The Harasser's Toolbox: Investigating the Role of Mobility in Street Harassment

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of physical mobility in street harassment by analyzing a stratified random sample of 334 cases posted to *Hollaback!*, an online community documenting experiences of street harassment. Findings suggest that harassers utilize means of transportation as weapons to inflict or threaten physical harm, to escape or preserve anonymity, and to pursue targets and as a hunting ground for potential targets. By identifying the mechanisms of street harassment, we theorize how harassers negotiate mobility—particular types of mobility, especially that which is enabled by public transportation and owner vehicles—to gain advantage over targets of harassment.

Keywords

street harassment, gender, mobility

Introduction

Street harassment is often regarded as women being publicly subjected to the animalistic sexual urges of men (Gardner, 1995; Nielsen, 2004; Vera-Gray, 2016). But street harassment is not a consequence of sexual attraction or gratification; rather, it is an exercise in and manifestation of power and dominance, wherein the harasser asserts dominance and exercises power over their target (Gardner, 1995; Kearl, 2010; Nielsen, 2004; Vera-Gray, 2016). The mechanisms through which harassers exercise power may vary considerably; however, we were able to identify several

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patterns in their use of power, specifically how harassers gain strategic advantages over their targets in tangible, identifiable ways.

In our research, we found that mobility—physical mobility, especially that which is facilitated by public transportation and owner vehicles—plays a critical role in advantaging the harasser. This advantage is thus manifested in public spaces where street harassment occurs. Previous research has investigated target responses to harassment and generated a growing volume of literature on the role of identity and power in these interactions (Gardner, 1995; Nielsen, 2004). While such literature is critical to understanding street harassment as a social phenomenon, we found in self-reports of harassment on *Hollaback!*, an international online community devoted to the sharing of street harassment experiences, that physical mobility, or "the ability to move from one place to another smoothly, quickly and without impediment" (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016, p. 547), was a defining feature of these experiences. We realized that while prior research has investigated how women negotiate mobility to avoid harassment (Dunckel-Graglia, 2013; Nielsen, 2004; Osmond & Woodcock, 2015; Riger & Gordon, 1981), we know relatively little about how harassers negotiate mobility to harass (Osmond & Woodcock, 2015).

Through this research, we examine the role of mobility in street harassment; more specifically, we identify the mechanisms through which harassers establish power and dominance using mobility. Told from the perspective of targets of harassment, this research calls attention to street harassment as a social problem—one that is worthy of research, resources, policy change, and public concern—which should be examined as not only an exercise of symbolic power but also an exercise of power made possible by features of public space.

Constructing Street Harassment as a Phenomenon

Despite the recent wave of interest, as shown by events such as International Anti-Street Harassment Week, street harassment is not a new phenomenon. According to Bowman (1993), documented cases of sexual harassment date back to 1875. Although conceptions of street harassment and survey instruments vary, in a range of studies, over half of women surveyed in the United States reported experiencing street harassment (Gardner, 1995; Kearl, 2010; Macmillan, Nierobisz, & Welsh, 2000; Nielsen, 2004). Yet, street harassment has been largely normalized or relegated to the margins of gender inequality discourses, often regarded as a natural or inevitable part of the female experience, less deserving of attention than other issues of gendered subordination (Bowman, 1993; Larkin, 1997; Tuerkheimer, 1997; West, 1987).

Popular and even some academic discourses characterize street harassment as "an inept form of courtship," which is "a convenient fabrication to mask the abuse of power involved, a way to cloud and obscure the real dynamics of harassment" (Langelan, 1993, p. 40). Located at the periphery of both most feminist activism and academic scholarship (di Leonardo, 1981), the literature regarding the nature, effect,

and experience of street harassment has remained relatively limited (Heben, 1994; Vera-Gray, 2016).

The difficulty in studying street harassment lies not only in the volume of existing literature but also in how the phenomenon itself is conceptualized. The literature that *does* center on street harassment often conceptualizes and names the phenomenon differently, which complicates cross-study comparison (Logan, 2015). By definition, street harassment is varied in its expression, ranging from uncomfortable looks to physical assault (Gardner, 1995; Kearl, 2010; Nielsen, 2004). In conceptualizing street harassment, most research suggests that it is most often delivered by men and directed toward women (Bowman, 1993; di Leonardo, 1981; Gardner, 1995; Kearl, 2010; Macmillan et al., 2000; Nielsen, 2004). Available, documented reports of street harassment suggest that persons who harass are typically read as men (Benard & Schlaffer, 1984; Gardner, 1995; Kearl, 2010; McNeil, 2012; Wesselmann & Kelly, 2010). However, women are also capable of engaging in street harassment. Moreover, heterosexual men who in some way challenge the rigid confines of masculinity, transgender and gay men and women, as well as individuals identifying as nonbinary may also experience harassment.

For a variety of reasons, many of which are influenced by heteronormative, traditional gender norms and homophobia, individuals who do not identify as cisgender, heterosexual women may be less likely to identify their experience as harassment or publicly share their story. Because street harassment has historically been framed as a "woman's problem," exclusively affecting cis-gender women, experiences of non–cis women do not appear as widely recognized or documented in the street harassment literature. While a majority of the targets in our sample seemingly presented or identified as women, we refrain from conceptualizing harassment as an exclusively gendered phenomenon. However, gender remains an important theme throughout the article due in part to our sample demographics, as well as popular discourses, which have affected the public's understanding of harassment. Gender will hereafter be defined as that which is accomplished through "a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, or a natural sort of being" (Butler, 1990, p. 45). Yet, to exclusively define street harassment in terms of a gender binary is to effectively obscure and invalidate experiences of street harassment from persons who do not fit this reductionist model. Furthermore, to suggest that the only plausible scenario of street harassment entails a male harasser and female target is to make static gendered power relations and homogenize the positionality and perceptions of all harassers and those harassed. Thus, street harassment must be defined in such a way that permits variability in interpersonal power relations across circumstances.

Although gender and sexuality are often salient components of street harassment, any number of inequalities may interact and take primacy within an experience. Thus, we propose a holistic definition to accommodate for the complexity and variability of social life:

> Street harassment constitutes unwanted attention in public, which psychologically, emotionally, and/or physically impinges on the target's well being. Street harassment is an intrusion, often by a person unknown to the target, which may take a variety of forms, ranging from remarks on physical appearance to sexual touch to brutal physical assaults: no matter the manifestation, street harassment is commonly rooted in inequalities of gender and/or sexuality, and often intersects with the harassed person's race or ethnicity, nationality, religion, class, age, and ability.

With this definition, it becomes clear that those who experience and witness the interaction determine whether or not it is street harassment; if neither the target nor witness deems this interaction to be problematic, it is not street harassment. We emphasize a subjective definition of street harassment because we are often asked whether a compliment to a beautiful stranger is harassment. Those who would ask such a question have missed the broader point of street harassment: The harasser's intentions are relatively unimportant in determining whether street harassment has occurred. Moreover, to suggest that street harassment can be objectively defined is to invalidate the experiences of those who receive the attention of strangers in public space and do not regard it as harassment. Thus, in our definition and research, we have purposefully included witnesses as evaluators of harassment, so as not to overlook the toll of harassment on witnesses, as viewing harassment as a bystander may evoke memories of one's own mistreatment and make salient one's disempowerment.

Whether street harassment takes place through a fleeting exchange or prolonged contact, whether it invokes the intersection of multiple structural inequalities or highlights just one, and whether the harassment is physical or verbal, the experience of street harassment can have a profound effect on a person's financial, educational, physical, and emotional well-being (Hanson, 2010; Pain, 2000). Gilbert (1998) writes, "No spatiality is inherently with or without power" (p. 598); thus, "freedom" of mobility is not necessarily empowering. However, avoidance of urban spaces, driven by fear of physical, emotional, and/or psychological violence, may limit access to economic opportunities, education, health care, and other valued resources (Dunckel Graglia, 2016). For instance, young girls in elementary school who have experienced harassment negatively perceive the school experience and are more frequently absent (Smith, Van Deven, & Huppuch, 2011). Street harassment goes beyond mere inconvenience or annoyance; the toll that street harassment takes can be severe and can span a lifetime.

Given the number of lives affected by street harassment (Gardner, 1995; Kearl, 2010; Macmillan et al., 2000; Nielsen, 2004), the potentially severe ramifications of street harassment (Hanson, 2010; Pain, 2000), and the relative dearth of scholarship on the subject (Heben, 1994; Vera-Gray, 2016), our research had two primary goals: (a) to identify the mechanisms through which harassers establish power and dominance using mobility to their advantage, and (b) to call attention to how features of physical space enable street harassment to persist as exercises of symbolic and (sometimes) physical power.

Method

We examined a total of 308 forum posts by users on the *Hollaback!* website, an online community devoted to personal experiences of street harassment. Drawing upon Uribe and Manzur's (2012) work, this study uses a stratified random sample of 25% of publicly available content from two metropolitan cities, New York and Chicago, when the samples were collected during October and November 2015. We chose New York and Chicago as sample sites because these chapters have been active for a relatively long time, with posts dating as far back as 2010 for Chicago and 2011 for New York City.

At the time of data collection, New York City's forum included 1,121 posts; Chicago's forum included 215 posts. Given the desire for representation between the two cities of interest, stratified random sampling was chosen as the ideal method:

> Stratified sampling recognizes several distinct subpopulations within a population, called strata. Each sampling unit belongs to one stratum only. Random sampling is carried out in each stratum separately so that the resulting sample reflects a priori distinctions known to exist within the population. (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 66)

In this stratified random sample, we collected and assigned case numbers to all available posts from both cities (or strata). Although we used qualitative content analysis procedures to analyze these data, we determined the appropriate sample size using a sample size calculator (Raosoft, 2004) and selected the appropriate sample size using the quantitative literature (e.g., Krippendorff, 1980; Uribe & Manzur, 2012).

Drawing upon Uribe and Manzur's (2012) work, we estimated a robust sample size for this project to contain at least 25% of all cases from each population, due to the disparity of detail and description among some cases and because the Chicago population was relatively small. Thus, we determined that the required 25% threshold would be met with 53.8 Chicago cases and 271.3 New York City cases. Using a sample size calculator, we confirmed the 25% threshold's validity. With a 90% confidence level and $\pm10\%$ margin of error, the required number of cases was 52 for Chicago ($N = 215$; Raosoft, 2004). Using a 90% confidence level with $\pm5\%$ margin of error, the required sample size for New York City ($N = 1,121$) was 219 (Raosoft, 2004). Because calculator sample sizes were less than the 25% minimum necessary for this research, we opted to use the more robust 25% threshold in determining sample sizes. Using a random number generator, we rounded each sample to the nearest whole number and randomly selected 54 cases from Chicago and 271 cases from New York City.

When we first began this project, we approached these data deductively. We developed a semi-structured codebook to investigate the role of intersectional identities in experiences of street harassment. However, we soon learned that forum content does not typically include racial–ethnic information in an effort to

avoid perpetuating stereotypes. The *Hollaback!* Anti-Discrimination Policy clearly states that the organization be anti-racist, anti-classist, anti-homophobic, anti-transphobic, and anti-ableist and asks its members to avoid referencing these statuses in submissions ("Frequently Asked Questions," n.d.). Whether motivated by the site's anti-discrimination policy specifically or colorblindness more generally, few forum users indicated the racial or ethnic identity of either the target(s) or harasser(s), unless it was central to the experience of harassment.

In addition, only four forum users explicitly identified as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, queer) or nonbinary and only one identified as a man, although these populations undoubtedly experience street harassment (McNeil, 2012). The remaining forum users in some way indicated, whether explicitly or implicitly, that they identified as women. None of the forum users explicitly identified as heterosexual. Persons who do not identify as cis-gender, heterosexual women may not label incidents of street harassment as such, given its framing as a cis-gender, heterosexual women's problem, or be willing to openly share and disseminate their accounts. The site may also be shared among certain social networks, particularly among cis-gender, heterosexual women. Moreover, the site is aesthetically feminine (its logo is pink) and disseminates videos, graphics, and written communication, which reference and showcase figures and persons who are most often portrayed as women who abide by conventional gender expressions. Consequently, individuals who do not identify as cis-gender women may not be exposed to the site or feel that the site is intended for persons like themselves.

For reasons previously mentioned, the demographics of forum users likely do not represent the demographics of all those who have endured street harassment. It is for these reasons that we support further study of the mechanisms of street harassment, particularly those related to mobility, as our research is not without its limitations. *Hollaback!* forum users are discouraged from disclosing particular demographic information, unless this information is determined relevant. Although an imperfect and sometimes problematic technique, we relied on pronouns, descriptions of attire and appearance, and other context clues to identify the gender of the target and the perceived gender of the harasser. It was not possible to identify the race–ethnicity of the vast majority of harassers, unless specifically included in the report. Given how few cases mention race or ethnicity, we were unable to conduct a comprehensive analysis of race and power in street harassment. As a result, we shifted our methods to accommodate a combination of inductive and deductive approaches while continuing to pay close attention to the symbolic use of power.

A cursory search of content from the *Hollaback!* forums reveals a wide variety of user-generated content. For example, some users report multiple experiences or a lifetime experience with street harassment in a single post, whereas others submit a few words describing a single event. In addition, forum moderators post announcements on the chapter site. Given the variability of data, we approached the project

for a second time using an inductive approach, wherein we examined themes as they emerged from these data.

Once the initial, inductive coding was complete, the coders discussed their findings. We determined that the influence of mobility was not only a key theme as it was described by many targets of harassment, but that mobility was also theoretically significant as an undertheorized area of inquiry. We then developed a set of rudimentary codes to be applied to a subsample of cases so that we could continue to develop the codebook. We developed a robust codebook based on the intricacies and complexities as they emerged in data.

Although many themes emerged from these data, coders focused on 13 codes, which corresponded with three code groups, or "families." The code families of interest were *Location of Harassment, Harasser Means of Mobility*, and *Mobility Used as Tool for Harassment* (Appendix). The codebook presented in the appendix provides a description of each code/family and demonstrates the scope of these codes as applied to the entirety of cases.

Once coding was complete, we engaged in a period of reconciliation. Following reconciliation, we arrived at a mean interrater reliability of $\kappa = 0.991$, and all interrater reliability measures were significant at the .01 level. Information regarding interrater reliability and coder results may be found in Table 1 in "The Harasser's Toolbox" section.

The Harasser's Toolbox

Harassers gain strategic advantages over their targets by negotiating mobility in tangible, identifiable ways. We use the phrase "harasser toolbox" to describe any combination of common approaches harassers select to identify and harass potential targets in public spaces. We argue that harassers have a number of options when it comes to harassing their intended target to the fullest extent, which may be at least occasionally determined by the harasser's preference. However, others seem to act strategically, selecting their harassment strategies based on the physical environment in which both they and their target exist. Harassers oftentimes use to their advantage transportation as a weapon to inflict or threaten physical harm, to hide or escape detection, and/or to pursue targets. Whether or not harassment occurs on or near sites of mass transit, harassers seem to regularly use public space as a hunting ground to select and isolate potential targets, implementing techniques that depend largely on the unique context of the environment.

As shown in Table 1, we identified prime locations for harassment and common means of mobility for the harassers. When the location of harassment could be identified, it was most often (20.45%) at sites of public transportation (e.g., at/on public buses, bus stops, train or subway cars, or stations) or areas "on the way to" or near bus, train, or subway stations (17.53%; Table 1 and Appendix). In addition, harassers were most often (55.14%) described as being "on foot" or standing, running, walking, or sitting in public space (Table 1 and Appendix). It was not uncommon for these "on foot" harassers to be loitering near sites of public transit.

Table 1. Inter-Rater Reliability Values by Code.

Code family	Code name	Coder 1 frequency and percentage of code applied	Coder 2 frequency and percentage of code applied	Inter-rater reliability (κ)
Location of harassment	Public transit	63 (20.45%)	63 (20.45%)	1.000*
	Near public transit	54 (17.53%)	54 (17.53%)	1.000*
	Private transit	5 (1.62%)	5 (1.62%)	1.000*
	Unknown/Miscellaneous	193 (62.66%)	193 (62.66%)	1.000*
Harasser means of mobility	Bike/Scooter	20 (6.49%)	20 (6.49%)	1.000*
	Car	40 (12.99%)	39 (12.66%)	0.985*
	On foot	170 (55.14%)	170 (55.14%)	1.000*
	Public transit	51 (16.56%)	51 (16.56%)	1.000*
	Unknown	49 (15.91%)	50 (16.23%)	0.988*
Mobility used as tool for harassment	Easy or quick escape	30 (9.74%)	29 (9.42%)	0.981*
	Public space as hunting grounds	90 (29.22%)	85 (27.60%)	0.960*
	Affects target mobility with vehicle/body	133 (43.18%)	132 (42.86%)	0.993*
	Unknown/No perceived use	120 (38.96%)	124 (40.26%)	0.973*

*Results are significant at the .01 level.

We also identified themes wherein mobility was used as a tool for harassment (Table 1). When it was used as a tool, harassers most commonly affected the target's mobility ($\bar{x} = 43.02\%$) using their body or a vehicle to alter a target's path. This often included obstructing a target's path so that they needed to move around the harasser, grabbing the target, or following/stalking the target so that they felt it necessary to pursue an alternate route. The second most common theme ($\bar{x} = 28.41\%$) involved harassers utilizing their mobility to select susceptible targets—the effects of which were magnified by the physical features of public transit spaces. Instances of harassment that took place under these conditions were especially severe, prompting us to name this theme "hunting grounds."

Hunting Grounds

Prior research suggests that harassment regularly occurs on or near public transportation (Kearl, 2010; Nielsen, 2004). Moreover, public transportation is a commonly feared space among women (Gill, 1989). While street harassment may occur in any public space, we argue that physical spaces in and around areas of mass transit offer unique advantages for harassers. In other words, areas of public transportation offer a target-rich environment to harassers because public spaces can offer the opportunity "for planned and spontaneous encounters" (Mehta, 2014,

p. 56). We use the phrase "hunting ground" to suggest that harassers may view harassment as a way to perform during a game of power and control (Gardner, 1995). Although harasser intentions and motives are beyond the scope of this research, framing harassment as a game suggests that harassers may be strategic in how they identify the "best" target in a target-rich environment and take precautions to avoid resistance from either the target or those who seek to assist or protect the target. Using the most conservative coder's results, a total of 85 cases (27.60%) include target reports which describe harassers' perceived forethought and/or planning, as well as reports of harassers acting opportunistically—for example, waiting for the opportune moment to harass or spontaneously acting when certain conditions arise.

Because a large number of strangers may be engaging in anonymous interaction within or near mass transit, these spaces act as a convenient hunting ground for harassers, who are able to disguise verbal affronts within a chorus of simultaneous conversations and physical abuses within the hustle-and-bustle of crowded spaces. By suggesting that public transportation serves as a hunting ground for harassers—who are typically read as male—we do not imply that men are inherently predatory or sexually aggressive; rather, we acknowledge that all individuals utilize public spaces, particularly areas on or near mass transit, to satisfy their personal goals (e.g., travel to and from work), but call attention to how harassers use these spaces to satisfy a unique goal: to identify and harass potential targets.

A significant number of *Hollaback!* forum users reported experiencing harassment on public transportation, ranging from physical violence to sexually aggressive remarks, a trend confirmed in previous research (Gardner, 1995; Kearl, 2010; Nielsen, 2004). Of the 308 cases in the sample, 117 (37.99%) cited street harassment experiences that occurred near sites of mass transit or while using public transit. In these reports, sexual touch and sex acts were especially common. Harassers seeking to expose themselves or masturbate with a target in sight were especially and disproportionately drawn to public transportation, ostensibly in search of a guarantee that their targets will remain in a fixed location for a predetermined and reliable amount of time. In other words, harassers are reasonably certain that targets cannot or will not exit a moving vehicle until the next predetermined stop. From this knowledge, harassers are able to gauge the amount of time with a trapped target and use this time to accomplish their goal.

Public transportation serves as an ideal space for those seeking to harass, particularly for harassers who engage in public sex acts. Whether the target is alone or camouflaged in a crowd of passengers, targets using public transportation are generally unable to easily or quickly escape their harasser and/or to notify authorities. For example, an anonymous poster recalls,

> [T]he trains were extremely packed and if I didn't squeeze myself on, I wouldn't be able to get to work so I forced myself onto the train along with other passengers. A few minutes into the ride, a tall man wearing sunglasses started groping my genital area. I looked down at his hand, looked at his face, and glared. But he continued. I couldn't

move anywhere because the train was packed so tightly and I was trapped. It was the first time being sexually harassed physically so I wasn't sure what I was supposed to do.

For harassers seeking prolonged anonymity, physical contact, and close proximity to their targets, few other public spaces provide such an auspicious opportunity. Particularly in times of heavy foot traffic, harassers are able to sit or stand close to targets without attracting undue attention from bystanders. Moreover, targets are less likely to be stationary on sidewalks or in parks than they are on public transportation, which allows harassers to more easily utilize their targets' bodies for the purposes of asserting their dominance and fulfilling their sexual desires.

Lena recounts an incident where the harasser used crowded public space to his advantage, maintaining close physical proximity to his target without attracting the attention of bystanders:

I was 13 years old at the time, and I was on the 4/5 train from Union Square at like 7:30 with my sister and dad. It was crowded, but this man standing in front of me seemed a little too close. Then I felt him rub his hand against my crotch. I tried to squirm away, because I didn't know what to do. Before I could get up the courage to push him away, he got off.

Forum users who reported incidents of harassment at a young age were generally unsure of how to appropriately respond or were too afraid to respond. Notably, a number of female forum users reported experiencing harassment at a young age; for example, one forum user recalled experiencing harassment at 8 years old.

While some harassers use crowds to their advantage, others assert themselves when public transportation is scarcely populated. These individuals use the absence of bystanders to enhance their power and control over the target. CJ writes,

A man sat near me on the southbound G train at 9:00pm Saturday night. He waited until we were the only two people left on the car. Then, he pulled out his penis and started jerking off between the 7th Ave and 15th St stations.

CJ's harasser waited for the opportune moment to act, when there were few witnesses aside from his target. In such instances, the absence of a bystander, or an "audience," may alter the harasser–target power dynamic. When an audience of bystanders is absent, the harasser may have nearly absolute control over the intensity of the affront, as the possibility of a good Samaritan intervening to protect the target is unlikely.

Given what we know about street harassment as a phenomenon, it is reasonable that no matter the setting, harassers seek to avoid detection and interference by bystanders, particularly if their harassment would be deemed unduly severe or offensive. As it stands, harassers may avoid bystander intervention or other repercussions in both crowded and sparsely populated areas of mass transit, although the

means by which they avoid detection may vary. Ultimately, however, harassers capitalize on their surroundings to gain advantage over their intended target.

The setting, in which there may be few or many bystanders, determines the locus from where power is derived. For the harasser in a crowded space, power may be derived from immobilizing the target using shame or fear and gambling on bystander silence. In areas of crowded mass transit, at any moment, an instance of harassment may be challenged, thus attenuating the power of the harasser over their target. Hence, these harassers may seek a thrill from their delicate and tenuous exercise of power. While the field of social psychology has well documented the bystander effect (Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010; Latané & Darley, 1968), harassers may carefully weigh the odds that responsibility will be diffused within a crowd.

Harassers who choose scarcely populated areas may exercise nearly complete control over the situation by playing a different numbers game: The fewer the witnesses, the less likely their power will be challenged. If the harasser is alone with a target, they only need to exert power over one person. In these situations, there are perhaps fewer unknowns for the harasser to account for and they may be more focused on ultimate control over one person as opposed to dispersed control over a group of people.

Immobilizing Targets

For some harassers, public transit serves as not only ideal hunting grounds but also a space in which shame may be used to immobilize targets. Britt recalls an incident in which her response was limited, in part, due to an expectation of shame:

> [T]he train was so crowded and more [people] were pushing on. I ended up standing I [*sic*] front of this heavyset guy with his coat open. Thought nothing of it. Within minutes I feel my rear being poked and I thought I was wrong. This guy kept rubbing his erection on my behind. I couldn't move and for some reason I was so shocked and confused and feared making a scene, so I said nothing. At one point I moved into the aisle and he followed and got behind me again. Lowering himself to better position his erect penis on my ass to run some more and it was like I was practically in between his legs. Luckily a lady moved over and said "sit down! That man is trying to rub "himself"' on you! [*sic*] I'm glad she did because my mind was racing and I was so angry.

In this instance, Britt is reluctant to "make a scene" or openly express hostility and command attention. Gendered expectations would have Britt internalize her anger and anxiety and remain unobtrusive, passive, and compliant. To do otherwise may cause a sense of shame. Maibom (2010) suggests that shame may derive from the failure to meet dominant social expectations and ideals. According to Manion (2003), women may experience shame when "they see themselves falling short of a traditionally feminine model of goodness or when they believe they are perceived by others as insensitive, unaccommodating, and, in essence, unfeminine" (p. 36).

We draw upon Manion's (2003) characterization to distinguish two forms of shame, which may or may not be experienced simultaneously by a target of street harassment. The first type of shame is distinguished by the self's determination of its action (or inaction) as warranting shame and may emerge without an external actor's intent to induce an internalized shame within the target. We call this experience *self-imagined shame.* The target who experiences self-imagined shame assesses the social acceptability of their ongoing or potential involvement in instances of harassment and envisions the response of others. For targets, the predicted response of others may be specific to individuals the target knows in a real and personal way, or it may pertain to imagined responses of the generalized other. If a target perceives their response to be socially inappropriate or unacceptable, they may experience shame. In response to self-imagined shame, a target may choose a course of action which conforms to social expectations.

In the preceding anecdote, Britt recalls her fear of "making a scene," after her body was used as a prop in her harasser's attempted sex act. Britt's concern, born of self-imagined shame, became immobilizing. Although Britt's shame was felt in reaction to the harasser's offense and perhaps lessened by a bystander's intervention, Britt frames the harasser's motivation as self-gratification. There is no evidence that the harasser intended to cause Britt's feelings of shame. Nevertheless, Britt refrains from protesting her harassment for fear of inducing public shame by violating the gendered expectation of passivity.

*Other-imposed sham*e is engendered by an external actor's express intent to induce feelings of shame within the target. Like self-imagined shame, other-imposed shame is established through the use of commonly understood frameworks of socially appropriate behavior. However, other-imposed shame is felt when the target internalizes external source(s) of shame, often enacted through the negative sanctions of others, as a result of the target's "provocative" behavior. When the target feels this kind of shame, it is often in response to the harasser or bystander intentionally calling attention to socially inappropriate or unacceptable activity (e.g., a harasser masturbating on a train) to induce a feeling of shame within the target. This is a shame of transference, wherein the target feels shamed by others for an offense they did not commit, but in some way caused.

According to Bowman (1993), street harassment of women by men implies

> either that women are acting out of role simply *by* their presence in public or that a part of their role is in fact to be open to the public . . . [Street harassment] emphasizes that women, unlike men, belong in the private sphere, the sphere of domestic rather than public responsibility. (p. 526)

In essence, street harassment is intended to put a woman "in her place" and elevate the position of the harasser. Logan (2015) suggests perpetrators of street harassment feel "entitled to own public space and in a sense to control and violate the people in that space" (p. 208). As a consequence, targets may become fearful of public space, alter their use of public space, and/or conduct themselves in public space in accordance with public expectation. For example, Sarah wrote,

A few weeks ago I was really excited to get to wear my beautiful summer dresses, skirts, and heels again but now the thought of going outside without a thick black coat to protect me. . . . It looks beautiful out there, but I just can't. The worst part is, when my husband comes home from being out of town for the weekend he'll ask why I've stayed inside for the last few days. . . . He doesn't understand what it's like. After I was harassed a few weeks ago, he thought it was because I had been wearing a jacket instead of a peacoat. When I tried to explain why saying that was hurtful he told me I should just talk about it with some of my girlfriends, because he didn't understand how I could be so upset. I'm scared to go outside. And I hate that.

Because street harassment is often directed toward women by men, the phenomenon derives from and legitimizes the subordination of women by men as natural, normal, and desirable. Other-imposed shame preys upon this rationale by compelling women targets to take blame for their perceived provocation, thereby accepting their subordination as legitimate in deference to patriarchal ideals. By contrast, because the male harasser is viewed as abiding by gendered expectations (i.e., dominance), they are often given a free pass because "boys will be boys."

Paige's experience provides an excellent example of how the "doing gender" rationale is revealed in other-imposed shaming. In this example, the harasser seeks to publicly humiliate Paige because he views Paige as a provocateur. After the harasser calls attention to the target, other passengers are inspired to negatively sanction Paige.

Then he screams from across the train "STOP SPREADING YOUR LEGS, YOU'RE TEASING EVERYONE OVER HERE." I was wearing a skirt, and my legs were not crossed, but my legs were by no means spread. They were just, there. I was sitting like a normal person. . . . I kinda ignored him, but he wouldn't shut up. . . . At one point, a guy sitting by this dude said to me "It is your fault that you're sitting that way. You shouldn't be sitting with your legs spread. You should be sitting like a lady. You're just asking for it." etc. etc. . . . He eventually said, "I bet you think it would be a man's fault if he assaulted you even though you're teasing everyone like that." Can you believe that? I eventually pressed record on my phone. And when the train stopped, I immediately went into a different compartment and burst into tears.

Paige's experience serves as an excellent example of gender performativity, particularly in public space: The advice to appear attractive, but sexually unavailable, signals that women should avoid victimization at all costs through the careful management of self-presentation. Patriarchal ideologies and dominant public discourses offer advice to safeguard women from victimization; the implication being that if a woman experiences victimization (ranging from small incivilities to assault), she is to blame: either she did not follow the directions of appropriate behavior or ignored advice on how to safeguard herself from victimization (Gardner, 1995).

Nielsen (2004) calls these safeguarding practices a "detailed calculus" (p. 59). Expectations regarding presentation of self in public space and avoidance of victimization are continuously iterated to women beginning in childhood; social

actors quickly correct "wrong" performances of gender, using other-imposed shaming to ensure future compliance (Gardner, 1995; Russ, 2008). Through dominant ideologies and discourses regarding so-called appropriate behavior, women are conditioned to expect negative sanctions when using public space because they are not entitled to the same rights as dominant groups. While street harassment may not necessarily come as a surprise, it may not minimize the salience of subordination.

Maibom (2010) contends that shame "features an audience and is sensitive to social rank" (p. 589). The social rank of an individual affects their susceptibility to shame as well as their ability to shame others. Maibom (2010) explains,

> There is often a power-differential between those who shame and those who are ashamed. People who have low rank, little authority, or belong to a minority, are shamed more easily than those who have higher rank, belong to the majority, etc. (p. 574)

The vast majority of harassers in the *Hollaback!* sample are read by targets or bystanders as cis-gender men. In addition, targets are often read as women by bystanders or identified as women by the targets themselves. As a social construction, gender is informed by social processes, history, and power relations wherein cis-gender, heterosexual, wealthy, White men of European descent have been placed at the top of the United States' power hierarchy (Nagel, 2000).

The susceptibility of women to shame, due in part to their comparatively lower social status than men, in combination with the difficulty of escaping harassment, makes public transportation an ideal space for men to utilize shame, whether other-imposed or self-imagined, against women targets. Moreover, although other racial–ethnic, sexual, class, and age descriptions are largely absent in *Hollaback!* data, harassers are almost certainly drawing upon existing frameworks of power to enhance their advantage in street harassment.

In Pursuit

One of the most terrifying aspects of street harassment is the real or perceived inability to escape. Women associate particular areas of the physical environment with the potential for victimization (Valentine, 1989). To combat potential victimization and mitigate anxiety or fear of victimization, women often adopt coping strategies for using space (Valentine, 1989). "Women develop individual mental maps of places where they fear assault as a product of their past experience of space and secondary information," such as their parents' fears for them as young women (Valentine, 1989, p. 386).

Few, if any, public spaces ensure a refuge from harassment. Outside of public transportation, harassers use means of transportation to pursue their targets. Tanya remembers,

> When I was about 15, I was walking to school in Springfield Gardens, Queens, when a man in his thirties, saw me walking by his house. He got in his car and followed me,

while he kept telling me how attractive he thought I was. I just kept walking, terrified. He followed me in his car all the way to school, but he never got out. After school, I told my parents what happened, and the next day, my father made me show him where his house was, but I never saw him again. He probably saw him through the window. From then on, I took the school bus.

In this incident, the man harassing a young Tanya uses his personal vehicle to keep pace with his target. Beyond pursuing his target, the harasser attempts to lure his target into the vehicle.

Sadly, forum users often reported instances of being followed by harassers on bikes or in cars and trucks. Using the most conservative coder's reporting, a total of 59 cases (19.16%) included reports of harassers using vehicles in their harassment. Tanya continued her story, writing,

One of the most humiliating incidents occurred (as if the others weren't bad enough) when I was waiting at the bus stop to go to a shopping area on Jamaica Avenue in Queens. A man pulled up in a car and started yelling sexual comments to me. Just when I started to cringe, my bus arrived, and I boarded. When I got off the bus, I thought I was fairly safe. I went into a shoe store. I was just getting to the aisle where my shoe size was, when suddenly, out of nowhere, the same man in the car appeared. Apparently, he followed my bus. He got in my face and yelled, "Bitch, if you didn't want to be bothered, you shouldn't wear those fucking tight-ass jeans, you fucking whore!" To top it off he spit on me, and left. Everyone in the store just froze, and it was dead silent.

In this instance, Tanya's harasser uses his vehicle to follow his target for miles across town. He then proceeds to pursue her on foot and publicly harass her, for the grave offense of wearing pants.

Using means of mobility, individuals are more easily able to verbally or otherwise harass their targets over greater distances or for a greater stretch of time. Almost all targets who reported being followed by harassers on bike or other motorized vehicles were on foot at the time. Harassing from the vantage point of a vehicle, even a bicycle, while the target is on foot gives the harasser the upper hand, as their target knows she may be overpowered at any moment.

Eluding Detection

Harassers also use their means of mobility to hide and/or escape. In the following instance, VK's harasser uses his bike for a quick escape from the harassment site:

I was walking down Bushwick Ave. with a bag of groceries—it was still light out. No one else was on the sidewalk, and a kid, probably between 10 and 13, rode up right next to me on his bike, grabbed my ass, then rode away giggling. I cursed him out but didn't chase him because I was carrying heavy bags.

By quickly escaping after groping his target, this harasser ensures that his target is not able to get a clear image of his physical appearance; thus, he remains an anonymous,

unknown threat. Using the most conservative coder's results, a total of 29 cases (9.42%) include descriptions of harassers who purposefully and quickly exit the scene after harassing the target. Anonymity is one of street harassers' most powerful tools because it often prevents targets and bystanders from the ability to seek formal recourse.

VK's harasser uses their vehicle as not only a means of escape but also to hide or obscure their identity. Laura recalls a similar experience:

> [A]s they passed (there were 4 guys in the jeep), the guy sitting next to the driver leaned out of the window and yelled, practically inches away from my face, "NICE TITS!" and they sped off. I was so furious, but for some reason not surprised, I just stood there like an idiot.

In using their vehicles to quickly vacate the harassment site, harassers are able to avoid repercussions from targets or bystanders, particularly if they are in an enclosed vehicle such as a car or truck. The implication of anonymity being that harassers avoid seeing the looks of disgust and shock, hearing the objections, or facing physical retribution from their targets or bystanders. Thus, by ensuring their anonymous identities, harassers safeguard against the possibility of recourse to targets or those who seek to protect or help targets.

Other harassers chose not to focus on ensuring an anonymous identity, but instead used vehicles to obscure their activities. This was particularly true for public exposure or sex acts. An anonymous user writes, "The summer I was 12, I saw men masturbating all over the city. On two occasions a guy would be in a car, honking to get my attention to show me he was masturbating." In these instances, harassers used their cars or trucks to hide public masturbation, revealing their activities only to designated targets. Tanya recalls a similar incident, her first recollection of street harassment, but certainly not her last:

> It [street harassment] started when I was eight years old. I was across from my elementary school waiting to cross the street. When everything was clear, I started to cross, when a middle-aged man pulled up in the crosswalk in front of me, cutting me off. From what I remember, he asked me some sort of question, but as I looked, I realized that not only was he masturbating, he was ejaculating right on the seat. I was horrified, and ran away. I am now 45 years old (Black Female), and that's my earliest recollection of when it all started.

Thus, eluding detection took two forms in harasser intent: a desire to maintain anonymity of identity and a desire to obscure their acts. While they are not mutually exclusive, they suggest a pattern where harassers may deem their offenses objectionable.

Mobile Threats

Using the most conservative coder's results, 132 (42.86%) forum users reported a physical component of harassment wherein the harasser attempts to alter the target's

mobility. Some of those reports include harassers who used their means of mobility as violent weapons. In some cases, harassers used their vehicles to intimidate and threaten physical harm to targets. Although no forum user reported experiencing a physical injury from a harasser's vehicle, the experience of being threatened was described as a frightening experience. In the following narrative, Cara details the extent of harassment she endured at the hands of a stalker:

> This guy started out by making gross noises with his mouth when I walked by him. It started when I moved to this neighborhood years ago. I ignored it. Then he started following me in his car. He would drive next to me really slow and stare. I ignored that, thinking he is an ignorant jerk. Then he progressed to suddenly showing up in places I was in . . . like the Laundromat and stores . . . I walk another way to avoid walking by his house but he has started appearing in places I am around the neighborhood. Even though I walk away from where he lives when I come to a certain intersection he is always suddenly there. A few times when I have come home a night he has driven his car right at me.

In this case, what seemingly started as street harassment grew into stalking, using a vehicle to inflict a perpetual feeling of fear in the target by driving directly toward her.

Martin reported a similar incident, motivated by homophobia and a rejection of gender-expansive expressions. *Hollaback!* tagged the following story as homophobic:

> I was wearing fairy wings and makeup from a fun costume day in the park. (I'm a man.) A car full of dudes pulled up, honked their horn, and they rolled down their window, yelled, and stared. After we crossed the street they turned right behind us, dangerously close, and sped away.

In Martin's experience, multiple male harassers use their vehicle as a weapon to intimidate and threaten harm to a man in costume. What is interesting about this description is its similarity to other reports where the targets of harassment were women. In many ways these cases share important similarities in how fear is incited, by following "dangerously close[ly]," "yell[ing]" and "star[ing];" like cases with women targets, enforcing gendered expectations of appropriate behavior or presentation is achieved through making a spectacle of the target. This is the mechanism through which harassers assert their symbolic power. However, the harassers in Martin's experience create a physical advantage for themselves by using an automobile to convey the severity of their threat.

A critical part of street harassment is the environment in which it occurs, in which mobility of both the harasser and the harassed can inform the perception of imminent danger. Although undertheorized in the street harassment literature, mobility is a significant component of many experiences with street harassment. Harassers leverage power and assert their dominance through their mobility; they

utilize means of mobility as weapons to intimidate or threaten physical harm, as a means to hide or escape and to pursue targets, and as a hunting ground for selecting potential targets. Whether riding a bike or on the subway, harassers utilize means of mobility to assist in enacting emotional, psychological, or physical violence upon their intended targets.

Discussion

Street harassment may severely impede the emotional, psychological, physical well-being, and mobility of targets. Mobility, though not inherently or necessarily empowering, is too often restricted out of fear (Gilbert, 1998). Fear of mobility, as induced by street harassment and other forms of violence, may restrict access to valuable resources and opportunities. Should they desire, all persons should be able to move freely and safely through public space. Street harassment must be recognized as a legitimate and significant social problem which affects countless persons across the globe.

Findings indicate that harassers negotiate mobility using a variety of recognizable tools to intrude upon a target; specifically, harassers utilize means of transportation as weapons to inflict or threaten physical harm, as a means to escape or preserve anonymity and to pursue targets, and as a hunting ground for potential targets. In other words, we contend that harassers work with a known toolbox of techniques to satisfy their personal goals. One's ability and capacity to harass without recourse is influenced by how a harasser negotiates space and mobility using this toolbox to gain advantage over their target(s). Due to the anonymous quality of public space and cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequality, there is little recourse for those who experience street harassment. The lack of recourse only enhances the power of these acts.

Nielsen (2004) poses an intriguing argument about the United States' protection of free speech and street harassment. She argues that while most Americans resist the notion of criminalizing street harassment because it may violate free speech protections, street harassment is similar to (and may in fact be) hate speech. However, as it stands in the current era, even hate speech may be protected under law. So while hate speech may be repugnant, it usually does not have any bearing in the legal realm. Only when street harassment takes the form of a bodily assault does it have a realistic chance for prosecution at the federal level, although some states offer varying interpretations.

The United States is part of the ever-growing minority of nations protecting street harassment under free speech. One notable reaction to street harassment across the globe is the creation and implementation of "pink transportation," including single-gender rail cars and women-only ride-sharing companies (Bates, 2016; Hall-Geisler, 2016; Izadi, 2016; Kearl, 2015; Ojeda, 2015; Sanghani, 2015; Volokh, 2015).

According to Kearl (2015), "pink transportation" does not accommodate for and may not be welcoming to all persons who experience harassment, including

nonbinary, transgender, queer, and male individuals. In addition, Kearl (2015) argued that "pink transportation" does not offer a long-term solution, nor does it address the underlying structural and cultural roots of gender inequality. Rather, the use of "pink transportation" places the burden of responsibility on women for their safety and well-being in public space. We echo Kearl (2010, 2015) in calling attention to street harassment as a global problem which requires a myriad of large-scale, but culturally specific solutions. "Pink" or sex-segregated transportation may be a temporary way to assuage some of the fear or trepidation of using public transportation, but it is not a long-term solution. Future research must address avenues to lessen the incidence of street harassment and protect those who are targeted by harassers, without becoming entrenched in First Amendment debates.

Public policy in the United States and around the globe must begin to restructure and reconfigure public space to become more inclusive. The first step is to recognize street harassment as a social issue and acknowledge its affect on the movements of countless individuals as they go about their daily lives. The second step is to implement policies on the city, state, and federal level, which could deter street harassment and empower targets in seeking recourse. However, it is not enough to punish harassers or make recourse more accessible. We must subvert the very power structures that underlie street harassment as a phenomenon, both as individuals and as a society. Researchers must find ways to contribute to this overwhelming task by collaborating with activist organizations that share a similar goal.

While we cannot stress enough the importance of additional research, some scholars have already documented important findings based on historic group inequalities. Women who are not perceived to be heterosexual or cis-gender, whose gender identity is ambiguous, and/or whose gender expression is non-normative are targeted for street harassment (Namaste, 1996). Women of color, heavily criminalized and sexualized in popular discourses, are especially vulnerable to street harassment (Chen, 1997; Fogg-Davis, 2006; Madriz, 1997a, 1997b), perhaps more vulnerable than White women (Kearl, 2010; Pain, 2000). McNeil (2012) found that street harassment is commonly experienced among gay and bisexual men. Moreover, Meyer (2012) suggests that hate crimes against LGBTQ-identified individuals often begin with street harassment. To study experiences of harassment among other marginalized populations may yield insights as to how street harassment affects diverse bodies and is enacted against those populations.

One of the most critical barriers to current research is the lack of data that specifically ask how race, ability, gender and sexuality, religion, nationality, class, and occupation affect the tenure, tone, and experience of street harassment. While there may be common threads, we should not continually homogenize "women's experiences" with street harassment. We suggest that future research continue to expand our understanding of street harassment by placing at the forefront experiences of

street harassment by people of color, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ, and gender-expansive individuals, as well as people who are targeted on the basis of religion, nationality, class, and occupation.

Street harassment affects people who do not identify as heterosexual, cis-gender White women and may occur at greater frequency or entail more hateful rhetoric and physical assault against other populations. However, much of the street harassment literature characterizes targets, specifically women targets, as victimized and powerless (Logan, 2015; Osmond & Woodcock, 2015). Future researchers should pay close attention to the reactions of targets, particularly targets who have experienced historical disenfranchisement and marginalization, given how little is known about the psychological and physiological effects of street harassment. At the present moment, what is known about such effects comes from Bowman's (1993) work. Bowman (1993) suggests that targets who do not overtly resist harassment are more likely to endure adverse psychological and emotional effects. However, are the psychological and physiological effects of street harassment experienced similarly across groups?

How does the context shape a target's reaction? What situations cause targets to react visually, audibly, or physically? What is the long-term impact of a lifetime experience with street harassment? Future research should focus on how targets enact their agentic power within street harassment, whether that manifests in overt disavowal in the moment or not. Technology may be a channel through which targets assert agency in moments of and following harassment. The role of technology as an ever-present feature of daily life ought to be explored in future research, both in its use by harassers to harass potential targets and in how targets and bystanders use technology to combat harassment.

To expand upon our understanding of street harassment as an enduring phenomenon, we must continually evaluate how the phenomenon is affected by an ever-changing social context. At this moment in history, the role of technology is of utmost importance as both a tool for harassment and an avenue for recourse. We must also pay close attention to how recent sociopolitical events have affected group relations in the United States. When women, people with disabilities, and religious, sexual, racial, and ethnic minority groups are publicly targeted, demonized, and demeaned, members of these subordinated populations may be profoundly affected. From the highest levels of governance to the lowest levels of public discourse, stigma matters.

In reexamining the ways in which we frame street harassment, we must also redefine street harassment as a problem that is not exclusively or evenly experienced by women and continually situate street harassment within an intersectional framework to interrogate the relations between street harassment, race, gender and sexuality, class, ability, religion, nationality, and space. We must recognize the impact of practices of social exclusion, like street harassment, and continue to investigate how public space serves as a conduit through which structural and interpersonal inequalities are reproduced.

Appendix

Operational Codes.

Code name	κ	Description
Location of harassment	1.000	Code family used to group locations where harassment occurred
Public transit	1.000	Occurring at/on public buses, bus stops, train or subway cars, or stations
Near public transit	1.000	Occurring in the areas surrounding public transit stations, such as nearby streets or areas cited as on the way to or from public transportation
Private transit	1.000	Occurring while in target's own, private automobile, taxi, or bicycle
Unknown/Miscellaneous	1.000	Reports not specifying the location in relation to transit (e.g., store, gas station, laundromat, park, beach)
Harasser means of mobility	0.995	Code family used to determine the specific means of mobility used by the harasser
Bike or Scooter	1.000	Delivered from a bicycle, motorcycle, or motor scooter
Car	0.985	Delivered from passenger or commercial vehicle (e.g., delivery/fire truck, taxi)
On foot	1.000	Delivered by harassers standing, running, walking, or sitting while not using a vehicle or public transit
Public transit	1.000	Delivered from harasser using public transit
Unknown	0.988	Reports not specifying the harasser's means of mobility
Mobility used as tool for harassment	0.962	Code family used to determine for what purposes the harasser used their means of mobility
Easy or quick escape	0.981	Describes harassers "speeding" or "riding off" after harassment concludes
Public space as hunting grounds	0.960	Describes harassers' forethought, planning, or opportunism (e.g., construction worker re-routing foot traffic, seeking a particular location or target)
Affects target mobility with vehicle/body	0.993	Describes harassers' use of vehicle/body to alter target's physical movements (e.g., blocking target's path, grabbing, following)
Unknown/No perceived use	0.973	Reports not describing perceived mobility as a tool for harassment

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