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Intimate intrusions online: Studying the normalisation of abuse in dating apps

Abstract

Intimate intrusions in mobile dating contexts are a pressing social issue given the high uptake of dating apps and frequent anecdotal reports of abuse. Despite emerging popular and scholarly interest in gendered violence and online abuse, little is known to date about women's everyday lived experiences of intimate intrusions facilitated through dating apps. In this review, I draw on three bodies of literature to demonstrate how sexual harassment, dating violence, and dating app research can help us better understand women's experiences on Tinder and similar apps. I then adapt the continuum of sexual violence as a framework to interrogate patterns of normalised abuse in this context. I argue that the theory of a continuum of sexual violence can help researchers to contextualise intimate intrusions on dating apps and consider their implications. It is important to pay attention to the normalisation of abuse in mobile dating contexts, particularly as a factor that may reinforce a culture that supports violence against women.

Keywords: Dating apps; Tinder; dating violence; sexual harassment; normalisation of abuse; continuum of sexual violence

Introduction

In 2014, Warriena Wright fell to her death from Gable Tostee's high-rise apartment balcony after they met via the dating app Tinder (Silva, 2015). Although Tostee was acquitted of all charges, Wright's death demonstrated the potential for serious harm when meeting with relatively unknown internet strangers. But dating has always been risky for women, as intimate relationships are a primary site of violence and abuse (Stanko, 1990). While the opportunity to date online has been possible for many years and popularised with the advent of Match.com (Ranzini and Lutz, 2016), the proliferation of

mobile phones, and increasing accessibility of the internet (Kelley, 2011) have spurred an increase in spatially aware apps directed at those seeking new friendships (Chen, 2008), sexual encounters, and dating relationships (David and Cambre, 2016). The potential for intimate intrusions, defined as behaviours "women themselves perceive and/or experience as intimidating, threatening, coercive or violent" (Stanko, 1985, 1), facilitated via Tinder is a pressing social issue given the app has become an increasingly common way for young people to interact (Sumter, Vandenbosch and Ligtenberg, 2017). In Australia, Roy Morgan (2015) research found that 8.8% of young people aged 18-24 years had used Tinder during the four weeks prior to being surveyed about dating app use. Due to its popularity, Tinder has the potential to shift norms around social interactions more broadly. Tinder's demographic skews young. Since relationship patterns are established early on and early abuse often has a lasting impact (Hlavka, 2014), abuse experienced while using apps like Tinder has potentially lasting implications. As such, this article focuses on women's experiences of intimate intrusions on Tinder due to its domination of the mainstream heterosexual dating app market (Sumter et al., 2017). Differences in dating app affordances and user behaviour also justify research focused on specific apps.

Scholars have long stressed that violence against women is comprised of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). More recently, the popularisation of the term 'coercive control' to refer to the broad range of behaviours comprising abuse in relationships highlights the importance of non-physical forms of abuse (Stark, 2007). Although experiences of physical dating violence and other forms of gender-based violence are important, the ability to stay connected via digital media regardless of distance means that physical boundaries are not barriers to abusive behaviour. Dating apps have created new avenues for the conduct of established forms of abuse (Hess and Flores, 2016). At the same time, dating apps have made new forms of abuse possible (Vitis and Gilmour, 2016). To date, however, research on gender-based abuse has largely focused on physical violence in cohabiting or marital relationships, as reflected in the term domestic violence.

As dating moves online, so does gender-based abuse. Indeed, social norms that shape offline interactions have been reproduced online (DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman and Robinson, 2001). But

early internet enthusiasts (see for example, Barlow, 1996; Rheingold, 1993; Turkle, 1995) predicted that the web would be a liberating space "…different from real, embodied face to face interaction" (Baym, 2010: 152). Some scholars envisaged an online experience distinct from the offline world (Haythornthwaite and Wellman, 2002). This utopian vision imagined the internet as a potentially democratic space free from racism, sexism and xenophobia (Herring, 1996). Other early Internet researchers predicted dystopian outcomes such as "information overload, email addiction, uninhibited aggression, and the eventual breakdown of people's ability to engage one another face to-face" (Herring, 1996:1). Contemporary research points to a middle ground in which oppressive and liberatory potentials coexist online (Baym, 2010). Gender continues to be an important construct in mediated communication (DiMaggio et al., 2001). Indeed, the gender norms that underpin the harassment of girls and women in online spaces are the same in physical settings (Baym, 2010).

Scholars have begun to document girls' and women's experiences of digitally-mediated abuse and harassment (Jane, 2017; Woodlock, 2016; Ybarra, Price-Feeney, Lenhart and Zickuhr, 2017). Scholars like Jane (2017: 117) have documented the insidiousness and harmfulness of "gendered cyberhate" in the face of feminist efforts of resistance. So far, most of the attention to gendered forms of digitally mediated abuse has been on the relatively public experiences of harassment and abuse of women around key incidents such as #gamergate (Chess and Shaw, 2015; Massanari, 2015); the non-consensual distribution of sexually explicit images referred to as image-based sexual abuse (McGlynn and Rackley, 2017; McGlynn, Rackley and Houghton, 2017); coercive or pressured sexting (Ringrose, Gill, Livingstone and Harvey, 2012); blackmail (Bluett-Boyd, Fileborn, Quadara and Moore, 2013; Henry and Powell, 2016); and the ways that social media have exacerbated the impact of bullying on young people (Kofoed and Ringrose, 2012; Weinstein and Selman, 2014). While shedding light on these problems, the research has primarily focused on different genres of abusive behaviours rather than how they fit into dating and relationship contexts.

In the absence of a dedicated literature on the subject, I consider three bodies of literature that can help inform future research on women's experiences on Tinder and other dating apps. First, I review the research on sexual harassment. Second, I review the literature on dating violence. This review is part of a larger project that focuses on Australia, and I primarily focus on the limited existing research that is specific to the Australian context. While international research exists, it is unclear how this applies to and differs from women's experiences in Australia. Accordingly, I critically assess the Australian literature to set a future research agenda. Third, I consider the emerging research on dating apps. I argue that intimate intrusions facilitated by dating apps are part of a continuum of sexual violence that have cumulative effects that are worthy of study alongside physical violence. It should be noted that while women and same-sex attracted people can be the perpetrators of sexual harassment and dating violence, these interactions may have different dynamics and warrant specific attention. This paper deals primarily with men's intrusive behaviour toward women.

I propose a theoretically informed research agenda for studying men's intrusive behaviour in the context of dating apps. I adapt Kelly's (1988) continuum of sexual violence to conceptualise women's experiences of intimate intrusions on Tinder and similar dating apps. While physical violence is widely recognised as abusive, this framework provides an opportunity to interrogate everyday patterns of normalised abuse that appear pervasive in mobile dating contexts. This is an increasingly pressing issue given the high uptake of dating apps and frequent anecdotal reports of harm. Ultimately, this paper argues that it is important to pay attention to the normalisation of abuse in mobile dating contexts, particularly as a factor that may reinforce a culture that supports abuse and violence against women.

Terminology

For the purposes of this article, I define intimate intrusions as women's experiences in mobile dating contexts that they "themselves perceive and/or experience as intimidating, threatening, coercive or violent" (Stanko, 1985, 1). Acknowledging the great terminological variation in research on gender-

based violence, a small body of international research has focused on men's intrusive behaviour. Although scholars have used different language, for example, men's stranger intrusions (see for example, Vera-Gray, 2016); commonplace intrusions (see for example, Kelly, 1988); and intimate intrusions (see for example, Kelly, 2012; Stanko, 1985), the common denominator that links these definitions is men's disruption to women's lives through 'everyday' forms of male violence (Vera-Gray, 2016). Returning to Stanko (1985), intimate intrusions is a useful term because it does not make assumptions about what the experiences are, where they occur, what they mean to women, how they affect women, how they respond to them, or the intent of the perpetrators. In this way, seemingly 'typical' events and those are that are widely recognised as abusive are open to investigation. Fundamentally, this terminology provides a holistic and useful lens for studying women's lived experiences of intrusions on dating apps.

A holistic approach is needed because we struggle to recognise and talk about abuse that does not meet current definitions of criminal behaviour. Popular media reports and social media users reveal the range of men's intrusive behaviour on dating apps. For instance, women report receiving lewd 'pick up' lines via dating apps (Instagram, 2018a), and experiencing physical violence when meeting in offline settings (Edwards, 2016). While these reports are good at identifying the behaviour, there remains a problem with conceptualising and naming the more 'typical' experiences as abusive. Crime and victimisation surveys shed light on women's victimisation and have the benefit of being regularly conducted; however, these often fail to reflect the range and extent of abusive behaviours women experience (Dragiewicz, 2011; Mooney, 1996). Using the intimate intrusions framing to investigate women's lived experiences could help to overcome existing measurement and terminological challenges.

Theoretical Framework

Despite widespread contemporary condemnation of gender-based violence, men and boys' abuse of girls and women is so common it may be considered ordinary. Liz Kelly developed a theoretical framework to help explain how violence and abuse could simultaneously be widely condemned and pervasive and tolerated. Kelly proposed the continuum of sexual violence in 1988. The key points of

the continuum of sexual violence are: gendered forms of abuse and harassment are not rare crimes. They are experienced by the majority of women and are therefore ‘ordinary’, rather than ‘aberrant’; ‘ordinary’ experiences of abuse have cumulative effects that can be as important as physical violence; and the focus on the extreme forms of physical violence that are recognised as ‘aberrant’ distracts us from addressing mainstream cultural values that effectively normalise abuse.

The continuum demonstrates how seemingly mundane events share commonalities with those that garner legal and media attention (Kelly, 1988). While the continuum draws connections between events, it also assists women to consider their experiences by highlighting how ‘typical’ and ‘aberrant’ male behaviours shade into one another. Kelly’s (1988) continuum seeks to better understand how women experience intrusive interactions. This approach provides a more meaningful way to understand women’s experiences of abuse than quantifying the prevalence of decontextualised behaviours. According to Kelly’s (1988) model, different forms of gendered violence are linked by social attitudes that minimise and excuse violence against women. These shared attitudes are what we need to understand in order to decrease violence and abuse rather than just responding to them. The continuum does not present a hierarchical determination of seriousness. Rather, Kelly (1988: 76) argues “the degree of impact cannot be simplistically inferred from the form a woman experiences or its place within the continuum”. In fact, Kelly (1988) seeks to challenge hierarchies of abusive behaviours that allow normalised and ‘quieter forms of intrusion’ to be ignored (Vera-Gray, 2014: 125). Despite Kelly’s call for attention to everyday violence in the 1980s, few scholars have taken up the study of intrusions, with most continuing to focus on de-contextualised incidents and physical violence (Kelly, 2012).

The continuum of sexual violence offers a useful conceptual tool for studying women’s experiences of intimate intrusions on Tinder and other dating apps. In particular, the continuum offers a way to investigate women's experiences of ‘typical’ forms of intrusion. In this way, we can move beyond focusing on discrete incidents and illuminate the commonalities between women’s experiences of ‘typical’ intrusions on dating apps and widely recognised forms of abuse. Indeed, as McGlynn, Rackley

and Houghton (2017: 4) noted in their study on image-based sexual abuse, the continuum of sexual violence's

> breadth and flexibility creates a framework in which new experiences can be located and accurately understood as abusive—something which is especially important in this area where modes of perpetration rapidly change due to advances in technology.

Conceptualising women's experiences in this way will enable a greater focus on the cumulative effects of intimate intrusions in the context of mobile dating. What is needed is a framework that can account for the connections between multiple intrusive behaviours and allows us to focus on experiences that have largely escaped the critical gaze of researchers and the public.

Connecting Insights from Woman Abuse and Dating App Research

Sexual Harassment

The current sexual harassment literature provides a useful background to inform future research on women's experiences on Tinder and other dating apps. A large body of international research has focused on sexual harassment in different contexts by a range of perpetrators. For instance, researchers have focused on sexual harassment in the workplace (Australian Human Rights Commission 2012; McDonald, Charlesworth, Graham, 2015); educational settings (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017; Gådin 2012; Hill and Kearl, 2011); public space (Lenton, Smith, Fox and Morra, 1999; Thompson, 1994); and the role of communication technologies in facilitating online sexual harassment (Megarry, 2014; Powell and Henry, 2016; Smith, 2016a). This robust body of research demonstrates that sexual harassment is common for girls and women.

Current national data indicates that a significant proportion of women have experienced sexual harassment. Australia's nationally representative Personal Safety Survey (PSS) (ABS, 2016) found that one in two women (53%) report having experienced some form of sexual harassment during their lifetime. Women most often reported inappropriate comments about their body or sex life, unwanted touching, grabbing, kissing, fondling, and indecent exposure by male perpetrators (ABS, 2016). The PSS (ABS, 2016) showed us that women's experiences of sexual harassment in the survey's preceding 12 months increased from 15% in 2012 to 17% in 2016. Most recently, the *Change the course: National report on sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian universities* (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017) nationally representative student survey showed us that 63% of women students report having experienced sexual harassment in a university settings at least once in 2016. Of these women, the survey found that the most common form of sexual harassment experienced was inappropriate staring or leering that made them feel intimidated (40%) (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017). Although it is not clear why a larger proportion of students report having experienced sexual harassment than women in the general population, this disparity could be attributed to measurement and terminological variation. At the same time, the researchers' method to reach the sample populations could account for variances. Further empirical investigation could help to shed light on these differences.

Experiences of sexual harassment can negatively affect women's lives; however, the majority of incidents are not reported. The Australian Human Rights Commission (2017) found that 95% of women students who were sexually harassed in a university setting did not make a formal report or complaint. Indeed, the project (The Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017: 144) noted that some students did not report sexual harassment because the commonality of the behaviours led them to believe they were "a normal part of the college or university experience." But this is unsurprising given "[c]atcalling, leering and inappropriate comments just seem like daily and sometimes unavoidable experiences for most young women" (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017: 33). While the normality of students' experiences affected formal reporting rates, this might also suggest the survey's findings are conservative.

At this stage, it is unclear whether women's experiences of intimate intrusions facilitated via dating apps are more similar to dating abuse or sexual harassment by known or unknown men. This ambiguity highlights limitations of current conceptualisations of abuse as it exposes the fluid nature of the boundaries of relationship categories. Given this fluidity, it is likely that experiences of sexual harassment and dating violence blur and overlap. As such, I now turn to the dating violence literature, which may help to situate women's experiences in the context of mobile dating.

Dating Violence

Women's experiences of dating violence are under-studied relative to research on adult domestic violence between married and de-facto partners (Dillon, Hussain and Loxton, 2015; Ragusa, 2016). A robust body of international research on domestic violence has helped us to understand married and cohabiting women's experiences; however, the findings may not be as useful for understanding women's experiences in less-established relationships and dating contexts. While commonalities may exist, women who are not bound by the ties of marriage or cohabitation may, in fact, experience different forms of abuse (Kimmel, 2002). This is important to consider because a focus on women in married and de facto relationships may mean that some women's experiences might not be captured in studies focused on domestic violence.

Researchers who have focused their investigations on dating violence have often explored the experiences of adolescents and young people. In particular, United States based scholars have focused on women who reside on university campuses (see for example, Nabors and Jasinski, 2009), and dating violence among high school students (see for example, O'Keefe, 1997). Studies on university students' experiences have explored the association between fraternity and sorority membership (see for example, Kalof and Cargill, 1991), alcohol consumption and sexual assault in dating relationships (see for example, Boyle and Walker, 2016; Smith, White and Holland, 2003). Similarly, Australian dating violence research has focused on small samples of adolescents, with a smaller number of studies including young adults (see for example, Cale and Breckenridge, 2015; Crime Research Centre and

Donovan Research, 2001; Chung, 2005; Chung, 2007). This research shows us that understanding the beginnings of abuse within relationships is imperative. However, the small amount of studies focused on adult women's experiences indicate that studies limited to school-aged children may not reliably capture the extent of dating violence.

Despite recent media attention to the issue, there is no recent, representative, purpose-designed study of violence against women (VAW) in Australia. While dating violence remains relatively under-studied in Australia, we know that it is not uncommon. A small number of Australian studies provide information on dating violence in adult heterosexual relationships. The primary sources of data include the Women's Safety Survey (WSS) (ABS, 1996), the PSS (2005; 2012; 2016), and the Australian component of the International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS) (Mouzos and Makkai, 2004). Most recently, the PSS (ABS, 2016) found that 7.4% of women reported having experienced sexual or physical violence by a boyfriend. Older studies, however, found higher rates of dating violence for similar categories. For instance, the IVAWS (Mouzos and Makkai, 2004) showed us that 23% of women experienced physical or sexual violence by a current boyfriend during the 12 months preceding the survey. Of the women who experienced violence by a man since the age of 15, the WSS (ABS, 1996) found that 34.1% of the perpetrators were boyfriends or dates. In addition to these sources, Easteal's (1992) pioneering national research on rape and sexual assault provided some earlier insights on dating violence. Of the 2,852 surveys received (96.2% women), the study found that boyfriends or dates were the perpetrators in approximately 13% of sexual assault cases.

Similarly to Australia's sexual harassment research findings, measurement and terminological variation could help to explain statistical differences. The PSS (ABS, 2012, 2016), for example, aggregates types of violence into individual incidents, coded for the seemingly 'most serious' form of violence. Counting incidents in this way may lead to an under-reporting of intrusive behaviours in dating contexts. At the same time, given the hidden nature of violence and abuse, incidence figures are undoubtedly conservative (Easteal, 1992). Nonetheless, these research findings indicate that abuse is not limited to marital or cohabiting relationships and point to the need to further explore dating abuse. Dating apps

are an important context to investigate given that they are increasingly commonly used to initiate dating relationships. As I suggest in the following section, attitudinal support for dating abuse of women and girls is another area that merits research.

Attitudes toward Violence and Abuse against Women and Girls

Attitudes towards violence against women and girls might help us understand why women experience intrusive behaviour on dating apps. As Kelly (1988) and Stanko (1985) stressed, attitudes toward violence and abuse are central to understanding it. Studies on attitudes toward violence against women and girls (VAWG) can reveal information about the culture that is important for violence. They can also help us to understand the concurrent condemnation and prevalence of abuse by illuminating where people draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and the contexts in which those lines shift.

The primary study of attitudes toward violence against women in Australia is *Young Australians' Attitudes to Violence against Women* (Harris, Honey, Webster, Diemer and Politoff, 2015), a representatively sampled study of 1,923 young people aged between 16-24 years and 9,566 adults aged 35-64 years. The survey found that the majority of young people perceive physical forms of abuse including slapping; pushing; forced sex; threats to throw, smash objects and hurt others as VAWG (97-98%). A lower percentage of young people (82-85%) recognise harassment via phone calls, text messages, and emails as VAWG. The majority of young people (84%) agree that electronically tracking a female partner without consent is serious; however, almost half (46%) consider non-consensual electronic tracking to be acceptable in certain circumstances. These findings show us that physical abuse is more easily recognised as a form of VAWG than non-physical forms.

One conclusion that we can draw from these findings is that attitudes about what constitutes abuse and acceptable behaviour in interpersonal relationships may not be as advanced as we might assume. Interpersonal violence is accepted by a sizeable minority of young people, especially when it occurs within intimate heterosexual relationships (McCarry, 2010; Totten, 2003; Xenos and Smith, 2001). The

Young Australians' Attitudes to violence against women (Harris et al., 2015: 31) survey found that 69% of young women and 50% of young men perceive VAWG as a prevalent problem. Despite 58% of young people scoring moderate to high in the 'understanding of violence against women scale', 86% also scored moderate to high on the 'violence-supportive attitudes construct', in other words, having a high level of attitudinal support for VAWG (Harris et al., 2015: 49). These findings suggest that while most people endorse items categorising a variety of forms of abuse as violence or abusive, many also hold violence supportive attitudes. These contradictions need to be addressed in order to move past condemnation of physical violence to prevention of the whole array of gendered abuse.

Attitudes toward violence against women can affect the perpetration of violence and shape how others respond to women's victimisation (Flood and Pease, 2009). Harris et al. (2015: 35) argue that,

> Men who use violence have strong adherence to beliefs justifying and excusing violence. The support of these by people around them can make the problem worse and undermine the goals of legal and treatment interventions.

An unintended outcome of anti-violence campaigns focused on physical violence against women to ensure it is taken seriously as a crime may be that non-physical forms of abuse may be ignored or minimised (Kelly, 2012). hooks (1997: 271) argues that "[a]n over focus on forms of extreme physical violence leads to an acceptance of everyday physical abuse such as occasional hitting". Historically, public conversations about violence and abuse have often skirted around more difficult discussions of gendered patterns of disrespect, sexism, and sexual double standards in dating and other relationships. As a result, these underlying contributing factors to abuse remain largely unchallenged. This warrants considerable attention because attitudinal support towards VAWG, coupled with high rates of sexual harassment and dating violence among young people, in particular, points to the potential for dating app facilitated intimate intrusions. But the normalisation of non-physical forms of violence and abuse might suggest that these experiences are likely to be under-recognised, especially in a context where

people largely communicate online. These implications demonstrate the need for an exploration of intimate intrusions in different contexts, including dating apps.

Dating Apps

Dating apps present a modern way for users to interact facilitated by Global Positioning Systems (GPS) technology. Although mobile device facilitated dating is a relatively recent development, these apps are not the first medium to enable dating practices. Evolving from newspaper advertisements, technology has long afforded ways to interact and build relationships (Ward, 2016). The first mobile dating apps appeared in 2003, with many others emerging in 2007 and thereafter (Quiroz, 2013). Dating apps are "unique in that they are accessed primarily via mobile devices and use fine-grained location information to identify nearby users" (Blackwell, Birnholtz and Abbott, 2014: 2). Using geo-locative technology, dating apps afford connections by notifying users when a potential interest is near (Aïmeur, Brassard and Rioux, 2013), enabling immediate online introductions with other members who are in the vicinity (Brubaker, Ananny and Crawford, 2014) "at the click of a button" (Gatter and Hodkinson, 2016: 2). On this basis, dating apps present a modern way for users to create seemingly serendipitous experiences that are, in fact, facilitated by GPS technology (Li and Chen, 2010).

The popularity of dating apps is exponential, with many people now using the internet to facilitate dating relationships (Duguay, 2016). In particular, the number of young people between 18 - 24 years using dating apps has dramatically increased, with this age group being the most likely to use dating apps (Smith, 2016a). Dating app use in the United States among 18-24 year olds has increased from 5% in 2013 to 22% in 2016. Public attitudes towards using dating apps and websites have also become more positive within the last decade (David and Cambre, 2016; Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis and Sprecher, 2012). The once-pervasive stigmatisation of online dating has lessened in recent years (Gibbs, Ellison and Heino, 2006; Farvid and Aisher, 2017), leading to online dating via apps becoming an accepted and ordinary way to meet people (Masden and Edwards, 2015).

Risks Associated with Dating Apps

While dating has always carried risks ranging from abuse to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, dating apps may raise important new questions concerning user safety. Dating app research is rapidly expanding; however, there is limited research on women's experiences of intrusive interactions on dating apps. At this stage, dating app research mostly engages with questions of risks related to privacy and interpersonal safety. For instance, scholars have documented that malicious users can extract messages and details from apps (Atkinson, Mitchell, Rio and Matich, 2016; Cheung, 2014). Real-time location-sharing technology may also present new problems for dating app users. GPS technology can produce an environment for interpersonal privacy and surveillance risks (Cheung, 2014; Mason and Magnet, 2012). While location-sharing technology affords interesting features, the privacy risks of sharing this data can be problematic (Li and Chen, 2010). Because of the rise in GPS technology, "[n]ew technologies complicate how women experience violence as well as how they are able to protect themselves" (Mason and Magnet, 2012: 107). For instance, women who are fleeing dangerous relationships may be jeopardised by mobile GPS technology. Real-time location software present on social media websites and apps such as Facebook (Mason and Magnet, 2012: 108) and Tinder (Farnden, Martini and Choo, 2015) could allow abusers to track their victims (Woodlock, 2016).

Popular media reports (see for example, Banks, 2016; Buttigieg, 2017) and a small number of online dating studies (see for example, Masden and Edwards, 2015; Smith and Duggan, 2013) provide evidence of women's intrusive experiences on dating apps. Smith and Duggan (2013) surveyed 2,252 adult men and women about dating app and online dating website use in the United States. They found that 28% of online daters and dating app users felt uncomfortable or harassed by someone who contacted them through a dating website or app. Women were much more likely to report abuse, 42% of female users and 17% of male users reported such experiences. Smith's (2016b) unpublished Master's thesis examined sexual harassment on dating websites and apps and found that of 319 women and men surveyed, 92.6% reported experiencing sexual harassment while online dating. Although Smith and Duggan (2013) and Smith (2016b) did not report disaggregated numbers on the experiences of dating app and online dating website users, Tinder's domination of the dating app market and online spaces

dedicated to documenting intrusive interactions facilitated through the app (Instagram, 2018c; Thompson, 2018) suggest Tinder users may also experience these behaviours.

Discussion

By avoiding discussion of the underlying values that engender abuse, contemporary discussions on domestic violence in Australia may have given rise to an unintended outcome. An overwhelming majority of the population condemns domestic violence and sexual assault and can recognise a range of physically violent and non-consensual sexual behaviours as abusive. At the same time, significant portions of the population hold abuse-supportive attitudes. Lundgren, Heimer, Westerstrand and Kalliokoski (2001: 18) term this problem the 'normalisation of abuse'. Men's violence against girls and women occurs in the context of everyday aggression that women view as ordinary yet disturbing (Hlavka, 2014; Kearney, 2001; Kelly and Radford, 1990). While physical violence is widely condemned, men's coercive and controlling behaviour is frequently trivialised precisely because it is so common and considered part of 'normal' male conduct (Berman, McKenna, Arnold, Taylor and MacQuarrie, 2000; Ismail, Berman and Ward-Griffin, 2007). This construction effectively exonerates boys and men who commit abusive but common acts (Klein, 2006). On this basis, women may be confused about how to define men's behaviour, despite feeling threatened by it (Fileborn, 2016). The normalisation of gendered abuse is a barrier to preventing men's violence against women (McCarry and Lombard, 2016).

It is only when focusing on extreme forms of physical violence that society disconnects men's acts from 'normal' male behaviour (Kelly, 1988; Stanko, 1985). Two recent cases illustrate the ways that cultural norms engendering violence and abuse can be maintained in the face of pervasive disapproval of dating violence. First, Paul Lambert stabbed Angela Jay after their brief relationship initiated via Tinder ended (Edwards, 2016). Journalists described Lambert as a "psycho in a suit" (Sutton, 2016) and a "sadistic Tinder stalker" (Banks and Kyriacou, 2016). Although this critical incident demonstrated emerging problems related to violence when using dating apps, popular media pathologised Lambert's behaviour and avoided discussing the normalised sexual possessiveness and entitlement that provoked the crime.

Second, as mentioned above, in 2014 Gable Tostee was accused of murdering Warriena Wright after she fell 14 storeys to her death from his high-rise balcony after meeting via Tinder (Silva, 2015). Although Tostee was not labelled a 'psychopath', media coverage pathologised his actions throughout the evening and following Wright's fall. One headline read, "Chilling CCTV shows alleged Tinder murderer calmly walking away for PIZZA while his date lay dead after falling from his balcony" (Godden and Vonow, 2016). Tostee's 'abnormal' behaviour positioned the event as atypical. Despite Lambert and Tostee's alleged physical violence, pathologising them served to decontextualise their abuse from the social contexts which produced their behaviour (Stoudt, 2006).

Although physical violence is important, focusing on physical violence can distract us from cultural norms that produce abusive behaviour. As a result, more 'typical' and common incidents do not receive much critical attention (Boyle, 2017). This is problematic because

> The cultural atmosphere that says it's okay for hundreds of men to catcall any woman in a public space is part of a continuum of misogyny that drives men to brutally injure women… (Tweten 2016, 201).

As such, focusing on 'exceptional' cases of physical violence may mean that more common intimate intrusions are ignored (Vera-Gray, 2014). Despite the popular media focus on physical violence, intimate intrusions facilitated via online contexts have come to the attention of social media spaces for entertainment purposes.

Some social media spaces frame men's intrusive behaviour on dating apps as humorous. For example, the popular Instagram page Tinder Nightmares presents screen-captured messages sent between users on the app (Instagram, 2018c). As described by Huffington Post contributor Vagianos (2014), the page "reveals the most awkward (and hilarious) parts of online dating." For example, one message reads, "[t]he games [sic] called Barbie, I'll be Ken and you be the box I come in?" Another reads, "If I was a

watermelon, would you spit or swallow my seed?" (Instagram, 2018c). Following the page's popularity, Tinder Nightmares founder Elan Gale (2015) created a book of seemingly amusing messages sent between users. The book's abstract reads, "*Tinder Nightmares* is a hilarious look at some of the most epic fails of the often racy, always ridiculous, "romantic" exchanges on Tinder." In an interview with The Guardian (Parkinson, 2015), Gale said, "If I don't find something funny I won't post it".

Women have also used humour to resist online abuse and highlight its absurdity. Spaces dedicated to women's resistance, what Shaw (2016) terms feminist discursive activism, include the Bye Felipe Instagram page, which chronicles violent messages sent between users on dating apps to "call out dudes who turn hostile when rejected or ignored" (Instagram, 2018a). Similarly, Anna Gensler's Instagram page 'Instagranniepants' offers her 45,000 followers unflattering nude caricatures of the men who have harassed her on dating apps (Instagram, 2018b; Vitis and Gilmour, 2016). Giving a voice to women, while simultaneously connecting through laughter, online resistance practices can challenge men's sexism (Vitis and Gilmour 2016). Although Tinder Nightmares does not explicitly function in this way, Hess and Flores (2016: 15) argue that "[b]y outing the performance of toxic masculinity, Tinder Nightmares provides women with a form of discursive agency through the showcasing of witty replies." It is important to note that the Tinder Nightmares uploads are de-identified, which means we do not know who sent, received, and finally submitted the screen-captured conversations. However, most of the messages the Instagram displays appear to have been sent by men to women (Thompson, 2018). While submitters may consider the act a form of justice, we do not know the impact of the page on its followers the extent to which Tinder Nightmares challenges abusive behaviour requires further investigation. Engaging with Tinder Nightmares' followers and contributors to determine how they interpret the interactions could help to shed light on these dynamics.

While humour might be an effective way to resist online abuse, it may also trivialise women's experiences and normalise men's intrusive behaviour. Treating abuse on Tinder as humorous may misrepresent women's lived experiences. Joking about abuse in the context of mobile dating may contribute to a culture that supports abuse and ultimately violence against women (Jane, 2017).

Conclusion

In summary, dating apps have become an important cultural context for intimate relationships. Research indicates that sexual harassment and dating violence are common. While physical violence is largely recognised as abusive, young peoples' attitudinal acceptance of non-physical abuse suggests that intimate intrusions facilitated via dating apps may be misconstrued. Commonplace intrusive behaviour coupled with social media users' framing of intimate intrusions as funny may normalise abuse on dating apps. Because there may be significant differences in affordances and user behaviour, we also need further research on other platforms to better understand women's experiences in diverse mobile dating contexts.

A Research Agenda for Understanding Women's Experiences of Intimate Intrusions on Dating Apps

To yield meaningful policy and programs, it is imperative that we work to better understand women's experiences of intimate intrusions on dating apps. I propose a theoretically informed research agenda on intimate intrusions in the context of dating apps. The continuum of sexual violence points to a research agenda that is focused on women's lived experiences and does not make assumptions about what the experiences are, what they mean to women, how they affect women, or how they respond. Significantly, the continuum of sexual violence legitimates the harms of non-physical forms of online abuse. Given that our current understanding of intimate intrusions on Tinder and other dating apps primarily stems from anecdotal accounts in popular and social media, empirical investigation will allow researchers to shed light on this area.

While the extant research provides a useful foundation, addressing known gaps and limitations could improve our understanding of this social problem. Four key areas to investigate in the future include: what are women's experiences of intimate intrusions when using dating apps? How do women understand these experiences? What is their impact? What do women do in response? How do platforms

address the problem of online abuse? Investigating these questions could help us to draw some conclusions about the culture and architecture that engender online abuse. Further research could also investigate whether intimate intrusions are getting worse or more common in the ‘private’ online context of dating apps. This would help to ascertain whether Kelly’s (1988) call for research on the continuum of abuse is still relevant, with enduring implications for prevention.

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