

Cyberfeminist Interactions: The gendered effects of first-person postings on street harassment websites

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"I hereby state that this report is my own work and that all sources used are made explicit in the text"

Signed: _____

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Abstract

Cyberfeminists continue to debate the benefits of the internet to women. This paper uses a cyberfeminist lens to review postings of street harassment incidents on three websites centered in Cairo, New York and Mumbai in order to understand the construction of gender and culture (or lack of) online. The findings support the theories of cyberfeminists who claim that gender is constructed online, and this construction is to the detriment of women. Gender became almost the only identity marker within these postings, ignoring the effects of race, culture, religion and ethnicity. These findings are important to the study of gender and globalization because feminists need to be aware of binary and hierarchized constructions of gender within this new technology.

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Introduction

When the Internet first became popular in the early 1990s, it was mostly seen as a male endeavor, as women's participation was only between 15-30% (Shade 2003). However, given the anonymity of one's identity online feminists soon realized immense potential in this new technology, giving rise to the new feminist discipline of cyberfeminism as well as the debates around the benefits of the internet to feminist thought, which still rage on today. Though some theorists believe the Internet is a place where the absence of gender will equalize power dynamics (Podlas 2000). Others, recognizing the power of the social construction of gender in society, debate the possibility of forgetting one's gender, or whether this is necessarily good, even in anonymous spaces (Kendall 1996). I believe these debates are immensely important to the study of gender and globalization for two reasons. First, similar to the porous borders proliferated by globalization in the offline world, the online world provides space for a significant amount of interactions between cultures. In this space, where both gender and culture have to be constructed, it is important to understand how these interact with one another. Both can be constructed, neither constructed, or one over-emphasized in relation to the other. All of these scenarios have consequences to our understanding of the online (and offline) world. Second, the Internet and globalization have helped create transnational feminist networks of women all over the world fighting for different feminist causes (Harcourt 2004). It is important to understand if these networks can fight for the rights of women from many different cultures without resorting to an essentialist framework based on gender. This paper seeks to contribute to these

debates. It seeks to understand whether gendered subjects are created on the Internet, if so, how they are created, and what day-to-day consequences this may have to women participating in these online spaces.

It was during my work as a volunteer that I discovered Harassmap.com, a website in Cairo that allows women to post their experiences of street harassment. Looking for a similar website in my own city, San Francisco, I came across Ihollaback.org, an umbrella website that creates similar pages for cities around the world. Because they contained information about a social phenomenon of interests to feminists, and they were based in different countries, I thought these would be interesting websites to study constructions of gender in online spaces where different cultures discuss a similar phenomenon. Furthermore, though scholars have undertaken cyberfeminist analyses of multi-user domains (Kendall 1996), email lists (Scott 2001), and online diaries (Fanselow 2009, Leow 2010, Little 2010), my research distinguishes itself by being the first to take a cyberfeminist view of websites allowing the upload of first-hand accounts of street harassment, the unwanted physical or verbal attention paid to those in public places. Besides Harassmap, which is based in Cairo, I chose to analyze postings on Ihollaback from New York and Mumbai. Each of these cities has its own unique relationship to street harassment: in New York its particularly bad on the subways (Kearl 2010), in Mumbai its known as “eve teasing,” referring to women as temptresses who provoke men’s sexual desires therefore deserve to be teased (Baxi 2001), and in Cairo, it is so widely accepted that a movie was made about the first woman to ever file a police report against her harasser (Rothe 2011). Thirteen postings from each

of the websites were analyzed using a cyberfeminist lens. Though street harassment itself has been analyzed in attempting to understand the reasons it happens (Gardner 1995), its consequences (Davis 1994, Fogg-Davis 2006, Kears 2010), and the legal ramifications (Bowman 1993), no analysis of personal stories collected online has been attempted.

Two main findings are discussed in this paper. First, though these postings come from vastly different cities with disparate understandings of the relationship between genders, the failure to ground them in these localities reinscribes their gendered nature. Secondly, this essentialism reinforces and restates the messages women receive throughout their life that all strange men have the potential for sexual assault (Burt and Estep 1981), and therefore women need to protect themselves and be constantly on alert (Gardner 1995). Not only do these messages scare women into avoiding public places, but they also lead to a mindset that blames the victim when there is a sexual assault (Gardner 1995). These findings provide support for the argument that the Internet recreates the same gendered binary in which we so often become caught in the 'real' world.

My aim is not to discount these stories presented, or the women who were courageous enough to post them. The point of this paper is to show that without any cultural context, these stories homogenize individual experiences into a singular narrative, a narrative that can be damaging to a woman's experience of her world.

Literature Review

Globalization, Cyberfeminism(s) and “Glocalization”

Globalization is often associated with the increase movement of capital or people across borders, but one major impact of this phenomenon is the facilitation of information moving across these same borders via the Internet. The broadening influence of the internet as well as the burgeoning ease in access of this resource in the past decade has led to the rise of two critical concepts in feminist literature: cyberfeminism and the ‘politics of place.’ Cyberfeminism will be used to help understand if gender can be reconstructed online and how this happens, and the ‘politics of place’ will help explore the consequences of failing to establish the influence of the ‘local’ in such a ‘global’ place as the internet.

Bela Chatterjee believes tracing the origin of the concept of cyberfeminism is impossible, but that one can connect disparate theories by their underlying theme of the interaction between women and technology (2002). Although there are as many understandings of cyberfeminism as there are feminism itself (Chatterjee 2002, Hocks and Balsamo 2003), both Sassen (2002) and Orgad (2005) agree that there are two main strands of this concept. The first is built on Donna Haraway’s idea that technology will provide a genderless utopia, and is more concerned with technology’s interaction with the female body (1991). The second does not have a singular author, but views technology’s advantage for feminism as appearing through the newly facilitated interactions between women from disparate locations (Scott 2001, Sassen 2002, Orgad 2005). Gillian Youngs praises the internet for providing a “fresh stimulus” for the further discussion of the structures that place

women in the gendered hierarchy (1999, 55), and Leow also praises technology's power to generate original ideas due to newly formed cross-cultural interactions, though she does question whether these interactions truly create space for new relationships, or simply reinforce the raced and socioeconomic hierarchies between women that already exist (2010). These authors are interested in how cross-cultural understanding will unite women under a feminism that embraces all cultures, religions, races, etc. Other authors are interested in the potential that comes from the lack of a physical body online. The ability to hide one's gender makes the Internet the, "great equalizer in terms of power between genders" (Podlas 2000, 848). Hocks and Balsamo, while recognizing these new communication tools are still embedded in culture, reject the idea that technology is inherently masculine and encourage women to use new technologies for "rearticulation" (2003, 203). Physical bodies are the sites on which cultural understandings of gender are inscribed (Harcourt 2009). Furthermore, these cultural indications of gender give power to men, and remove it from women. However, without a body in cyberspace, these cultural inscriptions do not exist, and as such, there is the potential for power to be redistributed. But these sentiments seem to be overly optimistic, and continuing evidence shows that cyberfeminism is not as subversive as it may seem. Societal anxieties around gender are so high that even without a physical body, there is still pressure to "be" or "perform" a gender online (Kendall 1996, Travers 2003). Furthermore, once a person's gender is revealed – whether it the gender they assume in the real world or not – the power hierarchy of gender is reconstructed, and women, or those posing as such, have to endure the same discriminatory

interactions they do offline (Little 2010, Kendall 1996). Chatterjee argues that, similar to offline interactions, subversive acts are needed online to shift these gendered hierarchies (2002). Finally, though some authors have agreed that these spaces can both resist and reinforce gendered subjectivities (Daniels 2009, Hamilton 2009), this was not apparent in the websites reviewed for this study. Though research on cyberfeminism has so far analyzed cyberlaw (Chatterjee 2002), breast cancer forums (Orgad 2005), online pornography (Podlas 2000), 'cyborg' lists (Youngs 1999), email discussion lists (Scott 2001), multimedia projects (Hocks and Balsamo 2003), and multi-user domains (Kendall 1996), it has not been used to analyze activist websites whose main purpose is to collect and post first-person accounts of street harassment.

The extraordinary increase in the exchange of ideas fueled by globalization created a fear that the internet's anonymity provided the opportunity for subjects to become 'unmoored' from their particular location (Sassen 2004), creating a space where the intricacies of one's history, which have a major influence in the way in which people interact with one another, are marginalized, forgotten, or dominated by one particular culture (Balchin 2002, Segev, Ahituv and Barzilai-Nahon 2007). Saskia Sassen (2004) and Wendy Harcourt (2002a, 2002b, 2004) have analyzed this idea in the context of NGOs concerned with locally-specific women's issues that are connected to one another via the Internet. These organizations are at once deeply rooted in their communities and concomitantly connected to a global network, an idea termed 'glocalization' (Sassen 2004). Sassen and Harcourt see these new networks as a positive way of gaining support for these movements, and they seem

to provide evidence that globalization may not crush local identities. However, remaining rooted in, and emphasizing, these local characteristics is vitally important. Harcourt mentions that, "... even in a globalized world, place is still the way people know and experience life" (2002, 8), while Sassen believes that even a new politics borne from these interactions would have to still remain "partly embedded" (2004, 652) in culture and identity. Women's oppression is specific to their location (Harcourt and Escobar 2002b); there are a myriad of "historical legacies" (Dirlik 2002, 15) that can affect the nature of the oppression. Many different cultures, races, ethnicities and religious ideas interacting on the Internet, and we are just beginning to understand how this can impact our sense of self and other. How does an American woman interpret an English language blog written by Saudi Arabian woman (Leow 2010)? Can she truly understand it if she has never been to Saudi Arabia herself? What can/cannot be portrayed because it is written in English? Even though Sassen believes this unmooring may be positive in creating a new politics, she and others understand how these characteristics are still vitally important to online interactions.

It is within these "glocal" networks that globalization and cyberfeminism interact. Women using cyberspace to subvert gendered patriarchy are taking advantage of the exchange of ideas facilitated by globalization. These cyberfeminists creating networks of politically active women are taking locally specific issues and promoting them as global. The websites being studied in this paper are a perfect example of one of these networks, taking a local issue and connecting women experiencing the same issue in different locations. But in doing so they have risked

the negative effect of globalization, removing them from the local situations and circumstances that are imperative to avoid essentializing these experiences.

Street Harassment

Though the focus of this paper is to understand the consequences of the portrayal of street harassment through first-person accounts online, it is still important to have an understanding of this social phenomenon. Against the backdrop that almost 80 percent of women around the world experience street harassment (Kearl 2010), the body of literature surrounding this phenomenon appears relatively small. Two of the few books written exclusively about street harassment are Carol Brooks Gardner's 1995 book *Passing By*¹, and Holly Kearl's 2010 book *Stop Street Harassment*. Though Gardner's book focuses on street harassment within one city in America's Midwest, the themes she discusses are relevant to the larger discussion on this social phenomenon. Kearl's book discusses the contexts and causes of street harassment, and provides ways women² can combat or prevent harassment.

There is, as yet, no legal or solidified definition of street harassment, though a few authors have proposed their own. Cynthia Grant Bowman, in a 1993 article reviewing the way in which the law views street harassment, grapples with several definitions and proposes guidelines, which include the anonymity of the harasser to the harassed (and vice versa), the public nature of the area in which the harassment

¹ This book is mostly about deviance in communication within public spaces, though the book is,

² Though Gardner acknowledges and provides some discussion of harassment within genders, Kearl's book is focuses exclusively on the phenomenon of men harassing women.

happens, the aim of the remarks having been intended for a certain individual, and those remarks being, “objectively degrading, objectifying, humiliating, and frequently threatening in nature” (524). Gardner believes street harassment is made up of, “*that group of abuses, harrying, and annoyances characteristic of public places and uniquely facilitated by communication in public*” (1995, 4). Though Bowman’s requirements for harassment include that the harasser is male and the victim is female, Gardner drops these requirements from her definition. Holly Kearn also includes gender in her definition of street harassment, which she says, “constitutes unwelcome words and actions by men in public places that invade the physical and emotional space of unknown women in a disrespectful, creepy, startling, scary or insulting way” (2010, 7). Laniya (2005) objects to the use of the name “street harassment” because it does not display the gravity of the effects of this type of interaction, and Davis views it as an act of “sexual terrorism” (1994, 138). Though they use different words, the authors agree street harassment must be done in a public place, and it must be harmful to the harasser in an emotional or physical way. Davis includes the requirements that “thank you” is never an appropriate response to harassment, and that the comments, “often refer to parts of the body not available for public examination” (1994, 139). Specific actions include whistling, making comments (sexual and nonsexual), following, and conducting inappropriate physical contact. This differentiates these specific actions from insults between friends or acquaintances in places such as schools or public shopping areas, as well as from more serious crimes such as sexual assault³ and rape.

³ Though some of the more aggressive physical contact associated with street harassment might be

Kearl understands these actions in a context of, “worldwide gender inequality,” “women as sex objects,” “rape culture,” and “victim blaming” (2010, 23-24), while Gardner’s view is that street harassment is a reaction to those that either strictly adhere to or deviate from their expected gendered performance (1995). Both authors agree that street harassment is an assertion of power, rather than sexual desire, and agree with Bowman that it is the cause of the, “informal ghettoization of women” (1993, 520), scaring them into remaining in the private sphere. Bowman views street harassment as a man asserting his power over a woman by forcing her to interact with him (1993), though Tuerkheimer criticizes Bowman’s claim that this power is not exclusively sexual (1997). Davis and Gardner believe street harassment is the consequence of the understanding of women as “open” in public spaces, denying their right to privacy (1994, 1995). Many men also believe that their actions are part of a courtship process, or generally not harmful to women (Davis 1994, Thompson 1994, Gardner 1995, Tuerkheimer 1997, Kearl 2010).

Though most authors include the gender of the harasser and the victim in their definition of street harassment, they also recognize that gender is often not the sole influence in these incidents. Kearl recognizes this complexity, outlining the many factors possibly at play during an incident of street harassment, including race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and disability (2010). Recognizing the influence of these factors provides a much more nuanced and complex picture of these actions. Though all of the above have been mentioned in literature discussing

considered sexual assault in some contexts. Bowman reviews what might happen if one were to try and prosecute street harassment as sexual assault (1993).

street harassment, race has been the issue most discussed as a complicating factor. Dierdre Davis (1994) provides a comprehensive view of the issues surrounding interracial street harassment, while Hawley Fogg-Davis (2006) discusses the implications of intra-racial harassment. African American women's experiences have been absent from mainstream feminist writings, and street harassment is no exception (Davis 2006). This exclusion leads to a generalization of women's experiences, which, "do not adequately address or reflect African American women's experiences" (157). These experiences are, "both genderized and racialized for all women" (162). When a white man harasses a black woman, the experience invokes the "institutional memory" of slavery, a time when black women were characterized as hypersexualized "Jezebels" and exploited for their reproductive abilities (Davis 1994). These factors are specific to this type of interaction, and would not exist during any other type of inter- or intra- racial harassment. Intra-racial harassment⁴ also contains roots in particular racial identities and creates psychological consequences unique to these identities (Fogg-Davis 2006). Though Fogg-Davis disagrees with Davis' assertion that black men who harass are victims of white patriarchy, both authors agree that the discourse around street harassment should contain more references to intersectionality. Though Davis and Fogg-Davis provide important reasons why race should be a consideration in the deconstruction of these incidents, both Kears and Gardner provide similar cases for many other factors that may change the understanding of this social phenomenon.

⁴ Both Davis and Fogg-Davis discuss these incidences within the African American community (1994, 2006).

Though no studies so far have tried to understand the effect of culture on street harassment, culture has been studied in terms of its effects on sexual harassment in the workplace. Sexual harassment at work and street harassment are very similar concepts. They both result from a power differential between the harasser and the harassed, the majority of incidents happen between women and men, and the incidents include uninvited comments and inappropriate touching. Luthar and Luthar (2007) assert that it is “critical” to study cultural and social factors when attempting to interpret the power differential between the harasser and the harassed. Many studies used Hofstede’s cultural typology⁵ to understand how cultural factors can impact the proclivity to harass, the interpretation of the harassment, and the response of the victim. Though I disagree with attempting to typify an entire country based on cultural characteristics, these studies do show how culture can impact interpretations of social interaction. For example, because they live in a conflict-avoidant society according to Hofstede’s typology, women in Mexico are less likely to attempt to enact laws against sexual harassment as compared to women in the US and Jamaica. Furthermore, women in Jamaica and Mexico are less likely to report incidents of sexual harassment than women in the U.S., because their cultures are more focused on the well-being of the group rather than the individual (Fielder and Blanco 2006). A study done with people from many

⁵ Hofstede’s 1980 study on IBM employees from 40 different countries created four “characteristics” under which he believed people from each country were more or less likely to adhere to. These were Power Distance, Individualism, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Masculinity. A higher score in power distance means there is more of a gap in power between individuals in a society, a high individualist score means people value the individual over the collective, a high uncertainty avoidance score means people tend to avoid confrontation, and a high masculinity score would mean a more patriarchal society (Luthar and Luthar 2007). A fifth dimension, Long-term Orientation, was added in 2001. A higher score in Long-term Orientation indicates that a country is more likely to seek long-term gains over short-term (Hofstede 2001).

different cultures showed that those from more individualist countries were more likely to see the harasser as guilty, and those from collectivist countries put more responsibility on the victim (Sigal, et al. 2005). Finally, a study done in Argentina, Brazil and Chile found that victims of sexual harassment in these countries did not report any change in job satisfaction, a departure from studies done with American victims of sexual harassment. It was proposed that because these Latin American countries score high on Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance scale, the victim would rather leave the job than stay and fight the harassment (Merkin 2008). These studies prove that culture can have a significant effect on understandings and reactions to harassment.

It is imperative, then, to understand all the factors at play during an incident of street harassment, including race, ethnicity, etc., to truly understand and accurately deconstruct the experience. Without these understandings, women's experiences are in danger of being generalized and essentialized. Viewing these experiences solely in terms of gender can also lead to the reiteration of messages women receive about their interaction with strange men.

Women and Socialized Fear of Crime

Burt and Estep (1981) demonstrate how, beginning in adolescence, women are constantly warned about the possibility of sexual assault and exposed to messages and images in the media that keep them fearful of crime (Dowler 2003, Moore 2009). These messages create a fear of public spaces and strange men. The fact that women fear crime more than men has been well-documented (Cops and

Pleysier 2011, Hurwitz and Smithey 1998, Warr 1984, Ferraro 1995, Fisher and Sloane 2003). This is a paradox given that men are more likely to be victims of crime within their lifetime⁶ (Ferraro 1995). Though these studies have been done mostly in the West, comprehensive international studies are emerging (UNICRI 1995), as well as those that focus on specific countries in the Middle East and Asia (Karakus, McGarrell and Basibuyuk 2010, Chockalingam and Srinivasan 2009). These studies demonstrate that women's increased fear of crime is consistent outside the West, as well.

Why do women fear crime more than men? The most influential hypothesis is known as the "shadow of sexual assault" theory (Ferraro 1995). Ferraro believed women's fear that rape may accompany any other non-sexual but interpersonal crime, "shadows" their fear of these non-sexual crimes, thus increasing their fear of all crime (1995). This is an important point given the belief that a woman's fear during an act of street harassment has much to do with her fear of being raped (Kearl 2010, Davis 1994). Another theory is that women are socialized to fear crime (Burt and Estep 1981, Hurwitz and Smithey 1998, Mehta and Bondi 1999, Sutton and Farrall 2005, Cops and Pleysier 2011). This socialization comes from the overwhelming warnings women about sexual assault as compared to men (Burt and Estep 1981, Gardner 1995). More evidence of socialization comes from Gilchrist et al. (1998), who show that it is not women that were fearful of crime, but those that exhibit female characteristics that tend to report higher fear of crime. Thus, men that exhibit female characteristics report higher fear of crime and women who

⁶ Excluding sexual assault (Ferraro 1995).

exhibit male characteristics report less fear of crime (Gilchrist, et al. 1998). Since gender is a performance (Butler 1990), the performance of that gender influences the level at which a person fears crime. Since women are *supposed* to be vulnerable, they are warned about their vulnerability, thus increasing their fear of sexual assault, and through the “shadow of sexual assault” theory, they become more fearful of all crime. Socialization not only comes from warnings adult women receive about sexual assault, but also from TV (Dowler 2003) and other media (Moore 2009). The media create stereotypes of the typical criminal and the typical victim, “contributing to the social definition of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ women” (Madriz 1997). “Good” women are those that dress modestly, stay away from dangerous areas, and behave appropriately, whereas “bad’ women do not adhere to these rules, and therefore are deserving of the crime that happens to them.

Methodology

For this study, I undertook a critical analysis of the postings victims of street harassment submitted to three different websites. I decided to analyze the postings themselves instead of the content of the entire websites for two reasons. The first is that the time constraints of this study were not amenable to taking on a content study of three websites. Secondly, the postings are the main focus of the websites, the rest of the content is marginalized next to the descriptions of the incidents. They are clearly what the websites are meant to convey and what the user will most likely read. Although there is mention of other parts of these websites, this is only to enhance the understanding of the postings themselves.

Postings were taken from three different websites: Harassmap.com, Mumbai.Ihollaback.org and Nyc.Ihollaback.org. Ihollaback.org started in New York in 2005, and has become the umbrella website for pages that report street harassment in several cities and countries around the world. Harassmap started in late 2010, and only collects reports of harassment in Cairo. Both sites started with the same idea: allow victims of harassment to use their mobile phones to either text or email details of an incident, including a photo of the harasser, if possible. The description and photo are then uploaded to a website where others can read them. The descriptions are listed in reverse chronological order similar to blog posting, where the most recent incident is listed first. Furthermore, using the GPS on the victim's phone or a description of the location of the incident, the incidents become pinpoints on a map, allowing other women, the activists running the websites, and local police to see where the "hotspots" of harassment are.

There were several reasons why these three websites were chosen. First, these are the only websites I was aware of at the time I began my research that use first-person postings of street harassment incidents. Secondly, the postings came from three cities in three different parts of the world. The dispersed locations provide a way to see the similarities and differences in descriptions of harassment between these diverse geographical locations. And finally, the postings for these three cities were all in English. On Harassmap, the postings are both in English and Arabic, but I chose only postings in English. Though I could have chosen some of the postings in Arabic and had them translated, I felt that the postings already in English would convey the feelings of the author better than ones that would be translated.

The Ihollaback site in Mumbai only launched in January of 2011, so there was a limited amount of postings. In order to look at each site equally, I limited the amount of postings I chose off each website to the number of postings I was able to access on the Mumbai site. The day I chose the postings, there were thirteen usable postings on the Mumbai site, so that is how many I chose from Harassmap and the Ihollaback NYC site.

As mentioned, I was limited in choosing all of the postings on the Mumbai site, but I chose postings off the other two sites as randomly as possible. To reduce my own bias, I attempted to only read the first few words of a post before cutting and pasting it into a word document. Each of the postings is time-stamped, so I also attempted to use postings from different time periods.

The Harassmap postings are different than the postings on the Ihollaback websites in two significant ways. First, the postings on Harassmap are automatically categorized by colored squares added to the bottom of the posting. Each of these squares represents a different type of harassment. Though I wanted a range of different postings, I also did not want to bias myself to only chose postings that were more serious or fit into a certain category, so I attempted to ignore those squares as I was choosing postings. Secondly, the postings on Harassmap tend to be much shorter than the postings on the Ihollaback sites. They are generally quick descriptions of what happened, without a discussion of where it took place, how the victim felt, or what, if any, action was taken.

This paper seeks to understand the influence of the a globalized Internet on feminist discourse through activist websites, so the postings were analyzed through

a cyberfeminist lens. I looked for themes throughout the postings, the use of repeated words or phrases, and similar depictions of the incidents and the emotions surrounding them. I also looked for differences in the postings between the three countries. I analyzed use of pronouns to create the gendered nature of the harassment, the way in which power was portrayed within the context of the incident being described, the sociocultural issues surrounding these incidents, as well as the missing part of these descriptions that created an essentialized view of the interactions being described.

Because the posts are all anonymous, there were no names with which to associate each posting. Therefore, to be clear about which posting is being discussed, I have coded each posting with a number and letter(s) indicating on which website it was posted, C for Cairo, M for Mumbai and NY for New York City. Thus, there are postings 1C-13C, 1M-13M and 1NY-13NY. The numbers were randomly assigned. All of the postings with their corresponding code can be found in Appendix A.

There were several issues with this study. The first is the bias of the author. Though I tried to remain as neutral as possible to the postings, I realize it is almost impossible to remain entirely neutral to ones subject of study. Furthermore, I have my own experiences being on the receiving end of street harassment. Because of the emotions surrounding these incidents, as well as being able to identify with the victims, I tried to minimize this bias by concentrating on the wording of the postings, rather than the incidents themselves. Second, I am viewing these postings through a Western perspective, as I was born and raised in the United States. I have

never been to Mumbai or Cairo, which means there may be cultural implications surrounding these incidences of which I am not aware. This perspective may lead me to come to conclusions that someone immersed in these cultures may not have.

There are also issues surrounding the postings themselves. These postings cannot be considered a “random” sample of women who have been harassed on the street, since the postings come from those who self-selected to describe their experiences. These authors are also literate, know how to operate a computer or a cell phone, and are comfortable enough to post a very personal experience in a very public forum. Furthermore, being able to either text or send in a post means these women have access to either an SMS-enabled cell phone or a computer with access to the internet, suggesting they were all from a middle to high level of socioeconomic background. Though it could be argued that there are internet cafes where internet access is relatively cheap, given the highly personal nature of these posts, it seems unlikely that a woman would chose to use a public computer to post these incidents.

Finally, one of the main arguments in this essay contends that, read all together, the postings are stripped of every characteristic other than the interactions between genders, essentializing the experiences of women and ignoring the complexities of their own identities and the complexities of the influence of culture and other factors on interactions between people. Since two of the webpages used for this story are linked together under one overarching website, it is more likely that these two would be read together than they would be read with the third, which is an entirely separate website with a different URL. Though it is not

impossible that a person looking to understand street harassment might read all three, the likelihood is low. In hindsight, it would have strengthened my argument had I chosen three (or more) webpages from the Ihollaback website.

Results

Thirteen posts from each of three websites, nyc.ihollaback.org, mumbai.ihollaback.org, and harassmap.com, were reviewed. After analyzing these, it became clear that there were generally four parts to each posting: descriptions of the harasser and the victim⁷, the act of harassment, the emotions of the victim, and actions that were taken to combat the harassment.

Who was involved in the harassment?

Gender was the characteristic cited most often to describe both the harasser and the victim, even though the authors of the postings almost always indicated the gender of the harasser, but did not go to great lengths to indicate the gender of the victim. In thirty-seven of the thirty-nine postings analyzed, the harasser was named as a man or group of men, indicated by use of the words man, male, he, men, boys, guy or guys to describe the harasser(s). For example, “when I was leaving college, some guy pinched my butt” (3M). In contrast, there were not many explicit indications that the victim was a woman, though other clues indicated a specific gender. For example, in their executive summary, Harassmap specifically states that

⁷ For 38 of the 39 posts reviewed, the victim and the author of the post are the same person, and so the words “victim” and “author” are used interchangeably. There is one posting that is a description of an episode of harassment happening to another person (5NY). When discussing this case, it is noted that the author and victim are different.

their aim is to encourage *women* to send a text each time they are harassed. Though this does not prohibit men from posting, this is a clear indication they are not the primary aim of this website. Therefore, since none of the postings definitively indicate the author is male, it can be assumed that all of the postings from the Harassmap website have been posted by women. The Ihollaback sites welcome postings about types other than heterosexual harassment, however, the language used in the postings themselves indicate that majority are authored by women. In two postings from the Mumbai site, the author indicates that to evade the harasser she went into the “ladies” compartment on the train. It is assumed that only women, or those passing as women, are able to enter these cars. In one of the more unique postings, posted on the New York site, the author is actually discussing a situation where she witnessed harassment, and indicates that the victim is a woman (5NY). In a two of the groping incidents, one in Cairo (5C) and one in Mumbai (13M), the harasser groped a breast, and in one posting in New York, the author stated, “That man was staring at my breasts!” (7NY). A less concrete, but still valid, way is to look at the name of the person who submitted the story, which is often used in the title of the posting, and whether it is typically a woman’s name. Though this is not a foolproof method, it is still a strong signal that the person being harassed is a woman. Given these criteria, I can say that seven out of thirteen posts reviewed on the Mumbai site and ten of the thirteen posts reviewed on the New York site were incidents of women being harassed. Since it has already been indicated that the overwhelming majority of the harassers were men, then the findings support the statement that the majority of the postings indicated harassment between a male

aggressor and a female victim. Therefore, gender was constructed through these postings, though more deliberately for the harasser rather than the victim.

Ages of the harasser or the victim were also included, though not as often as gender. It was indicated for the harasser once in the Mumbai postings (9M), three times in the Cairo postings (5C, 11C, 13C) and seven times in the New York postings (5NY, 6NY, 7NY, 9NY, 11NY, 12NY, 13NY). In these postings, age is indicated either by using the words “young” or “old” or indicating an age range that the victim guesses the harasser falls into. In ten of these eleven postings, the age of the harasser is mentioned simply as a description of the harasser, presumably in case anyone else sees the same person in the future. In the other case (13NY), the age of the harassers is included to note how young the harassers were, implying that boys can be sexualized at a very young age. Only four of the victims identify their own age: twice on the Mumbai site (9M, 10M) and twice on the New York site (5NY 13NY). In two cases where the victim mentions their age, it is to express their incredulousness that they would be harassed at either a young (13) or old (44) age.

Three postings, all on the New York site, mentioned race⁸. Only one posting indicates that race was a motivating factor in the harassment (6NY). This was posted on the New York website in May 2011. The victim, who reveals she is, “a petite Asian woman,” is listening to a WWII vet when he points to her and calls out,

⁸ Ihollaback.org has an anti-discrimination policy posted on the main website that states: “Replacing sexism with racism is not a proper holla back. Ditto to classism, homophobia, transphobia, and the usage of any other identity signifier” (<http://www.ihollaback.org/about/anti-discrimination-policy>). Though this discourages the use of race and other identity characteristics, I don’t believe it takes away from the argument that the failure to discuss these essentializes the experience of street harassment solely to gender. In fact, I think it bolsters the argument, because these websites are encouraging victims of harassment to understand these interactions as solely influenced by gender. Just like there are ways to talk about gender without generalizing, it can be argued that there are ways to talk about race, etc. as a part of an interaction without being racist.

“Look, there’s a ‘Toilet Seat’! That’s what we used to call them back then: a ‘Toilet Seat!’” (one is to assume, since this occurs while he is telling war stories, that “back then” means during the war). Since the author calls this comment both racist and sexist, the reader must assume the “they” refers to Asian women. Only two other postings listed the race of the harasser (9NY, 12NY). Both postings list the harasser as white, but do not reveal their own race. Neither postings from Mumbai or Cairo contained any indication of the race of either the harasser or the victim.

One posting, added to the Cairo website in February during the height of protests against then-president Mubarak, indicates that the victims were a different nationality than their harassers, by calling themselves “foreign girls” (7C). The author does not go on to speculate that they were harassed *because* of their identities as foreigners, but the fact that it is mentioned indicates that it is an important part of the story. Though they do not mention the nationality of the men who were harassing them, they do mention that the men who helped them get away from their harassers were Egyptian. Perhaps it is implied that the harassers were Egyptian, too, but why does the author fail to mention it when discussing the harassers, but then makes a point to mention it when describing their protectors?

Only twice did a victim mention what they were wearing at the time of harassment. This is a surprise given the frequency with which discussions around the influence of a woman’s outfit on her vulnerability to street harassment appeared in the research (Bowman 1993, Thompson 1994, Gardner 1995, Laniya 2005, Darnell and Cook 2009, Kearl 2010). In one instance, a victim in Cairo exclaims, “I wear hijab and I was wearing long clothes!!!” (9C). The *hijab* is a religious symbol of

piety and modesty (El Guindi 1999), so by adding in this detail, the author of the post is indicating she is not only a devout Muslim, but she was also dressed modestly. She believes this should have protected her from unwanted attention. The other posting where a victim mentions clothes was from the Mumbai website. In a departure from a description of an incident, this posting is more of a general statement about how she gets harassed no matter what she wears, though she does get harassed more when she wears revealing clothing. She laments, "It should not be about what I wear. Why are men in this city allowed to express their sexual desires, but I'm meant to keep mine under wraps?" (4M). No other postings included a description of the specific clothing being worn when the harassment occurred.

What happened?

The incidents listed fell into five categories: staring, following, uninvited comments, physical gestures, or physical contact. Within the total postings collected there were nine posts that included following, eleven posts that included staring, fifteen posts that included physical contact, nine posts that included a physical gesture, and twenty-one postings that included uninvited comments, making it the most frequently reported incident. The most frequently cited harassment in Cairo and New York was uninvited comments; in Mumbai it was physical contact. The breakdown of incidents was relatively consistent across the postings in Mumbai and Cairo, but skewed in the New York postings. On that site, the incidents of receiving uninvited comments were higher than the other two sites, with ten incidents. Furthermore, in the random postings chosen on the New York website, there were

no reports of stalking or following. The postings in Cairo represented the most reported incidents of uninitiated physical contact and stalking or following.

Reported incidents of staring used the words, *looking, staring, watching, leering* or *ogling*. Two of these reports included descriptions of the way the man was watching. In a posting on the Cairo website from April 15, 2011 the author stated that, “he looked at me in a sexual way” (12C). And in a posting on the New York website, the author posted, “he’s watching me menacingly” (1NY). The words “sexual” and “menacing” are used to indicate the way in which the victim interpreted the thoughts and actions of the harasser. Looking at the victim in a “sexual” way means they want to have sex with (rape) the victim. Looking at the victim in a “menacing” way means they want to harm the victim. These words are used to indicate that even if the harasser did not physically harm their victims, they were thinking about it, or had the intention to. Furthermore, using “sexual” assumes a heteronormative desire of the man (harasser) for the woman (victim).

Another word that is being used for its negative connotation is *stalking*. This word was used once in the Cairo postings (12C) and once in the New York postings (1NY). The clinical definition of stalking, “obsessive following” indicates that the act must be repetitive to fall into the category of stalking (McCann 1998). None of the postings that discussed stalking indicated that their harasser was someone they had seen before, the word must be being used in a different way. Similar to the postings above, simply describing the incident is not enough. The postings must include characteristics that indicate to the audience that the incident was threatening in

nature. Therefore, the person posting the comment is assuming they understand the intentions of the person who is following them.

Uninvited comments were the most widely reported incident, and reported the highest in the New York postings. They ranged from, “What a babe!” (12M) to “Nice ass!” (4NY) to giving the victim a rating for her looks on a 1-10 scale (5M). Though it is easy to see how the victims would be upset by negative comments, categorizing positive comments as harassment invokes a debate about what is actually considered harassment. On one side of the debate are those that say *any* comment, positive or negative, objectifies women and reduces them down to their physical appearance (Kearl 2010). But this gives zero agency to the woman to determine her own understanding of the interaction and interpret these actions any way she wants. My aim is not to engage in this debate, but to show how, by putting these “positive” comments on a website that views them in a negative light, the reader is told that if they are a truly liberated woman, they *should* consider these comments harassment. I’m not advocating that these websites censor their content, but I am trying to point out that these websites through the uploaded postings, are creating a definition of harassment that may not be true for every person.

How did the victims feel?

Many of the postings also expressed how the victim felt about the harassment. Only two postings had any sort of positive feelings associated with them. One, posted on the New York site, said, “Setting last night’s guy straight finally made me feel brave and in control” (10NY). The other, on the Mumbai site,

expressed her gratitude to the site itself, writing, “I’m so glad you all started this site, we really need it here” (5M). All other postings expressed negative emotions towards their situation, their harasser, and themselves. The most prevalent emotion expressed amongst all of the sites was anger. Though most of the expressions of anger were towards the harasser, two of the postings, one on the Mumbai site (13M) and one on the New York site (11NY), contained an expression of anger toward themselves as the victim, because they were not able to react fast enough to their harasser to combat his actions. The other emotions expressed were fear, embarrassment, shock and confusion. As stated above, the postings in Cairo are much shorter and generally just a description of what happened, so they contained the least amount of information about feelings around these incidents. Those postings on the New York website contained the most descriptions of how those who were harassed felt about the interaction.

Besides expressing anger and fear, many of the postings expressed regret at not having done anything to combat their harasser. One posting in New York lamented, “I wish I had at least told him what a pig he was” (2NY) and another in Mumbai expressed, “If I could do the whole thing over again, I would shout: HEY GADHE⁹. MY NAME IS NOT BABY” (7M). Others communicated that they would be ready the next time something like this happened. Two of the postings expressed the victim’s inability to stop thinking about the incident. While one continued to question whether acting against her harasser would have helped (11M), the other, posted on the Cairo site, was sure she would act the next time, saying, “it has taught

⁹ Translation: Donkey, ass.

me to carry rocks in my purse” (1C). One victim also lamented over and over the fact that she was not more aware of her surroundings and if she had only been more aware, she could have prevented what happened.

What did the victims do?

Besides the postings that contain regret for not having reacted fast enough, there are also postings that describe what actions were taken in reaction to harassment, demonstrating the victim’s power over their harasser. Ten of the postings described incidents where the person being harassed reacted against their harasser. Some of the postings describe yelling at the harasser: “I screamed at them” (9C), “You’re getting off at the next stop!’ I screamed” (12NY). Five postings, four in Mumbai (1M, 5M, 7M, 9M) and one in New York (8NY), indicated that the victim attempted to evade or avoid the harasser, by running into a train car, a rickshaw, or simply away from the harasser. Finally, one posting in Mumbai from April of this year, described how the victim tried to just ignore the harasser, but it did not work (8M).

One of the postings from the Mumbai site describes what one woman does when she is harassed, and received a response from one of the website administrators. The victim describes her actions, “I stop right in the middle of the road/station/market and create a huge commotion asking the other men and women around me to check this person as he is harassing me” (12M). At the end of this post is a response, which says, “HOLLA, NAMRATA! At Hollaback! we’re all about being assertive to your harasser, as long as you feel safe enough doing it.” It is

important to note that this is the only posting collected that received a public response from someone at the Ihollaback organization. There are two different ways this message could be interpreted. First, the administrator could be congratulating the victim for being assertive while being safe. Or, couched as a warning to “be safe,” the victim is being warned that there are only certain types of “being assertive” that are acceptable. There is no indication in the post the woman herself did not feel safe, yet the moderator of the website felt compelled to warn other readers that this reaction may not be considered appropriate. No other description of a woman standing up to her harasser was slapped with this warning. There seemed to be no such warning given to the woman who said she was going to carry rocks in her purse, seemingly with the intention of throwing them at her harasser, an act much more violent than causing a scene in a public market. It seems as though there is a certain level of acceptable behavior when combating one’s harasser, and these websites are letting women know which behavior is considered ok.

Discussion

Two themes were apparent in analyzing these postings. The first is that, by almost entirely failing to include characteristics of the victim and harasser other than gender, the postings construct the idea of an interaction solely based on the gender of each person involved. Though this supports cyberfeminist theories that recognize gendered binaries are just as prevalent online as they are offline, it rejects the theories of street harassment which underscore how important it is to

acknowledge race, ethnicity, religion, and other aspects of a person's identity when analyzing episodes of street harassment. Secondly, by essentializing these experiences to gender, they assume the narrative that women should be constantly suspicious of strange men, as well as perpetually prepared for the possibility of harassment. These warnings women receive throughout their life not only contribute to blaming the victim when she is attacked, but also socializing women to fear being in public places, which is just as much of a cause of the, "informal ghettoization of women" than actual street harassment (Bowman 1993). Both themes are crucial to the discussion of the influence of the Internet on feminism, as they are both constructed and determined by this medium.

These postings fail to represent the complexity of interactions of harassment. There is only one posting where race is considered a factor, when a white WWII veteran calls an Asian woman a "Toilet Seat". This situation is similar to the one described by Davis where a white man harassing a black woman invokes the relationship between a white master and black slave (1994). In this case, it is the dominant relationship between white military men and Asian women that existed during WWII. These are powerful "institutional memories" that create a power dynamic more complex than one simply based on gender (Davis 1994). As argued in Davis and Fogg-Davis' articles, race can be vitally important in understanding the complexities of these interactions (1994, 2006). Though every inter- and intra-racial interaction is not going to have the same characteristics as the ones discussed in these articles, they make the case for recognizing how intersectionality can help understand a situation more clearly. Furthermore, religion was only included once,

as well, when a victim in Egypt mentioned she was wearing a *hijab* when she was harassed. This woman believes she should not have been harassed because she was wearing a symbol of piety and modesty. However, the *hijab* is also a very controversial symbol in Egypt, invoking intense debates over the status of women, Islam, Egyptian society, and choice (El Guindi 1999). But in this case, the *hijab* is not seen as a complex symbol, only a way to guard against potential harassment. Instead of exploring any of these issues, the harassment is solely attributed to gender. If one is to truly understand the causes of street harassment, it is important to understand that power differentials between people can be caused by factors other than gender (Luthar and Luthar 2007).

Besides ignoring identity characteristics that could change the understanding of an incident of harassment, the postings also failed to take into account the culture in which the harassment took place. Though Turkle believes that the lack of identity on the Internet may allow us to create new spaces with which to understand one another (2011), it is still vitally important, when discussing an injustice faced by many people in different cultures, to understand each situation within the local context (Harcourt 2002, Sassen 2004, Dirlik 2002, Arizpe 2002). These postings are not “partly embedded” in culture (Sassen 2004), they are not embedded at all. Perhaps the website moderators believe that only people in the location in which the website is focused will read it, and therefore already have an understanding of the way power is constructed in those cultures. But the fact that the Mumbai and Cairo sites are partly (Cairo) or entirely (Mumbai) in English, despite the fact that this is not their dominant language, proves that they are attempting to appeal to an

audience outside their countries (*CIA World Factbook*, s.v. "India," "Egypt"). Furthermore, the New York and Mumbai sites are hosted under the same web address: ihollaback.com. At the top of the main website is a drop-down menu that allows one to flip easily between sites from different cities, increasing the likelihood that a visitor from one site would see what's been posted on another site. Culture is highly influential to a person's interpretation of the harassment and what they do in response to the harassment (Sigal, et al. 2005, Fielder and Blanco 2006, Merkin 2008, Luthar and Luthar 2008). Like Leow's question about the American reading a blog written by Saudi Arabian, one has to ask, can a person from India truly understand the cultural implications of an act of harassment in Egypt? Can an American truly understand the implications of an act of harassment in India? By almost entirely ignoring these issues, these websites are signifying the lack of importance they ascribe to these factors that may help better understand street harassment. Instead, they are only concerned with the power differentials between genders.

Given the praise that the Internet has received in its ability to subvert gendered patriarchy (Youngs 1999, Scott 2001, Hocks and Balsamo 2003, Orgad 2005), it is understandable that the creators of these websites adopted this new technology to combat an injustice they had viewed and experienced themselves. These cyberfeminists, the creators and the victims who post about their experiences, clearly believe that the Internet is the "great equalizer" (Podlas 2000). But by ignoring all other factors present in an incident of harassment other than gender, they are rejecting Haraway's idea of a genderless utopia, and instead rooting

the victims and harassers identities solely in their gender. The postings construct a hierarchical structure of gender as the hegemonic identity marker, creating a heteronormative binary, where all men are the sexual predators, and all women, their prey. As opposed to online spaces described by Kendall (1996) and Travers (2003), women were not allowed to choose, but were forced to assume their gender when posting on the website, reinforcing that women and men are gendered in public places. Without a sexed body on which to inscribe the meaning of gender, the only way to understand gender in cyberspace is if it is interpreted through socially constructed characteristics of gender as revealed by the one whose identity is being analyzed. But as Hocks and Balsamo (2003) note, because technology is situated in and created by society, it is just as influenced by that society as that society is influenced by technology. If gendered hierarchies outside of cyberspace place men in the more powerful position over women, then these hierarchies are recreated online simply by gendering an identity. Therefore, by stripping online identities to a gendered binary, the authors of the postings are reasserting male dominance, instead of regaining power from male attackers.

The message created when these incidents of street harassment are presented as occurring *solely* because of gender, and that women are most likely the victims and strange men the attackers, is that all women, no matter their age, religion, or race, no matter where they are in the world, should fear strange men. These postings portray a world where a man that is looking at them, even just a little bit too long, desires to either rape them or harm them. The postings discussing the

wearing of the *hijab* and large, loose clothing demonstrate that even complying with the rules of a “good” girl is not protection from these predators (Madriz 1997).

The proliferation of postings expressing regret at not being able to react fast enough to the harassment shows that women should think about what they would do if harassed, because only then will they truly be prepared. One posting on the New York site continually emphasizes that if the victim had just been more aware of her surroundings, she may have been able to prevent the incident, saying, “I know now that I should have been more aware of my surroundings . . . I have been scolding my self since it happened for not being more aware of him, that we were alone together and I was not aware of that sooner” (11NY). First, just by focusing on how her actions affected the outcome of this incident, this posting clearly shows the victim has internalized the warnings she has received throughout her life that it is *her* responsibility to protect herself. These are the same warnings Burt and Estep discuss in their study, warnings which contribute to the socialization of women to fear crime at higher rates than men (1981). Women are warned so often in their adult life about the potential for harassment and crime, that when it does actually happen to them, they blame themselves for not being prepared. Second, it appears to be a warning to women that they should not daydream, get lost in their thoughts, or zone out after a long day at work. As Gardner states, “whatever activities she carves for herself when in public are spoiled by the imperative to think of crime” (1995, 35). If they prepare ahead of time, they will react faster, and thus avoid the regret felt by these victims. Once again, it is up to the victim to be prepared.

Two of the postings discuss the potential use of weapons to fend off an attacker. One, in the New York postings, writes that after yelling back at the harasser, the author felt scared that he would retaliate, but then realized, "I had just borrowed a hammer from a neighbor. I took it out of my purse and just held it" (10NY). Another post, from the Cairo site, indicates that a harassment episode, "has taught me to carry rocks in my purse" (1C). In her book, Gardner discusses the myriad of products that have been marketed to women to protect them from assaults, anything from pepper spray to a blow-up doll designed to look like a male passenger in a car, so potential predators don't think a woman is driving alone. Encouraging women to carry weapons or products designed to lessen the chances she is harassed only further supports the idea that it is up to the victim to protect herself (Gardner 1995).

Furthermore, the postings expressing regret at not being able to react to ones harasser tell a story that victims of harassment not only should, but are in fact expected to, respond to their attackers. It is not just appropriate to ignore one's harasser, and go on with one's day, it is the responsibility of the victim to tell their harasser that what they are doing is not ok. However, there are rules when lashing out. As seen in the posting where a woman describes what she does in the event she is harassed, and the response she received from the website, responding to ones harasser is ok only if it is in compliance with the rules of femininity.

Blaming women for their compliance in their own harassment allows society to believe that they should be held responsible for failing to prevent other sexual aggression, as well. If the woman who was the victim of a man exposing himself on

the train blames herself for not being more aware of her surroundings, she is also telling society that it is ok to blame her for more serious crimes. In fact, this has already happened, as evidenced by the creation of “rape shield” laws in the US that prevent prosecutors from discussing the personal lives of the victims (*Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories*, s.v. “Rape shield laws”). In sexual assault cases, prosecutors often use details of the victim’s life proving they were not complying with the warnings they received as women, and so were deserving of the crime committed against them. Blaming the victim for these incidents obscures the site where blame should be placed: squarely on the shoulders of the perpetrator.

Furthermore, these messages are being delivered via a the globalized force of the Internet. The fact that victims on all three websites expressed regret at not being able to prevent their harassment demonstrates that these messages are already widespread. This is further bolstered by the statistics from each of these countries showing that women are more fearful of crime than men (Chockalingam and Srinivasan 2009, Cops and Pleysier 2011, Hurwitz and Smithey 1998, Warr 1984, Ferraro 1995, Fisher and Sloane 2003, UNICRI 1995). Thus, the Internet is not only constructing gendered binaries, but its reinforcing gendered messages around the world that are detrimental to women’s position in society.

Conclusion

In performing a critical analysis of three websites that post personalized stories of street harassment, it was found that the postings, because of their failure to discuss these instances in any terms other than gender, essentialize the

experiences of women and men, and add to the warning messages women receive about their vulnerability to sexual assault. Furthermore, the messages conveyed on these sites not only encourage women to behave within a certain norm, but they contribute to the understanding of sexual assault as the fault of the woman, due to her failure to behave within the norms of femininity.

Whether the Internet can subvert gendered oppression or reify gendered stereotypes is still being debated. This is an important discussion to the study of gender and globalization because feminists need to understand how the rapid spread of information and the myriad of interactions between cultures online is affecting understandings of gender. If, as was shown in this study, gender is being reified and hierarchized in online spaces, as it often is in the offline world, feminists need to find a way to perform subversive acts online (Chatterjee 2002), in order to make the internet a positive place for women of all cultures, religions, countries, races, sexual orientations, etc.

Although these findings provide one more picture of the way in which gender is constructed online, there are still many aspects of both street harassment and cyberfeminism that should be investigated. First, many more studies need to be done about street harassment and its prevalence. Though there are some statistics, more information about street harassment in other parts of the world needs to be studied. Furthermore, research could be done about the people posting on these websites. Though the gender of the author was assumed in many cases, it would be beneficial to know the gender breakdown of the authors within the different countries. Understanding their motivations, their feelings about posting, and their

increase or decrease in responding to harassers would be significant in understanding the real-world affects of these websites. It would also be interesting to know the breakdown of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, and caste amongst the authors. This would give us an idea of whether these websites are truly reaching a varied demographic or if the authors all come from a particular background. Finally, an important research question is about the reactions those that confess to being harassers have to websites like these. A study done in 2009 found that watching a film about the negative effects of street harassment failed to change the attitudes of college-age men about street harassment (Darnell and Cook). Are these websites any more effective?

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Appendix A: Postings of Street Harassment

New York City (nyc.ihollaback.org)

1NY) Nelly's Story: The way he stared

I had just gotten off the B6 at Remsen & Flatlands. I was about 10 blocks from home and didn't have any money on my metrocard. So I decided to walk home. The most that ever happened was an annoying "Hey beautiful" or "Psst" comment. They don't get in my space or follow me.

So I'm walking a couple blocks without harassment. When I spot this man crossing the street. Instantly I got a weird feeling ,now he's in front of me but walking extremely slow. So slow that I have to walk past him. My intuition told me NOT to walk past him. I caught him glancing over his shoulder and stopping once to look back at me. There was a bus stop right in front of me so I pretended to stop and wait for the bus. So Mr.Creepy decided to not go on his way but wait in the middle of the block. Now he's watching me menacingly while I'm waiting at the bus stop. He just won't leave. He starts to play with this gigantic tree in front of him,pulling the leaves etc. I guess he wanted to see what my next move was to stalk me. WEIRD. So I pull my cell out and press the Emergency number. I tell the operator what's he wearing and where I'm at. All the while the guy is still there next to the tree looking at me. Mind you there is passing traffic but there was no one else around! The bus comes but I ignore it as I was so busy talking to the 911 operator. I was just frozen, my intuition said "Stay put." After I hang up with the operator, the guy darts across the street and down the block. The cops show up a minute later. They seemed annoyed as if it wasn't really a crime. I felt threatened and at risk and guess who's supposed to keep citizen safe?--Cops. Who knows what could've happened. They waited with me until my mom came and got me. They promised to go down Avenue L to look for him. No, he didn't say anything but it was the way he looked and how I felt. SICKENING. I couldn't stop shaking for about 20 minutes when I got home . What women wants to be harassed on a fucking 15 minute walking home?

posted on May 26, 2011 in Uncategorized with 0 Comments

2NY) Stephanie's Story: "Last time I checked, walking in a subway tunnel does not give strange men permission to touch me."

I was on my way home from work, and had just gotten off the 1 going uptown to switch to the L at 6th avenue towards union square. In the tunnel, I was frustrated with the slow moving walkers so I started to move around them. coming directly towards me was a man and two friends. he made no motion to move to the side so I edged over and turned my body sideways to ease through him and the people I was passing. Instead of doing the same (because there would have been enough room between us if he had done just the same), he deliberately moved closer to me and put his arm out sideways so that it grazed my midsection and around me. he didn't grab me, but just kept walking as if he did nothing. I turned around and gave him the most disgusted face I could muster, but I wish I had at least told him what a pig he was. To make matters worse, with all the people around I actually felt embarrassed for myself, like I did something wrong. Last time I checked, walking in a subway tunnel does not give strange men permission to touch me.

Published on June 23,2011 at 4:11 am in **Uncategorized**

3NY) Nelly's Story: Groped on the bus

It was another Tuesday morning on the B82. It was ridiculously crowded and I was near the back. When I was getting on the bus, I did notice this guy checking me out. But I brushed it off pretty quickly. This guy was standing up holding onto the overhead bar like the rest of us. A stop is approaching, we're about 5 minutes from it at this point. This guy proceed to make his way towards the back, towards me. All of a sudden I feel an open palm against my ass like 2 or 3 times but it was so quick. Before I could turn and tell him a thing or two-or just to see his face the bus reached the stop and he's gone. I felt so dirty after. I know I have a nice ass but you gotta at least take me to dinner first. Ugh.

Published on May 26,2011 at 8:09 pm in **Uncategorized**

4NY) Anonymous's Story: An invasion of space

My Mom and I were walking home when three guys walking toward us began calling out things like, "Hey cutie," and the all too classy "nice ass." Nothing too groundbreaking or original, so I ignored it, but the kicker was right as they were passing us, one of the guys turned toward me and air-humped about two inches away from my ass. I guess I thought that guys would refrain from doing stuff like that when I was with my MOM but maybe that only encouraged them. I didn't say anything - I only just moved here and where I'm from the worst any girl will get is a "hey hottie" and you glare at them and it's over. I was unprepared for that invasion of personal space, but next time I'll be ready.

Published on May 22,2011 at 10:09 pm in **Uncategorized**

5NY) Alden's Story: A bystander's view

I was standing in the Q train on the way home this evening, and overheard two young men talking to a girl, who was probably in high school. She was seated next to one, the other was standing above her.

First they called her bitch, then they started telling her that if she told anyone (I'm not sure what they wanted to keep secret) they would break her face. "You don't want to end up dead, do you?" the seated guy said. She stared down in her lap and refused to answer.

"Hey!" the other said, leaning down to get in her face. "You look at him when he's talking to you."

At this point, I was not more than a foot away, staring at them openly, trying to summon my worst look of disgust. They didn't look at me. They knew I was there, but continued to cuss at her and threaten her. Finally they got off, but not before I snapped this picture.

I sat down next to the girl, and asked her if she was being harassed. She said, "No, they were just angry about something in my note book. But I wouldn't tell them who said it."

I didn't know what to say. So I just said, "Guys can be really annoying." She nodded.

I wish I had stood up for her more, or could have said something more meaningful. But as it was, I felt so confused about what was right, as racial and socioeconomic implications swirled around in my head.

Published on May 20,2011 at 1:14 am in **Uncategorized**

6NY) Anna's Story: Racial slurs are always unacceptable

Yesterday on May 15, 2011, my family and I went to Old Bethpage Village Restoration on Long Island for a WWII re-enactment (my son is researching D-Day for school). We had a great time and learned a lot from the servicemen and historians there. There was a group of men dressed in old military uniforms surrounding an old vet telling stories from D-Day at Omaha Beach when I approached wearing a WWII army jacket. I am a petite Asian woman (age 44, but I have been often mistaken for a much younger woman or a teenager). I crept up to the group with my camera to catch what story the old vet was telling when he looked up at me and stopped and called at me, "Look, there's a "Toilet Seat"! That's what we used to call them back then: a "Toilet Seat!" ... I, meanwhile, was dodging behind the other servicemen so they could feel what it was like to be called a "Toilet Seat" ...they just smirked and turned to look at me but they did not say anything to the old man to stop him...So I just took out my camera and started taking their picture so that I could post about it later...Finally the old man stopped after he said that about 5 times....

I know he's an old vet and he fought for our country back in 1944 so I couldn't just yell back at him with all those servicemen around him...I felt that maybe they felt I

was the one who was the invader encroaching on their all-man territory...their smirking disturbed me as it meant that they probably hear racist, sexist stuff about Asian women or other women all the time that it's almost normal to them...that to treat another race or sex as subhuman was part of the norm...I'm all grown up but I feared what would have happened if he had said that to a young Asian teenager or a young college student...I feel that despite our intelligence, our upbringing (respect our elders), and educational achievement, it means nothing to a group of old vets and servicemen because all they see is a "Toilet Seat"

I am a medical professional and I, too, have saved many lives...but it was appalling to me that out in public many men still have attitudes that date back decades and try to convince me and others that I am somehow subhuman or a dirty object...

Published on May 16,2011 at 11:58 am in **Uncategorized**

7NY) NW's Story: "My first taste of sexual harassment"

I'll start by saying I'm thirteen years old and I've lead a (luckily) sheltered life without harassment. Up until now.

I don't really know if this counts as sexual harassment. I'm not even sure of what happened. But since I think it's relevant to the site, I'll share my story.

I was in an airport with my family and I was dead tired. I sort of blanked out while we were on line. I'm staring into space and when I finally blink back into reality, I realize that I'm staring at an old man. He looked about fifty, with gray hair and a toothy smile, which he gave me. I smiled back, a little embarrassed for staring at him first. Then, as he brushed past me, he whispered something into my ear. I'm not sure exactly what he said but I caught the word "girl." I blinked and he smiled and walked on. I really was tired and wasn't sure what he said so I might be overreacting. But I still felt a little bothered afterwards, like something wasn't right. My mom sometimes talks about women's intuition. I just felt odd. I didn't say a word because I was sleepy and confused.

Two days later I was walking with my friend to an ice cream parlor when my friend took off her buttoned jacket as we walked. A man, not sure of what he looked like, passed by us slowly. When he walked away a little my friend turned to me shocked and hissed, "That man was staring at my breasts!" My head snapped up and I turned and glared at the back of the man as my friend replayed the incident to me. We were both a little troubled.

I know these examples aren't that bad. We weren't harmed but it was still a little weird. It was my first taste of sexual harassment...I didn't care for it.

Published on May 16,2011 at 12:50 am in **Uncategorized**

8NY) Setting 'em straight

Tonight, on a quick errand to the grocery store for milk, I was catcalled twice within 10 minutes. Last time I checked objectification was not on my shopping list. The first instance was on the street: "Hey baby, hey. How you doing baby?" etc. It was already dark out, and no one else was immediately nearby, so I just kept walking for fear of him turning on me if I said something.

Ten minutes later, I was waiting in the checkout line and a store employee gathering carts asked to get by me: "Excuse me, baby." Oh no no. When he walked back towards me I said, "Please don't call me baby." He looked taken aback and stammered "Uh uh, I'm sorry." Based on his reaction, it seemed like he didn't know that what he said was not welcome, which is exactly why it's good to set men who harass straight.

Submitted by EF

Published on February 19,2011 at 5:57 pm in **Uncategorized**

9NY) Rachel's story: What kind of person..?

I was walking home from work and listening to my iPod, so initially I didn't notice him. I glanced to my right and saw a white male in his 30's leaning out his window leering and yelling at me. I took out my ear bud and said very calmly, "Excuse me, what?" He seemed pretty pissed that I hadn't heard whatever lovely choice words he had for me, so he yelled, "C—!" and drove off. It happened so quickly that I didn't even think that I should have gotten his picture or his license plate number until he was gone.

I've gotten harassed a number of times in Hoboken, but usually it has been on Friday or Saturday nights when people are out drinking. This was the first time I've been harassed in full daylight on a fairly busy street. Honestly, I'm just kind of baffled by the whole incident. What kind of person yells that at a total stranger?

Published on April 30,2011 at 3:49 am in **Uncategorized**

10NY) Ellen's story: third time, and you're still not charming

I was crossing the street at about 10 pm and a man was crossing in the opposite direction. As he passed, he caught my eye and said, "Nice pussy, baby."

I yelled "You don't get to say that to me. What the fuck is your problem?" He started trotting away and I followed him to the curb. He stopped on the curb and I continued to yell at him. I said "You don't get to talk like that to women. Are you trying to pick us up? You fucking suck at it."

I turned around to go but the light was turning. I felt freaked out for a second with him behind me, but then remembered I had just borrowed a hammer from a neighbor. I took it out of my purse and just held it.

This is the third time in about a month that I've been harassed. The first time a man approached me, said I looked nice, and when I gave him a curt thanks, said he thought my "leeeeeegs are seeexxy." I told him loudly but not freaking out that we

were done talking and I crossed the road.

The second time I was on the subway and felt something against my butt. I thought it was my neighbors jacket or newspaper but I looked down and it was his hand. I said "Excuse me!" very loudly and he got up and left, but I wished I'd made a bigger deal of it and told him it was not acceptable, it was illegal, and that he had no right to touch me.

Setting last night's guy straight finally made me feel brave and in control. I think about being harassed and what I'm going to say more often than I want to. I hate giving these creeps the air time. But all the suave, clever things I have in my mind evaporate when I'm in the moment. But having yelled once, I'm not going to stop. I'm sure these guys do this ALL THE TIME and I want to make them afraid to in the future. I have the glum feeling that I'm not going to have a shortage of practice.

Published on April 28,2011 at 2:44 pm in **Uncategorized**

11NY) Brooke's story: Late night nightmare

On Tuesday April 19th, 2011, I was sexually harassed by a man on the G. I was riding from the Clinton/ Washington stop to 4th Ave/9th Street at about 1 in the morning. I became aware that I was alone with the man (only he and I on the car) when he approached me. I know now that I should have been more aware of my surroundings! He approached me calling me "beautiful" and asked me "Why are you so sad? You boyfriend is not with you tonight?" I said "no" and gestured to him with my hands to keep moving and leave me alone. He sat beside me and asked me why I was alone etc....and again I said no and gestured for him to go away. He got up from the seat and moved into the doorway that was beside me. He asked me "doesn't your boyfriend give you this?" and I turned my head to see that he had pulled out his semi-erect penis for me to see. I said "NO!" to him and turned my head away so that I wasn't looking at him...I was trying not to acknowledge what he was doing. When we reached the Smith/ 9th St stop he put his penis back in his pants and began to exit the train. Before he left, he stroked the side of my face and said "mmmmmmmm." I was disgusted! I rode to the next stop (4th ave/ 9th st) and exited the train. I took a cab the rest of the way home (not transferring to the R train at 4th ave to get home). I did not stop to report him. Now it is 2 days later and feel like there is nothing I can really do...besides send this email. I didn't even get a good look at him because I was trying to ignore him so that he would go away!

He was a mid 20's or early 30's male. He was well dressed. Overall he seemed well groomed and well put together. When he initially approached me I was not alarmed. He just seemed like an annoying flirt. I have been scolding my self since it happened for not being more aware of him, that we were alone together and I was not aware of that sooner. I hope that he does not do it again....I hope that this email makes SOMEONE aware of what happened. Is it too late to call the police? And, even if I did, would be able to give very few details about him. I was trying not to notice him:-{

Published on April 22,2011 at 2:27 am in **Uncategorized**

12NY) KK's Story: Another day, another subway masturbator

I was on the 1 train going downtown and felt someone staring at me. I glance up and see a man sitting in front of me with his legs spread wide open and there's a HUGE hole cut in his sweatpants. His penis is in full view. I turn bright red and my heart starts racing. I can't explain it, but I just KNEW that he had targeted me.

Then I start to think "this can't be happening, am I going crazy?" I nudge the woman sitting next to me and ask "am I seeing things?" and she affirms that he in fact is exposing himself ("Oh my GOD" was her reaction).

For some weird reason I started getting really nervous. I was super uncomfortable and felt violated. This is a public subway and it's not fair to impose this on anyone.

My reaction was probably exactly what he wanted: I looked him straight in the eye and said "put that thing away!"

"What thing" he said in a quiet, almost shy voice.

"You're getting off on the next stop" I screamed.

He claimed the next stop (42nd street) was his stop anyways. Who knows.

The worst part is that my boyfriend thought the whole thing was no big deal. And when I said I became "bright red and agitated" he replied "it sounds like you were excited."

411 on the PERP: white; 25-35 yrs old; scruffy light brown beard; hat; hoodie; and damaged sweatpants

Published on April 21,2011 at 4:12 am in **Uncategorized**

13NY) Laura's Story: Young boys learn how to harass women

I am closing hard on 35 (not that that makes much difference, but anyway) with a friend who must be about the same age. We were walking in this area about a month ago when a limousine rolled past, with a bunch of young boys, who must have literally been about 9, 10, or maybe 11 years old, leaned out of the window and said to some woman or other (I don't know who, it could have conceivably been any woman at the crosswalk - I suspect it may not have been me, since I am easily old enough to be their mother) 'Hey baby, what are you doing tonight?'

Let me just stress again that these kids clearly barely knew what they were saying and were literally children.

Yet, I immediately felt the same kind of embarrassment and threat that I feel in any other similar situation. And clearly these kids were not a threat.

My friend and I looked at each other and said something like 'Where did they pick THAT up from?'

Published on May 12,2011 at 5:02 am in **Uncategorized**

Mumbai (mumbai.ihollaback.org)

1M) churchgate train station

this man followed me all the way around the churchgate train station. i was so scared. i finally got into the ladies compartment and lost him. i wish i felt safer in bombay!!

Published on February 18,2011 at 5:52 pm in **Uncategorized**,

2M) we expect better behaviour too, chitra. keep holla'ing.

walking down hughes road, this group of men at a construction site ALWAYS stop and look at me. they tell each other that i'm there and what bothers me is that they know they're making me uncomfortable and they still do it. i hate this. i expect better behaviour from bombay men!!

Published on February 8,2011 at 7:02 am in **Uncategorized**,

3M) you do deserve better, bahen. the holla community is with you.

i go to xavier's and last week when i was leaving college, some guy pinched my butt. i turned around and he laughed with his friends. it made me so angry. i know that i deserve better.

submitted by: sanchita (not my real name)

Published on January 30,2011 at 4:29 pm in **Uncategorized**,

4M) say it, sister

I purposely buy clothes that are too big for me. I purposely go out wearing baggy clothes because I feel that when I wear something that shows skin, men stare at me more. Actually, they stare no matter what I wear, but even more when I am wearing something revealing. It should not be about what I wear. Why are men in this city allowed to express their sexual desires, but I'm meant to keep mine under wraps? Saying that women are harassed because we wore what we wanted, we 'asked for it' gives men sexual autonomy but doesn't give us sexual autonomy. This is a double standard.

submitted by: anonymous

Published on January 30,2011 at 4:26 pm in **Uncategorized**,

5M) mumbai's first hollaback!

Hello hollaback mumbai! I'm so glad you all started this site, we really need it here.

So this is my hollaback. There are these guys who I always see near my building. Every day, I walk by and they give me a rating out of 10 for how I look. They do it loudly enough for me to hear, and over time, it has gotten worse. First it was just two guys, now there are three or four. I have started using the back entrance of the building. But sometimes it's just more convenient to use the front entrance, like when I'm running late, and I dread seeing them there. It's every day – 5. 3. 7. 8. I'm not a number!

Hm, I feel better now.

Published on January 29,2011 at 6:09 am in **Uncategorized**,

6M) asha's story: marine drive, near cufte parade

this isn't like an official incident, but it happened months ago and it's still bothering me. i was at the end of marine drive, near cufte parade. i was crossing the street. i was in the middle of the street on that middle bar thing, waiting for the cars to pass. and this man in a big jeep who was driving down the road swung the car towards me for a second, like he was going to hit me, then laughed pulled back and kept going. he obviously knew he wasn't going to hit me, but he wanted to frighten me. it's been two months and every time i think back to that, it bothers me a little bit.

Published on March 18,2011 at 8:15 pm in **Uncategorized**,

7M) Santa Cruz train station. Priya's story: my name is not 'baby.'

This is my first Hollaback story. I was at the Santa Cruz train station and I was late for an appointment and rushing through the station. I got to the women's compartment section and was waiting there. Then I noticed these two guys just standing and watching me. One of them came over to me and said, 'hey baby, aap ka tamatar kitna rahe?' i was so embarassed! I was so angry! thankfully then the train came and i got on the ladies compartment and they were still laughing when they got on the train. If I could do the whole thing over again, I would shout: HEY GADHE. MY NAME IS NOT BABY."

8M) Karina's Story: URGH, indeed. Hollaback is with you, Karina.

I was outside the Mahim train station. I was walking towards the station, and noticed a man staring at me. I was uncomfortable, but I ignored him. Then he started following me, and I did what I usually do when some guy starts following me – I stopped walking, and stood on the side waiting for him to walk past me. But this guy didn't do either; instead, he stopped as well and continued staring. Then he said in Hindi, "hey baby, how much are your tomatoes?" URGH. I had been having a good day and he ruined it. This needs to stop!

Published on April 14,2011 at 2:56 pm in **Uncategorized**,

9M) K's Story: "what probably doesn't mean much to him, I can't seem to forget." We are with you, K.

As a young woman living alone in Mumbai, I was often worried about my security. This happened to me two years ago. I was coming out of the Bandra train station, catching a cab to meet some friends. I noticed some strange man (in his late 20s, thin) following me from the station. I weaved in and out of the hoards of people, but he kept up with me. I finally cut back and snatch a rickshaw, and told the driver to drive immediately. He started running after the rickshaw, but as we caught up speed I thought I was finally safe. At a stoplight short ahead, the man caught up to the rickshaw and grabbed my thigh, just as the light turned green and we sped away. I was so furious. What do you get out of doing something like that to someone? What probably doesn't mean much to him: touching someone's leg for a second, I can't seem to forget.

Published on April 7,2011 at 7:35 am in Uncategorized,

10M) kiddo's story: 'why should i have to?' you're right, kiddo, you shouldn't. hollaback is with you.

I find it sad, that the cat-calling/ harassment of women is not limited to adults. As a kid I loved the outdoors. But in a metropolitan city, it was difficult to find parks and fields so I was out on the streets playing with friends a lot, or even just taking a post-dinner walk.

It happened more than ten years ago, but I remember it so clearly because it left such a dark impression on my mind. I was taking a walk with a friend, when a man on a bicycle passed by me and groped my butt. I turned around and stared at him, but it was so unexpected and attacking, that I did not know what to do. I remember thinking at the time, that perhaps it was because of the shirt I wore, but I was 13 years old!! What a way to start forming healthy sexual identity at the start of teenage years. Anyway, I am perhaps over it, but I have faced this so much that now, even at the age of 25, I do not like going into a crowded market place without male company. I usually ask my cousins or father or bf... But why should I have to ?

Published on April 4,2011 at 5:43 pm in Uncategorized,

11M) Deb's Story: We're with you, Deb, and we're angry too. Keep hollering.

I moved to Mumbai earlier this year and didn't have a chance to really explore the city. One morning this week I thought of walking around south Mumbai- on my own. Loitering, you might say. After all, this is how I explored cities elsewhere. However, I had forgotten about the lack of clean public toilets and street harassment.

I took a train to CST and chose to pass some time by looking at the fine old buildings of J.J. School of Architecture and St. Xavier's College. Then, at some point I decided to go to the Strand Book Stall. As I wasn't carrying a map, I called up my husband over

the phone to ask for directions. I stood on the footpath of D. N. Road (near the J.J. flyover) speaking on the phone when I saw a man and a woman walking by. As soon as my eyes fell on them, the man puckered up his mouth and blew a kiss. The woman was walking slightly ahead of him and didn't realize what the man was doing. I instinctively looked away, feeling very angry inside.

I have played this incident over and over in my mind and have wondered how I could have reacted. Was he a local guy? Would anyone have supported me had I made a ruckus? Would it have done me any good to talk to the woman and point out her companion's behaviour? What if she didn't believe me? After all, many mothers/sisters/wives/friends refuse to believe that the men they are close to are capable of harassing 'other' women. I am still angry, still wondering.

Published on May 27,2011 at 1:05 pm in **Uncategorized**,

12M) Namrata's Story: My way of dealing with harassment

I have usually experienced men either singing lewd songs or passing comments like 'What a babe! What an item!' even when walking in presence of my husband. I have devised a new way of dealing with this: whenever I hear a comment or a song like this, I stop right in the middle of the road/station/market and create a huge commotion asking the other men and women around me to check this person as he is harassing me. This results in my protest have gained support from my husband and others around me. The culprit feels extreme embarrassment and I don't think he will repeat this behavior with anyone.

HOLLA, NAMRATA! At Hollaback! we're all about being assertive to your harasser, as long as you feel safe enough doing so. Keep on keeping on!

Published on May 26,2011 at 2:02 pm in **Uncategorized**,

13M) Rt's Story: "since then I'm wary of bicyclists." We're so sorry for this awful experience, Rt, but power to you for making it a holla, and saying that this behaviour is unacceptable.

Both these times I was walking to the station from work, once to Churchgate, once to VT. The time I was walking to Churchgate, on PM road, a cyclist rode towards me. The road was otherwise empty and he suddenly swerved, grabbing my breast. I froze, and tears filled my eyes.

The second time, at VT, a bicyclist came up from behind and grabbed my breast. There was heavy traffic on one side into which he quickly weaved, and I stood there watching his back disappear, shocked, shaken and very very angry at myself for not shouting my lungs out.

Since then, I'm wary of bicyclists and always ready to scream and hit out if see as much as a male hand coming my way.

Published on June 22,2011 at 5:51 am in **Uncategorized**,

Cairo (harassmap.com)

1C) A Film to Die For

12:12 Nov 2 2010 Manial - El Manial St.

[Stalking or Following](#) [Comments](#)

Description

My sister and I were crossing the street in Manial, you know the one that's on the Nile, heading to Cinema Galaxy. We looked both ways before we crossed, and it was clear. Midway in the street, a car comes speeding outrageously at us literally stopping 1 cm or so from our bodies. As we tried to dodge it, the asshole swerved towards us. We seriously thought we were gonna get killed and as the two motherfuckers in the car blasted music and said their flirty words, which we could barely focus on from the terrorizing fear, they left and no one on the street reacted as if this was perfectly normal. This isn't the first time I get into a situation with an asshole operating a vehicle, and it has taught me to carry rocks in my purse...because when this happens, the only thing those pervs do is run off like cowards and you know what...everytime that happens, I pray to God that He makes them pay...not just for me...or my sister...but for every other poor woman who has to put up with this shit everytime she sets foot on the streets of Cairo.

2C) Near Rd 9 McDonalds/Bridge across Metro Tracks

13:15 Nov 4 2009 Outside the Rd 9 McDonald's to the bridge crossing the metro tracks (not in the Metro Station), Sakanat El-Maadi Metro Station

[Rape / Sexual Assault](#) [Stalking or Following](#)

Description

A man followed me in his car as I walked by the McDonalds, got out of car and followed me across the bridge. He asked me for directions, pinned me to the side of the bridge and grabbed me in inappropriate places. I screamed for help - people chased him into his van on Rd 9, he drove away

3C) Midan Sphinx - Daily Harassment

12:17 Nov 12 2010 Agouza - Midan Sphinx

[Sexual Invites](#) [Ogling](#) [Comments](#)

Description

I work in Midan Sphinx, and park my car under 15th of May bridge. The distance I have to walk is less than 100meters, and I get harassed by five different men on average everyday, on my going and return walk. The distance is very small, but the number of comments and ogling I get everyday makes me hate my life and makes me unable to work. It's very difficult to start your day with being harassed, and then finish it with more harassment. I go home after work, and bury myself in bed and I almost never go out.

4C) Armed Security Guard

23:43 Dec 26 2010 Tiba + Gameat Al Dowal, Mohandessin

[Ogling](#) [Comments](#) [Touching](#) [Stalking or Following](#)

Description

An armed security guard in front of the Thai embassy followed me from Tiba street (where the embassy is) to Abdel Rahman Al Rafei, to Mohie El Din to Gameat Al Dowal where he indecently touched me and ran away.

5C) Groping (I'm tired of living in this country)

15:22 Dec 29 2010 Abdo Pasha, Abbasia

[Touching](#)

Description

I sent a report about an incident happened approximately 2 weeks ago, in which some guy tried to sort of kidnap my friend, yesterday, and with the same friend, what happened was that we were standing in front of our college (College of Engineering - Ain Shams university) in Abdo Pasha, Abbasia, and I went across the street to photocopy some papers, leaving my friend standing with another 2 girls who are also our friends, when I went back to them, she was crying and shivering violently, I asked her about what was wrong, she kept silent at first, still in shock, then after 10 minutes she told me that some guy, in his late forties !, groped her breasts as he walking by her !, I kept looking around for that guy in order to take a reaction and do anything, but it was too late that he left, and she was shocked enough from what happened that she couldn't call me from across the street at the instant.

6C) Creepy Follower

13:19 Jan 11 2011 Bohooth Metro Station

[Stalking or Following](#)

Description

Man walking ahead wouldn't stop checking back at me leering and slowing his pace so that I would catch up with him. I hung behind until he literally stopped 20 feet ahead of me and turned around and just stared and waited. I yelled loudly at him and he turned and walked quickly away. Amazes me that he feels he has the right to

just stand there trying to find out where I live. I am disgusted by the behavior of many men I encounter on the street daily, this type of behavior is cancerous to Egyptian society and will only hold back the country.

7C) Huge crowd of guys harrass two foreign girls

12:00 Feb 11 2011 Cairo

[Touching](#) [Stalking or Following](#)

Description

It happened on the night of the 11th february celebrations around mindnight/1am. I was walking home with my friend (we are two foreign girls living in Cairo) through Tahrir, a bunch of guys started following and groping us and we ended up in a huge crowd (around 40-50 guys, not sure) that just grew and grew and they wouldnt let go of us. Thankfully some (true hearted) egyptian men helped us and after a long fight/pulling/pushing they managed to get us to the army checkpoint nearby. If it weren't for those protecting us it could have ended a lot worse... I'll be grateful for them forever.

8C) Truck driver whisteling & calling me otta in abbas akkad in the middle of traffic

15:26 Apr 2 2011 abbas akkad, medinat nasr

[Catcalls](#) [Comments](#)

Description

Truck driver whisteling & calling me otta in abbas akkad in the middle of traffic

9C) I was smacked on the butt by a truck passenger driving by

21:36 Mar 27 2011 Intersection between Geel 2000, hosary mosque and Al wady hospital.

[Comments](#) [Touching](#)

Description

I'm not afraid to report these sick SOB's. I was harassed by a man that was a passenger in a truck (nos na2l) that was driving by and they all laughed and yelled profanities at me. I was walking home with MY MOTHER next to me. I wear hijab and I was wearing long clothes!!!

It was a poor area but I had to walk home with my mom at the time and that was the route.

I was embarrassed and angry. I screamed at them and then I tried to hold back my tears.

Not only did he try to smack my butt, due to the speed of the vehicle going by, I hurt

a lot and he hit part of my side. I only hope he hurt his arm. :@

What happened to the MEN who didn't tolerate this kind of behavior and stood up for their women in the community?! Huh? THIS CULTURE AND MENTALITY MAKES ME SICK. NO ONE FOLLOWS ISLAM ANYMORE.

And if girls dont report this because they're worried about their stupid reputation, WHAT ABOUT YOUR DIGNITY? God this makes me so angry...

This isnt the worse harassment case that ever happened, I know, but I thought I'd report it!

10C) Tahrir

15:12 Apr 20 2011 Tahrir

[Comments](#) [Touching](#)

Description

just got hit on by 2 policemen at #tahrir sq. Sadly, this is not shocking, nor is it the first time"

11C) Harrassment

14:58 Apr 19 2011 Nasr City - Makram Ebeid St. (عبيد مكرم ش - نصر مدينة)

[Comments](#) [Facial Expressions](#) [Stalking or Following](#)

Description

While I was driving back home from the bus stop I entered a small side street that leads to my house. I go through there all the time. Because the street is too narrow, the car in front of me had to slow down and go very slowly next to me. In the other car were two guys, in their twenties. They said inappropriate comments and the driver banged the side of my car with his hand. I shouted back and raised my arm after he left to the end of the street. He got angry that I raised my hand and stopped and drove back to follow me. I stopped and asked him why he banged the side of my car and he said another inappropriate comment about my body. This is ridiculous! Egypt will never change, comments and harrasment will never stop. There needs to be more action than just a map reporting cases, police need to be there to stop it. Even policemen used to give me dirty comments on the street!

12C) I was stalked in front of Chinese Embassy in Cairo

15:00 Apr 15 2011 China Embassy in Cairo

[Facial Expressions](#) [Ogling](#) [Invites](#)

Description

I was stalked from the guy in front of Chinese embassy in Cairo. I had to call my brother to pick me up. He stared at me and looked at me in a sexual way. I was so scared.

13C) Stone thrown at us

18:06 May 27 2011 sharia haram

[Comments](#) [Touching](#)

Description

walking on sharia haram at 6pm in evening to go back to hotel barcelo 2 young boys threw a stone at my (female) friend and i which, narrowly missed. they were on the centre reservation of the road, laughed and ran off.