelines, methods, and frameworks for researchers studying VAW. Publications of VAW 'textbooks' continue - some examples: Sourcebook on Violence Against Women (Renzetti, et al., 2001) – the latest is the third edition published in 2018; Violence Against Women: Understanding Social Problems (Renzetti & Bergen, 2004); Violence Against Women: Vulnerable Populations (Brownridge, 2008)	Psychological studies on the effect of street harassment on women - Fairchild & Rudman (2008); Macmillan, et al. (2000); Lord (2009). 2005 – 'Hollaback!' an online initiative to combat street harassment is launched 2008 – Stop Street Harassment is incorporated as a non-profit organisation which has since funded initiatives and conducted surveys on street harassment 2010 – UN Women launches a global 'Safe cities and Safe Public spaces' initiative (UN Women, 2017)
2011-2020	Research on preventive measures and policy implementations to eliminate VAW – example – Jewkes et al. (2015) discuss how participation of men and boys in preventive programs of VAW is essential; Ellsberg et al. (2015) evaluate the evidence of the efficacy of various types of VAW intervention and response measures;	Country specific studies on street harassment emerge, for example – India (Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014); Morocco (Chafai, 2017), Jordan (Truluck, 2015), and Mexico (Campos, Falb, Hernandez, Diaz-Olavarrota, & Gupta, 2017). 2013 – UN Women recognized sexual harassment of women and

	Michau, et al. (2014) discuss prevention of VAW by targeting key drivers, mainly unequal gender power equations; UN (2013) publishes the Commission on the Status of Women report where measures to eliminate VAW are reiterated Fulu & Miedema (2015) enhanced Heise's (1998) integrated ecological model of VAW to include global contexts Yount, et al. (2020) developed the Laws on Violence against women and girls Index or LoVI which measures the coverage of laws globally to address VAWG	girls in public spaces as a "distinct area of concern" (UN Women, 2017, pp. 2) 2018 - Women and Equalities Committee (2018), UK recommends inclusion of harassment of women and girls in public spaces in wider VAWG prevention strategy

Based on the above table, it can be surmised that the development and progress of the body of knowledge on VAW has been methodical, accelerated, and focused given the impetus from state and international institutions. Therefore the research into VAW has a solid foundation in terms of theoretical perspectives, definitions, and applicability of findings. In contrast, the research development into street harassment has been sporadic and in isolated pockets. Unlike VAW research, there has been no theorisation of street harassment, and neither has there been any significant progress from a knowledge perspective – for example, Bowman (1993) debated on how American laws regarding street harassment could be framed; more than twenty years later, Arndt (2018) was still grappling with this issue. Likewise, defining street harassment was debated extensively by the early feminist scholars (Bowman, 1993;

Kissling, 1991, Tuerkheimer, 1997) – it was still the topic of concern for Vera-Gray (2016) who debated the linguistics of street harassment terminologies. Similarly, there has been no further development and enhancement of the psychological studies conducted by Fairchild and Rudman (2008) or McMillan, et al. (2000).

Given that street harassment research has progressed as an independent thread from the wider studies under the VAW umbrella, the literature review in this chapter focuses exclusively on these street harassment studies.

In order to conduct a methodical review of some of the important studies on street harassment, the literature review is arranged in the following categories: legal studies on American jurisprudence of harassment; sociological research; psychological research; global studies on street harassment, and finally, street harassment research in India. The legal and sociological studies were conducted contemporarily in the 1990s and have laid the foundation for subsequent research into street harassment by defining and describing what constitutes harassment, and its impact on women's lives. The legal essays have critiqued the inadequate articulation of street harassment in jurisprudence, which impacts upon women's avenues to follow due process. The sociological studies have considered street harassment from sociocultural and linguistic perspectives and have explored how these perspectives fashioned the differential power of genders in a shared space. Hence, I have explored the legal studies followed by the sociological research before progressing to psychological research. I have then examined street harassment literature from different countries, and finally the research that is specific to the Indian context.

2.2.   Legal studies of street harassment in American jurisprudence

This section has explored six important legal and socio-legal studies on street harassment—Bowman (1993); Thompson (1994); Tuerkheimer (1997); Laniya (2005); Olney (2015);

Arndt (2018). All these legal studies are contextualised to the American jurisprudence (though, this was not by design); similar legal studies in English from other countries were not available via the literature search. These studies were selected for this literature review because of their important contribution in defining and positioning street harassment as a crime against women, and also because they highlight the challenges of incorporating women's voices and experiences in a male dominant legal system. Although these studies pertain to the American context, it can be construed that the arguments presented in them apply to the Indian context too.

The methodology adopted by all the studies, except for Tuerkheimer (1997) are similar—existing laws that could apply to street harassment were examined and critiqued, and possible legal remedies were suggested. Tuerkheimer (1997) adopted a phenomenological approach, where they explored how street harassment was experienced and perceived by women, and in the print media such as magazines. They then demonstrated how existing laws were inadequate in addressing street harassment experiences.

There were two fundamental problems that the authors of these legal essays attempted to address: one, the lack of a universally accepted definition of street harassment which could help in framing laws and two, the absence of street harassment laws in the American legal system. The scholars presented different views and approaches to arriving at a definition for street harassment—for example, street harassment was considered a violation of the fundamental right to freedom of movement by Bowman (1993) and Thompson (1994), whereas it was seen as the sexual subjugation of women by Tuerkheimer (1997). Scholars like Laniya (2005) viewed street harassment as a sociocultural problem and opined that unless the act was constructed as a crime in social discourses, laws could not be framed. In contrast, different approaches to criminalising street harassment were considered by Olney (2015) and Arndt (2018).

It was Bowman (1993) who first posited that street harassment laws were non-existent in the American jurisprudence because:

> Street harassment is a phenomenon that has not generally been viewed by academics, judges or legislators as a problem requiring legal address, either because these mostly male observers have not noticed the behavior, or because they have considered it trivial and thus not within the proper scope of the law (Bowman, 1993, p.519).

It was argued that in reality, street harassment induced the fear of the public space in women and as a result women were pushed back into the private spaces of home, resulting in their "informal ghettoization" (Bowman, 1993, p.517). Thus, a pronounced impact of street harassment was that it denied women the fundamental right to freedom of movement, thereby violating the concept of liberty i.e. the fundamental right of a human being to live without restraints (Bowman, 1993). The question of restoring women's liberty, at least in the American law, became the focus of Bowman's (1993) critique. Adopting existing laws such as those related to verbal harassment or invasion of privacy to prosecute street harassment cases was complicated because they presented inherent loopholes. For example, the courts required that the defence prove that the alleged perpetrator had the intention to harass the victim, catcalls could be protected under the First Amendment Act which guaranteed the right to free speech, and the verbal content of harassment was assessed based on the 'reasonable man' standard i.e. whether the spoken words would outrage a "man of average intelligence", indicating a strong male bias in the wording of the law (p.572). In order to overcome these loopholes, Bowman first proposed a definition for street harassment (see Chapter 1, Section 1.1) where the act and the actors were described. Subsequently, a possible legal statute was outlined to specifically address street harassment cases. It was posited that the goal of such a law was to serve as a deterrent and to "change the behaviour of the harassers" (p.574). Accordingly, this draft statute focused on the perpetrator's conduct, rather than their

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intentions, and treated harassment as a misdemeanour, which could invite a heavy fine of $250, or possible arrest. It was suggested that first time offenders be compelled by law to attend an educational program on street harassment, similar to first time traffic offenders; it was suggested that this exercise should be "onerous" enough to deter future harassment behaviour (p.576).

Like Bowman (1993), Thompson (1994) also viewed harassment as a detriment to women's freedom of movement. However, in contrast to Bowman's approach where street harassment was treated as an individual-specific case, Thompson (1994) defined street harassment as a societal problem. Therefore, it was suggested that street harassment laws should serve a symbolic purpose of conveying the state's zero tolerance towards the act. In order to implement this, the identification of three public zones was proposed where street harassment was known to be pervasive—construction sites, public transports, and public parks. It was suggested that signage boards that explicitly barred street harassment be put up at these sites. Specifically in the case of construction sites, it was further proposed that the existing laws on workplace sexual harassment be amended so that the employer was made responsible for the behaviour of their employees at workplaces. Given that construction sites were workplaces, the employers could then be held legally accountable for the behaviour of their employees. It was argued that these measures would deter street harassment.

The issue of street harassment, however, was not just about women's liberty, mobility or access to public spaces as argued by Bowman (1993) and Thompson (1994); it was contended that the aim of street harassment was the sexual subjugation of women (Tuerkheimer, 1997). In agreement with Bowman's (1993) view that street harassment was invisible to a largely male judiciary, Tuerkheimer (1997) opined that women and men inhabited different realities and given that women are lower in the societal gender hierarchy, any gender-specific harm to women remained imperceptible to the male-dominant society.

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However, unlike Bowman (1993) who proposed a definition for street harassment, Tuerkheimer (1997) argued that it is the right of the women who experience harassment to define it, and only then it could be articulated in the law. It can be opined that for Tuerkheimer (1997), the crux of the problem of harassment was not the lack of its articulation in the law as posited by Bowman (1993), but even more fundamentally, the lack of its articulation by the women who have experienced it in the first place. Thus, it was argued that the only remedy to make such gender-specific harm visible to a male dominant world was for women to describe their experiences and the impact of them on their lives. Consequently, rather than defining the harms of street harassment in the law in gender-neutral terms such as loss of liberty or invasion of privacy as described by Bowman (1993) and Thompson (1994), it was important to articulate its gender-specific harms. In this regard, it was crucial to acknowledge that the harm caused by street harassment went beyond restriction of women's movement; a far more insidious harm was the sexual objectification of women, where women were perceived as objects that must provide pleasure to men. This in turn created an environment of sexual terror for the women because every episode of harassment held the potential threat of further sexual violence. Sexual objectification and sexual terror together became the tools for psychological control of women. To combat this serious form of assault on women, Tuerkheimer (1997) argued that some of the current American laws must be overhauled and rewritten. First, the law should take into cognisance that street harassment is not just a nuisance act, but an act of sexual subjugation of women with sinister impacts. Second, the American legal system was devised to be gender-neutral; this created a conflict whilst prosecuting gender-specific crimes such as street harassment. Third, street harassment in the form of catcalling was difficult to prosecute because it could be protected under the First Amendment Act which guaranteed freedom of speech—in this context, Tuerkheimer

(1997) argued that the very notions of what constituted free speech and equality must be debated.

The notion that the articulation of their experiences of street harassment by women, or proposed definitions of harassment by lawmakers would lead to better laws, was contended by Laniya (2005). It was argued that a crime is a socially constructed act—for example, theft is considered a crime because it violates a socially constructed moral framework where taking things that do not belong to you without permission is morally wrong. In the case of street harassment, this fundamental social construction of harassment as a crime was absent because of the inherent hegemony in society where laws and social rules are constructed by men, and therefore, women's points of view and women's worlds became invisible. Therefore, Laniya (2005) argued that even before proposing amendments to laws as opined by other legal researchers, it was important to socially position street harassment as a crime. First, street harassment, like any other act of crime needed to be defined under the socio-legal framework model of "naming, blaming, claiming" (Laniya, 2005, p.94). Under this framework, defining a crime was a three step process—first, the harm inflicted by the crime must be articulated i.e. 'naming'; second, the perpetrator of the harm must be identified - 'blaming'; and third, appropriate justice for the harm must be sought - 'claiming'. It was contended that a fundamental problem in street harassment cases was that only individuals were identified as the perpetrators, whereas it was also necessary to acknowledge the societal systems that enabled and entitled harassers. Thus, harassment could be acknowledged as a societal problem only if this naming and blaming went beyond the individual. This could be achieved only if the both media as well as the law acted in partnership because both these platforms were powerful mediums that "have the ability to change behaviour and to shape perceptions, ethics, and values" (Laniya, 2005, p.93). For example, the media industry contributed to the culture of objectification of women and actively fostered a sociocultural

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environment that is hostile to women with its "phallocentric" gender representations (Laniya, 2005, p.107). Likewise, the reportage of sexual crimes, and consequently the construction of a sexual perpetrator in the media often adversely affected gender discourses. In this regard, the media coverage of the Puerto Rico Day parade in 2000, where several women were sexually assaulted, was presented as a case study. It was observed that some newspaper articles referred to the male offenders as "a herd of hoodlums" and a "wolf pack of thugs"—it was argued that such othering of the offenders denied recognition of the fact that these men were otherwise ordinary men with no prior convictions; instead it cast them as outliers of the society who were different from other normal, decent men (Laniya, 2005, p.115). By doing so the media had failed to examine the social culture that enabled and entitled such ordinary men to behave with "animalistic brute lust" (p.115). From the legal perspective, Laniya (2005) agreed with Bowman's (1993) suggestion that a separate law on street harassment was required that catered to women's experiences in its spirit and wording.

Unlike Laniya's (2005) long-term transformational proposal, it was opined that a simpler and immediate approach would be to criminalise all acts of street harassment (Arndt, 2018; Olney, 2015). It was argued that the philosophy behind any law was not just about punishment and deterrence, but also to influence positive and egalitarian changes in the American society, where the legal process did not come at a cost to the involved parties (Olney, 2015). Taking cue from Bowman's (1993) draft statute, it was proposed that street harassment laws should not focus on "naming and shaming" harassers, instead the act of harassment should be treated as "a violation, similar to a traffic offense" so that the harasser is protected from the typical aftereffects of criminalisation and incarceration (Olney, 2015, p. 160). However, instead of imposing a flat fine of $250 on perpetrators as suggested by Bowman (1993), it was proposed that the fines should be based on the perpetrator's capacity to pay (Olney, 2015).

In contrast, Arndt (2018) suggested that a balanced approach to criminalising street harassment under the American law was to frame laws based on the severity of the crime, offering a fair trial to both the victims and perpetrators. It was observed that street harassment laws were non-existent in the American context; therefore, it was proposed that a starting point would be to distinguish street harassment from other forms of harassment by recognising that it was sexually motivated "either by desire or discrimination" (p.92). Accordingly, street harassment could be divided into three categories - catcalls, public sexual attack, and public sexual assault. These categories were based on the reaction to harassment invoked in the victim: catcalls were deemed as the mildest form of harassment causing annoyance; public sexual attacks were recognised to invoke anxiety, fear and humiliation in the victim; and public sexual assault was seen to be aimed at a specific victim and made the victim fear for their safety. Thus, these emotional responses to harassment could be considered as a measure of the injury inflicted on the victim, and consequently they reflected the severity of the harassment (Arndt, 2018). It was argued that these categorisations were based on the principle that the penalty must be proportionate to the crime. This view is commensurate with Laniya's (2005) proposal that the harm of street harassment must be articulated so that an appropriate law could then be modelled on a 'naming, blaming, claiming' framework. In this case, the harm was articulated by the severity category of the harassment.

In all the studies discussed in this section, two opposing schools of thought were observed—one, that appropriate laws on street harassment would inspire a change in sociocultural discourses around harassment (Arndt, 2018; Bowman, 1993; Olney, 2015); and two, changes in sociocultural discourse would enable framing of appropriate laws (Laniya, 2005; Thompson, 1994; Tuerkheimer 1997).

A drawback with the studies that have proposed changes to existing laws is that street harassment was treated as an individual's problem. For example, whilst Bowman (1993) offered a possible legal solution, it can be argued that the burden of pursuing justice still fell on the harassed woman, even though the state had failed to protect her fundamental rights of liberty. Bowman (1993) also called for more women to populate the legal community to spearhead activism for affecting changes in the American law. This proposal once again places the obligation on women to resolve problems inflicted on them by societal failings, rather than the state also assuming responsibility for ensuring their rights. Also, Bowman's (1993) proposals focused more on the perpetrator's actions and did not consider the harm inflicted on the victim. It was argued that this approach manifested a "perpetrator-perspective" rather than a "violence against women" view (Olney, 2015, p.143). Although Olney (2015) sought to rectify this drawback in Bowman's (1993) proposal, it can be argued that Olney's (2015) proposals in fact further strengthened the "perpetrator-perspective" that they sought to avoid. First, Olney (2015) argued against the incarceration of the perpetrators of harassment citing potential damage to their family life and earnings; second, it was proposed that fines be set according to the perpetrator's capacity to pay, and third, the seriousness of street harassment was downgraded from misdemeanour to a petty offence comparable to a traffic offence. It can be contended that the comparison of street harassment to a traffic violation diminished and dismissed the suffering of women who experienced harassment—indeed, it can be argued that Olney (2015) has inadvertently objectified women as accidents waiting to happen in the public space. Also, Olney (2015) acknowledged that street harassment "dehumanises, devalues" (p.138) women and could have potentially adverse impacts on their mental and physical health—for example, harassment could result in a range of stress-related physiological reactions in women such as nausea, giddiness, and increased heart rate; it could induce negative emotions such as shame, fear, anger, and guilt;

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trigger post-traumatic stress symptoms in women who had already survived past sexual abuse; and finally, result in self-sexual objectification which could lead to sexual dysfunction. However, it is clear from Olney's (2015) proposals that the victims and the harm they suffered due to harassment have been excluded from consideration.   Therefore, it can be argued that like Bowman (1993), Olney's (2015) proposals too are driven by "perpetrator perspective" (p.143).

In contrast, by including the victim's experience in their proposed laws, and by introducing severity classifications of the harassment as 'catcall', 'attack', and 'assault', Arndt (2018) addressed the drawbacks of Bowman's (1993) and Olney's (2015) legal remedies. However, the limitation in Arndt's (2018) proposal is the subjectivity inherent in determining the severity of harassment. For example, a racial bias could induce the victim to feel more threatened if they were harassed by a non-white male—therefore, categorising the harassment as 'attack' versus 'assault' would become problematic. Likewise, it can be argued that the victim's personality, personal history, and exposure to previous episodes of sexual abuse could also make them fear for their safety even during so-called mild forms of harassment. Also, Arndt's (2018) proposal does not consider women's innate fear of sexual assault (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; Ferraro, 1996). The location of the harassment could invoke a great fear for one's safety—for example, being catcalled in a deserted parking lot. Here, although the behaviour of the harasser could be classified under catcalling as per Arndt (2018), the emotion it invoked in the victim would translate to public sexual assault. The root cause for this emotion is the unpredictability of street harassment where the victim cannot predict if verbal catcalling could escalate into physical sexual assault like rape (Bowman, 1993; Kissling, 1991; Laniya, 2005).

From a socio-legal point of view, Thompson's (1994) proposal of displaying explicit signage boards in public spaces prohibiting street harassment was pragmatic, logistically easy to

implement, and treated harassment as societal problem rather than an individual's problem. Such boards would serve the symbolic purpose of creating awareness and initiating a social discussion in the general public regarding harassment; it would also convey the message that the state recognised street harassment as unacceptable behaviour. Thompson's (1994) suggestions removed the burden of legal recourse from the harassed woman's shoulders and placed it back on to the state. Here, Thompson's (1994) focus was on immediate remedies and therefore they did not analyse sociocultural causes of street harassment. This gap was bridged by Tuerkheimer's (1997) sociocultural analysis—this was the first study to position street harassment as a gender issue rather than just an act involving two individuals. By identifying women as the oppressed group, and by acknowledging the absence of women's voices in the social and legal discourses, Tuerkheimer (1997) identified the fundamental flaws in the American legal language, which they argued had a male bias. A drawback of Tuerkheimer's (1997) study was that it placed the burden on women to articulate their street harassment experiences, thus absolving the state and society from taking responsibility for the harms inflicted on women. This drawback was addressed by Laniya (2005) who argued that the perpetrator of street harassment was not just the individual but also the flawed sociocultural gender discourses in society that enabled the harasser. Therefore, the responsibility was placed on the state institutions like the media and the legal system to initiate changes in these discourses. A limitation of Laniya's (2005) proposal was its aspirational spirit and limited focus on implementable remedies. Nevertheless an important contribution of Laniya's (2005) study is that it implicated sociocultural discourses in street harassment.

In conclusion, this section examined the important legal studies on street harassment. One of the key highlights of this section is that defining street harassment in the legal context is still problematic despite more than two decades of such scholarly deliberations. This quandary

was a common thread across all the studies – from Bowman's essay (1993) to Arndt's (2018). This literature review also highlighted the importance of understanding the contribution of sociocultural discourses towards street harassment, because even if perfect laws are written, they will be interpreted with a sociocultural bias held by the legal enforcer.

2.3.   Social discourse studies

The four sociological studies discussed in this section have explored the sociocultural root causes of street harassment and the harm it inflicts on women (Davis, 1993; di Leonardo, 1981; Gardner, 1995; Kissling, 1991). All these studies have encapsulated the 'voice of the woman' by adopting ethnographic methods such as interviewing women, observations, and recording self-experiences.

A sociological exploration of street harassment in the American sociocultural context was first done by di Leonardo (1981). This essay adopted an ethnographic approach, based on di Leonardo's (1981) observations of their own experiences as well as the experiences of other women. A key focus of the essay was to examine the possible causes of harassment. A hallmark of this essay is that it was the first to define street harassment (discussed in Chapter 1, section 1.1). Four important components of street harassment could be abstracted from di Leonardo's (1981) definition: the perpetrators are men; the victims are perceived as heterosexual women; harassment takes place in a public place; and sexual objectification of the woman is an important component of the act i.e. the man's behaviour is driven by sexual motivation. By emphasising on the location of the act this definition distinguished street harassment from sexual harassment at workplace, which was an important input for framing appropriate laws. It can be noted that scholars of subsequent legal studies have debated and built on this definition—for example, Bowman (1993) and Arndt (2018).

It was proposed that the act of street harassment was rooted in the changing power dynamics of the genders (di Leonardo, 1981). The capitalist economy of America had empowered more women to get into the paid workforce; this meant that women were no longer willing to provide men with services that were always expected of them, be it physical, emotional, or psychological care-taking. Therefore, street harassment was the overall "male backlash to the feminist movement, decline in perceived male's status, and the relative loss of women's services" (p. 55). In this context, it was argued that apart from the sexual motivation of the act, street harassment was also about the male re-establishing his control in the public space by inducing fear in the woman.

It was posited that another important reason for the increase in street harassment of women was the increase in "publicly displayed pornography" (di Leonardo, 1981, p.55). This included adult magazines and sex newspapers being sold in roadside kiosks and vending machines, billboard displays, and an increase in visible solicitation and prostitution. It was suggested that this hyper-sexual objectification of women that had permeated the urban landscape of America gave men, the primary consumers of such pornographic literature, a symbolic permission to harass women (Leonardo, 1981). On the contrary, it was observed that women who were accompanied by children were less likely to be harassed, indicating that harassers did not associate motherhood with sexuality i.e. mothers were not perceived as sexual beings by the harassers (di Leonardo, 1981).

Irrespective of the perceived root causes of street harassment, it was proposed that the main function of harassment was to control, dominate and subjugate women through fear (Kissling, 1991). The perceptions of men and women on street harassment were explored through personal interviews as well as through other literature review including popular magazines. It was found that most men did not perceive their act of accosting women in public spaces as harassment; however, such encounters evoked fear and anger in women, and in some cases,

even amusement when the women perceived catcalls as compliments (Kissling, 1991). Based on these findings, it was posited that street harassment of women was a "larger strategy of social control through sexual terrorism" (p.455). Even in the case of women who considered verbal street harassment as a compliment, it was argued that the so-called compliments only served to relegate women to a subservient status through sexual objectification i.e. the women were rewarded by the harasser for providing him visual pleasure (Kissling, 1991). This argument is similar to Tuerkheimer's (1997) view that street harassment sexually subjugated women (see section 2.1). It was argued that men's inability to recognise street harassment as a harmful behaviour was because the act lacked a common definition (Kissling, 1991). As a consequence, men could not accept women's fear of harassment either. However, Kissling (1991) does not explore why it was important for men to validate street harassment—it can thus be inferred that women's experiences are valid only if men recognised it. In order to make street harassment visible to men, it was proposed that women must define their experience and decide with "what bias street harassment will be encoded" i.e. whether one perceived harassment as a compliment or as a harm (Kissling, 1991, p.457). In this regard, it was proposed that street harassment be viewed as a "communication process/problem" (Kissling, 1991, p.457). Societal systems be they social, political, gender, or economic systems, are constructed and maintained through communication practices. In the context of street harassment, by studying the communication practices related to it, one could critique the systems that enabled harassment (Kissling, 1991).

As a tool of sexual terrorism, street harassment achieves social and psychological subjugation of women through the acts of exclusion, domination, invasion, and oppression (Davis, 1994). Exclusion of women from public spaces was achieved by creating an atmosphere of threat for women accessing such spaces. It was argued that the public sphere was constructed as a male zone where women were considered as trespassers by the men because women belonged to

the private sphere of homes. Di Leonardo (1985) and Bowman (1993) termed this attempt to relegate women to the private space as "ghettoization". Thus, by gendering the street as a male zone, street harassment perpetuated the dominance of men over women—if women were to access and inhabit public spaces, it was at the mercy of the men's pleasure and permission (Davis, 1994). Therefore, using street harassment as a tool, men asserted dominance over what women could do and where they could go. Indeed, the most insidious form of domination achieved through street harassment was over women's emotional and intellectual growth. For example, it was observed that harassment interrupted and overpowered whatever other needs a woman was mentally processing at that time. As a consequence, a woman's "way of knowing is replaced by men's thoughts of women" (Davis, 1994, p. 143). Therefore, harassment could also be framed as an act of invasion of privacy of the woman. It was argued that the right to privacy is an integral part of one's citizenship "within a particular sphere"; in this context, because of the gendering of the public space as masculine, women lose their right to privacy as they are considered a part of the public sphere only in ways to be enjoyed by men (p.144). Thus, it was articulated that street harassment resulted in the oppression of women since they were deprived of choices—a man on the street could strip the woman of her right to privacy and inhibit her access and movement with one word or gesture. This lack of choice and control in the external world resulted in a constant state of psychological oppression for women (Davis, 1994). Sexual objectification, a core construct of street harassment, also perpetuated psychological oppression, by dehumanising and deconstructing women as an assembly of sexual body parts (Davis, 1994).

Whilst these social and psychological harms are inflicted on all women who experience street harassment, a woman's historical context also contributed to her sense-making of these experiences (Davis, 1994). For instance, street harassment of African American women

"evokes the institutional memory of slavery" in them (p.163). It was argued that the lack of cultural and legal solutions for street harassment enabled white men to maintain the master-slave dynamics over African American women through harassment (Davis, 1994). African American women were excluded from the "cult of true womanhood" discourse where the chaste, moral woman was always represented by the virginal white woman. Consequently, it was posited that African American women's perception of street harassment was also influenced by their historical positioning as "Jezebels", or the white man's temptress, in the context of slavery (Davis, 1994). It was noted that African American women were also harassed by African American men, however this intra-racial harassment was based only on gender and not on race (Davis, 1994).

Street harassment imposes a "situational disadvantage" on the woman in a public space because on the one hand, the public space "symbolically" promises civility and equal access to one and all, but on the other, it also holds the potential for uncivil and threatening experiences (Gardner, 1995, p.56). A result of this dynamic of the public place is that for women, any private triumphs, be they professional or personal, are reduced to "nothing at all" the minute they encounter harassment (Gardner, 1995, p.51). This argument is relatable to Davis's (1994) observation that harassment causes "dissonance" in a woman at a psychological level, where the woman is conflicted between her self-construct and the harasser's objectification of her, causing a "mental pandemonium" (p. 175). In this ethnographic study, which spanned five years and included 506 participants (293 women; 213 men), Gardner (1995) found that street harassment of women also took place in semi-public spaces such as restaurants and shops. For example, a woman who was employed as a clerk in the lingerie section of a store reported harassment in the form of lewd stares and comments "by men who seem to think I've got no more clothes on than one of the dummies" (Gardner, 1995, p.57). Therefore, it was argued that in such semi-public spaces, the spatial

context of the woman influenced men's behaviour towards her (Gardner, 1995). This indicated that the realm of street harassment could also extend to spaces considered safe and private by women.

The sociological studies discussed in this section have made a significant contribution towards our understanding of street harassment. Street harassment has sociological roots and can be considered as a tool employed to propagate male hegemony in society by oppressing women and denying them agency and equality. In this regard, di Leonardo's (1981) study made an important contribution by discussing the two important social root causes of street harassment, namely women's increasing financial empowerment that threatened existing gender power balance, and a visual culture of female sexual objectification. Whilst scholars of subsequent studies turned their attention towards the psychological effects of street harassment on women, it can be argued that these suggested root causes described by di Leonardo (1981) remain under-researched, much to the detriment of our sociological understanding of street harassment.

The decisive argument by Kissling (1991) that street harassment was a form of sexual terrorism elevated the status of street harassment from a mere unpleasant interaction as generally perceived to a phenomenon that could pose a greater threat to women. This was further supported by Davis's (1993) analysis on the genderisation of spaces which led to women being treated as intruders of the public space by men. Likewise, Gardner's (1995) study gave an important insight into how spatial concepts are constructed and experienced by women and men differently, and that women have no control over the intrusion of their spaces by men. Whilst Gardner (1995) gave an insight into how a woman's spatial situation could provoke street harassment, Davis's (1993) analysis revealed how sociocultural and historical contexts could also entitle men to engage in harassment and influence women's meaning-making of the experience. In this regard, Davis's (1993) study assumes larger

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significance because this is the only study that has examined street harassment through an intersectional lens, thus making space for African American women's voices.

In summary, this section discussed some of the important sociological essays that have explored gendered construction of public spaces in the context of street harassment, and consequently, the power dynamics of gender in the public space, and the repercussions of street harassment on women's social and psychological lives. These studies have provided the foundation for subsequent psychological studies.

2.4.   Psychological studies

The psychological studies discussed in this section aimed to examine, through quantitative methods, the various effects of street harassment on women's mental health. The relationship between women's sexual harassment and their perceptions of safety was examined in a large quantitative survey (N=12,300) set in Canada (Macmillan et al., 2000); the impact of street harassment on self-objectification was assessed in a study with student participants set in an American university campus (N = 228) (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008); the relationship between street harassment and body image, self-esteem, avoidance behaviour, and objectification were considered in a quantitative study (N=133) also set in an American university campus with student participants (Lord, 2009); the influence of system-justification beliefs in women's coping strategy towards harassment and the influence of men's sexist beliefs on their perception of women's coping strategies to harassment were analysed in a study that also recruited students as participants (Female = 143, Male = 117) (Saunders, Scaturro, Guarino & Kelly, 2017). It can be posited that these studies drew their hypotheses from the sociological discussions presented in the previous section (2.2).

The results of the study by Macmillan et al. (2000) indicated how street harassment made women more fearful for their safety. In this study the participants were administered a

purpose-built survey that was designed to explicitly differentiate stranger harassment from "nonstranger" sexual harassment (p.310). The results indicated that 85% of the respondents had faced some form of stranger harassment, and that stranger harassment was far more "prevalent and extensive" than non-stranger harassment (p.311). Stranger harassment was found to be the "key determinant" in women's perception of safety, outweighing all other variables such as social class, physical disability, and urban residence (p.318). Thus, increased exposure to stranger harassment had a direct impact on women's feeling of safety. These findings are supported by the legal and sociological arguments of Davis (1994), di Leonardo (1981), Kissling (1991), and Tuerkheimer (1997) where it was posited that women feared street harassment because it had the potential to escalate to a sexual assault. In particular, the results of this study by MacMillan et al. (2000) has validated the opinions of Kissling (1991) and Tuerkheimer (1997) that street harassment is a tool used to sexually terrorise and subjugate women. Clear links between this study and Ferraro's (1996) theory of "shadow" of sexual assault can also be seen (p.670). This theory posits that the fear of sexual assault was the dominant fear in women i.e. this fear 'overshadowed' all other fears that operated on a woman—for example, a woman alone at home could be afraid of being burgled, but she will more actively process the fear of being raped by the burglar. The results of MacMillan et al.'s (2000) study demonstrated that street harassment contributed significantly in heightening this fear of sexual assault in women.

Street harassment was also found to have a significant impact on self-objectification in women. In their quantitative study, Fairchild & Rudman (2008) investigated the relationship between street harassment (which they termed as stranger harassment), self-objectification, fear of rape, and restriction of movement. They hypothesized that increased frequency in stranger harassment was positively related to self-objectification, fear of sexual assault and perceived risk of rape, and self-restriction of movement. They also predicted that

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participants' coping strategies towards harassment would mediate self-objectification i.e. women with active coping strategies, for example, confronting the harasser, would report lower levels of objectification compared to those who adopted passive strategies such as ignoring the harasser. Also, a high level of self-objectification was predicted in women who perceived certain forms of harassment such as catcalls as compliments.

It was inferred from the results that there was a "significant" relationship between experiencing harassment and self-objectification; harassment was "marginally" related to fear of rape, and "reliably" related to perceived risk of rape; and there was a negligible correlation between harassment and self-restriction of freedom of movement (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008, p.348). Coping strategies had a significant correlation with self-objectification where active coping strategies suggested lower self-objectification when compared to passive strategies (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008).

The authors suggested that one of the drawbacks of this study was that the place of harassment was not specified; since all the participants were students, it was assumed that the incidents took place inside the university campus (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008). It was posited that the public life on a university campus may be different from public life outside because "college women may be more likely to attend parties at fraternities or bars that allow for more harassment opportunities" (p.354). The researchers thus implied that college women could face a higher frequency of harassment inside the university campus compared to a public space. However, as discussed earlier in this chapter (see sections 2.1 and 2.2), studies have described the high frequency and pervasiveness of street harassment in the public space (di Leonardo, 1981; Gardner, 1995; Kissling, 1991; Macmillan, et al., 2000). Therefore, it can be argued that the location context of the harassment may not have influenced the results significantly in this study because the focus was on women's harassment by strangers. Indeed, contrary to Fairchild and Rudman's (2008) opinion, it can be argued that the

university campus is a more controlled environment compared to a public space. Also, compared to the large sample size in the study by Macmillan et al. (2000), the participant sample in this research by Fairchild and Rudman (2008) is small in number and limited in its demographic variance, given that all the participants were students. It can be posited that these factors have mediated the results in terms of the quantitative effect size —for example, compared to the findings of this study, the fear of sexual assault and threat perception in women were significantly more amplified in the study by Macmillan et al. (2000).

The quantitative modelling in this study by Fairchild and Rudman (2008) could not directly establish causal links between frequency of harassment and self-objectification—despite a significant correlation between the two, only a "potential" causality was speculated (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008, p.353). This indicated that a participant could display self-objectification due to multiple reasons, one of which could be harassment. In this context, it can be argued that the selection of independent questionnaires may have limited the scope of this research. However, their finding of a potentially strong link between harassment and self-objectification is important and this theory is supported by previous authors (Bowman, 1993; Davis, 1994; Kissling,1991; di Leonardo, 1985).

This relationship between street harassment and objectification was again investigated by Lord (2009) in their quantitative study (N=133). As in the case of Fairchild and Rudman (2008), the participants for Lord's (2009) study were American undergraduate students, aged 18-23 years. However, this study had a wider scope because it also examined the relationship between street harassment and body image, self-esteem, and avoidance behaviour. The results indicated that women who were harassed more frequently were more likely to have a positive body image. In contrast, women who had negative reactions to harassment were more likely to report a negative body image, i.e. feeling unhappy about their appearance. It was also inferred that participants with negative reactions to harassment were more likely to report

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feelings of inadequacy in meeting cultural expectations regarding their looks and were likely to have low self-esteem. Participants with negative reactions to harassment also showed avoidance behaviour by avoiding going alone to certain places. Finally, women of colour experienced higher frequency of harassment than white women.

It can be argued that whilst the results may be numerically accurate, Lord's (2009) interpretations are flawed. For example, it was posited that "the more frequently women reported being subjected to harassing behavior, the more likely they were to report feeling satisfied with their appearance" (Lord, 2009, p.52). Here, harassment is interpreted as having a positive effect on women. It can be argued that this result should have been interpreted through the lens of self-objectification, as examined by Fairchild and Rudman (2008) who proposed that women who are frequently harassed may display higher levels of self-objectification. Self-objectification may induce women to pay more attention to their appearance, and hence this could impact the woman's body image (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008).

A second drawback in Lord's (2009) interpretation is that they have assumed a direct causality between harassment and body image, self-esteem, and avoidance behaviour—it can be argued that they have erroneously interpreted correlation as causality. For instance, it was interpreted that negative feelings towards harassment predicted negative body image (Lord, 2009). Here, Lord (2009) does not take into account the proposals of previous studies, where it was posited that harassment could induce negative feelings of anger, humiliation, and fear in women (Bowman, 1993; Davis, 1994; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; Gardner, 1995; di Leonardo, 1985; Macmillan, Nierobisz & Welsh, 2000; Kissling, 1991). It can be argued that one could have negative feelings towards harassment despite having a positive body image. Studies have also proposed that reactions to harassment are dependent on situational, historical and personal contexts (Davis, 1994; Gardner, 1995). For example, street

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harassment was additionally distressing to African American women because it invoked historical memories of slavery (Davis, 1994). In Lord's (2009) study, it was found that women of colour experienced higher frequency of harassment compared to white women. However, the historical and cultural context in the reactions of African American women were not considered whilst interpreting the results. In conclusion, it can be argued that a fundamental drawback of Lord's (2009) study is the interpretation of the results without a sociocultural, historical and psychological context.

From a sociocultural perspective, it was proposed that system-justification beliefs in women influenced their coping strategy towards harassment; likewise, men's sexist beliefs influenced their perception of women's coping strategies to harassment (Saunders, et al., 2017). The system-justification theory posits that people support and actively participate in belief systems in order to maintain a societal status quo, even if such systems act against their self-interest (Jost & Banaji, 1994). In particular, people belonging to disadvantaged groups support such systems, despite these systems putting them in the position of disadvantage, because they tended to believe that these systems are in fact fair and legitimate (Saunders, et al., 2017). In the context of harassment, considering women as the disadvantaged group, it was predicted that women who held system-justification beliefs would adopt benign coping methods towards harassment (Saunders, et al., 2017). They also predicted that self-esteem was negatively related to benign coping methods and consequently, self-blame as a coping method was negatively related to self-esteem. Women with high self-esteem would reject benign coping methods of harassment and would not indulge in self-blame; conversely, low self-esteem would result in high self-blame and benign coping methods to harassment. With regard to men, it was hypothesized that ambivalent sexism in men predicted how the men perceived women's coping methods to harassment (Saunders, et al., 2017). Ambivalent sexism proposes that sexism has two distinct dimensions: benevolence and hostility (Glick &

Fiske, 1996). It was proposed that both these dimensions propagated sexist attitudes by reinforcing the ideology that women are inferior to men (Glick & Fiske, 1996). It was posited that a hostile sexist attitude advocated the view that women were enemies of men trying to usurp men's power and higher place in society; a benevolent attitude viewed women as the vulnerable "fair sex" (Saunders, et al., 2017, p.327). In the context of street harassment, the hostile sexist attitude was manifested in victim-blaming behaviours; benevolent attitude viewed women as weak and helpless who need the protection of men (Saunders, et al., 2017).

The results of this study (women: N=143; men: N=117) indicated that women with higher scores on the system justification scale tended to adopt benign coping mechanisms such as justifying harassment with self-blame. The results indicated that women who held themselves responsible for being harassed (self-blame) tended to score low on the self-esteem scale. Conversely, women with higher self-esteem scores did not accept the status quo and adopted active coping mechanisms. Men who showed hostile sexist attitudes prescribed benign coping methods for women who experienced harassment; men with benevolent attitude prescribed active coping methods. It was proposed that the men's prescriptions for coping with harassment, be it benign or active, sought to restore the gender power status-quo (Saunders et al., 2017). Men with hostile sexist attitudes did not endorse active coping because it would involve challenging the men and upsetting the power balance (Saunders et al., 2017). Benevolent sexists perceived women as weak and needed protection, so they viewed harassment as "unchivalrous" and hence advised active coping (Saunders et al., 2017, p.335).

The results of this study broaden the scope of our understanding on how women's sociocultural contexts influence their processing of harassment—this was theoretically discussed by Davis (1994) in the context of African American women's experiences of street harassment (see Section 2.2 in this chapter). Also, this research by Saunders et al. (2017) is one of the very few studies that has included male participants in a research on street

harassment—the findings show how even men are influenced by sociocultural beliefs and ambivalent sexism in their processing of women's harassment. From a methodological perspective, this study illustrates how, by including instruments that measure sociocultural contexts, the results from independent questionnaires can be interpreted from a holistic perspective, in contrast to Lord's (2009) study.

This section discussed some of the important studies that explored the psychological implications of street harassment on women. The results of all the studies indicated direct links between street harassment and the heightened fear of sexual assault in women. The potentially strong links between street harassment and self-objectification and low self-esteem were also discussed. Sociocultural contexts were once again implicated in the processing and coping of harassment by women.

2.5.   Global studies on street harassment

In the recent years, street harassment studies have been carried out in different countries and cultural contexts indicating that it is a universal problem. The studies selected for discussion in this section are set in Morocco (Chafai, 2017), Mexico (Campos, Falb, Hernández, Díaz-Olavarrieta, & Gupta, 2017), Japan (Horii & Burgess, 2012), and Sweden (Mellgren, Andersson, & Ivert, 2018). This selection provides a good range of different sociocultural contexts.

The relationship between the representation of women in Moroccan socio-cultural discourses and their harassment was explored by Chafai (2017). It was posited that there is a representation of an ideal Moroccan woman in the sociocultural discourses, and when women are perceived to deviate from this ideal representation, they could be subjected to "violence and harassment" (Chafai, 2017, p.824). First, it was proposed that whilst the recent sociocultural changes in Morocco have had a positive impact on the lives of women in terms

of education and paid occupation opportunities, their emancipation also created conflicts between traditional roles of women as homemakers and mothers versus the financially independent women that threaten male roles (Chafai, 2017). Also, the urbanisation of Moroccan cities has resulted in significant rural migration; this caused a clash of modern culture versus rural conservatism, where the "unveiled" urban Moroccan woman gained ill-repute amongst the rural men who were more accustomed to women who were confined to private spaces and who dressed modestly (Chafai, 2017, p.826). Secondly, the author noted that the education syllabus prescribed textbooks that were sexist, representing women in private spheres of home and motherhood, whereas men were positioned as breadwinners and leaders. Thirdly, even though the Moroccan constitution assured equal rights to all citizens, the "Family Code (the Mudawana)" prescribed a more restrictive view of Moroccan women and their rights (Chafai, 2017, p.826). Finally, the representations of women in media and popular culture often portrayed women regressively as ignorant or manipulative characters who operated within the private space of the home (Chafai, 2017).

A drawback of Chafai's (2017) study is that it does not provide direct links between these representations of women and their experiences of street harassment. This exploration would have been enhanced had Chafai (2017) illustrated their arguments with primary data, e.g. case studies, to demonstrate their hypothesis in action.

Researchers in Mexico found a significant correlation between street harassment and perceptions of social cohesion in Mexican women in their quantitative study (Campos, Falb, Hernández, Díaz-Olavarrieta, & Gupta, 2017). Social cohesion is an individual's ability to feel connected to the larger community (Campos et al., 2017). 952 Mexican women, who were already a part of a clinical trial for Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), were recruited for this study. The results found that over 60 percent of the women had experienced street harassment in the past one month, of which nearly 27 percent of women reported physical

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form of harassment, indicating the high prevalence of street harassment. 69.5 percent of the participants reported disrupted mobility, indicating the significant impact of harassment on women's freedom of movement. Nearly 77 percent of the participants tried to avoid being harassed by "detracting attention", that is wearing "inconspicuous clothes" or use of headphones and goggles to avoid eye contact, indicating that a majority of the participants adopted passive coping methods to harassment (Campos, et al., 2017, p.104). It was posited that since street harassment had a negative impact on women's mobility and also increased their threat perception, it limited their access to job opportunities and therefore healthcare access, resulting in their overall physical and mental isolation.

A drawback of this study is its sample base; the women were already victims of IPV, therefore the overlapping impact of IPV on social cohesion could not be ruled out (Campos, et al., p. 105). However, the importance of this study is that it perceived the impact of street harassment as a public health problem, rather than an individual's problem. The study also steers the direction of new research into exploring the multiple levels of disempowerment caused by street harassment through damaged social cohesion.

In Japan, the problem of "*chikan*" or groping led to the introduction of women-only train carriages (Horii & Burgess, 2012, p.42, emphasis in original). The objective of Horii and Burgess's (2012) study was to explore women's perceptions of such women-only public transport. The study was conducted through a survey of 155 women. The results indicated that some participants preferred women-only carriages for a range of reasons—from feeling safe to "complaints about the physical presence of older men (*ojisan/oyaji*) and their smell" (Horii & Burgess, 2012, p. 46, emphasis in original). There were also participants who disagreed with such a service for reasons such as, it discriminated against men, or that safety was each individual's responsibility. It was concluded that whilst segregating women did not solve the problem of chikan, however, women's approval of women-only train carriages was

a symbolic rebellion against Japan's patriarchal power represented by the stereotype of "salarymen" specific to the Japanese cultural context, who is the reviled, middle-aged man, or oyaji (Horii & Burgess, 2012, p.49). It was argued that there was an inherent conflict in this situation because it reinforced patriarchal notions of women's vulnerability in a male public space, and so the women's safety could be secured only by removing them from the proximity of men (Horii & Burgess, 2012). However, it can be observed from the study that the women were not mandated to travel by women-only carriages; they were given a choice of either using these carriages or travel in the mixed carriage as before. Therefore, instead of viewing this move as patriarchal, it can be argued that giving this choice to women was empowering and liberating; each woman could now decide how she wanted to travel depending on her situational and ideological context.

A drawback of this study is the misinterpretation of participants' responses—for example, Horii & Burgess (2012) report that—

> Rather than *chikan*, other more general concerns dominated the responses. They were usually concerned over personal safety which included terms such as: 'feeling safe (*anshin*)', 'feeling at ease (*ki ga raku*)', and 'safety (*anzen*)'" (p.46, emphasis in original).

It is clear from this observation that the authors believed that one can be groped yet feel safe; that physical safety and being groped are two mutually exclusive concepts. It can be speculated that Horii & Burgess (2012) have arrived at this conclusion because of their biased stance that chikan is harmless—"groping on the train may be physically harmless and almost always committed by strangers. This makes victimisation from chikan less traumatic than other 'more serious' sexual crimes such as rape" (Horii & Burgess, 2012, p.42). This conclusion was based on two arguments: one, that chikan was less likely to induce post-

traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in victims compared to other forms of negative sexual experiences; two, that chikan did not lead to eating disorders in the victims as in the cases of other sexual crimes (Horii & Burgess, 2012). These controversial conclusions were once again based on the authors' misinterpretation of the results of two different studies that explored sexual harassment in different contexts (Nagata, Kiriike, Iketani, Kawarada, & Tanaka,1999; Uji, Shikai, Shono, & Kitamura, 2007). With respect to this opinion of Horii and Burgess (2012), it can be argued that it is ethically wrong for any individual to decide which form of sexual assault is more harmful, because this line of argument runs the risk of constructing a discourse that only certain kinds of sexual harm are valid whilst other forms are not, thus silencing victims.

It is to be noted that women's sexual abuse in a public transport is a problem common to many countries—for example, Australia (Gardner, Cui, & Coiacetto, 2017), Bangladesh (Mazumder & Pokharel, 2019), Nepal (Neupane & Chesney-Lind, 2014), and India (Mitra-Sarkar & Partheeban, 2009) to name a few. A common thread in all these studies, including the current one by Horii and Burgess (2012) is that harassment in public transports is almost always physical because of the physical proximity between men and women inside the vehicle, and also because the crowded space provides anonymity to the harasser.

Similar to public transports, it was observed that women in semi-public "nightlife" spaces such as nightclubs, bars and restaurants, which were termed as "sexualised social spaces", faced a high frequency of harassment (Mellgren, Anderson, & Ivert, 2018, p. 265). In this study set in Sweden, Mellgren et al. (2018) recruited university students as participants (N = 1941) to investigate the frequency of harassment, the participants' responses to harassment, and the reasons why they do not report the harassment. A mixed method design was used where the participants where administered a survey, followed by a descriptive questionnaire.

It was found that 24.4 percent of the participants had experienced harassment in the past twelve months and 49 percent of the victims reported feelings of anger after the incident. 58 percent of the incidents took place in semi-public places such clubs, pubs or restaurants. This can be related to Gardner's (1995) opinion that the spatial context of the woman influenced men's behaviour towards her (see Section 2.2 in this chapter). Therefore, Mellgren, et al. (2018) concluded that lifestyle factors contributed to the probability of being harassed, i.e. women who did not socialise in these particular semi-public spaces may not face the same levels of harassment as women who frequented these places did. Whilst the authors do not explore this point further, the observation itself implies that women are indirectly responsible for the harassment they experience because of their lifestyle choices. In the descriptive answers, the participants reported that harassment was so normalised that inappropriate touching of a woman's body was considered acceptable in the society. All the participants shared common feelings of "degradation, disrespect, and disappointment" regarding their harassment experiences (p.272). 98.5 percent of the victims chose not to report the harassment to the police because they believed the police would not take any actions, and that being harassed was "a normal part of being a woman" (p.273).

This study by Mellgren, et al. (2018) provided the view of street harassment in an advanced society, where the sociocultural discourses are less patriarchal and more egalitarian and feminist, compared to other societies such as Morocco, Mexico, and Japan discussed previously. Indeed, the authors noted that Sweden is one of the world's most gender equal societies, yet the results of their study showed that even in such developed societies street harassment was normalised and women were not free from harassment and its debilitating effects. It was therefore opined that "women have their lives in part shaped by men's sexual behavior, regardless of the official level of equality between men and women" (p.274), indicating that perhaps women are truly never free.

In summary, this section discussed studies on street harassment set in different countries such as Morocco, Mexico, Japan, and Sweden. Each of these countries have diverse sociocultural gender discourses, yet street harassment was a common experience shared by all the women. These studies have strongly demonstrated how street harassment is a global phenomenon, and that sociocultural contexts are important in understanding street harassment experiences.

2.6.   Street harassment studies specific to India

Street harassment research in India is still nascent compared to the research conducted in the west. It was found that the existing studies in India are localised and limited to cities like New Delhi and Chennai. This section explored the works of Baxi (2001) who gave an insight into how street harassment is handled in the Indian law; Mitra-Sarkar & Partheeban (2009), who did a quantitative survey on street harassment of students in Chennai; the UN Women and International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) (2012) survey conducted in New Delhi which explored perceptions of street harassment amongst men and women; a qualitative study of street harassment set in New Delhi by Dhillon and Bakaya (2014); and finally, Natarajan's (2016) qualitative study on street harassment in Chennai that included focus-group discussions with college students and group interviews with police officers.

The socio-legal essay by Baxi (2001) gave an insight into the evolution of the laws on street harassment in the Indian legal system, and how the interpretation of these laws are entwined with Indian sociocultural discourses on harassment. As discussed in Chapter 2, "eve teasing" is an Indian euphemism for street harassment and it refers to "all forms of harassment women face in public spaces that are considered trivial, funny and part of everyday life" (Baxi, 2001, p.1). This term illustrated how, through nomenclature, street harassment is a society-sanctioned and normalised form of violence against Indian women (Baxi, 2001).

In the legal context, the term eve teasing is not a legal category, instead, the act is ambiguously defined as "outraging the modesty" (see Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion) in the Indian Penal Code (IPC) (Baxi, 2001, p.3). It was argued that this legal phraseology often resulted in "moralistic interpretations" rather than factual emphasis, because the focus was on the woman's modesty or absence of it—the law would regulate the woman's morality rather than guarantee her rights (Baxi, 2001, p.3). For example, it was found that women's complaints against harassers was often met with disbelief or callousness by the police, who would not record the women's complaints (Baxi, 2001). Indeed, until 1991, only rape and kidnapping were categorised under crimes against women in crime statistics reports; other forms of sexual harassment of women such as eve teasing was simply clubbed under "'other IPC crimes'" indicating that eve teasing was considered insignificant (Baxi, 2001, p.4). In 1992, new legal classifications were included under crimes against women, where eve teasing and molestation were assigned separate penal codes. From that point, the legal system viewed eve teasing as verbal harassment and molestation as a physical harassment. This once again suggested that eve teasing was less serious, and therefore less harmful compared to molestation. From 1994 onwards, the term 'eve teasing' was replaced by 'sexual harassment' in the crime reports; this was seen as a triumph for the Indian feminist movement where 'eve teasing' was on its way out of legal nomenclature, and was finally replaced by a term that denoted the seriousness of the crime (Baxi, 2001).

Baxi's (2001) essay is an important starting point for street harassment research in India because it gives an insight into the legal and social construction of harassment. It also illustrates the vast difference in the sociocultural and legal perceptions of street harassment between India and the west.

Contrary to the downgraded seriousness of street harassment in the legal and social discourse, a quantitative study conducted in Chennai revealed the pervasiveness and seriousness of

harassment (Mitra-Sarkar & Partheeban, 2009). A bespoke survey was administered to 274 college students to assess the forms of harassment they experienced and the locations where the acts took place. The results indicated that 66 percent of the respondents had experienced harassment. The participants reported that their worst experiences of harassment were in public transports such as buses and trains with no separate sections for women. Bus stops were also identified as hotspots of harassment where women were heckled and catcalled whilst waiting for a bus. Over 80 percent of the respondents reported that their parents and family members were constantly worried about their safety. As a coping strategy, the women felt that traveling in groups, or with a male companion reduced the risk of harassment. Only 11 percent of the respondents had sought police intervention, and less than a quarter of them found the police sympathetic or helpful. A majority of the participants, nearly 70 percent, believed that the root cause of harassment was the influence of movies (Mitra-Sarkar & Partheeban, 2009). This can be compared to di Leonardo's (1981) observation (see section 2.2 in this chapter) that the increased visibility of pornographic materials in the cities, from billboards to magazine kiosks, had resulted in an upsurge of street harassment.

It can be posited that this study by Mitra-Sarkar & Partheeban (2009) provides a snapshot of the lives of ordinary, young Indian women under the shadow of street harassment. The findings of this study indicated that when the public transportation becomes the site of harassment, it can have potentially significant and direct impact on all aspects of a woman's life—the public transportation is crucial for a woman to get to school or university, to get to work, or to buy food. This study shows how street harassment turns public transportation, the conveyance link between a private realm i.e. the home, and the public space into a fearful place for women, threatening their autonomy and freedom of movement. These findings resonate with the findings of studies from other countries such as Australia (Gardner, Cui, & Coiacetto, 2017), Bangladesh (Mazumder & Pokharel, 2019), Horii and Burgess (2012);

Nepal (Neupane & Chesney-Lind, 2014) where women reported high frequency of harassment on public transports.

A larger quantitative survey was conducted in New Delhi to establish a baseline statistic on public harassment, as a part of United Nation's (UN) worldwide Safe City Initiative program (UN Women & ICRW, 2012). This bespoke survey recruited 2001 females and 1003 males, in the age of 16-49 years. The survey sought to explore perceptions of both men and women on various facets of harassment including locations, frequency, and the factors that caused harassment. The results found that 91.5 percent of the female respondents had faced some form of sexual harassment in a public space in their lifetimes, with 53 percent of them reporting physical sexual harassment such as pinching and groping. 54 percent of the women reported feeling unsafe in a crowded bus, corroborating the findings of Mitra-Sarkar and Partheeban (2009). The majority of women (85.4 percent) and men (87 percent) believed that sexual harassment was the biggest factor that heightened safety risk of women in Delhi's public spaces. 93 percent of the women respondents and 86 percent of the men reported that the biggest factor affecting women's safety was their gender – "being a woman" (UN Women & ICRW, 2012, p.17). In a demonstration of how harassment leads to self-restriction of freedom of movement, 70 percent of the women said they avoided going to secluded places, 50 percent avoided crowded places, and 40 percent avoided going out alone after dark. 50.5 percent of the male respondents reported perpetrating some form of sexual harassment in public in their lifetime, and three out of four men felt that it was women who provoked men into harassing them (UN Women & ICRW, 2012).

It can be surmised that this baseline survey by UN Women and ICRW (2012), the first of its kind, gives a snapshot of the scale, pervasiveness, and entrenchment of street harassment as a social problem in India.

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In contrast to the above quantitative studies, a qualitative research was conducted to explore women's lived experiences of street harassment in Delhi (Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014). They interviewed 20 female participants, all residents of Delhi, in the age of 18-30 for this study. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA, Smith & Eatough, 2007) was conducted on the interview data and the findings were discussed under the following themes— omnipresence of street harassment; perceived reasons; reactions to harassment; family reactions; apathy; strategies for self-protection; and required changes. These findings, especially the themes of omnipresence of harassment, apathy by authorities and society, and self-protection strategies were in accordance with the findings of Mirta-Sarkar and Partheeban (2012), and UN Women and ICRW (2012). If the quantitative studies measured various aspects of street harassment, Dhillon and Bakaya's study (2014) added qualitative depth to the experience of street harassment—for example, it was observed that "only one strategy was seen by every participant as an almost foolproof way of avoiding harassment, which was to go into public spaces with a male" (p.7). This observation provides an active illustration as to how street harassment can fetter women by increasing their dependency on men.

A significant contribution of this study is that Dhillon and Bakaya (2014) abstracted an experiential model of street harassment. This model illustrated how the factors causing street harassment and women's response to the experience operated in a near inescapable "cyclical" process, where women must constantly anticipate harassment, and when it does occur, they must take an informed yet instant decision regarding their reaction to it (p.9).

A minor point of critique on this study is its methodological ambiguity—the study, although described as IPA, lacks the clear hallmarks of hermeneutic inquiry and idiography (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). For example, the emphasis of IPA is not just on the contours of an experience, but what the experience meant for an individual (Smith, et al., 2009). In this

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regard, it can be argued that the interpretation of individual experiences in Dhillon and Bakaya's (2014) study was not deep enough to capture the "'hot cognition'" meaning-making of individual participants (Smith, et al., 2009, p.33). Instead, the study leans more towards thematic analysis.

A new kind of quantitative study on street harassment was conducted in Chennai by implementing a Rapid Assessment Methodology (RAM) (Natarajan, 2016). It was posited that whilst RAM was not a traditional methodology that involved "scientific rigour", it could be deployed to "produce sufficiently reliable information about specific problems to permit preventive actions to be identified and implemented" (Natarajan, 2016, p.1). In this study, RAM included three different forms of data collection: focus group discussions with students, interviews with police officers, and safety audits of places surrounding college campuses. A total of 140 students were recruited for the focus group discussions; each group had about 30 participants. The interviews with police officers were semi-structured and were conducted in small groups of four to six; a total of 30 police officers were interviewed. The safety audit of the campuses and surroundings was carried out by observing the public space for features such as street-lighting, if the place was isolated, the design of bus-stops, to name a few (Natarajan, 2016).

The focus group discussions were analysed, and the findings indicated that street harassment occurred at all times of the day but increased during "rush hour" of 5pm – 9pm (p.5). A woman on her own was more likely to be harassed; harassment took place within all public spaces including streets, parks, and bus stops, as well as on public transports such as buses and autorickshaws. The perpetrators could be any male, from autorickshaw drivers to police officers. These descriptions were similar to those outlined by Mitra-Sarkar and Partheeban (2009), whose study was also carried out in Chennai with students as participants. It can be

posited that despite the seven-year gap between these two studies, there appears to be no change in the levels of harassment experienced by young women. However, some of the experiences described by the female students in Natarajan's (2016) study illustrated how modern technology such as mobile phones have obliterated the public/private divide, thus invading the woman's private sphere. For example, a female student described "A guy got my number and tortured me, kept calling very often and later on he started threatening me. Now I stopped using cell phone and I'm scared whenever I hear mobile ring tones" (Natarajan, 2016, p.6). Also, street harassment has the potential to escalate into serious life-threatening assault and this unpredictability is terrifying for the woman; for example, a student described how men harassed girls by forcing them to accept love letters, and if the girls resisted, the men would "threaten to meet parents and to pour acid" (Natarajan, 2016, p.6). Here, the threat to "meet parents" is in effect a threat to shame and dishonour the girl and her family, and with the threat of the acid attack, it indicates the perpetrator's desire to destroy the woman beyond repair, both physically and psychologically. This violence is comparable to Kissling's (1991) description of street harassment as sexual terrorism.

2.7.   Conclusion

This chapter traced the development of research on street harassment which occurred outside the ambit of research on VAW. One of the reasons for this exclusion was that VAW is often interpreted as physical and psychological violence perpetuated against women by intimate partners. Therefore research into street harassment developed as an independent subject and this chapter presented some of these important literature on street harassment. The literature was grouped into five categories— a) Legal studies – these explored how street harassment was framed in jurisprudence b) Sociological studies – these explored discourses around street harassment, its perceived harms on women, and the positioning of women in society c) Psychological studies – these examined psychological effects of street harassment on women

Sensitivity: Internal

d) Global studies on harassment – these explored how street harassment was perceived in different countries/cultures e) Street harassment studies in India – these explored some of the important research on street harassment in India, and its cultural nuances.

It was observed that the foundation of street harassment research was laid in the American context with the feminist studies of Bowman (1993), Davis (1994), Kissling, (1991), and Leonardo (1981). These studies defined street harassment, discussed the complexities of implementing laws to criminalise harassment, explored the sociological and potential psychological implications of harassment on women's lives. These studies gave a platform for research that explored psychological implications of harassment, for example, the research by Macmillan, et al. (2000), Fairchild and Rudman (2008), and Lord (2009).

The sample of international studies on harassment that were discussed, contextualised to Morocco, Mexico, Japan, and Sweden clearly showed that street harassment is a global problem and highlights the fact that cultural interpretations of gender are important in understanding harassment behaviours. Street harassment has the same characteristics globally; the descriptions by American women are similar to the experiences of Indian women, Moroccan women, or Mexican women. Within India, the studies demonstrated that harassment is a pervasive problem from Delhi in the north to Chennai in the south – both regions have their own distinct cultures, but the experience of harassment was similar for the women of both these regions.

It was observed that whilst there was considerable interest in the subject of harassment in the 1990s which resulted a number of significant studies, this momentum was not sustained through the subsequent decades. For example, there is no standardised instrument yet to examine causes, patterns, and effects of street harassment; no studies have offered a significant new insight into harassment; indeed, even to date, psychological studies refer to

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Fairchild and Rudman's (2008) work and there has been no further development on their research. It was also observed that the majority of the quantitative studies recruited students as their participants. The voices of older women from different demographics such as working women and homemakers, have largely been excluded from research on street harassment. Thus, it can be argued that although the literature review on street harassment spanned nearly four decades, progress on the ground has been incremental and slow, with negligible impact on the lived experiences of women navigating public spaces.

In summary, these are the known aspects of street harassment: street harassment has a workable definition; it occurs in public spaces; women form a majority of the victims; men are usually the perpetrators of harassment; one of the causes of street harassment is men's perception of a gender power imbalance in society; the effects of street harassment are psychologically harmful to women. Paradoxically, what remains muted and unknown is the voice of the woman—her sense-making of living in an environment of harassment, and its impact on her overall life; all of which remain relatively undocumented and unexplored.

Chapter 3: Theorising Street Harassment

One of the gaps in street harassment research thus far has been the lack of theoretical perspectives that help examine the root causes of street harassment. This understanding is vital to designing appropriate research programmes and preventative measures, as in the case of rape, IPV, and sexual assault (Ellsberg, et al., 2014; Jewkes et al., 2015; Michau, et al., 2014). As discussed in section 1.2, Chapter 1, I posit that street harassment is a form of VAWG. Therefore, street harassment can be examined under the same theoretical lenses as the VAWG.

3.1 Applying Heise's (1998) integrated, ecological framework of VAWG to street harassment

Heise's (1998) ecological framework (see Figure 2) represents the interplay of sociocultural and individual factors that influence the propensity of male violence towards women (UN Women, 2009; Fulu & Miedema, 2015; Heise, 1998).

Figure 2: Integrated ecological model of VAW (Heise, 1998)
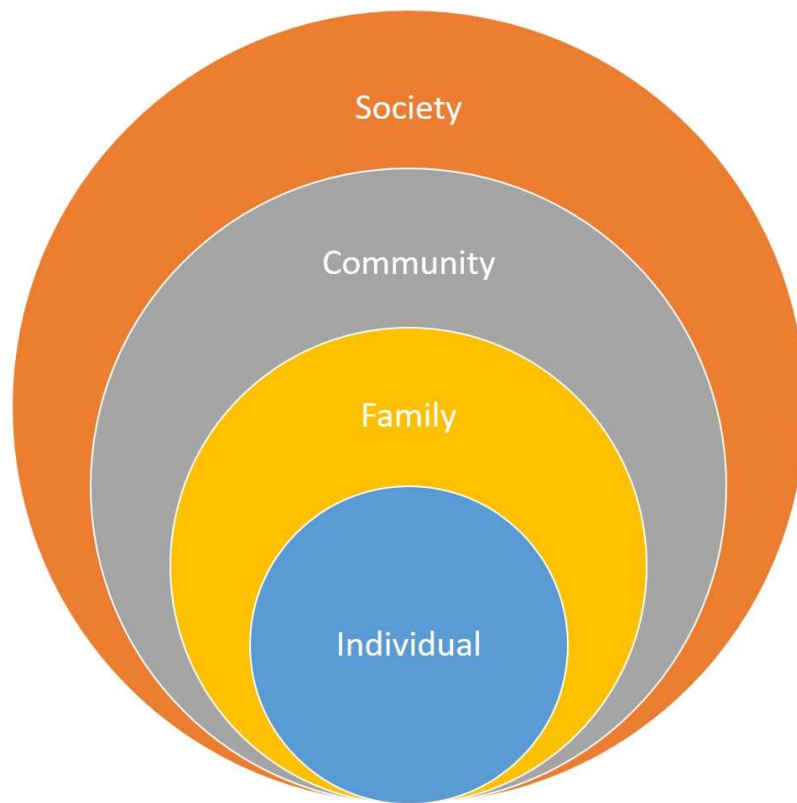
The macrosystem of sociocultural discourses, belief systems, and patriarchal attitudes manifest at the societal layer. Gender norms, stereotypes, and rules are defined at the societal layer and can be rigidly enforced in some societies (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2010; Heise, et al., 1999; Michau, et al., 2015). This layer represents different forms of violence and oppression against women perpetuated by the State institutions such as enforcing patriarchal laws that maintain male hegemony, condoning and normalising violence against women by not enacting appropriate laws, citing cultural discourses to justify harmful and undignified practices against women, not providing women access to the required health and legal infrastructure to protect them, or employing rape a weapon of war (UN Women, 2009; Heise, et al., 1999). At the community level, violence and oppression is enabled by limiting women's access to the facilities the State has to offer such as education, healthcare, or jobs. Male peer groups work together to maintain the male hegemony in the communities. This layer represents the violence women face in their communities such as sexual harassment at

workplace, rape, sexual assault, acid attacks, and sexual murder (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2010; Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; Heise, et al., 1999). Within the family unit, women are exposed to different forms of psychological, financial, physical, and sexual oppressions and violence – for example, male family members control the finances and women are not given any decision-making powers; intimate partner violence or IPV manifests at the family level where women can face a range of violence such as marital rape, psychological coercion and control, and sexual and physical assaults (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2010; Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; Heise, et al., 1999). Finally, the characteristics of the individual also influence the attitude towards violence; this could be psychological, neurobiological, or environmental factors of upbringing (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2010; Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; Heise, et al., 1999). For example, it was found that childhood emotional and physical abuse and neglect, as well as trait anxiety were reliable predictors of IPV (McMclure & Parmenter, 2020). Likewise, it was posited that men who have witnessed domestic violence during their childhood tended to perpetuate similar violence towards their partners in their adulthood (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005). Thus, a combination of these four layers influences an individual's propensity to perpetuate gender-based violence.

Heise's (1998) integrated ecological framework discussed above can be applied to explore some of the root causes of street harassment in India. First, at the 'society' layer, the Indian society functions as a "classical patriarchy" where the eldest male in the family is considered the head of the family who is obeyed by all members, be it male or female (Kandiyoti, 1988, p.278; Dey, 2019). Given the plurality of regional cultures, languages, and traditions in India, the discrimination women face is not of a monolithic nature based on gender alone, but on various intersections such as caste, class, skin colour, religion, and socio-economic status to name a few (Dey, 2019). In the wider society this patriarchy manifests in the form of male hegemony where State and religious institutions are run by men, and patriarchal belief

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systems become the "dominant cultural narratives" which are disseminated through various mediums such as educational institutions, media, art, and literature (Menon & Allen, 2018, pp. 52). An example of such a narrative is that Indian women are the bearers of honour of their families and communities, and sexual offences against the women are interpreted as the woman bringing shame to her family and community, therefore, in order to maintain the honour of her family, she must remain silent about the violence inflicted on her (Menon & Allen, 2018; Ragavan & Iyengar, 2017).

Second, at the community level, Indian women's experiences of violence or perceived threat of violence depends on various parameters such as the general socio-economic status of the community, the beliefs held within that community, and the infrastructure of the community. For example, it was found that women who live in neighbourhoods where IPV is justified have a higher risk of being assaulted by their husbands (Menon & Allen, 2018). Likewise, the infrastructure of the city or the local community such as streetlights, safe footpaths, accessible police stations, safe toilets, safe public transports – all influenced women's perception of safety in the community (Datta & Ahmed, 2020; Jagori & UN Women, 2012).

Third, within the boundaries of the family, the Indian patriarchy follows a complex model where patriarchal roles and tenets are operationalised and propagated by women, especially mothers of sons (Channa, 2013; Ragavan & Iyengar, 2017). This is particularly significant in "joint" families where the married son's family and his parents live under the same roof (Ragavan & Iyengar, 2017, pp 3310). In this system, whilst women in general occupy a subservient space providing domestic, physical, and sexual labour, the older matriarchs i.e. mothers to sons (who then become mothers-in-law) have power and control in the domestic sphere (Channa, 2013; Raghavan & Iyengar, 2017). In this case, women who are daughters-in-law can face abuse from the mother-in-law in the form of psychological and physical violence (Ragavan & Iyengar, 2017). Mothers are exclusively in charge of parenting

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responsibilities, and it is through them that gender stereotypes and discourses on Indian masculinity and femininity are imparted to next generation of men and women—the sons are groomed to be the next patriarchal heads, whilst the daughters, the bearers of family honour, are trained to become the ideal mother/wife when they get married (Channa, 2013; Ragavan & Iyengar, 2017).

These rigid gender roles and patriarchal performances in the Indian context indicate that a high level of sexism is evident through every level of Heise's (1998) ecological framework, where hostile sexism punishes women who deviate from prescribed gender norms and benevolent sexism rewards women for adhering to traditional roles (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Hill & Marshal, 2018). For example, the notion that women have more "tolerance", "patience", and "wisdom" compared to men is reinforced in girls from a young age, and this is used as a justification as to why women must nurture and "pamper" the men and boys in the family who are allegedly incapable of such maturity (Channa, 2013, p.95). This female stereotype of the nurturer is rooted in Brahmanical Hindu ideology and is referred to as the "devi image" (*devi* means Goddess) or the "pativrata" (a loyal wife) template (Channa, 2013, p.95, Ramasubramanian & Jain, 2009, pp.253; Rao, et al., 2015). As a result of hostile sexism, any woman deviating from these templates can be "stigmatized, marginalised, and devalued" (Ramasubramanian & Jain, 2009, pp. 253). Thus at the individual layer of the ecological framework, this sexism has a significant influence on an individual's gendered attitude and behaviour. For example, Das, et al., (2014) found that adolescent Indian boys who were exposed to rigid gender roles at home and in the community condoned violence against girls.

This combination of imbalanced gender powers and sexism in the Indian society and family implies that Indian women face different forms of violence at home (IPV, in-law abuse), in the community (rape, sexual assault), and through State institutions (weak laws, justification

of harmful practices) (Channa, 2013; Dey, 2019; Menon & Allen, 2018; Raghavan & Iyengar, 2017).

3.2 Proposing the 'Triad' of street harassment – Sexual Objectification, Sexism, Rape Myth Acceptance as core mediators

In the case of street harassment, perpetrator behaviour can be classified into two types – non-physical behaviour such as leering, passing sexual comments, and/or exhibitionism, and physical behaviour such as groping, pinching, and other forms of forced sexual touches (Bowman, 1993, di Leonardo, 1981, SSH, 2014). Unlike the sustained nature of IPV or sexual harassment at workplace, street harassment is opportunistically perpetrated in a public space, and the perpetrators are often strangers, i.e. there is no relationship between the perpetrator of the violence and the victim (Bowman, 1993; SSH, 2014). In this context, it can be posited that one of the primary constructs of street harassment behaviour is sexual objectification, where the man perceives the woman as an assemblage of sexual body parts, rather than a whole person who deserves dignity and respect (Bowman, 1993; Kissling, 1991; Gervais & Eagen, 2017). It has been proposed by Gervais & Eagen (2017) that sexual objectification is a precursor to a range of sexual violence against women including street harassment through "objectifying gazes" and "appearance commentary" and sexual assault including rape (pp.227). A study by Vasquez, et al. (2017) indicated that sexual objectification increased aggression in men towards the women they objectify. It can be posited that this aggression based on objectification results in the physical forms of street harassment.

Sexual objectification, in turn has its roots in sexism, especially hostile sexism and rape myth acceptance (Gervais & Eagen, 2017; Vasquez, et al., 2017; Poerwandali, et al., 2019). Rape myth acceptance propagates stereotypical, victim-blaming beliefs about sexual assaults by

placing responsibility of the crime on the victim (Gervais & Eagen, 2017; Vasquez, et al., 2017). In a comparative study involving British and Indian male participants, it was found that the Indian participants had a higher level of rape myth acceptance compared to their British counterparts, and this was mediated by their higher levels of hostile sexism and traditional attitudes towards women (Hill & Marshall, 2018).

It was posited that sexism is inculcated in an individual from a young age, where she/he learns gendered behaviour, attitudes and stereotypes emphasised and operationalised in their sociocultural contexts (Sundaram & Jackson, 2018). For example, it was observed that

> Gender norms teach young men that they should be dominant, in control, authoritative; and teach young women that they should be submissive, sexually unknowledgeable and not too assertive (Sundaram & Jackson, 2018, p. 4)

Sexism is a strong mediator in how an individual perceives the notion of gender-based violence – for example, in a study conducted in India with urban adolescent boys, it was found 78% of the participants condoned "some forms of violence" against girls (Das, et al., 2012, p. 104). It was observed that boys with equitable gender attitudes were significantly less likely to condone or perpetuate violence against girls (Das, et al., 2012).

Based on the above discussions it can be hypothesized that there are three core mediators of street harassment – sexism, sexual objectification, and rape myth acceptance – acting in tandem in a triadic ring of influence as represented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: The 'Triad': Mediators of street harassment behaviour
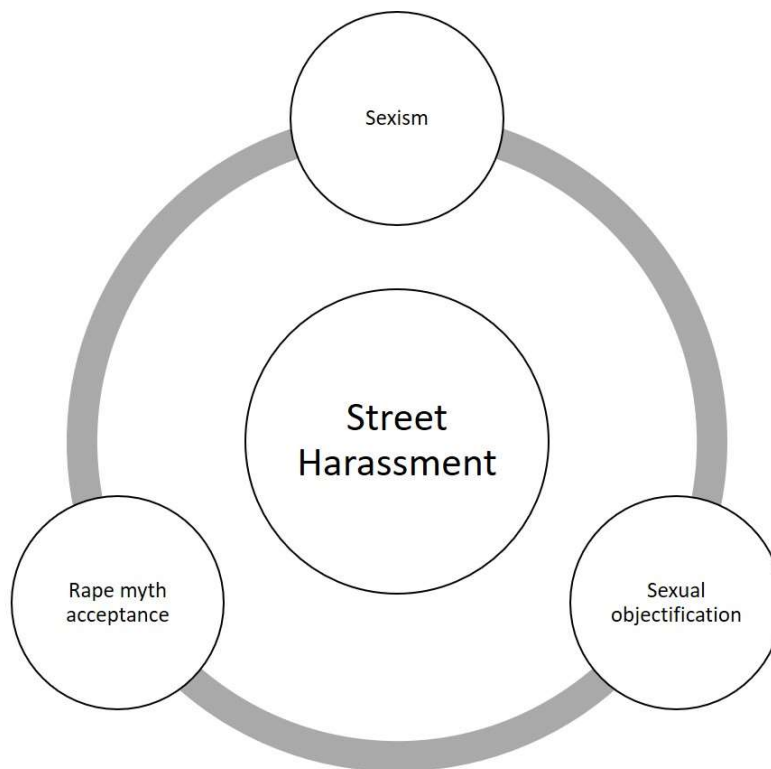
It has been posited that the primary motive behind any of form of sexual harassment is not just sexual desire, but "the desire to protect or enhance social status when it seems threatened" (Berdahl, 2007, pp.645). In the case of street harassment, it was proposed that it is a way of men demonstrating and re-establishing their power in the public space by sexually terrorising women back into the private spaces of home (di Leonardo, 1981; Kissling, 1991). It was proposed that men considered the presence of women in the public space as an encroachment into male territory, a threat to the male hegemony of the public space, indicating deep-rooted hostile sexism (Bowman, 1993; di Leonardo, 1981; Kissling; 1991; Kiskela, 1999; Laniya, 2005). It was also posited that men are so accustomed to receiving some form of service from women all the time that even in the public space, she must, at the

very least, give him sexual pleasure (Bowman, 1993; di Leonardo, 1981; Gardner, 1995; Kissling, 1991).

In the Indian context, it was observed that if an Indian woman must navigate any sociocultural or geospatial space safely, she must project the asexual image of the mother or sister i.e. the devi or goddess archetype, at least in appearance, to gain male respect (Channa, 2013). However, considering the high prevalence and normalisation of street harassment, it can be hypothesised that Indian women in the public space are stripped of this asexuality (of the mother or sister image) by the male beholder because she is no longer inside her domestic boundary—the woman now becomes only a sexual object available for male pleasure, suggesting sexual objectification and rape myth acceptance, where the woman is blamed for 'venturing out'.

3.3 Structure of this research

In order to study this complex Indian ecosystem that enables street harassment, I felt that understanding and interpreting individual women's experiences alone would be inadequate. It was vital to analyse sociocultural discourses around gender, particularly those surrounding Indian womanhood to understand how sexism and sexual objectification becomes normalised in the Indian psyche. This understanding of the gendered sociocultural universe would then give a deeper insight into the individual experiences situated within this context. Also, the construction, sense-making, and recounting of an experience itself is dependent on the sociocultural influences operating on the individual (Crotty, 1998; Smith, 1996; Smith et al., 2009; Willig, 2013). It was noted that, "people's interpretations are not entirely idiosyncratic and free-floating; instead, they are bound up with social interactions and processes that are shared between social actors" (Willig, 2013, p.97). Crotty (1998) opined that, "we are all born into a world of meaning" and that "when we first see the world in meaningful fashion,

we are inevitably viewing it through lenses bestowed upon us by our culture" (Crotty, 1998, p. 54). Thus, in the context of street harassment in India, it can be argued that the prevailing sociocultural discourses that are unique to India play an important role in women's sense-making of street harassment experiences. For an individual situated outside this cultural context, this meaning-making laden with sociocultural implications may not make complete sense. For example, it is a cultural practice in India that adult children, even if financially independent, continue to live with their parents. This is even more so in the case of women—unmarried adult daughters live with their parents, and subsequently move to their husband's homes after marriage. This is very different from much of western practice. Therefore, when women participants of this study, who are adults with successful careers, talked about convincing their parents to give them permission to go on a holiday alone, a western scholar may not grasp its full import, unless they have an insight into the Indian sociocultural context.

Therefore, this research was structured in two parts – Part 1) Sociocultural Study that explored gender discourses related to womanhood in India through the lens of Bollywood movies, and Part 2) Experiential Study that explored the lived experiences of street harassment of Indian women. For the Sociocultural study, Bollywood films were selected as the medium of study because scholars agree that it is one of the most powerful propagators of sociocultural discourses and gender stereotypes in India, where the performance of masculinities and femininities are reiterated (Butalia, 1984; Channa, 2013; Gokulsingh & Dissanayake, 1998; Mikos, 2014; Ramkissoon, 2009). The relationship link between the Sociocultural study and Experiential study i.e. discourse and meaning-making of experience can be represented as a Venn diagram as shown in Figure 4, where individual experiences are situated within the sociocultural universe.

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Figure 4: Structure of this research

Figure 5 below represents the research structure in relation to Heise's (1998) ecological framework with respect to India. The Sociocultural study corresponds to the discourses propagated in the society and community layers and the Experiential study is concerned with the Family and Individual layers where individual experiences are situated.

Figure 5: Heise's (1998) ecological framework applied to the Indian context
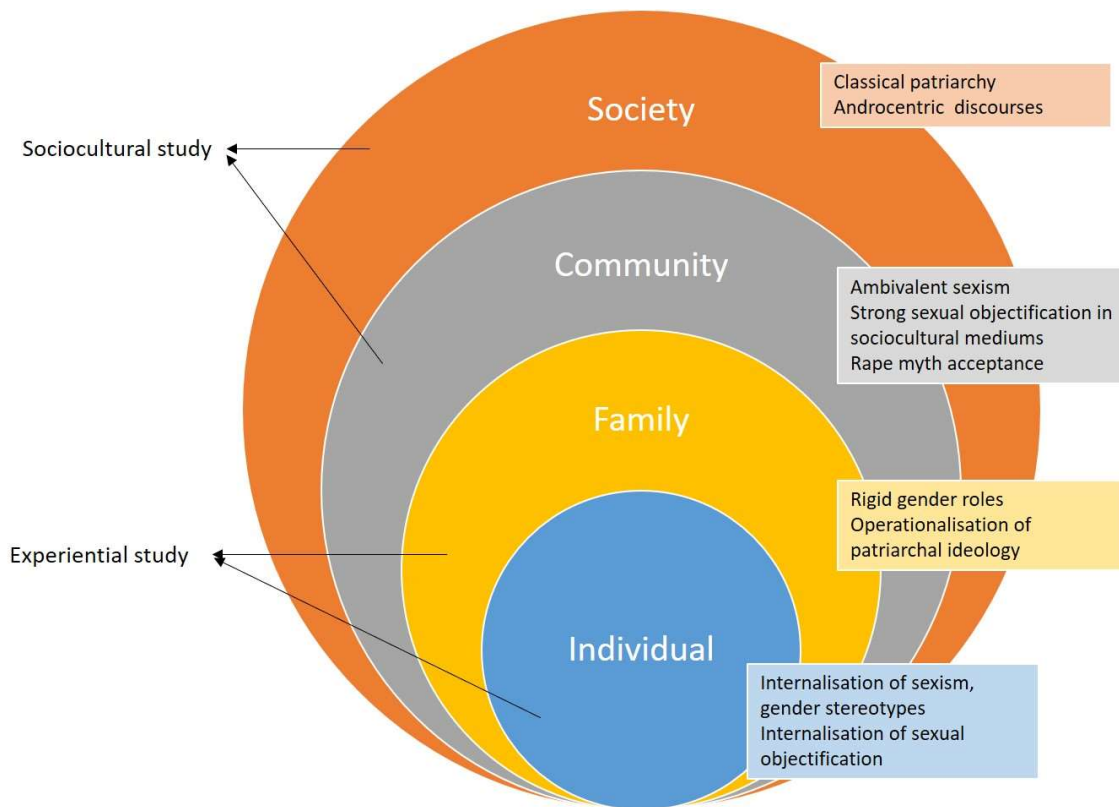
Dispositive analysis (Jager & Maier, 2016; Khan, Holland, Williams, & Montague, 2019) was adopted as the methodology for the Sociocultural Study in order to understand the construction of predominant gender discourses on women in the Indian society.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA, Smith, Flowers, & Larking, 2009) was adopted as the methodology for the Experiential Study, given its hermeneutic interest in the meaning-making of experiences by individuals.

3.4 A note on the methodological compatibility between the Dispositive Analysis and IPA

Dispositive analysis has a dual alignment with two theoretical perspectives, symbolic interactionism and philosophical hermeneutics (Khan et al., 2019). First, dispositive analysis is concerned with the production of discourse by social actors through speech, action and

object materialisations; therefore, it is rooted in symbolic interactionism (Khan et al., 2019). Symbolic interactionist researchers are interested in how a society is formed and maintained through repeated interactions between social actors, i.e. there is explicit and implicit code of conduct that is understood by all actors; common meanings are ascribed to objects, and the actors interact with these objects and other actors based on their interpretation of these meanings (Carter & Fuller, 2015; Crotty, 1998).

Second, a key step in doing dispositive analysis is the "reconstruction" of knowledge that binds speech, action, and object materialisation together to achieve a common goal (Jager & Maier, 2016, p.131). This involves interpretation, and Jager and Maier (2016) proposed that the researcher should play an active role in this interpretation by becoming immersed in the social context under study, and also by using one's own knowledge. This stance of interpretation where the researcher embraces their biases and knowledge in the research process aligns itself to philosophical hermeneutics (Schwandt, 2000).

Both symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics come under the umbrella of interpretivism (Crotty, 1998). Also, the dispositive and the discourse are closely interrelated—the dispositive can be considered as the operational building block of the discourse, neither can exist without the other (Khan et al., 2019; Jager & Maier, 2016). Therefore, from an epistemological perspective, like the discourse, the dispositive has a social constructionist root.

In the case of IPA, it was proposed that there are "fertile links" between IPA and discourse analysis because the IPA researcher is interested in understanding how discursive constructions influence sense-making of an experience (Eatough & Smith 2017, p. 204; Smith, 1996). Given that dispositive analysis is an extension of discourse analysis, it can be surmised that IPA shares a close link with dispositive analysis too. Further, IPA is also

underpinned by a symbolic interactionist perspective, aligning it to a social constructionist epistemology (Willig, 2013). Also, hermeneutic philosophy is a core element in IPA (Eatough & Smith, 2017; Smith et al., 2009; Willig, 2013). In particular, in Willig's (2013) proposed six-stage process for conducting discourse analysis, the subjectivity stage is closely related to individual experience i.e. ways-of-seeing and ways-of-being, which overlaps with the IPA domain (Willig, 2013).

In conclusion, the theoretical compatibility between dispositive analysis and IPA is evident— both dispositive analysis and IPA are rooted in interpretivism, and both are aligned to symbolic interactionist and hermeneutic theoretical perspectives.

PART 1

SOCIOCULTURAL STUDY

"Girls like you are made for love" - Exploration of gender discourses on Indian womanhood articulated through women's stereotypical representations in recent Bollywood movies of romantic genre - 2013-2017

Chapter 4: Introduction - Women's representations in Bollywood – a brief overview

The Indian film industry is the largest in the world, producing around 2000 films every year in over twenty Indian languages (Deloitte, 2016). Bollywood, a colloquial name for the Hindi movie industry, is the most popular segment of the Indian film industry and contributes to nearly 43% of the Indian film industry's revenue (Deloitte, 2016). With a history of over 100 years, Bollywood has been considered to have a strong influence over cultural and social discourses of India (Butalia, 1984; Dwyer, 2010; Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 1998; Nayar, 1997).

Bollywood films capture the complexities of Indian life, caught at the intersection of Indian tradition, modernisation and westernisation, albeit camouflaged in larger-than-life sets, where the protagonist must navigate various conflicts and emerge victorious without compromising his/her Indianness. Non-Indianness is often represented as being westernised, which is considered morally inferior because of its alleged focus on hedonistic pursuits; Bollywood has constantly highlighted the virtues of Indianness by pitting it against the mechanisations of western culture (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 1998; Nayar, 1997; Nandakumar, 2011; O'Neil, 2013).

In commercial Bollywood movies, the woman is the vehicle that operationalises Indianness discourses through stereotypical female roles (Agarwal, 2014; Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 1998; Nayar, 1997; Nandakumar, 2011; Ramkissoon, 2009; Raza, 2015; Sherafat, 2013). Women's roles are predominantly defined through their relationship to the male protagonist (Tere, 2012). For example, typical female roles are the male protagonist's mother, sister, lover, wife, courtesan, widow, vamp, or prostitute (Nandakumar, 2011; Ramkissoon's, 2009). These female roles have been categorised into two types: the *sanskari* Indian woman

(adherent to tradition), and the morally corrupt vamp (Agarwal, 2014; Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 1998; Kishore, 2014; Nayar, 1997; Nandakumar, 2011; Ramkissoon, 2009; Raza, 2015; Sherafat, 2013). The *sanskari* woman is the chaste virgin who upholds traditional values of self-sacrifice, putting family above personal desires and aspirations, dresses traditionally in a saree or salwar kameez and leaves all important decision-making to her husband, partner or elders of the family (Agarwal, 2014; Nandakumar, 2011; Sherafat, 2013). Other attributes of the *sanskari* woman include coyness and submissiveness; she follows rituals of prayer and worship; abstains from alcohol, and does not socialise with men (Ramkissoon, 2009). Mothers and wives, or the hero's love interest, are usually cast in the *sanskari* template (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 1998).

In contrast, the vamp is the immoral Indian woman who is presented as "mean, seductive, coquette and vixenish, characterless and promiscuous" (Kishore, 2014, p.141). A vamp is considered westernised because she is licentious; is ambitious and career-minded; dresses in clothes that reveal her body; socialises with men; visits pubs and discotheques; she smokes, and drinks alcohol (Agarwal, 2014; Nandakumar, 2011; Kishore, 2014; Ramkissoon, 2009). Agarwal (2014) summarised that "the vamp always smoked, bared flesh and was punished for her bad deeds" (p.28). It was posited that the presentation of the vamp in an "eroticized" and "fetishised" manner catered to the Indian male gaze, offering them the sexual pleasure which was not possible through the depiction of the *sanskari* heroine (Kishore, p.141). In general, all negative female characters such as prostitutes and cabaret dancers were categorised as vamps (Kishore, 2014).

This binary stereotyping of women contextualised to India is comparable to the 'slut' discourse of the west, where modesty, demureness, and submissiveness is decreed as respectable femininity and is associated with the white middle class woman, whilst anyone

falling out of these parameters are labelled as sluts (Armstrong, Hamilton, Armstrong, & Seeley, 2014).

The stereotypes of the *sanksari* woman and the westernised vamp became less explicit, at least in external representations of appearance, from 1999 onwards. This may be attributed to the changing economic and socio-cultural landscape of India (Dudrah, 2006; Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 1998; Gopal, 2011).

4.1.   Sociocultural changes in India from the 1990s

In the early 1990s, the Government of India heralded economic liberalisation, inviting foreign investments in various industry sectors (Adhia, 2013; Ganguly-Scrase, 2009; Weber, 2012). Information Technology, Computing and Telecommunications (ICT) sectors particularly saw a rapid growth, taking advantage of India's vast demographic of young, English-educated, technical human resource pool (Arun & Arun, 2002). As a result, India witnessed an accelerated growth in the Indian middle-class segment—economists estimated that this demographic grew from less than 30 million in the 1990s to about 600 million by 2015 (Roy, 2018). As of 2017, India ranked 11th in the world in terms of the number of high-net-worth individuals (HNWI) i.e. millionaires, and fourth in the Asia Pacific region, with "2,19,000 ultra-rich individuals with a combined wealth of USD 822 billion" (Economic Times, 2017, para 1; Kannan, 2018). It was noted that between 2005-2015, the income savings rates of the average Indian household tripled, and thus, more families had "significant disposable income" (Roy, 2018, p.33). It can be argued that this middle-class consumer segment, with their disposable income and appetite for luxury goods and services, drove a cultural change where they adopted a more western lifestyle. For example, in contrast to the tradition of arranged marriages, dating, a very western concept, is now common in urban India—India is one of fastest growing markets for the dating app Tinder (Singh, 2018). Likewise, with the Indian Supreme Court decriminalising same sex relationships and adultery in 2018, dating

apps such as Grindr (a dating app for the LGBTQ community), and Gleeden (an extramarital dating app), are also expecting success like Tinder in India (Chaturvedi, 2018).

Another important social change ushered in by economic liberalisation was the increase in the percentage of women across the corporate workforce compared to previous generations. This increase was driven by an employee-friendly multinational work culture in various industry sectors, especially in ICT, and banking and finance. For example, in the area of specialist technology roles, 35% of the workforce are women (McDonald, 2018); nearly 25% of employees in the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) are women (BBC, 2016); a 2013 survey of CEOs (N=52) in the banking and finance sectors found that 29% of CEOs were women (Basu, 2013).

The deregulation in the media and technology sectors resulted in an explosion in cable television, with households having access to hundreds of channels beaming foreign productions such as soap operas, crime dramas, and pop music which were popular in the USA, the UK and rest of the western world (Bajpai, 2016). Bollywood film production and financing underwent a significant transformation (Bhattacharjya, 2009; Dwyer, 2006; Gopal, 2011). The Government of India, which controlled movie production, distribution and export, deregulated its stake in the Indian film industry and invited private investors. The budgets for film productions increased dramatically and the producers discovered the potential of a large overseas market for Bollywood movies, such as the USA, the UK, Canada, countries in the Middle-east, and Africa, to cater to non-resident Indians (NRIs) (Bhattacharjya, 2009).

As a result of these sociocultural and economic changes Bollywood now had an audience within India and abroad who led more westernised lifestyles than before. Hence the old discourse of *sanskari* Indian values versus the decadent West had to transform. For example, heroism in a Bollywood movie was no longer about self-sacrifice, but about individual achievement (Adhia, 2013). Similarly, businessmen were "valorized", that is, amassing

wealth and materialism, a symptom of western capitalism, was no longer considered morally inferior (Adhia, 2013, p.108). Likewise, keeping in step with the Tinder generation, premarital sex was no longer taboo in Bollywood plots, and the heroine was given more sexual agency, albeit ensconced in the heterosexual male gaze (Janardhan, 2017).

This close relationship between Bollywood and real-life Indian discourses is an area of interest for both film critics and academics in the fields of art and sociology. In particular, the portrayal of Indian women in Bollywood movies has been the focus of recent studies. An in-depth literature review is presented in the next chapter which examines some of the existing studies on female portrayals in Bollywood.

Chapter 5: Literature review – Portrayals of women in Bollywood

The aim of this literature review was to explore existing research on Bollywood films pertaining to gender representations. A literature search with various combinations of key words such as "gender representations bollywood", "female representations bollywood", "bollywood gender roles, stereotypes" indicated that there are only a small number of studies on this subject. The majority of the studies were in the form of essays or case studies; only two studies were quantative. The essays and case studies focused specifically on women-centric films where a woman is the central protagonist and there is no male hero.

A unique quantitative study that included semantic quantitative analysis of movie plots of all Bollywood movies released from 1970 (N=4000) and a deep image analytics of the corresponding movie posters indicated that the patterns of gender bias and stereotyping in Bollywood movies has not changed significantly across decades (Madaan, Mehta, Agrawal, Malhotra, Aggarwal, & Saxena, 2017). The analysis was operationalised based on nine character dimensions, including occupations, appearance, and emotions assigned to male and female characters. The centrality of the male and female protagonists was also assessed, along with the dialogues these roles articulated, and the screen time allotted for each protagonist (Madaan, et al., 2017). They found that some of the frequently used adjectives to describe male characters were wealthy, rich, strong, successful; the adjectives used to describe women were beautiful, attractive, rich, widowed, pregnant (Madaan, et al., 2017, Figure 1). In spoken dialogues, the verbs associated with male characters were kills, beats, shoots, proposes, realises; the verbs associated with women were marries, loves, explains, (was) molested (Madaan, et al., 2017, Figure, 2). Male characters were often associated with the emotion of anger, and females were associated with the emotion of happiness (Madaan, et al., 2017, Figure 15). This can be related to the epithet "angry young man" given to Amitabh

Bachchan, considered the doyen of Indian film industry and Bollywood, for his portrayals of the hero fighting against a corrupt system (Lal, 2012, para 4). In terms of occupations, it was found that male characters were often depicted as doctors, gangsters, managers, police officers, or singers; women were portrayed as teachers in nearly 60% of the movies that were analysed, followed by secretary, or student (Madaan, et al., 2017, Figure 3). The results also indicated that the percentage of female centric movies has increased only marginally from 7.1% in 1970s to 11.9% in 2017 (Madaan, et al., 2017, Figure 12).

The above results indicate that gender stereotyping in Bollywood is deeply entrenched. It can be argued that the marginal increase in number of female-centric plots is an encouraging trend. The results also demonstrate how men and women are linguistically constructed in different ways—men are associated with personality and situational traits: strong and rich, for example; whereas women are constructed through their bodies and their placement in a heterosexual relationship—beautiful, pregnant, or widowed. It can be posited that the implication of these linguistic constructions is that it promotes the hegemony of men, and women are inherently objectified as service providers to men—they provide visual pleasure, or they produce babies, for example; whereas men are the drivers of the society with greater agency and power.

The objectification of women was further explored through a quantitative comparative content analysis of successful Bollywood films released at two distinct time periods—2003-2004 and 2013-2014 (N=100) (Khan & Taylor, 2018). The authors' analysis determined that female protagonists were consistently rewarded or punished depending on the role's adherence to prescribed gender norms (Khan & Taylor, 2018). It was proposed that prescriptive gender norms i.e. the set of rules that specified how a particular gender should be presented via appearance and behaviour, was a key element of the Indian sociocultural psyche (Khan & Taylor, 2018). In the Indian context these gender norms have been enforced

strictly on women, with the normative woman being the upper caste Hindu woman (Khan & Taylor, 2018). For example, a married Hindu woman must display the *bindi* or *sindhoor* (vermilion either placed as a dot between the brows or on one's hair parting), and wear the *mangalsutra* (a specific type of gold chain) (Khan & Taylor, 2018). In behaviour, the ideal Indian woman must be "submissive, docile, generous, innocent, polite, and family oriented", apart from "speaking softly, being modest, and acting shy" (Khan & Taylor, 2018, p.3643). Deviance from these norms often results in punishment, for example, the films show that the female character is harassed, or sexually assaulted, or even ostracised depending on the extent of deviance (Khan & Taylor, 2018).

Bollywood has been a highly influential medium that perpetrates the prescriptive gender norms, particularly for women. The time periods 2003-2004 and 2013-2014 were specifically selected for this study because of the increase in violence against women in India, as well as the drafting of laws empowering women (Khan & Taylor, 2018). 25 movies from each of the four years were selected based on the box-office success as reported in the IMDb database. The study found that irrespective of the year of the release, the positive traits of the female protagonist was portrayed as "being easily trusting, empathetic, emotional, soft-spoken, patient, and as an object of men's desire" (Khan & Taylor, 2018, p.3652). The character was rewarded when she displayed these positive traits; the rewards included material rewards or psychological rewards such as acceptance, appreciation, or a "happily ever after" resolution (Khan & Taylor, 2018, p.3649). Deviance from these positive traits were punished with "physical-psychological punishment", for example, rape, emotional isolation, or verbal abuse, and/or with "social punishment" such as ostracism, abandonment, and social ridicule (Khan & Taylor, 2018, p.3648). However, the results indicated that punishments were fewer in the more recent movies. This could be attributed to the sociocultural changes in women's

lifestyles, including higher rates of financial independence, and the increased discussions of feminist issues across media platforms (Khan & Taylor, 2018).

Bollywood films produced during the time period 1950s to 1970s portrayed protagonists who closely represented the common Indian man and woman, and the stories carried social and moral messages of Indianness based on values espoused in Hindu mythologies (Agarwal, 2014). The settings of these movies often reflected life on the ground—the struggles of agrarian communities in rural India, the challenges of industrialisation in urban India, and the struggles of caste and class in all strata of society (Agarwal, 2014). The virtues of Indianness and the dominant discourses on Indian womanhood were strongly articulated through the portrayal of female roles in these movies. For example, in the film *Mother India* released in 1957, the female protagonist, a mother of two sons, not only tills her land, typically considered a male job, but when her wayward son tries to abduct a woman from the village, she shoots him dead (Agarwal, 2014). Through this portrayal, the dualism of Indian womanhood was highlighted—the Indian woman is the loving, tender mother, who displays the strength of a man when it comes to nurturing her family. However, this loving mother, like the warrior goddess Kali, is also unflinching when it comes to punishing sinners, just the way this mother killed her immoral son. Thus, *Mother India* defined the perfect vision of Indian womanhood, where such a woman inspires awe and even devotion through her strength as a mother and wife, and the male gaze is unable to sexualise her (Agarwal, 2014).

The decade of the 80s was the era of action films. It can be posited that this trend of action films was also a reflection of the violent political unrest in the country—in June 1984 the then Prime Minister of India, Mrs Indira Gandhi, ordered a military operation to flush out Sikh militants from the Golden Temple in Amritsar, a sacred place of pilgrimage for Sikhs. The military operation that lasted for eight days resulted in hundreds of causalities, especially civilians who were caught in the crossfire of the operation (India Today, 2018). A fall out of

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this operation was that Mrs Indira Gandhi was assassinated on October 31, 1984 by her Sikh bodyguards; this in turn led to a systematic pogrom of over three thousand Sikhs in matter of four days, by Hindu mobs (Singh, 2014).

In this decade of unrest, the role of women in the action movies shrunk "to being a glamorous component of the films, dancing around trees, being kidnapped, raped or killed" (Agarwal, 2014, p.25). The women's roles became highly sexually objectified—they were either objects of romantic interest for the hero, or the objects of sexual lust for the villain. However, it was also the decade that saw the emergence of female superstars such as Sridevi, who commanded box office collections the way male stars typically did (Agarwal, 2014). For example, in the film *Himmatwala* (The brave one) released in 1983, Sridevi "out-danced and out-fought the men" (Agarwal, 2014, p.25). In this film, unlike the stereotype of submissive heroines, Sridevi played the role of the villain's daughter, Rekha, who is an unkind and arrogant woman. Rekha is following the footsteps of her father who is a powerful and rich man in the village, known for his ruthless cruelty and oppression of the villagers. Rekha mends her ways when she falls in love with the morally upright Ravi, even helping him avenge his father's dishonour at the hands of Rekha's father. Thus, the plot realigns back into a traditional track where the hero's love story culminates with a kind and submissive woman (Agarwal, 2014). It can be posited that the characterisation of Rekha emphasises the patriarchal notion that women themselves do not possess unique personalities, but merely reflect the characteristics of the dominant males in their lives—in this film, Rekha first emulates her cruel father, and then the righteous Ravi, her love interest. As the audience, we never get to know the real Rekha.

In the post-economic liberalisation era after the 1990s, Bollywood movies moved away from rural and small-town settings, and hackneyed plots of police and robbers; instead it was the era of romance in grandiose settings and exotic locations, and glamorous presentation of the

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heroes and heroines (Agarwal, 2014). It can be inferred that these opulent settings not only represented the new spending power of the Indian audience, but it was also a reflection of their aspirations of a luxurious lifestyle. Despite the westernised presentation of the films, the core plots emphasised on a return-to-Indianness theme (Agarwal, 2014). For example, movies like *Hum Aap Ke Hai Kaun* (Who am I to you?), one of the biggest box office successes of the 1990s, regressed to portraying the ideal Indian woman as subservient and self-sacrificing, unlike the fiery Sridevi of the 80s. Women with careers were portrayed as homewreckers, or, if a woman failed in her love life, she then opted to pursue a career instead, indicating that a woman cannot have both love and career (Agarwal, 2014). Thus, the female roles were designed to represent male fantasies and ideas about Indianness (Agarwal, 2014). This was observed even in movies that were considered new-age, representing the millennial generation. For example, the film *Dil Chahta Hai* (The heart desires) released in 2001, and one of the biggest blockbusters of the decade, was praised for its real-life portrayal of three urban young men, all hailing from well-off families. The upwardly mobile urban youth in the audience closely identified with the protagonists' westernised lifestyles and sensibilities. In this movie, whilst the male roles were well-defined and had distinct, well-rounded character development, the corresponding three female protagonists were one-dimensional (Agarwal, 2014). For example, the male characterisations included unique personalities such as the extrovert, the introvert, and the hopeless romantic, with distinct careers such as an industrialist and an artist; the women however were only defined through their relationships with men—the woman with a dumb boyfriend, the woman with an aggressive and possessive fiancé, and the alcoholic woman with a vindictive ex-husband. This aligns to the findings of Madaan, et al. (2017), as discussed previously. As a resolution of the plot, among these three women, the two single women eventually pair up with two of the male leads; the divorced woman, who is also older than her corresponding male lead, dies. Thus, despite the modern

packaging, even the most urbane plots of Bollywood reinforce patriarchal notions of womanhood, that only single, virginal women are ideal wife materials for young men; however, these young men are free to have sexual experiences (Agarwal, 2014).

The decades post-2000 onwards saw the rise of popularity of social media in India, especially platforms like Orkut, Linkedin, and later on, Facebook and Twitter (Das, 2016). Feminist activism was now organised on these social networking platforms with a wider reach and instant responses (Titus, 2019). It can be posited that with this increased awareness around feminist issues, film makers began to experiment with storylines that moved away from stereotypical representations of the woman protagonist. An example was the movie *English Vinglish*, released in 2012, that had a middle-aged, married woman as the main protagonist (Chatterjee, 2016). The central theme of this film explored the struggles of the homemaker, Shashi, in defining her identity within the family, and her wish to be seen as an equal partner by her husband. Shashi is looked down upon by her teenage daughter and husband for her lack of English-speaking skills, despite her expertise in running a home-based food business of preparing and selling Indian sweets. When Shashi travels to New York to assist in her niece's wedding, she secretly enrols for an English-speaking course. The plot culminates in a scene where Shashi must give a toast to the bride and the groom. Her husband, unaware of her newly acquired skill, tries to prevent her from speaking lest she embarrasses not only herself but the family. However, Shashi successfully delivers the toast, in which she talks about the importance of equality and friendship in the relationship between the husband and wife, and the importance of being non-judgemental in a family. Shashi's husband realises the error of his ways, and there is an indication that Shashi's position in her family has now transformed. In this film, Shashi's character not only represents a homemaker's story, but the national negotiation with identity in the post-colonial era, where knowledge of English is equated with upper class, caste, as well as privilege (Chatterjee, 2016). The film also

portrayed the new version of patriarchy, where the wife and mother must straddle modernity and traditionalism without becoming westernised or orthodox; from this respect, Shashi can be considered as the "new woman" (Chatterjee, 2016, 1190). Thus, Shashi does not separate from her husband who did not value her, neither does she act upon a romantic interest expressed by one of her classmates, a Frenchman, in the English class—both these actions would be considered westernised. Instead, Shashi skilfully repositions herself within the family, especially by recalibrating her husband's view of her, without damaging the relationship. It can be argued that Shashi is the 'new woman' not because she fit into the new patriarchal requirements, but because she overcame her inhibitions and took control of her circumstance, and she fought for her identity. Also, she does not vilify romantic interest from another man, as is expected from a married Indian woman; instead, Shashi thanks the man for making her feel good about herself. It can be argued that this self-centred awareness in Shashi, that she too has the right to feel desired, is a deviation from the expectation that a traditional Indian married woman must be selfless.

The 'new woman' template was further explored in an increasing number of movies, with the plotlines featuring only female protagonists who, unlike Shashi, disrupted patriarchal power balance instead of working within it. In movies like *Kahaani*, *Gulab Gang,* and *Queen,* the central theme is about the female protagonist avenging some injustice done to her (Gupta, 2015). A common theme across these movies was that the female roles were not constructed to represent the nation or Indianness, instead, the women were depicted as individuals with specific goals (Gupta, 2015). In *Kahaani*, the protagonist Vidya is a heavily pregnant woman in search of her missing husband. In the climax scene, it is revealed that Vidya was using a prosthetic belly to fake her pregnancy; it was a ploy to project her vulnerability and use the police to find her husband's killers. Vidya succeeds in killing her husband's assassin and escapes without a trace. In *Gulaab Gang*, Rajjo, the protagonist leads a vigilante group of

women in her village who mete out punishments to men who abuse women. In *Queen* the female protagonist Rani is abandoned by her fiancé two days before their wedding because he feels she is not modern enough. In a break from the stereotype of lamenting about lost honour, Rani decides to go alone on the already booked honeymoon holiday. It is the first time Rani has stepped out of her home alone, and although the journey through Europe is daunting, Rani discovers herself and her identity. In these three films, the women are decoupled from sexuality and morality and hence the audience are able to access the characters as wholesome personalities, unlike the sexualised depictions of *sanskari* women and vamps (Gupta, 2015). It can be posited that these revenge-format plots are a response to the rise in feminist discourses fuelled by the increase in violent crimes against women and children in India during this time period—for example, the horrific murder of teenager Aarushi Talwar in 2008 in her own home (Sen, 2015), the gangrape and murder of Jyoti Singh in 2012 (Chamberlain & Bhabani, 2017), the gangrape of a photojournalist working on a field assignment (India Today Online, 2013), and several other high-profile cases of rape and murder of women (Lakshmi & Kaphle, 2013). These violent crimes spawned a new subgenre in Bollywood, the "Delhi film", where the plotlines are set in Delhi, and the themes of rape, misogyny, and urban anxiety are explored (Chatterjee, 2019, p.130). Two films that are a hallmark of the 'Delhi' subgenre are *Pink* and *NH10*, both of which articulate "one of the most pervasive fears of being a woman in Delhi: the terror and anxiety of navigating the city alone at night" (Chatterjee, 2019, p.135).

The central theme of *Pink* is about the concept of consent, and how this fundamental concept is relatively absent in the gender discourses of India. There are three female protagonists in the film, Meenal, Falak, and Andrea; all three are upwardly mobile, young working women, who live as flatmates in Delhi. One evening whilst attending a rock concert in the city, they meet a group of men, one of whom is a mutual friend. The girls are invited for dinner and

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drinks after the concert to which they readily agree. However, the men attempt to molest the girls; Meenal smashes a bottle on her molester's head and the girls escape. The molester hails from a rich and powerful family and along with his friends he begins to threaten the three women. Meenal is abducted and molested in a moving car as a warning, reminiscent of the many real-life gangrapes that occur in moving vehicles in India (Alam & Joseph, 2017; IANS; 2019; Press Trust of India, 2019; News18.com, 2017; News18.com, 2019; Outlook Web Bureau, 2019; TNN, 2019). After this incident, the women decide to fight for justice in the court. Although justice is delivered, it comes at a very high price—the women are discredited and every aspect of their lives including the fact that they live on their own, their socialising with men, and their previous sexual relationships are examined in humiliating detail. Through the legal arguments, the film questions stereotypical gender discourses, such as men assuming that with women like Meenal, Falak, and Andrea, who are westernised, consent to sex can be taken for granted (Chatterjee, 2019). Also, even a platonic interaction on the part of the woman, such as a smile or a conversation with a man could be seen as a sexual invitation (Chatterjee, 2019). The film also explores how misogyny and sexist attitudes spans across classes—in this film the molesters are men who are educated and come from rich families, and still believed that because these three girls agreed to join them for a drink and dinner, their sexual consent was implied (Chatterjee, 2019).

It can be argued that *Pink* is a significant film contributing to the Indian feminist discourse because it is one of the first movies to articulate the concept of sexual consent in a direct manner. This discourse assumes greater importance in the present sociocultural context which considers sex as a male-only prerogative, and women as providers of sexual service. For example, the Indian government has argued against criminalising marital rape, stating that such a step would destabilise the institution of marriage, and that women can misuse the law to harass their husbands (Choudhury, 2018). *Pink* also delineates the societal prejudices that

constantly act specifically against single, adult Indian women who live independently, when compared to men leading a similar lifestyle (Chatterjee, 2019). In summary, *Pink* does not offer solutions, but asks potent questions, thus involving the audience in its storytelling.

The film *NH10* can be positioned as an action-thriller similar to Hollywood's slasher genre movies, where Meera, the female protagonist metes out her own form of justice, unlike the girls of *Pink* who followed due process. The term 'NH10' is an acronym for National Highway 10, a 405-km stretch of road that connects Delhi and Punjab traversing through the state of Haryana (Chatterjee, 2019). The main plot of the film unfolds on this stretch of highway, where Meera and Arjun, a middle-class urban couple from the glitzy city of Gurgaon, witness an honour killing. The killers now hunt Meera and Arjun, and Arjun is murdered. Arjun's death transforms Meera from the hunted to the hunter, and the plot culminates in Meera inflicting violent deaths to each of the killers.

Despite its commercial packaging, *NH10* is important because it disrupts gender stereotypes, where the main protagonist is the corporate-type middle-class urban woman who avenges the death of her husband (Sharma & Malhotra, 2018). Thus, Meera's trajectory transforms in the film, from that of a successful, westernised woman who enjoys an egalitarian relationship with her husband, to that of a killer who is as brutal as the rural men who commit honour killing. Meera uses a range of killing methods, such as shooting, driving over her killers, and using a crowbar as a weapon. In one of the final scenes, Meera smokes a cigarette in front of one of the killers, as if challenging his masculinity, and indicating that they both are equal—she too smokes like a man and kills like a man (Sharma & Malhotra, 2018). Thus, it was posited that gender and sexuality are socially constructed and unstable, and the internalisation of gender stereotypes in a society creates barriers for healthy gender interactions (Sharma & Malhotra, 2018). Apart from gender depictions, *NH10* also explores the severe dichotomies of the Indian society, including the clash of modern values versus orthodoxy, and the rural-

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urban divide (Chatterjee, 2019). This is encapsulated by one of the lines delivered by a police officer to Meera, "*Gurgaon mein jahan aakri mall khatam hota hai, wahan aapki* democracy *aur* constitution *bhi khatam ho jata hai"* ("Democracy and constitution end with the last mall in Gurgaon") (Chatterjee, 2019, p.138). This indicates that the rural-urban divide is not merely on the material plane—these are two separate worlds with different sociocultural ideologies and psycho-spatial realities. The film depicts how these two worlds exist separately, and when they do intersect, it is with fatal consequences (Chatterjee, 2019).

In summary, the review of the above literature reveals that Bollywood continues to be a significant propagator of gender stereotypes. The quantitative studies by Madaan et al. (2017) and Khan and Taylor (2018) indicate that the depiction of the traditional or the *sanskari* woman (one who adheres to the prescribed gender norms) versus the westernised woman (one who deviates from the prescribed gender norms), is still prevalent. Although there has been an increase in the number of movies with women protagonists, the overall number of such movies are few compared to other commercial Bollywood genres (Madaan et al.,2017). Therefore, it was found that multiple studies have analysed the same movies, offering little new perspective.

There is a clear gap in sociological research of Bollywood movies in terms of exploring the mechanism of constructions of stereotypes, especially the female stereotype. For example, although Madaan, et al. (2017) quantitatively explored the trend in linguistic constructions of genders, there was little scope to focus on the qualitative context behind these constructions, i.e, asking who is constructing a woman as 'beautiful' and why? It can be posited that by delineating the various ways in which a woman is constructed as *sanskari* or vamp, the prevalent gender discourses in India can be understood more deeply. Therefore, the objective of this sociocultural study was to explore how female stereotypes of the *sanskari* woman and the westernised vamp are constructed and operationalised in recent, unexamined Bollywood

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movies. The mechanisms of such social constructions can be studied by analysing the meanings communicated through human interactions i.e. through language, actions, and meanings attributed to objects (Jager & Maier, 2016). Accordingly, the methodology used for this study was dispositive analysis (Khan, et al., 2019), presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Methodology and Method

The aim of the Sociocultural Study was to understand how the concept of womanhood is constructed in the sociocultural gender discourses of India. Womanhood is defined as, "the state of being a woman" and "the distinguishing character or qualities of a woman or of womankind" (Merriam-Webster dictionary, 2019). Discourse is defined as "institutionalised ways of talking that reinforces and regulates action and thereby exerts power" (Jager & Maier, 2016, p.111). A discourse can therefore be considered as a repository of cultural knowledge on a given topic, which is disseminated within that cultural boundary through language, both through the spoken and written word. The discourse, i.e. the cultural knowledge, often evolves over a significant period of time, thus shaping and constructing realities (Jager & Maier, 2016). However, the knowledge held in a discourse is valid only in a specific time period, in a specific geographical context, to a specific group of people (Jager & Maier, 2016). Thus, by analysing the knowledge held in a discourse, one can get an insight into the sociocultural systems of a particular populace at a given point in time (Jager & Maier, 2016). Discourse analysis involves understanding and interpreting 'what is being said' about a given topic of interest at a given point in time in a given context, and also 'who is saying this?' to understand power constructs within that sociocultural context (Jager & Maier, 2016). In the context of this study, it was surmised that a discourse analysis on Indian womanhood would help us understand how Indian women are spoken about and spoken to; it would reveal the limitations, if any, placed on Indian women regarding what they can say, do, and feel; and finally, this type of analysis would highlight the power constructs of the discourse by asking— 'who is generating this knowledge?' in order to identify the hegemonic structures of the society, giving an insight into the social world inhabited by Indian women.

6.1. Rationale for selecting dispositive analysis as the methodology

Given the social constructionist epistemological stance of the Sociocultural Study, Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA, Jager & Maier, 2016, Willig, 2013) was the first choice of methodology. FDA can be used to explore how "social and psychological life" are constructed through language; this analysis offers insights into "ways-of-being" and "ways-of-seeing" in the world (Willig, 2013, pp.130). Thus, it can be posited that discourses impact an individual's sense-making and experience (Willig, 2013). Also, FDA researchers are interested in understanding how discourses exert power by examining subject positions (Jager & Maier, 2016; Willig, 2013). For example, in the discourse of motherhood, women occupy the subject position where they are *subjected to* laws and religious dogma. Subject positioning also gives an insight into the power *of* the discourse as well as who has power *over* the discourse (Jager & Maier, 2016). For example, it can be argued that the predominantly male lawmakers, male religious heads, and religious texts authored by men have power over the discourse of motherhood through their regulation of abortion laws, and moralistic discourses on birth control, despite motherhood being an exclusively female domain.

Researchers who use FDA have traditionally worked with text as the input data, for example, newspaper articles, blogs, speeches, and/or interviews (Jager & Maier, 2016; Willig, 2013). However, knowledge is not held and transmitted through the spoken and written word alone; there is implicit knowledge in actions and materialisations i.e. meanings ascribed to objects (Jager & Maier, 2016; Willig, 2013). Therefore, ideally a discourse analysis should also include the study of this implicit knowledge held in non-discursive entities. In this regard Foucault proposed the concept of the dispositive, a knowledge ensemble, which consists of speech, action, and materialisation coming together as a single functional unit of knowledge, to achieve a specific goal (Caborn, 2007; Jager, 2001; Jager & Maier, 2016; Keller, 2007).

Analysing the knowledge held in the dispositive ensemble would then help the researcher analyse 'what is being said?' i.e. the traditional discourse analysis, as well as 'how is it being enacted?' i.e. the construction and operationalisation of that discourse (Khan, Holland, Williams, & Montague, 2019). The structure of the dispositive as customised to the Sociocultural Study is shown in Figure 4. This diagram was adapted from Jager and Maier's (2016, p.114) representation of the dispositive.

Figure 6: Structure of the dispositive
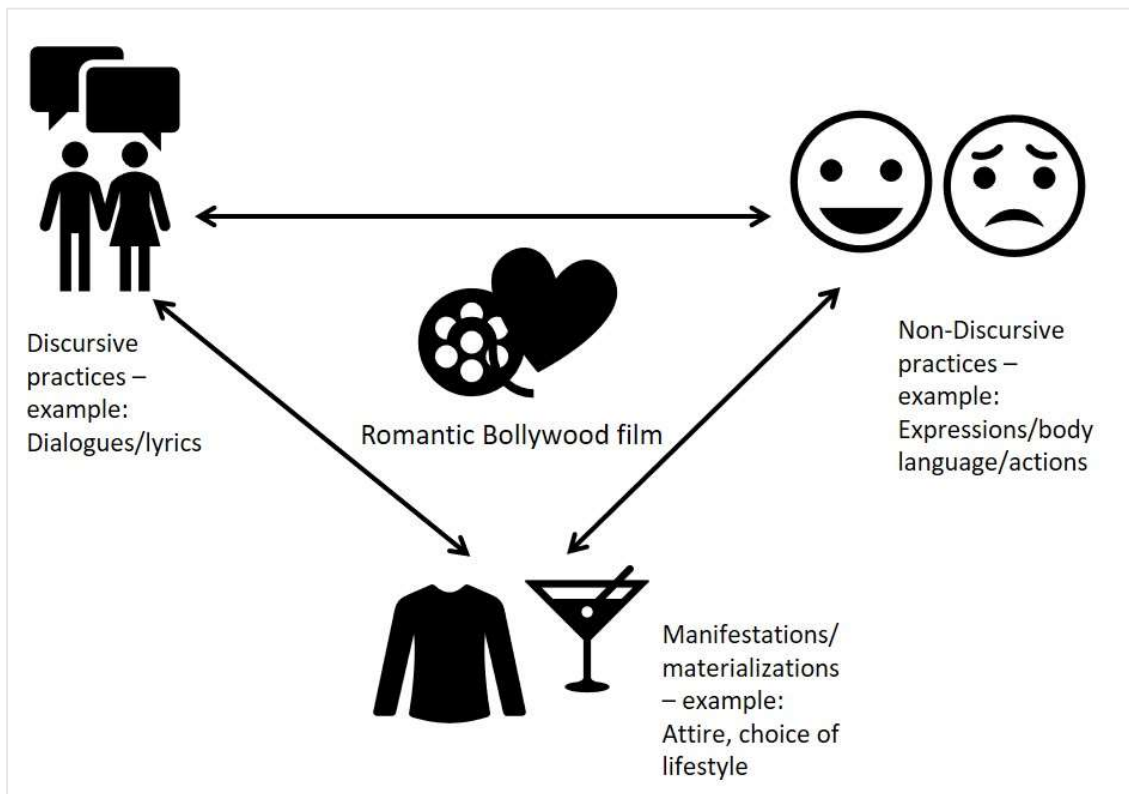
In the context of the Sociocultural Study, which was to understand the construction of womanhood in the Indian discourse, it can be argued that it was critical to examine the implicit knowledge that is encoded in non-linguistic practices and materialisations. For example, some places of worship in India such as the Sabarimala Hindu temple did not allow women who were in a menstruating age group of 10-50 years to enter (Harikrishnan, 2018).

When the Supreme Court of India passed a verdict that women should be allowed entry, the state of Kerala in which the temple is situated, witnessed unprecedented riots and mob fury against the judgement (Harikrishnan, 2018). This example illustrates the implicit knowledge held in a population's practices and actions; here there are implicit meanings attached to women's bodies and their physiological functions, and there is also an implicit meaning in the anger of the men protesting against the court's judgement. Therefore, I surmised that a traditional discourse analysis was not equipped to extract this implicit knowledge. Hence, I decided to implement a dispositive analysis for the Sociocultural Study. However, at the time of commencing this study, no methodology to conduct dispositive analysis existed. Possible approaches to conduct a dispositive analysis were proposed by Caborn (2007) and Jager and Maier (2016). These approaches did not suggest a methodology but put forward a broad outline. Based on Jager and Maier's (2016) proposal, I developed a methodology for conducting dispositive analysis (Khan, et al., 2019).

6.1.1. *Tailoring dispositive analysis methodology for the Sociocultural Study*

The scope and suggested methodology for doing a full-scale dispositive analysis is exhaustive and time-consuming (Jager & Maier, 2016; Khan, et al., 2019). The multi-method approach proposed by Khan et al. (2019) included three important steps: a) first, perform a traditional FDA using Jager & Maier's (2016) approach to understand 'what is being said', i.e. to understand the explicit knowledge about a given topic; b) the second step is to understand how 'what is being said' is enacted, i.e.to understand meanings, social symbolisms, behavioural codes and signs—the implicit knowledge; this step called for ethnographic methods of participant observation and interviews; c) the third step was to interpret the ethnographic data using Willig's six-step FDA method (2013).

In the context of this research, doing the full dispositive analysis according to this methodology (see Khan, et al., 2019) posed challenges—conducting a discourse analysis on the broad topic of Indian womanhood, and then doing ethnographic studies in India—both were beyond the scope of the PhD given the time constraints as well as the main aim of this research. Therefore, I adopted an abridged approach for the purpose of this research. First, I proposed to select a suitable medium for the ethnographic study that reflected Indian society and its sociocultural discourses as closely as possible. In this regard, Mikos (2014) stated that

> As a media of communication, films are embedded in the circumstances by which society communicated and interacts. Movies are part of discursive and social practises. They reflect the conditions and structures of society and of individual life (pp.409).

In the Indian context, social researchers agreed that Indian films represent a microcosm of India, articulating beliefs, class systems, religious, social, cultural and psychological discourses that reflect real life (Butalia, 1984; Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 1998; Gopal, 2011). In particular, the Hindi film industry, popularly known as Bollywood, with is global reach to Indians all over the world, is considered the most important visual communication medium that not only reflects Indian society, but also shapes sociocultural discourses of India (Athique, 2005; Bandopadhyay, 2008; Butalia, 1984; Kaur, 2002; O'Neil, 2013; Tirumala, 2009). The principles of dispositive analysis have been adopted by Gatling, Mills & Lindsay (2014) to critically evaluate representations of middle age discourses in films previously—in their case comedy films of Hollywood. Therefore, I selected Bollywood films as the medium of input for the dispositive analysis. Given that the aim of the Sociocultural Study was to understand how the discourses on Indian womanhood were constructed and practised by Indians, I selected Bollywood films of the romantic genre where the articulation of gender

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discourses is more prominent compared to other genres, and where both the male and female leads have a substantial contribution to the plot.

The proposed methodology for dispositive analysis (Khan, et al., 2019) has two rounds of FDA; the first round to understand 'what is being said?', and the second round for the dispositive interpretation. In the Sociocultural Study, instead of a traditional FDA, a detailed and focused literature review on women's portrayal in Bollywood films was conducted in order to establish 'what is being said?' about women and Indian womanhood (see Chapter 8). An important aspect of FDA is the genealogical perspective which explores the history of a particular discourse in order to understand its evolution; I have presented this by tracing the changes in the representation of women in Bollywood as a reflection of socio-economic changes in India (see Chapter 7). A necessary component of doing dispositive analysis, given its hermeneutic roots, is the researcher's reflexivity. This is presented in the following section, specific to my relationship with Bollywood movies.

6.2. Reflexivity

As an Indian woman of the 1970s generation, I have grown up watching Bollywood movies and enjoying Bollywood music. In the pre-internet/pre-social media era of the 1980s and 1990s, Bollywood wielded a considerable influence on my notions about romance and fashion; I was in my early twenties then. There were many Bollywood songs eulogising the beauty of a virtuous, submissive woman. From praising the woman's demureness – her downturned eyes would not meet the hero's who was serenading her – to poetic lines about the fragrance of her virginal body, Bollywood had, and still has, a song for every aspect of a woman. A woman's face has been compared to the full moon, her body has been compared to heady alcohol, her hair is likened to the new moon night, her arms must have the softness of lotuses, her breath must have the fragrance of sandalwood – the list is endless. In the more recent movies, the sexual objectification of women is heightened through 'item numbers',

where a woman dances suggestively to a song which is loaded with sexual innuendo. The dancer, colloquially known as the 'item girl' is often picturised as the lone woman dancing amidst a crowd of men wanting to touch her. The item girl is always clad in clothes that reveal her cleavage and midriff extensively, with several closeup shots of her body.

Doing this study has made me realise that the objectification of women in Indian society is so insidious that it has become a part of our thoughts and behaviour. We have grown up, and our children are growing up, in this culture of extreme objectification of women.

During this study, I have been conscious of my own views as an Indian woman, and as consumer of Bollywood movies. In the true hermeneutic spirit espoused by Smith et al. (2009), I have used my cultural knowledge and insight whilst interpreting the scenes. The interpretations are closely linked to the visual cues and the spoken dialogues to ensure that my subjectivity does not interfere with the analysis.

6.3. Method

The romantic genre was selected for this study because the female roles have more screen time and they participate in the progress and resolution of the cinematic plot. Also, romantic movies provide an adequate number of scenes to study gender interactions between male and female roles. Movies for this study were shortlisted based on two criteria: the performance at the box office which indicated the audience reach of the movie, and its genre. Therefore, as a first step, a list of movies that were classified as an 'All Time Blockbuster', 'Blockbuster', 'Super-hit' and 'Hit' by the Box Office India website for the period 2013 to 2017 were selected. The factors used by the website for the classification of box-office status included, total net earnings of the movie worldwide, number of footfalls, number of screens the movie was distributed to, and the number of weeks the movie ran for. However, no information was available on the website about the algorithm used for the classification. A total of 47 movies

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were selected based on box office success. The year-wise distribution of successful movies is shown in Table 2.

Table 2:Movie shortlist categories

Year	All Time Blockbuster	Blockbuster	Super Hit	Hit	Total
2017			1	2	3
2016	1	1	2	7	11
2015	1	1	2	6	10
2014	1	1	4	5	11
2013	1	4	2	5	12
				Total	47

These 47 movies were then filtered on genre—all movies listed as 'romance', 'love story' and 'romantic comedy' were selected. The genre of the movie was also double-checked by going through the publicity materials released by the production house; this included trailers and movie descriptions on DVD jackets.

Nine movies were selected based on the above sampling approach, starting with the most recent releases of 2017. These are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Shortlisted movies

Year of release	Movie title
2017	Badrinath Ki Dulhania (Badrinath's Bride)
2016	Ae Dil Hai Mushkil (The heart is difficult)
2015	Pyaar Ka Punchnama 2 (Rules of love)
2014	2 States
2013	Chennai Express

	Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani (The madness of youth)
	Aashiqui 2 (Love)
	Raanjhana (Beloved)
	Shuddh Desi Romance (Pure Indian Romance)

Gatling, Mills & Lindsay (2014) applied the theory of the dispositive in their study on representation of old age in Hollywood comedy movies. They analysed three movies. Therefore, using Gatling, Mills & Lindsay's (2014) study as the benchmark, this study too selected three movies. Starting with the latest release in 2017, each movie was viewed once and assessed for its relevance for the study. The movies were viewed on Netflix, Amazon Prime, or on DVD. A shortlist of four movies was reached; one movie was marked as a back-up in case the data from the three shortlisted movies was insufficient for analysis. The researcher used their discretion to decide if the core romantic plot was substantial. The three movies selected for this study were – *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani* (Johar, Johar, & Mukerji, 2013); *Pyaar Ka Punchnama 2* (Pathak & Ranjan, 2015) *Badrinath ki Dulhania* (Johar, Johar, Mehta, & Khaitan, 2017).

6.3.1. *Plot summaries of shortlisted movies*

Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani (The madness of youth) is an urban romance, with the female lead Naina Talwar narrating her romantic journey. Naina falls in love with an ex-high school classmate, Bunny, but is unable to confess her feelings to him. They fall out of touch and eight years later, Naina meets Bunny again at a friend's wedding. She realises how different they are, and even though she still loves him, she must decide if Bunny is the right man for her.

Pyaar Ka Punchnama 2 (Rules of Love) traces the conflicts of dating and love in the capital city of New Delhi. The protagonists are three young, urban men, Tarun, Gogo, and Chauka in search of romance. They eventually meet their love interests— Tarun's girlfriend Kusum is a fiercely independent woman; Gogo's girlfriend Chiku is a rich woman; Chauka's girlfriend Supriya is a working-class woman living with her conservative parents.

Badrinath Ki Dulhania (Badrinath's Bride) is set in the Indian towns of Kota in Rajasthan and Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh. It traces the love story of Badrinath and Vaidehi. Badrinath is a high school dropout who comes from a rich, patriarchal family that believes that women must not work. Vaidehi comes from a working-class, conservative family. She dreams of having a career, thus fuelling a conflict in the plot.

6.3.2. *Data Preparation*

The movies were viewed on Netflix or purchased on Amazon Prime streaming video. *Yeh Jawani Hai Deewani*, viewed on Amazon Prime, had a running time of 159 minutes; *Pyaar Ka Punchnaama* 2—136 minutes, viewed on Netflix; *Badrinath ki Dulhania*—139 minutes, viewed on Amazon Prime.

The first viewing of each movie was conducted as a participant observer. Freehand notes were made during the viewing, without pausing the movie. These notes were unstructured and free-flowing; they consisted of any aspects of the film that caught my attention. Subsequently, a scene-selection framework was developed to aid in selection of scenes that significantly tracked the development of the female lead role. A scene is considered as a cinematic sequence which takes place in the same space, time, and camera position (Trottier, 2014). A change in one of these three elements results in new scene. The framework was based on Marshall's (2009) guidelines on character development in a movie script using character objectives, functions, emotions, and background. For the purpose of this study,

these four factors were deconstructed into six areas as shown in Table 7: communication, career, finance, relationship handling, personality traits, and agency.

Table 4: Character areas for analysis

Character areas	Scene markers
Communication	Scenes containing significant interaction between hero and heroine – What do they talk about? What emotions are expressed, what objectives are achieved?
	Interaction between heroine and other roles
Career	What careers are pursued by the man and the woman? How does she manage her career? What do other roles think of her profession? How is it spoken about? What does she think and say about it?
	What career roles are attributed to heroes?
	Are careers of men and women prioritised?
Finance	Do heroines take financial decisions in the movie?
	How does this compare to a hero's handling of finances?
	What are the reactions of others in the storyline when women discuss money?
Relationship handling	How are conflicts handled by hero and heroine? Who steers the course of the relationship?
	Who is the decision-maker? How does the heroine relate to other roles, e.g. parents, sister, and friends.
	Who initiates the relationship?
Personality traits	What is the dominant personality trait/emotional structure of the heroine? What is her aim and function in the movie? What emotions is she allowed to display and how are these feelings perceived by others?
Agency	Does the heroine take independent decisions regarding her choices – from clothes she chooses to wear to sexual decisions? Does she get to initiate sex? Does she get to withhold consent?

Based on the above framework, the second viewing was undertaken and scenes that were related to any of the above dimensions were identified by noting the start and stop time on the media player's time bar. A total of 50 scenes were identified across all the three movies. A third viewing of these 50 scenes was conducted in order to identify the scenes that significantly defined the female character, for example, decision-making scenes that propelled the plot forward; specific personality traits of the female role that came to the fore which altered the plot; and/or scenes that portray relationship dynamics between the male and female lead. A total of 14 scenes were thus selected for analysis.

By using the pause and play features of the media player, each of the 14 scenes were viewed multiple times so that a thick description could be noted down in longhand. A scene analysis matrix shown in Table 8 was developed and used as a guideline for scene description.

Table 5: Scene analysis matrix

Linguistic cues		Nonverbal Audio cues and Visual cues						
Dialogues	Song lyrics	Facial expressions	Body Language	Scene setting	Placement of characters in the frame	Clothes	Background music	Symbolisms (use of objects)

For the purpose of this paper, the dialogues were translated from Hindi to English by the researcher, who is a native Hindi speaker. The translation was corroborated with the English subtitles available on both Netflix and Amazon. The scene descriptions and the translated dialogues was the raw data used for dispositive analysis. Three types of female role constructions were determined during the analysis. They are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 7: Dispositive analysis of the films

Three female stereotypes were determined during the analysis of the selected films – the *sanskari* woman, the vamp, and the *sanskari* feminist. Whilst the sanskari woman and the vamp are existing stereotypes, the feminist can be considered as an emerging female template in Bollywood. They are discussed in the following sections.

7.1.   Construction of the sanskari woman

The *sanskari* woman is represented by the character Naina Talwar, the central female role of *Yeh Jawani Hai Deewani*. The movie commences with Naina's narrative voice, where she recounts her encounter with Kabir (the male lead), also known as Bunny. We are given to understand that although Naina and Bunny studied in the same high school, they had hardly interacted. Naina was the studious girl who always scored top grades whilst Bunny was known for being a disruptive student and a flirt. A few years later, Naina, now a medical student, accidentally meets Bunny on a holiday and she falls in love with him. She decides her love will be unrequited since Bunny has different priorities, and so she chooses not to confess her feelings to him. Eight years later, Naina and Bunny once again meet at a mutual friend's wedding. This time, Bunny expresses his love for her, but she must decide if the relationship will work because the two of them are very different, with diametrically opposite views on life.

The following scene is the first significant encounter between Naina and Bunny. The preceding scenes show that Naina is a medical student who lives with her parents. An encounter with an ex-classmate Aditi has left Naina frustrated about her own life which she feels is devoid of fun and socialisation; instead there is enormous pressure on her to get good grades. Aditi had informed Naina that she was going to Kullu Manali, a hill station in the foothills of Himalayas, for a trekking holiday. In a disruption of the 'obedient daughter'

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stereotype, Naina decides to go on the trip to Kullu Manali. She books her place in a group trip at the last minute unbeknownst to her parents and sets out on this new journey.

The scene is set in a busy railway platform, presumably New Delhi. In this scene, Bunny is standing in front of the Kullu Manali train, shooting a video with a handheld camera. Naina, who is in a hurry to catch the train, runs into Bunny and mistakes him for the tour guide, Sumer. When Bunny turns around to face her, Naina recognises him and is confused.

(Dialogues/words spoken in English are *italicised).*

Table 6: Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani – Bunny meets Naina

1	Naina	*Excuse me* (Bunny turns around). *Sorry*, I'm *late* but… (Naina now recognises Bunny).
2	Bunny	*Hey!* You? (Naina has a faint smile). *Aisha, right?* We met at Tanya's *party?*
3	Naina	Naina. Naina Talwar.
4	Bunny (Snaps his fingers)	Geetanjali's *cousin*!
5	Naina	*Modern School. Same batch.*
6	Bunny	Ooh yeah! *Scholar* Naina. How can I forget these specs? (Steps forward and gives her a hug) *Long time, man.* How are you?
7	Naina	Actually, I'm *late*. Where is Sumer?
8	Bunny	Sumer? One minute! One minute! You are coming with us?
9	Naina	Yes (she is distracted; she must pay the porter for helping her with her luggage).
10	Bunny (Steps closer to her with an amused expression)	You know, right? This is a *trek*?
11	Naina	So?
12	Bunny	Nothing. Just that you'll have to climb mountains. You'll have to sleep in tents. Bears might come.
13	Naina (irritated)	I know what a *trek* entails
14	Bunny (Smirks)	*Okay, bro*
15	(The tour guide, Sumer arrives on the scene and informs Naina that she cannot be accommodated because she came at the last minute).	

16	Naina (to Sumer)	Can nothing be done? Please? I can even sleep on the floor of the train.
17	Bunny	Sleep with me.
18	Naina stares at Bunny	
19	Bunny	Arre! Not with me. We'll take turns to use the berth.
20	Bunny (turns to Sumer and winks)	Bribe the ticket collector
21	Sumer agrees and allows Naina to join the group	

In this scene Naina's appearance is modelled after a schoolgirl, even though she is an adult.

(refer Figure 7 below).

Figure 7: Naina Talwar's appearance (Mukerji, 2013)

Her waist-length hair is neatly brushed and held in place with a headband. She is in a short frock type dress that covers her thighs. She has a worn a jacket over the dress and is carrying a crossbody bag. She is clutching a thick book, presumably a textbook, to her chest. This adolescent attire is juxtaposed with hints of adulthood in the form of facial makeup—her eyebrows are shaped, and she is wearing eye makeup, as well as lipstick. She wears no jewellery, except for a pair of small ear studs. It can be posited that Naina's look aims to evoke a "Lolita-like image" which packages innocence, sexual inexperience, submissiveness and passivity (Savage, 2011, p.110). In this image, the girl is deemed sexually desirable by the beholder, however she herself remains unaware of her sexual attractiveness (Savage, 2011). In this scene, as the urban millennial, Naina is dressed in western clothes, but as the *sanskari* girl, she projects her virginal innocence. In contrast, Bunny sports a fashionable, short hairstyle; he is dressed in a pair of jeans and a white t-shirt over which he wears a red checked shirt. He sports an earring on his left ear. He is clean shaven with a hint of stubble.

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In this interaction, Bunny is depicted as the worldly and sexually experienced man who is quite popular with women, which is evident when he mentions female names such as "Tanya" and "Geetanjali" (lines 2, 4). He is westernised in his use of language and behaviour, using words such as "bro" (line 14) and greeting Naina with a hug, a woman he barely recollects as an ex-classmate. Bunny's easy interaction with the tour guide Sumer indicates that he is street smart and an experienced traveller, unlike the novice Naina.

Bunny's interaction with Naina is a form of eve-teasing, a colloquial term in India for street harassment. This behaviour was coded as moderate sexual harassment perpetrated by heroes in Hindi movies (Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2003). Bunny's "sleep with me" (line 17) represents his male sexual entitlement which is normalised as part of his sense of humour. This aligns with Ramasubramanian & Oliver's (2003) finding that sexual harassment by heroes is often contextualised as fun in Hindi movies. This behaviour represents the power Bunny wields over Naina because he is a man with life-experience and Naina, the inexperienced woman, is at his disposal if she wants to board the train. Bunny is condescending when he realises the studious Naina is joining them on a trek, presuming she does not know what a trek entails (lines 10, 12). In close-up shots, Bunny's face is close to Naina's. Naina must look up to meet his eyes during the interaction, symbolically representing the power difference between the characters (refer Figure 8).

Figure 8: Bunny and Naina interactive position (Mukerji, 2013)
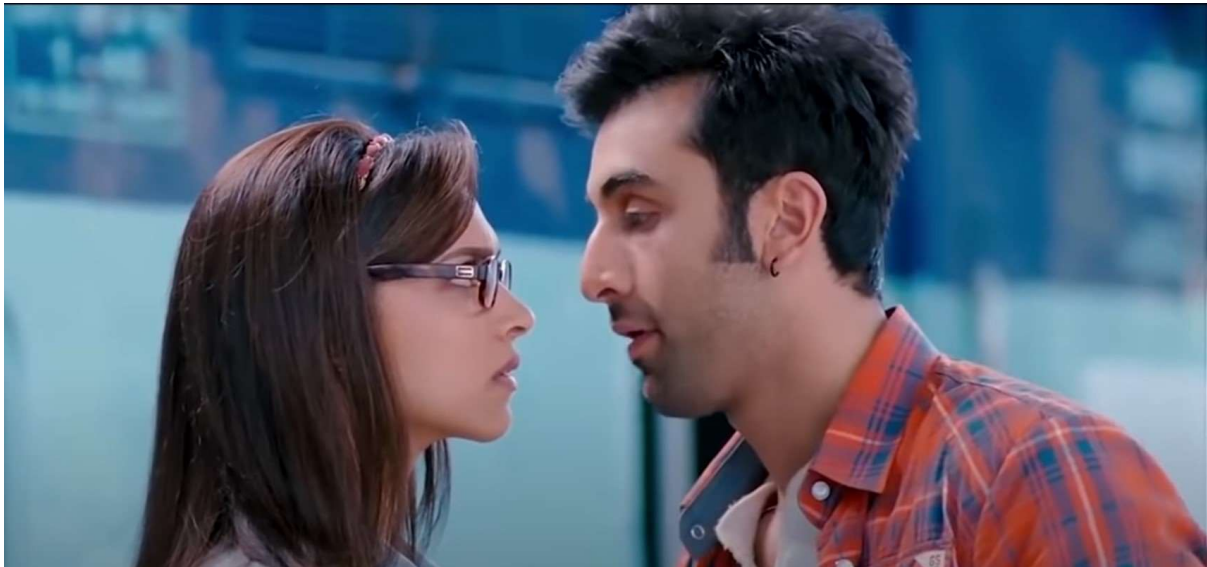
In a subsequent scene, Bunny helps Naina board the train with her luggage. In the process he takes the liberty to look into her bag and picks up a religious object, an idol of the Hindu elephant god, Lord Ganesh. He holds it up and looks at it with a bemused expression. Naina snatches the idol back from him and keeps it back in her bag. The religious symbolism of the idol indicates that Naina is a spiritual person, a practicing Hindu. Also, as a further evidence of Naina's spirituality, in another scene she is seen praying in front of a Hindu temple, in the traditional posture of joined hands and closed eyes. However, she is still dressed in the schoolgirl western attire as before—a short dress that reaches just above her knees with a sweater, and hair neatly held in place with a headband. Thus, although Naina is presented with a modern, westernised appearance, her beliefs and attitude conform to the stereotype of the *sanskari* ingénue. For example, Naina has traditional views on marriage and motherhood. This is depicted in the following scene where she goes sight-seeing in Manali along with Bunny, her friend Aditi, and another young man, Avinash who is also an ex-classmate. They

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witness a wedding procession and a discussion regarding marriage ensues. Naina is walking

next to Bunny, followed by Avinash and Aditi. Aditi tells Naina that Bunny is 'allergic' to

marriages.

(Dialogues/words spoken in English are *italicised).*

Table 7: Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani – Bunny's views on marriage

1	Bunny	*Of course,* yes. Naina, tell me one thing. If I give you the same type of food every day, lentils and rice, will you be able to eat?
2	Naina (puzzled)	Meaning?
3	Bunny	Meaning marriage *is* lentils and rice *for* fifty years *till you die.* In *life* one must also taste a bit of minced meat burgers, chicken kebabs, and hakka noodles also should be there, isn't it? There is problem in the *basic concept* of marriage. So instead of getting married five or six times, it is better not to get married at all.
4	Naina (shocked expression)	Five, six times?
5	Bunny	Why? Is it less? (Everyone laughs, except Naina).
6	Naina	And if you want kids?
7	Bunny	What has that got to do with marriage? We can make babies right now. (He goes close to her and holds her hand). Come let's go behind the temple.
8	Naina	(Pulls her hand back and walks away with an irritated expression).
9	Bunny	How many do you want? I know how to make twins too.

In this scene Bunny's harassment continues despite causing discomfort to Naina. He finds

amusement in challenging her traditional notions on marriage and sex (lines 3, 7, 9). His

suggestion that they have sex "behind the temple" (line 7) not only shows his disrespect for

Naina's traditional and religious beliefs, it also demonstrates he derives his male entitlement

through his sexual experience (line 9). Naina holds traditional ideas about marriage and

motherhood, and her facial expressions during this conversation reveals she is shocked by

Bunny's disparaging attitude towards marriage. She takes Bunny's opinion seriously when she questions him about having children (line 6).

Bunny has constructed Naina as a *sanskari* woman by attributing meaning to her gestures of praying, her carrying a religious idol, her assumed lack of life-experience, and her traditional views on family and marriage. In addition, she is studying to be a doctor, an honourable profession in the spirit of Indian tradition of *seva* or rendering service to others. Indeed, in a later scene, Bunny talks to Naina about Lara, a woman of Naina's age, who is also a part of the trekking group. Lara's incorrect Hindi and anglicised accent indicates she is from abroad, with a westernised upbringing. Bunny tells Naina –

(Dialogues/words spoken in English are *italicised).*

Table 8: Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani – Bunny's classification of women

1	Bunny	*You're right.* She's a little *silly, I know.* But I can't *flirt* with girls like you, right? So I have to make do with such girls.
2	Naina	Girls like me, meaning?
3	Bunny	Girls your type are not meant for *flirting.* [Pause] You are made for love. And love [pause] is not good for my health.

Bunny has classified women into two groups, the ones he can flirt with and the ones who are meant for a more serious relationship. As a male, Bunny feels entitled to decide about the kind of relationship a woman should offer him. He makes this decision based on his construction of the woman as *sanksari* or westernised. The *sanskari* woman deserves his love and his long-term commitment for which he is not yet ready - "not good for my health" (line 3), and in the meantime, the westernised woman is meant to keep him sexually occupied and entertained.

Although outwardly both Naina and Lara dress in western clothes that are short and reveal their legs, Bunny has constructed Lara as the westernised vamp because she responds to his

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flirting. Hence, Bunny assumes he has her consent to touch her body, even if it is through deceit. For example, during the trek, Lara sits next to Bunny to take a break. In this scene, Lara is dressed in a pair of shorts and a shirt. She has tied the shirt into a knot just below her bust, so her navel is visible.

(Dialogues/words spoken in English are *italicised).*

Table 9: Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani – Bunny and Lara

1	Lara (breathing heavily)	My body is so stressed.
2	(Bunny stares up and down her body)	
3	Lara (Points to a small bruise on her outer thigh)	See what happened here.
4	Bunny	*Oh no, baby!* Such a big *cut*. We should go to the *hospital*.
5	Lara	*What? Really?*
6	Bunny	Yeah. But how is it possible here? (Looks around) One *second*. (Bunny fetches some leaves.)
7	Bunny (sits next to Lara and places her leg on his lap.)	*Come, Cuckoo*
8	Lara (infantile tone)	What are you doing?
9	Bunny (Holds up the leaves).	This is…huh…ajinomotato *plant*. It is very good for the *skin*.
10	Lara (smiles)	*Oh, really?* Can you put some on my *face* too?
12	Bunny (hands over some leaves)	Here. Go ahead.
13	(Lara giggles as she rubs the leaves on her face)	
14	(Bunny feels up Lara's leg in the guise of "applying" the leaf.)	

The sequence of this scene is depicted in Figure 9.

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Figure 9: Bunny and Lara (Mukerji, 2013)

In this scene, although her injury is miniscule, Lara accepts Bunny's observation that it is serious enough for a hospital visit. She cannot understand that Bunny's "ajinomotato" (line 9) is a made-up word and her ignorance is evident when she asks if she can use it on her face. The background voiceover says "*satyanash*" (what a disaster), referring to Lara's stupidity. The audience, already aware of Lara's dim-wittedness in preceding scenes, are conscious of Bunny's sexually-motivated intentions while Lara herself remains ignorant and laughs as Bunny touches her. Whilst Lara has asked Bunny to look at her bruise, at no point, either by gesture or verbally, does she ask him to run his hands down her legs. Despite this, Bunny asserts his entitlement over her body. Even though Lara has not given consent explicitly, Bunny assumes it is implied, or perhaps not necessary, because of the clothes Lara wears and the way she socialises and interacts with him, and more importantly, because of her ignorance of his intentions.

In contrast, in a scene that takes place during a wedding, Naina is dressed in a long skirt and a strapless blouse, where her shoulders, cleavage and midriff are exposed. Her phone is in a

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pouch that hangs from the waistband of her skirt. She has applied *mehendi* (henna tattoo) on her palms and so she asks Bunny to retrieve the phone from her pouch to make a call. Bunny must put his arms around her waist to retrieve the phone. However, unlike his behaviour towards Lara, Bunny does not sexually touch Naina even though her torso is exposed to a greater extent than Lara's was (refer Figure 10).

Figure 10: Bunny retrieves the phone for Naina (Mukerji, 2013)

Thus, through Bunny's gaze, the women's bodies are eroticised or de-eroticised for the audience. The westernised Lara's body becomes a centre of visual and tactile pleasure, while the sanskari Naina's body is to be respected.

7.2.   Construction of the vamp

The vamp has been a secondary role in Hindi films, often providing the illustrative contrast of westernised decadence to the Indian *sanskari*-ness of the heroine. For example, in the previous section, Lara was the vacuous vamp whose characterisation served the purpose of highlighting Naina's *sanskari*-ness through a theme of contrast.

In Pyaar Ka Punchnama 2 the westernised vamp has a primary role as the central female character. This film is set in New Delhi and charts the romantic escapades of three urban

young men, Tarun, Gogo, and Chauka. They are flatmates and live in a luxury high-rise apartment building.

Tarun meets his love-interest Kusum for the first time in a gym (refer Figure 11).

Figure 11: Tarun meets Kusum (Ranjan, 2015)

The scene shows Tarun working out on a bench press. He is dressed in a full-arm track suit. He pauses his workout to take a break when he notices Kusum as she walks in. Kusum is dressed in lycra jogging capris and a sports bra. Her midriff and back are exposed.

The camera tracks Tarun's gaze as he stares at her. He follows her and gets on the treadmill next to hers. He looks sideways and stares at her body as she walks. Then, as Tarun is standing and doing his bicep curls with a pair of dumbbells, Kusum walks past him. She uses a bench placed near him to bend over and perform tricep extension curls. Tarun, who is standing behind her, turns to look at her. The camera, representing Tarun's gaze, zooms to her buttocks and pans out to show the rest of her back. Tarun is seen smiling. Kusum then does her squats facing a mirrored wall. She is in the foreground of the camera frame, and as she does her squats, Tarun is seen in the background doing crunches whilst staring at her. Kusum has a smile on her face. After the work out, she approaches him.

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(Dialogues/words spoken in English are *italicised).*

Table 10: Pyaar ka Punchnama 2 - Tarun meets Kusum

1	Kusum	I'm done. Now you can carry on.
2	Tarun	*Sorry? Oh no, you are misunderstanding.* I wasn't ogling at you. It's just that the trainer isn't here *so he asked me to keep an eye on your…form.*
3	Kusum (*smiles*)	*So, how was my form?*
4	Tarun	*Well, running was 8 on 10.* There's no problem in running away with…I mean no problem in your running. *Abs almost 9 on 10.* But if you ask me, don't overdo it. And yes, *back* can be *better*. 6 on 10. *Especially at this young age, strong back* is very necessary. *And squats and stretching…10 on 10.*
5	Kusum	*So, how do I get 10 on 10 on all?*
6	Tarun	It's not very difficult. *I can work on you*…(closes his eyes as if realising his faux paus)… *your form until you get 10 on 10.*
7	Kusum	*And what will you charge for your services?*
8	Tarun	*A coffee and a conversation? Costa? 5?*
9	Kusum	*Do you want to pretend to have a conversation? Or do you really want to have a conversation? How about 7? My place?*
10	Tarun smiles	
11	Kusum	So, are you going to tell me your name or…
12	Tarun	Tarun
13	Kusum	Kusum

Scopophilia is defined as pleasure derived from looking at a person as an erotic object (Mulvey, 1973). In this scene, the audience engage in Tarun's scopophilia as he follows Kusum around the gym. Tarun is clad in a full track suit and no part of his body is exposed and so the focus is entirely on Kusum's body. Although Kusum is wearing clothes appropriate for her gym session, her body is eroticised through Tarun's gaze as set up through the camera angles.

In a departure from the *sanskari* stereotype of a sexually inexperienced, submissive woman, Kusum is as sexually self-aware and as assertive as Tarun. She was not only aware of Tarun's ogling, but her knowing smile at the end of the scene indicates that she enjoyed being looked at, and perhaps she played to it.

Tarun's objectification of Kusum's body is highlighted as he rates her exercises (line 4), thereby indicating he has observed various sections of her body such as back and abdominal area. He communicates his sexual intentions through double entendre and exerts his male prerogative of being sexually more experienced than Kusum, or at least he assumes so in this case. For example, Tarun's advice to Kusum regarding her back, "Especially at this young age, a strong back is very necessary" (line 4), in an indirect reference to a sexual position. The disruption of the gender stereotypes culminates when Kusum behaves like a stereotypical male lead by asking Tarun out, indeed by inviting him over to her home.

As the relationship between Tarun and Kusum develops, Kusum's views regarding financial matters causes friction between them. For example, in the following scene, Kusum and Tarun have dined out at a restaurant with Tarun's flatmates Gogo and Chauka, and their girlfriends, Chiku and Supriya respectively. After the dinner, Kusum wants to split the bill and takes out her credit card. This creates an awkward moment for everyone at the table, including the other two women. There is a tacit understanding between Tarun, Gogo, and Chauka that as a

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high earner, Tarun usually pays the bills whilst Chauka and Gogo repay him later. Supriya and Chiku also look uncomfortable at Kusum's assertion regarding paying her part of the bill, because they have assumed that their boyfriends will pay. Chiku offers her credit card but Tarun turns it down and proceeds to pay the bill alone. Neither Gogo nor Chauka offer to pay. The following conversation takes place in Tarun's car. He is dropping Kusum home after the dinner and has parked in front of her house.

(Dialogues/words spoken in English are *italicised).*

Table 11: Pyaar ka Punchnama 2 – Kusum splits the bill

1	Tarun	Was that necessary?
2	Kusum	What do you mean?
3	Tarun	*Why are you getting into it?* Gogo, Chauka and I have our own way with accounts. *And why are you even getting into money matters?*
4	Kusum	Why? Because I'm a girl, *that's why I'm not supposed to get into money matters? I don't agree with it.* And I did what I felt was right.
5	Tarun	Yes, but you could have done it later. Why did you push everyone into it?
6	Kusum	When did I push everyone? *I said I'm splitting.* Now it was their inner *guilt* that *after I said* they took out their *cards.*
7	Tarun	Of course that is bound to happen *if you insult everyone.*
8	Kusum	Who did I *insult? I did what I always do. And I won't be apologetic about it.* You know this always *mattered* to me. It's non-negotiable for me. I did not *force* anyone *but I will not participate in this exploitation in the name of friendship.* But if you have problems with this, then okay. I won't come out with your friends. *Anyways I barely know them.*
9	Tarun	Kusum…

10	Kusum	*Just decide. Am I the kind of girl you want in your life* who can speak her mind? *Or am I too uncomfortable for your world? Call me when you're sure.* (Gets out of the car)

In this scene, Kusum's defence of her actions where she openly talks about money, traditionally presumed to be a man's domain, has caused discomfort in Tarun. Tarun is conforming to the discourse of the male as the breadwinner and is agitated that Kusum has challenged that position. When Tarun asks Kusum, "why are you getting into it?" (line 3), her offer to contribute towards the dinner is seen as interference into a male domain. However, as a high-earning male, Tarun's offer to pay the bill is perceived as hosting. By emphasising "money matters" (line 3), Tarun has drawn the boundary that women must not discuss or participate in financial matters in public, and by doing so, Kusum has overstepped her boundary. Tarun considers Kusum's flashing her credit card as an insult to everyone at the table (line 7). However, Kusum is uncompromising and sees no mistake on her part. She stands her ground and is fearless in giving her negative opinion about Tarun's friends (line 8), and challenges Tarun to rethink about their relationship and his expectation of her as a woman (line 10). This scene illustrates how money as an object holds different meanings for the traditional Indian male and the modern Indian female.

As the film progresses, the issue of money continues to create conflicts between Kusum and Tarun. For example, Kusum gets upset when Tarun, who is at work, curtly cuts off her call by asking if it was urgent, and if not, he would call later. When Tarun eventually calls her, she does not answer the phone in a tit for tat, leaving him waiting in order to snub him. In the following scene, it is late evening and Tarun has headed to Kusum's home from work. Kusum opens the door.

(Dialogues/words spoken in English are *italicised).*

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Table 12: Pyaar ka Punchnama 2 – Kusum earns less

1	Tarun (standing at the doorstep as Kusum opens the door)	I was calling you.
2	Kusum (walks away).	Was there anything *urgent?*
3	Tarun (walks inside)	*Baby* that time I was *stressed* because of work.
4	Kusum	Hmm.
5	Tarun (sighs).	*Boss is after my ass these days.*
6	Kusum (stirring a pot on the hob)	Tarun, that's what a *boss* means. *At least* you could have listened to what I had to say.
7	Tarun	*I'm sorry.*
8	Kusum (serving a plate)	I had an urgent work.
9	Tarun	What work?
10	Kusum	Now that is done.
11	Tarun	*Okay,* but what was it?
12	Kusum	What will you do knowing? Now that it's done.
13	Tarun	*Still,* tell me.
14	Kusum	Why? Oh. *You want to know coz you don't believe* that this was an *urgent work?* (takes her plate and walks towards the sofa).
15	Tarun (follows her)	Oh dear. Okay, it is done right, let's forget it.
16	Kusum (sits on the sofa)	*No Tarun, that's not the point.* You're always talking about your work as if only you are working.
17	Tarun (sits facing her)	Kusum *they pay me three lakhs a month* (3 lakhs is 300,000 – he means Indian rupees). *You don't -*
18	Kusum	Oh. So say that because you earn more than me, your work is more important. What of me? *I earn just fifty thousand.* So, of course I can spare time for you. Why should my work *matter*?

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In this scene, unlike the template of a *sanskari* woman, Kusum offers no comfort or sympathy to Tarun who is stressed about his work. Indeed, she does not even offer the food she's cooked, serving up a plate only for herself, disrupting the stereotype of the nurturing woman. She is focused on emotionally punishing Tarun for ignoring her. Kusum is aware that she earns lesser than Tarun but does not want to be undermined in the relationship because of this financial inequality. As the story progresses, Kusum's hypocrisy is further highlighted. Kusum is vociferous about sharing bills and expenses, but she never pays up. She constantly tells Tarun to keep track of everything he buys for her, assuring that she will repay him in the future. She even maxes out a credit card obtained for her by Tarun. When Tarun expresses his desire to quit his job and start his own venture, Kusum suggests they open a joint back account where they deposit 20% of their respective earnings every month so their future can be secure. This would mean Tarun's share is sixty thousand rupees whereas Kusum's share is ten thousand rupees. Although Tarun feels trapped, he is unable to say no to Kusum. Eventually, when Tarun tells her he wants to access the money from their joint account to fund his start-up business, Kusum blames him for over-spending money on his friends. In this scene, Tarun is in Kusum's house. He is seated on the sofa, working on his laptop. Kusum is working on a painting.

(Dialogues/words spoken in English are *italicised).*

Table 13: Pyaar ka Punchnama 2 – Tarun and Kusum's joint account

1	Tarun	*I think* I'll have to withdraw money from our joint account. I can't *support* my *website* without it.
2	Kusum	If you keep blowing money on Anshul and Chauka, then this is bound to happen.
3	Tarun (irritated)	Kusum, you're again talking about the same thing. When you don't know the *understanding* between us, why do you keep bringing this up again and again?

4	Kusum	If you have such a great *understanding* with them, why don't you go and ask Anshul and Chauka for the money? It's your money and your career. Go ahead and take out your *half* of the money from the account.
5	Tarun	My *half*? I thought it is our money.
6	Kusum	So you want to withdraw all the savings?
7	Tarun	Kusum I'm talking about withdrawing the money that I would've actually saved for the website, had I not put into the joint account.
8	Kusum (angry)	*Oh, now I get it. I thought* we're saving equal portions of our salaries. That we're investing equally. *But I didn't realise* that you are keeping track of who is *contributing* how much?
9	Tarun	Kusum, I'm not tracking anything. *I'm just asking for your support.*
10	Kusum	*I'm sorry, Tarun. I'm not able to support you financially.*
11	Tarun	*Support* need not always be *financial,* Kusum. At least *support* me in other ways? And if you can't *support,* at least don't be so *negative.*
12	Kusum (raised voice)	*What do you want me to say? It's a great idea?* That it's a *successful business plan?* Are you going to become Mark Zuckerberg because of this *website?* (throws away the painting cloth and walks away).

Kusum is aware that her contribution towards the joint account is much lesser than that of Tarun's. However, because she is in a committed relationship with Tarun, she has positioned herself as an equal partner (line 8). Therefore, she stakes claim over an equal half of the money in the account. She undermines Tarun's business decisions by mocking them (line 12). Tarun feels bereft of financial as well as emotional support from Kusum (line 11). Kusum is the opposite of the selfless and supportive *sanskari* woman, instead, she is aggressive and self-centred. For Kusum, the bedrock of her relationship with Tarun is financial security, and she has no qualms using him to achieve that. Thus, Kusum's character

arc has transitioned from that of a financially independent woman to that of a manipulative woman who employs emotional pressure tactics on Tarun to stake claim on his earnings.

In contrast, in a preceding scene, Gogo suggests to Tarun and Chauka that they must all go together on a holiday abroad with their girlfriends. He feels that the break will smoothen the friction that's taking place in everyone's relationships. Tarun chides Gogo regarding the expenses this could entail. However, Gogo says since his girlfriend is rich, her credit card is as good as his. This scene highlights the difference in the concept of ownership of money. As a male, Gogo feels entitled to his girlfriend's money. However, as a woman, Kusum's staking claim on Tarun's money causes distress. This can be attributed to the patriarchal discourse that positions men as providers and protectors of women.

When Kusum senses her control over Tarun is weakening and that he will not change his mind about his business idea, she blames his friends for leading him down the wrong path. In this scene, Tarun and Gogo are at their flat. Kusum, who has not been able to get hold of Tarun, calls Gogo. When Gogo sees the caller display, he shows his screen to Tarun. Tarun puts the call on speaker and nods at Gogo, indicating that Gogo must take the call.

(Dialogues/words spoken in English are *italicised).*

Table 14: Pyaar Ka Punchnaama 2 – Kusum criticises Tarun

1	Kusum	Hello?
2	Gogo	Yes, Kusum.
3	Kusum	Are you with Tarun?
4	(Tarun looks at Gogo and shakes his head). Gogo	No.

Sensitivity: Internal

5	Kusum	*What the fuck are you guys teaching him?* Why are you guys doing this? I know it's you guys who are teaching him all this. He has become blinded. He's not able to see how his life is going to get ruined but are you guys also not able to see it? And you call yourselves friends? *You know,* I *discussed* this idea even with my *boss. And what he had to say? That Tarun is being childish.* He's talking like a kid. Okay, he has no *value* to anything I say. But when even a *senior* person is saying like this, then there must be something wrong, isn't it? *I'm telling you, I will not be a part of this seriously.* If he wants to destroy his *life* like this, *then I have no interest in being part of such a life.* I cannot ruin my life because of his insanity.

In contrast to the *sanskari* woman's devotion to her husband or partner, Kusum is only focused on self-preservation. She is unhappy about the prospect of dwindling financial resources from Tarun and blames his friends for manipulating him. In a role reversal of genders, she infantalises Tarun as someone who has no discerning thinking capacity (line 5). She has also overstepped the boundaries of a couple's confidentiality and disclosed Tarun's plans to her boss, who has derided Tarun (line 5). Kusum sees there is no benefit in remaining invested in this relationship and vocalises her decision to break away from the relationship.

In summary, the millennial vamp has transformed from a small role to a full-length character. She is unapologetically self-centred and challenges male discourses by inflicting psychological and emotional wounds on the male protagonist. She is unafraid to use her body, her sexuality, and feminist discourses to her advantage.

7.3. Construction of the sanskari feminist

Like Kusum, Vaidehi in Badrinath Ki Dulhania also challenges patriarchal discourses for self-preservation. However, her motives are driven by self-respect and an ambition to change the economic status of her family.

Vaidehi hails from a modest working-class, conservative family in Kota, a town in Rajasthan. Unlike her elder sister Krithika, Vaidehi has ambitions of becoming financially independent, and wants to become a flight attendant. However, her parents are keen on getting Krithika and Vaidehi married into good families conforming to the social discourse of the primary duty of parents. They are in the process of seeking arranged marriage proposals for their daughters. Whilst Krithika has accepted this marital destiny, Vaidehi rebels and wants to achieve her own status and identity and make her own decisions. She is also against the prevalent illegal practice of dowry payments, where the bride's family make payments to the groom's family through cash and material goods such as jewellery and electronic items before the wedding. Although demanding a dowry is punishable by Indian law, it is widely prevalent in many communities and is often a precursor for domestic violence (Srinivasan & Lee, 2004).

Badrinath is a rich young man from Jhansi, a town in Uttar Pradesh. He is a high school drop-out and manages his father's money-lending business. Badrinath comes from a highly patriarchal family where his father makes all the decisions and women are not allowed to work. For example, Badrinath's sister-in-law, a highly qualified graduate in accountancy and business management is forced to stay at home.

Vaidehi and Badrinath meet at a wedding. Vaidehi's family are friends of the bride's family. Badrinath is at the wedding to recover a debt from the groom, who has promised to repay as soon as the dowry is handed over to him. In this scene, which takes place at an opulent

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wedding venue, Badrinath and two other friends are sitting with the groom in a decorated portico. The groom's father and the bride's father are standing and talking to each other. The groom's father is praising the bride's father for the impressive wedding arrangements. It is night and the venue is lit up with thousands of lights. Vaidehi and her sister Krithika approach the men to announce dinner.

Both Vaidhehi and Krithika are dressed similarly in a grand embroidered lehenga choli (maxi skirt with a mid-riff revealing blouse), with a long dupatta (scarf) draped across the left shoulder (refer Figure 12). This is accessorised with a pair of traditional earrings, and bangles on both hands. Vaidehi has a *bindi* on her forehead and her makeup includes lipstick and kohl-lined eyes. Her hair is styled in layers and is left loose in a modern way.

Figure 12: Vaidehi (L) and Krithika (R) (Khaitan, 2017)

Badrinath is dressed in a red shirt over which he wears an embroidered red sleeveless jacket. His hair is heavily gelled and combed back and he has a stubble indicating a fashionable urban look.

Just as Vaidehi and Krithika approach, the bride's father is handing over the dowry money in a decorated suitcase to the groom's father.

(Dialogues/words spoken in English are *italicised*).

Table 15: Badrinath ki Dulhania – Vaidehi meets Badrinath

1	Vaidehi (addressing the bride's father)	Tiwari*ji*? I want to tell you something…
2	Badrinath	Hello!
3	Vaidehi (turns to him)	
4	Badrinath (walks up to her and stands close to her, towering over her)	See, there is an *urgent meeting* going on here. Why don't you come later?
5	Vaidehi	(laughs). What *urgent meeting* is going on is evident -
6	Badrinath (interrupts Vaidehi)	*Madam!* Don't start your women's liberation *drama* here. We know what is right and wrong. *Out.*
7	Vaidehi (points her forefinger at him)	*Shut up. And don't interfere.* I don't want to talk to you.
8	Badrinath (shocked into silence)	
9	Vaidehi (turns to the fathers)	We haven't come to stop you. We came to announce *dinner.* (Turns to Badrinath). You know what, as such, I have already given up the idea of reforming this country a long time ago.
10	Badrinath (nods, staring at Vaidehi)	
11	Vaidehi (to the fathers)	Actually, your guests are all roaming around here and there. So we are *requesting* you to do this *business deal* inside a room, okay? (Turns to Badrinath with a smile). See? That's all I wanted to say.

12	Badrinath continues to stare at her.	
13	Vaidehi (snaps her finger in front of his face)	Do you eat moong ka halwa?
14	Badrinath	No
15	Vaidehi	Oh you must taste it today. It is very tasty. After today, you will eat it everyday. (Claps her palms in front of his face). Namaste

Vaidehi is petite. Her clothes and jewellery suggest she is a single woman. For example, Hindu married women traditionally wear sarees instead of the lehenga, jewellery that symbolises their marital status such as the mangalsutra (a type of necklace, often made of black beads and gold) and silver toe rings, and a streak of vermilion along the hair partition, often at the centre of the forehead (Dwyer, 2000).

Badrinath on the other hand embodies masculinity in his muscular body structure, aggressive body language and behaviour. Had Vaidehi displayed symbols of being a married woman, perhaps Badrinath's interaction with her would have been different. For example, he would not have stood close to her, making an eye-to-eye contact and confronting her (line 4). However, as a single woman, Vaidehi is immediately subjected to Badrinath's masculine power. Badrinath's condescending dismissal of her, "come back later" (line 4), is like shooing away a pesky toddler who is interrupting the adults. When Vaidehi laughs sarcastically about the "business meeting" (line 5), Badrinath assumes she is one of the so-called feminists (line 6) who has come to stop the dowry exchange, which is illegal by law. His body language is now threatening, when he tells her the men know what they are doing, and is disrespectful when he says "Out", implying that she should leave if she was there to challenge them (line 6).

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However, unlike the *sanskari* narrative of a submissive woman, Vaidehi matches Badrinath in aggressiveness. She does not step back or step down, instead, she holds up her forefinger in a warning gesture (refer Figure 13).

Figure 13: Vaidehi's aggressive response (Khaitan, 2017)

Badrinath's Hindi is rustic, so when Vaidehi uses English to counter him, he is shocked and unable to respond (line 7). Vaidehi continues to engage with him with sarcasm and passive aggressiveness when she says with a smile that she has given up any reformatory ideas about the Indian society (line 9). After announcing dinner, she once again addresses Badrinath in a pacifying tone, as if one were talking a toddler throwing a tantrum, "see, that's all I wanted to say" (line 11). Then, continuing in the same vein, like offering a candy treat to pacify the irksome toddler, she suggests that Badrinath try "*moong ka halwa*" (line 13, 15), a sweet dish prepared with yellow lentils.

After this encounter, Badrinath is fascinated with Vaidehi. He tells his friend Somdev, who aspires to set up a matrimonial agency, to take photographs of Vaidehi and Krithika

(unbeknownst to them) at the wedding. The act of taking Vaidehi's photographs without her knowledge or consent is representative of the larger issue of how women lose ownership of their bodies in a public space (Edd-Lodge, 2015). Subsequently, Somdev tracks down Vaidehi's address and approaches her parents in the guise of an arranged marriage broker. He promises to find suitable grooms for both Vaidehi and Krithika. Somdev then gives all the information about Vaidehi and her family to Badrinath. Vaidehi's surname is Trivedi, indicating that like Badrinath, she too is from the upper Brahmin caste. Badrinath decides that he must marry Vaidehi. He relentlessly stalks her despite her repeated rejections. He firmly believes that he is the most eligible match for her, and her rejections are possibly because of other reasons. Indeed, in this pursuit, Vaidehi's voice or thoughts are inconsequential in Badrinath's male world; she is reduced to an object, a shiny new toy that must be acquired. Badrinath's pursual of Vaidehi is an example of how stalking is romanticised in Hindi movies where consent of the woman is deemed unnecessary. *Na mein haan hai* (in her no, there is a yes) is a justification that is often ascribed to such stalking, indicating that when women say no, they actually mean yes, and the boy must put an effort and woo her (Jaikaran, 2015). Stalking is shown as the man's persistence and commitment to love (Jaikaran, 2015).

Badrinath finds out surreptitiously that Vaidehi had suffered financial losses due to her ex-boyfriend Sagar. Sagar and Vaidehi had planned to set up a salon business together. Sagar fell short of cash and so Vaidehi persuaded her father to part with 1.2 million rupees (approximately £13,000) from his savings. Vaidehi had worked out that the business would generate 600,000 rupees profits per annum, thus ensuring financial security for her family. However, Sagar absconded with the money. Vaidehi is constantly berated by her father for the high financial loss, which she still wishes to repay.

In this scene, Badrinath and Somdev are again following Vaidehi, and manage to board the bus in which Vaidehi and her sister Krithika are travelling. Badrinath is angry about

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Vaidehi's repeated rebuttals to his marriage proposal. The scene is shot inside the bus. The bus is crowded and Badrinath makes his way down the aisle of the bus towards Vaidehi, who is accompanied by her sister, Krithika. Badrinath is angry and shouts at Vaidehi as the crowd looks on.

(Dialogues/words spoken in English are *italicised).*

Table 16: Badrinath ki Dulhania Scene location – Badrinath stalks Vaidehi in the bus

1	Badrinath	In two days you've made me run between Jhansi and Kota thrice. All the oil wells of the worlds are drying up. At least feel sorry about that.
2	Vaidehi	Smear less oil on your hair. Wells will not dry up.
3	Somdev	This is not oil. It is *gel*. For *styling*.
4	Vaidehi	(to Badrinath) All this *drama* you are doing, I can understand everything.
5	Badrinath (in an aggressive tone)	What drama have I done?
6	Vaidehi	I could make out your loose character from the very first time I met you at the wedding.
7	Badrinath	If my intentions were bad I would have made you my *girlfriend* and roamed around. (Looks at Krithika) I would not have come with a marriage proposal.
8	Vaidehi	*Girlfriend*? (laughs). Have you had any *girlfriends* before?
9	Badrinath (turns around and looks at a passenger)	I never wanted a *girlfriend*.
10	Vaidehi	Good you did not want. No one would have agreed to be your *girlfriend* in the first place. (Looks at a passenger) Isn't it, sister?
11	Badrinath	Now stop with this *girlfriend-boyfriend* business. Talk about our marriage.
12	Vaidehi (agitated, she raises her voice)	I DON'T WANT TO MARRY! How many times should I say no? Should I *tattoo* it on my arm?
13	Male Passenger	*Madam*, is he harassing you?
14	Badrinath (aggressively to the male passenger)	Does this look like harassment to you? Don't act too much like a *hero* in the bus.

15	Vaidehi	Look here! Listen. I don't want to get married at all. Not to you or any other guy or even a girl.
16	Badrinath	So what do you want to do?
17	Vaidehi	I want to help Krithika get married. Then I will leave Kota forever and go away.
18	Badrinath	Where?
19	Vaidehi	Near Himalayas. In a small hut. I'll become a monk.
20	Badrinath	Vaidhei*ji*, I know all about what that guy did to you. You are hurt by that, I understand. Despite that I am ready to marry you.

As the male, Badrinath has the sole power to decide on the kind of relationship he can pursue with a woman, depending on whether he assesses her as *sanskari* or not. For example, it was his choice that he did not degrade Vaidehi by "making" her his "girlfriend" (line 7). There is a sexual connotation to the term "girlfriend", whereas proposing a girl for marriage reflects the man's respect for the woman, which is accorded to her depending on how *sanskari* she is. This is similar to Bunny's classification of women in *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani*—the *sanskari* woman who is meant for love, and the westernised woman who is meant for flirting. On the other hand, the woman is devoid of choice; even when she says no, it is deemed as a possible yes.

Dating and having a boyfriend or girlfriend are considered western influences that corrupt traditional arranged marriage systems (Doshi, 2016). Any pre-marital romantic liaison, even if it did not entail sex, is considered western and immoral. Badrinath does not blame Vaidehi for her previous relationship, instead, views her as a victim of a cheating boyfriend (line 20). However, he uses Vaidehi's past as leverage to assert his moral superiority over her. He feels she is now at the disposal of his good intentions.

Badrinath sends a formal marriage proposal to Vaidehi's family through Somdev's so-called matrimonial agency. Vaidehi's parents consider it a good match because Badrinath comes from a rich family. Vaidehi comes under emotional pressure to agree to the alliance. In this scene, Vaidehi is working on her laptop late in the night. She wishes to pursue a career as a flight attendant and is taking down notes from training academies on the internet. She shares her room with Krithika, who is asleep. Vaidehi's father comes into the room and asks her to step out for a chat.

(Dialogues/words spoken in English are *italicised).*

Table 17: Badrinath ki Dulhania Scene location – Vaidehi and her father

1	Father	A lot of my money was lost, it's okay. Let's leave that aside. But after a long time, something good is happening in our family. Please don't destroy this with your stubbornness. If your wedding takes place, even Krithika's will be settled.
2	Vaidehi	Papa, even I want Krithika's wedding to take place.
3	Father	Your biodatas have been circulating for past three years. Krithika also kept rejecting good alliances in her stubbornness. She did not heed my advice at all. As you get older, good alliances will dry up. That marriage broker will settle both your weddings.
4	Vaidehi	They are not the right kind of people, Papa
5	Father	My child, even you don't know the difference between right and wrong. I'm getting *retired* in two years. I must get the two of your married before that. I have discussed this with my employer. I can *mortgage* the house and get a *loan. Interest-free.* And I will repay it somehow.
6	Vaidehi	Papa! As soon as I get a job I will repay all your money
7	Father	I don't want your money, my child. Just stop running behind these jobs. Get married. Then Krithika's wedding also will take place. Just do this favour for us.

Vaidehi's desire for independence, especially financial independence, is considered destructive by her father when he pleads with her not to "destroy" a good opportunity with her "stubbornness" (line 1). If Vaidehi gets married into a rich family such as Badrinath's

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then this will be a stamp of societal approval and will pave the way for Krithika's wedding too. Once again, Vaidehi's past is used against her to coerce her into submission. Vaidehi's father views her as a woman who has strayed from the *sanskari* path; she not only had a boyfriend, she lost money too and now she is causing further problems by seeking financial independence which upsets the traditional role of the man as the breadwinner. Her father feels that only marriage will restore her respectability (line 7). Her father's refusal to accept her financial support, even if it means financial ruin, demonstrates his sense of shame in accepting money earned by a woman, especially a daughter (line 7). Accepting money from his daughter would disrupt the power structure in the family by undermining his role as the provider and protector as father and husband.

In contrast to Vaidehi, Krithika who is elder to Vaidehi, is passive and expresses no ambitions or desires regarding her life. Her marriage has been arranged thanks to Badrinath's help. In this scene, Vaidehi is browsing through an internet website for flight attendant training. It is late at night and the lights are off in the room, except for a table lamp. Krithika is lying on the bed.

(Dialogues/words spoken in English are *italicised).*

Table 18: Badrinath ki Dulhania – Vaidehi and Krithika

1	Vaidehi	Krithika?
2	Krithika (sleepy tone)	Hmm?
3	Vaidehi	Why do you want to get married?
4	Krithika	Because my happiness is on the earth, not in the sky
5	Vaidehi	Badri is a sweet guy. But his world and mine are different. I desire something more from life.
6	Krithika	Even I desire Hrithik Roshan*. As if one gets what one desires.
7	Vaidehi	So you are doing a *compromise*?

8	Krithika	No. I am simply accepting the reality that's in front of me today. You can't trust the future.
9	Vaidehi	You can't trust anyone.
10	Krithika	Badri is not Sagar, Vaidehi. Without any expectations he is helping our family so much.
11	Vaidehi	So should I give up my dream of flying?
12	Krithika	Dream of being happy instead. Then whether it is the sky or the earth, it won't make a difference.
13	Vaidehi (smiles)	So you mean there is no difference between Bhushan and Hrithik Roshan?
14	Krithika	See, I will not tell lies and my fiancé will not be able to hear the truth. Just go to sleep.
15	Vaidehi (laughs)	

*Hrithik Roshan is a leading Bollywood star

Krithika believes that marriage is the key to her happiness (line 4). She indirectly mocks Vaidehi about her career ambitions of becoming a flight attendant by saying her happiness is "not in the sky" (line 4). Krithika has accepted her life with its boundaries – as a *sanskari* woman, she must conform to the tradition of getting married according to her parent's wishes. She feels accepting the reality and being practical about it is the best way forward because there she has no control over her future (line 8). She is engaged to a man who is not very handsome (line 14), but if she refuses this alliance, she may not get a better match in future. She advises Vaidehi that one will not get everything one desires (line 6), and a practical solution is to work with the present reality (line 8). Vaidehi is conflicted because she cannot meekly accept the rules laid out for her. She has a strong sense of identity and ambition and knows she and Badrinath are mismatched personalities (line 5). Vaidehi is stepping out of the *sanskari* template of being selfless, instead, she gives her ambitions higher priority over relationships (line 5). Krithika on the other hand sees the futility of desiring unattainable goals (line 6). Krithika advices Vaidehi to find happiness in relationships, and that in due course her individual ambitions will not matter (line 12). Krithika is trying to

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bring Vaidehi back into the *sanskari* boundaries where the woman must find happiness in the happiness of others and where personal ambitions for a woman are deemed selfish.

Eventually Vaidehi agrees to get married to Badrinath. However, she flees town on the day of the wedding. She heads to Mumbai where she undergoes a flight attendant training and is subsequently placed in Singapore for an advanced course.

Badrinath and his family are humiliated. Badrinath and Somdev track down Vaidehi in Singapore. Badrinath who is still in love with Vaidehi, cannot understand why she deserted him. He confronts her publicly and is given a police caution. In the following scene, Badrinath creates a ruckus in front of Vaidehi's workplace. The security guards try to tackle him as he attempts to climb the automated gates. Vaidehi comes running out and pacifies the agitated security guards. She drags Badrinath away.

(Dialogues/words spoken in English are *italicised).*

Table 19: Badrinath ki Dulhania – Vaidehi and Badri in Singapore

1	Badrinath (very agitated; speaks in a loud and raised voice)	Vaidehi I want to talk to you urgently. My father will settle my marriage alliance elsewhere. But I want to marry only you. Why can't you understand my plight?
2	Vaidehi	QUIET! (Points a finger at him). Let's go to Jhansi. Come. I'm prepared to go with you. I earn 1.5 lakhs* per month here. In fact, I've just been informed that I can get a job here in Singapore. I am ready to leave everything. Let's go. But before that, you make a phone call to your father. Right now. Tell him after marriage Vaidehi will work wherever she wants to and that you support her decision. Tell him. Call him now. You can't do it? You can't do it, right? What happened Badri? You are ready to hang me in public. You are even willing to get hanged in Singapore. But you are unable to make a single phone call to your father.

3	Badrinath lowers his head. He remains silent.	

*Note: 1 lakh = 100,000. In the above conversation, Vaidehi is referring to rupees. 1.5 lakh rupees is approximately $3000 Singapore dollars and £1650 GBP

In this scene the power dynamic has shifted between Vaidehi and Badrinath. Vaidehi, who has achieved her goal of becoming financially independent, is able to control the narrative of this conversation.

It can be interpreted that her independence is also symbolised by her westernised appearance (refer Figure 14)—she is professionally dressed in a flight attendant's uniform of an international airline.

Figure 14: Vaidehi is in control (Khaitan, 2017)

Badrinath now becomes the subject of her power, symbolised by her dragging him away to confront his behaviour. Vaidehi's current salary of 1.5 lakhs per month is a substantial amount for the average Indian working-class individual (line 2). In fact, this moves Vaidehi up in the social class, into the upper middle-class bracket. In addition, there is future potential

for Vaidehi to work in a foreign country, a privilege only few can afford. Vaidehi has paid a high price for this independence by sacrificing all her personal relationships. She challenges Badrinath by stating that she's willing to forgo her salary and career in Singapore and return to Jhansi with him, provided he stands up to his father (line 2). For Vaidehi, her freedom is non-negotiable. Badrinath who is known for his machismo and aggressiveness, is now unable to meet her eyes. By asking him to call his father, an act which is impossible for Badrinath, Vaidehi demonstrates how, despite patriarchy making him feel special and privileged on account of his gender, Badrinath is also a victim. He too is devoid of voice and agency when it comes to making important life-choices.

7.4.   Implications of the findings

The analysis of the female roles in the three selected movies demonstrated that three types of female roles are constructed – the *sanskari* woman, the vamp, and the *sanskari feminist.* The *sanskari* woman and the vamp are persisting stereotypes in Indian cinema, as indicated in the study by Khan and Taylor (2018). The dispositive analysis in this present study indicated that the representations of the *sanskari* woman and the vamp have transformed to align to a modern, westernised audience. A novel finding of this study was the emergence of a third type of role, the *sanskari* feminist. The *sanskari* feminist is an emerging, positive template that bridges the characteristics of the *sanskari* woman and the vamp. The dispositive analysis also discovered that these classifications are constructed by the male characters. The dispositive can be represented as follows –

Figure 15: Male gaze constructions of female stereotypes

Discursive practices – Women's opinions on marriage, motherhood, sex

Male-gaze construction of *sanskari woman*/westernised vamp

Non-Discursive practices – example: Women's adherence to religion/spiritual practices; intellect; socialising with men

Materializations – example: Women's construction of money, personal agency; career pursuits; self-care
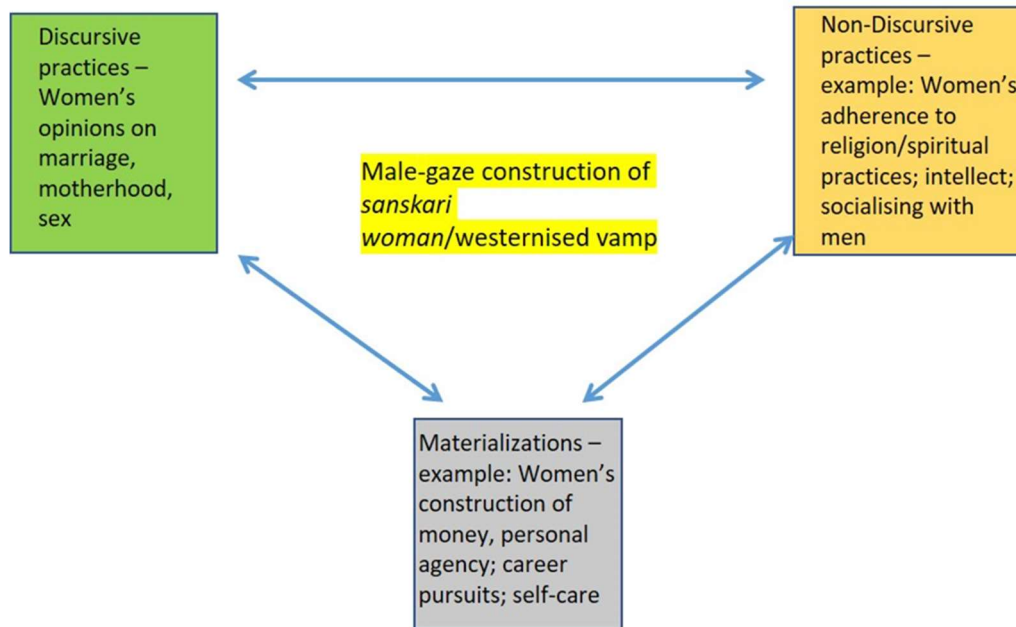
The stereotypes of the *sanskari* woman and the westernised vamp are operationalised through the beliefs, behaviour and speech of female roles instead of explicit depictions such as their clothes, as done in earlier movies of 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. For example, although Naina and Lara of *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani* are westernised in their clothes, Naina is constructed as the *sanskari* woman because of her adherence to traditional beliefs, whereas Lara is the vamp because she flirts with Bunny.

The *sanskari* feminist role blurs the line between the *sanskari* woman and the vamp. The *sanskari* feminist, like the vamp, challenges patriarchal power structures but at the same time, upholds values that are deemed *sanskari*. For example, both Kusum (the vamp) and Vaidehi (the *sanskari* feminist) are constructed as women with strong self-identities and agency, and both use the men in their lives to their advantage. However, the key differences between the

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sanskari feminist and the vamp is represented through the value systems that motivate them, and through economic power, that is, how the women obtain economic agency, and how they intend to use it. Men have traditionally played the role of breadwinners and therefore they wield power and control economic resources of the family, more so in Asian families (Chung, Tucker & Takeuchi, 2008). Indeed, even in families where both spouses contribute towards financial income, the male is institutionally constructed as the breadwinner and has more say over financial resources (Yodanis & Lauer, 2007). Economic abuse is a tactic used to establish dominance and subjugate the women in families (Chowbey, 2017). Some of the common forms of economic abuse meted out to women, especially wives and daughters, are the withholding of financial resources to deny access to education, job opportunities and healthcare, and exploitation of the woman's financial resources (Chowbey, 2017).

In the case of Kusum and Tarun in *Pyaar Ka Punchnama 2*, although Kusum is financially independent, she earns less than Tarun. In a role reversal, Kusum economically and emotionally abuses Tarun for financial gain. Kusum's repeated invasion of Tarun's economic agency disrupts the status quo of the man as the provider (Berland & Wechter, 2004). Kusum's aggressiveness creates a discomfort not just in Tarun but also in the audience. This role reversal can be compared to the Hollywood film Fatal Attraction where the male becomes the victim of the female's power play. Berland and Wechter (2004) observe that the appeal of *Fatal Attraction* lies in "its formulaic ability to trigger men's fear of feminism, women and female attachments" (p.42). The movie plot of *Pyaar Ka Punchnama 2* proceeds to restore the power balance of male over female by constructing Kusum as the vamp driven by negative traits of deceit and greed, who is eventually emotionally punished when Tarun ends the relationship calling her a *kamini* (bitch). Berland and Wechter (2004) describe this plot twist as "portraying a woman who owns her desire as the culprit" (p. 41).

Vaidehi, on the other hand, is the victim of economic abuse, where her right to earn a living is denied by her father. Vaidehi's need for economic independence is driven by positive traits of self-respect and the interests of her family, that is, her parents' financial security and her sister's marriage. So, even though she is not honest with Badrinath regarding her motives, she is constructed as the *sanskari* woman.

The study also found that the female stereotypes of *sanskari* woman and westernised vamp are predominantly constructed through the male gaze. It is the man who assesses whether a woman is *sanskari* or not and subsequently decides what he is entitled to from the woman, whether it is her love or just sex. When the man decides a woman is westernised, he assumes there is implicit consent from the woman for him to invade her space - for example, Bunny's touching of Lara's legs in *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani,* and Tarun's ogling of Kusum's body in the gym in *Pyaar Ka Punchnama 2*. This classification can be compared to Sochen's (1979, as cited in Berland & Wechter, 2004) observation on the good girl and bad girl images in Hollywood. The good girl is "sweet and innocent" and the bad girl is "sexy, decadent and exotic" (Berland & Wechter, 2004, p. 37).

It was posited that the symbolic significance of costumes in Bollywood movies was that they articulated the character's moral placement in society within the context of the movie (Wilkinson-Weber, 2014). However, in the three movies that were analysed for this study, it was observed that irrespective of whether the female role was *sanskari* or not, a stylistic commonality in the costumes of the female characters, at least in pivotal scenes, was that the woman's midriff was exposed, and the neckline revealed cleavage. Thus, whether it was Naina and Vaidehi who dressed in traditional Indian attires such as lehengas or sarees, or Lara and Kusum who dressed in shorts and gym wear—they all exposed their navels and cleavage. This clear eroticisation of the female body in the Indian context is constructed by showing the "'acceptable' erotic zones of the breast, waist and hips" (Dwyer, 2007, p.150).

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These styles of clothing, although different in form from the traditional Indian saree, carry forward the function of the saree in highlighting parts of the female body associated with maternity and fertility i.e. hips and breasts, and are suggestive of the woman's virginity by revealing "a slender waist and deep navel" (Dwyer, 2007, p.151). Thus, it can be argued that the female body is primarily presented for visual pleasure of the audience in commercial Bollywood movies, and that the audience cannot distinguish between the *sanskari* woman and the vamp based only on the symbolism of the costumes. Therefore, the moral constructions of the woman are based on the male gaze of male character, which is then adopted by the audience.

This combination of the construction of women through the male-gaze and the resultant male entitlement is dominant in real-life gender discourses in India where women bear the responsibility of how men behave towards them. Therefore, women are often victim-blamed for sexual crimes committed against them by men. Entitlement is defined as the "subjective perception of what one deserves in a specific situation" (Tolmacz & Milkulincer, 2011, p.75). Entitlement is implicated as core construct of narcissism and is considered a predictor of sexism, rape and domestic violence (Bouffard, 2010; Tolmacz & Milkulincer, 2011). For example, when a woman was gang-raped in a moving car in Kolkata in 2012, the then Sports Minister of West Bengal, Madan Mitra, made this statement on a television show, in which he indicated that the woman was to be blamed for the rape -

> She has two children, and so far as I know, she is separated from her husband. What was she doing at a nightclub so late at night? (Roy, 2012, para 2).

Similarly, colleges routinely restrict the agency of female students by imposing curfews and dress codes in the guise of protecting them from male harassment, often banning western

Sensitivity: Internal

clothes such as jeans, leggings and t-shirts (Reuters, 2016; Sharma, 2017; Times of India, 2016).

Thus, it can be concluded that there are real-life implications of male-gaze representations of women perpetuated by Bollywood. This can be seen as a "vicious cycle" where Bollywood influences real-life gender discourses and in turn, these discourses influence Bollywood representations (Nandakumar, 2011, p.43)

PART 2

EXPERIENTIAL STUDY

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of adult Indian women's lived experiences of street harassment in India

Chapter 8: Introduction to street harassment in India or 'eve teasing'

The euphemism for street harassment in India is 'eve teasing' (Adur & Jha, 2018; Baxi, 2001; Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014; Mohanty, 2013; Misri, 2017; Natarajan, 2016). It can be argued that unlike the western terminology 'street harassment' which represents the place – 'street' – where the crime of 'harassment' takes place, 'eve teasing' downgrades harassment into a trivial, fun activity. Also, 'eve teasing' shifts the blame of harassment on the woman by positioning her as the provocateur, or Eve, the Biblical woman who seduced Adam (Misri, 2017; Mohanty, 2013). This term has come under criticism by activists and scholars alike, with Baxi (2001) arguing that the term trivialises and normalises violence against women in public spaces "by positioning the very presence of women in public spaces as 'provocative'" (p.1), where the women are constructed as "temptresses who provoke men into states of sexual titillation" and so, the woman "is both a tease and deserves to be teased" (p.3). Thus, the cultural sanction to harass a woman is constructed linguistically in the very term 'eve teasing' (Baxi, 2001). This normalisation of street harassment in India can also be inferred from its representation in influential cultural mediums like Indian cinema as harmless fun or romantic pursuit indulged by men (Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014; Misri, 2017; Ramsubramanian & Oliver, 2003).

A negative effect of this persistent trivialisation of street harassment in social discourses is that Indian women have to cope with an unsupportive state machinery where complaints of street harassment are not taken seriously. For example, the survey results of a study conducted by Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) revealed that even when women reported harassment incidents to the police, complaints were not formally registered to follow through the case (Chandran, 2016). In Delhi, one in thirteen cases of sexual

harassment was reported to the police but no complaints were registered; in Mumbai, one in nine cases was reported and only two complaints were registered (Chandran, 2016). In sharp contrast, the Delhi police registered 37 percent of complaints regarding mobile phone thefts and the Mumbai police registered 45 percent, indicating the dismal priority afforded to sexual harassment cases (Chandran, 2016). Likewise, the results of a survey of judges of Indian courts showed that 68 percent of the respondents believed that provocative clothes invite rape (Khazan & Lakshmi, 2012). This finding further indicates the deep-rootedness of patriarchal ideology in the Indian society, where Indian women are systematically silenced with institutionalised victim-blaming (Gupta, 2013).

Another reason for the ineffectiveness of the police and the judiciary especially in street harassment cases is ambiguously worded laws which compel law enforcement officers to rely on cultural rather than legal interpretations of harassment crimes (Baxi, 2001). For example, one of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections, IPC 509, which is used in 'eve teasing' harassment cases is titled as, "Word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman" and is detailed as:

> Whoever, intending to insult the modesty of any woman, utters any word, makes any sound or gesture, or exhibits any object, intending that such word or sound shall be heard, or that such gesture or object shall be seen, by such woman, or intrudes upon the privacy of such woman, shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine, or with both (IPC, 1860, p.226).

Similarly, IPC 354 comes under the chapter related to "Offences affecting the human body" (IPC, 1860, p.132), and is titled "Assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty" (IPC, 1860, p. 156). It states:

Whoever assaults or uses criminal force to any woman, intending to outrage or knowing it to be likely that he will there by outrage her modesty, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both (p. 156).

It is argued that the term 'modesty' itself is problematic because it focuses on scrutinizing the woman's morals rather than her rights (Baxi, 2001; Tewari, 2017). Also, the term modesty is not defined in the IPC and it is left to the interpretation of the legal teams to decide whether one's modesty was outraged or not, and secondly, whether there was intent to outrage modesty (Mukherjee, 1995; Tewari, 2017). This quandary is well illustrated in the historic Mrs Rupan Deol Bajaj harassment case (Mukherjee, 1995). In 1988, Mrs Bajaj, a high-ranking officer with the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) was slapped on the buttocks by a decorated and high-ranking police officer KPS Gill during a social gathering at a private venue, in the presence of guests. Mrs Bajaj lodged a complaint against Mr Gill under the above-mentioned IPC 509 and IPC 354 sections. Her case was initially quashed by the lower courts because it was interpreted that the incident was too trivial to have caused her harm. However, her case was finally upheld in the Supreme Court and Mr Gill was convicted of sexual harassment in 2005, seventeen years after Mrs Bajaj had lodged her complaint. Mr Gill was ordered to a pay compensation of rupees 200,000 (a little over £2000) to Mrs Bajaj who declined to accept the money, and Mr Gill's 3-month prison sentence was converted to a probation. In the final judgement, the Honourable Bench referred to dictionary meanings of the word modesty, and also to a previous judgement which had observed that women inherently possessed modesty on account of being women (Mukherjee, 1995). The arguments in Mrs Bajaj's case centred around whether her modesty was outraged and whether it could be proved that Mr Gill had the intention to outrage her modesty. This case not only demonstrates the lengthy time period it takes for legal recourse for India, but also the

inaccessibility of the law to a common woman without the monetary resources or powerful legal contacts of Mrs Bajaj. Indeed, a study by Jagori & UN Women (2011) conducted in New Delhi found that women faced harassment (verbal, visual, and physical) in public spaces at all times of the day and night. Public spaces included streets, bus stops, marketplaces, on public transports, and in Metro (Delhi underground trains) stations, which effectively covered all the places an individual must navigate to perform a daily routine, such as going to work, school or college, and shopping for groceries. The results of this study showed that 93 percent of female respondents (N = 3508) attributed their "feeling of insecurity to simply 'being a woman'" (Jagori & UN Women, 2011, p. 17). The findings of this study indicate the pervasiveness and inescapability of harassment in India where Indian women feel entrapped. It can be surmised that with no protection offered by the state, Indian women "are in a constant state of vigilance, like a country on terrorist alert" (Narayan, 2018, para 7).

Given this context, this research extended the boundaries of street harassment research in India by focusing on individual experiences. The methodology of the research is presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 9: Methodology and Method

9.1.   Rationale for selecting Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The genesis of this research on street harassment evolved from a period of introspection—growing up in India and experiencing street harassment constantly influenced my own understandings of the topic which I knew had to be addressed via reflexive processes (see Chapter 1, section 1.3). It was important for me to understand the nature of the world for any Indian woman who experiences harassment, as this is so lacking in the extant literature. Also, I wanted to make this lived-world of the Indian women more visible to those who do not inhabit this reality. It was argued that in order to make an invisible world or experience visible, it must be linguistically constructed, that is, this world must be described – spoken about, written about – by its inhabitants (Davis, 1994; Kissling, 1991). This is not just a passive construction, but a Heideggerian view of "being-in-the-world", where the world is constructed based on the inhabitant's intersubjective relationship with other entities, be it people, systems, or languages (Smith et al., 2009, p.18).

Therefore, the aim of this research was a logical extension of these questions and concerns—to explore the lived experiences of street harassment of Indian women residing in India. By exploring the particulars of different lived experiences of street harassment as narrated by the women first-hand, and by exploring the meanings the women derived from these experiences i.e. by understanding how harassment influences these women's interrelationship with society, I hoped to understand Indian women's "being-in-the-world" more clearly (Smith et al., 2009, p.18).

The exploration of experience as described above has two aspects—first is the experiential aspect – the phenomenological; the second is the meaning-making or interpretation of the experience by the individual experiencing it – the hermeneutic. Given this phenomenological-

hermeneutic stance, I concluded that the methodology most suited for this research was interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA, Eatough & Smith, 2017; Smith, 1996; Smith et al., 2009).

The underlying epistemological base of IPA is drawn from the philosophies of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Larkin, Watts, & Cliffton, 2006; Smith et al., 2009). The notion of experience, that is, the phenomenological aspect, is core to IPA - "IPA is usually concerned with experience which is of particular moment or significance to the person" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 33). Such experiences can be of two types—a single discrete experience that has a life-altering impact on an individual's life, or an ongoing experience (Smith, 2019). An event becomes qualified as an "experience" when it invokes considerable "hot cognition" in the individual who undergoes it (Smith et al., 2009, p. 33; Smith, 2019). Hot cognition involves a sustained reflection on the experience as the individual tries to understand its meaning; this reflection involves "much cerebral activity, and that cognition is emotionally laden" (Smith, 2019, p.167). This is especially true for ongoing experiences, for example, a long-term illness, where the individual mentally engages with the experience of the disease, trying to make sense of it (Smith, 2019). Here the individual's cognition is not just about understanding the pathological technicalities of the disease, but it is about emotionally engaging with the meaning of experiencing it; for example, the disease could make them feel imprisoned, or feel diminished in stature. It was posited that such ongoing experiences are particularly suited for IPA (Smith, 2019). In the context of this research, studies have indicated that street harassment is rarely a one-off experience, instead it occurs to women repeatedly, invoking various emotions in them such as fear, anger, shame as they make meaning of the experiences (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; Macmillan, et al., 2000; Lord, 2009; Mitra-Sarkar & Partheeban, 2009; Natarajan, 2016; UN Women & ICRW, 2012). Therefore, it can be argued that street harassment is an ongoing experience, comparable to

Smith's (2019) example of an individual suffering from a long-term chronic illness. Also, street harassment consists of several discrete experiences and so its meaning-making has two layers—the emotional cognition of each experience, and the emotional cognition of the cumulative effect of multiple experiences. This can be compared to the meaning-making of a long-term disease, for example, cancer, where patients may process each chemotherapy session individually, but also, there is considerable hot cognition regarding the experience of the disease itself. Therefore, it can be posited that an ongoing experience consists of several discrete yet related experiences, like the subplots of a story, and so, hot cognition involves the meaning-making of each experience by placing it in context with other related experiences, in order to make sense of the bigger picture of an ongoing reality. It can also be suggested that hot cognition has a temporal dimension where individuals do a predictive meaning-making of their future based on their meaning-making of past and present experiences. For example, the fundamental nature of street harassment is that it intrudes on a woman's privacy by forcing her attention towards the perpetrator's actions (Davis, 1994; di Leonardo, 1981; Gardner, 1995; Kissling, 1991). A woman walking down the street who is catcalled for example, may suspend all other thoughts, and focus on this unfolding experience – she must assess her safety, assess the perpetrator, recall previous harassment experiences to decide her present actions, process her emotions, all in a split second. After the experience has concluded and the woman is in a safer place, she may continue to process and reflect upon the harassment episode, filing it away in her mental library of related experiences, where she attempts to understand what this particular experience means, and how it relates to her larger understanding of street harassment as a reality. For example, in a survey conducted in New Delhi on street harassment, the majority of the women responded that the biggest factor affecting women's safety was their gender – "being a woman" (UN Women & ICRW, 2012,

p.17). This example can be considered as the 'big picture' meaning of the ongoing experience of harassment.

Thus, the core philosophy of IPA is that by understanding this intricate meaning-making of an experience or lived reality by an individual, the researcher can access the experience as closely as possible (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006; Smith, et al., 2009; Smith, 2019). The process of meaning-making involves interpretation, and hence IPA has an inherent double-hermeneutic, that is, the researcher must interpret the individual's interpretation of their lived experience (Eatough & Smith, 2017; Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006; Smith, et al., 2009; Smith, 2019).

I assessed that the phenomenological-double hermeneutic construct of the IPA provides me with a powerful platform to achieve the two important objectives of my research – one, to document the phenomenological descriptions of the participants' lived experiences, thus making space for their voice; and two, to make the participants' worlds and experiences visible by interpreting their meaning-making of their experiences. Also, IPA allows me to consider the common sociocultural background that I share with my participants as my strength in the research process, rather than a limitation or a bias that impedes the process and rigour of the project.

These factors enabled me to decide on IPA as the best-suited methodology for the core study.

9.2. Method

The Experiential Study consisted of two IPA projects, IPA-1 and IPA-2, with four participants in each project. IPA-1 had participants who are adult Indian women aged 25-35, single, never married, and residents of India. IPA-2 had married Indian women aged 36-50, who are mothers to at least one daughter aged 12-19, and both mother and daughter are residents of India. This two-group design was adopted to explore a multi-view perspective of

street harassment, i.e. how it was experienced by Indian women in different stages of their lives—as single women, as married women and as mothers. This design also gave an insight into how Indian women parented their daughters given the social reality of street harassment.

In India, it is a cultural practice for adult children, both daughters and sons, to live with their parents even if they are financially independent. Daughters move to their husband's homes after marriage. Single women living with their parents have more restrictions placed on them when compared to married women, which may affect their lifestyle and choices (Lamb, 2018). Even in the case of single women living on their own they must navigate through many social prejudices compared to single men (Lamb, 2018). Therefore, single women and married women were considered as two separate demographics for this study. Accordingly, they were assigned to the relevant participant group based on their marital status given that IPA methodology recommends homogeneity of the participant group (Smith et al., 2009).

Of the four single women who were recruited, two live on their own, and two live with their parents. Although the residential situation of the participant was not a part of the inclusion criteria, this design helped me to explore how the participant's residential situation influenced their agency regulation, family and social relationships, particularly around their experiences of street harassment.

The Mothers group was designed to explore the sense-making of street harassment by married Indian women, and how this influenced their own lives and choices. Additionally, their parenting behaviours towards adolescent daughters was of interest, especially since their daughters were in an age group where they may begin to experience street harassment.

9.2.1. Participant recruitment

It is acknowledged that apart from the broad category of gender, Indian women experience a complex set of "intersecting discriminations" based on caste, education, monetary status,

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profession, religion, geography, and skin colour (Banerjee & Ghosh, 2018; Dey, 2019, p. 357). These marginalisations are specific to an individual and influences their meaning-making (Banerjee & Ghosh, 2018). For example, Banerjee and Ghosh (2018) point out that the Indian feminist movement is not one homogenous sisterhood but is divided into subgroups such as the upper-caste or *savarna* feminists, the Dalit-Bahujan (lower caste), and *Adivasi* feminists. Each of these groups represent different forms of power imbalances within the feminist movement itself, and therefore this influences their view of structural inequality (Banerjee & Ghosh, 2018). In the context of this study the participant selection criteria presented an unavoidable bias with respect to language and socio-economic status. First, India has 22 official languages of which I am fluent in four. However, there was a high possibility that potential participants would not be fluent in these four languages that I know. Also, even within the same language, there can be different dialects leading to translation errors. Thus, to maintain homogeneity in the participant group, and also because the research is being conducted in English, knowledge of English was necessary to participate in this study.

Second, I reside in the United Kingdom and the participants reside in India. This geographical separation necessitated the use of telecommunication technology such as phone and Skype via the internet for data collection. Thus, it was necessary for participants to own or have access to a secure phone and/or internet connection.

These two constraints restricted the potential participant demographic to urban women. In this regard the participants' privileged status in the Indian society is acknowledged; their financial status and education has given them access to life-opportunities such as employment, independent travel, and owning of property which is not available to a majority of Indian women.

Thus, the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the two IPA studies were as follows:

IPA-1 – Single Women Study

Inclusion criteria – a) Adult women aged 25-35; b) Single (unmarried/never married); c) University-level education to ensure competent English language skills; d) Access to secure internet and phone; e) Residents of India

Exclusion criteria – a) Participants outside the above age group; b) Participants who cannot communicate in English; c) Participants currently under therapy/medication for stress, depression and/or other mental health issues; d) Participants without access to secure internet and phone.

IPA-2 – Mothers Study

Inclusion Criteria – a) Adult women aged 36-50; b) Mothers to at least one daughter aged 12-19; c) Graduate-level education to ensure competent English language skills; d) Access to secure internet and phone

Exclusion criteria – a) Participants outside the above age group; b) Participants who cannot communicate in English; c) Participants currently under therapy/medication for stress, depression and/or other mental health issues; d) Participants who do not have access to a secure phone and/or internet connection; e)Participants who are not mothers to daughters, or whose daughters are less than 12 years of age.

Based on the above criteria, a snowball sampling approach was adopted for participant recruitment. Initially, potential participants known to the researcher were approached individually and confidentially via email and/or a telephone call to register their interest in the research. Also, a brief invitation to participate was posted on an Indian women bloggers

group of which the researcher is a part of. (Please see Appendix 1 for the 'Invite to participate' email and social media invite).

Six single women and five mothers registered interest in the research by replying confidentially via individual emails. A participant information document was emailed to each responding participant. This document had details regarding the aims of the research, what was expected of the participants, their right to withdraw and the process of withdrawal, confidentiality assurance of their participation, confidentiality of their data, how the data would be used and stored, and steps to be taken by the participant if they felt the need for professional help. The document also included the interview questions, so that the participants could decide if they were comfortable talking about their experience. The participants were informed that the interview would take place over Skype or via a telephone call, whichever option was convenient for them, and that the interview could last at least one to one and a half hours. They were informed that the interview would be audio-recorded for transcription purposes, and that the audio file would be deleted immediately after transcription. Details on security, anonymity, and confidentiality measures which the participants must undertake whilst attending the interview were also given. The participants were requested to tick appropriate boxes in the informed consent form if they were happy to proceed, which indicated an agreement that they had read and understood all the details of the research. A provision was provided in the form for the participant to print their names as a digital signature. The participants were also requested to fill the demographics form if they wished to proceed with the research. The Participant Information document and the informed consent form are provided in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 respectively.

Four out of the six single women participants signed the informed consent form; one potential participant declined since she was under medication for anxiety; there was no response from the remaining one.

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Similarly, out of the five mothers, four signed the informed consent; one mother declined as she was not comfortable being audio-recorded.

A brief profile of each participant is given below. All participants live in large cities of north, west, and southern India.

Participant profiles of single women -

Durga (age group – 30-35): Durga is a freelance writer (writes in English) and contributes to magazines and online portals. She mainly writes about relationships and women's issues in urban India. She is also an activist, participating in activities related to empowering women and girls. At present, Durga lives in a working women's hostel in a large north Indian city.

Vaishnavi (age group – 30-35): Vaishnavi lives in the same city as Durga but has her own home; her parents live with her. She is a high-ranking executive in an advertising firm; this places her in a high-income group. She also owns and drives a car. She has varied interests, ranging from cinema to performing classical Indian dance forms. She is a vociferous feminist activist and is involved in several radio talk shows and street plays. She actively participates in political and socio-cultural debates; she is also a regular participant of protest marches regarding wide-ranging issues.

Mamatha (age group: 30-35): Mamatha lives in a large city in western India with her parents and a brother who is also single. She is a highly qualified business management graduate, with a specific interest in anthropology as applied to marketing. She is in a high-paying corporate marketing job, that requires her to travel extensively within India, and also abroad. Mamatha's family owns a car, although she did not specify if she drives it exclusively.

Aditi (age group: 30-35): Aditi is from the same city as Durga and Vaishnavi. She lives on her own in a rented flat and owns a car. She is in a well-paid technical career in information technology sector. As a hobby, she travels extensively within India and is a popular blogger.

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Participant profile of mothers:

Jaya (age group: 45-50): Jaya lives in a large city in western India with her husband and two adult children—her daughter is now 22 (at the time of interview) and her son is 20. She described herself as a homemaker. In the past few years, she has taken up writing and athletics. Jaya has won medals in power weightlifting and is a fitness enthusiast. She was raised in an orthodox Hindu Brahmin family, and subsequently she married into a similar orthodox Hindu Brahmin family. She placed significance on this aspect because she perceives it has influenced her personality. Historically 'Brahmin' has been a priestly class and is considered the highest caste in a Hindu society. In modern India not all brahmins are priests, however, they may strictly adhere to traditions.

Radha (age group 36-45): Radha lives in a large north Indian city with her husband and two daughters aged 13 and 9. She is academically qualified with a master's degree in computer science. However, she gave up her corporate career to care for her children. She is a blogger and does freelance marketing through online channels. Like Jaya, she comes from an orthodox Hindu family.

Asha (age group: 36-45): Asha lives in a large city in south India with her three daughters—the eldest is 13-14 and the youngest 8-9. She is separated from her husband, but they are not divorced. Her husband lives in the same city and they have an amicable friendship. However, the day-to-day parenting decisions are taken by Asha. Asha has an MBA degree from one of India's premier institutions. She has also done her Bachelor's degree in Engineering. She now holds a high position in one of the world's biggest multinational IT corporations. She was raised in a Christian family.

Veena (age group: 40-45): Veena hails from the same city as Jaya. She lives with her husband and a teenage daughter (17). Veena is married into a Christian family and follows both Christianity as well as Sikh traditions as a Punjabi. She is a very popular blogger.

9.2.2. Designing the interview schedule

A semi-structured interview questionnaire was designed based on the guidelines given by Smith et al (2009). Given the sensitive nature of the topic, the questions were designed in a concentric formation as recommended by Smith et al. (2009), that is, a broad societal topic contextualised for this study was discussed first which then helped to progressively circle into the core experience of street harassment. In this regard, the findings from the Sociocultural Study as well as current news and media trends were used to shape the interview questions. This is in line with Smith et al.'s (2009) observation that contextualising the interview with culture-specific data can be helpful for the interview process, as well as for post-interview reflections. A combination of descriptive, narrative, comparative and evaluative questions were designed (Smith et al., 2009). Although possible prompts and probes were included in the interview schedule, these were used flexibly during the interview. In order to put the participants at ease, the word "interview" was replaced with "friendly discussion". The interview schedule is available in Appendix 4.

9.2.3. Ethical considerations

The research proposal, including the method and interview schedule was approved by University of Derby's Psychology Research Ethics committee. In particular, this research has adhered to the ethical guidelines for human research given by the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2014). Anonymity of the participants was upheld by masking the participants' identity (via pseudonyms) and identifiable details in the interview data. Also, the data collection and handling adhered to the guidelines given in the Data Protection Act 1998,

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Section 33, and to the ethical tenets of EU General Data Protection Regulation 2018 which reiterate the use of lawful, fair and transparent modes of data handling. Accordingly, in this research, audio files were deleted immediately after they were transcribed.

Before starting the interview, the researcher repeated the salient points of the research to the participant, including the aims, contact details of the researcher and the supervisory panel, participant rights, confidentiality and data handling. Participants were explicitly made aware in the participant information document, as well as verbally before starting the interview, that the researcher was not a licensed therapist or a counsellor, and that the participants should get in touch with their local GP at the first instance if they felt the need for professional support after the interview.

After each interview, the researcher debriefed the participant reiterating the salient points of the research. During the debrief, the participant was asked if they were okay and felt comfortable after the interview. The debrief document, shown in Appendix 5, was emailed to them immediately after the interview.

9.2.4. Conducting the interviews

All interviews were conducted over the telephone. The participants had provided their preferred contact number in the informed consent form. Thereafter, the researcher coordinated a mutually convenient date and time slot of 90 minutes for the discussion. During this coordination, which took place over text messages, it was emphasised that the participant be in a safe and secure place from where she could attend to the call undisturbed.

As the researcher, I have interacted with all but one participant socially: one participant is an ex-colleague, and I know the others through a blogging network for Indian women called Indiblogeshwaris of which I am a member. This familiarity with the participants proved to be an advantage in the interview because of the already established levels of comfort and

rapport. However, during the first interview, I realised that my existing friendship also posed a subtle problem; whenever the participant shared something emotional, they expected an equally emotional response from me, such as anger or at least condemnation of the perpetrator. This would have been my normal reaction had it been a "regular" conversation. However, as an interviewer I was restrained in my response so that I did not inadvertently 'lead' the participants with an emotional response. As a result, I could sense a brief pause in conversation, no longer than a few seconds, where the participant expected me to say something more emotive than my response (which was delivered in a neutral, yet attentive tone). So, from my second interview onwards, I made it a point to explain to the participants the reason why I might sound a little distant in tone during the interview. The rhythm of subsequent interviews was then not affected as the expectation was clearer.

Also, with my first participant, when I began with the customary queries regarding her comfort and convenience, and if she was in a secure location, her reply was that she was fine and looking forward to the discussion, and that she was in fact, taking the call in a public park since it was her 'walking' time. I offered to call her back at another time when she was in a more private location, but she insisted the park was a good location for the call and that we could go ahead. After the completion of the interview, I requested her to text me once she reached home after her walk. So, my second learning was to insist with every participant that they must be in a secure location such as their homes, or a conference room in their workplace to take the call. All my other participants took the call from home.

The semi-structured nature of the interview schedule offers flexibility - the interview may not follow the order of the questions strictly, or indeed, the participants may speak about some aspect of their experience which is completely outside the interview schedule, thus offering new insights. I mentally prepared myself to be open-minded, and to allow the participants to control the flow of the conversation, unless the discussion veered completely off-topic.

However, I found myself caught off-guard when my first participant quickly did away with all the 'warm-up' questions and plunged into the topic with the declaration, "The thing is in this city as such we are not scared of catcalls, we are only scared we shouldn't get raped." This was a valuable lesson in interviewing for me—to expect the unexpected. I found myself on this precipice a number of times when participants described their experiences, some of which were deeply moving. I found it helpful to pause the interview for a minute or two after any emotional recounting by the participant and ask if they needed a break. I felt approaching the interviewee with respectful empathy this way not only helped us recover, it also helped the participant to emotionally relax and go deeper into their meaning-making.

In retrospect, a face-to-face interview would no doubt have enhanced the interview experience for both myself and my participant. As an interviewer, I would have had the added advantage of observing the participants' body language as they spoke, and this would have enhanced my insight into their meaning-making. Perhaps based on body language cues, I could have asked more pertinent follow-up questions. However, I must also note that the participants chose telephone over video call when given the choice. When I reflect on this choice made by the participants, I believe that this was the most comfortable mode of communication for them. I can only guess that meeting face to face, either in person or via video may have introduced a sense of awkwardness where the participant became 'hyper' aware that this interaction was 'formal' and official – this would have made them very conscious of their mannerisms. The telephonic conversations removed this visual 'pressure' on them and as such the experiences they narrated over phone was extremely rich, very personal, and detailed. So I have concluded that the quality of data did not suffer in any way due to telephonic interviews. A similar conclusion was acknowledged by Drabble, et al. (2017) regarding using telephonic interviews for rich, qualitative data collection especially on sensitive topics with women participants. Telephone interviews have been similarly

acknowledged as a "productive mode of data collection, comparable to face-to-face mode" (Kee & Shrock, 2019, pp. 351).

I placed the calls to participants from my home, in my private study. I ensured I was alone at home during all the interviews because the calls had to be taken on speaker phone to enable audio recording. I made the calls from my landline, using an international calling card. The phone was put on speaker and the recording took place on the Dictaphone as well as my iPhone as a backup. I made it a point to inform the participants before switching on the recording devices, and also when I turned them off after the interview.

After the interviews, I immediately transferred the audio files on the Dictaphone and the iPhone to my personal computer, after which I deleted the original files on the devices. The data was transcribed manually from these audio files on the personal computer into Microsoft Word documents by listening to the recording with headphones and pausing and playing the recording as I typed. No software such as speech-to-text programs were used for this process. This was a slow process where the recordings had to be heard multiple times during transcription of each sentence. The emotional aspect of the tone was captured by changing of fonts – for example, all capitals to capture participants' emphasis when they spoke certain sentences and phrases; the symbol (.) to depict a short pause of a couple of seconds in the participants' narration when they stopped to think or recollect/reflect what they are about to say. After the transcription was completed, I read the transcripts in conjunction with the recording to ensure I had captured everything verbatim and had not missed out any parts. Once this final check was completed, the audio files on the computer were permanently deleted. In this regard I would like to mention that having listened to audio files multiple times, both as a whole interview and in snippets, the voice of each participant, their unique tone and accent was registered acutely in my mind. So, even after I deleted the audio files on the computer, I could 'hear' the participant's voice whenever I read their transcripts.

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9.2.5. Data transcription and analysis

The data analysis procedure recommended by Smith et al. (2009) was adopted and amended slightly for this study. It was recommended that for the data analysis, two columns be drawn on either side of the transcript in the format of a table, so that exploratory comments could be noted in the right-most column against each chunk of the transcript, and corresponding developing themes could be noted on the left-most, that is the first column (Smith et al., 2009). Following a similar principle, I adopted Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for the data analysis. Each transcript in the Word document was copied and pasted into an Excel spreadsheet so that the questions and answers appeared in a single column. This also meant that each question and answer appeared in separate rows i.e. they were in unique cells. Two columns were added adjacent to the transcript column; one for exploratory comments, and one for noting down possible themes. A screenshot of a typical transcript spreadsheet is presented in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Screenshot of analysis

The first step of analysis involved a focussed reading of the transcript. Then, after an intentional gap of one or two days, I returned to the transcript. Smith et al. (2009) have given a guideline for capturing exploratory comments, which includes descriptive and linguistic observations. Accordingly, I read each answer closely and noted down, in a stream-of-consciousness mode, anything that caught my attention during the reading. I did not sift my thoughts, nor classify them as descriptive or linguistic. All these observations were noted in the exploratory comments. After completing the exploratory column, I once again took a break from the transcript for a day or two. These breaks served two purposes—first, the transcripts are highly emotional and some of the experiences of the participants made stressful reading, therefore I needed a break to manage my own emotional responses; second,

in my experience as a novice IPA researcher, I have found that returning to the data after a short break often helps in viewing the data with 'fresh eyes', and the discovery of new meanings is possible. The second close reading of the transcript involved reading each answer in the context of the exploratory comments and paying close attention to utterances that had stuck in my mind despite the break between the first reading and the second. I followed the guidelines of unearthing "gems" as proposed by Smith (2011, pp.7), where an utterance revealed the very core of an experience, either directly, or after some probing. For example, one participant, brought up the topic of fear of rape 11 times in the conversation, and used varying versions of the phrase "don't get raped"; "I don't want to be raped"; "first and foremost thing is you shouldn't get raped"; "we shouldn't get raped". These phrases switched on a floodlight on the participant's meaning-making, where street harassment was truly sinister for her. At this point I was also aware of my own engagement with her words, the involuntary physical and emotional response it evoked in me during the analysis—goosebumps and anger. I reflected on my internalised emotions to this data and noted this down in my reflexive journal. I also discussed my feelings with my supervisors to destress and reflect and had them review my data analysis to ensure that I was interpreting the participant's meaning-making, and not interpreting my own feelings to her experiences.

The next step was to develop themes from the data of each individual participant, by examining the exploratory comments as well as the corresponding transcript. Smith et al. (2009, p. 92) noted that themes, usually in the form of concise phrases, captured the "psychological essence" of a given set of statements. For example, a possible theme that could be extracted from the variations of the "don't get raped" utterances was the psychological state of fear that the participant experienced. Discovering a theme also involved identifying the "object of concern" of the participant, and the meanings that they associated with this object (Larkin, 2019). Such objects of concern were discoverable by

exploring how the participants positioned themselves in the context of the lived experience, their orientation towards this lived reality, and the different social rules, and "structures/relations" that were employed in their sense-making of their lived experience (Larkin, 2019). For example, identity was discovered to be an area of concern for some of the participants, where they explored how street harassment denied them their wholesome identity as individuals by reducing them to sexual objects in the public space.

This process of theme development was done for all the interviews. Thereafter, the themes from all the interviews were listed in a single column on a separate spreadsheet. This column was then examined for "patterns and connections" (Smith et a., 2009, pp. 96). For example, if one participant spoke of her fear, another spoke of anger. Both these themes are related to emotions, and hence were given the same colour code. At the end of the exercise, themes with the same colour code were copied and pasted on the spreadsheet. A screenshot of this process is shown in figure 17.

Figure 17: Grouping themes
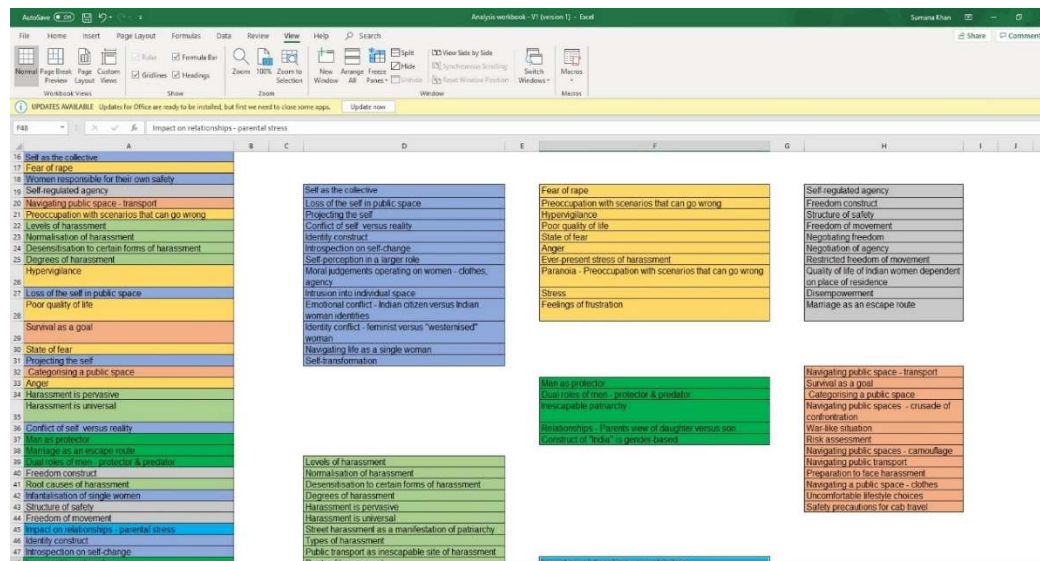
Each group of themes with the same colour code were once again subjected to a close study for the identification of the superordinate themes. This was done using various techniques such as abstraction and subsumption (Smith et al., 2009). This round also involved examining the descriptive themes that captured the texture of the harassment experience, and abstracting it to a conceptual level by asking the question "what does it mean to the participant?"

A master-table was prepared that mapped the superordinate themes, the corresponding subordinate themes, and the relevant extracts. Figure 18 shows the master table.

Figure 18: Master table mapping themes and extracts

The themes tables for the single women group and the mothers' group are given in tables 20 and 21 respectively.

Table 20: Master table of themes for "Single Women" group

Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme
Navigating and negotiating identity	Switching between The Self and the Collective
	Transformation of the Self
	Identity conflicts
Disempowered status	Coping with infantalisation
	Compromised sense of agency
	Harassment is an isolated battle
Psychological distress	Heightened sense of fear – hypervigilance and paranoia
	War-like situation
	Emotional stress in family relationships

Table 21: Master table of themes for "Mothers" group

Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme
Harassment an inescapable existential component of womanhood	Harassment as a rite of passage into adulthood for women
	Coping with harassment as mothers
	Passing on the baton – preparing daughters to cope with harassment
~~Fenced inside~~ Prisoners of a man's world	Women's agency defined by father/ husband
	Protecting agency - coping with multiple levels of emotional isolation
	Breaking the cycle – parenting of sons is the key to change

Selection of the extracts for the themes were based on how closely they illustrated the theme, be it in terms of showing contrasting points of view or showing a common sense of experience and meaning across participants. For example, on the topic of wearing shorts on public transportation, one participant gave a divergent view where she said that she deliberately wore shorts whilst using public transportation as an act of defiance, so that she

could reclaim ownership and control of her own body in the public space. Also, I revisited the highlighted utterances, pondering on *why did she say it this way?*

Each theme was then analysed and interpreted in terms of the hermeneutic circle (Smith et al., 2009; Larkin, 2019). The utterances that were highlighted during the exploratory reading were now closely examined by asking *why did she say this here?* This was followed by situating a particular phrase in her overall experience, that is, moving within the hermeneutic circle of the whole and the part, the part and the whole. For example, on the topic of clothes, one of the participants said that she would not "obviously" wear shorts on a public transport. Here, the question arose, was "obviously" just a figure of speech, or did it mean something more? In the context of her wider experience, my interpretation of her was that she came across as a careful, vigilant woman who was very particular about the kind of clothes she wore in the public space, depending on the place she was visiting, and the kind of people who had access to the place. So, her use of "obviously" had a purpose in this case.

The themes were developed over a cycle of iterations, where my supervisors had the opportunity to review the themes. First, I was cognizant of the fact that English is not my native language, so I had to be very conscious of every sentence I wrote, so that my supervisors understood my interpretation of the participant's meaning-making the way it was intended. Second, a deeper interpretation of some of the themes was encouraged; as a novice IPA researcher, I was wary of 'overstepping' the interpretative boundary and masking the participant's interpretation with my own emotional response, or, by doing a speculative interpretation by inadvertently venturing into a psychoanalytic area, as described by Smith et al. (2009).

Detailed analyses of the themes are presented in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 10: Interpretative Analysis of 'Single Women' interviews

The themes that were developed during the analysis of interview transcripts of participants of the Single Women group are provided in Table 3. This group consisted of four participants—women aged 30-35, single, and all of them live and work in urban areas. Two of them live with their families, the other two live on their own.

Table 22: Theme table for Single Women group

Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme
Navigating and negotiating identities	Switching between the Self and the Collective
	Transformation of the Self
	Identity conflicts
Disempowered status	Coping with infantalisation
	Compromised sense of agency
	Harassment as an isolated battle
Psychological distress	Heightened sense of fear – Hypervigilance and paranoia
	Living in a war-like environment
	Emotional stress in family relationships

Note: Symbols used in the transcripts – [ ] indicates non-contiguous portions of a larger transcript was used in the extract. (.) refers to a short pause by the participant for a couple of seconds. Capitalised words indicate words spoken in a loud tone for emphasis.

10.1. Superordinate Theme 1: Navigating and negotiating identity

The concept of identity was a concern for the participants. The participants reflected on how street harassment affected their individual self-identity constructs and their perception of how others viewed them. Also, even when the participants described their individual experiences, they referred to them as a universal experience that is common to all Indian women, thus embedding themselves in the larger sisterhood. These themes related to the participants' identity are discussed in detail in the following sections.

10.1.1. Subordinate theme: Switching between the Self and the Collective

Durga is a single woman who lives in a paying-guest accommodation for women, in a large, cosmopolitan city. She often freelances as a writer as well as motivational speaker. When asked about her typical preparations when invited for a speaking program, this was her response.

> It is just survival in this city. Who will drop you? At what time will you come back? And is it a safe zone? We are very, very clear about that. Who will drop me back if it's late? If the session starts at 7 and I will be back at 9, do I have friends out there who will drop me back? Do I have someone who is coming along with me? Or one of the organisers? Specially, it's good if she's a female who can drop me back. So these are our first concerns. Then, whether someone is paying, or they are not paying, what the topic is, that becomes secondary thing. We are very, very clear about our own safety first and rest follows after that.

In Durga's world, the public space can be interpreted as an enemy territory where the collective Indian sisterhood is the oppressed group. In this world, the women can survive only through mutual support; only women can be trusted if one must navigate in this enemy territory.

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Durga's declaration "it is just survival in this city" sets the fearful tone of how she perceives the public space which she must navigate as a part of her daily life. The words "just" and "survival" conjures up an image of an inhospitable, harsh, and dangerous environment where remaining alive and safe becomes the first priority; it is almost animalistic in nature as if she must survive a hunt. Therefore, even when she gets a speaking assignment, several factors related to the public space contribute towards her decision of accepting the job. The crisp, qualifying questions "Who will drop you? At what time will you come back? And is it a safe zone?" is comparable to a soldier assessing an enemy territory in order to work out the escape plan before venturing out on the mission. The use of the description "safe zone" instead of *place* is reminiscent of the words *war zone.*

Durga does not frame her question as "who will drop *me*?"; instead she switches to the pronoun "*you*" indicating that this is a question any woman would ask in her place; it is also her way of including me, the researcher/interviewer, a fellow Indian woman, in her experience; it indicates her presumption that I would know and understand her lived reality. Likewise, the use of the pronoun "*we*" when she says, "*we* are very, very clear about that" can be interpreted as the dissolving of her individual self-identity in the collective sisterhood identity of Indian women; Durga's perception is that her experience and fears are the same as that of all Indian women, and hence when she speaks, it is the voice of this sisterhood. She again switches back to the 'self', with the personal pronouns "*I*" and *"me"* when she describes the logistics of returning home. Here, the self-reference can be connected to her particular situation where she does not own any mode of transport such as car or a scooter and relies exclusively on public transport or friends to commute in the city. She emphasises that an ideal situation, ("specially"), would be if the organiser is a woman who drops her back. I connect this to her answer to another question in the interview where she mentions

[ ] With women, you are much more relaxed because everyone has the same story.

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It can be interpreted that Durga supposes that all Indian women are bound by this universal shared experience of the fear of the public space – 'everyone has the same story' – hence it can be construed that Durga considers this sisterhood as the only reliable support system to survive in the city. When Durga again emphasises the collective "we" in, "We are very, very clear about our own safety first and rest follows after that" – it can be interpreted that Durga deems that for any Indian woman, safety is of paramount importance, even above earning a livelihood.

Aditi too is a single woman living on her own in the same city as Durga. She lives in a rented flat, owns and drives her car, although she dislikes driving. As with all interviews, one of my first questions to Aditi was to tell me a little about herself. This was her response –

I come from a small town near City K. The thing is that during my growing up years it was so much, like it was conditioned into us that if somebody is making a pass at you or if somebody is whistling or whatever like those type like they used to sing some weird songs and all and those things used to happen. And the reaction that we were conditioned to give was ignore it and move away or don't look at them and don't huh don't see eye to eye with them just move away as far as you can and reach back home. Sometimes yeah that's the only thing we can do but now later on as we grow older we realise that's the biggest mistake we were all doing that time. The thing is that my home was just I had to cross the gate of my colony, I just had to cross the road and that was my school. So I did not have to go through it a lot but then I came to know through a lot of my friends that yeah while going back home this thing happened, that thing happened, that people are huh the girls are getting scared because like it's very evident it happens everywhere. Not only in small towns but even in City D like it's a routine. After a point you get so used to it that you don't even think about it.

Aditi begins with a reference to herself as an individual "during my growing up years" and moves on to the collective "us" in the later part of the sentence. Her cryptic mentioning of "it was so much", without a reference to what "it" means in this context, can be interpreted as either "it" is a reference to the high occurrence of street harassment at that time, or to the intensity of the conditioning that all the girls were subjected to. The use of the words "conditioned into" suggests the action of application of external force and pressure to shape their behaviour; in this context, it can be interpreted as the act of forcing the girls into submission by repeatedly drilling into their minds that silence and avoidance are the only acceptable reactions to street harassment. These lessons instilled a fear of the harassers—the phrases "don't look at them"; "don't make eye contact"; "move away as far as you can" are packed with the extreme fear for life one would feel if one encountered a dangerous animal.

Aditi then switches to her own individual reality; the proximity of her home to her school meant that she experienced lower levels of harassment compared to her friends ("I did not have to go through it a lot"), however, her use of "but then" hints that her relatively safe position did not let her escape completely; she internalised her friends' experiences, their fears, and the knowledge that harassment is pervasive – "it's very evident it happens everywhere" – whether a girl lived in a small town or in a large city, harassment was the existential reality for girls and women.

Both Durga and Aditi described how street harassment is very pervasive. However, Aditi's description does not carry the pervading sense of fear that was present in Durga's account— the fear of harassment is ever-present in Durga's mind who consciously processes this threat whenever she accesses a public space. Durga construed her fear as the fear felt by the collective sisterhood. Aditi on the other hand appears nonchalant, as if she, and therefore all women, have developed a thick skin towards harassment - "After a point you get so used to it

that you don't even think about it". It can be interpreted that Aditi perceives street harassment is so pervasive and normalised that it has stopped registering on women's cognitive radar.

Unlike Durga and Aditi, Vaishnavi is very clear of her own identity as well as her role in the collective identity. Vaishnavi also lives in the same city as Aditi and Durga. Vaishnavi owns a house in which her parents live with her, she drives her own car and is a full-time professional. Describing herself and her social context, Vaishnavi says:

> I'm easily one of the most privileged people in the country. Umm I'm an English-speaking, earning, private-company working, upper caste Hindu. Privileged woman. All of that accounts as tremendous privilege in India in today's time. Just by the virtue of being privileged I need to do something about me.

It is to be noted that although Durga and Aditi share a similar socio-economic background to Vaishnavi, it is only Vaishnavi who identifies herself as a privileged individual. She uses the word "privileged" four times in the extract and qualifies it with adjectives such as "most" and "tremendous" to emphasise her position of power – this indicates that Vaishnavi sees herself on the highest echelon of power in relation to the collective sisterhood. Therefore, she feels "I need to do something". She does not say "I *want* to do something" which would indicate a desire, or at least a choice to fulfil a desire. Instead, it can be interpreted that the word *need* shows that Vaishnavi takes "to do something" as a mandatory responsibility because of her privilege. She ends this sentence by using the words "about me". She could have said, "I need to do something about my privilege". But her use of "about me" is strange, almost as if she's referring to herself in the third person, the way one would say, "do something about her". It can be interpreted that "Me" is not just her gross body, it is also her personality, her privilege, her power, all bundled together, and she must put this "me" entity to good use. In this next extract, she positions the "me" in the context of the larger sisterhood.

> If I am this outspoken feminist who wants to be a part of this movement, then there are going to be things that are larger than me. This realisation exists.

Here, a little more of what Vaishnavi wants to do with the "me" entity is revealed. Her self-construct of being an "outspoken feminist" is supported in the entire duration of the interview where she is vociferous about Indian women's rights as well as the patriarchal culture of the Indian society. She is not just a woman with an opinion on feminism, but she is a feminist activist who is actively involved in taking the message of Indian women's rights to the grassroot levels; for example, she conducts sessions on women's rights on radio shows, she visits rural areas to perform in street plays about women and children's rights, and she participates in protest marches regarding various social issues as a part of her activism. It can be interpreted that Vaishnavi sees her power and privilege as tools to further the feminist movement. When she says, "there are going to be things that are larger than me" – this statement can be interpreted in the larger context of her interview where being a feminist activist in India comes with personal risks to her safety. For example, she says later on in the interview regarding performing in street plays -

> So I remember while performing I've been catcalled, hmm but I've never registered that while performing because the performance is so much larger than anything else.

During the performance, Vaishnavi is no longer the individual entity, but a part of a grander production that is engaged in an activity which she believes can affect social change. Hence, she does not register any harassment that is directed towards her as an individual woman. It can also be interpreted that Vaishnavi perceives exposing herself to harassment this way is an inevitable sacrifice, a small price to pay for her privilege. However, under normal circumstances, that is, when she is not a part of a performance, she has zero-tolerance for harassment. She sees this as a non-negotiable part of being a feminist.

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> So if I have to call out somebody for what they're doing to me or to anybody else while next to me, I, I need to do it. It takes a lot of courage and lot of conditioning to say okay, go act.

The concept of the "me" entity continues in this extract; Vaishnavi sees herself as a project in progress - she must evolve, break out of previous conditioning, recondition, reclaim, take risks, confront. If she must be useful to the larger sisterhood, the "me" must become strong and battle-ready, so that she can rise above the role of being just a survivor of the environment like Durga and don the mantle of a crusader. Vaishnavi is aware of the fact that confronting a harasser "takes a lot of courage" because street harassment can escalate into a dangerous situation quickly and unpredictably; so every time she confronts a harasser, she is aware that she is putting herself in a potentially dangerous situation. However, she believes that speaking out against harassment is an integral part of the feminist ideology which she subscribes to; an ideology that she perceives is greater than the "me" entity. This self-conditioning is in contrast to the conditioning Aditi received in her younger days. Here, Vaishnavi is reconditioning herself to eschew such submissive coping methods. There is the faintest glimpse of two versions of Vaishnavi when she says "okay, go act" – Vaishnavi the vulnerable, practical woman, and Vaishnavi the feminist, the "me" entity. The practical Vaishnavi knows the risks (hence the reference to "courage"), whereas the "me" entity is aware of her position of privilege, and so, there is a brief struggle before the "me" entity wins and the self-permission is given, "okay, go act"—to speak up, confront, protect, protest.

This theme explored how the women moved between the collective and the individual constructs as they positioned themselves in an environment of street harassment. Their accounts also indicated an internal transformation during this meaning-making process. This is explored further in the next theme.

10.1.2. Subordinate theme: Transformation of the self

Three participants, Vaishnavi, Durga, and Aditi explored their experience of moving from their native hometowns to a larger urban city. For example, they no longer had the protection and security that their immediate family and community offered. In this context, coming to terms with street harassment required each of them to realign and readjust to a new environment and culture.

In the following extract, Vaishnavi reflects on a street harassment experience which she believes has left a lasting impression on her personality.

> As a college student, you know and I think, that whole progression from City L to my college in City D, I mean, that, that arc was steep and it was an important arc for me. So I remember I was walking with a bunch of my friends and somebody catcalled my friend. My thing at that time would've been to walk on. But she went back and slapped the guy, pulled him from the collar and took him to the nearest police station. And that is etched so deeply in my head, the basic thing that why was I (.) more than the incident, my own reaction has sort of stayed in my head which was that why was I okay to walk past? Why did I not (.) it was broad daylight, it was one or two in the afternoon or something like that, hmm there was no reason why I should stand up for it, there was no reason for me to take it. But I chose to remain silent while somebody else sort of chose to do what they did and hmm so that stayed with me for a very long time. And I realised that everything that happens around you, you need to speak up.

In this one incident, Vaishnavi witnessed the complete dismantling of the cultural expectations of Indian femininity by her friend. It can be interpreted that for Vaishnavi, who described elsewhere in the interview that she hailed from an "egalitarian" community which

was very safe, this incident was an epiphany. Her friend, a woman, not only confronted the harasser, she also physically assaulted him by "slapping" him and dragging him to the police station. For Vaishnavi, this woman's rage and her physical strength shattered the myth of the feminine qualities of meekness and weakness. The learning curve, which Vaishnavi refers to as "steep" arc, can be interpreted as the beginning of a transformation in her, where she questions all the gender rules and discourses she had accepted thus far, trying to get to the very core of her identity—what prevented her from speaking out and actively supporting her friend – "why was I okay to walk past?" Vaishnavi engages in a clinical analysis of her passive reaction to the incident and concludes "there was no reason". It can be interpreted that the true moment of enlightenment for Vaishnavi was when she realised that she too had a choice to speak up and confront harassment, as demonstrated by her friend. Vaishnavi arrives at this conclusion by examining the individual reactions to the incident – "I chose to remain silent while somebody else sort of chose to do what they did". A choice indicates that an individual has control over a process and outcome; in this context, Vaishnavi realises that she need not be a passive survivor of harassment. This is the beginning of the transformation in her into an "outspoken feminist", which was discussed in Sub-theme 6.1.1.

In Aditi's case, the transformation was a process, unlike the moment of epiphany that Vaishnavi experienced.

I was very scared traveling by bus. Because my school was just, what, I used to just come out of the gate of my colony and cross the road. It's just that one road. That was commute for me before coming to City D. Initially I used to be very scared because I would take the City D city bus. This was not the special university bus, this was just the normal buses. [ ] I don't exactly remember how things changed but I think coming to City D could be a factor. Because back in City K I would never have done this like I would have never have shouted back or something. But I don't exactly remember the time this thing changed. Because we're

conditioned not to say anything and I was following all that but then I moved to City D. And I think during my time in the university, I used to travel a lot in city buses that time. There was no metro (tube). There were a LOT of incidents happening every day. So I think, sometimes we think no that today this one day something did not happen. So those were the days that time it used to be when EVERY DAY something would happen. Somebody will touch you, somebody will say something. So common. And somehow maybe one day you can ignore, second day you can ignore but cannot ignore it forever. So if it keeps on happening somehow you'll have to change yourself and put up with it and shout it back.

It can be interpreted that for a young girl barely out of her teens coming from a smaller town, who had been conditioned to ignore harassment, and indeed who had limited exposure to harassment in her hometown, the reality of being assaulted every day in City D would have been terrifying. Aditi's repeated use of the word "scared" indicates her fear and the inescapability of the situation—Aditi cannot avoid the commute because she cannot stop attending college, and so, she must brace herself for the daily dose of harassment – "EVERY DAY something would happen. Somebody will touch you, somebody will say something. So common." Her trapped situation can be interpreted as that of a cornered prey that is poked, prodded, and wounded for entertainment; eventually, self-preservation kicks in and the wounded prey in turn attacks its attackers. Similarly, Aditi evaluated that her only chance of survival was to fight back – "So if it keeps on happening somehow you'll have to change yourself and put up with it and shout it back". This was the first step of Aditi's transformation, from being a passive victim to a confrontational survivor. This transformation process required her to unlearn, re-condition herself, and re-learn. In her hometown, she had diligently followed what had been drilled into her—to remain silent, to ignore, to walk away when faced with harassment - "I would have never have shouted back or something". However, the harassment in City D was merciless and relentless; this old avoidance strategy

was no longer valid for such sustained harassment – "And somehow maybe one day you can ignore, second day you can ignore but cannot ignore it forever." Thus, like Vaishnavi, Aditi too discovered she had the choice to speak up and confront harassers, and this realisation can be interpreted as the genesis of her transformation as an individual.

Later in the interview, I discovered that Aditi is an avid traveller and goes on frequent solo trips all over the country. I interpret this as her second transformation. Tracing this change, Aditi says it started with her long-term work trip to a western foreign country.

> There were a couple of times where I wanted to go see this museum which none of my friends were interested in. So I thought okay it's not such a big deal I want to see it because I don't know if I will come back to this place or not. So there it happened the first time that I went inside a museum and told myself that I'm not going to rely on anybody else. If I want to see it I'll go see it myself. That's where the whole solo thing began. I feel if I had not come there, then maybe my life would've taken a totally different course also. Who knows I may not have travelled so much. I got the confidence I could do it. Even though it was safer and better there, if I can do it there, I can do it in my own country. So that's how it all began (laughs).

In this financially independent stage of her adult life, just like her transition from the smaller hometown to the large city within India; Aditi transitioned from the large Indian city to an international city. The phrase "it's not such a big deal" indicates the amount of hesitation she had to overcome, the amount of thinking and self-coaching she had to do, for a simple activity such as visiting a museum alone. This is also a reflection of the conditioning that she and all the girls grow up with, that there is safety in numbers. In the earlier parts of her interview, Aditi mentions how her college commutes became less stressful because she travelled with a group of friends. Thus, in the foreign country, Aditi must break out of this

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dependence on others if she must fulfil her desire. Indeed, for Aditi, this visit to the museum held a deeper significance – for the first time, she was doing something on her own for her own pleasure, to fulfil her personal desire, something she had never done in her life ("it happened the first time"). This visit became symbolic of the completeness of transformation of her identity where she experienced the self-realisation of herself as an independent being – "told myself that I'm not going to rely on anybody else"; consequently she views this as a life-changing moment "I feel if I had not come there, then maybe my life would've taken a totally different course also". It can be interpreted that this change is not just external, where she commenced her solo travels in India, even to hinterlands, but the change was also internal in her as an individual, where she has transformed into a fearless person. Later in the interview she says "I know that whatever it is, if it happens, I'll deal with it. There is no need to be always scared and change your plans because you are alone." Thus, in Aditi's extract, we can trace this transformation from a "scared" young girl, to a woman who faced, fought, and survived an adverse environment. It can be construed that Aditi's rebellion against her patriarchal conditioning is demonstrated through her solo travels.

If Aditi and Vaishnavi rebelled in specific ways against harassment and transformed into fearless women, Durga's transformation was quite the contrary, as she is a more cautious, and sometimes nervous person.

Durga remembers the first incident of harassment vividly -

So what happened, when I first went to my college, my hostel was ten minutes away. So we, a group of girls, would go to college. At least fifty girls. So first thing I realised (.) as your invitation to the adult world was men are hanging around and they are holding their penis and showing it to you. I was (.) I had no clue what was happening. I went into shock. I said why are they doing this? And that is when my seniors told this is the world we are going to live in.

If, if you plan to stay in this city and work. And then in one month there was a rape in the university. And that is when I realised okay, this is going to be an everyday situation. We spoke to our teacher, we did marches. We could do that only in the campus. I mean I went to a girls' college and campus was safe. But outside the campus, we had to go home as early as possible. 7 o'clock was the deadline to get home. So I would run back because (.) I don't know. I didn't want to be raped. And that was the thing I learned at 18, now I'm 32, I have the same thing (.) I don't want to get harassed, I don't want to get raped.

Durga comes from one of the few regions in India that has a very egalitarian gender culture. In the later part of the interview, she describes the environment in which she grew up, where women had a strong presence even in public spaces, and she had hardly faced any sort of harassment. Like Aditi, Durga too moved from her small hometown to the cosmopolitan City D. This was her first time being on her own, living in a hostel, away from family. Like Vaishnavi, Durga too remembers lucidly the first incident of harassment she and her friends faced collectively. There is sarcasm and disbelief as she haltingly describes what she saw indicating her naivety at that time. It can be inferred that Durga and her peer group were seeing male genitalia for the first time, indeed, forced to look—she begins by saying "first thing I realised", indicating that this was the first time she'd experienced an incident of this nature; her phrase "as your invitation to the adult world" hints that this is the first, albeit forced, sexual exposure she had; the use of "your" indicates this was the case with most of her peer group. Her use of the word "realised" indicates her incredulity and shock, as if she couldn't believe her eyes; it is a poignant narrative of her loss of innocence—the realisation that what she was seeing is a man's genitals held out for display. She continues in her bewildered tone "I had no clue what was happening" – her description reveals the inexplicability of the situation to her younger self, the sheer brazenness and shamelessness of it, of men lying in wait for these large group of girls, "at least fifty", and in that public street,

unzipping and "holding their penis and showing it you", with no legal or social consequences imposed on them. Her description of her reaction "went into shock", can be interpreted as the physiological and psychological jolt she felt, as one would experience when confronted with a traumatic event. The phraseology of going "into shock" is also indicative that her reaction was a prolonged emotional state when compared to someone saying *I was shocked,* which indicates a momentary reaction.

Durga's report of the senior students' matter-of-fact advice regarding the exhibitionist men - "this is the world we are going to live in" - indicates that this kind of harassment was a routine rather than an exception, was extremely normalised, a veritable rite of passage for the young girls, a condition they must accept if they were to survive in the city - "if you plan to stay in this city and work".

Even as Durga was coping with this situation, the rape in the university cemented her fear and the truth hit home, her college seniors were not exaggerating after all – "I realised this is going to be an everyday situation". She encapsulates the collective helplessness of all the students in the two crisp phrases - "We spoke to our teacher, we did marches."

Durga's world had two safe places – the all-women's college and "home" – the hostel. For Durga, traversing the public space between these two physical buildings – college and hostel – became a survival battle, like crossing a moat filled with malevolent monsters. Her description "I would run back because (.) I don't know" shows the fear inside her to "run back" "as early as possible", like how, in ancient times, people would run into the safety of a fortress before the drawbridge was lifted to prevent entry of enemies.

Durga repeats "I don't want to get raped" like a mantra; she draws a timeline "that was the thing I learned at 18, now I'm 32, I have the same thing" – her mantra has not changed over a decade. It can be interpreted that because of these early experiences related to harassment and

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rape, Durga now perceives the public space as unsafe for women by default. Throughout her interview, the public space was depicted as having an identity of its own – as an oppressive, looming threat; a lurking monster. For Durga, dodging these dangers of the public space and surviving has become the central axis around which everything in her life revolves, be it her job, her friendships, or even her lifestyle choices. Her repeated use of the word "survival" and the phrase "don't get raped" indicates that these two aspects have become all-consuming in her life.

Reflecting on how this central fear has changed her as a person, she says

I mean I just can't trust people. I have lost my trust in people because I don't know. Tomorrow if someone is picking me up, how do I know that guy won't do anything to me?

Self-protection is Durga's primary concern. So, she mistrusts every male interaction and views men as potential harassers by default. Her use of the phrase "I have lost my trust" indicates that she has transitioned from a person who would innately trust people, to someone who is suspicious and does not take anyone at face-value. For example, she says later on in the interview -

I'm constantly on guard. Who is calling me and why is the *chowkidar bhaiya* (security guard at her paying guest accommodation) asking me *aaj kitne bhaje aaoge?* (What time are you coming?) It's scary, right? You have to (.) you just give wrong information. Always give wrong information. It has become a habit. Even if you ask tomorrow where were you? I might give wrong information because it becomes a survival instinct. Lying becomes survival.

Here she reveals the full impact of her mistrust – her daily life is like that of a secret service operative who works undercover in an enemy territory, planting misinformation to dodge being captured. Durga is never relaxed, she is "constantly on guard" – assessing, second

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guessing every question, every phone call, every information that is asked of her. "Always give wrong information" – that's the simple rule she follows – no one should know the real Durga because that would compromise her safety. She first uses the word "habit" indicating a repeated routine, something she practised in the earlier days, and as time passed, the habit was honed into a "survival instinct". She is hypervigilant like a prey animal in the wild smelling the air and scanning the landscape for danger so they can flee. This mistrust fuels conflicts in Durga's internal world, which is discussed in the next theme on identity conflicts.

10.1.3. Subordinate theme: Identity Conflicts

This theme explores how street harassment gives rise to conflict and tension in participants' self-identity.

In this extract Durga reflects on an 'awakening' moment whilst travelling alone in an autorickshaw – she realises her extreme vulnerability where her personal identity is immaterial because she perceives herself to be at the mercy of the driver.

> You know, that day (.) it's a very strange thing. I went to an event. I came back with a friend. In an auto we came back. And she just stepped down like ten minutes before where I had to reach. And then I realised despite all my education, all the feminism and all the power I have, this man who is driving the auto now has all the power over me. That shackled me at that moment. It's just ten minutes he had to drive me to my house (.) I took an auto with a friend and came (.) and that ten minutes, it was like ten o'clock and there was not much crowd (.) that ten minutes shackled me that despite all my accessibility and all the feminism this man right now who has absolutely no education has all the power over me. And that was when I realised my space in this society. For all the feminism and equality we talk about, I was like this man can shackle me right now.

In this extract, it can be interpreted that Durga has gendered the concept of "power". She views herself as a progressive, empowered woman, who derives "power" from her education which allows her to understand and exercise her rights, and even access public institutions such as the police and legal systems – "all my accessibility" – that is, Durga does not see herself as a helpless, voiceless citizen. On the other hand, when Durga says "this man who is driving the auto now has all the power over me" – here she associates "power" with the sheer brute force of physical and sexual power of the man. Thus, it can be interpreted that for Durga, power associated with a female is cerebral, whereas power associated with a male is physical and sexual. At this stage she has already made a class distinction between herself and the rickshaw driver – she is the educated, progressive individual, whereas he is the low class, uneducated driver "who has absolutely no education". It can be interpreted that Durga perceives herself above this driver in terms of status, however, this fact is futile because she is "shackled" - she sees herself as a prisoner, imprisoned because of her gender; the repeated use of the word "shackled" depicts a prisoner whose hands and feet are bound in heavy iron chains offering limited or no movement. Specifically, "shackled" can be interpreted as Durga's mental imprisonment, where she perceives she is at the physical mercy of men, and her intellect or ideologies will not influence or determine how a man can behave with her in a public space. The identity conflict arises at this point in her – "And that was when I realised my space in this society" – in her private realm she is an articulate, intelligent, progressive woman and this is her self-identity; in the public sphere she is the prisoner of man, manacled mentally and physically, completely reduced and deconstructed to a sexual entity only.

In the case of Mamatha, the conflict is between her identity as an Indian woman who faces street harassment, and her identity as a proud Indian citizen. Mamatha is a highly qualified corporate executive who travels in her job. She lives with her parents and adult brother. She

narrated this episode regarding a friend of hers who refused to move back to India now that she had a daughter.

This friend of mine was very clear I cannot imagine my daughter growing up in India. And, very honestly, I was VERY upset. But I also got where she was coming from. I also felt a LOT of it was to do with the EXCESSIVE negative news that we read. Not like the US is a safe place for women. I mean their abuse and harassment and domestic violence statistics are no fun. And I find it, I find it really, I don't know, I don't know what word to use but it's not like they are any better or more equal society but she still felt that she would not be able to get her daughter back to India. And they're talking about City M. My friend is from City K. Had she said this about any other city, I would've still understood. But she said that about City M and as a person staying in City M and despite having been through these harassment cases, I still felt it was unfair and I still felt offended *ki* (that) WHY? It's not THAT bad. But I don't know, some part of me felt *ki itna bura nahin hai ki* it's unliveable (it's not so bad that it's unliveable). *Aisa nahin hai ki* (it's not like that) people are not living here anymore. But it does happen. She's very clear she doesn't want her daughter growing up in India.

From this extract, it can be interpreted that Mamatha's identity construct as an individual is tightly bound with her identity as an Indian citizen. This is different from Durga's self-identity for example, where citizenship was decoupled from the individual identity. Therefore, it can be interpreted that for Mamatha, criticising India is equivalent to criticising her as an individual, hence she appears to be personally offended regarding her friend's parenting decision. Indeed, Mamatha's tone was emotional even during the recollection of this conversation.

Mamatha's conflict as an Indian woman versus Indian citizen is pronounced and flipflops throughout the extract, and the interview. For example, earlier in the interview, Mamatha

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describes the extreme paranoia she deals with when out in the public space, especially when she travels for work. So, in this extract, she tries to empathise with her friend as a woman - "But I also got where she was coming from". Almost immediately, the citizen-identity takes over when she changes her mind and decides that her friend's decision is influenced by exaggerated media reports. This citizen-identity now tries to dismantle the logic behind her friend's decision and prove that the friend has been unreasonable – yes, India has safety issues regarding women, but the US is no different – she bolsters this argument with "their abuse and harassment and domestic violence statistics are no fun". She is now so irritated and frustrated about her friend's decision that she can't find words to articulate – "I find it, I find it really, I don't know, I don't know what word to use". According to Mamatha, both the USA and India are equally unsafe for women. So, her friend pointing out that only India is unsafe is a great affront to Mamatha's patriotic feelings. Then, the woman-identity takes over the argument when Mamatha tries to soften her stance and present herself as a reasonable woman – perhaps she would not have found her friend's decision so illogical, had she referred to some other city like Delhi. Here, Mamatha is indirectly conceding to the fact that there are places in India that are unsafe, and it is acceptable to not want to bring up daughters in such places. However, her friend was talking about City M, Mamatha's city of residence and this increases her conflict and agitation to such an extent that on the one hand she admits she has faced harassment in City M – "despite having been through these harassment cases" – yet her citizen-identity takes over and she soundly criticises her friend's decision – "still felt it was unfair" – and emphasises on the personal offence this caused her "I still felt offended". This internal conflict rages intensely inside Mamatha and it appears that she has spent considerable time reflecting on her friend's decision, torn between supporting her and opposing her. When Mamatha says "some part of me", it can be interpreted that the woman in her did not believe wholeheartedly that her friend was wrong; yet, the Indian citizen in her

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found the decision unfair, and this citizen-voice emerged stronger than the woman-voice. The confusion of these opposing emotions becomes evident when Mamatha subconsciously switches to Hindi – "*itna bura nahin hai ki*"; "*Aisa nahin hai ki*", as if almost speaking to herself, and it can be interpreted as the citizen-identity in her is convincing the woman-identity that "it's not so bad"; "it's not unliveable"; and "it's not that people are not living here".

This conflict in Mamatha is pronounced in her interview and always surfaces when others bring up the topic of India's unsafe reputation with respect to women. At times, as the interviewer, I felt I was listening to an argument between two individuals – with Mamatha the Indian citizen implying that no one should criticise India and Mamatha the Indian woman empathising with the criticism that women face harassment.

For example, in this extract, she speaks of a male friend's online interaction with an Instagram follower, a foreign woman –

Very recently I think one of my friends on Instagram got followed by some random female from Malta. So he followed her back. I think she keeps travelling across the world, so he was like 'wow, why don't you visit India also, it has so much to offer.' And she says, 'I've heard really bad things about India and it's not safe to come alone, if I come, it'll have to be with my boyfriend. I can't travel alone.' And he shares it with me and I was like, MY GOD *matlab* (means) I don't even think that female must be knowing anything about India, *kya hai woh desh mein* (what is there in that country) but all she knows is that country is not safe to go if you are a woman. I also feel this is VERY unfair because OF COURSE it's not like rapes are not happening around the world. They are. Abuse happens. But I think, I mean I don't know, sometimes I really feel the coverage is very very, the media coverage also happens to be a little too unfair. But at the same time, I feel all of us have had these

> experiences, being eve-teased, harassed especially while taking public transport. And especially if you've to go to Delhi, I mean I HATE Delhi. If given a choice, I would just want to pluck it out of India and throw it outside. I don't want the country umm this city to be a part of this country. Because you JUST DON'T FEEL SAFE when you go there.

Once again, Mamatha becomes emotionally agitated on hearing her friend's account; her voice becomes loud and high pitched with disbelief as the citizen-identity takes over and she berates the foreign woman for having a negative opinion about India, without knowing anything else about the country. Mamatha again blames the media for the unfair, negative coverage which tarnishes India's image, because according to her, women are abused all over the world, and it is not correct to pick on only India. Then, immediately, the woman-identity takes over the argument, admitting that "all of us", that is Indian women, have experienced harassment. This time, the woman-identity is as vociferous as the citizen-identity, unlike in the last extract. Here, Mamatha's fury is targeted at Delhi. "Hate" is a very powerful emotion and Delhi evokes this irrational rage in her when she expresses violently that she wants to "pluck it out of India and throw it outside", the way one would pluck out an infested fruit or a diseased branch in a tree and throw it in the garbage. She continues to explain –

> Whenever I've had to travel to Delhi for work OH MY GOD, I'm like MY GOD I don't want to stay back late. I'm not even saying that everyone there is a rapist or a, you know, harasser. But that's just the vibe of the place. I don't know why the residents there or Delhiites don't do anything about it. But yeah, this also brings a bad name.

An inexplicable panic and fear envelopes her in Delhi and she can't put a finger on what makes her feel this panic. She pins it vaguely to "the vibe of the place". Here, almost imperceptibly the citizen-identity takes over and blames the people who live in cities like

Delhi for creating the negative perception of India. Therefore, such cities must be "plucked out" and thrown away. This emotion in Mamatha reemphasises how strongly her sense of citizenship is coupled with her individual identity, leading to a seemingly never-ending conflict, where the citizen-self blames media reports and cities for propagating the negative image of India, but the woman-self directly contradicts this argument by admitting how she feels unsafe in the public space.

These ever-present identity conflicts in the participants, as well as the threatening nature of the public space contributed towards a sense of disempowerment in them. This is discussed in the next theme.

10.2. Superordinate Theme 2: Disempowered status

10.2.1. Subordinate theme: Coping with infantalisation

Infantalisation is the act of treating an adult like a child. The participants explored how the perception of unsafe public spaces often resulted in them being infantalised by family and community, causing emotional distress.

In this extract, Mamatha describes how she had to negotiate with her parents to go on a solo holiday.

I've travelled to, I've stayed in Hongkong because of work. I was quite young then. And I've stayed in the UK. And I've travelled solo in both the places. I've been to China on my own. And umm but this is the first time, and I'm quite old now that way, I'm 33, but this is the first time I'm doing a solo trip in India. And my parents are very uncomfortable with that. My brother has been going for these solo trips I think for these past three, three and a half years. But while I travel quite a bit for work, and I love to travel in general but I also realised most of my social traveling happens with my friends. Personal travelling. This was the first time I

was sort of venturing into this alone. I really had to a LOT, it took a LOT to convince my parents that umm you know that I should go it's probably not that bad an idea.

Mamatha projects the image of a modern, independent woman who can manage on her own quite well even in foreign cultures and non-English speaking countries. However, it can be interpreted that whilst she constructs her self-identity as a capable, matured, independent woman, her report suggests that her parents who are worried about her safety, see her only as a woman who is vulnerable to sexually motivated attacks. So, even at 33, which she terms as "quite old", and despite being financially independent, she must seek her parent's permission, cajole them, and convince them that "it's probably not that bad an idea" for her to go on a solo-holiday. She says "it took a LOT" to persuade them, indicating this negotiation was emotionally draining for her. It can be interpreted that Mamatha is conflicted by her parents' inconsistent responses—they accepted her work-related solo travels to foreign countries but are against her solo travel within India for pleasure. Also, in contrast, her brother, who like Mamatha is a financially independent adult, does not face any opposition when he wishes to do similar travel.

When Mamatha eventually goes on this trip, she is further faced with more advices from her parents and brother –

If you tell them solo travel, they'll be like, how will you manage? Where will you eat? Take care, umm take care of your bag, take care of your, you know, pick-pocketing, take care – like when I was coming to this city, my brother also was like the sun will go down by 5:30-6. You need to be back to the hotel by then (laughs). [] This entire *sheher* (city) is bubbling with energy, there is so much happening on the street but the first thing that comes to their mind is don't stay out for too long, maybe return by latest 7:30-8, have dinner in your hotel, why do you want to stay out alone? Why don't you leave early like 8am *nikaljao* (leave). *Matlab* 8am

kuch khulta nahin hai (like, nothing opens at 8am) – the sun will be up and it is so much easier and safe.

For Mamatha, the entire experience of taking a holiday is fraught with tension. Mamatha is an experienced international traveller, and hence she feels infantalised by her family's advice, as if she were a child going away on a school trip – "take care of your bag". Her exasperation was palpable in the way she modulated her voice during this narration especially when she described the objections to her holiday proposal - "how will you manage?" and "where will you eat" - as if the very idea of her, despite being a capable 33-year-old, managing routine activities of her day is unfathomable to them. It can be interpreted that she perceives that her family sees her as a clueless young girl who is incapable of understanding what is good and safe for her. The tension between Mamatha and her family is interpreted – for Mamatha, the holiday would mean discovering the place she is visiting, immersing herself in its vibrant atmosphere; however, she knows that her family sees this holiday as a bad idea, and it is as if they have given in reluctantly to a child's tantrum. As if granting a concession of allowing her to travel, they then suggest the timings she must follow—Mamatha is agitated as she finds these suggestions ridiculous because they defeat the very purpose of her holiday. Mamatha's experience can be interpreted as her continuing to be a child her parents' eyes, where she must take permission to go out to play, and a conditional permission is granted, where the child is asked to return at a certain time.

In both extracts she mentions her brother's role indicating she processes an internal comparison between herself and her brother. First, just like her brother she is also a financially independent adult; however, as a woman she is less than equal to him because she must still negotiate for her freedom of movement; she must still seek her parents' permission to go on a vacation, and the permission is not easily forthcoming. Second, apart from her parents, she is now also restricted by her brother's protectionist stance. As a single woman, it

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can be interpreted that Mamatha's boundaries are drawn by her family members and she must expend considerable emotional energy to assert her independence and remind them that she's a capable adult.

In Aditi's case, although she lives on her own, she is infantalised by outsiders.

Eight years now that I've been living alone. So the first time was long back, in 2011. Yeah, 2011 I started living alone. That was the first time I did it and recently only I changed the flat. So both times I had to tell the landlord that I'll be staying here but my parents will be visiting me and will be staying here for half the year and they'll come and go because they have a house in the other city. So unless I tell that the owners are not really willing to rent out a flat to a single lady. Because they have this perception that a lot of things might be happening.

In this extract, the statement "owners are not really willing to rent out a flat to a single lady" indicates how single women are considered a liability and that someone must take responsibility for these women, just the way children must be monitored by responsible adults. So, either the parents must be in charge of the single woman, or a husband. Aditi attributes this to the cultural fear that unmonitored single woman might assert their sexual independence and be promiscuous, thus bringing shame to the family and community. This can be interpreted in the sociocultural context where Indian women are culturally earmarked for representing the honour of their family and are perceived as the symbols of Indian culture and tradition. Premarital sexual activity of women is therefore considered immoral and a threat to Indian culture. Thus, Aditi is not viewed as a thirty-year-old independent adult by a potential landlord, instead she is perceived as an unnecessary liability as an unmonitored single woman.

Aditi also adds -

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> The other point is even I don't want people, these property brokers and others also to know that I'm living alone. They're two sides of the same coin. I, I can't tell them that I'm living alone because of again safety reasons.

Aditi has to camouflage her independent status for her own safety because a single woman on her own she is a vulnerable prey to sexual attacks. So, Aditi must lie that her parents will live with her. Thus, whether it is the cultural fear of the society regarding her single status, or it is her own safety measures, it all comes down to Aditi being a single woman – "two sides of the same coin" – a single woman must be kept under supervision.

This view is also echoed by Durga, who lives in a paying-guest accommodation.

> Honestly, I really want to get married because I'm tired of this constant vigil of people staring at you. *Kahan jaa rahe ho*? *Kahan aa rahe ho*? (where are you going? Where are you coming from?) That irritates a human being, right?

Durga perceives that she is constantly at the centre of attention, like the object of suspicion of a neighbourhood watch. Her situation can be likened to that of a naughty child being monitored by a babysitter, the child must account for her movements to prove she is not up to any mischief. Her rhetorical question – "That irritates a human being, right?" can be interpreted as her justification of the anger she feels – any "human being", that is, any adult in her place, irrespective of gender, would feel frustrated if they are constantly monitored for their behaviour as if they were irresponsible children.

The term "constant vigil" conjures up grim images of people keeping a nocturnal watch over a very ill person, or people holding a quiet, disapproving protest at night. It can be interpreted that this is Durga's perception of the people observing her, that she is this suspicious entity, or perhaps some kind of an invalid, over whom they are keeping a watch. Thus, in turn, Durga is acutely aware of the people watching her, so she also is on a "constant vigil", and

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she's "tired of this constant vigil". Durga interprets that the root cause of this is her single status where people appear to be hypervigilant about her movements lest she brings shame upon the community. Her perception of the people's "vigil" over her reflects her own fears regarding her single status, as if she is an anomaly. Her life-situation is a cause for concern for her – later in the interview she mentions that she is very conscious of the fact that she is in her thirties and still single, and she does not even live in her own home, but lives in a paying-guest accommodation like a young student. Thus, Durga surmises that marriage is the answer – "I want to get married" – this will end the vigil, the disapproving protest, because a married status will catapult her into a respectable position in society, it will prove her adulthood, and her independence will no longer be a threat to the society.

In general, this infantalisation experienced by the participants also affected their agency, as discussed in the next theme.

10.2.2. Subordinate theme: Compromised sense of agency

Durga, who lives on her own in a paying guest accommodation, reflects on how her single status constantly makes her feel vulnerable to harassment. Throughout the interview, Durga's sense of loss of control of her agency in the public space is palpable. She believes marriage is the key to safety, even if it is a "compromise".

A woman is never relaxed on her own (.) unless she has a family and she is married. And this is why most of the time our parents want us to get married whether we like it or not because living on your vigil constantly it's not an easy thing. If you are sick and you are going to the doctor, someone might harass you in between. So this is how it impacts our decisions, our choices. And also one of the reasons why I also want to get married is because I'm tired of this constant vigil. You know, I'm like the one thing is someone will be there to pick me up right. Constantly negotiating with the autowallah *bhaiyas* (brother), and the taxiwallah

> *bhaiyas*, and being nice to them, it is irritating. So yeah, it is also one of the reasons why we all wonder if we get a good guy, let's compromise and get married. At least we will be safe.

A sense of oppression envelopes Durga's account, where even mundane routines such as hiring a taxi or an autorickshaw is fraught with anxiety for her. There is no moment in her daily life where she feels truly free, a moment where she can drop her guard and be herself. First, a loss of sense of privacy can be interpreted because Durga perceives people around her are hypervigilant to her movements, which in turn makes her hypervigilant. Then, there is the stress of constantly assessing her safety – she cannot just hire a taxi or an autorickshaw like a man would, unlike a male passenger she must bear the additional burden of "being nice" to the driver to ensure her safety – her 'niceness' being the price she must pay for the driver's good behaviour towards her. Durga's preoccupation with safety can be interpreted as obsessive when she describes hypothetical scenarios where she could be unwell, but gets harassed nonetheless on the way to see the doctor. In this extract, Durga's yearning for freedom from these mental shackles of fear and hypervigilance is touchingly conspicuous and is comparable to that of a prisoner waiting for their release date, marking the days on a wall. It can be interpreted that Durga has given her escape route much thought, and has concluded, much against her feminist beliefs, that the only way she can achieve this freedom is by getting married. Thus, ironically, in Durga's world, the man is the predator as well as the protector. She observes - "a woman is never relaxed on her own unless she has a family and she is married"—it can be interpreted that Durga believes that married women are less likely to be harassed, and are not culturally and morally policed like single women are. Thus, marriage would offer her the required escape from both harassment and "constant vigil". Therefore, when she says, "let's compromise and get married", it can be interpreted that Durga is not just referring to compromising her feminist ideology, she is also referring to compromising on her notions about romantic love leading to marriage. She further adds -

> So this is one of those reasons, as much as love and companionship and all that shit that we write and talk about (laughs). If I die, there's no point in talking about feminism, right? (laughs)

She is bitter and cynical when she refers to love and companionship as "all that shit" because her existential reality is harsh and her need for a man is based on more utilitarian grounds rather than romantic notions. Her statement "If I die" is dramatic but can be interpreted as how Durga perceives that even her freedom to live is under threat – later in the interview, she speaks about crimes against urban single women like her who have been raped and killed at their homes.

In comparison, Vaishnavi has a contrary view and is in complete control of her agency, which gives rise to conflicts with her parents.

> I'm so proud of being so fiercely on my own (.) umm (.) I don't let the vigilance come as much as I let the whole idea of standing up for what I desire come into the picture. You know, and I think that idea of being comfortable in your solitude and being extremely comfortable in your own company also comes back to the whole expectation of marriage. I say look, marriage is a choice. It's literally if I want somebody's company in my time. I'm very happy with my own company, I don't need to be validated by the world and by the man I choose to marry.

Unlike Durga who sees her single status as a liability and therefore faces internal conflicts in her self-identity as a feminist, Vaishnavi sees her single status as a symbol of independence – "fiercely on my own", something that she is "proud of". It can be interpreted that Vaishnavi's self-identity is very strong and she does not perceive herself as a vulnerable single woman like Durga; instead Vaishnavi sees herself as whole being who is not only capable of physically navigating through day-to-day life, but also psychologically she values her own

company. When she says "being comfortable in your solitude", she is defying and challenging the cultural expectation that single women are incapable of being alone, and indeed they must not be left alone as discussed in Aditi's extract.

Throughout her interview Vaishnavi has displayed a defiance to traditional expectations and especially has a confrontationist attitude towards harassment. Earlier in the interview she spoke about how harassment is always on her mind when she's in the public space - "it's on live, it runs with me all the time". However, she is determined that this "vigilance" should not take over her life and refuses to be disempowered and restricted by such fears. So, unlike Durga's view that marriage is an escape route from harassment, Vaishnavi does not allow this existential reality of harassment to influence her life decisions. It can be interpreted that in Vaishnavi's case, the traditional role envisaged for an Indian man, that is to be the protector of the woman and her provider, becomes redundant. Vaishnavi is not only financially independent, she is also emotionally very secure. So when the topic of her marriage arises, there is tension between her and her parents who want her to get married. She says -

In my house even today we have conversations like oh but you're thirty-two, oh but you should be married. And the contestation comes from the point that what does thirty-two have to do with a need to get married. And the other question is what is this "should"? Why is this idea of "should", you know no matter what you do why is marriage compulsory?

The phrase "even today" indicates her surprise and disbelief that despite all that she has achieved and become, and despite the fact that her parents themselves fostered an egalitarian family environment, she still gets rebuked for remaining single at thirty-two. In the Indian society sex and motherhood are culturally sanctioned to Indian women only through marriage. When Vaishnavi debates "what does thirty-two have to do with a need to get married?" she is indirectly challenging this discourse by rejecting the idea that marriage is

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necessary for sex and motherhood. It can be interpreted that with her successful career and enriching social life, Vaishnavi has demonstrated that it is possible to be in complete control of one's agency, and to lead a fulfilling life without the crutch of traditions.

In contrast to the big, life-altering decisions of marriage that Vaishnavi and Durga have discussed, Mamatha reflects on how even seemingly insignificant decisions such as her choice of clothes are dictated by the external environment, in order to avoid being harassed.

> I, I tend to wear a lot of denims and t-shirts. *Matlab* (means) even denims and t-shirts *matlab kis length ka hai* (what length is it?) – whether it's till your hips or is it short or you know, is it a long *kurti* (tunic top) over denims? On the basis of a place we tend to select *kya pehnna hai kya nahin pehnna hai* (what to wear, what not to wear?)- these are very basic things I don't think any men ever thinks of these things. [] I mean who will wear the *dupatta* (a long scarf, usually draped around the shoulders, worn with a salwar kameez) with a denim and a t-shirt? But then you do that, just to hide umm your chest. It's silly but better safe than sorry. It is not *ki aap ko koyi* threat *hai* (it is not that you are under threat), it is just that you will invite unwarranted glances, a little too much of attention which you don't want.

It can be interpreted that even the simple act of stepping out to a public space leads Mamatha to objectify herself militantly, viewing herself through a male gaze, that is, the eyes of the harasser, assessing if different parts of her body can "invite" "a little too much attention". The verb "invite" connotes a voluntary act of welcome. So, when Mamatha says "you will invite unwarranted glances", it can be interpreted that she holds herself, and indeed all women responsible for their own safety. This indicates the internalisation of the victim-blaming discourse that men are easily sexually provoked, and the female form is the sexual provocateur, and hence the female body must be made inconspicuous for the good of all. Thus, for Mamatha clothes have the primary function of hiding the feminine form lest it

sexually arouses the male. It can be interpreted that given a choice, Mamatha would like to dress differently, and not with an aim of avoiding harassment; for example, she does not like to pair a *dupatta* with her jeans and t-shirt outfit, but she feels compelled to dress this way. Therefore, there is a hint of an internal conflict within her, where is aware of her hypervigilance over her clothes, as well as the fact that she is compelled to be this way because of her gender – for example, she observes that choice of clothes is a "very basic thing" yet, as a woman she must undergo a complex decision process for choosing what clothes she can wear, whereas in contrast "I don't think any men ever thinks of these things."

Thus, it can be surmised that harassment affects the bigger life decisions, as well as the smaller, day-to-day decisions of the participants' lives. The next theme discusses how the participants are further disempowered because of the isolation they face whilst coping with harassment.

10.2.3. Subordinate theme: Harassment as an isolated battle

The participants reflected on how women have been isolated by the social and political systems when it comes to their safety.

Aditi gives this example -

> There was an article where they've given a bus number. They've said that since so many years that whole route that bus is running and people have nightmares to narrate that on that route incidents have been happening everyday. Multiple incidents. It's been going on since years. As in they were talking to people who used to take that bus when they were in college and now they are 50-60 years old. It's happening since that time and it's happening even now. Something happened recently on that bus to a college student and then people started re-tracing it and it came down that people who are 50-60 years as in women who are 60 years

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old now they faced it when they were in college. It's been constant since that time. And STILL nothing has happened. Every girl has faced so much.

During the interview, Aditi's voice rose when she concluded "and STILL nothing has happened" – her anger, dejection, and frustration at the sheer apathy of the society to women's suffering ("every girl has faced so much") was clear as she found this inexplicable and unacceptable. Her experience depicts harassment as having spanned generations, so Aditi's sense of frustration and disbelief is apparent, as despite the magnitude of the problem, it can be interpreted that harassment is an open secret and women continue to suffer in silence, not because they don't raise their voice, but because no one listens to their voice. Aditi holds the society and the state institutions responsible for this situation; they are complicit in enabling harassment by ignoring women's voices. From Aditi's extract, it can be interpreted that she does not expect to see a change in this apathy or improvements to women's safety in the near future.

Likewise, Durga has no faith that women will ever be safe from harassment and feels fatalistic. When asked to reflect on any particular incident of harassment she had experienced, Durga responded –

Forget one incident, I'm telling you, walk down the street at ten. Maybe you had to buy a medicine. Just walk. There will be cars slowing down around. You have no clue and if you are in the wrong state someone might just pull inside the car. And that has happened when I was a university kid; that has happened now; that has happened then. Governments came and went. But it's very scary (.) at nine the cars will slow down and ride next to you. And that is when you change the road, you change the pavement. It's survival at the end of the day. No one knows who will be the victim tomorrow.

Her phrase "forget one incident" suggests that Durga is in the middle of a battlefield and there is no point in talking about one single fight. Durga describes the threatening environment of the public space with startling clarity. Her phrase "I'm telling you" is a challenge, and an Indian way of emphasis - an assertion that she is not exaggerating. She sets up the scene – "walk down the street at ten" – she means ten in the evening and gives a context "maybe you had to buy a medicine". Then like a movie director of a crime or a thriller movie, Durga draws us into her world – as the woman hurries down the road, cars are slowing down and cruising next to her. If the woman is not alert and quick on her feet ("if you are in the wrong state"), she can be "pulled inside the car". Thus, in Durga's hypothetical description, a sinister world can be interpreted where women are hunted down and brutalised by packs of men roaming in vehicles. Durga's tone is tired when she says this modus operandi of attack has not changed down the ages – it had happened when she was a "university kid" and it is still continuing even now, more than a decade later. She is utterly dejected when she says "Governments came and went"; once again, like Aditi, Durga is highlighting the fact that women's safety and their harrowing situation has never been addressed by successive governments; it is as if women exist outside the societal discourse where they are unheard, unseen. Durga's observation, "It's survival at the end of the day. No one knows who will be the victim tomorrow", packs in all the fear and helplessness she feels about the situation. Women are depicted as being isolated, living in a state of constant threat even whilst going about mundane, daily routines. In this environment, it can be interpreted that the first and foremost goal of the woman is survival.

From the wider social context in which women are invisible and excluded, Aditi zooms in and reflects upon on the men in her immediate circle. She says -

> I just hope it ends someday. Somehow sometimes I feel men should get a taste of it. They should also understand that what kind of, whatever we are saying, sometimes even our own

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friends or colleagues or brothers even, they don't understand where we are coming from. And they will not understand unless they see it happening or they feel it. They're always overprotective because they know how guys are. But they don't have a clue about what we speak. They really don't.

When Aditi says, "I hope it ends someday" – here "it" refers to street harassment – the statement can be interpreted as an expression of hopelessness, even though the word "hope" is used; it is the way one would speak of a cataclysmic global reality with no end in sight, like terrorism or melting ice caps, a context in which one has no clue about the solution or even a belief that that there is a solution. Aditi's tone is angry, malicious even, when she says, "men should get a taste of it". She is frustrated as no matter how many ever times women explain, no matter the regularity with which women are assaulted, men don't seem to understand the fear and trauma women undergo. The hopelessness is further emphasised when Aditi reflects that the men in her own life do not understand a woman's point of view when she speaks about harassment – if this is the case with men closest to her, then she has no hope that women will find empathy in the wider society. When she says "they will not understand unless they see it happening" it can be interpreted that Aditi positions harassment as completely invisible to a male world because it is not a lived reality for men. Aditi's anger is palpable in her conviction that men will never understand a woman's reality of harassment unless "they feel it". It can be interpreted that Aditi is also suspicious of this so-called ignorance of men; there is a sense of disbelief in her – on the one hand men don't seem to understand women's experiences of harassment but at the same time, they are "overprotective" because "they know how guys are" – that is, as men they have an insight into the harasser's mind. It can be interpreted that according to Aditi, men seem to understand what it is to harass, but do not understand what it is to *be* harassed. Eventually Aditi concludes in an angry and frustrated tone, "But they don't have a clue about what we speak.

They really don't". It can be interpreted that Aditi's anger is also because women's reality is so easily dismissed as inexplicable by men, as if a woman's word is not enough, and that even though men themselves are directly responsible for this reality, it is still not enough for their close male relatives to fully empathise with women.

10.3. Superordinate Theme 3: Psychological distress

10.3.1. Subordinate theme: Heightened sense of fear – hypervigilance and paranoia

The participants discussed how their experiences and understanding of harassment has made them more fearful of hypervigilant in the public space. In the following extract, Durga talks about how the very primal fear of rape is always uppermost on her mind.

So we are not bothered about catcalls or someone, you know, touching you inappropriately on the road. We are only concerned *ki* (that) rapes shouldn't happen. So yeah, we live with that fear constantly. [] Someone will rub their penis on your ass, that happens. But we have gone beyond. We are only concerned that we shouldn't be raped. Rest we'll deal with it. If you stay in the city, if you are an ordinary woman, you get to deal with it each day, from public transport to everything. But first and foremost thing is you shouldn't get raped. And therefore, we are very, very conscious about our movements, our travels; our friends have to know where we are going, we send them our location and (.) that day I was like two minutes away from home. Suddenly there was one guy who came, he was just crossing the road and I was like, I had my antenna up, and okay I just looked at the building right in front me, one with lights on, and I made it as if I'm talking to someone on that room. I was like, *haan haan tum neeche aajao, mai aa gayi* (yes, yes, you come down, I've reached). I shouted so much. Of course the guy just left. This thing worked. But that's how we function. Don't get raped. That's how we function in day-to-day life.

Durga has classified rape as the ultimate form of sexual assault – "first and foremost" – on a woman; nothing can supersede rape in its brutality. It can be interpreted that Durga has carried this fear from her younger days as a student, as was discussed in section 6.1.2. When she says, "we are not bothered", she has downgraded the priority of other forms of harassment such as catcalling or even serious physical molestations such as groping or masturbating against the woman's body ("Someone will rub their penis on your ass, that happens). Her casual tone and use of the phrase "that happens" indicates that these forms of physical harassment have become so normalised in women's lives that Durga feels there is simply no point in obsessing over it; indeed, one should expect such assaults "you get to deal with it each day, from public transport to everything." When Durga says "we have gone beyond", it can be interpreted that Durga is referring to a new cause for concern—that the nature of sexual crimes against women have gone beyond the norms of social and human tolerance, and this has pushed these other forms of harassment to the background for Durga—later in the interview Durga mentions news reports of children and babies being raped; she repeatedly refers to crime statistics later in the interview "if you see statistics single women are raped so much"; "look at the rape statistics that happen". For Durga, it can be interpreted that the fear of rape has replaced every other fear – "we are only concerned that we shouldn't be raped."

When Durga says "we shouldn't be raped" – it can be interpreted in the context of how she perceives women are isolated in this battle, where the Indian state machinery and the society have ignored their situation – therefore, she has come to believe that women have no choice but to be responsible for their own safety. Hence, Durga practises this vigilance day after day – "therefore we are very, very conscious about our movements, our travels; our friends have to know where we are going, we send them our location" – Durga appears to be always on her guard, always hypersensitive to her surroundings, and always expecting the worst from

men. This is illustrated in her encounter where just the act of a man crossing the street over to her side is enough for her go into a survival mode mentally. For example, the man's movement puts her on high alert "I had my antenna up" – like a deer that suddenly stands still, ears twitching, trying to assess if a predator is hiding nearby. Her survival instinct goes into overdrive, and she immediately launches a loud, fake conversation, pretending to inform someone in a nearby building that she's arrived. The quick-wittedness in this reaction indicates that she is mentally ever-prepared for such scenarios, as if this were a tried and tested diversion tactic. Through her fake conversation in Hindi, she has indirectly communicated to the stranger that she is a localite, and that she is not alone, she has got people who are meeting her in a matter of seconds. Thus, she has successfully deflected a potential harasser. In this account, it is not clear if the man intended harm, or whether he was just a passer-by – it can be interpreted that for Durga his intentions are immaterial, she simply cannot take any risk because he is a stranger in a public space. Durga again repeats her mantra, "don't get raped", like one would say "don't catch a cold", that prevention via her hypervigilance is better than cure. There is a matter-of-fact resignation in her tone when she says, "This is how we function in day-to-day life" – she is always on the edge; she must always assume the worst; to consider every man who comes close to her as a potential harasser and rapist, and so she must do everything possible to keep alert to and avoid or escape from that situation.

This fear of rape results in paranoia across the interviews where the participants imagine worst-case scenarios. For example, Mamatha describes how a simple taxi ride is a nerve-wracking experience.

> See this car, *kya bolte hai* (what do you say), lock system. It's a great thing. But for someone who is sitting in the back, and there's an automatic system – I remember my boss telling me that car *mein* automatic locking system *hai* (there's an automatic locking system in the car)

and sometimes you have to take very early morning flights like 5am, 4 am. And you have to reach the airport like whatever, 3:30 – 4, so we have to take an earlier cab. And we're thinking like automatic system *hai*, *bandh mat karo* (if it's an automatic system, don't lock it), I don't want to be, you know, I don't want the car to be locked. And, automatic system *mein* the driver will have more control, what will I do. So, I mean I don't (.) first of all I'm half asleep, I'm thinking of what I'm going to do when I reach the place, the kind of deadlines or work schedules I'm going to have but over and above all of that, I also have to worry about keep looking in the review mirror often, is he not dozing off? And is he okay? Is he you know *baar baar mujhe peeche tho nahin dekh raha* (repeatedly staring at me (through the rear-view mirror)) and is my lock open and stuff like that, what if I just need to JUMP out of the car? These thoughts shouldn't be coming to your head. I think it's something that most women, sort of, live with.

Like Durga, for Mamatha too the uppermost thought on her mind is her safety, and her hypervigilance is triggered even in seemingly mundane situations such as a taxi ride. For example, in this extract, she perceives the male driver as a potential harasser by default; her hypervigilance and panic increase because she is in close proximity to a man in a confined space, a car. She is already in a vulnerable state - given the late hour she is not very alert, and she is mentally processing work-related stress. However, her sense of immediate danger takes precedence where she visualises worst-case scenarios of being abducted by this taxi driver, and so, her only escape route would be to jump out of the moving car. This visualisation is so powerful in her and the situation is so plausible to her that she is obsessed with the status of the lock – "is my lock open?"; "I don't want the car to be locked". When Mamatha says, "these thoughts shouldn't be coming to your head" – an internal conflict can be interpreted, that on the one hand she sees these thoughts as abnormal, and on the other, she can't help having them. She positions herself as not being alone in this, and that all women

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"live with" these thoughts – the defencelessness of this situation is interpreted here, the hypervigilance akin to an incurable condition that one must "live with" and adapt to.

Mamatha experiences this heightened fear of a sexual assault even when she is in a private space such as a hotel room. She is paranoid of her privacy being invaded by hidden cameras. She describes –

> When I stay in a hotel the first things I do by default is I check if there's any recording device anywhere. It seems CRAZY. But a lot of women do that. Check the mirror *kuch hai, nahin hai?* (is something there or not?) And we're staying in some very good hotels. But I think it's just got into us, *ki* you never know – should I let my guard down? So I end up checking the mirrors, I end up checking umm all these nooks and crannies *kuch hai tho nahin? sab kuch safe hai*? (is there anything? is everything safe?) – and then I'll start to unpack and stuff. It's just become a habit. I don't get into a room and directly unpack my bag. I HAVE to check. It's these little things, if I sit and think *waise tho bahut kuch nikal ayega* (that way several such things will come out) – it's this extra baggage that I have to always carry, I feel that, that takes you down.

Mamatha's rhetorical question "should I let my guard down" is indicative of the intense mistrust Mamatha has of any public or private space other than her home. It can be interpreted that apart from direct harassment from men, Mamatha also greatly fears the invasion of her privacy by men who may not be physically present in her vicinity. Thus, her suspicion and hypervigilance are triggered – "because you never know" – it is this not knowing of where and who can attack her, be it physically or by invading her privacy remotely, that causes her paranoia. Her use of the pronoun "you" indicates that she believes this hypervigilance is true for all women. There is no set template to identify a harasser or the

conditions that trigger harassment, hence, Mamatha feels she can never let her "guard down".

Like Durga, her hypervigilance is a practice that she has inculcated almost instinctively –

"but it's a thing that's got into us" –the phrase "got into us" can be interpreted as how the

mental state of hypervigilance has become a permanent feature of women's psyche, like a

virus that is dormant in the body and gets triggered when the conditions are conducive. This

is similar to Durga's statement where she says, "A woman is never relaxed on her own."

Mamatha describes all the practices that go with this hypervigilance as "extra baggage that I

have to always carry", and this baggage "takes you down". Her description conjures the

image of a dystopian reality where the "baggage" metaphor suggests the heaviness of the

load, yet she must bear this ever-present burden, stoop under its weight and stagger through

life, as she can never put it down except in the safety of her home. It can be construed from

this metaphor that Mamatha perceives she has only two choices; either bear the burden, no

matter how much pain it inflicts, and move forward in life or stay at home where she is

relieved of it. Mamatha gives more insight into this load she carries –

> The challenge is I always have to be prepared. I mean I can't let my guard down. That's very
>
> annoying. I mean I should be able to go out for once thinking that *chalega, kuch nahin hoga*
>
> (it's okay, nothing will happen). But I ALWAYS have to think, okay, *yeh* cut-off time *hai*
>
> (this is the cut-off time), I should be back, or I should be travelling light or whatever, I should
>
> be appropriately dressed.

There is no escape from the stress of being prepared for an attack all the time. Mamatha's

repetition of "I can't let my guard down" indicates the mental claustrophobia and suffocation

she endures because of the relentless sense of threat she perceives whenever she steps out of

home. She has to be hyper-alert because the attack can come from anyone, anywhere. Her

helplessness and frustration can be interpreted when she uses the phrase "for once" as if

pleading, indicating she has never experienced freedom from fear and hypervigilance.

Aditi adds another dimension of how harassment is always present in her mind-

> It, it's something that really affects me. Even it doesn't matter where I am or what I'm doing. If I'm not in India it affects me in a way that wow how good here it is. As in I don't have to bother about anything. It's always there constantly whether or not you are here or there abroad.

The threat of harassment has become such an integral part of Aditi's existence that she feels it acutely even in its absence; the way one might remember a debilitating pain when it is momentarily healed; the painlessness is a relief, but also a cause for anxiety because one dreads the recurrence of the pain any moment. Similarly, when Aditi is abroad, the absence of pervasive harassment in those places affords her a glimpse into a life that is free from the fear of harassment. Even so, harassment is still on her mind, because like the recurring pain, it is the reality waiting for her back home and it can be interpreted that Aditi too is never fully free of the fear even in a safe environment.

10.3.2. Subordinate theme: War-like situation

Participants discussed how the public space becomes a war-like zone where they must adopt various measures to protect themselves from harassment.

Mamatha describes her student days when she commuted by bus to college –

> We friends would always have these experiences where men would unnecessarily, you know, touch you on the back, or pinch you, or try to get very close, and it used to be very annoying. Or if they're tall, they would sort of place their chin on your neck and try to peep in and stuff like that. That's very common. So as a practice that's why, and this I learnt from my friend who was travelling by local trains. So what she used to do is, she used to keep all these sharp objects in her bag. She advised why don't you keep these sharp objects on the edges of your

bag. *Koi aa bhi raha hai*, (if someone comes), he will get poked. Compass *hua, yah kuch bhi hua* (any sharp object like a compass), *kuch bhi* (any) sharp object, keep that. And I thought that was a very smart thing to do and I started doing that.

This extract illustrates that for girls and women, even a routine journey in public transport can be hazardous, and as if going to war, they must protect themselves with improvised weapons. The womanly knowledge pertaining to self-protection is akin to the machinations of a secret cult, where the knowledge is passed on discretely to other members of the cult. Here Mamatha's friend has devised creative uses for geometry instruments and has passed on this knowledge to Mamatha. A sense of stealth can be interpreted in this entire extract, where harassment in a public transport is very common, and the women adopt quiet measures for self-protection. This arrangement also emphasises the isolation of women, where neither the state nor the society protects them, as discussed in section 6.2.3.

Years later, as Mamatha started her career, her mode of travel changed from public bus to company-sponsored taxi. However, she still carried weapons.

There was a time when I used to travel, umm when I used to work in this firm, there was some months when I was servicing the EU market. And so my office timings were Europe timings, so I used to come back really late. And I used to have a cab by the company, but it was very worrisome for my parents and my mom then started giving me these sprays, and *kya bolte hai, mirchi* (what do you call it, chilli), which she said you need to carry it just in case if you ever need it.

Here, it is again another woman, Mamatha's mother, who arms Mamatha with improvised 'weapons' fit for a new mode of transport. Mamatha's potential attacker could be the driver of the taxi, as discussed in the previous theme 6.3.1. Mamatha's mother has weaponised her with "sprays", which could be a spray made of homemade chilli powder. Thus, it is not just Mamatha, but even her mother who visualises the ways in which Mamatha can come under attack. It can be interpreted that irrespective of age women expect harassment as if by default, and they must collaborate with each other to protect their agency. Mamatha reflects on this situation in anger –

And now when I think of it, I think these things, I mean, I don't know how to put it. I mean, you're assaulted, and therefore you go prepared – ten different things that you should carry, umm almost thinking that *kuch tho hoga hi mere saath* (something will definitely happen with me), that I think that sometimes, when I now look back at those days I feel, MY GOD. I mean why should any female EVER think the worst and prepare, prepare, prepare.

Mamatha's rage is palpable in the repetitive use of the word "prepare" – Mamatha finds it incredulous that women must navigate a threatening environment, where they must anticipate harassment at every step; this is comparable to a soldier's covert mission in a hostile enemy territory where the attack can come from any place; so the soldier is fully armed. Even though Mamatha says 'looking back', indicating she may not carry all the weapons now, however, she is not free from the fear and anxiety of anticipating harassment as discussed in 6.3.1. Mamatha's helplessness can be interpreted in her rhetorical question "why should any female ever think the worst", where she acutely feels the injustice of forcing women to live under such threat.

The experience of being like a soldier navigating a hostile enemy territory is continued in Durga's account, as she uses clothes as an effective camouflage to blend into the environment and not draw attention to oneself –

If it is like older part of the city, we wear suits; however if it's in the southern part of the city, or educational institutes, where the crowd is young, we can wear a skirt or we can wear shorts, but we are very, very clear about where are we going. If you go to the older part of the city or the western part of the city where it is very, very crowded, we don't walk around in shorts. Jeans are fine. However when we go to old city, we basically wear kurtas. So, it depends upon places where you are going and with whom you are going. If you are wearing a very short dress, if you have a group of friends, then we go for it. And depends upon (.) if it's a poetry club or something then people are wearing whatever they want to wear. So absolutely, we make sure how we are going, who are we interacting, because our survival (.) our projection is the first thing that comes to mind when we move out in the public space.

The mistrust that Durga has cultivated towards the public space and men in public space (discussed in theme 6.1.2) continues in this account where she perceives herself as a moving target vulnerable for attack in a public space. Therefore, her strategy is to make herself as inconspicuous as possible in the public space. It can be interpreted that for Durga, clothes fulfil the function of a camouflage so she can blend into the surroundings and remain safe ("our survival (.) our projection is the first thing"). In order to do so, Durga has mentally mapped the spaces with the kind of men who have access to the space.

Not all spaces invite all kinds of people. If you're going to a club, or maybe a restaurant, if it's an upper umm upper middle-class type go, yeah you can wear a skirt, you can wear shorts, you're fine. Yeah it depends on the spaces. [] So it's also the whole thing of class also comes into. What kind of people inhabit around that space? And who are the people who can

access those spaces? Accessibility and class absolutely count. I will never wear shorts to old city. Yes you can but you have to accessibility *kis kis ki hai*? (Who has the accessibility?) The spaces where poetry and all happen, accessibility is of people who are pretty educated, you know, students, young people, educated class, mostly upper middle-class people. So you have to see accessibility of the people. There you wear whatever you want to and go you will feel safe. I don't say incidents don't happen there but, that's how you work through that. Accessibility is very important, like who are the people who are able to access those spaces?

Durga's repeated use of the word "accessibility" indicates how an inert geographical space can become threatening or non-threatening for her based on the people who inhabit that space. It can be interpreted that Durga has stereotyped men based on her perception of their economic and education status; she perceives that men from a lower economic class pose a greater threat to her safety than men who are from an upper class. This classification also came to the fore when she described her panic in an autorickshaw as discussed in section 6.1.3, where she assumed that the autorickshaw driver was uneducated and lower class. This can further be interpreted as Durga perceives men from upper class are more liberal and westernised like herself, and therefore less of a threat, whereas men from a lower class are possibly more patriarchal and pose a greater threat to her safety. Therefore, Durga chooses clothes depending on her perception of the class of men who access a given space; that is, she can "project" herself as traditional or modern accordingly. Thus, it can be interpreted that for Durga a routine action such as accessing a public space becomes a complicated threat assessment process, comparable to that of a soldier on a reconnaissance mission in an enemy territory, camouflaging themselves to remain hidden from potential attack.

Vaishnavi gives another scenario where clothes are used as a camouflage to escape threat -

> There are times that I've come back from work at 1:30 – 2 in the morning, driving. And I have been tempted, and I know my cousins do this, they take their earrings off and they tie their *dupattas* (long scarf usually worn with a salwar kameez) around their breasts to try and appear like men. And I'm not exaggerating. That fear is so real.

If Durga dressed according to what she perceived as acceptable for a class of men to avoid being conspicuous, in this extract, given the time of the day, Vaishnavi described the women who adopt a masculine camouflage to remain safe—the prey appears like the predator.

Vaishnavi is earnest as she asserts "I'm not exaggerating", indicating these measures may sound over the top to someone outside this reality. The sense of threat and fear in this atmosphere is palpable, almost cinematic like a war movie, where the protagonist dodges patrolling enemy groups, and escapes under the cover of assuming another identity. This extract also demonstrates the extraordinary measures Indian women adopt to remain safe, as if they are residents of a war-ravaged region.

In contrast, during the daytime Vaishnavi does not believe in camouflage and prefers for a direct confrontation with the harasser, like a soldier who is prepared for a hand-to-hand combat. She describes –

> I remember we were in a metro (underground train) once for something and you know there was this man who was staring at me and umm I just decided to stare back till the point he moved his eyes away. And I still remember how stubborn he was, for a good one, one-and-half minutes he continued boring into my eyes. You know and for me, I was very clear that okay I'm not going to tear away till the point you know, you don't look elsewhere I'm going to do it. And I did that till the time he stopped looking and he got up and he left. So yeah, these are various things you try but I think what every time has umm sort of moved me to act has been just the realisation about the impunity with which they come to do.

If Durga and Mamatha are driven by fear in the public space, in the different landscape of the daytime, Vaishnavi is driven by anger. Vaishnavi's description "boring into my eyes" indicates the potentially intimidating aggressiveness and intensity of the man's stare. It can be interpreted that Vaishnavi's tactic to mete out the same treatment to the harasser is not just about confrontation, or defeating that one man who stared at her, but it is more about fighting a system that empowers a man to invade a woman's space in which ever means possible. It is about fighting for her space and fending off invaders, even if they invade her privacy with their eyes; she is more able to do this during the daytime. Vaishnavi further adds –

> Umm and, and also I feel that you know because we are so patriarchal as a social structure that umm most women will tell you it's okay, get up and shift, you know. But that "get up and shift" is the first step towards *ghar ke andhar raho kyun ki raat mein ladkiyon ka rape hota hai* (stay inside the house because girls get raped in the night).

It can be interpreted that for Vaishnavi, allowing the offender to get away with unacceptable behaviour would mean she too has enabled him to continue with this act. By doing so, for Vaishnavi it would not only mean she has acceded her space, but that she has also submitted to his power and given up her agency. Vaishnavi's experience suggests that these small, momentary compromises are the bricks that build the wall that ultimately confine women in the private spaces of their homes. So, in her own way Vaishnavi pushes back the invader and regains control of her private space. It can be interpreted that each such confrontation represents a battle for the woman, a step in making change, albeit during the daytime, and it is a battle for validating her existence, that she too has the right to a physical and psychological space.

This war-like reality of the external environment often creates tension and rifts in families of the participants.

10.3.3. Subordinate theme: Emotional stress in family relationships due to normalised threat of harassment

For Vaishnavi, the friction with her parents (who live with her now) started with something small, such as her choice of clothes and led to bigger arguments.

So I remember once I had gone out, and I came back home at eleven at night. My dad opened the door and I was in a pair of shorts and a t-shirt and he asked me where were you? I said I was in a market in City G and he said like THIS? And I looked at him and I said What does THAT MEAN? What does LIKE THIS mean? He said no, you were wearing this shorts and a t-shirt. And I said YES, why is that a problem? And his next sentence was that I'm not contesting that you should not wear what you want to wear and go out when you want to go out. That is fine. All I'm saying is it can invite trouble. And I turned around and I said what does INVITE TROUBLE MEAN? I'm not INVITING trouble by wearing something. So he turned around and said that I am not saying that you're inviting trouble. I'm saying this is how the society is looking at it. I said I don't care. So he said I understand you don't care but you know so (laughs) so his point was that I am very happy with you reclaiming your body and reclaiming your fashion and wearing shorts. He was like you wear shorts everyday *yaar* (buddy), you go wherever you want to go, I don't have a problem. But all I'm saying is that the world around you is not looking at this, in, through an idealist lens. There is a context in which you're being viewed. And my push back to him was that that is the very context I'm willing to fight. To which he turned around and said, look, I'm very proud of the woman you're becoming. But I'm afraid, and I'm more afraid than I have ever been. I would be less afraid if you were out wearing a pair of jeans right now.

The tension in this father-daughter relationship is interpreted because whilst Vaishnavi's father respects her yet also fears for his out-spoken daughter's safety, Vaishnavi is

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uncompromising of her principles and her self-identity of an adult, independent woman. In her narration, her father's helplessness can be interpreted, where at the beginning of the conversation his questioning can be perceived as authoritative, and as the argument proceeds, he sounds deflated and defeated as he admits his debilitating fear for Vaishnavi's safety. It can be interpreted that for Vaishnavi, her father's questions regarding her clothes is symptomatic of the larger issue of society controlling women's choices without holding men accountable for their actions; she is not just arguing with her father, but with the patriarchal society he seems to embody at that moment. The emotional conflict in Vaishnavi deepens as she is caught between her parents' worry about her safety, and her own principles. She further adds –

I feel SO bad, you know, I'm putting my parents through this, every day. But the personal politics is also so important that I don't have a choice and I keep telling them that I'm sorry I'm being so selfish but umm, yeah this is bigger than you and me. They said we get it, but you can't take away our rights to, you know, feel afraid. And I said, yeah I can't, and I'm nobody to do that. And I genuinely feel that my parents are, you know, paying the price of being a parent to somebody like me. But what do you do, you know? Either you put down and you accept it. Or you do something to change it. And oddly this is the dialogue from *Rang de Basanti* (a Hindi movie) - *Zindagi jeene ke do hi tareeke hote hai, ek jo ho raha hai, ho ne do, bardasht karte raho. Ya phir zimmedari uttao usse badalne ki* (There are only two ways to live life, one, just tolerate whatever is happening and let things go on. Or take responsibility and make changes.)

It can be interpreted that both Vaishnavi and her parents carry emotional burdens, she of guilt, they of fear. Vaishnavi's guilt arises from the fact that she holds herself responsible for

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her parents' constant anxiety regarding her safety. However, she has accepted that this will be an unresolvable eternal conflict because she believes her activism is a non-negotiable personal sacrifice which she must make for the greater good – "this is bigger than you and me". It can be interpreted Vaishnavi is resigned to the reality that she cannot be a good activist and a good daughter at the same time; letting go of her activism is not possible, it is her core identity. The strength of her ambition towards activism can be interpreted from the fact that she recites a dialogue from a popular Hindi movie (released 12 years ago) from memory – in the movie, a group of youngsters stand up against a corrupt system, a plot she identifies with her own life – it can be interpreted that this dialogue represents her life motto. This ties up with her core identity construct as a fighter which was discussed in section 6.1.2; she sees herself as someone leading a change. However, this also results in an emotional helplessness both for her and her parents, where her parents are "paying the price of being a parent to somebody like me" - as their child, she is unable to offer the basic emotional comfort to her parents because it would compromise her ideology and her identity as an activist.

In contrast, for Mamatha the conflict with her parents is more about day-to-day routines.

I remember the moment, the time when I came back from Hongkong, and I think one of the days I got very late from work and the first thing my mom telling me was that, "This is NOT Hongkong. You need to come back to your senses."

Not only must Mamatha deal with the stress of her job, she must also cope with her mother's anxiety as well. "You need to come back to your senses" is a very strong rebuke – it can be interpreted that her mother is telling Mamatha that she must wake up to the reality that her career is not as important as her safety; that she should stop behaving as if India is safe like a foreign country where she had lived and worked on her own. No matter what professional

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achievements Mamatha has under her belt, her mother has reminded her that first and foremost she is a vulnerable woman, similar to Vaishnavi's father reminding Vaishnavi that she is just a woman for the man on the street. Mamatha reflects further on this stress everyone in her family faces –

I think it doesn't just impact me; it impacts my family. And I think that bothers me the most. If I had to stay back in office for my work till whatever, 10, 11, 12, my concern is not just me. Of course, it impacts me, I'm worried when I'm travelling alone, we have our male colleagues who'll drop us and then reach their homes, they also stay far, it's unfair on them also. But I think more than anything it's my parents or my brother, or anyone who cares for me. Why should even THEY have to go through stress? Just because I'm staying back late? So I don't think it's just the female who goes through this worry and pressure. It's everyone who cares for her. Today I had an early morning flight and my brother had to drop me to the airport. And it's not like (.) I had to leave home by six, *itna kuch jaldi kuch nahin tha* (it was not too early), but because it's now winter, there's still no sunlight, my dad is very uncomfortable. He says *nahin* (no), somebody has to drop you. So then my brother had to drop me. I felt like *matlab* (means) solo trip *ka* purpose *kya hai* (what is the purpose of a solo trip), if solo I can't travel to my own airport? (laughs) So yeah. I felt quite annoyed. But that's the reality I think. It's not just me. It's everyone. It's my mom who stresses; it's my dad, if I'm coming home late he will not go to sleep, only once he knows that I'm in bed, then he goes to sleep. These things really bother me.

Every routine decision Mamatha takes, be it going on a vacation or choosing to put in extra hours at work, it impacts and inconveniences everyone around her, be it parents or colleagues. This causes a whirlpool of emotions in her. First, a sense of frustration and helplessness can be interpreted when Mamatha questions "why should even THEY (her family) have to go through stress?" She is resigned to the fact that there is nothing she can do

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about this stress others undergo because of her; she has reconciled to this reality; it is a part of her existence as an Indian woman - "But that's the reality I think". She also feels angry and infantalised ("I felt quite annoyed") when her sense of independence is ignored and dismissed (discussed in detail in section 6.2.1), for example, she is not allowed to go to the airport alone. Mamatha must also cope with feelings of guilt because of the stress her family undergoes on account of her; for example, her father waiting up for her ("These things really bother me"). Thus, it can be interpreted that Mamatha is never free of stress and anxiety – not only is she anxious about her safety when negotiating a public space on her own, as discussed in 6.3.1, she is also stressed about the anxiety her family experiences even with her 'normal' routine.

Aditi too is concerned about the stress her parents undergo, especially her mother, whenever Aditi is out of the house. Even though Aditi lives alone, and her parents live in a different city, Aditi must call and inform her mother every day as soon as she reaches home.

My mom always used to tell me, and this is one thing she always tells me - wherever you're going it's okay. Just when you come back home, tell me whenever you have reached. So whether it's coming back from work or I'm out for the weekend, out with friends. So sometimes I also have to lie around and tell her yeah I've reached home just to so that she sleeps peacefully. Because if I keep on telling her I'm still out, she'll, she'll keep awake till I reach home and I tell her. Even if it is 1o'clock in the night or something. So when I was in Europe, even if I'm coming back a couple of hours late, it is already 1 o'clock in India and she'll be awake. So that's the time it actually started that I would tell her yes, I'm already home even though I was still working. There the distance and the commute also was not so much. Even if I stopped working at 8 o'clock, I'll reach home by 8:10. Then my dad came over for maybe three weeks. The he saw for himself how safe it is. And then he told my mom also no need to worry, it's all okay and it's much better here, and you stop calling her and

asking her whether she's reached home. She will reach home safely here, that is no problem. But then she did not stop calling, that is how moms are (laughs).

Like Mamatha and Vaishnavi, it can be interpreted that Aditi too bears the emotional burden of her mother's anxiety. In Aditi's account, her mother's relentless fear for her daughter's safety is clear and is similar to Mamatha's father not going to bed till the time Mamatha has returned home, or Vaishnavi's parents talking about their constant fear for Vaishnavi's safety. Through Aditi's narration, her mother's helplessness is also palpable – it can be interpreted that given the geographical distance between Aditi and her parents, the only way Aditi's mother can control her own fear is by knowing Aditi has reached home every night. This fear renews afresh every day, irrespective of whether Aditi is in India or abroad. Aditi's statement "that is how moms are" indicates how her mother, like Mamatha's mother, is 'in the know' as a woman—she truly knows, perhaps through her own experiences, the threat her daughter faces, and hence she excessively worries.

Thus, it can be interpreted that the fear of harassment also invades the private space of the participants, affecting family members too. This is comparable to Durga's narration of keeping a "constant vigil" – here the parents are also keeping a 'constant vigil', staying up in the night, waiting for their daughters to return home to a safe space.

10.4.   Chapter Summary

This chapter analysed and interpreted the themes that were developed from the interview transcripts of the Single Women group. The themes explored how street harassment had a deep impact on both the external and internal worlds of the participants. The themes also show harassment affected family dynamics, causing stress and anxiety in family members. The table of themes is given below-

Superordinate theme	Sub-theme
Navigating and negotiating identities	Switching between the Self and the Collective
	Transformation of the Self
	Identity conflicts
Disempowered status	Coping with infantalisation
	Compromised sense of agency
	Harassment as an isolated battle
Psychological distress	Heightened sense of fear – hypervigilance and paranoia
	War-like situation
	Emotional stress in family relationships

Chapter 11: Interpretative Analysis of 'Mothers' interviews

This chapter explores how mothers of teenage daughters make sense of the reality of street harassment, and what this means to their idea of womanhood, the role of mothers, and parenting styles.

Table 4 represents the themes that were developed during the analysis of the interviews with mothers.

Table 23: Theme table for 'Mothers' group

Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme
Harassment as an inescapable existential component of womanhood	Harassment as a rite of passage into adulthood for women
	Coping with harassment as mothers
	Passing on the baton – preparing daughters to cope with harassment
Prisoners of a man's world	Women's agency defined by father/ husband
	Protecting agency - coping with multiple levels of emotional isolation
	Breaking the cycle of harassment – parenting of sons key to change

Sensitivity: Internal

11.1. Superordinate Theme 1: Harassment as an inescapable existential component of womanhood

Harassment was perceived as an inescapable existential reality by the participants who have experienced harassment through different ages and stages of their lives—as young girls and as mothers of young daughters. Consequently, the participants also reflected on how as mothers they prepared their daughters, the next generation, to face and cope with inevitable harassment.

11.1.1. Subordinate theme: Harassment as a rite of passage into adulthood for women

The participants discussed how they experienced harassment for the first time as young girls in the aged 13-16.

Jaya was born and brought up in City B but moved to the larger cosmopolitan City M after her marriage. She is now 47 with two adult children – a daughter who is 22 and a son who is 20. Both children are single and live with Jaya and her husband. Jaya recollects her first experience of street harassment.

> I was just going down by my road where this guy on a cycle he came and grabbed one of my boobs. It's not like, I was not in college. I was probably in school and I was very thin and I didn't have a boob to speak of like you know. Nothing I mean like I hadn't even developed that much of boobs also like you know? So he came and grabbed one of my boobs and he ran past. And that was my you know like you know I still remember it. It was a kind of traumatic for me at that point of time. I didn't share it with anyone, nor my mom nor my friends or anything because I didn't know how to react about it.

Jaya's vivid memory of this incident, despite the fact it occurred more than thirty years ago, indicates that she still remembers and feels the trauma of the experience. In her reflection it can be interpreted that she continues to find it difficult to make sense of the experience—there is an underlying sense of 'Why me?' in her contemplation. First, there is a vague understanding within her recollection of her younger self that harassment happens to youthful college-going girls "it's not like, I was not in college"; however, she was just a school-going child, so it was inexplicable that she was physically harassed. Her description of her body at the time of the incident can be interpreted as an internalisation of the harassment discourse which positions women as sexual provocateurs. Hence, it can be interpreted that Jaya is still trying to find answers as to why as a child, her almost sexless body, "very thin" and "I didn't have a boob to speak of" provoked such a violent physical attack. It is as if Jaya is working off a checklist that was supposed to pre-empt her from harassment, thus emphasising her incomprehensibility of the incident. The state of mental and physical agony of her younger self can be interpreted when she describes the incident as "a kind of traumatic", indicating the turmoil of emotional confusion within her. This is further compounded by the fact that she was unable to share the incident with anyone to seek emotional support. Her isolation, bewilderment, and helplessness can be interpreted when she says, "I didn't know how to react about it"—as a child she did not have the life experience to make sense of the incident and appears to be still struggling with it even as an adult. It can be interpreted that this was her first experience of physical molestation, where the innocence of her childhood was damaged by this single unprovoked attack by a stranger on the street. Through Jaya's narration, it can be construed that there was a vague awareness within her younger self that there could be a sexual connotation to the attack because her breast was grabbed; perhaps this realisation kept her from sharing the incident with her mother or her friends because she was still trying to

understand the experience. Jaya subsequently reflects on the emotions she felt in the

aftermath of this incident –

You know I could feel his hands on my boob for a very long time you know. The touch I could feel it. I was burning. I wasn't ashamed as such but you know but I was seething with rage. Like I wanted to do something but I couldn't do anything. I didn't know what to do. So you have this you know like I should've done this, I should've – but at that moment there is nothing you could have done because it's happened in a split second. There's nothing. So more than ashamedness or anything like that I was in rage. Most of the time it has been rage for me you know rather than being ashamed or anything.

Jaya's memory of the incident is vividly tactile. When she recollects how she could feel still

feel "the touch" days after the incident, it is comparable to a phantom pain of an amputee, a

pain that she appears to process even in the present day as an adult; this also indicates the

physical and psychological agony the incident inflicted on the mind and body of her younger

self. Her statement "I was burning" can be interpreted in two ways: first, the momentum of

his grab would have been physically extremely painful, leaving behind a "burning" physical

pain; also, as she processes the incident, reliving through it mentally, it sears her emotionally,

"burning" her like a fever. She then qualifies her dominant emotion – "seething with rage",

and thus, her "burning" can now be interpreted as her fury; her uncontrollable, blinding

anger. In this extract, her emotions swing between fury and helplessness, and her anger is as

much directed at her helplessness when she says, "Like I wanted to do something but I

couldn't do anything". Her fury is bottled up and she does not know how or where to vent it;

this helplessness also stems from the fact that as a young girl, she has not fully understood the

impact of the incident in order to figure out a course of action – "I didn't know what to do".

Her obsessive analysis and reliving of the incident, repeatedly questioning herself if she could

have reacted in any other way, further shows her debilitating trauma, and each time she

circles back to the same conclusion that she could not have done anything because "it's happened in a split second". Her frustration is palpable when she repeats "There's nothing".

She emphasises that "it has been rage for me you know rather than being ashamed" – this can be interpreted as her defiance against the standard discourse that the burden of honour rests on women, and so when men sexually assault women, it is the woman's honour that is tarnished and hence she must feel ashamed. It can be interpreted that even as a young girl, Jaya's self-identity was that of an autonomous individual and not just a sexual body, and hence she felt rage that she could be treated with such impunity and indignity.

Like Jaya, Asha too was physically harassed for the first time as a young girl.

I think I was in 7th standard or so. So just entering those teenage years or so. It was in a bus in State K. We were going to a park or to visit somebody or something. It was very one of those normal kind of outings. And we were, we were huh there were a lot of people at the door and somebody groped me. And I remember that was my first groping incident. You know I remember how disgusted I felt by the whole thing. I had no idea who it was because there was so much of a crowd and all. In fact, even to this day I remember what I was wearing. It was just one of those simple pinafore kind of dresses. You know it was not, nothing very provocative. But and I remember feeling that I want to go home and take a bath. I felt dirty after that.

Like Jaya, Asha's memory too is distinctly tactile and vivid indicating the lingering trauma of this incident. Her description of feeling "disgusted" and that she wanted to "go home and take a bath" can be interpreted as how her younger self felt defiled in such a visceral way that she wanted to wash herself as if to purge her body and mind of this recoiling touch, and purify herself. Her specific recollection of her clothes as "nothing very provocative", as if to defend herself and prove that it was not her fault that someone touched her, can be interpreted

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as being her defence against the common discourse that women provoke harassment due to their clothing. It can be construed that Asha, like Jaya, is aware that she was not at fault, and still continues to seek answers for this incident.

When asked to reflect more on the phrase "nothing very provocative", she describes–

> It was something that went through my head because it was that, it was that, I don't know if you call it a pinafore? It's basically imagine a skirt with a panel in front and then there are those straps that come in from the back and you buckle it on the panel. And then you wear a t-shirt or a top inside. So, so I thought maybe my t-shirt was too tight. It was always that trying to put the blame on myself, you know, maybe because of that that this happened. Of course later on as I grew up and my mental thought processes matured, it was not me, it was that guy who was being a pervert. But yes, at that point, that thought did cross my mind.

It can be interpreted that Asha started the day as just a young child who was only looking forward to a day out; however, the harassment incident suddenly pushed her into to an adult world. Like Jaya's experience, Asha's childhood innocence is erased by this incident. The extract indicates that this young Asha is grappling with feelings of debasement and guilt, that somehow, she as a person along with her physical body are responsible for what happened. When she mentions that she wondered if her t-shirt "too tight" it can be interpreted that like Jaya, Asha too understood, though not fully, that something sexual has happened to her; was done to her. Unlike Jaya who felt rage at the intrusion on her body, the young Asha processes the incidents with shame and self-blame, that it was her body that provoked the harassment – "It was always that trying to put the blame on myself, you know, maybe because of that that this happened."

In complete contrast to both Asha and Jaya, Veena was a fighter even as a young girl. She too faced harassment as a young teenager but she believed in punishing the harasser on the spot –

So yes, when I was a young girl, when I was just in my tenth standard and I used to go to tuitions, I used to travel by the bus. Because obviously we did not have the luxury of being driven around in a car and our parents wanted us to be you know or worldly wise so you know I would travel by bus. And I would always carry a safety pin with me because the buses were so crowded, and you don't really have a separate section for the women and for the gents you know. So you're all packed in like a box of sardines, and anyone's hands are going anywhere so yes I used to travel with a safety pin. And I would be generous in poking around if I felt hands here and there. There were times when you know old men have coming following me up to my house. And there was a time when there was this one old person, he asked me if I could share the rickshaw with him. I obviously did not have the money, let alone the sensibility to go alone with him in the rickshaw so I refused. And then he came in the same bus and he got down at my bus stop. And then he had the audacity to follow me halfway to my house. And he tapped on my shoulder and he asked me why didn't I share the rickshaw with him? But fortunately the one thing that my parents taught me or gave me was gumption. You know one thing that they taught me was to be fearless to give it back. I FIRED the daylights off that man. I told him look you are in my area. One word and you know obviously all the vegetable vendors they knew me, they've seen me grow up so they know who I am. I said one word from me and you'll get beat up to pulp. What I suggest is that you know, you just retreat from here. I was barely fifteen. But yeah you have to fight your way through.

Veena is nonchalant as she describes the rampant physical harassment in the bus during her routine commutes. Her bold attitude indicates that even at fifteen, she was already worldly-wise unlike the innocent Asha and Jaya. Her description of using safety pins is comparable to the Mamatha's account in the Single Women group, as discussed in section 6.3.2.

Her narration of the stalker incident is just as breezy; perhaps she reflects back on it now as an adult with pride and this influences her tone, although the details of the incident are clearly sinister. A flash of her childhood innocence touchingly comes through when her mind first reflects on the practical issue of money when she is invited by the stranger to join her in the autorickshaw. However, the 'adult' in her takes over, the instinct which makes her very self-aware and adept at thinking on her feet, keeping her safe. The description of this incident indicates that Veena was alert about this man's movements. It can be interpreted that as the incident progresses, Veena now no longer sees the man as the benign "old man", but as a stalker with dangerous intentions. The strength of her presence of mind and survival instinct is demonstrated when she confronts the man and reportedly warns him of dire consequences in a dramatic, almost filmy manner reminiscent of Bollywood action movies – "one word from me and you'll get beat to pulp".

It can be interpreted that Veena's preparedness, alertness, and self-awareness in this extract was because she knew what to expect from men in public spaces unlike the naïve Jaya or Asha. There is nothing melodramatic or sentimental in her reflections, instead a sense of an acceptance, that harassment is the existential reality she will face every day is interpreted. There is no self-blame or self-questioning confusion like Asha and Jaya; it is very clear to her that she is not responsible for men's behaviour towards her. Later in the interview, she reflects on how men perceive women in the public space –

> "It's just a pair of boobs walking on two legs. So that's what they see and then that's how it is."

By using the article "it" in reference to women, it can be interpreted that Veena is illustrating how women in the public space are objectified and dehumanised by men; it conjures the macabre image of a non-living entity – a pair of breasts that are mobile on a pair of legs – and

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nothing else about the woman that makes her a whole human is perceived by the man. There's a finality in Veena's tone, a shrug of the shoulder metaphorically speaking, when she says, "that's what they see and then that's how it is." Her dismissive tone can be interpreted as she sees no point in expending energy in trying to understand the situation, one must just get on with the job of living in this environment, and for that, one must "fight your way through".

Veena's observation about the severe objectification of women is further explored in the next theme, where the participants faced harassment as older adult women, despite their role identities as mothers being clearly identifiable.

11.1.2. Subordinate theme: Coping with harassment as mothers

Radha is a mother of two girls, the elder daughter has just moved into her teens and the younger daughter is around ten. She lives in a cosmopolitan city; she pursued a career in marketing having graduated with a Master's in computer science. Since the birth her second child, she has worked part-time from home as an online marketing professional for her husband's firm. This gives her the flexibility to also be a homemaker so she can give more time to her family.   Radha recollects a harrowing harassment incident she had to endure when she was pregnant with her first child –

> It happened during the first pregnancy of mine. I was standing by a bus. And that day I was wearing a saree. I was eight months pregnant. And inside the bus a guy actually masturbated on me. I was anyway an emotional mess at that time. So I got down the bus. I puked. I cried. [] The thing is I couldn't react to that man. I did not scream, I did not yell at him, I did not do anything. I, I was completely frozen because I don't know…I was completely frozen. And

> the worst was that nobody was, everybody was there, everybody knew what had happened but nobody reacted. Not a single person in the bus reacted.

Like Asha who reflected on the clothes she was wearing when she was harassed a child, Radha too mentions she was in a saree, as if by reflex. This mentioning of the saree can be interpreted as a subconscious pre-emptive disclaimer by Radha that she was dressed in a traditional Indian attire which did not provoke the attack. This also indicates Radha's internalisation of the victim-blaming discourse where women's clothes are often blamed for provocation of harassment. Radha was heavily pregnant: a visible sign of motherhood. In the Indian cultural discourse, mothers and motherhood is symbolically placed on high moral pedestal. Thus, it can be interpreted that Radha should have been doubly insulated from any harassment. However, she is assaulted in a heinous way in full view of her passive co-passengers as if in a dystopian reality. Radha was already in a vulnerable state both physically and emotionally – "emotional mess". Also, she was using a public transport where apparently no one has offered her a seat, and thus, standing in a crowded bus would have increased her physical and mental exhaustion. In this extract Radha's numbing helplessness and catatonic shock can be interpreted as she describes her attack—the crowded bus would have been prison-like, not offering her space for movement or quick escape. Even now, after several years after the incident, she finds her paralysis during and after the incident inexplicable as she haltingly describes, "I, I was completely frozen because I don't know…I was completely frozen." It can be interpreted that the attack was so debasing that her mind had suspended any form of processing, because of which she could not even scream or "do anything". Her frozen state and the silence of the public meant that the man carried on his attack unchallenged, and Radha bore this assault in silence, moving only when the bus approached its next stop to alight from it. Through Radha's narration, it can be interpreted

that she is also pained by the callous apathy of the people in the bus; it was as if she was invisible to them as a fellow human, or as if such attacks were an everyday occurrence, too mundane to stir their collective conscience.

Radha describes her reaction after alighting the bus in two crisp sentences – "I puked. I cried." Her immediate reaction of vomiting can be interpreted as both physiological and psychological – it is the body's physical reaction to the sudden and extreme trauma it has experienced, the way one would throw up having come across a grisly scene. Even years after this incident, her abject helplessness and the perverseness of the experience haunts her in this extract.

Like Radha, Asha too explores her experience of harassment in a public transport, a passenger train.

About four years back or so, I was in a train. And it was one of those "sitting trains" huh those inter-city trains. So I was sitting and suddenly this chap he came and sat next to me. So it's a three seater bench. I was at the window and somebody was at the aisle. And then this chap came and sat at the middle. And he was quite drunk. And then he came falling into me and then I actually took my bag and pushed him with it and ensured that the bag was there so that you know his thigh couldn't touch mine and his arm wouldn't touch me and things like that. And then at some point I told him you better get up and go from here, like by then I was an adult who could manage these situations but it did take me those five minutes or so to reach that point. And by then he was trying all these physical things.

In her early experiences of harassment as a young girl, Asha had reflected on her feelings of shame and self-blame. Later in the interview, she mentions how she unlearned these emotions as she grew up into an independent woman. Therefore, in this extract, a sense of surprise in

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Asha can be interpreted when she says "it did take me those five minutes or so to reach that point" – that despite her life experience and her empowered status, her first reflex was to cope with the harasser silently; it took her a few minutes to surmount the initial instinct to cope with the harassment discretely. When she says, "by then I was adult who could manage these situations", it can be interpreted as her self-talk reminding herself that she was no longer helpless a young girl, but a capable adult woman with a voice. Thus, her empowerment is evident when she does not move away, instead she fights for her space and physically pushes away the harasser and asks him to leave.

In contrast, Jaya has always discussed the rage she feels after every harassment experience and has aggressive confrontations with the harassers. Here she discusses a recent incident of street harassment that she and her then teenage daughter experienced together.

And recently few years back there was this just around the corner of my house in City B where I was going. There was this one guy who was on a huh who was riding a bicycle. It was me and my daughter who were walking down the road and he said something lewd while passing us. I remembered and then you know kind of the alarm bells rang in my mind and I was like okay you know I have to be on my guard. I saw this guy had taken a detour you know he had gone the whole way and you know he had taken a u-turn and he was coming back at us. And again you know I was alerted and I had a bag in my hand you know. He was coming to grab my boobs and then I hit him. I shouted loudly and then he got scared and he ran away. Like he cycled away so fast.

The harasser's initial "lewd" verbal harassment has triggered Jaya's memory when she says, "I remembered" – this can be interpreted as her memory of a similar incident she had faced as a young girl under similar circumstances as discussed in section 7.1.1; this current situation is

like déjà vu. Jaya's survival instinct is triggered as she goes on red alert ("alarm bells rang") and she instantly becomes hypervigilant "I have to be on my guard" – like a prey in the vicinity of a predator. This time, not only must she protect herself, but also her daughter. Jaya's past experiences have made her battle-ready. Like a soldier she tracks the enemy's movements, assesses his intent to attack and target of attack. She aggressively defends herself, fending off the harasser who flees. In this extract, it can be interpreted that the existential reality in the public space has not changed for Jaya – the threats she faced as a 14-year-old girl are the same even when she is a 47-year-old, the only difference is she is now ever-prepared. Her reality is now the reality for her daughter.

Jaya also explores another incident in which her privacy was violated by a stranger, albeit at home, and therefore for her, this broadens the spectrum of street harassment – it is not just harassment one faces in a public space, but also in a private space when perpetuated by a stranger.

> So my dad's house was getting painted and there were a few things that were remaining. This painter, the contractor is a very trusted person. He's my dad's friend and everything and dad practically used to leave the workers at home and you know go about doing his chores outside the house without locking anything you know. They were so trustworthy. And this time I went there was some work remaining. It was like mid-afternoon. Two of the workers were there. So (sighs) I had gone for a walk. Then we had a late breakfast or something. Then I came home and I wanted to take a bath. I went into the bath and I don't know why I just – alarm bells were ringing in my mind. I closed the windows of the bathroom while taking bath. And then at some point of time I saw this guy peeping through that crack you know I couldn't fully close it, the latches, because they were all freshly painted and they wouldn't close fully. So I saw this guy peeping through the window. Again, I was filled with rage, it

was not ashamedness I mean nothing like that. I came out I really had a fight with them and blasted them and made them go out of the house.

[ ] But there is something, some sort of a gut feel I was having right from the beginning when I went into the bathroom you know that made me close the window, keep looking back at the window to you know see if someone is peeping and then I saw this guy. So yeah, that was it.

As a background context, this incident took place recently when Jaya was visiting her father who lives alone in another city. Jaya personally does not know the men – they are strangers to her, but she has interpreted her father's relationship with them as being based on trust and friendship—she uses the adjectives "trusted man" and "so trustworthy" to describe the men. Therefore, she implicitly inherits the trust her father places in them. It can be interpreted that the trust is primarily shared by the men, i.e. her father, the contractor, and the two labourers working under the contractor. As the incident unfolds, it is evident that Jaya is excluded from that circle of trust; the "trustworthy" men don't extend the same respect and trust to Jaya as they do with her father. Instead, Jaya is only perceived as a woman, a body that has become available for visual sexual gratification and opportunistic violation.

Jaya again uses the phrase "alarm bells were ringing in my head" – this phraseology is a pattern in her interview, similar to "on my guard", "sixth sense", "gut feel" – this gives an insight into her psychological state of hypervigilance which is on a hair-trigger. In this particular incident, she says "I don't know why" – she finds the sense of threat inexplicable; she cannot put a finger on why she felt unsafe in her own home – so at this stage, her hypervigilance can be interpreted as paranoia. She trusts her instincts and secures her privacy as best as possible. It is as if she is giving in to the paranoia – "keep looking back at the window to you know see if someone is peeping" – and she is vindicated, she catches the culprit. Now her hypervigilance can be interpreted as a finely tuned instinct.

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Jaya is emphatic that she did not feel "ashamedness" – she repeatedly mentions this word in her interview, and this can be interpreted as her rebellion against the cultural discourse which expects that a *good* woman who is sexually harassed must feel ashamed. Jaya's consistent emotional response towards such violations, right from the first incident of harassment, has been "rage". It can be interpreted that her rage is not just against one single incident, but it is also against the cultural discourse that objectifies women, reducing them only to bodies available for male pleasure. Jaya's rage can also be interpreted in the larger context of her interview, where she reveals she comes from a religiously orthodox and conservative family where women and girls were "marginalised". She describes certain practices that were followed which specifically inculcated girls with a sense of shame regarding their bodies – for example, the women were treated as untouchables during their menstrual cycles because their bodies were considered unclean. Jaya's rage stems from these deep-rooted experiences too, it is her way of rebelling and fighting against the patriarchal idea that she is just her body and nothing more; a body that is either an object of shame or an object of sexual pleasure depending on how the male consumer perceives it. Her rage is against the complete belittlement of her as a human being specifically because of her gender.

The meaning-making of harassment experiences by mothers enable them to learn and impart life-lessons to daughters, empowering this next generation to cope with harassment. This is explored in the next theme.

11.1.3. Subordinate theme: Passing on the baton – preparing daughters to navigate environment of harassment

A sense of inescapability from harassment was interpreted when the mothers discussed preparing their daughters to cope with harassment they would face in future.

Radha has unvarnished conversations with her elder daughter regarding harassment:

I've been telling that this groping happens, cat calling happens, all this I've been discussing with her. Because as kids when we used to travel by train all this groping incidents have happened with me as well as my sister. We were too young and we did not know why this was happening. Nobody had prepared us. Like my mom never spoke to me anything about this and even if I used to go back to her with my experiences, she was like it's okay, it all happens. That's how she had handled. So I didn't want that to happen to my kids so I've been sharing those incidents with her. I keep telling her, whenever you move out, be aware of your surroundings, beware of who is – there are people who stare, there are people who try to touch you, indecent manner, everything I have been telling her. I hope I mean if it ever happens it doesn't come to her as a shock and she knows how to handle that situation.

Here, not only is Radha recalling her own experiences of harassment, she is also unlearning from her mother's parenting. Radha remembers her experiences of harassment when she was her daughter's age - it was as if both Radha and her sister were thrown to the wolves without any forewarning and were expected to fend for themselves. Radha's mother's response can be interpreted as a cold, dismal acceptance of the unsafe environment her daughters must live in, and that they must endure harassment in silence. This reaction from Radha's mother can also be interpreted as protecting the daughters from the community's victim-shaming, drawing from the discourse that a woman's honour is lost if she is sexually assaulted. When Radha

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says, "nobody had prepared us", a sense of betrayal can be interpreted; the adults she looked up to for security and protection, in this case her mother, did not forewarn her about harassment – perhaps Radha could have protected herself better had she been educated about harassment. The harassment experiences were seen as even more traumatic by Radha and her sister because of this unawareness regarding the outside world.

In contrast to her mother's parenting, Radha has an open communication with her daughters regarding harassment. Radha repeatedly uses the phrase "I've been telling her" indicating the frequency of these talks with her daughter and the importance of them to her—hence, it can be interpreted that Radha is resigned to the fact that her children too will experience harassment. Therefore, in Radha's open parenting, the emphasis is on empowering the daughters and preparing them for the world outside so that they are confident to "handle the situation".

In contrast to Radha, Asha has a more wait and watch approach to educating her three girls whose ages range from 8-14.

> [ ] we were passing by somewhere else, some guys called out to us and my younger two daughters turned and looked at them. So I told them don't look at them because you don't know if they're calling out to you or somebody else. You don't acknowledge them, ignore them and walk fast. So those are different ways of teaching them either by my own experience huh my own behaviour or telling them very, very particularly.

Asha's challenge is to educate her daughters about harassment in an age-appropriate way. The incident itself illustrates the pervasiveness of street harassment, where even a mother and her young girls are not spared. In this situation, it can be interpreted that Asha feels her younger daughters are too young to understand harassment, at the same time, through her behaviour, she has also imparted the lesson of avoiding confrontation or any form of

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engagement, even non-verbal ones such as eye contact with strangers, especially men, and moving away from the place quickly. However, with eldest teenage daughter, Asha must find ways to convey these lessons about negotiating the public space without antagonising her.

So she loves wearing shorts. So she would love to go everywhere in shorts. So when I was trying to explain to her that you know, yes, shorts are nice, but, you should look at where you're going and whether the people over there are comfortable with you wearing shorts so that you don't warrant unnecessary attention. Okay now the reason I'm telling her that is because I feel she's not yet equipped to handle unnecessary attention, the harassment as we're referring to. 'Coz I remember myself at that age. You don't know when you should be making a noise and when you should be running away from there, you know that I feel that you're not yet mature at that age to know the difference. [ ] So, so now it is a standard joke that oh I can't wear shorts to the market road (laughs). I try not to make it very serious and you know, like get her angry or I shouldn't get angry but make it more, you know, take it in the lighter way.

In the beginning of this extract, Asha's skilful negotiation with her daughter imparts the lesson of regulating one's agency, in this case, the choice of clothes, based on the public places one is accessing. In contrast to Radha's direct talks about the different ways in which a woman can get harassed, here, Asha indirectly teaches her daughter that in order to navigate a public space safely, one must be mindful of the larger community and be cognisant of how one will be viewed by others. Asha is imparting the lesson that calling attention to oneself in a public space, especially to one's body because of the choice of clothes, is unsafe. This indicates that self-sexual objectification is induced subconsciously in girls at a young age because of harassment. It can be interpreted that Asha's intentions are not to regulate her daughter's choices, but to adopt preventive measures until such a time when the daughter is mentally and emotionally ready to handle situations of harassment. This is indicated in

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Asha's introspections on her mental maturity when she was her daughter's age; Asha uses these reflections in guiding her parenting methods. So, Asha must strike the balance between being firm, yet reasonable, without making the situation stressful for either of them – "take it in the lighter way" – so that there is always a communication open with her daughter. Indeed, this balancing act itself can be stressful as Asha describes –

You know trying to figure out how much of the topic one needs to talk to the teenage daughter is like a huh is like a very, balancing on a very THIN switch blade. (laughs). Because sometimes I'll get eyerolls when I'm talking too much about one thing you know like uff! Enough Mama! or something like that. That signals to me that okay, I don't need to talk about it anymore. But at the same time you know there are times when my daughter comes up to me and she herself initiates a conversation on topics like this. So I think I would not probably talk too much about it in preparation of her going away at some point. I try to address it at different logical points that lead up to it. Because knowing the person that she is, she'll probably will not want to take lectures.

Here Asha's comparison of mothering with a balancing act done on a "very thin switch blade" indicates the patience and focus that goes into saying the right thing at the right time lest the communication with her daughter is harmed. The comparison can also be interpreted as the stress Asha undergoes in carefully choosing the words to talk about harassment – too much can exasperate her daughter – "I'll get eyerolls" – thus the seriousness of the context is lost. So, unlike Radha's explicit instructions, Asha prefers to talk about harassment as and when there is a context – "different logical points" – keeping in mind her daughter's independent spirit. Later in the interview, Asha recollects that she was an "obedient" daughter whilst growing up who rarely questioned her parents' directives, unlike her own daughters who demand answers. In this regard, this extract also reflects Asha's sense of identity as a mother; it can be interpreted that she does not see herself as an absolute authority

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figure, instead, as a skilled negotiator or a diplomat, where she is the mentor and confidant guiding her daughter's decisions, not just as a mother but also as a woman.

Veena too relies on her own experiences, as well as the way she was groomed by her parents to guide her 17-year-old daughter.

Fortunately or unfortunately because I've been through it I have spoken to her about it. And it started I think when she was in grade 9. That's when she started traveling by herself in the auto rickshaw. And I always told her, if you feel uncomfortable about anybody or any place, get out of it immediately. I also told her that when she's traveling, gather a crowd. The thing that most people are scared about is a crowd. Because I have to, apart from the fact that yes, you know, there are certain beliefs that I have, I cannot pull her away from society. She will be working in a society which is flawed. So I have to teach her tactics, self-defence techniques that are going to work for her and that are going to you know show that she is safe. Because she is not me, yes, she is our daughter, but she has her own persona and she will probably react to things tad bit differently than I do. So what I've told her, obviously she can't walk around with a safety pin. So she travels in rickshaws which so far have been decent. Whenever like one or two offhanded incidents where she felt uncomfortable, she's very promptly asked them to stop and she's gone and taken another rickshaw. So my first rule of thumb is if anything or anyone makes you uncomfortable, you will get out from there. If you feel that you're cornered, raise a stink, raise your voice, shout, scream, whatever. And third thing I told her is approach a cop wherever she is, approach a cop or approach an adult or anybody that you think can help, you know. But yeah, fortunately she hasn't had to use any drastic measures till date. So, so far so good.

Veena's "Because I have to" can be interpreted at two levels of internal emotional conflict – first: the fact that Veena must send her daughter into the unsafe world outside where the latter

can come to harm, and this causes an emotional conflict with her protectionist instinct as a mother; second: the emphasis on "have to" indicates these conversations are unpleasant for Veena; it is emotionally difficult to imagine her daughter in dangerous situations and then give the best advice for that situation. But, preparing a daughter for harassment has become a non-negotiable aspect of mothering, hence "I have to". Veena's own upbringing and personal beliefs in women's empowerment comes to the fore during the entire interview and this is what she refers to when she says, "certain beliefs that I have". Here it can be interpreted that Veena is grappling with two extremes of a woman's existential reality – either remain safe in the confines of the home or navigate in the potentially unsafe world outside to achieve one's life's goals—this is interpreted as the "flaw" in the society that Veena is referring to where women have only these two extreme choices and nothing in-between. Indeed, when Veena says "I cannot pull her away from society" – the reference to "society" is almost as if it is an external entity, a threatening beast, and Veena's use of the phrase "I cannot pull her away" can be interpreted as the helplessness Veena feels – she cannot rescue her daughter from the clutches of this beast, instead she must teach her to fight it and live with it and within it.

In order to do so Veena must put herself in her daughter's shoes; what worked for Veena may not work for her daughter. So, through Veena's account it can be interpreted that teaching a daughter to handle harassment is like a customised syllabus. When Veena says "so far so good", it can be interpreted that Veena is aware of the fact that despite the best preparation, the outside environment is unpredictable, and the safety of a woman is largely dependent on luck. Veena also relies on her upbringing as her guiding factor; unlike other participants who learned and unlearned from their mothers, Veena is influenced by her father.

> And he would always tell me it's not I don't trust you but it's the elements outside. So that's when he taught me to fight the elements. And that is what exactly I've tried to imbibe in my daughter. Fight the elements. They're always going to exist. Utopia is never going to be there,

a perfect society is never going to be there. You are always going to have anti-social elements. So how do you handle, how do you, you know, ensure that you rise to the occasion and you protect yourself. And there are going to be times like, I remember, I have been groped, I have been touched, but I'm not saying you've got to let go and let it happen, all I'm saying is you know don't take the blame on yourself that this happened because of you. It would've happened irrespective of you. You know? It would've happened irrespective of you because that man over there felt the need to you know invade in someone's space.

The theme that society is an external entity continues in this extract when Veena uses the phrase repeatedly "fight the elements". The word "elements" is often used to describe weather and climate conditions, its usage here can be interpreted as Veena's worldview of the society as an Indian woman, where the society is like an unpredictable and catastrophic weather system, and one's existence is at the mercy of this system. It can be interpreted that Veena does not see herself or other women as a part of this 'system', but as passive recipients of whatever the system has to throw at them. Thus, living in this society implies that one has to be prepared always by being in a constant survival mode. Veena inherited this worldview from her father, which was confirmed by her own harassment experiences; now, her daughter is being taught this worldview from Veena.

Veena's extract is unique because she is the only participant who speaks of positive coping methods where she inculcates in her daughter to reject self-blame in the aftermath of harassment.

In this superordinate theme, the participants' experiences were explored to understand how harassment was an inescapable part of womanhood, and how successive generations of mothers and daughters coped with harassment. This leads to various kinds of disempowerment which is discussed in the next theme.

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11.2. Superordinate Theme 2: Prisoners of a man's world

11.2.1. Subordinate theme: Protecting agency - coping with multiple levels of emotional isolation

Participants experienced emotional isolation in the aftermath of harassment in three different ways – self-imposed, imposed by family members, and imposed by societal institutions.

Participants imposed emotional isolation on themselves in order to process the harassment experience and also because silence was seen to be the price to pay for one's freedom.

Jaya describes why she would not share any harassment experiences with her parents –

> So, because I being from a conservative family, I wouldn't want to share these kinds of things with mother or father or brother because they would restrict me going out, you know? As I was the only girl child in the family, it was my brother and all my cousins were boys you know. So before I attained puberty I used to hang around a lot with my brothers. Go out a lot with them, we used to go trekking and everything. I was labelled a tomboy. But things changed after I matured you know when I attained puberty, you know. I was made not to go out with them you know? Those things changed. I mean if I shared with this with them you know they would not let me go out alone or they would not let me go out after certain time of the evening. This was in my mind more than anything else, it was like my freedom would get affected. So this is the reason I couldn't tell my parents.

Jaya remembers her younger days as two specific time periods – the prepubescent years when, like her brothers, she faced no restrictions; the post-puberty years when this freedom was taken away from her – "made not to go out with them". Jaya has interpreted that her freedom was restricted as a punishment of her gender, which was manifesting in her

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changing, maturing body. Jaya's "conservative" family confined her movements, even if it was being in the company of her brothers, due to her body being identifiable as a woman. In this situation if Jaya confessed to her parents about being sexually harassed on the street, her freedom would be impeded even further. Therefore, silence was the price Jaya paid for her freedom, and in this recollection, we see that she had to cope in isolation with the emotional distress caused when harassment occurred.

Radha, who experienced a serious incident of harassment when she was pregnant (discussed in 7.1.2), also had to weigh her options of maintaining her freedom versus seeking emotional support from her family. The difference is that whilst Jaya was a young girl when she assessed her choices, Radha was a mature, married woman on the way to motherhood.

> But I did not go and discuss this with anybody including my husband because I was worried that they may not allow me to go and work again. My condition at that time was okay I was pregnant, they would say leave the job, sit at home. I didn't want that to happen so I did not disclose it to anyone.

Here Radha had to cope with the emotional distress of the harassment she faced, and also had to assess what this incident meant in the larger context of her life – the price of emotional support from her family would be the restriction of freedom of movement and loss of economic independence. Therefore, like Jaya, Radha too suffered in silence and emotionally isolated herself to process the experience. It can be interpreted that even though Radha was an adult married woman who was financially independent, the power centre in her life was her husband and probably other elders of the family when she says "they".

Thus, both these extracts can be interpreted in a larger context – freedom is not an inherent existential state for girls and women, it is bestowed by those in authority, that is fathers, brothers, husbands, and harassment can cause this freedom to be taken away.

In the second type of isolation, even if the participants wanted to take legal action against harassers, they do not receive support from their family and once again they faced isolation. Jaya continues to reflect on the incident of harassment she faced inside her father's home (discussed in 7.1.2). Jaya describes her reaction to the 'peeping' incident –

[ ] I really had a fight with them and blasted them and made them go out of the house. [ ] I screamed at them, yelled at them. And you know, I was worked up. If possible, I would have beat them to a pulp. I, I felt that I shouldn't lay my hands on him because he was such a bad person. You know, I shouldn't touch him also. There was no point in slapping him also you know. I didn't feel like seeing his face. That was there. [ ] But you know I didn't take legal action because it's not worth it in India. Legal action is not worth it at all and the contractor himself was not ready to believe what happened to me. He said these are my trusted workers. It hasn't happened in my career you know, we have been working in so many houses, so many places with so many girls around, nothing has happened this way or anything like that [ ] And then when the contractor came the next day, he was apologising to me. He said you know if you go to the police it will be your name that will be tarnished. I said, what the heck? I mean like I have no huh shame in going to the police and telling them this has happened. Why should YOU be ashamed of what is going to happen to me? So that is my thought. You know the whole idea was that and you know my dad was there, present through everything but huh he said okay let's go to the police and then he calmed down. But he also didn't pursue the matter because the contractor was his friend.

Jaya's blinding, violent rage in the aftermath of the incident can be interpreted when she says, "I screamed at them" and "If possible, I would have beat them to a pulp". At the same time, her fury is tempered by her absolute revulsion of the perpetrator. In this incident, it is a cabal of men against her; her helplessness, frustration, and sense of complete isolation can be interpreted from her repeated statement that legal action "it's not at all worth it". First, she is

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discredited by the contractor ("the contractor himself was not ready to believe what happened to me"). It can be interpreted that by using the word "girls" instead of "women", the contractor is indicating to Jaya that when his workers were not tempted by younger girls, how can they be tempted by an older woman? Also, a sense of betrayal can be interpreted when she says regarding her father, "But he also didn't pursue the matter because the contractor was his friend." Jaya is defeated; her rage is deflated; she says, "I didn't take legal action because it's not worth it in India" – for one she perceives the legal system as inefficient, but also, in this case, she has no witnesses and it is her word against the men's, and the men have ganged up on her as if in a brotherhood pact. She adds -

> See, it starts with home, right? In the first place your people should support you and back you and say okay fine let's go to the police. Let us do this. Let's just bring the culprit to the book or whatever like that. One thing that is there, so you don't find support, it's *jaane do* (leave it be); it's like that kind of a thing, you know? Just leave it you know. Forget it as a bad dream. Nothing is going to happen, why prolong it? You know, you'll be losing your peace of mind over this and all those things. And again this contractor comes and he says me like there's no point in going, your name will be tarnished and everything like that, you feel like what's the point *yaar* (buddy)? You know I have gone through all this, and they are supporting their workers or whoever it is. They are talking like it is your name, your, you know whatever. I mean like how is this going to help? So if this happens elementally at your place, then how is a third person like a police is going to believe you?

For Jaya's family, the focus has shifted from Jaya and her emotional distress to what her pursuit of justice could mean to her and for the family. Involving the police could bring disrepute – "it will tarnish your name" – as well as additional stress. This can be interpreted as the notions of family honour and reputation are considered more important than Jaya's emotional well-being. Therefore, Jaya faces intense emotional pressure to maintain silence on

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the harassment incident. Her sense of dejection is palpable when she says, "you feel like what's the point?"—her emotional distress has been dismissed; suddenly there is a role reversal – she is seen as the troublemaker instead of the victim of harassment, whilst the harasser is defended as if he is the victim of her wrath. Her dejection turns into helplessness when she observes that there is no hope for justice when it is not supported at home in the first place.

Conversely, Radha who did approach the police on an occasion, describes her frustration with the police system.

See equal rights and everything is there but I would see those equal rights being huh in fact I would say our rights being taken away from us. Even the lawmaker, even if we have rights for everything our rights have been taken away. We do not get; like I told you earlier, like if we go and report a crime the kind of questions the police officer will ask; in fact when I had that identity theft problem I went to the police station and the police guy, the questions he asked! First question that he asked was what kind of photo did you upload? It was like, instead of doing their job, they are having fun at the expense of the victim. When I told him that it was just a normal picture and I showed him the picture, he was like *iss mein kya badi baat hai?* (What is the big deal about this?) So the first thing is they themselves don't understand what is identity theft. He was like share *kiya tho iss mein kya badi baat hai?* (So what if it was shared, what's the big deal?) So here people themselves are not aware, the lawmakers themselves are not aware of why somebody is reporting something. Many of the things they say like *iss mein complain karne wali kya baat hai?* (What is there to lodge a complaint about this?) So even if our Constitution gives us equal rights, it is not happening in reality. We do not have equal rights. And when the victim is a woman she's being questioned, that I know because one or two experiences that I have had and I have seen others

having, if the victim is a woman, she is counter-questioned. Instead of being heard, she is again questioned. Yeah, so there's no equal rights.

It can be interpreted that for Radha, just being a woman in the world suggests that her "rights" are something that is bestowed upon her and women in general by men, as if these rights exist in some kind of a repository and are a hand-out by the male powers that be, which can be taken away if the women did not conform to male expectations, i.e. rights are not an integral and inherent part of simply being a human-woman. Radha repeatedly uses the phrase "taken away" to describe her helplessness; it can be interpreted that because she perceives that rights are "given", they can also be taken away, therefore women don't have any ownership on those rights. The lawmakers, here the police, are one of the primary custodians of the Indian Constitution, there is an expectation that they must protect her rights, but on the contrary Radha finds herself stripped off her rights by the custodians themselves.

She gives an example of when she approached the police to report a case of cyber harassment she had faced. Radha's powerlessness can be interpreted – her rights have been ignored, belittled and dismissed by the very institution that is supposed to be the last bastion of a democracy that upholds citizens' rights. Instead, like in Jaya's case, women who demand justice and want to follow due process are considered troublemakers and harassed all over again. Here Radha's disillusionment can be traced in stages – first, she believes "Equal rights and everything is there"; mid-way she concludes "we do not have equal rights" – this can be interpreted as Radha believes that she has some rights, but it is being taken away; finally she declares, "Yeah, so there's no equal rights" – this can be interpreted as Radha now believes there was never any concept equal rights to begin with, for it to be taken away; it's as if one is born with this handicap if one is a female.

Thus, emotional isolation can be interpreted as a concentric circle that spreads out in stages – first, it is self-imposed and the woman suffers harassment in silence; second, if she speaks out, silence is imposed on her by her family; finally, if she manages to initiate due process, silence is imposed on her by the judicial system. This *being in the world* for women can be interpreted as living in a prison where the prisoners have limited rights that can be bestowed and taken away based on the prisoner's behaviour. This leads to a compromised sense of agency in women which is discussed in next sub-theme.

11.2.2. Subordinate theme: Women's agency defined by men

Participants explored how their sense of agency is compromised both in public and private space.

Veena, who is very independent in her personal life, explores how the external urban culture still fetters her in a public space.

A couple of years ago I had visited a Gurudwara with two of my girlfriends; it was a girls' trip. And I visited this as an adult, as a mother to a teenager, so that would be about five years ago. Yeah, my daughter is now 17, so yeah, she was just about, she was a preteen. And we were three adults and we stayed real close to the Gurudwara. We stayed at a hotel which was like walking distance from the temple. And we wanted to do the Prabhat Pheri which is like going to the temple at like 3:30 - 4 in the morning and you can see the sunrise you know. And you get to see the morning prayers. It's supposed to be really, really a divine experience. So we wanted to do that and the gatekeeper of the hotel, he refused to let us travel by ourselves or even walk by ourselves. He ensured we got a rickshaw. And then he almost threatened the guy at least ten times that he had taken down the number and he would go to the cops or do something if these three ladies did not reach safely to the temple. And in my head all the

while I went thinking, we're going to a religious place, right? And this place that we're staying in is literally a five to ten minutes walking distance from the Gurudwara. And I still can't walk. And I'm with two girl friends. There are three of us. And we still can't walk down the street. We need, hmm if not a male chaperone, we need some male providence to get us to the place we need to be. I think I was a little bit shook by that because a lot of cities that I have visited in India itself, hmm travelling, a solo woman travelling, is STILL a cause of concern.

An undercurrent of disbelief and frustration can be interpreted in Veena's narration where she tries to make sense of at what point in her womanhood journey can a woman consider herself safe from harassment? As if trying to find answers, Veena goes through a checklist that she feels should ensure her safety. First, Veena is a mature, older woman and a mother; second, she is on a pilgrimage; third, she is not alone but with two other women. In this circumstance, Veena finds it unbelievable that a man can become sexually aroused to harass her and her friends, especially when it is evident that she is heading to a place of worship. The watchman of the hotel does not share Veena's disbelief; indeed, this stranger, who is placed below Veena and her friends in socio-economic class hierarchy, suddenly assumes charge of the women as he is a man. Veena is now helpless; it can be interpreted that Veena and her friends have surrendered their agency and submitted to this man's authority because "he refused to let us travel by ourselves or even walk by ourselves." When Veena describes "I was a little bit shook", it can be interpreted as her shocked realisation that the freedom of movement she enjoys in her native city is not the reality in all places within the country – indeed this freedom is so precarious that the urban culture of a place can take it away from her. Also, her freedom is regulated by a male, either in the form of a "male providence" who decides on the

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boundaries of freedom; or, ironically in the form of a male harasser, who could also invade her boundaries.

In contrast, even in the private space Jaya describes how she must negotiate for her agency as well as her daughter's, with her husband.

She does face restrictions also. Because my husband – he's the same, he's not going to change. So he also says like you are wearing certain dresses you wear a jacket on this or don't wear short skirts and all those things. So we both have adjusted to his thought processes that you know we select dresses in such a way that they are not revealing or we don't wear it in front of him. So when he's not around, we wear whatever we want to wear. [] And here, she wears a jacket over her dress and then goes out and removes it. So we have seen that happen also in most of the movies and everywhere. And if she's going to a party, so many times she hasn't said that she's going to a party mainly because he doesn't allow her to be beyond certain time of the night so she has to lie to him that she's going to a friend's place for a sleepover. And then go there, change the dress, get dressed up and then go a party and come back and sleep at their place and come home the next morning. So she faces that now. Yeah, and even now she's working with two boys – two of her partners are boys. He has a problem when she has to go to their places regarding work or staying late for work. So yeah, but she continues to do what she wants to do fighting all this. It's not that she's compromised a lot – she does compromise but you know she does.

Here, Jaya and her daughter are a team who must navigate around the authority figure, the husband/father, and thus there is friction in day-to-day life. Life can be interpreted as a tightrope walk for both Jaya and her daughter, where they must balance their freedom as well as ensure they conform to the husband/father's expectations of how they should be ("we select dresses in such a way that they are not revealing or we don't wear it in front of him").

Jaya's weariness of this situation is interpreted when she says regarding her husband, "he's the same, he's not going to change"; this also indicates that his rules are non-negotiable and she defers to him. So, in order to maintain domestic harmony, Jaya and her daughter find it easier to circumvent the rules rather than have a discussion with him – this leads to cat-and-mouse scenarios which Jaya compares it to the fictional world of movies, indicating she finds this way of living surreal, yet it is her existential reality.

In a later part of the interview Jaya describes how both she and her husband hail from conservative families. Jaya's husband's expectations can be interpreted in light of this context – he is motivated by both a concern for safety for his wife and daughter, and he may like them to conform to the traditional framework prevalent in the socio-cultural context. In this regard, Jaya's family can be seen a microcosm of the larger society where the patriarchal figurehead of the family operationalises and ensures socio-cultural discourses are adhered to, especially the discourse that women embody the honour of the family. Hence it can be interpreted that Jaya's husband disapproves of their daughter working late with her male colleagues or wearing certain kind of clothes fearing it might bring disrepute to the family. Jaya is frustrated by the restrictions placed on her too.

> I wouldn't want you know, being a mature woman we learn that every huh you know we are not kids or anything like that. At every step people shouldn't be correcting you *ki* this is right, this is wrong, this shouldn't be done, or you know? Because you know I'm extra alert while walking out, as I said. My husband doesn't like me going out wearing just a sleeveless, so I wear a jacket over the sleeves and go. That shouldn't be the case. I mean I shouldn't be caring about what I'm wearing or not wearing. But I do, you know? Just because this idea that somebody will see me, I have to cover myself. So that's there. So I want freedom in that – that kind of way, you know.

In this extract Jaya is conflicted – on the one hand she is angry that she is infantalised despite being a "mature woman". When she says, "at every step people shouldn't be correcting", this can be interpreted as how Jaya feels she is constantly under the critical eye of people around her, waiting to pounce on her to point out alleged mistakes in her way of living and being – here, Jaya's mental claustrophobia is interpreted. However, an underlying emotional conflict is also indicated – whilst she is angry with her husband for imposing his decisions on the clothes she can wear, she also understands one of the root causes of his behaviour is the unsafe environment in the public space. Her idea of freedom can be interpreted as very fundamental, even rudimentary - of being able to breathe and exist without censure.

Radha echoes Jaya's thoughts on the claustrophobic environment created for women –

I come from a very conservative background, so I anyway didn't have any freedom of choice, like of clothes and all, so that way I think even now many of the girls do not enjoy the freedom they should. They can't choose the type of clothes they want to wear, they can't move around as freely as men, they are judged by the way they walk, by the way they talk, so, just as an example, my daughter loves wearing shorts, but my husband being a protective father, he doesn't allow her to wear shorts and move out alone. He's like you can wear it if you are joining us, but you can't wear it if you are going out alone. [ ] If you ask me clothes really don't protect. Because all my life I have worn suits (salwar kameez) or sarees. I started wearing jeans only after I got married. So incidents still happened with me. I don't think clothes have got anything to do with the behaviour of the person. I do not think so but, how do I say umm – if you see here how people look at somebody who's wearing shorts – like out on the road we see that happening. Like if you are wearing any revealing clothes or even any western outfit, people here are yet to accept it. They look at you as if they are watching something really different. Yeah they look at you as if you are specimen in a museum.

Radha's observation about how women are monitored can be interpreted as a prison-like situation where women live under an inescapable, omnipresent critical eye that watches their every move. Thus, there is no concept of true freedom that women experience. In case of Radha's daughter, once again the father regulates the choice of clothes, and his concern is for her safety. This is similar to Jaya's husband or Asha imposing restrictions on their daughters on the choice of clothes. This can be interpreted as women are conditioned to regulate their basic choices from a very early age and in the process, they learn to live under scrutiny; they learn how a woman's clothes and behaviour are encoded with morality, and non-adherence will result in criticism or punitive actions by men. In other words, they learn to live and function in a specific boundary that is controlled by men.

Radha does not oppose her husband's decision even though she personally does not believe that clothes offer security from harassment – she has her own experiences to prove it. However, it can be interpreted that she also accepts the reality that her daughter will be unsafe if she is conspicuous on the street because of her clothes; being conspicuous is the precursor to harassment. Radha justifies her decision by describing the intense scrutiny women dressed in western clothes endure – "they look at you as if you are specimen in a museum"—the word "specimen", which brings to mind the image of a strange, dead creature floating in formaldehyde, can be interpreted as the dehumanising eye of the society which no longer views the woman as a living and thinking human being.

When Radha says, "I come from a very conservative background, so I anyway didn't have any freedom of choice"; the word "anyway" positions a direct relationship between the conservative nature of a family and its impact on the agency of female family members. For example, jeans are considered a western wear by conservative families and hence Radha's parents did not allow her to wear them. However, her husband did not oppose them, so she

wore a pair of jeans for the first time in her life after marriage. This can be interpreted as how fathers and husbands are pivotal figures of authority in women's lives, who control the woman's sense of agency. Here the father relinquishes control of the daughter to the husband, like handing over a piece of luggage for safekeeping. Thus, men are the gatekeepers of women's agency in a family and therefore in the society. The next theme explores participants' view of how this patriarchal control by men in families foster a culture of disempowerment of women and enable harassment by men in the public space.

11.2.3. Subordinate theme: Breaking the cycle - Parenting of sons as key to social change

The participants believe that the culture of harassment and disempowerment of women starts in a family. Here they describe how as mothers of daughters they are not empowered to initiate cultural change; this must come from parenting of sons. For example, responding to a question on the root of harassment, Radha says -

> I think the main reason is the family in which an individual is brought up. How the women are treated there, the role of women – how is it defined? All this will influence their mindset. If a child is seeing oh women are being supressed and this is how it has been going on they'll take it as a common thing and their minds will not evolve. [] The main conditioning happens from the family background. That's how I look at it. Because even if a family is, like there's no violence, even if the women are being subjected to verbal suppression, it all goes into the mind of the child that this is how to behave in future. It goes into the conditioning. [ ] I think parents of boys also need to talk to them. How not to behave with a girl. Yeah so it's not just preparing the girl child, we have to prepare the boys also. Because my sister has a son. I have many cousins who are much younger than me. So I do have these conversations with them. I share some of my experiences with them also so they know how a female will feel. I think

it's better to talk to them and inform them how the other person feels. Otherwise you can't expect them to understand right?

Radha interprets that there are two aspects to parenting – the first one is through implicit learned behaviour where children learn from the way women in the family are treated – this becomes the foundation of their future interactions with the opposite sex. It can be interpreted that Radha perceives the suppression of women's voices in a family as equivalent to a form of violence, and that such an environment can be as lethal as an environment of violence as far as the child's conditioning is concerned. This meaning-making indicates that Radha perceives that even in the role of mothers, women are helpless and are imprisoned by the male world and men's behaviour towards them even inside the boundaries of a family. Therefore, Radha believes the second aspect to parenting is to talk explicitly to sons regarding harassment. When she refers to "conversations" she has with the younger boys of her extended family, her actions can be interpreted as her attempt to break the cycle of the entitled male upbringing. Radha's rhetorical question "you can't expect them to understand right?" can be interpreted as how she perceives men's world to be entitled and so excluded from women's realities, that the men have to be taught the very fundamentals of empathy. This can also be interpreted as how men are conditioned to think of women as lesser beings and not fellow humans with feelings like themselves.

Radha's view is illustrated by Jaya's experience who describes how her husband's worldview shaped by his upbringing impacts her life and her daughter's –

It is the deep-rooted patriarchy for one it is there. Because I see it in my own house you know like where my husband himself is making like he's a boy so he's allowed to do this, she's a girl so she's not allowed to do this. That is like it is there in every house. And he's also come from a very rigid family where you know the girls were not allowed to study after a certain

level. They were not allowed to go to the college also. Basic education was what that was needed. And during their monthly periods they were asked to stay away and not touch things. So he comes from that kind of family where the women were always marginalised. So, I think it is the basic unit of the family. Whether you are educated or not educated it doesn't matter. It's like this – you grow up seeing what your parents are doing and you learn that. That's always there with you unconsciously whether you want to rationally you're talking *ki* I'm a very progressive man, I allow my daughter to do this; I allow my wife – "allowing" like you know he's giving the permission to his daughter and his wife to do things. He's rationalising that okay because I'm a progressive husband, I'm educated, you know, my parents never allowed my sister to do this. So, it starts from the family, it starts – the root is the upbringing. The whole mentality is there, it should change. And, yeah, even the educated people, even the elite people differentiate a lot when it comes – I think it's just there in our soil (chuckles) you know, deep-rooted in our soil that we have to come out of it.

Jaya puts "deep-rooted patriarchy" as the crux of women's issues and backs it up with experiential evidence when she says, "Because I see it in my own house". Here, Jaya comes across as a mute spectator of her husband's discrimination between their son and daughter. This also gives an insight into the power balance in the house – Jaya's husband determines and doles out measures of freedom to the women in the family; Jaya and her daughter must exist within that freedom, although they have found ways to circumvent the boundaries. There is an aloofness in Jaya's extract as she psychoanalyses her husband like a neutral psychotherapist. This aloofness can also be interpreted as resignation to one's fate because Jaya's and her daughter's being-in-the-world is entrapped by the husband's worldview. In turn, his worldview is inherited – he is using the parenting he received as a guideline to steer his family, similar to how Jaya learnt and unlearnt from her mother about parenting

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daughters. It can be interpreted that Jaya has now reconciled to the fact that her husband's self-perception as a progressive man is flawed and cannot be changed because he believes he has bestowed her and their daughter with greater freedom than his father ever gave his sisters. So, Jaya concludes that this cycle can be broken only if changes are initiated at a family level – "the root is in the upbringing". Her statement can be interpreted as the key to such changes lie in the parenting of sons. However, it can be interpreted that Jaya does not believe this change is possible; there is a sense of inescapability when Jaya describes social prejudices as "deep-rooted in our soil" – it is as if this patriarchal ideology is a visceral part of one's anatomy, entering the bloodstream through the food one grows and eats; as inescapable as the hard-wired DNA.

Veena too questions men's upbringing and suggests that there is a direct connection between men's parenting and their tendency to harass. She recollects -

There have been times when I've been walking from college and like there's someone who is exposing himself, over there and you just learn to turn your eye and go. So it's not only, like it's not just harassment but I mean like when you look at a man, I try to analyse this all the time. When I look at man for example, I'm looking at his eyes. You know, how bright are his eyes. I'm looking at his hair, I'm probably looking at his smile. I'm NOT looking at his crotch. I JUST WOULDN'T be interested in looking at his crotch! Probably the one thing that I like in a man is whether they match their shoes and their belt. So that's what Im looking at, I'm looking at his shoes, I'm looking at his belt. So I'm just, I'm just trying to, and at no point I'm objectifying the man. I am admiring the man, okay, and I am probably fascinated by the man if I'm looking at a good-looking man. But for men it's not like THIS! They will invariably look at your breasts. And I think mentally they've already undressed you and I've seen that look a little too open in life to recognise it. Because for men it doesn't matter. [ ] It's a little weird. Because I think they're brought up very weird you know? They're never taught to look

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at things in a different way. I think we're taught the softer angles in life. Women are always taught the softer angles in life. Men, I mean I'm particularly speaking about Indian men, they're never taught anything. I just don't think they're taught. [ ] That was one thing I promised myself like if I ever, ever, ever have a son, I'm going to raise him better.

When Veena says "I try to analyse this all the time", it can be interpreted that she finds it inexplicable that an adult could behave the way harassers do. She attempts to get an insight into such behaviour by comparing it to her own reactions when she views a man – she concludes her view as a woman is possibly romantic "admiring, fascinated" but non-sexual. However, she interprets the male gaze on the woman as always sexually objectifying. She concludes that these gendered behaviours are a direct result of parenting. Her use of "softer angles" can be interpreted as how women are inculcated with human qualities of empathy, and social behaviour, whilst men are brought up like brutes ("Because I think they're brought up very weird you know? I'm particularly speaking about Indian men, they're never taught anything. I just don't think they're taught."). She further elaborates -

Somehow I feel that if you're huh it all boils down to what your nucleus is as a family.[ ] In India you will always see the mother taking her son to the ladies bathroom. You will never see the father taking the son to the gents. Why not? You know so I mean, in the child's head, he's already in the ladies' area. I mean so he doesn't feel that this is not his territory. A father would never take his daughter to the men's loo, right? So we don't have that thought process, like a woman will never enter a men's area. Right? Because we are conditioned that way. But as a child itself, I think the mothers are unable to let go of their sons when they're younger. It's like you know probably the need for them to do everything for the son. Like the girls are made to be independent. I don't see that for sons. I could be wrong because I'm raising a daughter myself. But I see that with my nephews you know. So if my nephew has had something to eat, he won't pick up the plate. But my niece will. It's only when I go and

raise my voice like listen you're gonna pick up your plate, and you're gonna wash it and you're gonna keep it. So I think the disparity is right there. It's subtle, it's so subtle that the boys don't pick up on it

Veena's observations indicate routine parenting activities are primarily assigned as the mother's responsibility. It can be interpreted that Veena perceives mothers inculcate a sense of entitlement in sons, and as women, are enacting the discourse that they are service providers to men, in this case, their sons ("the need for them to do everything for the son"). Thus, it can be inferred from Veena's meaning-making that from a young age, men cannot distinguish or respect boundaries; on the other hand, daughters are taught to draw and remain within strict boundaries. Also, this parenting style instils a disproportionate sense of entitlement in men but ironically at the same time, it also disempowers them by making them overly dependent on their mothers and later on their wives. This disempowerment in turn manifests as men seeing women as service providers and care givers, and men as entitled receivers of this service.

Thus, mothers of daughters feel change can be brought about only if the parenting of sons undergo a change, and this can be brought about by mothers of sons – thus, it can be interpreted that the key to social change with regard to harassment is in the hands of women.

11.3.   Chapter Summary

This chapter analysed and interpreted interview transcripts of mothers of teenage daughters. The mothers discussed their own experiences of harassment and their coping strategies, as well as how they are empowering their daughters to cope with harassment. Six themes were developed and discussed under two superordinate themes as follows –

Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme
Harassment as an inescapable existential component of womanhood	Harassment as a rite of passage into adulthood for women
	Coping with harassment as mothers
	Passing on the baton – preparing daughters to cope with harassment
Prisoners of a man's world	Women's agency defined by men
	Protecting agency - coping with multiple levels of emotional isolation
	Breaking the cycle of harassment – parenting of sons as key to change

Chapter 12: Implications of the findings of the Experiential Study

The results of the Experiential Study indicated that for the single women, their meaning-making of harassment experiences was centred around the self, i.e. specifically what it meant to them as individuals, although they believed that their experience was common to all women. In contrast, the mothers reflected on the harassment experiences in the larger context of womanhood. This indicated that given the longer life experience of the participants of the Mothers group, who are all older than the participants of the Single Women group, they tended to adopt a longitudinal meaning-making of harassment. This also indicated their view that harassment was an inescapable reality.

It can be inferred that for the Single women group, heightened fear and sense of identity were primary issues of concern, whereas for the Mothers group, the predominant issues were compromise in sense of agency and the inescapability of harassment. It can be interpreted that although participants of the Mothers group also experienced harassment, the lack of the hypervigilance and heightened fear in their meaning-making indicated that they experienced lesser frequency of harassment compared to the younger women.

The findings also indicated that disempowerment is an overpowering impact of street harassment manifesting in the internal and external worlds of all the participants. This is represented in Figure 19—it illustrates how disempowerment interlinks the different themes, which are subsequently discussed.

Figure 19: Schematic representation of themes in operation for all participants
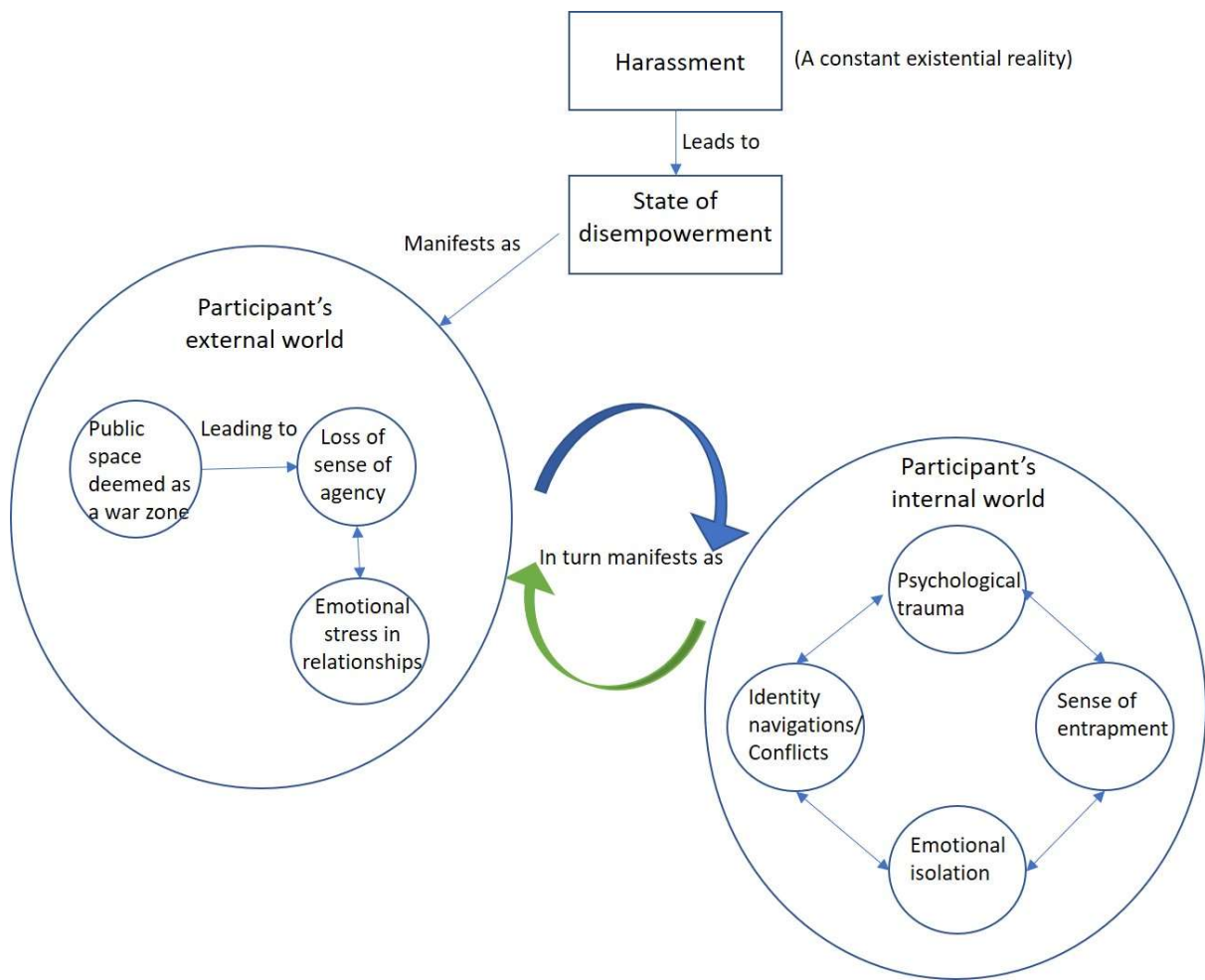
First, disempowerment manifested in the participant's construction of their external world. The Single Women group found the public space more threatening than the participants of the Mothers group did. The comparison of the public space to a war zone was implicit in the extraordinary precautions taken by the participants of the Single Women group whenever they accessed public spaces. They armed themselves with weapons, they displayed hypervigilance, and carefully selected the clothes they wore as if camouflaging themselves. Thus, accessing a public space was comparable to a military reconnaissance mission. In general, all participants from both the groups viewed the public space as an unsafe zone. This

indicated that street harassment disempowered individuals by disrupting their fundamental right to freedom of movement. This is supported by Bowman's (1993) observation that harassment denies women an equal opportunity to participate in "the affairs of the polis" by preventing them to safely move and assemble in public spaces (p.521). Although this perspective is contextualised to the North American socioculture, it is valid even in the Indian context—the Experiential Study demonstrated how participants, especially the single women, self-regulated their movements in the public space to remain safe. For example, Durga selected speaking session opportunities only after ascertaining that she knew someone in the group and had someone trustworthy to drop her back home. On the other hand, Mamatha, who had no control over her work timings, was chastised by her mother for working late, causing Mamatha emotional stress. Radha from the Mother's group stopped using public transport for her late evening commute to home after her experience of harassment. This disempowered her by making her dependent on her husband. These accounts demonstrated that self-regulation of movement to avoid harassment had a direct impact on the participants' access to social and economic opportunities.

The analysis indicated that disempowerment due to harassment also impacted the participants' overall sense of agency. Sense of agency is the cognition that one is responsible for one's own actions (Brancazio, 2019). It was proposed that sense of agency has two levels – the primitive minimal sense of agency and the higher narrative sense of agency (Brancazio, 2019). Minimal sense of agency is described as the actions produced by an individual in a pre-reflective state; there is "no need for introspection to assess whether one is the source of one's own actions" Brancazio, 2019, p. 426); for example, drinking a glass of water because one is thirsty. Minimal sense of agency is representative of "minimal sense of self" that involves a cognitive interaction between the individual and the environment they are in (Brancazio, 2019, p. 427). On the other hand, the narrative sense of agency is a more

conscious, deliberate process where the individual produces actions consciously based on their meaning-making of past experiences, their belief systems and values, and other external factors such as socio-cultural discourses (Brancazio, 2019).

It was proposed that gender has a strong influence on the narrative sense of agency—gender archetypes in a culture reinforce gender oppression thus constraining the narrative sense of agency of the oppressed gender (Brancazio, 2019). For example, in Euro-centric cultures women are represented in archetypes of "the temptress, the virgin, the mother, and the sage" (Brancazio, 2019, p.433). This is similar to the findings of the Sociocultural Study which demonstrated that in the Indian sociocultural context women are often represented in cultural templates of the *sanskari* or the traditional Indian woman who is virtuous and virginal (similar to the 'virgin' of the Euro-centric archetype), and the westernised vamp (the 'temptress' in the Euro-centric archetype) who is sexually liberated and therefore considered to have loose morals. When individuals are repeatedly exposed to these archetypes, they shape their goals, actions and intentions based on these templates, thus influencing their sense-making of their existential realities (Brancazio, 2019). For example, in the context of street harassment in India, the participants described how even something as inconsequential as choosing the clothes one wanted to wear for the day was a complex decision-making process. Durga and Mamatha in the Single Women group described how they chose clothes according to the public space they wanted to access, so that they could remain inconspicuous in a crowd, without drawing sexually motivated attention from men. Jaya in the Mothers group described how the clothes she and her daughter could wear was often monitored by her husband. Radha and Asha also described how they do not allow their teenage daughters to wear clothes such as shorts outside their homes. These decisions are rooted in the wider discourse, as confirmed in the Sociocultural Study (see Chapter 6) that the Indian male gaze determines if a woman is virtuous or not; if the male perceived a woman as "westernised", a

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trait often encoded in the woman's clothes, then he felt entitled to receive sexual gratification from her without her consent. Thus, the participants regulated their sense of agency, or in some cases family members of the participants were compelled to regulate the participant's choices, in order to avoid this sexualised male gaze.

This need for participants to regulate their agency can also be explained from the dualistic concept of shame and honour. In a study involving South Asian women living in Britain, Gilbert, Gilbert and Sanghera (2004) found that the notions of shame and honour contributed towards subordination and entrapment in relationships. It was proposed that shame, apart from being an internal emotion, can also be external where it is "related to how one thinks others feel and think about the self" (Gilbert, Gilbert & Sanghera, 2004, p. 110). In the context of harassment, the link between harassment and external shame was demonstrated when participants often ruminated about how they would be viewed by potential harassers and arranged their appearance accordingly. For example, Mamatha described in detail how she examined herself with a critical eye with the point-of-view of a harasser, and ensured her top was long enough to cover her waist and hips, and she always draped a scarf over her t-shirt to ensure the curve of breasts was concealed. It was posited that such increased focus on one's appearance triggered self-objectification, and this in turn increased body shame and body surveillance in women (Moya-Garofano & Moya, 2018). In the context of harassment, previous studies have indicated a positive correlation between experiencing street harassment and body shame, body surveillance and self-objectification in women (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; Moya-Garofano, Rodriguez-Bailon, Moya & Megias, 2018; Lord, 2009). Based on the findings of the current Experiential Study it can be argued that in the Indian cultural context, external shame drives self-objectification which is employed as a safety mechanism by women to avoid harassment. This perspective enhances the existing understanding of the relationship between self-objectification and coping strategies adopted by women who

experience harassment. For example, it was found that women who employed positive coping strategies to counter harassment such as confronting the harasser showed lesser levels of objectification (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008). Also, women who reacted to verbal harassment with positive affect, i.e. happiness and less anger, showed higher levels of objectification (Moya-Garofano, et al., 2018). In these examples, self-objectification was positioned as the result of the individual's coping strategy to harassment; in the Indian context, self-objectification by itself is adopted as an avoidance coping strategy.

Shame is also a reflected attribute, where one's actions and appearance can bring shame to the family or community, and similarly and the actions of others can bring shame to self (Gilbert, Gilbert & Sanghera, 2004). It was posited that in patriarchal societies the men are shamed for not ensuring their women operated within cultural boundaries (Gilbert, Gilbert & Sanghera, 2004). The dispositive analysis in ~~Study 1~~ demonstrated how the idea of an ideal Indian woman and her cultural boundaries are constructed by the Indian male gaze. Thus, it can be argued that apart from concerns about safety of their daughters/wives, fathers and husbands regulated the agency of the women in the family to constrain them within the accepted cultural boundaries, so that the family is not shamed in the community. This was demonstrated by the heated arguments between Vaishnavi and her father, when her father objected to her wearing shorts in public spaces or staying out late; here, the father insisted that whilst he respected Vaishnavi's freedom, he was concerned about how society would view her. This was also demonstrated when Aditi described how landlords are reluctant to rent their properties to single women, lest the women engaged in activities such as premarital sex that are considered a cultural taboo, which could reflect dishonourably on the landlord.

These multiple aspects of disempowerment (see Figure 19) of the participants also had an impact on their internal world, i.e. on their emotional and psychological states. It can be argued that there was a constant feedback between the participant's external and internal

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world, reinforcing and influencing each other. This can be explored through Young's (2008) proposal that disempowerment is implemented through psychological control of an oppressed group by a power-dominant group. Although Young (2008) has postulated this theory in the context of global elite versus common citizens, this can also be applied to the current context of harassment where women can be considered as the oppressed group. This resonates with Tuerkheimer's (1997) argument that "Sexual objectification and terror are integral pieces of women's psychological oppression" (p. 167). This psychological control is achieved through three levels of mental disempowerment: normalising the abnormal; learned helplessness; the Betwixt and Between syndrome (Young, 2008).

In the case of 'normalising the abnormal', it was noted that almost all the participants were subjected to harassment at a young age, a common form being men exposing themselves to young girls and children in the vicinity of schools and colleges. These incidents happened during the daytime, in public spaces such as roads and streets, and often in the presence of other members of the public. This paedophilic behaviour was reportedly witnessed by both the participant groups when the women were young students. It is to be noted that the two participant groups belonged to two different generations – the single women are millennials born in the 1980s; the mothers belong to the 1970s generation. This indicates that men exposing themselves to children was a common occurrence across generations, and this 'abnormal' behaviour had now become normalised in the society. This was further confirmed by the fact that no one came to Radha's rescue when a man masturbated against her body in a bus, an attack that was witnessed by several people. It can be argued that this wall of silence, either born of apathy or fear, whilst enabling and emboldening the harassers, also normalises harassment.

This normalisation of abnormal and criminal behaviour resulted in the second form of mental disempowerment – learned helplessness – where an oppressed group believes they have no

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control over what happens to them (Young, 2008). In the context of harassment, learned helplessness was demonstrated through the themes of emotional isolation and sense of entrapment. The public space was constructed as an unpredictable and dangerous warzone, where the women had no control over how men behaved towards them. Also, the participants described how they did not get the support of their family or the state institutions even if they wanted to follow due process. Learned helplessness diminishes the self-determination instinct and the individual then begins to normalise assaults and acts of injustice (Young, 2008). This was reflected in the participants' resigned acceptance of harassment as a part of their womanhood journey. Thus, many of their life-decisions that required traversing a public space was tailored to avoid harassment, for example, clothes, mode of transport, job opportunities, and social outings. Indeed, their sense of hopelessness was so deep-rooted that the mothers taught daughters to expect harassment and advised them on ways to cope with it. In other words, disempowerment due to harassment was propagated from one generation to the next.

The constant erosion of the women's agency and self-determination led to state of frequent construction and deconstruction of the participants' sense of self in the private and public sphere. This conflict is described as the Betwixt and Between syndrome, the third form of mental disempowerment as proposed by Young (2008). In this situation the oppressed find themselves in an unfamiliar zone that is removed from their "sense of self and reality"; this results in disorientation and chaos till a new reality emerges (Young, 2008, para. 21). In the context of harassment, this syndrome was illustrated by the theme that explored the participants' navigation of their self-identities and identity conflicts. This was especially pronounced in the participants of the Single Women group. The participants identified themselves as feminists, and had strong self-constructs as financially independent, articulate, privileged women. Yet this self-construct crumbled in the public space where they felt they

were reduced to merely sexual objects by men. For example, Durga explained how she was "shackled" by the thought that the illiterate driver of the autorickshaw in which she was travelling could overpower her if he chose to, and she with all her education and feminist ideology and so-called power, would be at his mercy. Mamatha felt diminished because of infantalisation by her family members – for example, seeking permission with much negotiation to go on a solo holiday, despite being a financially independent adult. These experiences resonate with Tuerkheimer's (1997) interpretation of her experience where a normal greeting with a familiar male escalated:

> When I passed a man who works in the law school building, a man I see in the halls often, we both said hello to each other. He asked how I was doing. I said fine, and asked how he was doing.

> And what he said is this: "I'm OK sexy, but I would sure be doing better if I could taste you. " At that moment, all the feminist theories, all the

> understanding, all the insights in the world didn't matter...What mattered

> was that he had just told me that he would be doing better if he could

> taste me (p. 193).

Tuerkheimer (1997) termed this as "spirit murder" and "psychic disempowerment" (p.189) and considered such harassment as an assault to the very core of a woman's self-construct. Thus, the participants constantly oscillated between their wholly formed self-identities and the reductionist ways in which they were perceived by society.

Studies into street harassment have posited that gender-based harassment is a manifestation of power, and in particular it is a way of maintaining the status quo of male dominance in public spheres by creating an threatening spatial context for women (Berdahl, 2007;

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Bowman, 1995; Gardner, 1995; Kissling, 1991; Thomson, 1993; Raeburn, 2016; Tuerkheimer, 1997). Kissling (1991) described harassment of women as "part of a larger strategy of social control through sexual terrorism" (p.455). In this regard, the mental disempowerment of women who experience harassment can also be examined under the lens of the approach-inhibition theory which explores the relationship between power and behaviour and posits that greater power results in positive affect whilst reduced power correlates to negative affect (Keltner, Gruenfeld & Anderson, 2003). People with higher power tend to pay more attention to rewards, have positive emotions, they show automatic cognition, and in general their behaviour is rooted in their personality trait (Keltner, Gruenfeld & Anderson, 2003). Conversely, people with reduced power pay more attention to threats, they display inhibited social behaviour, negative emotions dominate, and they have controlled cognition (Keltner, Gruenfeld & Anderson, 2003). In particular, regarding the inhibited social behaviour of people with less power, the action-inhibition theory posits - "The behavioural inhibition system is equivalent to an alarm–threat system. Inhibition is activated by punishment, threat, and uncertainty" (Keltner, Gruenfeld & Anderson, 2003, p. 268). In the context of street harassment where the women are in a position of reduced power, the behavioural inhibition is illustrated by the participants' construction of the public space as a threatening warzone where encounters with men who are strangers can be an unpredictable experience, ranging from mere stares to physical assaults. Thus, the women's behaviour in a public sphere was not driven by their personality traits but was a result of persistent controlled cognition, where they made elaborate strategies to avoid harassment. This is supported by Koskela's (1999) argument that "the concept of space is a social construction" (p.112) where space is not just a reflection of physical freedom of movement or distribution of bodies, but it is where gender-based power contexts are performed. Hence fear of sexual victimisation alters the very construction of spatial realities for women – thus some spaces

and time of day connote masculine power – for example, the crowded streets of a city and night times are constructed as unsafe by women and they avoid accessing these places; the result is that these spaces are populated by more men, their oppressors (Koskela, 1999).

Further, the approach-inhibition theory posits that the inhibition behavioural system resulted in negative affective states such as anxiety and heightened vigilance. This psychological trauma was especially pronounced in the Single Women group, where participants reported a heightened sense of fear, especially of rape, hypervigilance, and in some cases, paranoia. This fear in turn made the participants hypervigilant to threats, with some of them visualising scenarios of possible attack and their escape routes, for example, Mamatha explicitly visualised a scenario of being attacked inside a taxi by the driver and imagined herself jumping out of a moving car. The study also revealed that family members of the women also displayed heightened anxiety for the safety of their daughters. For example, Aditi who lives on her own in a different city from her parents, described how her mother would stay awake waiting for Aditi's call informing that she'd reached home, and this practice continued even when Aditi lived in a different country for a brief period of time. Likewise, both Mamatha and Vaishnavi described the anxiety, stress and guilt they felt when they reached home late because their parents would wait up for them. In the Mothers group, both Asha and Jaya described "sixth sense" instincts regarding potential attacks – Jaya especially described how she had a "feeling" of being watched whilst taking a shower which turned out to be true.

These threat perceptions of the participants can also be explained by Ferraro's (1996) theory of fear of sexual assault, where it was posited that the fear of sexual assault or rape operated as a master fear in women, and this made them more afraid of crimes than men. For example, this is illustrated by Durga's repeated use of the phrase "should not get raped". This fear of victimisation is consistent with the findings of Macmillan, Neirobisz and Welsh (2000) who found that "stranger harassment is a key determinant of perceptions of safety among women"

(p.319). Likewise, Fairchild and Rudman (2008) found that street harassment has a positive correlation with women's fear of rape as well as their risk assessment of potential rape. It can be proposed that in the Indian context this fear of sexual assault also extends to parents of single women, where they are afraid for their daughters' safety.

These findings of the Experiential Study show that the effects of street harassment are insidious and have a far-reaching existential impact on women—from a woman's core construct of identity, to her mental health, relationships, access to opportunities, and overall quality of life.

Chapter 13: Overall Discussion

One of the overarching ambitions of this research was to illustrate how street harassment is a form of sustained violence against women. The experiences of the participants indicated that street harassment starts in early childhood – for example, participants described being groped or witnessing men exhibiting their penises on the road as young, school-going children. Mothers described how they are preparing their daughters to cope with street harassment, which was considered an inevitable part of an Indian woman's life. The concept of the "continuum of violence" (Kelly, 1987) illustrated in the diagram depicting the various forms of sexual violence women face in their lifetimes (Refer Figure 1, Chapter 1, Section 1.1) can be revisited to include street harassment as shown in the Figure 20 below. Based on the participant's experiences, street harassment can be depicted as a constant reality from childhood through women's reproductive age.

Figure 20: Plotting street harassment on women's lifetime axis (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002)
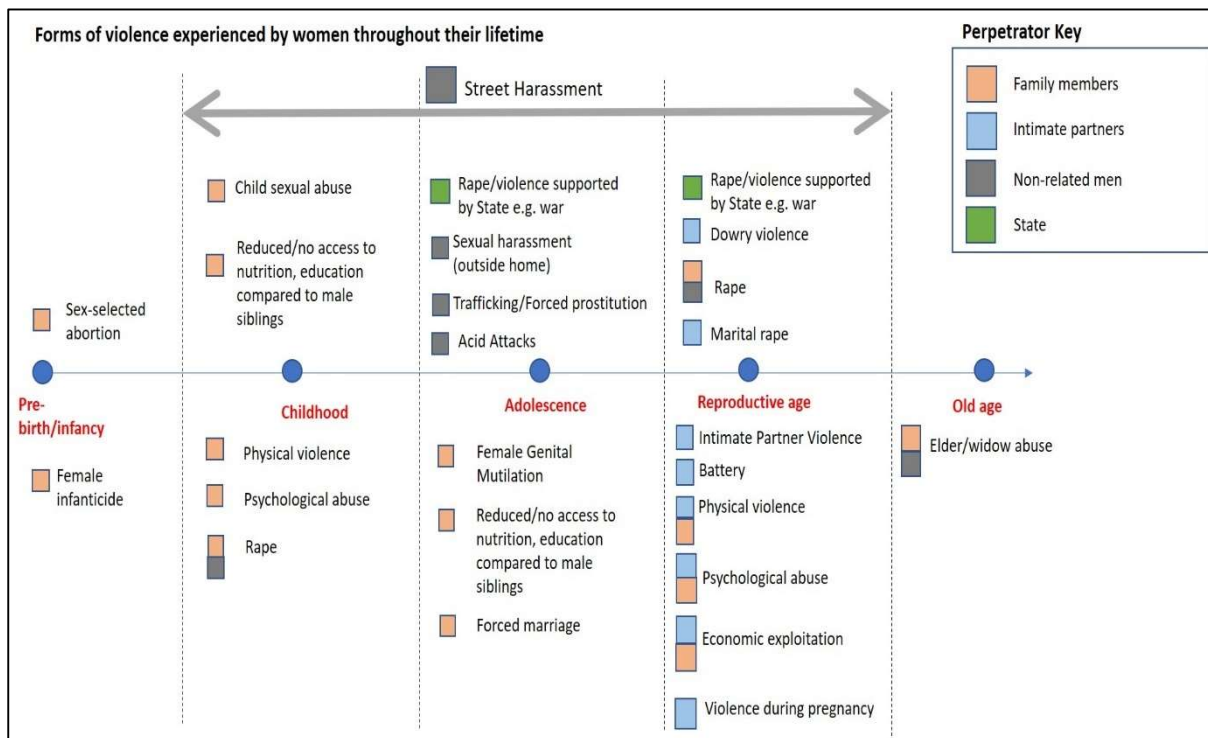
An important observation made during the course of this research was that street harassment did not come under the purview of violence against women (VAW) discourse, laws, or research. A result of this exclusion was that street harassment research evolved independently and in parallel to the developments on VAW. This research has taken the first step to provide a starting point for studying street harassment as a specific kind of violence against women by leveraging VAW lenses. For example, street harassment was theorised in the context of Heiss's (1998) integrated, ecological framework of VAW in Chapter 3. This allowed for the positioning of street harassment as a social problem rather than an individual man-on-woman crime. This positioning further justified and strengthened the two-layer structure of this research and emphasised the criticality of the Sociocultural Study. The findings of the Sociocultural study in conjunction with the findings of Experiential study is represented in the following Venn diagram (see Figure 21 below).

Figure 21: Representation of findings of Experiential Study and Sociocultural Study
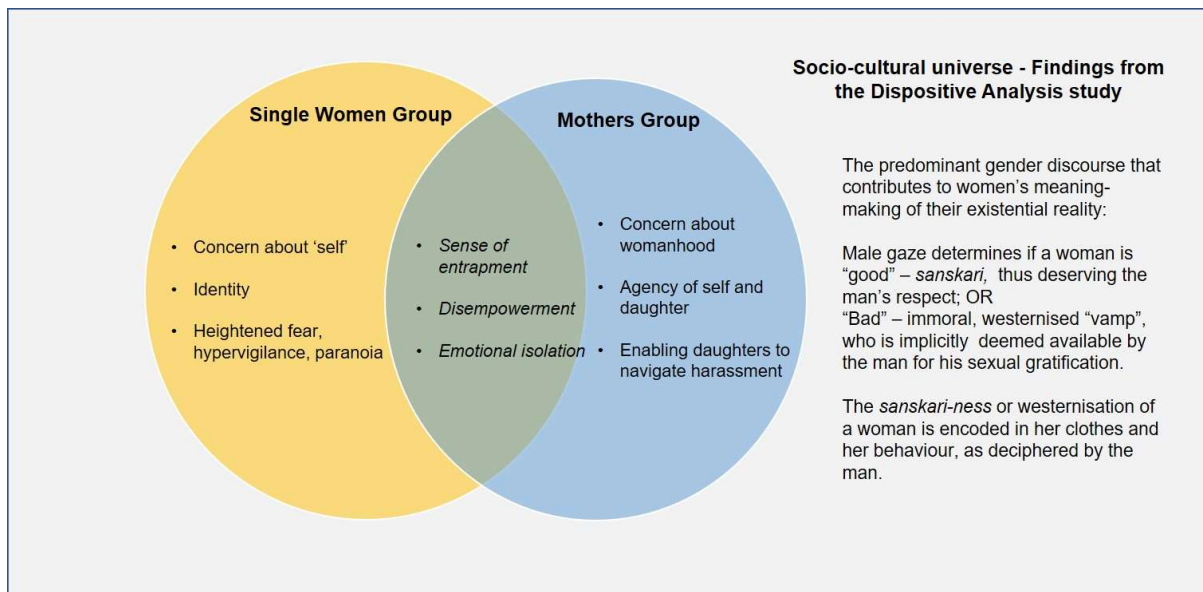
The intersection of the circles shows the experiential commonality across both the participant groups of the Experiential Study. The outer area of the Venn represents the sociocultural universe (as discussed in the findings of the dispositive analysis in Sociocultural Study) within which the participants are culturally situated.

These findings give further credence to the 'Triad' of street harassment mediators – sexual objectification, sexism, and rape myth acceptance (see Chapter 3, section 3.2). For example, the findings from the dispositive analysis of Sociocultural Study indicated that the gendered concept of woman and womanhood was constructed through the Indian male gaze and is deeply ingrained in the Indian psyche. This manifested as ambivalent sexism where women's physical, sociological, and psychological identities were encoded with cultural markers which was used by the Indian man to determine if the woman was "good" or *sanskari*, or "bad" or immoral. These cultural markers were encoded in the woman's clothes, her socialising behaviour, and her religious beliefs, indicating a pervasive culture of sexual objectification, as if a woman is the sum of her appearance, whilst erasing her inner thoughts, emotional

world, and identity. This male-gaze construction in turn determined how an Indian man behaved with a woman. If the Indian man assessed that a woman was "bad", he asserted his sexual entitlement over her in various ways without her consent, illustrating rape myth acceptance, where the woman was positioned as a seductress and that she was 'asking for it'. This male gaze discourse construction was evident in Experiential Study analyses where it had a strong impact on the participants' meaning-making of their everyday existential reality in the context of harassment—for example, participants of the Single Women group presented varying levels of self-objectification, where they saw themselves in the eyes of the potential male harasser and regulated their choice of clothes so as to remain inconspicuous in a public space. This can be explained through the concept of "derivatization" where an individual is reduced to or becomes a mere derivative i.e. the "reflection, projection, or expression" of another's desires and beliefs (Cahill, 2009, p.14). This concept was used by Cahill (2009) to theorise sexual violence and objectification—for example, theorising rape as an example of derivatization, it was observed –

> He projects upon her being the reflection of his own desires, and nothing but those desires: she who must become what he wants (a rape victim), is incapable of being anything other than that. The (temporary) totality of the obscuring of her subjectivity speaks to the utter foolishness of any mind/body distinction with regard to the experience. She is attacked as an embodied subject, as a whole entity, with particular focus on her sexual being (Cahill, 2009, p. 25).

Street harassment in India as a result of the male gaze construction can also be explained by the concept of derivatization, where the man in the public space projects his sexual desires, hostile sexism, and other gender biases on any woman on the street and views her mostly as a sexual being and nothing else.

Sexism is an integral aspect of a patriarchal society where "violence is the most extreme expression of patriarchy" and is used to subjugate women into men's service (Rodriguez-Menes & Safranoff, 2012, p.585). This subjugation is done directly by forcing obedience through violence or indirectly by restricting and reshaping opportunities and limiting freedom of women (Rodriguez-Menes & Safranoff, 2012). The participants' experiences indicate that street harassment is insidious because it results in both forms of subjugation – it inflicts physical violence (example, Jaya was groped viciously, and Radha was masturbated against) as well as psychological violence (Mamatha's paranoia of sexual assault; Durga's preoccupation with rape). It also curtails women's freedom of movement and access to opportunities (for example: Durga refuses to buy a house and live independently because of safety concerns; Jaya's husband places restrictions on her and their daughter's movements). These findings align with the UN's (1993) definition of Violence Against Women:

> act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (UN, 1993, p. 3 Article 1)

Based on these findings, it is recommended that any future research into street harassment must position street harassment as a distinct form of VAWG. In this regard it is worthy to note that during the course of this PhD, the UK government has already taken the first step to include their findings on street harassment in their future strategy for VAWG (Women and Equalities Committee, 2018). Applying the lens of VAWG on street harassment positions the act as a social violence rather than an invisible individual problem – this opens doors to examine various forms of sociocultural enablers, from legal definitions to linguistic constructions of the act. For example, in the Indian context, based on the participants' experiences, an adult male exposing himself in view of school girls (Durga's experience), or

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a man masturbating against a woman in a bus (Radha's experience) – neither of these horrific acts should be constructed in everyday parlance as mere 'eve teasing'. This social positioning also makes way to examine the causal factors of street harassment and propose suitable interventions - for example, sensitization of media portrayals of gender stereotypes, or how families discuss gender roles in their homes.

The next section discusses some of the specific areas that street harassment research could focus on – these recommendations are based on the findings of this research.

13.1. Future research directions

The findings of this study indicated potentially important areas for future research on the subject of street harassment. First, some of the participants displayed elaborate catastrophising - for example Durga's constant rumination about avoiding rape and the ways in which she might be attacked; Mamatha described paranoid thoughts during mundane taxi rides and her paranoia whilst staying in hotel rooms which compelled her to search for hidden cameras. All participants described how they viewed male strangers in public spaces as a potential threat by default. This kind of catastrophising, anxiety, and rumination are core constructs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and paranoia (Freeman et al., 2013). Therefore, it is critical to do a longitudinal study to understand if women who are exposed to long periods of sustained harassment develop PTSD and paranoia symptoms. In this context, given that mothers prepared daughters to live in an environment of harassment, studies should also research if paranoia could be induced from one generation to the next.

Second, the social rank theory of depression posits that when individuals perceive themselves in a lower rank in a social hierarchy, they experience feelings of defeat and entrapment, which in turn leads to depression (Carvalho et al., 2013; Wetherall, Robb, O'Conner, 2019). In this study, the participants often described their emotional isolation whilst coping with

harassment and their sense of entrapment in what they constructed as a man's world. They also described a sense of defeat because they felt harassment could not be stopped. Thus, strong correlations between the participants' descriptions and the symptomology of depression under the social rank theory model are indicated. Therefore, it is recommended that future research should aim to understand the direct correlations between depression and the sustained experience of harassment.

Third, specific to Indian context, a quantitative study (N = 39745) by Mishra (2013) proposed that the disempowerment of Indian women can be measured using four dimensions: fertility decisions, economic decisions, household decisions, and personal decisions. Each decision category had two to three questions to determine if the participant had a say in the decision-making process. A participant was considered disempowered only if she had no say. The average age of women in the sample was 36 years old; the questions were contextualised to married Indian women and pertained to their family life, for example, household purchases, healthcare, and family finances. Thus, the method of this study hinged on an inherent assumption that disempowerment of women occurred primarily in their households. The current IPA study on harassment indicated that women can also be disempowered by social conditions that limit their agency. Thus, women may be empowered in their personal lives but are disempowered in the public space due to harassment. Also, Mishra's (2013) study considered disempowerment to be a binary state – a woman is disempowered only if she has no say at all. This simplistic view ignores scenarios of compromise and coercion where the decision was not taken independently by the woman. The IPA study on harassment indicated that disempowerment has both behavioural and psychological implications. Therefore, it is proposed that the instrument used to measure disempowerment in Mishra's (2013) study be amended a) to include scenarios of coercion b) include specific questions about disempowerment due to harassment.

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Fourth, for quantitative studies on street harassment, there are no standardised instruments that can be adopted for cross-cultural studies. The findings of this study indicated that many aspects of harassment such as fear, anxiety, and disempowerment in women are common across cultures and generations. Therefore, future researchers should develop a standardised instrument that will help highlight street harassment as a universal problem for women.

Fifth, all the important studies into street harassment implicate men as the perpetrators. Even so, men's perspective on street harassment has rarely been captured in research. It is important to understand the dynamics of how (and if) harassment empowers and entitles men; why do they indulge in harassment; how do they choose their victims, and finally, explore the psychological profile of men who resort to harassment.

Sixth, the findings of this study indicated that the urban culture of a given city contributed significantly to women's construction of the public space. For example, Durga mentioned growing up in a place where harassment was unheard of and posited that it was because there was a greater presence of women in the public and semi-public spaces. Research into such urban culture would be useful in understanding how to construct safe and inclusive spaces for all citizens.

With respect to the Sociocultural Study, previous studies on female stereotypes in Bollywood have examined specific female characters in specific movies (Bandyopadhyay, 2015; Chatterjee, 2016; Chatterjee, 2019; Gupta, 2015; Sharma & Malhotra, 2018). These studies have been in the form of critiques and essays. This study enhances the existing body of research by using dispositive analysis, a novel method, to explore the construction of stereotypes and operationalisation of discourses at a granular scene-level. The study provides a starting point for future research on Bollywood movies where the link between Bollywood representations and real-life discourses can be studied in depth, both from quantitative and

qualitative angles. The collective findings could have a social impact in terms of sensitising film makers, including scriptwriters, directors and producers on the impact of their films on gender discourses in India.

13.2. Limitations of the current research

One of the inherent drawbacks of this research was its bias/dependency on English-speaking participants due to logistical issues of translation. The recruitment was based on opportunistic sampling, and thus, the participants were all highly educated, urban women who identified themselves as privileged. Whilst this does not diminish their experiences in any way, this study unfortunately excluded the voices of Indian women who spoke vernacular languages.

Another inadvertent drawback was that although the sampling did not look at particular cities, the majority of the participants came from three major cities of north and west India. It was found that the participants hailing from the north had more intense experiences of threat and harassment compared to the women from western India. Whilst an IPA study is not about generalisation, the research would have been enriched had there been participants from other cities of the country, especially from south, east, and northeast India.

The data-gathering took place via telephone calls. This posed challenges at times, especially when the line was not clear. I felt some of the emotional textures of the participant's narration were lost when they had to repeat themselves to be heard clearly. A learning from this study is that especially for sensitive topics, a face-to-face interview is best suited.

A drawback of the Sociocultural Study is its subjective nature. The scenes have not been coded for facial gestures in the case of non-verbal communication and is based on the researcher's subjective interpretation. Also, the researcher is not a professional reviewer of the film medium and technical aspects such as camera angles and background music, which could also communicate meaning, have not been analysed.

13.3. Conclusion

Street harassment is a universal problem for women which does not receive as much attention as it should. The research into street harassment is still in a nascent stage with much of the focus on the jurisprudence of harassment, and specific psychological effects such as objectification. However, the findings of this study demonstrated that street harassment has deep-rooted disempowering effects of on women's lives that are propagated from one generation to the next; these effects can impact women psychologically, sociologically, and even physiologically. Given these findings, research into street harassment must be accelerated so that governments can formulate appropriate laws to safeguard women. The first step in this direction would be for an international body such as the UN to declare street harassment as a distinct form of VAW.

In the context of India, the findings of this study hold a mirror to the country that celebrates its cultural vibrancy and diversity of religion, culture and language. Indian women have been shown to live in psychological prisons due to the tight links between harassment, male power, and female subordination using fear and shame.

As long as street harassment continues to be invisible to the society and state institutions, it can be argued that women can never become equal citizens of any country.

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Chapter 15: Appendices

Appendix 1 – Invitation to participate in the research

Invitation on social media – Facebook and women's blogging groups

Dear friends, as a part of my PhD Psychology research with the University of Derby, I am exploring the impact of street harassment, or eve teasing as it is termed in India, on the lives of Indian women. If this interests you and you wish to know more, please email me on S.Khan21@unimail.derby.ac.uk.

Invitation via email:

Dear <NAME>

As a part of my PhD Psychology research with the University of Derby, I am exploring the impact of street harassment, or eve teasing as it is termed in India, on the lives of Indian women. Please find further details of this research in the Participant Information attached to this email. You may please read the document and decide if you wish to proceed with your participation. Participation involves a friendly conversation with me over telephone or Skype at a time convenient to you. If you have any questions or clarifications, please feel free to get in touch me – my contact details are given below. If you are happy to go ahead with your participation, please fill the consent form and email it to me at S.Khan21@unimail.derby.ac.uk. Please feel free to forward this invite to women in your social circle who you think will be interested in this study.

Kind regards,

Sumana Khan

Email: S.Khan21@unimail.derby.ac.uk

Phone: +44 7554994347

SkypeID: sumana-khan

Appendix 2 – Participant Information Sheet

Dear <Participant name>,

I kindly invite you to take part in a research that I'm conducting as a part of my PhD with the University of Derby. The study aims to explore the impact of street harassment, or eve teasing as it is termed in India, on the lives of Indian women.

The following sections give you more details of the study.

1)   What is this study about?

Street harassment is a gender-based sexual harassment of individuals in public places, often perpetuated by strangers. Studies indicate that women are more often subjected to street harassment than any other gender, and the perpetuators are men. In India, street harassment is known as "Eve teasing" and encompasses a range of sexually aggressive behaviours such as catcalling, making lewd gestures or passing obscene comments and physical assault in the form of groping. The aim of this research is to explore how street harassment in India impacts different aspects of an Indian woman's life.

2)   Eligibility to participate

You must be -

- An adult woman in the age group 25-35 AND Single (unmarried/never married)

OR

- An adult woman in the age group 36-50 AND married WITH at least ONE DAUGHTER in the age group of 12-19

- Graduate-level education to ensure competent spoken English*

Sensitivity: Internal

- Access to secure internet and phone

- Residents of India

Participants who are currently undergoing therapy, or are under medication for stress, depression and/or other mental health issues cannot take part in this study. Please note this is keeping the participant's safety and well-being in mind, because this is a sensitive area of research.

*The researcher acknowledges and appreciates that there are 22 Official languages in India as recognised by the Constitution of India. The researcher is fluent in four Indian languages, but they may not be the ones the participant is comfortable with. Given that ten participants will take part in this study, the research will be conducted in English for ease of communication and to prevent faulty translations.

3)   What do I need to do?

As a first step, please go through this document. It gives all the details of this study including what is expected of the participant, an interview schedule, participant rights, the participant's right to withdraw from the research, details of professional help, and confidentiality statement of this research. If you have any doubts or need clarifications on any aspect of the study, please get in touch with me at S.Khan21@unimail.derby.ac.uk or my Director of Studies, Dr Fiona Holland (f.g.holland@derby.ac.uk; telephone 01332 591657). In particular, please go through all the interview questions in the Interview Schedule section to ensure you are comfortable talking about your experiences.

Participation in this research is voluntary. If you are happy to proceed with the study, please fill and sign the "Informed Consent Form" and the Demographic Information form. The Informed Consent form is a declaration that you have read and understood all information

about the study, including your rights as a participant and withdrawal procedures, and that you meet the eligibility criteria to safely participate in the research. This will also ensure the appropriate interview schedule is presented to you. This information will not be shared with any third parties and is confidential, and adheres to the Data Protection Act 1998, Section 33 and to the ethical tenets of the EU General Data Protection Regulation, 2018 which reiterate use of lawful, fair and transparent modes of data handling. Data collection is in the form of a friendly conversation-style interview with you. You will please need to indicate your preferred method of participation in the research interview – telephone or Skype. If Skype, you have the option of choosing whether you prefer a video or audio-only call. Also, please indicate if you are available to have a follow-up conversation with the researcher within three months of the date of the first interview. This optional follow-up conversation will take place only if the researcher, after having transcribed the audio recording of the first interview, wishes to seek further clarifications/details on a particular response. If this is the case, please be assured the researcher will inform you well in advance and a mutually convenient date, time and duration of the follow-up conversation will be agreed upon. However, if you do not wish to participate in this follow-up interview please indicate in the informed consent form.

4)   What happens next?

After you sign the Informed Consent form, I will get in touch with you to finalise a time for our conversation. Your safety is of paramount importance. Before scheduling the interview, I will seek your assurance that you have a secure phone or computer, and that you will be able to take the call undisturbed from a safe location such as the privacy of your home or a secure conference room at your workplace. I will schedule the interview at a date and time that is mutually convenient. The interview will last for at least an hour. However please allow a time slot of ninety minutes.

5)   What happens during the interview?

Before beginning the interview, I will once again seek your assurance that you comfortable, and are in a safe, private place to participate in the interview without interruptions. I will go over the aims of the research and reiterate your rights as a participant, your right to withdraw and confidentiality of your data. The interview is intended to be a long and friendly conversation and your comfort is very important. In this regard, please note that the interview schedule is just an indicative list of questions and is only intended as a guide to explore your experiences. You can take your time to introspect, discuss and explore your experiences. The interview will be audio-recorded so that I can transcribe it verbatim for data analysis. The steps taken towards data confidentiality are described in the Confidentiality section of this document. The interview will last at least for an hour. However, please block ninety minutes for the interview.

After the interview, I will once again seek your assurance that you are comfortable. I will summarise the aims of the research, your rights and the procedure to withdraw from the research. I will also reiterate how confidentiality and anonymity of your data will be ensured. You will then be asked to choose a pseudonym, so your transcript can be anonymised. I will seek your permission to get in touch with you for an optional follow-up conversation, within three months of this first interview, only if required. For example, after transcribing the audio file of this interview and reading through the transcript, I may feel the need for further clarifications or details on certain responses. However, please be assured this follow-up conversation is optional and you are welcome to decline permission. After the call, I will email a detailed debrief document to your preferred email address obtained at the time of invitation, with all the above details including my contact details if you need any further clarifications, and contact details of my Director of Studies if you wish to discuss feedback/escalate. The document will mention the date within which the follow-up interview

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can take place, and the last date for communicating your withdrawal decision. This is a potentially sensitive area of research and your safety and wellbeing is very important. In this regard, the debrief document will recommend you get in touch with your family doctor/GP in the first instance, should you feel the need for professional help.

6)   What are my rights as a participant?

Participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the research even after participating in the interview. However, please note you need to communicate your decision to withdraw within two weeks of your interview. Please feel free to send an email to S.Khan21@unimail.derby.ac.uk stating your decision to withdraw. The last date for communicating your withdrawal decision will be mentioned on the Debrief form given to you at the conclusion of your interview. If you withdraw, you can be assured that all interview transcripts and audio recordings of the interview will be securely destroyed, and it will not be used in the research. If you wish to discuss or give feedback on any aspect of the interview, please feel free to email me at S.Khan21@unimail.derby.ac.uk and/or my Director of Studies Dr Fiona Holland at F.G.Holland@derby.ac.uk; phone: +44-01332 591657 and Skype ID: drfionaholland

7)   What measures will be adopted for confidentiality and data security?

Your safety is of high importance. Please be assured your participation in the research will be strictly confidential. I will not reveal or discuss your participation in any forum.

The audio files on the Dictaphone will be uploaded to my personal computer immediately after the interview and the files on the Dictaphone will be deleted thereafter. The audio files of the interviews and the interview transcripts will be stored in my personal computer which is password-protected and only I have access to it. The audio files on the Dictaphone will be deleted as soon they have been uploaded into the computer. For additional security, the files

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will be stored in a password-protected folder on the computer. The computer is situated in a private room in my residence. You will have a pseudonym and all identifying details in the interview such as names of places will be masked to protect your identity. The pseudonyms will be agreed upon during the interview. The audio files on the computer will be deleted immediately after completing the transcription. The anonymised text transcripts of the interview will be retained for a period of six years and deleted thereafter. In general, the research will adhere to the guidelines laid out in Data Protection Act 1998, Section 33 and to the ethical tenets of EU General Data Protection Regulation 2018 which reiterate use of lawful, fair and transparent modes of data handling. Accordingly, the contact details of the participants will be deleted as soon as transcription is complete. In the event a second interview is required, and the participant gives permission for the same, the contact details will be deleted immediately after the second interview. The audio files of this second interview will be deleted immediately after transcription.

In case you have opted for Skype interview, please note Skype provides full encryption of Skype-to-Skype calls to prevent malicious eavesdropping. For further details on security provided by Skype, please refer to https://support.skype.com/en/faq/FA31/does-skype-use-encryption. However, like all features of the internet, it is technically possible to hack a call-in-progress. But please be assured this is a very remote possibility.

Anonymised verbatim quotes from the interview document will be used in this research thesis to present data analysis. In future, the thesis can be published in academic journals or as a part of conferences. However, the interview transcript in its entirety will never be published in any medium.

If you withdraw from the research, all data in the form of audio and text files pertaining to you will be deleted permanently.

8)   What support can I expect?

I acknowledge the highly sensitive nature of this research. At every step, I will ensure you are comfortable, especially during the interview. You need not answer all the questions put to you and you are welcome to stop the interview and reschedule, or even withdraw from the research should you feel so. If at any point during or after participation, you feel the need for professional assistance, please get in touch with me – email: S.Khan21@unimail.derby.ac.uk; phone: +44 7554994347 or Skype: sumana-khan. You can also get in touch with my Director of Studies Dr Fiona Holland – email: F.G.Holland@derby.ac.uk; phone: +44-01332 591657 and Skype ID: drfionaholland. However, it is important to know and understand that I am not qualified or licensed to provide professional counselling. I strongly recommend you approach your family doctor for suitable advice and professional reference.

9)   Interview Schedule

1.   Thank you for taking part in this interview. Please could you tell me a little about yourself?

   a. *Prompts – family, job, education*

2. If you don't mind, can you please describe a typical week day?

   a. *Prompt – How do you get to work? How late do you work? How is the commute back home?*

3. How you would describe yourself as an individual?

   a. Prompts: example – traditional/western/depends on occasion and people; outgoing, extrovert, introvert; how would you describe your fashion style – the kind of clothes you like to wear – ethnic Indian, western or a mix depending on the occasion.

b. Prompt: Can you please give your thoughts about what tradition and traditional/sanskari means to you?

4. *Could you please share some details about your social life?*

   a. *Prompts – how often do you go out? What kind of transport do you use? What are your favourite places for socialising – example, restaurant, mall, movies.*

   b. *Prompt: From a broader perspective, can you please share your thoughts, as an Indian woman, how and what influences your socialising decisions and choices?*

5. *Could you please describe what freedom of an individual means to you as an adult Indian woman and citizen?*

   a. *Prompt: If you don't mind, can you please share your thoughts on to what extent you enjoy the freedom you've described? If you don't mind, can you please share with me the constraints you feel are around you, both in personal and public life?*

6. Coming to street harassment, I'm interested in knowing your thoughts on why Indian women face street harassment?

   a. Prompt: What are your thoughts around how popular culture influences social culture? For example movies, mythology, or even interactions on social media.

7. Can you please describe in your own words, what you think street harassment is? If you don't mind, and if you are comfortable, can you please share any street harassment incident that you experienced?

a. *(if needed) prompts on when and where the incident took place. Details about the time of day, what was the participant doing at that time, who was the perpetrator.*

8. If you are comfortable, can you please elaborate on your emotions and reaction when the incident took place?

   a. *Prompts – How often do you think about the incident? What kind of thoughts come to you when you reminisce this incident? If you don't mind can you please share in detail?*

9. How did you cope with the incident? For example, can you please tell me details about any lifestyle changes that you adopted? If so, can you please share your emotions when you decided to make those changes? In what areas of your life you made the changes?

   a. *For example, clothes; kind of transport you use; daily routine changes etc*

10. If you don't mind, can you tell me if the incident/incidents made you take/consider any life-changing decisions? Example – change of job change, discontinuing a school course?

    a. Prompt: Can you please share your emotions when you made the above decisions – what were the pros and cons and compromises you had to consider?

11. A little earlier you described yourself as <refer answer to 3>. Can you please reflect on how these experiences you've undergone have, if at all, influenced you as an individual?

Sensitivity: Internal

12. How often do you venture out alone – example travelling to work, socialising or holiday travel? Please can you share some of the thoughts that run in your mind when you prepare for each travel?

   a. *Prompt: For example, if you must travel by taxi, how do you ensure a safe travel? Can you please describe if you choose your wardrobe keeping in mind your outside travel? Do you travel alone often? Are you allowed to travel alone? If so, what negotiations must you do – example, permissions from parents, husband?*

13. There is frequent coverage regarding crimes against women in the media. Can you please share your thoughts such coverage?

   a. Prompts: How does such news coverage make you feel? Could you please reflect on your reaction and emotion when you read about someone else's experience? How does it impact you?

   b. Apart from the news, when friends narrate harassment experiences, can you please reflect on how it affects you?

14. You are a mother to a daughter. How has your own experience of street harassment and your assimilation of information and opinions related to street harassment impacted your parenting?

   a. Prompt: What are your thoughts about her eventually facing the street? How will you help her navigate choices?

15. Do you think you will discuss street harassment with your daughter at an appropriate age? Can you share some of the advice you intend to give her?

16. Please share any final thoughts you have on all that you've so kindly discussed.

10) Contact for further information

Thank you for taking the time to read this document. If you have any questions or clarifications, please feel free to get in touch with me at – Email: S.Khan21@unimail.derby.ac.uk; phone: +44 7554994347; Skype: sumana-khan. If you want to discuss any specific part of the study, or want to leave an improvement feedback, please get in touch with my Director of Studies Dr Fiona Holland at F.G.Holland@derby.ac.uk; phone: +44-01332 591657 and Skype ID: drfionaholland

If you are happy to proceed with the study, please complete the Informed Consent Form and Demographic information and email it to me at S.Khan21@unimail.derby.ac.uk.

With regards,

Sumana Khan

Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form

1) I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask any questions I have.

☐ Please tick box

2) I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw even after participating without giving any reason, and I must communicate this decision within two weeks of my participation

☐ Please tick box

3) I confirm that I have not been diagnosed with anxiety, PTSD, depression or other psychological conditions

☐ Please tick box

4) I understand that my data can be used in academic publications

☐ Please tick box

5) I understand that my data can be used in teaching materials (this is optional, and you may leave the box blank if you are unsure)

☐ Please tick box

6) I consent to giving my interview for this research which will be audio-recorded.

☐ Please tick box

7) (Optional) I understand that if the researcher needs further clarifications, she can get in touch with me for a follow-up interview within three months of the first interview. I consent to this follow-up interview.

☐ Please tick box

8) I prefer to be contacted on -

☐ Telephone – Please give your number:

☐   Skype – Please give your Skype ID and do state if you prefer video/audio-
         only call:

_____

Signed (please print your name in block letters):   _____

Date: _____

Appendix 4: Interview Schedule

1. Thank you for taking part in this interview. Please could you tell me a little about yourself?

    a. *Prompts – family, job, education*

2. *If you don't mind, can you please describe a typical week day?*

    a. *Prompt – How do you get to work? How late do you work? How is the commute back home?*

3. How you would describe yourself as an individual?

    a. Prompts: example – traditional/western/depends on occasion and people; outgoing, extrovert, introvert; how would you describe your fashion style – the kind of clothes you like to wear – ethnic Indian, western or a mix depending on the occasion.

    b. Prompt: Can you please give your thoughts about what tradition and traditional/sanskari means to you?

4. *Could you please share some details about your social life?*

    a. *Prompts – how often do you go out? What kind of transport do you use? What are your favourite places for socialising – example, restaurant, mall, movies.*

    b. *Prompt: From a broader perspective, can you please share your thoughts, as an Indian woman, how and what influences your socialising decisions and choices?*

5. *Could you please describe what freedom of an individual means to you as an adult Indian woman and citizen?*

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a. *Prompt: If you don't mind, can you please share your thoughts on to what extent you enjoy the freedom you've described? If you don't mind, can you please share with me the constraints you feel are around you, both in personal and public life?*

6. Coming to street harassment, I'm interested in knowing your thoughts on why Indian women face street harassment?

    a. Prompt: What are your thoughts around how popular culture influences social culture? For example movies, mythology, or even interactions on social media.

7. Can you please describe in your own words, what you think street harassment is? If you don't mind, and if you are comfortable, can you please share any street harassment incident that you experienced?

    a. *(if needed) prompts on when and where the incident took place. Details about the time of day, what was the participant doing at that time, who was the perpetrator.*

8. If you are comfortable, can you please elaborate on your emotions and reaction when the incident took place?

    a. *Prompts – How often do you think about the incident? What kind of thoughts come to you when you reminisce this incident? If you don't mind can you please share in detail?*

9. How did you cope with the incident? For example, can you please tell me details about any lifestyle changes that you adopted? If so, can you please share your

emotions when you decided to make those changes? In what areas of your life you made the changes?

a. *For example, clothes; kind of transport you use; daily routine changes etc*

10. If you don't mind, can you tell me if the incident/incidents made you take/consider any life-changing decisions? Example – change of job change, discontinuing a school course?

a. Prompt: Can you please share your emotions when you made the above decisions – what were the pros and cons and compromises you had to consider?

11. A little earlier you described yourself as <refer answer to 3>. Can you please reflect on how these experiences you've undergone have, if at all, influenced you as an individual?

12. How often do you venture out alone – example travelling to work, socialising or holiday travel? Please can you share some of the thoughts that run in your mind when you prepare for each travel?

a. *Prompt: For example, if you must travel by taxi, how do you ensure a safe travel? Can you please describe if you choose your wardrobe keeping in mind your outside travel? Do you travel alone often? Are you allowed to travel alone? If so, what negotiations must you do – example, permissions from parents, husband?*

13. There is frequent coverage regarding crimes against women in the media. Can you please share your thoughts such coverage?

a. Prompts: How does such news coverage make you feel? Could you please reflect on your reaction and emotion when you read about someone else's experience? How does it impact you?

b. Apart from the news, when friends narrate harassment experiences, can you please reflect on how it affects you?

14. You are a mother to a daughter. How has your own experience of street harassment and your assimilation of information and opinions related to street harassment impacted your parenting?

a. Prompt: What are your thoughts about her eventually facing the street? How will you help her navigate choices?

15. Do you think you will discuss street harassment with your daughter at an appropriate age? Can you share some of the advice you intend to give her?

16. Please share any final thoughts you have on all that you've so kindly discussed.

Appendix 5: Debrief Form

Dear <NAME>

Thank you for your valuable time and contribution to this important research. The aim of this study is to understand how street harassment impact an Indian woman's life. If you wish to know more about street harassment worldwide, please visit http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/.

Please note that participation is voluntary, and if you change your mind about your participation you have the right to withdraw. However, please communicate your decision to withdraw within 2 weeks of giving your interview. You may please send an email to me at S.Khan21@unimail.derby.ac.uk stating your decision to withdraw and do quote your pseudonym in your email so the correct data set can be identified. Rest assured, in the event you withdraw from the study, your data will be permanently deleted, and it will not be used in the research.

The last date for withdrawal is _____

Your selected pseudonym is _____

Your participation in the research will be anonymous and confidential. The research will adhere to the guidelines laid out in Data Protection Act 1998, Section 33 and to the ethical tenets of EU General Data Protection Regulation 2018 which reiterate use of lawful, fair and transparent modes of data handling. Accordingly, your audio files will be deleted as soon as transcription is complete. Your contact details will also be deleted once transcription is complete. In the event a second interview is required, and you give permission for the same, your contact details will be deleted immediately after the second interview. The audio files of this second interview will be deleted immediately after transcription.

The text transcripts of the interview will be retained for a period of six years and deleted thereafter. Anonymised verbatim quotes from the interview document will be used in this research thesis to present data analysis. In future, the thesis can be published in academic

journals or as a part of conferences. However, the interview transcript in its entirety will never be published in any medium.

If I need further clarifications or details regarding any of your responses, I request your permission to have the follow-up conversation by _____ You will be given adequate notice, and a time and date for this follow-up will be fixed based on mutual convenience. This is optional, and you are free to decline permission.

The study deals with a sensitive area of research, and if at any point during or after participation, you feel the need for professional assistance, please get in touch me - email: S.Khan21@unimail.derby.ac.uk; phone: +44 7554994347 or Skype: sumana-khan. You can also get in touch with my Director of Studies Dr Fiona Holland – email: F.G.Holland@derby.ac.uk; phone: +44-01332 591657 and Skype ID: drfionaholland. Please note that I am not qualified or licensed to provide professional counselling. Hence, I strongly recommend you approach your family doctor for suitable advice and professional reference.

If you have any questions or clarifications about the study, or any feedback, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me at S.Khan21@unimail.derby.ac.uk; phone: +44 7554994347 or Skype: sumana-khan or my Director of Studies Dr Fiona Holland at F.G.Holland@derby.ac.uk; phone: +44-01332 591657 and Skype ID: drfionaholland

Thank you once again, for your invaluable time and contribution to this important study.