Misogynist content exposé pages on Instagram: Five types of shamings, moderators and audience members

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Abstract:
The aim of this article is to explore the audience and moderator types on Instagram's misogynist content exposé pages (MCEPs) - where people share and shame screenshots depicting gendered online hate, harassment, and men's sexual entitlement. We have framed our study with concepts like refracted publics, imagined audiences, and shaming as a social practice, and we set out to look for communicative shaming practices beyond the theoretically well-established reintegrative/disintegrative distinction. Analysis of qualitative online interviews with the moderators of MCEPs (n = 6), combined with both qualitative and quantitative content analysis of the posts' captions (n = 100) and comments (n = 1325) helps us understand the mechanisms, types, and aims of online shamings and dive deeper into understanding the different roles people take in these communicative practices.

Results of this study present five main types of shamings and the linked moderator and audience types: pedagogic shaming (moderators as Educators, audiences as Instructors), denunciatory shaming (Judges and Angry Mobbers), recreational shaming (Entertainers and Jokesters), participative shaming (Community Builders and Support Squadders) and reflective shaming (Looking Glasses and Mirrors). Theoretical types can be combined and modified in practice, based on the strategies the moderators are using, aims of communication, and specific constellations of audiences.

Keywords: misogyny, gendered online hate, digilantism, online sexual harassment, Instagram, online shaming, audiences, moderators

Introduction

A screenshot of a strange man saying 'You look so pretty' to Jessica who thanks him for the compliment. The man continues by typing a seemingly sweet proposal about cuddling

tonight. Jessica rejects this offer by saying that she has a boyfriend and is not interested in such connections. The next screenshot depicts the conversation escalating to something very different. The guy, not satisfied with the answer, replies with all caps 'GO FUCK YOURSELF' and, one hour later, adds 'YOU ARE A WHORE'.

Such encounters are part of business-as-usual to women who use dating apps, social media, or go online, in general. Some have argued that violent e-bile, misogynistic hostility, and heavily gendered vitriol have become *lingua franca* in most online spaces (Jane 2014; Jane 2016). E-bile and gendered vitriol denote 'extravagant invective, the sexualized threats of violence, and the recreational nastiness that have come to constitute a dominant tenor of Internet discourse' (Jane, 2014), a variety of denunciatory forms that share signal features. Very often, the hostility is directed specifically at women and such misogynist behavior in online spaces has been previously studied in online games (Salter & Blodgett, 2012), Twitter (Hardaker & McGlashan, 2016), news comment sections (García-Favaro & Gill, 2016) and 'lad' social media accounts like UniLad (Phipps & Young, 2015), among other environments. 'Despite the worsening nature of the problem, platform managers, policy makers, and police have, for the most part, failed to adequately respond' and some women have turned to 'a spectrum of do-it-yourself attempts to secure justice online' (Jane, 2017a: 2-3).

This article will focus on some such attempts in digital spaces where misogynist content, typically in the form of online gendered hate (Smith, 2019a) is exposed and shamed, narrowing it down to Instagram as a platform. The pages and accounts we focus on, display and discuss instances where women have had disturbing online conversations with men, often on dating apps. The expose-and-shame movement is obviously larger than Instagram and misogynist men, but this specific platform is arguably the most visible and dominant (Titlow, 2016; Ritschel, 2018). So far, the academic literature has described and explored specific Instagram accounts (e.g. ByeFelipe, Tinder Nightmares) that counter the performances of toxic masculinity (Hess & Flores, 2018; Shaw, 2016; Thompson, 2018). Among other things, it means that we do not yet have a specific agreed-upon term for these kinds of publics. Some have referred to them as spaces for feminist discursive activism through the highlighting of oppressive discourses in online dating (Shaw, 2016), others described them as 'screen-grabbed messages of sexist abuse and harassment women have received from men' (Thompson, 2018) or spaces of 'feminist digilantism' (Jane, 2017a). In order to be concise and unequivocal, we will refer to such online spaces as misogynist content exposé pages (MCEPs). It is important to note that these pages usually do not focus on the more 'serious' technology-facilitated sexual violence (Henry & Powell, 2015) like virtual rape, revenge porn or death threats. MCEPs usually share and shame unsolicited dick pics, poorly-constructed flirtatious advances and insults that follow rejections. But even more importantly, though – such behavior should not be brushed off as harmless banter and simple misunderstandings, as we tend to 'underestimate the harm that can come from the cumulative impact of repeated exposure to the "less serious" forms of online gendered hate' (Smith, 2019a: 291).

MCEPs are also a great example of the expansion and normalization of online shaming as a social practice, defined here as different forms of (semi)public cross-platform condemnation of people and their actions by mass online audiences (Murumaa-Mengel & Lott, forthcoming; Detel & Petley, 2013; Solove, 2007). Online shamings can be analyzed as combinations of reintegrative (shame-correct-forgive) and disintegrative (shame-stigmatize-expel) sanctioning practices that are aimed at keeping or restructuring social order (Braithwaite, 1989). Even if the shamed men are not participating in these spaces, the shamers are 'making a visible stand and saying "this is unacceptable"' (Smith, 2019a: 299) to all others who are looking. Additionally, contemporary networked publics (boyd, 2014), sousveillance (Bossewitch & Sinnreich, 2012) and the increasing efficiency of search engines and social networks make it more and more likely that offenders will become aware of their wrongdoings being under discussion and/or mockery.

The aim of this article is to explore the misogynist exposé pages that share and shame screenshots depicting harassment and men's sexual entitlement. Analysis of online interviews (n = 6) with the creators or moderators of Instagram MCEPs and content analysis of the posts' captions (n = 100) and comments (n = 1325) help us to look beyond descriptions of the content of MCEPs and understand the broader mechanisms and motivations of online shamings and the different roles that people take in these communicative practices. As a result of our mixed-methods approach, we can describe the main approaches of moderating and community-building, as well as participating and 'audiencing', laying the foundation for a useful self-reflexivity or analysis tool for various actors in online spaces. But first, a quick overview of the theoretical-empirical foundation, to ground and contextualize our study.

Online Gendered Hate and Sexual Harassment

MCEPs under scrutiny in this article usually share screenshots of online gendered hate (Smith, 2019b), typically set in the context of men sexually harassing women and girls on various online platforms. Online gendered hate denotes 'abusive, threatening or upsetting acts or comments which are often sexual, violent, or gendered in content, and which target women in [public] online spaces' (Smith, 2019b: 261). A big part of online gendered hate revolves around sexual harassment – offensive and threatening sexual messages, gender-humiliating comments, and sexual jokes that are being sent mostly on social media (Barak, 2005) – frequently directed against women. Still, it is important to note that sexism is intersectional – compounded with racism, homophobia, ableism, and all other forms of hate (Shaw, 2014). Different forms of online gendered hate and sexual harassment may include, for example, gender-based hate speech, name-calling, unwanted sexting, distribution of pornography, cyberbullying, and revenge porn – all of which can cause as much psychological and physical harm to a victim as offline violence (Smith, 2019b; Henry & Powell, 2015; Paasonen, Jarrett & Light, 2019). Routinized and normalized sexual harassment of adult women, in particular, has been largely overlooked by authorities and

the technology industry (Salter, 2018: 31), or 'monumentally inadequate' (Jane, 2016: 285), often implied that it is the cost of women being online.

One specific example of such routinely trivialized and downplayed harassment is the universally recognizable dick pic genre, also an important part of MCEPs. Dick pics have entered social media through dating and hookup apps, as well as the diverse back channels afforded by personal messaging tools (Paasonen, Jarrett & Light, 2019: 78). In the dick pic genre, there are broadly two categories – the expected picture and the unsolicited one (Tiidenberg & van der Nagel, 2020). The unsolicited dick pics are categorized as sexual harassment (Vitis & Gilmour, 2017) or technology-facilitated gendered abuse (Smith, 2019b) and men may send them from frustration, to seek attention, from a rush of adrenaline, or they might be confused about the unwritten rules on social media (Tiidenberg & van der Nagel, 2020: 101). The experience of receiving unsolicited pictures can be defined as invasive, disturbing, and humiliating – as diminishing women's sense of sexual agency (Paasonen, Jarrett & Light, 2019: 93). Jane (2014) has noted that e-bile producers are rarely reprimanded for engaging in insensitivity or cruelty, while recipients and outside observers are frequently chastised as hypersensitive or humorless and the same goes for dick pics.

Essentially, it is a power struggle of a socially constructed binary and the oppositely gendered world where masculine men must obey rigid traditional power structures, often scaffolding harassment and violence (Phipps & Young, 2015). Laura Thompson (2018) found in her research that men who are faced with rejection, attempt to shame women to (re)position femininity as subordinate to masculinity. For example, they will use insults about women's beauty to reduce their value in the 'marketplace'. Thompson (2018) conducted a discourse analysis on MCPEs content, concluding that posts are mostly themed in two categories: 'not hot enough' discourse and 'missing consent' discourse which both reveal logic in which a woman's constructed 'worth' resides in her beauty and sexual property. According to traditional gender norms, a man is perceived to have more power in choosing a partner, but on online dating sites and apps women get to choose and control the search for potential partners, so harassment can create new forms of gender discipline. The absurd offenses and threats can be seen as a response to losing control in the face of shifting gender-power relations (Thompson, 2018). Previous research reveals toxic masculinity through hypersexual patterns of behavior, such as failed unpleasant first pick-up lines, hypersexual declarations, and objectification of women (Hess & Flores, 2018; Shaw 2016; Thompson, 2018).

It is necessary to emphasize that alongside all the negative aspects, social media can empower silenced and marginalized voices, drawing attention to social struggles more effectively than the political systems (campaigns like #MeToo, #SayHerName or #TimesUp) because it allows engagement by previously excluded people, and justice that bypasses formal systems (Sassen, 2002; Vitis & Gilmour, 2017). In other words, women can discursively refute a marginalized victim position but also routinized sexism and misogyny, using online platforms to call out offenders, congregate and form communities, contesting the existing norms, and restructuring social order (Abraham, 2013). Some Instagram pages

with wider audiences (@byefelipe, @tindernightmares) have expanded into larger movements - they include websites, podcasts, ebooks, and petitions to implement anti-harassment policies (byefelipe.com, n.d., Gale, 2017). These kinds of Instagram pages help to expose the privately experienced harassment and misogyny online (Hess & Flores, 2018; Shaw, 2016) and provide women with a resource to draw attention to sexism happening online through witty takedowns and derisive laughter (Shaw, 2016; Hess & Flores, 2018). Tomlinson (2010) calls the collecting and sharing of one type of examples an 'intensification of the internet' where similar discursive patterns are demonstrated. Frances Shaw (2016) sees MCEPs as examples of feminist discursive activism that draw attention to online dating, using public shaming as a political strategy. She adds that such Instagram pages are like a safe space for the feminist online community, where they can strengthen their arguments and feel their collective power.

(Imagined) Online Publics and Audiences

First, MCEPs can be viewed as a formation of a particular 'intimate publics' (Berlant, 2008), as the content of these pages is often connected to the traditional private and intimate sphere of one's body (e.g. dick pics) and sometimes sincere failed romantic or sexual advances. Sexuality, intimacy, and romantic spheres have historically been understood as deeply private, but even more importantly, due to the blurred boundaries between the public and private spheres and a sense of shared values and experiences, an imagined community (Berlant, 2008) is formed. By 'intimate publics', a space of mediation in which the private is refracted through the public is meant, and for its members, it is a place of recognition and reflection (Berlant, 2008).

Secondly, MCEPs are also a great example of networked publics (boyd, 2010), described as spaces that are constructed through networked technologies that structurally support and normalize the persistence, visibility, spreadability, and searchability of information (boyd, 2010), nudging us toward a state of mutual surveillance (Fulton & Kibby, 2017). In other words, information online can be difficult to delete, easily found via search engines, copied endlessly, potentially becoming visible to large audiences, and laying the foundation for mass online shamings.

And thirdly, Crystal Abidin (2021) suggests a companion framework to boyd's (2010): refracted publics which are characterized by conditions of transience, discoverability, decodability, and silosociality with impact audiences and weaponized contexts. MCEPs fit that framework because much of the content is ephemeral (Instagram Stories); to find them, one has to know where to look or just 'stumble upon them'; and a strong sense of community, within-group references, and strongly encoded language and signs are being used.

Narrowing it down to conceptualizations of audiences: the overall communicative mode of contemporary online communication is 'conversation', where the strict separation of sender and receiver is blurred (Schmidt, 2014). Although 'ordinary' audience members

can be truly active participants of these shared spaces (sending in material, commenting, amplifying and interpreting the content by sharing and tagging), moderators are powerful agents in these spaces, gatekeepers that dictate or nudge the content and behavior in their groups and on their pages. Moderators are expected to guard the gates of their audience reactions, carefully choosing valid opinions with the danger of either censoring genuine speech or letting potentially damaging content slip through (Frischlich, Boberg & Quandt, 2019). On Instagram, the page creator is also the moderator who decides the aim of the page and the content that is uploaded. Still, underlying potential of a dialogue and active participation has become the norm on social media, meaning content is created with perceived ideal audiences who are 'intellectually engaged with the text, rather than an intervention in a text' (Tincknell & Raghuram, 2002: 200).

In such settings, 'audiencing' – the public performance of belonging to the distributed audience for a shared (media) event/scene (Highfield, Harrington & Bruns, 2013) or 'audiencehood' – is a relationship that binds cultural forms and audiences, a sensibility (Hermes, 2009), and it is oftentimes supreme to the content itself. In the case of MCEPs, the audience members can participate in contributing the content, and the moderators become part of the audience when participating in the discussions and networking with other MCEPs – all potentially strengthening the perceived bond of shared audiencehood. Active and reflective audiencehood (Corbette & Wessels, 2017) develops by many different processes and practices, e.g. exploring and selecting content, interpretations that people make and act on, experiences, and people's reflections on them.

Constructing and perceiving the online contexts and communities of practices 'correctly' can be a tricky task, as 'the social cues that would normally inform the recipient(s) about the intentions of the sender are missing and thus the meanings of a statement multiply, escaping the control of the author' (Laineste, 2013: 30). So we are left to imagine our audiences – whether it be from the perspective of the moderator of such spaces or from the perspective of people 'audiencing'. The notion of the imagined audience as a term for mental conceptualizations of the people we are in communication with, has been in use already for over a century, but it has more importance than ever in online settings (Murumaa-Mengel, 2017; Litt, 2012). Users are very attentive and often 'take cues from the social environment to imagine the community' (boyd, 2007: 131) but this imagined community more often than not differs from the actual audience, as social media environments host a great variety of individuals. We tend to model ideal audiences in our heads, mirror images of ourselves (Marwick & boyd, 2011), and perfect recipients of our messages and information, as they share our values and have the right interpretative lens (boyd, 2014). 'Nightmare audiences' (Murumaa-Mengel, 2017; Marwick & boyd, 2011) are the opposites, usually representing different values, sense of humor, spheres of life, or have some control over a person. For example, abuser's aim may be controlling and intimidation of (specific) women through use of technology (Smith, 2019b) but they could find, unexpectedly, the actualized nightmare recipients of their messages to be masses of angry feminists, seeking 'street justice' (Jane, 2016). Or, from a different perspective, a member of

MCEP's community of practice may post content that is aimed at their imagined ideal audiences (e.g. sharing same sense of humor), when actualized audience members turn into nightmare ones, missing the joke and criticizing the original poster.

Digilantism and Shaming as a Social Practice

Returning to online gendered hate and the fact that there is serious lack of institutional solutions – according to Jane (2017a) this is the reason why many contemporary feminist activists are pushing back via digital vigilantism or 'digilantism' – DIY justice online, often involving public shaming. Shame is a social emotion and shaming a social practice (Braithwaite, 1989; de Vries, 2015). Cultural norms for accusation depend on the context - time, place, and community norms are what determine the shaming and accusation (Scambler, 2019). Usually, two types of shaming are distinguished - reintegrative and disintegrative (Braithwaite, 1989: 55). Reintegrative shaming means that community disapproval of certain behavior will be followed by gestures of reacceptance. Attention and focus is usually on the behavior, not the person. Disintegrative shaming or stigmatization divides the community and the violators are despised, cast out of the group or society, deemed unfit as a whole person, not just the behavior. So, we could argue that when MCEPs are anonymizing the cases of online gendered hate and sexual harassment, they are engaging in reintegrative shaming, thus serving mainly awareness raising purposes (Jane, 2017a). And when attackers are identified, the shaming falls under the category of disintegrative by default.

One might think being made an outcast is far worse than active large-scale sanctioning by the community (and then forgiveness). Surprisingly, Braithwaite's theory counters this view, as shame is more deterring when it is done by persons who are important to us. That is probably why some of the most notable digilantism cases have revolved around alerting important others of the offenders (e.g. mothers, see in depth analysis in Jane, 2016). When the shamed become outcasts, they can reject the rejectors and the shame no longer matters (Braithwaite, 1989). Power over someone is the basis of stigma and accusation - without it, it is impossible to stigmatize or blame people (Scambler, 2019).

A positive aspect of shaming could be its potential to discipline and transform the person's deviant behavior but it runs the risk of counterproductivity when it turns into stigmatization (Braithwaite, 1989). Shaming can be devastating in its reverberation especially when gaining viral circulation. Punishment is then permanent and often disproportionate to the actions (Paasonen, Jarrett & Light, 2019). As Frances Shaw (2016: 2) notes, online mass shaming can result in enjoyment of the practice of shaming itself and reinforce or perpetuate some of the harms of harassment by encouraging victim-blaming and shame.

Similarly, Emma A. Jane (2016: 290) has pointed to the risks and destructive potential of digilantism and crowd-sourced justice online that 'can result in scapegoating,

and in e-bile producers being attacked via methods that are similar – or worse – than those being objected to in the first instance". Because in attention economy's war over our eyeballs (Abidin, 2014), there is a degree of competitiveness to online gendered hate and subsequent feminist digilantism. In addition, any act of digilantism can put activists at risk, have uncertain results and 'strengthen extrajudicial cultures online, whereas what the problems of cyber-harassment and cyber-hate urgently require are institutional remedies' (Jane, 2016: 292), thus arguing that digilantism should be contextualized as a diagnostic, not a solution (Jane, 2017a).

Braithwaite's reintegrative and disintegrative shamings are very broad categories that include a wide array of motivations and practices within them. For example, Murumaa-Mengel and Lott (forthcoming) have proposed a distinguishable sub-category - recreational shaming and sanctioning - which is a humor-based playful collective shaming that often takes place via online platforms, seemingly just for the sake of fun and shaming, motivated mainly by social belonging needs and entertainment gratification. This type of shaming, balancing somewhere in between 'serious shaming' (condemnation) and 'just for laughs', has become embedded in people's media uses, normalized, and internalized as forms of accepted social practices and structures (Murumaa-Mengel & Lott, forthcoming). Humor can take some of the seriousness away from these messages, creating a sense of safety for the people participating in shaming practices (Tweten, 2016; Rentschler & Thrift, 2015). Laura Vitis and Fairleigh Gilmour (2017) have talked about humor's transformative potential – comic takes and rituals, shining a light on hegemonic assumptions generate sense of community across difference through a shared 'getting' of the social, cultural and political context. On the other hand, humorous takes on a gendered social issue can still have serious consequences, as female vigilantes risk being dangerously attacked themselves (Jane, 2016). There is even a popular quote, attributed to writer Margaret Atwood, stressing the fear of mockery: 'Men are afraid that women will laugh at them. Women are afraid that men will kill them.'

In this article, we want to explore the different practices and aims of online shamings further, focusing on MCEPs on Instagram and ask the following main research question: What types of online shamings take place on MCEPs? We will reach this goal by exploring the communicative patterns on MCEPs content, audience's and moderators' reactions and comments; and by interviewing the moderators to understand their perceptions about the problem of online gendered hare and sexual harassment, communities and publics they moderate, and descriptions of their roles.

Methods and Data

In order to understand the nature of these Instagram accounts both, from the perspective of moderators and the audiences, we designed a two-phase mixed-method study, including interviews with the moderators and content analysis on the MCEPs. Research ethics-wise, we modelled our approach after existing scholarly work on similar topics and research sites

(Shaw, 2016; Hess & Flores, 2018; García-Favaro & Gill, 2016; Thompson, 2018). We have informed consent of the interviewed moderators and their permission to analyse the MCEP's content, using mainly quantitative approach, but obtaining the informed consent of thousands of audience members of MCEPs was not possible, nor reasonable. So we refrain from using very specific and recognizable examples of content; we quote users without attribution, as Instagram's usernames are easily searchable; and we did not intrude carefully guarded semi-private online spaces but rather focused on MCEPs that were open for wider publics. All the captions and comments illustrating the examples are presented without hashtags for keeping anonymity and blurring what could be called the 'back traceability vectors' as much as we can. We were also aware of the potential harms that may rise from engaging with often-toxic content and have institutional support, should they actualize.

Interviews with the Moderators

In 2019, we contacted over 60 pages that focus on sharing screenshots of online harassment of women carried out by men, via their direct messages where we explained the study and asked for an interview. We chose interviews as a method of qualitative approach because it helps to understand interactions, processes, lived experiences, and belief systems of the participants (O'Leary, 2017: 272). Purposive sample allowed for the selection of specific people to illustrate the cases the study is interested in (Silverman, 2013). In addition, it is useful when the research topic corresponds to a limited number of data sources needed to make sense of the phenomenon (Robinson, 2014: 32). We found the groups from existing literature (Hess & Flores, 2018; Shaw, 2016; Thompson, 2018) and keyword-based searching (popular dating platforms) but also found some groups from news coverage about online harassment of 'average' women online (not specifically gamers, for example). After finding the initial pages, we 'snowballed' on to the next pages, suggested by the platform based on similar content recognition.

Most of those we reached out to, did not answer, as was expected. We asked for qualitative synchronous video interviews, which can be uncomfortable for moderators who avoid attention to their personal self, their role, experiences, and attitudes, instead of focusing on the content. Additionally, it is likely that pages with a large following receive an abundance of direct messages on a daily basis, and our drafting attempts got lost in the mass of messages. Nevertheless, we received some positive answers from five different pages and subsequently conducted six in-depth online interviews (one page was represented by two moderators, separate interviews). The interviews took place in 2019-2021, the longest interview lasted 80 minutes and the shortest for 40 minutes.

The pages represented by their moderators in this study are either English or Estonian language-based, active and have shared something within the previous 30 days, and have at least a thousand followers. Participants form a rather heterogeneous group: although most of the interviewees identified as female (one male - Moderator 1), they were

from different age groups and ethnicities. In order to protect their identities, we will refer to them as Moderator 1, Moderator 2, etc. and we will refer to the pages as Page 1, Page 2 etc.

The pages had from 1000 to 200 000 followers and had existed between two to five years. Content varies - three of the pages share only the moderators' own experiences on dating apps while two accounts rely on submissions from their followers. Most of the pages share other types of content as well besides screenshots of conversations (e.g. relatable memes, profile descriptions of men in dating apps) and use some method of anonymizing the people on the screenshots (blurring their faces and hiding names). Only Page 5 has decided to keep the names visible and cross out only the eyes of the men portrayed in the pictures, leaving the rest of the face and body visible.

To understand the perspective of the moderators, we used a qualitative approach and conducted six semi-structured interviews. The advantage of an inductive qualitative approach can be that new, unexpected data may emerge (O'Leary, 2017) but we also made use of existing scholarly knowledge in the planning. Most of the interviews were planned and conducted by the second author as online synchronous interviews, with the exception of one Estonian interviewee who was interviewed offline, face to face, as it was the participant's request.

Content Analysis of the Posts and Comments

We decided to combine the interviews with standardized content analysis (Rössler, 2002; Krippendorff, 1980) of the same five MCEPs whose moderators were interviewed, analyzing the MCEP's posts' captions and comments. Additionally, we decided to conduct qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) on the same material, to look beyond numbers.

The content on the pages was public and did not require special access. One main criterion was set - the post had to be a screenshot of a conversation between a man and a woman as the MCEPs in the sample publish misogynist behavior conducted by men towards women. To achieve a broad and systematized sample of the posts on those MCEPs, we constructed an 'increasing-decreasing skip strategy', a term we use for an approach where starting from the most recent post, the researcher skips one, then two, then three, and so forth, until up to ten posts and then decreasingly back to one. Systematic sampling is favored when texts stem from regularly appearing publications and using a constant helps to avoid cyclic regularities (Krippendorff, 1980: 115). We ended up with a sample ranging from November 2018 to March 2021, which included the captions of 100 posts on five MCEPs with attached comments (n = 1325). Regardless of the fact that the content and comments are public, we have decided to anonymize the data, in compliance with Association of Internet Researchers' Ethical Guidelines (franzke et al. 2020).

For data analysis, we combined quantitative and qualitative methods. The first phase of standardized content analysis is to construct a coding instrument, in our study divided into two types of units – first, analyzing the caption of the post (n = 100) and statistics of

that post and secondly, the comments (n = 1325). The coding instrument was developed in two iterations where it was perfected by the study's second author after a test-coding.

We specified the quantitative results by combining data analysis with techniques from qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in MAXQDA, leading us to find how a topic is talked or written about and to making sense of those commonalities. Typologies were constructed after the initial immersion – '"repeated reading" of the data, and reading the data in an active way' (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 16) – and (dominantly) inductive coding had shaped into broader categories for both, interview and content analysis data. We first noticed 'recreational shaming' as a distinctive type next to deductively coded pedagogical (originally coded as 'reintegrative') and denunciatory (initially 'disintegrative') shamings. As we compared each new part of the text to previously coded ones, trying to find common ground where possible, we started noticing that some practices do not fit into the three existing super-categories but need new topic categories (that eventually evolved into shaming types). We recoded the texts several times, trying to find central axes, and then complimenting the axially coded text with keyword-based coding and finally, selective deductive coding. So what began as a well-educated hunch, an in-vivo code of 'validation' ended up as 'reflective shaming' and 'my people' as 'participatory shaming'.

Results and Discussion

All of the interviewed MCEP moderators expressed that they are not short of images, but rather find it difficult and exhausting to work through all the potential posts, as their inboxes are full of submissions sent by the followers and their own phones contain thousands of screenshots waiting to be published. Therefore, intimate publics (Berlant, 2008) are flourishing and what is meant for private becomes public for a community. Moderators are active gatekeeper-participants in the intensification (Tomlinson, 2010) practices, using and amplifying material that falls into categories of misogynist, creepy, sexual, objectifying content or screenshots that 'make you burst out laughing' – a form of networked laughter (Rentschler & Thrift, 2015).

Moderators may have different aims, styles, and practices in running their MCEPs, making use of various strategies for audience engagement, building reciprocal 'communicative intimacies' (Abidin, 2015) with their audiences. How they do it exactly can vary, and next, we will describe the five main types of shamings (pedagogic, denunciatory, recreational, participative and reflective) and linked moderator/audience member types. Obviously, all of these types are to some degree analytical constructions, meaning that in real life, a person can embody different types in various situations, engaging in different practices, fluidly moving from one type and role to another.

Pedagogic Shaming: Educators and Instructors

Most interviewees said that the aim of the pages is mainly to educate men and draw attention to the problems going on in the online dating/communication field. The main goal for an **Educator-type** moderator is to demonstrate online gendered hate as a real problem. Educators expressed that in their ideal audiences (Marwick & boyd, 2011) they see people who are open-minded and willing to learn about the problem and to notice and change unacceptable behavior:

> Moderator 6: So that maybe some people will look back on their own conversations and realize that maybe they shouldn't have written like this. I have been contacted by many men who have said that: "When I was a 14-year-old, I was a retard and I also wrote some inappropriate things to women".

Interviewed moderators often expressed a core belief that behaviors can be corrected if people are aware of the realness of these stories, of a systematic problem existing. According to Jane (2016) talking publicly about such negative experiences and republishing gendered hate falls under 'consciousness raising', activism that in her opinion should continue. Many of the respondents said the aim is not to shame anyone on purpose and not to prescribe in a demanding way how to behave, rather nudge the deviants towards the 'right path':

> Moderator 5: I don't want to shame anybody, which I know seems hypocritical because..., I genuinely want people to just do better. That's it. That's all I ever want.

Educator-type moderators also hope to help and inspire women who get similar messages in understanding possible responses and the principle of not staying engaged and polite in an abusive situation. Similar messages are reinforced by **Instructor-type** audience members, offering advice or criticism (12% of all comments, e.g. 'Bruh, block him and the guy won't bother you anymore'; 'I don't want to criticize the ignorance of this girl, but you don't add strangers to your friends list'). Instructor-type audiences are involved in a balancing act in many ways, as there is a thin line between offering sincere advice and engaging in shaming/blaming of the victim:

> Moderator 6: The kind of people who write under every post: "Why didn't you block him?". But I did not. In the same way that you don't immediately tell a person on the street to fuck off when they want to ask something from you.

Pedagogic approaches and motivations fit the framework of reintegrative shaming (Braithwaite, 1989). Community is oriented towards disapproving, disciplining, and educating, and does that by posting and ridiculing or condemning certain behavior, sometimes (but more often not!) turning into reintegrative approaches – if offenders and 'wrongdoers' (e.g. in the comments) are remorseful, signs of reacceptance can follow in the form of supportive comments and reactions.

Educators want to avoid disintegrative shaming and 'harsher' name-and-shame type of content and communication, which is why they delete certain comments where offenders' identities are speculated on and potential for doxxing and 'going real-life' is imminent. In addition to deleting problematic comments, Educator-type approaches entail replies and interaction with the commenters, trying to explain why the comment is not appropriate to the uneducated:

> Moderator 4: I do not think I have actually really deleted very many. If it is something that I can shut them down, like in a reply and then I will do it. Because it is usually just like a stupid man who does not know how to interact with women. I do not see anything wrong with this.

Gender is obviously a central theme when it comes to MCEPs, as content focuses mainly on gendered hate, authored by men and directed towards women. All of the moderators have an overview of their followers and audiences of their pages - whether via Instagram account statistics or day-to-day analysis and interaction with the commenting members of the audience. Our sample's MCEPs' followers are predominantly women in the same age group as the moderators, meaning usually 25+ years old, or young adulthood (Erikson, 1994), forming the basis of 'ideal audiences' (Marwick & boyd, 2011) and therefore also the brighter view of the 'imagined audiences' (Litt, 2012; Murumaa-Mengel 2017) as they use cues from the platform statistics and a large portion of interactions in the comment section.

Denunciatory Shaming: Judges and Angry Mobbers

Denunciatory shaming is usually not supported by the interviewed moderators - they are inclined to follow Instagram's community standards and socio-legal frameworks that try to prevent mass online shamings without proof:

> Moderator 1: I have had to delete a couple of the girls' comments because they would recognize some of the men…. But that is defamation because you cannot accuse someone of harassment by name unless you have made a statement to the police and he has been found guilty.

When looking past the potentially socially desirable answers, we can notice that **Judge-type** of moderators would probably like to engage in more drastic shamings, as they were critical towards Instagram's policies. Platform's rules can result in MCEPs themselves being expelled

and de-platformed. Instagram was described to be removing posts, deleting the accounts completely, or shadowbanning them (denoting the platform blocking a user or their content from the audience so posts will not show up in news feeds, but the moderator staying unaware of the ban). Judge-type moderators take offense when their agency and right to decide is removed, especially when considering how many decisions and value judgments they have to make when selecting content. The moderators often claimed to use their 'moral compass' when posting – try to avoid screenshots of clearly mentally ill people, widows, or older men who sincerely do not understand the internet culture and are still learning how to use dating apps and lack digital literacies. They also avoid posting conversations that portray arguing between teenage friends or ex-partners to keep the focus of the page. Sensitive topics that are not published and thus left out of communicative practices are harassment and pedophilia cases towards minors. One page directly sends these screenshots with the consent of the minor to the police.

> Moderator 1: We have around ten posts where we have suspected men of pedophilia and have given them to the police. If we see by the user profile picture that she is very young, then we will ask her age just in case and if she says she was a minor, those screenshots do not actually go up. It is already possibly a criminal case and we just pass them on to the police.

If we think in terms of shaming, then Judges are often geared towards protecting the victims and expelling the offenders, i.e. disintegrative shaming - to punish, mark, and expel offenders from communities, even sometimes to name-and-shame and leave permanent digital footprints (like Page 5 does with their content that is not anonymized). For Judge-type moderators, the term digilantes (Jane, 2017a) could be also used since they actively and vocally stand up for justice. Conventional legal remedies are perceived as not keeping up with the pace of digital platforms (Jane, 2016), so fight-responses (Jane, 2017b) might escalate into 'recreational nastiness' (Jane, 2014) that raises question of whether feminist activists can claim to inhabit the ethical high ground if they use the rhetorical tools and tactics deployed by their attackers (Jane, 2017a).

Similar attitudes and tones can be perceived in audience members' comments – **Angry Mobbers** (19% of all comments). For example: 'Dont be shy, drop the name 🙂', urging the disclosure of the offenders' identity. Or another: 'I threw up in my mouth at the "petite muses" bit and then it got all fucking racist and I was like NO. GTFO'. The abbreviation GTFO (Get The Fuck Out) itself suggests an undertone of disintegrative shaming, shunning from 'our space' but serves also as a norm-enforcer, a precautionary 'if you behave similarly, repercussions will follow'.

Sometimes an alternative Angry (Misogynistic) Mobber appears – verbally attacking other audience members or moderators, especially when the latter are posting their own content, not mediating others' experiences. These types of commentators can be seen as nightmare audiences (Murumaa-Mengel, 2017; Marwick & boyd, 2011) because the

moderators initially do not expect such reactions and are not looking towards them in the comment section. This is also an example of refracted publics (Abidin, 2021) because the moderators have fostered silosociality and suddenly, unexpected and unimagined members of the audience appear. According to the interviewees, the most typical Angry Mobber, in that case, is a man who is defending the men who are being shamed on MCEPs.

> Moderator 2: I don't want to paint them with one brush and say that all incels, but most of the trolls are guys, even incels.

Such audience members have tried to hack into the accounts, left hundreds of comments, and constantly report every picture so Instagram would remove the posts. According to the moderators, the goal for 'trolls' is never to contribute to the real discussion but to disturb the environment as much as possible. When it comes to 'trolls' we can see how Braithwaite's (1989: 55) theory comes to life – they are the outcasts and they try to reject the rejectors and the shame does not matter to them anymore.

Recreational Shaming: Entertainers and Jokesters

First, it is important to note that even when people are engaged in 'serious' online shamings they might perceive these activities not necessarily as shaming, labeling it something else (Skoric et al., 2010: 195). So, we are not saying that the following examples cannot have any negative consequences, but that they can be presented in the 'drawing attention through witty takedowns and derisive laughter' (Shaw, 2016; Hess & Flores, 2018) frame. This sometimes relieves the shamers from the burden of responsibility or the moral deliberation over their actions (Murumaa-Mengel & Lott, forthcoming) and it helps to take away power that the misogynist attacks carry (Tweten, 2016). Out of the 100 analyzed posts' captions, 22 were satirical or were making fun of the man in the screenshot, e.g 'I so just LOOOOOVE the spam on IG... sure, dude, I want to see you take your pants off... 😵', or '9cm dick... wrong unit of measure honey'. Ridicule and mockery are used as a strategy to point out someone's deviation from the norm (Wolf, 2002) and thus recreational shaming shares some common ground with previous types of shaming. But this one has a strong emphasis on 'LOL-worthiness', a criterion directed primarily towards the MCEP's community and self, not the offender, as the **Entertainer-type** moderator described:

> Moderator 3: If it makes me laugh or if it's just kind of very wild. If it's something really bizarre, out of the ordinary, it makes me laugh.

Entertainer-type interviewees stated that their goal is to entertain people who share similar experiences or who do not have any idea of what is going on in the online dating world. The pages act as a coping mechanism for the moderators and the community, for the people

who have similar experiences. Humor as control (Kuipers, 2008) and networked laughter (Rentschler & Thrift, 2015) brings relief to otherwise bleak situations:

> Moderator 4: It's been like a really nice thing to do, like for fun. And then just kind of laugh because if you don't laugh at these things, you'll cry.

Analysis of the comments from the community also shows that recreational shaming, ridiculing, and laughing at the wrongdoer is a popular choice and reaction, thus leading us to construct the **Jokester-types** of audience members. Actually, the most numerous category from the comments' analysis was jokes/laughter (27% of 1325 comments). The result is not a big surprise, as online shaming, sarcasm, irony, and competition for reactions play a major part and the performative participation in digital culture often revolves around making the wittiest remark (Laineste, 2013):

> Moderator 2: For the most part, the people that do comment are really funny. I often think that the people who comment are funnier than the post. So I do have a really good audience.

Most of the time the Jokesters' comments had a sarcastic undertone and they were making fun of the man in the post: 'Ah yes, cutlery and genitalia, two topics that women are extremely comfortable with coexisting in the same train of thought.' Recreational shaming seems to be the most engaging, too and it draws the audience's attention because the most liked comments were Jokesters' comments. For example, the most popular comment received 1063 likes: 'Kayaking and hiking?? Boring!! Watching Netflix with a 23 year old woman?? Groundbreaking, thrilling, legendary, iconic'.

When inspecting the Jokester type, we can see that the enjoyment of the shaming practice itself is emerging to be more dominant than the actual sanctioning of the deviant. Recreational shaming can surely have reintegrative or disintegrative under- or overtones, but there is room to theorize whether this form of shaming is more focused on the shamer than the shamee. Or, in other words, to what extent is it a performance, a competition of outwitting others in the war of eyeballs (Abidin, 2014). Obviously, humor and laughter carry other social functions, it is not just a calculated attention-seeking strategy but can also create a sense of shared 'conspiracy' among participants, an 'effective way of forging social bonds, even in situations not very conducive to closeness' (Kuipers, 2008: 366).

Participative Shaming: Community Builders and Support Squadders
Sometimes, MCEPs host tightly-knit social groups and communities that seem to enjoy the sense of belonging and acting together as a community. We can see how 'audiencing' - a public performance of belonging to an audience (Highfield, Harrington & Bruns, 2013) - becomes supreme to the misogynist content and offenders. Thus, we propose the sub-category of participative shaming – the collective shaming of behaviors and people,

motivated mainly by social belonging needs. Almost all of the interviewed page creators described looking for social support from their close friend circles even before sharing materials with a wider audience or taking on the full role of **Community Builder**:

> Moderator 5: I was married for 17 years and internet or dating apps were not really a thing when we started to get together. So after about like two months into dating I realized like: "Oh, this is insane." And I started showing my friends pictures of these terrible dating profiles. I'm like, who does this? And, and they made the suggestion [to start the page].

Community Builder type moderators who are running smaller accounts can begin by networking with other similar pages and their creators, because cross-page collaborations are beneficial for all, as audience members overlap in some parts and will potentially bring new followers from others. The MCEPs will leave comments under each other's posts to boost engagement, but also show support and strengthen social bonds with other moderators:

> Moderator 3: I have a lot of similar accounts following me as well. I'd probably say, um, about 40 to 50% of my followers are just similar accounts.

The moderators of pages with bigger followings mentioned that their community of like-minded people - **Support Squadders**, as we have named the type here – also helps to moderate comments and they report inappropriate comments. Support Squadder type of audience members (20% of all comments) are supportive and positive towards the moderators and other Squadders, but they also share their own similar experiences in the comment section, usually vaguely, so the aspect of belonging, chiming in, contributing to the group is dominating in participative shaming communicative practices.

The universality of these experiences is what drives the expansion of MCEPs, as a noticeable part of Support Squadders' comments were taggings of their friends, e.g. '@XXX Read this, STAT!! How many times have we had convos over this exact style of message?!?!' But larger followings also mean more opinions, experiences, vulnerabilities, offenses, and perceptions of accepted norms and netiquette. Perhaps unsurprisingly, we found that smaller groups hold strong in-group solidarity that is based on deeply encoded intertextual referencing and a sense of community. Small MCEPs can be categorized as refracted publics - cultures of strategies that are organized by public or pseudonymous or anonymous users in concealed spaces 'below the radar' (Abidin, 2021; 10), giving them freedom and the perception of safety and separation. The Community Builders of smaller accounts value the communicative intimacies (Abidin, 2015) they are able to build with their ideal audience members – by posting reply-comments like: '@XXX - omg yes, all of what you said x 1000!' - and the fact that they are able to check the profiles of new members, forming intimate publics (Berlant, 2008).

When specific 'nightmare audiences', such as Angry Misogynistic Mobbers appear, Support Squadders form a metaphorical phalanx and try to protect the community's members, moderators, and central values.

Reflective Shaming: Looking Glasses and Mirrors

Reflective shaming has some overlap with pedagogic shaming but the central ethos revolves around mirroring and amplifying (but not improving or fixing) the ugly side of the world – contextualizing the MCEP as merely a neutral vessel. In a way, **Looking Glass** type moderators perceive the need to, not necessarily educate, but reflect the world, zoom in to hidden spaces, problems, and behaviors. The reasons for starting the page vary from person to person but very often the Looking Glass moderator type could be constructed from these descriptions and explanations, such as here:

> Moderator 1: I was wondering how to present such a big social problem, that first, you should illustrate what exactly you think the problem is. At this stage, the current account is basically to put all the problematic interactions and encounters that girls have had into one account so it forms a pattern.

Looking Glasses do not take the active role of Educator, but act as a more passive vessel, 'showing the world what it is actually like', often learning something new along the way themselves as well:

> Moderator 5: Sometimes the comments make me think: "Oh, I hadn't thought of that perspective at all." And so I fully own that piece of it. And it's an educational journey. It's kind of like: "Hey, I didn't know that that was a thing."

We see that the reflective audiencehood (Corbett & Wessels, 2017), categorized in our study as **Mirrors,** can function as self-reflexivity assistants in this reflective shaming. Mirrors (20% of all comments) reflect different ways how messages can be read, privileges left previously unexamined, but they do it in a way that is not instructional, nor angry. Mirrors will turn attention to posts where moderators have 'jumped the gun', e.g. shaming ambiguous interactions, decodable in various ways: 'It is a polite offer after all... I don't see anything obscene or harassing. Why is it here?'

Sometimes Mirrors are audience members that sincerely have not previously noticed online gendered hate and are asking fundamental questions, helping the moderators and audience members understand information gaps. Usually, they were described as people who are trying to educate themselves on how women are being treated. Some of the page moderators guessed that there are around 20-30% of men among the commentators, often

thankful to the page and potentially new norms of dating and sexual expectations have emerged (Hess & Flores, 2018) for these men:

> Moderator 2: I will get comments from men saying: "You have opened my eyes to what dating apps are actually like."

Mirrors turn into Vanity Mirrors when audience members send in their contributions and get offended when their post is not published (fast enough). Thompson (2018: 84) was seeing dating apps as marketplaces for men but we suggest that the actions of Vanity Mirrors can be also seen as a marketplace. Vanity Mirrors seek validation and are looking essentially at how much their bad experience is worth in the group.

> Moderator 6: We started to get messages from offended girls. Like, why can't my picture be used? It somehow became like a bragging thing when your screenshot has been on the account. Grown-up women wrote to us that "I thought you cared about us."

Interestingly, being a visible and acknowledged contributor to online public shamings is the desired status for some, perhaps because of entertainment or social belonging, but very likely reflecting the social media logic of attention economy and the war over eyeballs.

Conclusions

At the heart of this study are Instagram pages that expose the routinized online gendered hate and sexual harassment women experience online, by posting screenshots of conversations which include verbal abuse and uninvited intimate photos, often with names and faces of the men attached in order to intensify (Tomlinson, 2010) the problem and draw attention to it. Republishing offensive material and talking about the hurt it has caused may have the reverse effect of giving the offenders the satisfaction of successfully eliciting of emotional responses (Jane, 2016). On the other hand, there is lot to be gained: MCEPs and digilantism (Jane, 2017a) more broadly can create safe spaces for feminist discursive activism, supporting strong collective power (Shaw, 2016), because when harassment and abuse are viewed and called out specifically as that, rather than as a trivial issue, women are more likely to talk about their experiences publicly, instead of suffering in silence (Citron, 2009: 377).

The moderators and audience members play an equal role in the networked and/or refracted publics (boyd, 2010; Abidin, 2021) when it comes to contributing to shaming practices. As the main result of our paper, compressed into **Figure 1**, we constructed five types of shamings and linked MCEP's moderator and audience roles that counter performances of toxic masculinity (Hess & Flores, 2018; Shaw, 2016; Thompson, 2018).

These types and roles are not carved in stone but are and should be rather fluid, overlapping and merging over imagined audiences, desirable results, shifting in and out of different modes and motivations of participation and practices.

Pedagogic shaming	Denunciatory shaming	Recreational shaming	Participatory shaming	Reflective shaming
•Educators •Instructors	•Judges •Angry Mobbers	•Entertainers •Jokesters	•Community Builders •Support Squadders	•Looking Glasses •Mirrors

Figure 1: Five types of online shamings and the responding moderator and audience types.

We have noticed that shaming as a social practice is drifting towards becoming more 'me' and 'us'-centered. When Braithwaite (1989) distinguished reintegrative and disintegrative approaches, they were described as sanctioning mechanisms against the deviant. Recreational, participative and reflective shaming types all included elements indicating that social and belonging needs of the shamers were just as important in MCEPs than DIY justice. Contemporary practices of shaming have become embedded in people's habitualized media uses, and we could ask: if offenders/victims and moderators/audience members are anonymized, it is all done 'just for laughs', is this even shaming, then? Or is it an agonistic game, a type of 'recreational nastiness' (Jane, 2014; Jane, 2017a), rather than political activism and social sanctioning? We want to emphasize that due to the longevity of digital content and enhanced networkability, not only can online gendered hate and harassment be linked to the victim (Citron, 2014), but so can the shaming of (poorly) anonymized harassers become a part of the offenders' digital footprints. Thus, these practices do or have the potential to function as social reintegrative/disintegrative sanctioning.

One of our interviewees said 'if you don't laugh at these things, you'll cry', pointing us towards the realization that when 'serious' digilantism tends to be confrontational (Jane, 2017a) and to make use of fight-responses (Jane, 2017b), recreational shaming is a coping strategy, falling under the flight-responses (Jane, 2017b) – making it less personal by turning the abuse into a joke.

Normalization of digilantism may mean that individuals and society as a whole will pay a price – 'the persecution of innocents, disproportionate punishment, disillusionment with the justice system, strengthening of extrajudicial cultures online' (Jane, 2017a: 8), provoke hostile counter-responses, spiral into vengeance-motivated lynching or even sadism (Jane, 2017a: 4). But until platforms and socio-legal structures do not remove the need for feminists to engage in such practices, we encourage the moderators and audience members to examine and reflect upon the different shaming practices and make use of those that come with most benefits. For future research, we suggest looking into deeper

into the two new shaming categories that we proposed; explore the overlap of digilantism, shaming and trolling; but also to study specific platforms' rules and norms, as they are powerful parts of the system, sometimes actively re-/disintegratively sanctioning the online publics people have created.

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