'Talk about a cunt with too much idle time': Trolling feminist research
F. Vera-Gray

Abstract
Given the growing popularity of online methods for researchers and the increasing awareness of the levels of harassment and abuse directed at women online – especially women expressing feminist views – it is critical that we address the implications of online abuse for feminist researchers. Focusing on an often hidden yet significant part of our methodological decisions, recruitment, this paper details the online abuse levelled by men's rights activists against a research project on women's experiences of men's stranger intrusions in public space. It argues for the need to locate such experiences within a violence against women frame, extending the concept of a continuum of sexual violence. Such an extension renders visible the added labour of 'safety work', which forms an invisible backdrop to the methodological decisions of many feminist researchers.

'When women gather online, and especially when they attempt to discuss feminism, they are not uncommonly the target of negative attention from individuals, mostly men, who feel threatened by or otherwise uncomfortable with feminism.'
                              - Herring, Job-Sluder, Scheckler & Barab (2002)

'feminists women are disgusting they bleed form those nasty holes every month and drop that shit on the floor, they need to be neutered!!'
                              - Unknown man on research website (2012)

Introduction
The methods chosen for participant recruitment may not immediately present themselves as a fruitful avenue for an exploration of feminist methodologies. Often hidden or barely hinted at in our writing up, the process of research recruitment can be dismissed as a means to an end, a necessary but relatively uneventful precursor to the methodological guts of our research. Where discussions exist in the feminist literature, they tend to focus on a discussion of sampling and ethics, typically around accessing hard-to-reach populations and/or the use of personal networks to minimise perceptions of separation between researcher and researched in the research context (England, 1994; Madriz, 2003; Browne, 2005). Little space is given to the ways in which feminist researchers encounter a specific and significant decision when recruiting participants; whether or not to make explicit our feminist position. This decision impacts the research process through

supporting or discouraging participants themselves, as well as the stories they may feel they can tell. It also can have a personal impact in the form of experiences of sexism, abuse and threats of violence directed towards the researcher and participants. This latter impact is relatively unaddressed in the literature, with Stanley and Wise (1979) a key exception.

This paper will speak of this personal impact, and its implications for feminist methodologies, through outlining my own experience of men's stranger intrusions after using a method of online recruitment for a feminist research project. During the course of a weekend a total of 88 abusive comments about myself, my research and my participants, were posted online after the recruitment call for a research project I was conducting into women's experiences of men's intrusion in public (commonly termed street harassment) was posted on a men's rights Facebook group. Analysis of the comments revealed how the rhetorical strategies used to dismiss the research shared similar characteristics to the comments directed at women challenging intrusion in physical public space. Similarities also existed between myself and my participants in how we responded to men's stranger intrusion across the two different contexts, in terms of the 'emotional labour' (Hochschild, 1983) I performed to manage negative impact, as well as in my reflections on what Liz Kelly terms 'safety work' (see Author, 2016a). These connections, both in how resistance to intrusion by women is conceptualised by intrusive men, and in the habitual work of responding to the possibility and reality of intrusion, suggest an overlap in experiences for women in online public space and physical public space. They also suggest an aspect of hidden added labour forming an invisible backdrop to the methodological decisions of feminist researchers.

Here I aim to make explicit some of this labour, focusing particularly on safety work, as well as the overlaps between women's experiences of men's stranger intrusion online and in physical public space. I begin with a broad outline of the research itself, sketching the other elements of my methodology within which the method of online recruitment was situated. The second section turns to an overview of the current literature on women's experiences of online abuse, noting the absence within this of an explicit acknowledgement or examination of the potential for abuse facing feminist researchers engaging in online methods. The decision to not locate my project as feminist is discussed in the third section, before exploring in detail the ways in which despite this, the research website was subjected to a sustained period of abuse by men's rights activists, including the public posting of a separate video, with associated comments. The ways in which this abuse made visible the operations of safety work within the context of a feminist research project is discussed drawing on a concept developed in relation to my work on women's experiences in physical public space, 'the right amount of panic' (Author, 2016a). The conclusion points to the need for greater discussion on the benefits and challenges of locating research as feminist during the process of recruitment, and an increased recognition of the hidden labour of both safety and emotional work performed by feminist researchers.

Researching the ordinary
The research project underpinning this paper was designed to provide a new body of evidence regarding the practice and experience of unknown men's intrusion on women in public space. At the time, I was focused solely on physical public space, drawing on the emerging body of work, both academic and activist, that was raising awareness of women's experiences of 'street harassment'. Given my experiences during the research project, and the increased awareness of online abuse over the intervening years, I would now argue for the inclusion of women's experiences online within all research on men's intrusion in public space. The argument here is that, similar to the ways in which women read routine forms of men's intrusion through the possibility of escalation to other practices of men's violence, most often to rape (see Author,

2016a), online forms of intrusion frequently rely on the threat and reality of physical forms of intrusion for their particular rhetorical force. As such, women's experiences across Kelly's (1988) continuum of sexual violence form a central internal contextual factor in their perceptions and the impacts of men's stranger intrusion online.

In addition to adding to the growing body of evidence being collected through online forums documenting the type, frequencies and impacts of men's intrusions in public space (see Kearl, 2010; Bates, 2014), the study aimed to conduct an explicitly philosophical examination, building a phenomenology of men's intrusive practices. At its core was the desire to translate philosophical concepts into everyday language, whilst maintaining the uniqueness of the philosophical perspective. This guided the methodological framework, developing the reciprocal practice of translating philosophy into the vernacular of women's experiences and women's experiences back into and through a philosophical language. The project sought to explore the impact of the everyday, women's mundane encounters with men's personal and structural power, on how women understand and enact their embodied selfhood. In coming from a focus on women's experiential realities, it developed Kelly's (1988) continuum of sexual violence – a conceptual framework for building connections from these mundane encounters to recognised practices of men's dominance – introducing the concept of a continuum of men's intrusive practices to assist in shifting the policy focus onto the behaviours and decisions of men.

The study itself consisted of a three stage research process for participants involving: an initial conversation; a notebook stage in which participants were asked to record men's intrusion as it happened over a period of two weeks to two months; and a follow up conversation to explore the notebooks. The research process enabled women to opt in or out at each point of participation. Of those participating in the initial conversations (n=50), 34 (65%) went on to complete the notebook, and just under two thirds (64%, n=32) completed a follow up interview. In order to combat the force of the habitual, the research design aimed to first assist in participants becoming more aware of men's intrusion and their responses through the initial conversations, and then to invite participants to examine new experiences in light of this heightened awareness. Using an adaptation of the everyday incident analysis tool, developed by Kelly and Westmarland (2015), individual participant notebooks were created to cover three categories that were understudied in the literature: 'space invaders' (unknown men intruding on space both physical and mental); 'the gaze' (both actual and anticipation of the gaze); and, in a phrase borrowed from Laniya (2005) 'verbal ejaculations' (including comments and noises). Each category asked specific questions designed to capture phenomenological detail through locating the experience temporally, asking participants for example, what she was thinking before, during and afterwards, or how free she felt before, during and afterwards.

The initial and follow up conversations sought to help make 'speakable' experiences that were outside of the dominant narrative of street harassment as either criminal or complimentary. The intention here was to help capture the routine forms that are absent from much empirical work on the topic yet form a large part of many women's experience. To do this I extended Ann Oakley's (2005) conceptualisation of conducting an interview *as if* it were a conversation, suggesting that for a feminist existential-phenomenological project there is a benefit in extending Oakley's concept to a joint exploration of research questions; conducting research *as* a conversation (see Author, 2016a). Such a research method builds on the work of Marjorie DeVault (1990), who moved beyond a traditional interview format to adopt an 'interactive approach' (Anderson & Jack, 1991). DeVault worked in collaboration with her respondents to 'co-construct' new words that accurately reflected their experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Such collaboration is seen in

conversation where the dynamic of power shifts as participants and researcher exchange, develop and bounce ideas between one another, rather than in the one way exchange of conventional interviewing or even more participatory designs where, though participants interact, the structure and content remains defined by an outside source. This is not to suggest conversation removes the power dynamics inherent in the project of research, though there is a more fluid exchange and co-creation of knowledge. The process of analysis and writing mean that I ultimately recreate this co-creation, a process described by Coy (2006: 422) as 'my story of their stories'.

For this project, the dual methods proved beneficial in helping to combat the particular silencing of the phenomenon born of its invalidation and the operations of minimisation as a form of coping. Conversation involved myself as a researcher bringing in my own experiences with men's intrusion in public space, as well as that of previous participants, in order to open spaces for discussing the breadth of practices and responses. The notebooks enabled women to examine experiences that were commonly forgotten, and to reflect on their beliefs about the frequency and impact of intrusion given a record of encounters over a set period of time. There are similarities here with what Cook and Fanow (1990) describe as the centrality of consciousness raising, both as: 'a specific methodological tool and a general orientation' (Cook & Fanow 1990: 72) for feminist research. Whilst the consciousness raising groups of the 1970's may have given way to other forms of feminist organising, there is room to develop an argument signalling online forums, including social media groups, as the new millennium's form of feminist consciousness raising. Such spaces have the unique capacity of offering public/semi-public forums for women to record and share experiences of sexism or violence, at the same time as maintaining relative anonymity. Janet Morahan-Martin considered such a capacity in her evaluation of the potential for the internet to increase women's 'space for action' (Jeffner, 2000), claiming that for online spaces: 'the lack of physical presence, anonymity, and disinhibition can foster more open communication and feelings of safety' (Morahan-Martin, 2000: 686). These same qualities provide an unfortunately fertile ground for online sexual harassment, where relative anonymity and disinhibition (see Suler, 2004), combine with public access to create what Liz Kelly (2007) terms a 'conducive context' for men's stranger intrusions.

Men's intrusion online
Research has documented the ways in which feminist forums in the emerging internet era faced disruption from men posting misogynistic messages (Reid, 1999), however given the steep rise in both women's usage of the internet in the past decade (Abraham, Mörn & Vollman, 2010) and the continual development of new tools for online social networking, greater opportunities for sexist harassment have arisen. Currently academic literature on the specific phenomenon of men's stranger intrusions on women in online public spaces remains relatively sparse when compared to the broader literature on flaming and trolling (Kayany, 1998; Kowalski, Limber & Agatston, 2012; Lea, O'Shea, Fung & Spears, 1992; O'Sullivan & Flanagin, 2003). Hardaker (2010) claims that even academic literature on flaming and trolling is meagre when compared to other negatively marked online behaviours such as cyberstalking and cyberbullying, with consideration of flaming and trolling left largely to popular literature and the media. Across the literature there is a notable absence of studies on the experiences of feminist researchers using online methods as part of the research process. This comparative silence may have similar causes to the academic silence around the issue of men's intrusion in physical public space, where the trivialisation of the experience itself, combines with debates about naming to generate difficulties in reaching an agreed definition (Hardaker, 2010; Herring, 2002; Jane, 2012). That there is no unified name or definition used across the literature causes significant difficulties in generating evidence for the prevalence of the phenomenon. Different terminologies include a different range of practices,

rendering comparisons between and across studies difficult, a problem also found in empirical work on 'street harassment' (see Author, 2016b).

Though exact conceptual and operational definitions have yet to be agreed, this paper draws on the classifications given mainly by Herring et al (2002), Kaynay (1998) and O'Sullivan & Flanagin (2003) in their discussions of the broad, and often overlapping categories, of trolling and flaming. The most readily recognised term for the perpetrator of online intrusion, 'troll', originates in the fishing practice where a lure is dragged through the water with the intention of provoking a feeding frenzy amongst fish (Donath, 1998; Binns, 2012). Susan C. Herring, one of the most prolific writers on the experience of gendered abuse in online environments, (Herring, 1999; 2000; 2002; Herring et al, 2002; Herring, Johnson & DiBenedetto, 1995) suggests that the experience of trolling presents a gender disparity common to forms of sexual violence, with victims mostly women and perpetrators mostly men. She connects the resistance to acknowledging the harassment experienced by women in computer mediated communication to libertarian values, highlighting how what she terms the 'rhetoric of harassment' employs liberal principles of freedom of expression to construct women's resistance as censorship (Herring, 1999). Elsewhere, Herring argues that such libertarianism is also gendered, quoting from a 1997 study from the Graphic, Visualization, and Usability Center (Kehoe, Pitkow & Morton, 1997) that found that of internet users 'male respondents … cited "censorship" as the greatest threat to the Internet, whereas females cited "privacy" as their greatest concern (Herring, 2003: 209). Here privacy is interpreted by Herring as a reflection for a concern for personal safety rather than a concern for encryption or hacking issues, noting that the survey did not give respondents to choice to list concerns such as safety or harassment.

Herring et al (2002) developed a widely used definition of a 'troll' as being a user of computer mediated communication (CMC) who is 'hostile to the purpose of forums, actively seeking to disrupt and undermine them' (357). The focus on forums here can be applied across new and emerging social media contexts, such as the growth of micro-blogging platforms and public photo sharing networks. This definition captures the strategies of pseudo-sincerity and blatant abuse used to disrupt and instigate argument for the purposes of amusement, both of which were experienced in the messages received during this project. It posits three categories of trolling communication: messages from a sender who appears outwardly sincere; messages designed to attract predictable responses or flames; and messages that waste a group's time by provoking futile argument (Herring et al, 2002: 375). As such the practice of trolling may or may not include flaming, or direct insults. Its purpose rather, irrespective of the means of achievement, is to be deceptive and/or antagonistic in order to entice other online users into argument with success measured by the maximum number of responses received (Donath, 1998).

Trolling then can be seen as the broader term for attempts to wilfully disrupt online communities, with flaming being a particular useful strategy for this purpose. In his 1998 discussion of uninhibited online behaviour, Kaynay builds on existing definitions of flaming as expressions of hostile emotions directed at another person (rather than mere criticism directed at ideas and opinions) in claiming that 'hostility alone may not be sufficient to determine what constitutes a flame. The "lack of constraint," too, is an important dimension of flaming' (Kayany, 1998: 1137). In their discussion of a framework through which to make sense of online flaming, O'Sullivan and Flanagin (2003) claim that in determining whether a message is a flame or not, both its operational and contextual dimensions must be considered, that is not just whether it contains hostile or aggressive content but also the interpretations of both sender and receiver. As an example, they cite the casual use of profane language and humorous name-calling between friends. This idea of

humour or 'banter' is often referred to by producers of flames in response to naming the harm. Such a response has the potential to cause additional injury rather than mitigate harm through delegitimising the harm experienced in the first place and suggesting the recipient is hypersensitive (Jane, 2012). Notably, both calls about hypersensitivity and minimisation are common strategies to invalidate women's experiences of men's stranger intrusion in physical public spaces (Author, 2016a). The interactional-normative framework O'Sullivan and Flanagin (2003) develop for categorising a message as flaming then focuses specifically on 'individuals intentions and interpretations based on contextual factors, especially various levels of norms' (74). There are problems with this framework if the intent of the perpetrator is given definitional privilege over the interpretation of the target. These are discussed in detail by Jane (2015), and also bear similarity to the ways in which the current UK law on a particular form of online harassment of women, image-based sexual abuse or 'revenge porn', has been critiqued by legal scholars due to its requirement for the intention to distress (see McGlynn and Rackley, 2015). Despite this, the focus on a message's contextual dimensions can be usefully employed to capture the uniqueness of flames directed to women by men online, where the prevalence of violence against women and girls is taken as a situating context. As such, though profane or explicit messages from a male stranger could be argued to have a benign or humorous intent on an individual level, our attention is turned to the structural context in which and through which these messages have meaning.

In this way, an exploration of the particular impacts of men's online intrusion is connected to wider work on men's violence against women. Such a connection is readily made in groups campaigning on the issues. The End Violence Against Women coalition in the UK, for example, highlighted key connections between social media and violence against women in their report on new technologies (EVAW, 2013), whilst the international anti-street harassment organisation Hollaback!, extended their advocacy into online harassment through the launch of their online platform 'Heartmob' in 2016.[1] Academic literature conceptualising the links however is less visible. There are growing attempts to name the particular forms of intrusion women experience from men online, with Jane (2012) claiming that negative attention in online spaces is getting more prevalent, 'uglier', and with distinctly gendered characteristics, pointing to the need for further research. Jane uses the term 'e-bile' to refer to what she sees as a particular type of vitriolic discourse not only tolerated but expected online, 'notable for its hostile affect, explicit language, and stark misogyny' (2015: 65). E-bile, with its intonations of the abject, is resonant here with Laniya's (2005) use of 'verbal ejaculations' to name the verbal intrusions directed by men to women in physical public space. Recently Henry and Powell (2015) have developed the term 'technology-facilitated sexual violence and harassment' (TFSV) to 'describe collectively the range of criminal, civil, and otherwise harmful sexually aggressive behaviours perpetrated against women with the aid of new technologies' (2). Henry and Powell draw out the connections between TFSV and other forms of violence against women and girls, including a broader range of practices than the abusive commentary considered here and a useful exploration of how CMC can still be considered embodied communication, with according embodied effects. As such, their work marks a significant shift in the literature through its explicit location of online forms of violence and intrusion within a violence against women frame. The terminology however, of 'technology-facilitated' shifts our focus to the medium as the problem, similar to the concerns Jane (2015) identifies with the 'first wave' of research in this area. It is the social context of gender inequality that facilitates the violence and harassment women experience online, technology is a tool mobilised within this. It may be then that instead of seeking new terminology to describe what

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[1] Hollaback!, www.iheartmob.org, last accessed 5 April 2016.

women experience online, our task is to continue refining the concepts we already have for forms of violence against women, and test these out within the context of online spaces.

Research, interrupted.

The discussion of the literature on trolling, as well as in my own work on reframing street harassment (see Author, 2016b), demonstrates how terminology is of particular significance when researching forms of men's violence against women. Not only are the terms used for naming individual forms of violence constantly evolving, the very positioning of certain practices as harassment or violence may inhibit participation from those who do not identify their own experience within this frame. McKenzie-Mohr and Lafrance (2010) detail this difficulty in relation to subverting dominant narratives, discussing their attempts to find a way to invite participants to their study 'without prefiguring the stories that could be told' (54). Decisions must be made during the recruitment stages about whether material will make explicit the project's epistemological location; whether it will name its feminism. When researching violence against women, this question of how to locate the research so that women who may or may not identify themselves as feminist feel equally invited to participate, may sit in tension with other key ethical considerations such as how to inform women about the disclosures that may result from participation or how to combat the power imbalance present in the dynamic between researcher and researched.

For the study under discussion here, I chose not to explicitly locate the study as feminist in order to encourage participation from women who did not identify as such. At this point the question of how to manage potential disruption of the recruitment process from men who are averse to feminist research was not part of my methodological considerations. No mention was made to the epistemological framework of the research, the particular feminist research centre I was based in, or my professional background within the sexual violence support field in the initial recruitment publicity. Difficulty came in the need to name experiences of criminalised forms of violence against women, and to recognise that these may be explored across the research process. It is here that the feminist positioning of the research became apparent. The continuum of men's intrusive practices as a key conceptual tool underpinning analysis meant that both women who felt they had large stories and those who felt they had none occupied the same amount of space in the research context, however it also meant that participants would be invited to explore the ways in which their experiences related to other experiences along the continuum of sexual violence. Although participants were not systematically asked which practices of men's violence and/or intrusion they had experienced, there was a definite focus in the project's theoretical framework on the links between and within different forms of sexual violence. Such a framing would both guide the research conversations and be evident in the research findings. To hide this from participants even at the recruitment stage felt unethical, particularly as it would set up a dishonest and imbalanced power relationship between researcher and researched. Recruitment material thus made explicit the ways in which different encounters with intrusive men would be explored; as connected in lived experience.

Online recruitment was chosen as the primary means of disseminating the call for participation, supplemented with printed leaflets, and a website was created through the free blogging tool Wordpress.[2] This choice was underpinned by how the creation of a research site would enable a web link to be used for dissemination that could contain the bulk of information women would need to make a decision about participation. It was also chosen given the popularity of the internet for the particular form of violence being studied. The ability of a blogging site to be used for

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[2] https://publicspaceresearch.wordpress.com/

comments, both by potential participants and by those seeking to disrupt the research, was not considered at this point. The link to the research site was shared across several well known feminist blogging sites and online platforms targeting specific communities that have been considered 'hard to reach' for sexual violence research due to low rates of disclosure and barriers to help-seeking (Kanyeredzi, 2013; Washington, 2001) including black women forums and specialist sexual violence services. Over a hundred requests for participation were received within a 24 hour period, significantly exceeding initial expectations of the levels of participation. The site also started to be used by women to record their own experiences of men's intrusion, possibly connected to the common use of online platforms to support such disclosures. On realising this use, I chose not to disable the comments on the site in order to collect data from women who felt comfortable recording experiences online but did not want to participate beyond this. The research site remained online after the sample was recruited in order to enable ease of dissemination of updates and findings to women who did not participate but had shown interest in the project. These two decisions proved particularly significant as without them I would not have been alerted to the trolling of the project.

Three months after recruitment had finished, on a Saturday morning in June 2012, I started receiving notifications of abusive messages being left on the research site. Site statistics revealed the site was viewed 948 times on this Saturday. The comments continued throughout the weekend, culminating in a total of 61 comments left on the site by 18 individual commentators.[3] 36 of these met the criteria for trolling (from 14 commentators), 21 were comments engaging with the trolls in support of the research (from 3 different commentators), and 3 were comments from men policing what other men were saying.[4] Due to the use of pseudonyms I was mostly unable to conduct a demographic analysis of any of the commentators (both on the research site and on the YouTube video) other than ascertaining the gender of those on the research site through the content of their messages and/or their pseudonym. Here, all of the supporters of the research were women and all of the comments meeting the criteria for trolling were from men. An additional 1 comment was recorded that disparaged the research subject but did not fit the criteria given for a troll by Herring et al (2002). This commentator appears to be a woman given the username used, who without profanity or insults, stated that she did not feel the subject being researched was 'something to get worked up about.'

All of the posts on the research site were made public except for one which was specifically directed at one of the commentators defending the research. I chose not to approve this comment as part of my feminist practice, as the offensive nature of it could have caused emotional distress to an unknown woman. It also may have further fuelled her engagement with the trolls, something that Donath (1998) suggests is part of the troll's motivation. In order to not single the comment out as a 'private' issue, I include it in full below.

> youre a perfect example of what happens when society pampers a cunt
> (that would be you), treats her like royalty by virtue of vagina, gives her
> preferential treatment in every critical situation (life boats on a sinking
> ship; blankets and food at earthquake/tsunami evacuation centers;

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[3] Two different pseudonyms were posted from users with the same email address. It is a known strategy of trolls to use multiple usernames or 'sock puppets' (see Bu, Xia & Wang, 2013). As such I have collapsed these into one commentator.

[4] This latter use can be usefully conceptualised as part of Garner's (2016) 'regulatory men speak'. The monitoring here came both in the forms of encouragements to not use flaming but instead to use argument, and, conversely, to not use argument but (through allusion) to use physical violence with 'your own women'.

sentencing for criminal conduct; education; welfare; etc., etc.), AND,
on top of that, gives her too much idle time.

I've read your psychotic comment spree. Talk about a cunt with too
much idle time (seriously dont you have anything better to do?). I
suppose, going by your tortured logic, the reason you have so much
time on your menstrual hands, as compared to us men who have to
slave away to provide for our families, is because you are, um,
oppressed?

What a joke. Go elsewhere to diddle your cunt. Stop torturing good
men.

After using internet search engines to trace the commentators and the research website, a
YouTube video disparaging the research and encouraging others to troll the research website was
discovered,[5] which contained an additional 76 unique comments about the project and myself (4
comments were posted multiple times), from 57 different usernames.[6] 52 of these meet the criteria
for a trolling comment (including flames), 16 were conversational between commentators
unrelated to the research (congratulating the producer of the video or thanking other
commentators), and 4 were comments that could neither be construed as trolling or as supportive.
In addition, 3 comments were seemingly random, related to neither the video or other comments,
and 1 was a woman defending the subject of the research (identifiable due to content of the
comment, which addresses how safety work – 'stranger' danger' – is built into 'us'). As the
comments on the YouTube page were more likely to be flames, and the usernames more
anonymous than the Wordpress site, I have resisted attributing gender to the other commentators.
The presenter of the video, self-proclaimed 'male defender' Bernard Chapin, credited a
contributor at 'Men's Rights Facebook' with alerting him to the existence of the research. I was
unable to find either the poster or the group on Facebook with the name given by Chapin in his
video. As such, though reasonable to assume there would be additional comments at this original
source, I am unable to address those comments here. I am also unable to wholly account for the
timing of the intrusions, other than the probability that the men's rights group had been alerted to
its existence through several media articles about street harassment published late in the previous
month in which I had been quoted (references removed for review).

'Fuck you and fuck you all': Experiencing intrusion
Following Emma Jane's (2012) suggestion to use the citation of the messages received without
censorship as a deliberate strategy to challenge the 'tyranny of silence about the sexually explicit
nature of this material' (2012: 2), what follows are examples of the explicit flames posted on the
research site. These messages were directed at me with the exception of the first comment, posted
underneath a message from a disabled woman who shared her experiences on the research site,
including being kissed in her mobility scooter while being unable to get away. The usernames of

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[5] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOhuqb2Udhk
[6] I was unable to see the email addresses of commentators on the YouTube page, only the usernames. This means no
definitive claim can be made about each username representing a unique individual.

the commentators have been removed and the punctuation, grammar and spelling has been replicated directly from the posts.

> …wow i wont fucking kiss a disabled womyn, lolz but the laughing thing is even this disabled and handicap bitch thinks that she is something that men will die for, fuck you and fuck you all.

> Initiatives like this are nothing other than a public expression of rape fantasy and the unspoken desire to be ravaged.

> What a cunt. Look, bitch, you can hate men all you want. I don't care, because you're obviously a sick cunt I wouldn't want anything to do with… Bitch, please find the tallest skyscraper near you, and jump off of it. You would be doing a great service to society.

The research site was moderated, meaning most comments needed my approval before being made public. Some, however, were posted directly under previous comments and as such bypassed moderation. It also meant that I was emailed every time someone commented. As the video disparaging the research was hosted on YouTube, the comments there were moderated by the user who uploaded the video. The flames here appear to be even more uninhibited than those on the research website, perhaps due to the perceived unlikelihood of anyone involved in the research finding the YouTube video or the assumed camaraderie with the other users of Bernard Chapin's YouTube channel. Commentators on the YouTube video site used the space more often than those on the research site for general messages aimed at negating the subject of men's intrusion in public spaces as one worthy of study, condemning feminists and feminism, and linking the vocalisation of the experience of men's stranger intrusion to female narcissism. The first three comments below are taken from the YouTube page, with the last from the research website. All focus on traditional misogynistic stereotypes of women as lying, paranoid, jealous of or competitive with other women, and narcissistic.

> Women complaining about male attention = veiled bragging.

> I'll tell you what this is about. It's a woman's way of saying men are checking them out by complaining about it. Like the one where they complain about how men are always looking at their breast. It's to let other women know that men are paying attention to them.

> They are self-absorbed nut-jobs.

> I see many narcistic and delusional womyn here who think that they are beautiful and entitled and should attract men "flies"

As seen in this final comment, whereas commentators on the research site were able to direct their insults to women participating, the YouTube commentators directed their abuse more to feminists and women more broadly. Men posting flames under the YouTube video tended to post just once as the messages were not engaged with. The examples given below are from commentators who did not appear to post directly on the research website, though some mentioned having visited the site:

> feminists women are disgusting they bleed form those nasty holes every
> month and_ drop that shit on the floor, they need to be neutered!!
>
> How about throwing all men in jails or better send "US" to middle east
> or South east asia because we are sick and we are tired of your fucking
> delusions that your_ the beautiful thing in this world and the most
> privileged sex of this world, fuck you for being a fucking retard bitch.I
> am sick and tired of these mad womyn.
>
> your vagina must be the size of the grand_ canyon.
>
> sounds like a snobby little princess_ type. theres only one real way to
> cure them but its illegal :|...ummmm

This last example demonstrates the ways in which knowledge of the broader context of violence against women and girls was used as a rhetorical device to assist in generating meaning and impact.

The other kind of messages received were those which follow Herring et al's (2002) criteria for a troll in that they attempted to waste time through provoking futile argument whilst appearing outwardly sincere. This type of message was more common on the research site. The attempts to provoke argument here were based largely on the invalidation of women's experience and a repudiation of Kelly's (1988) concept of the continuum of sexual violence, a conceptual framework not explicitly mentioned though evidenced through the list of behaviours used to invite women to participate. This listed five points following the question, have you ever experienced attention from a male stranger in public? In order these were: being told to 'cheer up' or 'smile'; having comments made about your appearance that you either liked or disliked; being assaulted, flashed, touched or followed by a male stranger; feeling as though you are being stared at; or any other experiences you want to talk about.

> The third bullet point is a serious problem. In fact, the disgusting part
> here is how that third bullet point (actual crimes) were put on the same
> bullet list as potential annoyances.
>
> The only bullet point that should be considered a problem is the third.
> The others… if you can't deal with these things yourself- you are a
> special precious snowflake so don't go outside.
>
> Oh I see, "being pathetic" is now on the same scale as groping (AN
> ACTUAL crime)? How dare you minimize the evil that is groping. You
> do realize **YOU ARE TRIVIALIZING GROPING**

The very linking of these forms may have been enough to situate the study as feminist, demonstrating that a project's (or indeed a woman's) feminism may not need to be explicit to be targeted by intrusive men online. Such responses to the concept of the continuum illustrate the stark lines drawn between 'normal' and 'criminal' intrusion, the lines represented in legal and policy frameworks and also seen in the fear of crime paradox, which claims women are more likely to fear crime but men are more likely to be victims of crime. The problem lies in how these strategies of inclusion and exclusion do not reflect the ways men's intrusive practices are

experienced. Importantly, as demonstrated in the last comment listed above, where the tension is made explicit, women's experiential knowledge is subjugated. In this way instead of the continuum raising the experience of men's stranger intrusion in all forms to the same level of legitimacy as the experience of criminal intrusions such as groping, it is suggested that linking intrusions together in this way delegitimises, and thus trivialises, intrusive practices currently on the criminal end of the continuum. This tension between dominant definitions and women's own experiential knowledge (Kelly & Radford, 1990), with the ultimate negation of the latter, is also demonstrated through comments that aimed to invalidate the legitimacy of men's stranger intrusions, both as a source of concern for women and as a research subject for 'real' (male) academics.

> Male scientists don't get involved in these kinds of thing because they are busy researching real things that may have an impact on the world.
>
> So right off the bat, this so called academic is ensuring that confirmation bias will affect her findings and support her hypothesis. Not exactly what you might call the scientific method, is it?_
>
> I do feel for women who do get groped (which is pretty rare, as much as you'd love to claim otherwise), I just can't see how being looked at, complimented or being told to 'cheer up' is oppressive. Annoying maybe.
>
> I remember one time being savagely beaten while walking home from high school. If those guys just decided to randomly wag their penises at me instead of beat the shit out of me I would have been overjoyed. Oddly enough nobody thought I was oppressed.

This final comment demonstrates another technique for invalidation, equating female and male experiential realities and using men's reality as the basis for establishing what does and does not count as violence.

The right amount of panic
The experience of men's intrusion online was an unforeseen outcome of the method of recruitment for this project. Its ability to disrupt the recruitment process was avoided as it came after the call for participants had closed, however the personal impact of the interruption is unavoidable. This impact did not come from commentators who simply disagreed with the project's aims and methods, though as is shown above the arguments used in disagreement were grounded in sexism. It was rather grounded in the personal attacks that were made to myself, my participants and to feminists in general. The aggressive nature of these comments encouraged me to engage in forms of safety work that I had not previously considered, as well as emotional work in managing the personal impact of abuse. The emotional work of researching rape is explored by Campbell (2002). Though her focus is the emotional impact of data collected from participants, Campbell highlights how this personal impact is compounded when the subject is one of violence against a marginalised group of which the researcher is a member (Campbell, 2002). For feminist researchers working on violence against women then, online abuse from men doubles our hidden labour. Not only is there work to be done in managing the research subject (and our own position in relation to it), but we have to conduct both work to manage our responses to our own

experiences and histories of men's violence, as well as safety work, that is the work of managing one's own safety in relation to men's practices.

Liz Kelly's conceptualisation of 'safety work' can be understood as similar to the 'emotional labour' described by Arlie Hochschild (1983), whereby the work of managing one's emotions is embedded in one's profession, with the ability to regulate one's emotions becoming itself a form of economic capital. The work of addressing safety concerns for both oneself and one's participants within the research context is an often hidden part of feminist methodological processes. Mostly this work is pre-emptive, however in this context the bulk of my safety work came during the experience of intrusion itself. In order to assess the threat level posed by the intrusion online, and evaluate the best course of action to lessen this threat, I conducted an 'escalation calculation' similar to the habitual work of my participants in physical public space. Such a calculation was conceptualised in my research as the impossible task of deciphering 'the right amount of panic' (Author, 2016a). In attempting to gauge what the right amount of panic was in a given situation, participants relied on the interplay between their awareness of the external environment and on their pre-constructed templates of risk to conduct an escalation calculation. The operations of this calculation were mostly hidden, conducted often without conscious awareness and grounded in the possibility of intrusion, with women trying to pre-empt and thus prevent unknown men's behaviours. In online spaces, part of this template of risk is formed through the knowledge of men's intrusion in offline spaces. This reveals again the ways in which the range and extent of violence against women acts as a situating context for men's online intrusion and further suggests the usefulness of a violence against women frame for understanding perpetration, impact and the possibilities for prevention.

The suggestion here is that for feminist researchers (in particular but not only those researching violence against women), there may be an under-acknowledged habitual form of labour we conduct in order to assure a sense of safety in the research context. For some this may be more obvious; a colleague who was researching men's engagement with the practices and debates of sexualisation at the same time as I was undertaking this study, explicitly and consciously carried out safety work across her methodological decisions – from recruitment through to conducting the research and considering methods for dissemination (Garner, 2016). For my study, however, the ability of men to use online public space to intrude was not something I had anticipated, particularly not for a research project that was only recruiting women. On reflection, the tension between freedom and safety which acts to restrict women's freedom of movement in physical public space in order to increase their feelings of safety, is replicated in online public space where women's freedom of speech is inhibited through men's intrusive practices. 'The right amount of panic' for feminist researchers then connects both to safety concerns for researchers working with men across the area of violence against women, as well as to the calculation needed to design methodologies that utilise the possibilities of online spaces, whilst simultaneously reducing the opportunities for men's intrusion. As in public spaces, such action will rarely be experienced as capable in terms of preventing men's intrusion as the vast majority of safety work is pre-emptive; 'success here is an "absence" of a predicted outcome' (Wise & Stanley, 1987: 171). Though unmeasurable in this sense, it is important that the place pre-emptive safety work may occupy in the methodologies of feminist research projects, as well as in women's lives, is made visible. This increasing visibility may assist in a broader feminist project seeking to illuminate how the continuum of men's intrusions practices reduces women's freedom.

Conclusion

A conceptualisation of feminist research as a practice and process requires the inclusion of elements commonly placed on the fringes of our methodology, including the process of recruitment and the decisions made here about locating a project as feminist. Given both the experience during recruitment for the project and the growing awareness of online abuse against women worldwide, there is a strong case for seeing the violence, abuse, intrusion and intimidation that women experience in online public spaces to be an extension of, rather than separate to, the forms they experience in offline public space. Where the expression of a subjective experience is met with invalidation, calls of paranoia or narcissism, and misogynistic abuse, that expression itself can become a political act. That such opposition was experienced online, despite the careful use of terminology and the considerations given to not explicitly locating the project at the recruitment stage within a feminist violence against women framework, suggests that some of the key concepts covered during the exploration of women's experiences of men's stranger intrusion may be relevant within the research context itself, particularly where that context crosses into both on and offline public spaces. This combined with similarities in the gender disparity of perpetrators and victims, highlights the necessity of conceptualising experiences of the online harassment of women as a modern day extension of Kelly's (1988) continuum of sexual violence.

Further research on intrusion in public spaces should include online contexts in order to explore the overlaps and differences, as well as how women's experiences offline impact on our experiences online. Particular points of interest that could arise from such studies may be in the demographics of who occupies what public spaces, and what this then means for the intrusion different women experience. The street harassment literature, for example, demonstrates the ways in which race, appearance, class, age and sexuality all influence the likelihood of women defining men's practices as harassing and of seeking legal remedies for harm (Davis, 1993; Fogg-Davis, 2006; Gardner, 1995). Research on women's experiences of and responses to men's intrusion in online public spaces may reveal points of similarity and departure from what is known about the role of intersecting inequalities offline. It will also help a broader project of naming and exploring the range and extent of women's practices of safety work, again mapping differences and similarities across contexts. Connecting forms of men's violence and intrusion in this way, replicating the experiential connection women live, helps to render visible the added labour of feminist research; the too-often hidden forms of our resistance and resilience. Making visible this hidden work, both Hochschild's (1983) emotional work and Kelly's (Author, 2016a) safety work, underlies a feminist research practice and as such deserves a central space in discussions of our methodological processes.

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