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## **Tweeting the Gendered City: Analysis of Harassment, Reflection on Justice**

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*Street harassment is a gender-based injustice experienced in public spaces. In this research, I draw on feminist perspectives and explore the stages of social movements to study how social media platform Twitter is used to share and process experiences with street harassment, pass along resources and media about street harassment, and to engage in anti-street harassment organizing and movement building activities. I detail a qualitative approach to social media research, introduce the concept of listening in Twitter-based research, and conclude with ideas for future research.*

**Keywords:** Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Social Media | Urban Studies and Planning

Street harassment is a persistent issue affecting women's experiences in public space. Street harassment may include unwanted attention in the form of catcalls, leering, sexual gestures, groping, or a combination of physical and non-physical contact (Davis, 1993). Harassment can occur whether on foot, bicycle, public transportation, or while merely existing in public places, such as parks, or shopping centers. To differentiate from other forms of contact in public, some characterize street harassment by "the unacceptability of 'thank you' as a response" (Davis, 1993, p. 214), meaning negative attention that is underserving of thanks. Incidents can also evolve, starting with catcalls and escalating to physical contact, stalking, or violence. It is therefore unsurprising that women may feel increased risk in public as compared to men (Smith & Torstenson, 1997). In fact, fear of harassment (and harassers) negatively affects how women interact with cities, often restricting their access and freedom to enjoy the same spaces as their male counterparts (Day, Stump, & Carreon, 2003). Indeed, the harassment women experience is a gender-based injustice and the consequences in relation to their ability to access and exist in public spaces are undeserved, unjust, and unfair.

Most frequently women are the targets of street harassment by male harassers; however, research shows that street harassment "is not essentially sexual in nature as much as it is motivated by, and instrumental to, male power and hierarchy" (Bowman, 1993, p. 519). Within this understanding, harassment in public can be understood as less about sex and more about the reinforcement of gendered and patriarchal power. This understanding is also evident in the ways men experience harassment. A survey from the organization Stop Street Harassment found that 25% of men have experienced street harassment and that a high percentage of those males identified as LGBTQ (Stop Street Harassment, 2014),

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although more research is needed that specifically examines the harassment experienced by transgender people. The same study revealed that 18 percent of men reported being verbally harassed and nine percent noted that they were the subject of homophobic or transphobic slurs in public (Stop Street Harassment, 2014). In other words, these men were targeted by harassers who used gender-based slurs to maintain their positions of dominance and power in public. Expressions of power in public space also “include other sites of dominance: heterosexuality, whiteness, wealth, youthfulness, mental and physical abilities, and citizenship” (Flores, 2016, p. 36), and experiences with street harassment may be further complicated by intersections of race, ethnicity, class, age, or legal status.

In recent years, attention to street harassment as an issue in public spaces has increased in popular media. For example, comedienne Jessica Williams devoted several segments to street harassment on *The Daily Show*, *Playboy* developed an infographic titled “Should You Catcall Her?” (hint: only if it’s consensual, or she’s a cat), and articles continue appearing in outlets such as *Time Magazine*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Guardian*. While conducting this research, several reasons emerged as potentially influencing this shift. First, the work of anti-harassment organizations such as Stop Street Harassment and Hollaback! has both built awareness of the issue and offered ways for women around the world to become involved in activism and advocacy. Additionally, their advocacy has contributed to significant outcomes such as policy changes and anti-harassment campaigns on public transportation (Huusko, 2014). Second, there is more coverage of street harassment as a news story. For instance, this study period (August 15 to November 15, 2014) was chosen because it coincided with the point that the national conversation about street harassment was accelerating. Journalists wrote about the above mentioned anti-harassment campaigns, and news outlets reported on several violent incidents in which street harassment escalated to murder, such as the case of Mary Spears, a Detroit mother of three who was killed when she rejected the advances of her harasser (Edwards, 2014). Lastly, individuals have also drawn attention to the issue and engaged in their own forms of resistance through art and photography projects, blogging, and sharing their own harassment experiences. For example, Tatyana Fazlalizadeh is the artist behind the project Stop Telling Women to Smile, which according to her website is an attempt to “address gender based street harassment by placing drawn portraits of women, composed with captions that speak directly to offenders, outside in public spaces” (Fazlalizadeh, n.d.).

Public space is profoundly gendered, and street harassment can have negative effects on how people experience city spaces (Flores, 2016). The purpose of this paper is to examine how Twitter can be used to study street harassment using qualitative methods, and to reflect on the possibilities of centering injustice when conducting social media-based research projects. In this study, the injustice that is centered is street harassment, which is viewed as preventing equal access and rights to the city for women. This work addresses issues of power and oppression by using feminist and social movement frameworks to guide a qualitative approach to social media research. In what follows I explain the framing of this project, which is drawn from Fenster’s concept of the Right to the Gendered City along with Moyer’s Stages of Social Movements. Next, I walk through the tweet data collection and methods. Finally, I share major findings about experiences with harassment, organizing, and resistance, and conclude by examining the ways in which social media researchers can and should use their work to focus on issues of injustice.

## **Theoretical and Conceptual Framing**

Framing for this study is twofold, drawn from both feminist scholarship in urban planning, and Bill Moyer's (1987) analytic model of social movements. Together these perspectives provide a foundation for both using a justice-based approach to studying gender and understanding street harassment as a gender-based injustice, as well as a meaningful way to assess how anti-street harassment activism and organizing may fit within a broader social movement structure.

### **Feminist Theory and Urban Planning**

This study is guided by feminist thought, which I define as a broad area of scholarship and practice examining the systems and conditions that create and maintain women's subordinate position to men in society. For me, using a feminist perspective in planning research means 1) identifying the power in relationships between women and cities, spaces, and places; and 2) acknowledging the complex and different ways these relationships form and develop based on intersections of race, class, sexuality, ability, immigration status, and more. I also draw on Ange-Marie Hancock's ideas about recognizing "the vast racial and ethnic diversity of intersectionality's foremothers" (Hancock, 2016, p. 26) in that my understanding of and approach to intersectionality is not influenced by a single scholar, but rather is shaped and reshaped by the writings of bell hooks, Gloria Anzaldua, Mari Matsuda, Cherrie Moraga, Patricia Hill Collins, Kimberle Crenshaw, the Combahee River Collective, and more.

Feminism is most popularly described in terms of waves (first, second, third), but there is debate about whether the waves framework is still useful, particularly since it incorrectly and a-historically implies that over time gender activism in the United States has been linear and converged around a singular set of ideas that we refer to as feminism (Nicholson, 2010). For instance, within the waves framework the first wave focuses on the suffrage movement, which culminated in the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. However, the waves framework oversimplifies the experiences of women during this time by erasing organizing among Black women for the right to vote (Terborg-Penn, 1983). Additionally, this framing suggests a close to the first wave that doesn't account for the continuing negative experiences of Black women who—despite the passage of the amendment—still "were met with hostility" both at the polls and among white women organizing with the National Women's Party (Taylor, 1998, p. 238).

In following the waves framework, the second wave of feminism began during the 1960s and consisted of several branches: radical feminism, liberal feminism, and socialist feminism. Feminists started grassroots "women only" spaces, and focused on individual rights by centering attention on issues such as reproductive freedom and the Equal Rights Amendment. Critics argue that women of color feminisms are decentered in second wave framing, meaning that analyses of race and class take a backseat to sexism (Thompson, 2002), and that this period is better understood as a "group of feminisms, movements made by activist women that were largely organizationally distinct from one another, and from the beginning, largely organized along racial/ethnic lines" (Roth, 2004, p. 3). Finally, the third wave within the framework started during the 1990s and was rooted in having the

power to make your own decisions, “regardless of what those choices are” (Shugart, Waggoner, & O’Brien, 2010). The third wave also acted as a critique of the second wave, with a focus on defining feminisms through identity and intersectionality, analyses that drew on “difference, deconstruction, and decentering” (Mann & Huffman, 2005), and the use of queer theory. Some scholars now question whether we are entering a fourth wave, perhaps aided by technology that allows for feminists worldwide to communicate and take action (Munro, 2013).

In the field of urban planning scholars have called for feminist planning theory and for including feminist critiques in planning theory debates, but they also note the challenge that comes from having “little agreement within planning as to what constitutes planning theory, as there is little agreement within feminism as to what constitutes feminist theory” (Sandercock & Forsyth, 1992, p. 68). Scholars have written gender into planning histories (Hayden, 1981; Wirka, 1996), and have conducted research on non-sexist cities (Hayden, 1980), but feminist planning is not currently considered a subfield within urban planning. More than 30 years after feminist perspectives started appearing in planning literature, Jacqueline Leavitt (2003) argued that a gender-based paradigm shift had yet to happen in the field. However, Tovi Fenster’s (2005) concept of Right to the Gendered City, which guided this research, brings us a step closer to this potential shift.

In her work, Fenster (2005) challenged Lefebvre’s idea of right to the city by using feminist critiques, arguing that it “lacks sufficient attention to patriarchal power relations, which are ethnic, cultural, and gender-related” and therefore “doesn’t produce a practical standpoint (p. 217). Fenster argued that by thinking about space in terms of public and private, the public sphere appears neutral — free from power relations — which fails to reflect the experiences of women in cities. Here her perspective works congruently with my desire to locate the power in relationships between women and cities, spaces, and places in my research. Although Fenster focused on the right to the *city* [emphasis mine], in this study I take a step back to look at public spaces more generally because street harassment is a gender-based injustice that can occur in any public space, whether in urban, suburban, or rural areas.

### **Eight Stages of Social Movements**

The conceptual lens grounding this research comes from Bill Moyer (1987), and his Eight Stages of a Successful Social Movement. This framework is helpful for contextualizing the growing resistance to street harassment as an injustice experienced in public space, and examining how online and on-the-ground efforts build movement around the issue. The model uses stages to show a pathway for how public awareness of a problem such as street harassment can, through activist and advocacy work, gain the public’s approval, and eventually their support for movement alternatives. The first three stages of the model include moving from what Moyer calls a steady state to the build-up of stressors in the system. During this time, the usual means of addressing problems fail, and conditions change leading to what he terms a trigger event. At this point the fourth stage begins and public awareness of the issue grows. Stages five and six reflect the path to winning public favor, and building to a point of resolution, which begins with stage seven, success. Finally, the model concludes with a point when public support for alternatives supersedes public opposition.

## **Twitter, Data, & Methods**

Data for this project were collected from social media platform Twitter. The platform allows users to interact by sharing 140-character posts that appear on their personal account pages, as well as a continuously scrolling public newsfeed comprised of tweets from all users the account follows. Posts, referred to as tweets, can include text, links, photos, videos, hashtags, and more. Twitter was founded in 2006, and according to Statista the platform had 288 million active monthly users at the time of this research (Statista, n.d.). Most Twitter accounts are public (Madden et al., 2013), meaning that these tweets are publicly available. Twitter is used for everything from quickly disseminating information to the public (Heverin & Zach, 2011) to connecting with others while remaining authentic (Marwick, 2011). Within urban planning, research on social media focuses on platforms as a means of virtual participation. For instance, researchers have studied how citizens use social media to engage in planning processes (Mandarano, Meenar, & Steins, 2010), and how riders engage with public transit agencies on Twitter (Schweitzer, 2014). Research also confirms that the virtual realm is a space of resistance (Castells, 2015), and Twitter has played a role on a global scale, for example during the Arab Spring uprisings (Bruno, Highfield, & Burgess, 2013). Considering Twitter as a space of resistance also acts as an additional piece of framing for this study.

Twitter was the preferred social media platform for this study because tweets are available to the public unless the account is set to private. Importantly, tweeting is based on the concept of users wanting their tweets to be read widely and shared by members of the public. This differs from a platform such as Facebook, where posts are most often limited to viewing by those who are connected as “friends.” Twitter is also unique in that it provides researchers with unsolicited narratives from users without the researcher, or any other agent, prompting the user by asking questions. For example, a user might be compelled to tweet because of a recent experience, or to share an opinion or an article. Tweets are not the product of answering researcher-prompted questions, which in this study allowed for observations of how users naturally engaged in discussions about harassment, how they shared information, and the language they used, without the worry that users may be adjusting to their usual online behavior to fit the research.

### **Case Study Methodology**

In this research, a single-case study design was used to study street harassment and Twitter. Single-case designs are appropriate when the research has a “critical, unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal case” (Yin, 2014, p. 51). The rationale for using a single-case design for this study came from the perspective that street harassment is a common experience, and therefore I anticipated that this case study would provide some insight into the use of Twitter in relation to this everyday phenomenon. This single-case design also included four sub-units — a separate analysis of each set of tweets collected based on the final keywords and hashtags: *catcall\**, *#EndSH*, *#streetharassment*, and *#YouOkSis*. Case studies are successful when researchers understand the issues, are attuned to relationships between the data and theoretical concepts, and are able to adapt to unexpected opportunities for research throughout the duration of the study (Yin, 2014).

## **Data Collection**

In this study Twitter was examined as a virtual public space where users can discuss and build resistance against the harassment they experience in physical public space. Tweets were collected through an online service, which captured tweets based on a list of provided keywords and compiled them in .txt data files. Along with the exact text of each tweet, the data also included the date and time, the username (also referred to as a handle), and if available, the geographic location. Fewer than five percent of all tweets contained geographic data, so it was not used in this study. The low percentage may suggest that users are not inclined to turn on their account location settings. Additionally, the data does not include demographic information such as the sex or age of the user.

Criteria for determining tweet selection was based on developing a list of keywords and hashtags related to street harassment through what I refer to as a *listening* process. This study involved a six-month *listening* period prior to tweet collection during which time I took a systematized approach to monitoring Twitter daily for harassment-related tweets and looking for changes over time. The first purpose of the listening process was to search for tweets related to street harassment, meaning that they specifically mentioned street harassment or included related words like catcalling. To do so, I explored tweets posted by anti-harassment organizations, and during the early stages of the *listening* period ran searches of broader key terms such as sexual harassment or feminism, and also scanned the tweets for references related to street harassment. I documented the results of the *listening* process, for instance noting when new hashtags emerged, or when media stories appeared to drive tweet activity. I also set up a Google Alert for the phrase “street harassment” that served as a tool for identifying trending hashtags about street harassment and learning about new anti-harassment events and campaigns. This new information was then used to further inform the searches and scans conducted during the *listening* process. As the *listening* process continued it became more narrowly tailored as I could identify promising accounts, routinely used terms, and specific hashtags to monitor.

The second purpose of the *listening* process was to note whether a keyword or hashtag was sustaining activity over time. Given the speed at which topics can become popular and then suddenly fade from Twitter, selecting terms with longevity increases the likelihood that the term will remain in use for the duration of the project. For instance, at the start of the *listening* period the hashtag #HarassmentIs was used frequently, with tweets starting with #HarassmentIs and followed with an example of harassment. However, listening to Twitter over time revealed that this hashtag went dormant within a few weeks, producing only a handful of new tweets for the duration of the study period. Relying solely on a preliminary scan of tweets rather than taking the time to engage in the *listening* process would have resulted in including #HarassmentIs as a hashtag in the study, with limited if any tweets over time.

The pre-collection *listening* process continued over a period of six months, during which time I developed a list of ten keywords and hashtags that routinely included tweets about street harassment: catcall, #EndSH, #EverydaySexism, harassment, #HarassmentIs, Hollaback, #rapeculture, #sexism, #SSH, and #streetharassment. This list of keywords and hashtags was then submitted to the online tweet collection service. After reviewing a week’s worth of collected tweets it became clear that some terms were still too broad, meaning that even if they produced tweets about street harassment, most tweets were off-

topic. For example, the hashtag #everydaysexism regularly contained tweets about street harassment, but the clear majority of tweets were about sexism in general. In another example, although Hollaback! is an established anti-harassment organization, reviewing the collected tweets for the keyword ‘Hollaback’ revealed that most contained a pop culture reference to the Gwen Stefani song by the same name rather than street harassment.

I continued the listening process throughout the study period, which was key to recognizing the rise of a new hashtag that became popular shortly after tweet collection began: #YouOkSis. The hashtag #YouOkSis was used to discuss experiences with street harassment within Black communities, and without continuing the listening process throughout the study this crucial hashtag might have been overlooked. The final list of keywords and hashtags analyzed in this study include: catcall\*, #streetharassment, #EndSH, and #YouOkSis.

### **Data Analysis**

During the fall of 2014 nearly 10,000 tweets about street harassment were collected through the online collection service based on the four final keywords and hashtags: catcall\*, #streetharassment, #EndSH, and #YouOkSis. Of these tweets, 9,272 were coded and used in the final study. To reach this final list of 9,272 tweets, several hundred tweets were weeded out for two reasons: 1) a read-through of the tweets revealed some which were off-topic, spam, or ads; and 2) the tweet files from the collection service often included repeat tweets at the beginning of the document, which had already been included on the prior list.

Although research using tweets as data is often analyzed quantitatively, in this study qualitative methods were used and tweets were analyzed individually as micro-narratives. The complete collection of tweets was analyzed as a case study, and tweets were also analyzed as subgroups within the larger case by each keyword and hashtag, which allowed for comparisons between and across groups. A tweet analysis plan was developed and took place in three phases: 1) informal coding, 2) formal coding, 3) coding by tweet type. During the informal coding stage tweets were read and coded based on individual tweet content. Codes were grouped into themes. During the formal coding stage tweets were analyzed based on concepts from drawn feminist thought such as identifying patriarchal power relations. Codes were again grouped into themes. During the final coding phase tweets were coded by tweet type refers to whether a tweet is used for sharing, engaging, or analyzing (Evans-Cowley & Griffin, 2011). Major themes were identified through analyzing the first two coding phases. Themes revealed the ways in which Twitter was used to discuss experiences with street harassment, as well as how the platform supported anti-harassment efforts by both individuals and organizations.

### **Major Findings**

Tweet analysis revealed three major themes for understanding street harassment, and anti-harassment organizing: It Happened to Me, Media Sharing, and Organizing and Movement Activity. Each theme is illustrative of the gendered experiences users face, the building awareness of street harassment as a named public issue, and the growing resistance to

harassment, whether seen as a moment of individual activation to speak truth or as an organized effort.

### **It Happened to Me**

Twitter users often engaged Twitter to provide *It Happened to Me* type stories about personal incidents with street harassment. This included sharing, venting, and processing their personal experiences. Stories shared by users reflect the presence of gendered experiences in cities, and using a feminist perspective to analyze the tweets revealed the presence of gender-based power relations playing out in public. For example, many tweets explicitly demonstrated that being male is a source of power in public spaces. Among Twitter users who identified the sex of their harasser in their tweets, nearly all noted that their harasser was a male or that they were harassed by a group of men. Some users also referred to men calling them derogatory names such as bitch or whore.

- @User1: “*gettin pretty tired of creepy-ass dudes honking/shouting/catcalling me. no thank you sir I am not interested*”
- @User2: “*no, i will not "call you when i get out of high school" mr. guy-in-terrifying-black-truck. catcalling is NOT appreciated.*”
- @User3: “*Prime pick-up line: 'Sup, brown Suga! Whatchu got goin' on?' Asked me 2x, increased aggression, then called me a bitch. #youOKSis.*”
- @User4: “*I once politely rejected a man's advances in a bar and he immediately yelled 'fucking bitch!' and tried to hit me #YouOKSis #NotJustHello.*”

These tweets reflect two different stages of Moyer’s social movement model: first, they demonstrate street harassment as a problem in public spaces; and second, they act to build a public awareness of the issue through the use of social media.

### **Media Sharing**

A second theme was the sharing of media stories, information, and harassment parodies and memes. During the study period, the most frequently shared harassment-related media stories included 1) the murder of Mary Spears who was shot to death after declining the advances of her harasser; 2) a video from Hollaback! titled “10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a woman” that showed a woman being catcalled as she walked through the city; and 3) an infographic from *Playboy* that assisted readers in deciding whether it was ever okay to catcall a woman (spoiler: only if she is actually a cat, or you have both consented to engage in the catcalling). More than half of total tweets analyzed in this study included a link to a media story or video about street harassment. This theme revealed the increasing influence of media outlets and social media sharing as contributing to both Moyer’s “Ripening Conditions” stage, and the “Take Off” stage when public awareness of the problem increases. In this sense, both the media coverage and the high level of social media sharing appeared to build awareness about the issue, and seemed to add to the growing public acknowledgment that women and men may not have the same experiences on city streets.

## Organizing & Movement Activity

Another major theme that emerged was the presence of organizing and calls to action against street harassment. This included sharing information about meetings, rallies, and marches, engaging in online campaigns or tweet chats, and even calling on men to step up and intervene when witnessing harassment incidents. These types of movement-building tweets came from both individual and organization accounts, and demonstrate the growing public awareness of and pushback to the issue. There is no one event that seems to satisfy the designation of a “trigger event” to set off this stage of Moyer’s framework; however, when viewed in context of the broader movement for women’s liberation, it appears that collective injustice felt by women across the country (and world) may act as an event that continues to spur activity, both generally and specific to this issue. The following tweets show the types of online anti-harassment organizing users engaged in during the study period.

- @User5: *“Hate #streetharassment while #running? Hope you can join the Thursday tweet chat, #rwsafety #endsh <http://t.co/S8RR9AdroQ>”*
- @User6: *“Started by @KatiHeng, “But What Was She Wearing?” is a project documenting what #streetharassment really looks like. #EndSH”*
- @User7: *“Thanks to Feminista Jones I pulled a couple of #YouOKSis's tonight. What an effective (and natural) intervention.”*
- @User8: *“We gotta start standing up and speaking out for our women more. Putting our fuckboy friends in check too #YouOkSis.”*
- @User9: *“Does #streetharassment & #catcalling happen to you? Share your story with us! <http://t.co/cryZpEEdsF> #EndSH #sexualharassment #sexism”*

If we view these actions specifically in the context of a growing anti-street harassment movement, then the data suggest that the Moyer’s “trigger event” may not be a specific event, but rather a period during which anti-harassment campaigns by existing organizations increased, meaning that street harassment became a defined area in the broader issue of violence against women. Coupled with the increasing media coverage, this worked to raise awareness of the problem while also creating a sense of urgency in the public. However, anti-harassment movement activity was not without critiques. For instance, both Twitter users and bloggers criticized anti-harassment organizing as excluding Women of Color, placing their experiences as secondary – or invisible -- within the movement. Users took to Twitter to share their critiques.

- @User10: *“Why the anti-street harassment movement needs to involve more women of color: <http://t.co/D7Qejiaiac> #endsh”*
- @User11: *“Where are the viral #streetharassment videos about #WOC? Here are the videos, you can help make them viral! <http://t.co/0RDBtXqZjC> #Endsh”*
- @User12: *“my thgts on being a WoC leader in Hollaback & that viral video #EndSH #intersectionality <http://t.co/rJLmAy373k>”*

As evident from these tweets, users had a strong response to the “10 Hours Walking in NYC as a Woman” video, which featured a white woman. Bloggers and opinion writers

noted that white male harassers had been edited out of the footage, which implied that street harassment was an issue of Men of Color harassing white women, and other users shared videos documenting the harassment facing Women of Color walking through cities. Users also called for the anti-street harassment movement to involve more Women of Color.

### **Discussion: Possibilities for Social Media and Social Justice**

Justice-based practices influenced every step of this research, and included: 1) focusing on street harassment as a gender-based injustice; 2) using feminist thought to frame the research; 3) and engaging in qualitative analysis of tweets. From collecting and amplifying the lived experiences shared through tweets, to using feminist frameworks and social movement models to analyze virtual organizing, this research offers a new approach to conducting social media research for justice.

This research focusing on street harassment is significant for three main reasons. First, most women report experiencing street harassment (Stop Street Harassment, 2014), yet there is limited scholarship about how this affects experiences in public space. The data collected during this study period offer first-person, tweeted accounts of street harassment and evidence that experiencing harassment negatively impacts the daily experiences of women in public spaces. Through both the sheer number of tweets about this issue, and through qualitative analysis of the tweets we gain a clearer understanding of how Twitter is used to communicate about, process, and organize against, street harassment. The decision to analyze tweets qualitatively is significant because it allowed for a closer reading of the tweets — such as capturing tone, or noting sarcasm — which revealed the fear, frustration, and anger of these users. The data give clues as to the multiple ways harassment is experienced (on transit, by pedestrians, by men yelling from cars, etc.), while also hinting at the introduction of local measures to push prevent harassment including awareness campaigns on public transportation lines.

Second, using feminist framing in this research was essential because this lens revealed sources of power related to gendered experiences in public space. In this sense, the study challenges assumptions about public space and examines how systems of oppression such as sexism shape daily lived experiences. For example, being male was a source of power noted by many individual users whose tweets indicated the sex of the harasser -- nearly every user in this category referred to being harassed by a male or several males.

Lastly, this research presents a chance to use social media-based data to demonstrate that public spaces as profoundly gendered. Tweet data demonstrate the increasing urgency for researchers and practitioners to engage in work addressing gendered public space, and highlights the perspectives revealed through using a feminist lens, and drawing from social media. For researchers, this also means continuing to engage in research projects that center non-dominant perspectives, building on existing research by expanding definitions of women to be more inclusive, and reimagining what we think we know in new ways.

### **Challenges and Limitations of the Research**

Engaging in this research process revealed challenges to using social media in research. Methodological challenges included concerns over the longevity of platforms (how long will Twitter remain popular?), changing functions over time (new features were introduced

during the study period), and accessing social media data (limited options for collecting tweets). However, broader challenges also exist, and one weakness of Twitter data pertains to who has the privilege of accessing the platforms and for what purposes. Although there are millions of Twitter users in the United States, many voices are still left unheard. These participation issues echo the challenges seen with surveys (who responds?), web-based applications (who engages?), and in-person participation at meetings (who has time to attend, has childcare, or even knows the meeting is occurring?). Additionally, although Twitter feeds are public, there may be ethical issues with regard to identifying users and surveillance concerns related to monitoring, storing, and analyzing the activity of named users. During this study, all usernames and handles (the @name used to identify accounts) were removed from the data, and data was stored in password protected files.

### **Conclusion**

From examining harassment experiences in public space to using tweets as data, this research offers a new qualitative approach to justice-oriented social media research. This approach can easily be replicated and applied to other issues by engaging in a listening process around the desired topic and determining a set new set of keywords and hashtags for tweet collection. Additionally, this research could be replicated using the same keywords and hashtags, using the original research as a comparison point for analyzing changes in how Twitter is used over time, for identifying shifts in organizing and activism, and for noting movement activity and/or policy gains.

More scholarship about street harassment is needed, particularly justice research that includes ongoing analyses of organizing and movement-building efforts in cities. For instance, research is needed to assess the effectiveness of awareness raising campaigns by public transportation agencies to learn what effects, if any, they have had on reducing harassment. Additionally, future research could engage users in different ways, such as tweet chats where users include a specific hashtag to find and engage with each other online at an agreed upon time. Future research might also cross the boundary between virtual and physical space by including an interview component in addition to the tweets.

The inspiration to engage in this scholarship stems from knowing that only through creating new knowledge do we stand a chance of shifting the research canon away from reinforcing dominant systems of oppression and toward work that questions, that pushes boundaries, and that more accurately reflects the justice-driven analyses our world requires, demands, and deserves. Although a gender-based paradigm shift is still on the horizon in urban planning, there is hope that justice research brings us ever closer.

### **Author Notes**

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