



# TWEETING BACK WHILE SHOUTING BACK: SOCIAL MEDIA AND FEMINIST ACTIVISM

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[CN: accounts of sexual assault & sexism]

## SOCIAL NETWORKING

- Popularity of social networks via social media is on the increase:
- Estimated 2.3 billion social network users (Chaffey, 2016)
  - 10% increase between January 2015 & January 2016
- More than 1.6 billion Facebook users
- Approximately 1 billion YouTube users
- Around 310 million people use Twitter each month
- Around 300 million people use Instagram every month



## SOCIAL NETWORKING & FEMINISM

- Digital explosion of young feminists using social network sites
- Range of reasons behind feminist social media use:
  - Enlarge & maintain feminist networks (Crossley, 2015)
  - To connect geographically distant feminist communities (Schuster, 2013)
  - Foster a sense of belonging (Baer, 2016)
- Use of social media can provide an introduction to feminist thought & activism, and make feminism more accessible.



## SHOUTING BACK

- A term used mainly by feminists
- A way of using social media in response to sexism, misogyny and social injustice both online and in real life
- Using a # to shout back on social media provides a platform for women to:
  - to share experiences around sexism and harassment
  - raise consciousness
  - challenge dominant hegemonic discourses
  - raise awareness about women's everyday realities in both the private and public sphere



## SHOUTING BACK AS A FEMINIST TOOL

- 'shouting back' – responding using a hashtag in digital spaces
- Enables dialogue & debate between feminists & others (Crossley, 2015)
- Enables quick & easy location of particular campaigns
- Makes feminist perspective available & accessible to a larger audience (Eagle, 2015)
- Can be used to share experiences & garner support from others online

## EVERYDAY SEXISM PROJECT



project about contact support digital security [Tweet](#) [Like](#) 38k

The Everyday Sexism Project exists to catalogue instances of sexism experienced on a day to day basis. They might be serious or minor, outrageously offensive or so niggling and normalised that you don't even feel able to protest. Say as much or as little as you like, use your real name or a pseudonym – it's up to you. By sharing your story you're showing the world that sexism does exist, it is faced by women everyday and it is a valid problem to discuss.

If you prefer to e-mail me at [laura@everydaysexism.com](mailto:laura@everydaysexism.com) I can upload your story for you instead. Follow us on Twitter (and submit entries by tweet) at [@EverydaySexism](https://twitter.com/EverydaySexism).

## EXAMPLES OF #EVERYDAYSEXISM

**Marianne Heaslip** @marianneheaslip · Jun 4  
Called a 'little slag' today by a gent in a car today, seemed offended that I was on my bike and turning right at a junction @EverydaySexism

**Beth Dangerfield** @bethdangerfield · May 27  
Being harassed on the street for wearing jeans with ripped knees @EverydaySexism #everydaysexism #london

**Ellie** @nocaptainellie · May 16  
#wheniwas 15 a group of lads at school would put their hands up your skirt whilst you were walking up the stairs

**Cycling Lara** @TheBikeLifeLara · Jun 7  
Have we really not progressed beyond "Top 10 Sexiest Female Pro Cyclists" @CyclingTodayEn ??? #everydaysexism #womenscycling

**Pamela** @PamelaDelanoRN · Jun 6  
When did babyclothes get so weird & gross? Reinforcing stereotypes start early @Walmart @EverydaySexism #notbuyingit

**ariel** @frickintaco · May 5  
#WhenIWas 14, a boy stuck his hand down my dress and bra and I told him to stop and he didn't. I was told that "boys will be boys".

**Kat-O-Nine-Tails** @theninshkat · May 31  
@EverydaySexism proud/shaky on Saturday after telling a drunken lad harassing a girl on her own to stop being creepy and foff #shoutingback

**Keisha James** @Reanimateddoll · 12 Aug 2015  
@EverydaySexism Guy followed me on the street wanting to know my name, told him "patriarchy" + walked away as he was confused. #ShoutingBack

## ME TOO & TIMES UP CAMPAIGNS



"The clock has run out on sexual assault, harassment, and inequality in the workplace. It's time to do something about it."

- Movement against sexual harassment at work founded in early 2018
- Time's Up badges were worn by attendees of the Golden Globes, Oscars & BAFTAs to raise awareness of the campaign
- Time's Up has raised \$22 million for the legal defence fund to support women who have been sexually harassed at work

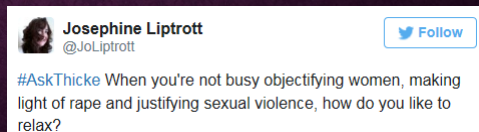
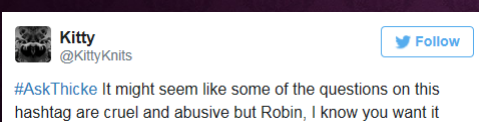
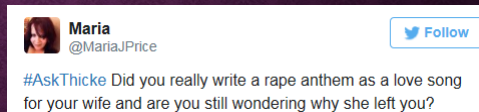
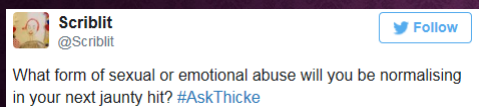
## ME TOO & TIMES UP CAMPAIGNS

- Using a # to demonstrate the scale of sexual harassment & gendered violence women experience in their everyday lives



## #ASK THICKE

- Social media promotions unrelated to feminist campaigns have been commandeered (quite brilliantly) by feminist activists
- #AskThicke used by VH1 for Robin Thicke to interact with fans...



## YOUTUBE PARODIES

- Blurred Lines feminist parody
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tC1XtnLRLPM>
- Frozen feminist parody
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9K-hMDC9GY>



## TOKEN ACTIVISM?

- Use of social media as form of slacktivism or token activism (Kristofferson, White & Peloza, 2014)
- Quick & accessible nature of social media can prevent grass roots or real world engagement with feminist activism



## BUT...

- Digital spaces & social media are not a utopia for young women:
  - Attacked or 'trolled' online
  - Use of memes to proliferate sexist narratives
  - Maintain & reflect power inequalities from the real world
- Exclusionary implications:
  - Internet can platform some women but while excluding others
  - Need for broadband connection/smartphone
  - Need for digital labour to establish & maintain online presence (Fotopoulou, 2014)

## CONCLUSIONS

- Radical potential for shouting back to highlight sexism, inequality, misogyny & rape culture
- However, the importance of offline feminist movements should be valued



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Thank you

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