

Women's Cyberactivism against catcall in Brazil: From 'Invisible Sexism' to Sexual Violence against women

Eulália Vasconcelos(Doctoral Course, Nagoya University)
Sang-Mi Kim(Associate Professor, Nagoya-University)

Abstract

Third and possible fourth wave feminism have used cyberspace to enhance their movement and spread information to women who previously did not have access to their rights as citizens. This study exposes the use of the internet by women's cyberactivists as public arena against "catcall" in Brazil. Through collective action women cyberactivists have raised a discussion that this behavior is recognizable as normal or compliment because of the invisible sexism supported by patriarchal society. Furthermore, on cyberspace women find shared support to understand that catcall is violence against themselves common but not natural. To achieve our aim, we selected two online projects "*Chega de Fiu Fiu*" (Stop Catcall) and "*Cantadas de Rua – Conte seu caso*" (Street Catcall – Tell your case) conducted content analysis to understand women's perception about gender violence and interview with women's cyberactivists.

Key-words: cyberactivism, internet, women, violence, invisible sexism.

Introduction:

Cyberspace is definitely the new arena for marginalized people. Social movements have created new ways to express and organize their ideas and activities. Castells (2012) discusses the use of the internet to overcome more than the fear of self-expression, but its capacity to enable voiceless to take part of "networks of outrage" around the world. Women also are part of this networked movement, and feminism movements make use of the internet to enhance itself and spread the information based on its characteristics. The term like "cyberfeminism" is a part of feminist discussion. We adopt Jessie Daniel's perspective of the role of the internet to make women be involved in new form of contestation (Daniel, 2009). Women use the cyberspace to change naturalized sexism, particularly machismo, through diverse points of view shared in a plural and connected women network.

This study analyzes the use of the internet by women's cyberactivists as public arena against socially accepted "catcall" in Brazil and the perception of it as gender issue part of patriarchal society. Through collective action women cyberactivists have raised a discussion that this behavior is recognizable as normal or compliment because of the invisible sexism supported by patriarchal structure. Furthermore, on cyberspace women find shared support to understand that 'catcall' is violence against themselves mainly for considering their culpability and also power gender relation. In reality, women feel guilty for be harassed and find in the cyberspace support and comprehension to change the attitude as "innocent catcall" to gender violence. Patriarchal social structures normalize and standardize the subordination of women in a sense that is not perceived clearly (Millett, 1970; Foucault, 1978; Butler, 1990; Castañeda, 2007). Patriarchy involved in the society leads to what Castañeda addresses as "invisible machismo", everyday situations that the entire society does not identify as oppressive attitudes over women. The comprehension of the concept of patriarchy is needed to discuss invisible sexism and its consequences to women. In this paper, we

first review the literatures on women's cyberactivism, discussing the notion of collective action online, and patriarchy and invisible sexism, theories that guide our empirical analysis. An overview of sexism in Brazil, through socially accepted behaviors contextualizes this paper.

To achieve the objective of this paper, which is an excerpt of a research concerning cyberspace as public arena for questioning "the invisible machismo" that ruptures the dichotomy of public-private within gender relations, we selected two online projects and conducted a content analysis of 265 posts written and shared by women who are victims of public harassment in the period from June to August, 2014, and also interviews with founder and manager of these projects. The online projects "*Chega de Fiu Fiu*" (Stop Catcall), part of feminist weblog *Think Olga*, and "*Cantadas de Rua – Conte seu caso*" (Street Catcall – Tell your case) focus on public harassment that leads us have chosen both to proceed our research. Through qualitative content analysis we intend to understand why women use the cyberspace to share these stories, moreover analyze women's perception of public harassment. These pages were selected because the number of 'like' in their Facebook fan pages and page views in their weblogs, besides the number of shared stories, 2,651 cases in total, during less than 2 years of activity. "*Chega de Fiu Fiu*" received from 2013 to 2014 August, 1,168 testimonies, while "*Cantada de Rua*" from 2012 November to 2014 August 1,483 reports. Both pages has received, an average, 3.2 and 2.4 stories a day respectively discussing public harassment, that are sub categorized in harassment (verbal and physical), physical violence (abuse and assault) and rape. Mostly women share their stories anonymously after years of silence, which reveal that they do not feel safe to expose their personal situation. We also conducted semi-structured interviews with founders of related weblogs and pages to produce material concerning these projects, moreover to understand the role of them to empower women.

Women Online: Breaking stereotypes through self-expression

Women's cyberactivism might be considered relevant to women's movements in general. They make use of cyberspace, undoubtable, as their arena to change their reality, and discuss feminism itself. Sadie Plant (1997) believes cyberspace has a "feminine essence" that naturally allows women organize themselves in a better way. We focus on women's cyberactivism because this specific study intends to discuss female activism in the cyberspace, not extend to cyberfeminism that involves a deep discussion based on Donna Haraway (1991) and Sadie Plant's (1997) concepts of the relationship between women and machine through cyborgs and the binary system. Furthermore, we need to understand the third-wave feminism and also the possible emergence of fourth-wave feminism to contextualize the current women's movement in the cyberspace. Discussing women's engagement online, we have adopted the perspective of Daniel (2009) who focuses on women's engagement on the internet and also online activism that Kira Cochrane (2014) explores in her book concerning the new feminist landscape.

Others scholars, like Krollokke & Sorensen (2006), understand that the third-wave feminism is based on all of aspects of feminism.

Third-wave feminism is tied up with the effects of globalization and the complex redistribution of power, which challenge feminist theory and politics. It also mirrors the diversification of women's interests and perspectives and the breakdown of master stories of oppression and liberation. For example,

postcolonial, third-wave feminism is concerned with establishing a new critical global perspective and creating alliances between Black, diasporic, and subaltern feminisms, whereas queer theory and politics create a platform for what has now split into the lesbian, gay, bi-, and transsexual and transgender movements. (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006:19)

Scholars as Snyder (2008) considers the third-wave feminism has no huge difference in claims nevertheless it is possible to consider that it has new approach to achieve gender equity involving all of categories.

That is to say, third-wave feminism makes three important tactical moves that respond to a series of theoretical problems within the second wave. First, in response to the collapse of the category of “women,” the third wave foregrounds personal narratives that illustrate an intersectional and multiperspectival version of feminism. Second, as a consequence of the rise of postmodernism, third-wavers embrace multivocality over synthesis and action over theoretical justification. Finally, in response to the divisiveness of the sex wars, third-wave feminism emphasizes an inclusive and nonjudgmental approach that refuses to police the boundaries of the feminist political. In other words, third-wave feminism rejects grand narratives for a feminism that operates as a hermeneutics of critique within a wide array of discursive locations, and replaces attempts at unity with a dynamic and welcoming politics of coalition. (Snyder, 2008:03)

Certainly, Rebeca Walker is the most representative scholar to discuss third-wave feminism exactly because she coined the term in 1992. Based on her discussions queer and non-white women are central part of feminism in this new wave. Walker (1992) advocates the need of the plurality of the issues concerning women such as reproductive rights, rape, harassment, gender violence and maternity-leave.

From the women’s articulation on cyberspace, it is possible identify a huge movement to promote gender equity. Supported by Jessie Daniel’s perspective, we focus on women usage of cyberspace to struggle against patriarchal and sexist society. Cochrane (2014) considers, in reality, that the internet has enabled the transition of third to fourth-wave feminism because the internet itself has contributed to a global community of feminists. Online platform has combined the characteristics of third-wave feminism, based on intersectionality, with the capacity of the internet to connect women from diverse backgrounds and allows them to discuss, share and find support to their own experiences. There are scholars who call “online feminism” as the movement of women activists online to struggle for gender equity. In this paper we focus on online feminism particularly related to women’s cyberactivism that represents women’s movements online centered on invisible machismo depicted by public harassment.

In the “Arab Spring”, for example, women’s cyberactivism were largely discussed by scholars for showing Muslim women’s engagement in expressing themselves. Even in more conservative societies, women play a significant role through the entire revolution. One aspect that is important emphasize is the fact women do not need go to streets to be involved, go online is substantial to enhance social movements. Yet in “Arab Spring”, women were active in spreading information not only locally but also and mostly globally, even when they could not go to the streets as Radsch says about Libya. “Women cyberactivists largely stayed behind the scenes in their homes,

taking mobile phone videos, pictures, and reports from the frontlines and putting them online as well as spreading information about what was happening elsewhere in Libya.” (Radsch, 2013:17)

Castells (2012) also discusses the major role played by women in the “Arab Spring”, particularly in Egyptian Revolution, specific case that he studies in his book *The outrage of movements*. He explores the active participation of women in reporting and denouncing injustices and the claim of change by society through social media, such as weblogs, Twitter and Facebook. Because of their action, they were victims of violence by the military regime in Egypt. “During January and February, at least 15 women were killed. Many women arrested in the square were subjected to virginity tests, which members of the military government openly acknowledged and justified in a CNN interview, on the grounds that these women were whores.” (Castells, 2012:71) It implies the relevance of women’s cyberactivism that leads them to face the violence that they are vulnerable. Women also perceive that cyberspace allows them to expose the everyday sexism which maintains them excluded from politic realm. Castells also highlights “the awakening of Egyptian women” which is considered one of the “main fears” of patriarchal society. (Castells, 2012:72)

Furthermore, Piela (2012) discusses the use of the internet by Muslim women to change the submissive and voiceless stereotype over them. According to her, non-Muslim media tend to reinforce this image about women from Islam, although go online enable them to promote debate on their society unveiling their activism. “Women too have utilized such cyberactivism to agitate for often-controversial positions.” (Tobin, 2014) And it is perceived their positioning concerning the confrontation of diverse issues using the cyberspace to achieve so-called gender equity.

This capacity of women to exercise cyberactivism might be explained by the concept of collective action. Kluver & Soon (2014) discusses blogging as a communal activity that make emerge a collective identity which conducts to a collective action. Supported by their assumption, women, as individuals, use the cyberspace based on the need for self-expression, although the capacity of connection on the internet make their activity a collective action. The first-person style of writing and the capacity of creating a network allow women to be protagonist of their movement. (Bozal, 2011) Women use the internet not only blogging but also sharing contents through different social media and social networking sites, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, YouTube, and Instagram as well. Women’s movement online, as the internet essence, is based on personal engagement that leads to a group action according to self-identity with issues shared online.

Women in general have been making use of the cyberspace to breakdown stereotypes and raise points that they consider crucial to promote gender equity. From World Pulse, an online community formed by women from 190 countries from different backgrounds and social conditions focused on citizen journalism, to local initiatives, women are online. Schuster (2013) discusses the use of activism online by young feminists in New Zealand and the impact of their activity to feminist engagement. According to her, young women are familiar with new media because its accessibility and speed of connection. “Moreover, as Harris has pointed out, social networking tools provide ‘places where young women can express both personal and political views and connect with diverse others. They can operate as “safe spaces” from which young women speak out.’ Similarly, Keller has argued that young women use blogs as platforms because there are not many other spaces available for them to speak out and discuss their opinions on political issues.” (Schuster, 2013:18) United Nation Women

has been developing and encouraging the use of new media by women around the world besides the extensive campaigns through social media such as “The brave are not violent”, in Latin America and Caribbean, “Women should”, based on generalized sexism on the internet through google search, and #OrangeDay, the use of Social Networking Sites for 16 days activism against gender-based violence and promote gender equality through this hashtag. In Brazil UN women has developed a tool from a partnership with the National Government, Public Policies for Women Secretary, called “Click 180”. It is a website and mobile application to support women involved in violence. According to Thays Prado, UN Women Public Relations in Brazil, this application allows privacy to women. Moreover, women young leaders in communities and villages encourage all of women to access the website and use it. (2014)

Patriarchy and invisible sexism: the objectification of women in the public spaces and power gender relations

The relation between “public-private” reveals that these two spaces are not only antonyms but mostly pillar of the discussions concerning gender relation, characterized by power of men over women. Bobbio (1989) discusses the dichotomy public/private as “the ‘great dichotomies’ used by several disciplines – social and historical sciences as well as law – to define, represent and order their particular field of investigation.” (Bobbio, 1989:1) Gender scholars criticize this dichotomy in their studies because Bobbio (1989) considers these two spaces as different, separated. Actually, public-private are politically defined by patriarchal structures (Pateman, 2013). The discussion concerning public leads us to identify that women in public spaces have their bodies taking part of public realm as well. In gender relation, women’s role is played at home even they are able to work outside domestic realm is preferentially to female.

Generally, women in public spaces are vulnerable to suffer harassment, which is many times called just “catcall” or compliment, particularly when it does not involve a more concrete attitude, as assault or rape. According to Stop Street Harassment Organization, through a survey online with 2,000 respondents, 65.0% of all women had experienced street harassment in the United States. An online survey conducted by the weblog and online project “Stop Catcall”, 7,762 Brazilian women answer the survey, and 99.6% asserted they were harassed in public spaces. Professor Carol Brooks Gardner is responsible for the first research regarding street harassment. She conducted an interview with 293 women in Indianapolis, U.S., from the late 1980’s to early 1990’s and 100.0% of all interviewees revealed being harassed in public and 90.0% said it was “troublesome”. “Public harassment includes pinching, slapping, hitting, shouted remarks, vulgarity, insults, sly innuendo, ogling, and stalking.” (Gardner, 1995:82)

Women do not feel safe in the public spaces, although it is not restricted to streets, includes work, stores, restaurants, movie theaters, malls and public transportation. It is considered women’s situation also very connected to patriarchy society, a system that Millett (2000) considers that every instance of society is on male’s hands controlling by men power. Women are subordinated by men and their behavior should be “decent” in public realm. “What goes largely unexamined, often even unacknowledged (yes it is institutionalized nonetheless) in our social order is the birthright priority whereby males rule females. Through this system a most ingenious form of ‘interior colonization’ has been achieved. It is one which tends moreover to be sturdier than any form of segregation, and more rigorous than class stratification, more uniform, certainly more enduring. However muted its present appearance may be,

sexual dominion obtains nevertheless as perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power.” (Millett, 2000:25) Patriarchal society leads to sexism that Castañeda (1999) considers embedded in our culture and difficult to identify in more subtle way, and she calls “invisible machismo”. Through patriarchal system that women are subordinated by men, machismo often pervades disguised as love, care, protection and normal behavior of society in general.

Notwithstanding, the combination of all these aspects induces two main points of discussion: culpability of women for be harassed, they feel guilty for the violence they had suffered, and expose the objectification of women’s body. Feminist’s scholars MacKinnon (1989) and Dworkin (2009) discuss the sexual objectification of women’s bodies based on pornography that reinforce their disadvantage position because of patriarchal society. To them, pornography encourages women submission and promotes sexual violence against them. From their perspectives linked to other feminists that study objectification of women, Nassbaum (1995) and Bauer (2011), constantly and naturally male domination transform public spaces dangerous to women for their vulnerability to suffer harassment.

Brazil is the 7th country in the world in the ranking of women’s murders. According to Institute for Applied Economic Research, Brazilian institute, IPEA, from 2001 to 2011 50,000 women were murdered in Brazil, mostly victims of domestic violence. Although, scholars believe the cause of domestic and public violence against women is extremely connected to patriarchy and its sub product sexism (machismo). A research conducted by IPEA and launched on April 2014, Social Perceptions, revealed this aspect of consolidated and embedded patriarchy in Brazilian society. The question “If women knew how to behave there would be fewer rapes in Brazil” showed 58.5% of all interviewee agreed totally or partially with this statement. Also, 25.2% of total respondents agreed totally or partially with the question “women who show their bodies deserve to be attacked”. On April, when this study was released, women organized an act of repudiation through social networking sites, called “I don’t deserve to be raped”, against this result. Journalist Nana Queiroz invited people on Facebook to share their photos naked or wearing any type of clothe with the sentence “I don’t deserve to be raped”. Journalist first shared her own photo at night and next day the page received 45,000 photos supporting her initiative. On the other hand, Nana Queiroz closed her page because she received 500 messages of threat and assault. “I faced hard moments. My photos were shared in porn websites. I understand that the internet protects oppressed people but reveals the monstrous side of the people. The internet is a reflection of culture.” (Nana Queiroz, 2014)

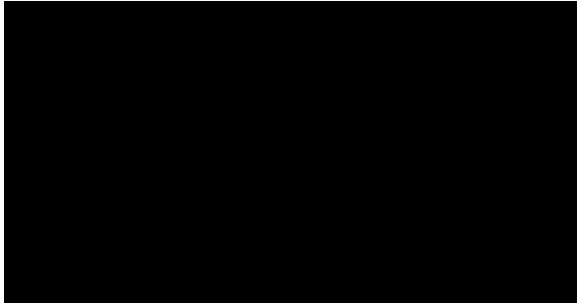


Figure1.

The online survey conducted by online project “Stop Catcall” showed that 90.0% of women asserted they change their clothes when they think about the place they go because of the fear of harassment. “The patriarchal paradigm of family, besides assuming male supremacy, focuses on family structure formed by man, woman and children. The paradigm is heteronormative and androcentric: put man and male as reference in all social spaces. The universal, neutral is masculine; and man should have the power – of decision, of commanders, of resources and on the body and the mind of woman.” (IPEA, 2014:7)

“Chega de Fiu Fiu” (Stop Catcall) & “Cantada de Rua – Conte o seu caso” (Street Catcall: tell your case): women voicing online against public harassment

Since childhood women have learned how to behave in public spaces, what kind of clothes to wear and that good girls do not do certain things such as walk alone and late night, talk to strangers. They learn how to defend themselves and are responsible for their attitudes and consequences. If you are a “good girl”, why do you suffer harassment in public spaces? What did I do to be harassed? Or raped? Thinking about these often situations among women from diverse age, social status, ethnicity, background, etc., women has been utilizing cyberspace to share their own stories and find support from others in similar situation.

“Cantada de Rua – Conte o seu caso” (cantadaderua.com.br) was first launched as Facebook fan page, on November 2012. A year later, after the repercussion, its manager, Asa Heuser, 57 years old woman, decided to create a weblog to generate a collection of all account pages had received. “I decided to create this fan page just for personal curiosity. But I have to be honest, I was surprised by the number of stories. Most of them were strong stories.” (Asa Heuser, 2014) Facebook fan page has 15,167 likes, a number of people who wants to receive page update in their newsfeed. Presently, the project has a team with four women, two of them are responsible for editing the stories and other two publish news related to violence against women. Fan page and weblog do not restrict to publish testimonies, they share news, academic works, surveys and contents from other pages that discuss similar issues. “Cantada de Rua” has a collection of 1,580 stories shared without identification by women who have felt a need to unburden with someone.



Figure 2 Cantada de Rua webpage

The anonymously, protection and space for express feelings were also considered the main purposes for women go online against harassment by Juliana de Faria, manager of “Chega de Fiu Fiu” (Stop Catcall). Through her personal weblog, Think Olga (www.thinkolga.com), created on April 2013, Juliana initiated this online project to understand catcalls in the Brazilian streets. From the weblog, she put some illustrations concerning harassment and started to receive e-mails talking about personal situations. Juliana opened a testimony section in her weblog and the survey came from the repercussion of these testimonies. She was interested in collecting evidences that this naturalized culture was not accepted by women.

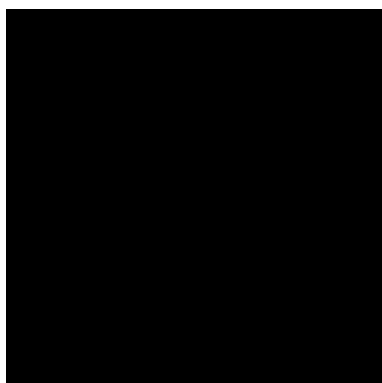


Figure 3

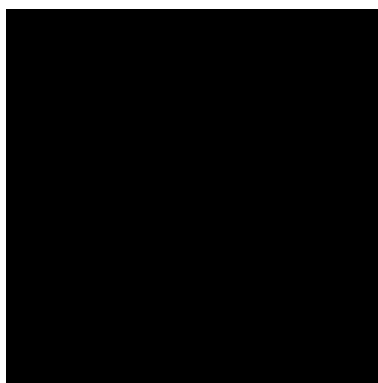


Figure 4

Figure 3. “Do you think that yelling ‘Hot’ is a compliment? Your mother doesn’t!”

Figure 4. “Walking through a public space do not turn my body public”

On September 2014, weblog launched the survey “stop catcall”, an online campaign against harassment in public spaces, and the page receive 140,000 page views only this specific day. On the other hand, after survey was released, Juliana de Faria received threats in different ways that, according to her, “just confirmed the need of discussion concerning this issue. Harassment is very serious.” (Juliana de Faria, 2014)

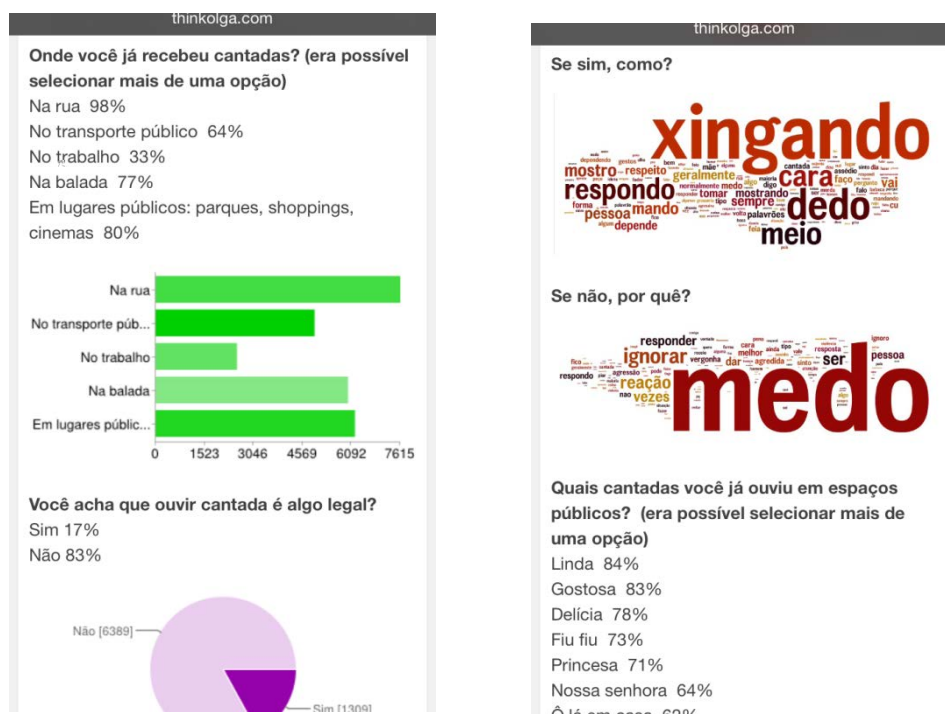


Figure 5. The Result of Survey regarding “Stop Catcall”

Think Olga still has its weblog, with 2,000 page views per day, Facebook fan page, has received 23,385 likes, and specific online project “stop catcall”, with a community page on Facebook with 2,620 members, and “Chega de Fiu Fiu” map, space on the weblog that women post their testimonies and mapping the violence at the same time. Initially, weblog received 72 stories from women and 6 from men. After the “Chega de Fiu Fiu Map”, all of stories are collected there, totaling 1,200 stories from different parts of Brazil, until the conclusion of this study. All of stories have the same essence of “Cantada de rua”: harassment in all diverse ways. Women and girls have used the cyberspace through both pages do expose serious and hard situations that occurred and still are occurring in their everyday life. All of them assert they do not have “anyone to share”, or “they are afraid of judgments” and “it was a long time ago, when I was a child”. These webpages have revealed frequency of this kind of situation that it is not discussed in the society.

Methodology

To analyze women’s perception concerning catcalls, we selected two online projects that receive an average of 2.94 stories of harassment a day that give us an extensive material to conduct content analysis supported by theoretical framework, which are “Chega de Fiu Fiu” (Stop Catcall) and “Cantada de Rua – Conte seu caso” (Street Catcall – Share your case). Moreover, they also have Facebook fan page with a considerable number of likes and members, 23,000 to Think Olga, fan page of the website that “Chega de Fiu Fiu” is part, more 2,600 members in its community; and 15,000 to “Cantadas de Rua”, both talking specifically about public harassment.

In addition, we conducted qualitative interviews with founders/managers of both webpages, 2014 on July, August and September, Asa Hauser of *Cantada de Rua* and Juliana de Faria of *Think Olga/Chega de Fiu Fiu*.

Descriptive data of Content analysis

In order to explore the theme “public harassment-catcall” we decided to make a sample of stories of each page collected during three months, June, July and August.

The total of stories is 265 from two pages, 121 cases from “Cantada de Rua” and 144 cases from “Chega de Fiu Fiu”, representing 2.4 and 3.2 stories a day respectively. All these stories were carefully analyzed, based on content analysis. We categorize them according to the situation: harassment (verbal and physical), physical violence (abuse and assault) and rape. Each online project has its own categorization; however we decided to create a new one to provide a more pragmatic analysis.

Table 1: Category of Testimony

Online Project/Category	Harassment	Physical Violence	Rape
Cantada de Rua	81	31	09
Chega de Fiu Fiu	117	11	01

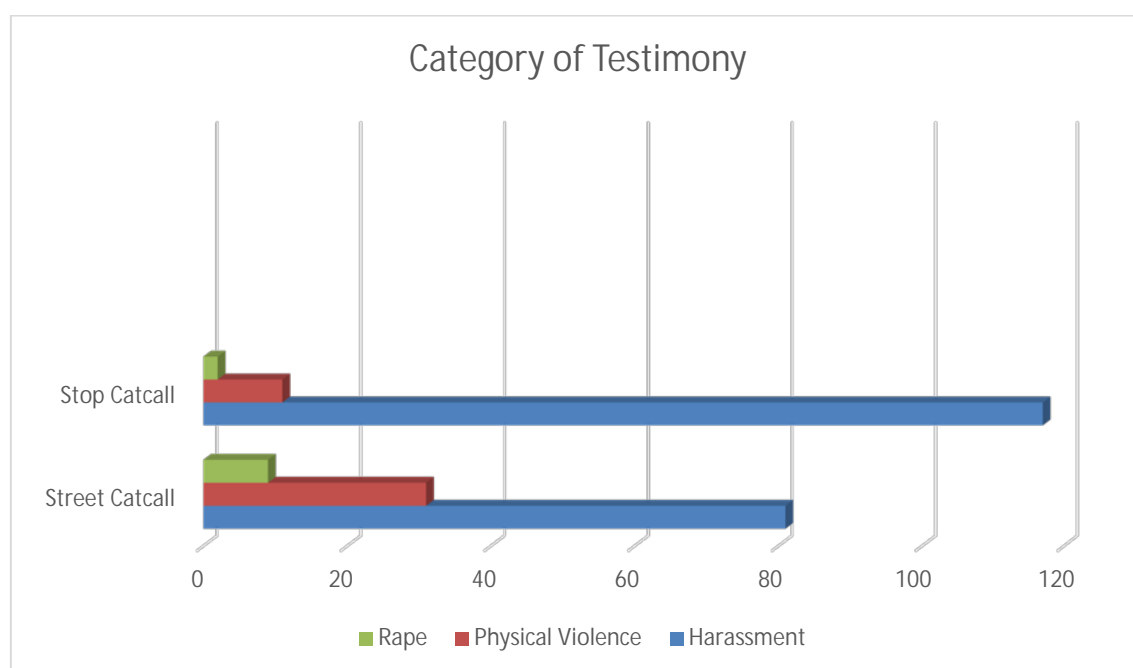


Figure 6: Category of Testimony

We also created a table concerning place where women were harassed (catcall) and one more showing age of them as follow.

Table 2: Place of Catcall

Online Project/Place	Streets	Place of work	School	Public transportation	Party	Home	Restaurant/Bar	Supermarket	Book Store
Cantada de Rua	34	01	04	17	05	07	-	01	-
Chega de Fiu Fiu	96	03	06	15	03	02	04	01	01

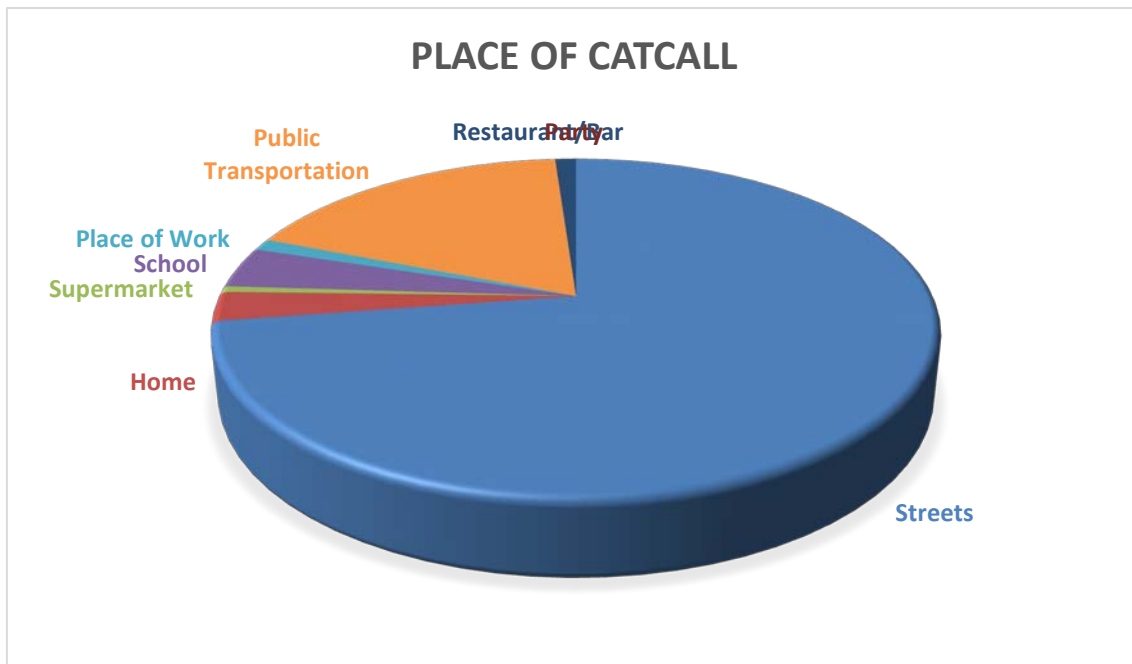


Figure 7: Place of Catcall

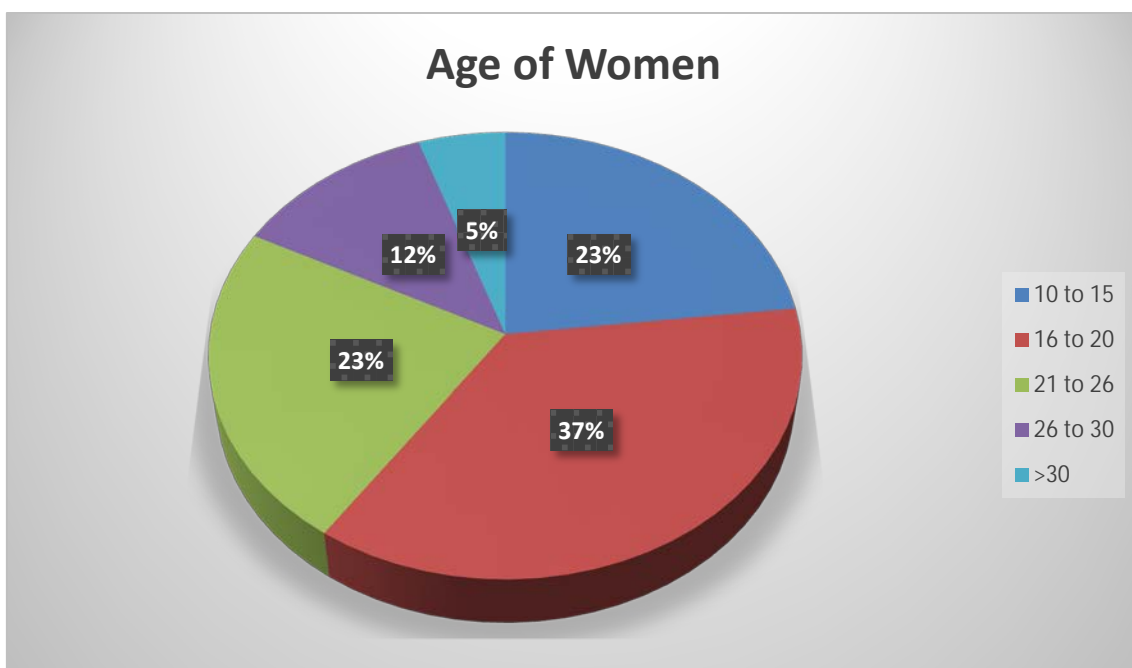


Figure 8 : Age of women

These tables were prepared not to develop a quantitative analysis, but to create a big image of women who are victims of public harassment. And then, we selected common words and expressions and also similar situations as presented.

Table 3. Common words and expressions

Tired	Embarrassed	Constrained	Everyday	No reaction
Disgusting	Repulsive	Touched me	He patted me	Nobody believes me
I was exaggerated	I did not tell to anyone	Fear	I do not want to go outside anymore	Fear of judgments
Fear of rejection	Changed my routine	I was very badly	He insisted	He was angry
I changed my place	It was annoying	Bothered	It was not only one day	Humiliated
They told that was my fault	I was wrong	I felt invaded	I endured quiet	People say that is normal. I disagree
I reacted	I could not do anything	Offensive	Degrading	Powerlessness
Piece of beef	I felt horrible	Vulnerable	Violated	I know all of women suffer this situation
I had to accept as a compliment	My privacy was violated	Revolted	Outrageous	My clothe doesn't matter
I changed my clothes	Guilty	I cried	I avoid to go out at night	Helpless
I felt diminished	Insecure	Disrespected	Ashamed	Panic

**Figure 9. Tag Cloud**

All these data do not represent a profile of women who have suffered any kind of public harassment in Brazil on the other hand it represents an image of women who access this kind of website and the aim of their users and also women's age when they were victims of harassment, showing that they kept all these reports covered. This study

made a content analysis of all 265 stories not only collecting more shared words and expressions but mainly to select testimonies that lead us to raise a discussion regarding the importance of the cyberspace, particularly cyberactivism to women's empowerment. All testimonies are anonymous and expose the need of women be not only heard but also to comprehend that harassment is common however not acceptable.

Cyberspace to women might be understood as public place that they are safe from physical assaults and protected by judgments from the society. Furthermore, women are able to exercise their citizenship and discuss their issues. From the moment they share their stories they do not only find a place to exchange and unburden their experiences but also comprehend their role in the society.

Involved in patriarchy structures and the lack of self-expression, women do not talk and expose harassment that they are vulnerable to suffer. They cannot talk to anyone because, according to them, people (family, friends, and partners) "would not believe it" and "think my reaction was exaggerated." Because of this, words and expressions such as *disgusting*, *fear*, *angry*, *crying*, *nobody knows* and *sexist* were often cited in diverse stories. Moreover, *fear* is considered the second most cited word in all of them that shows how unsafe women feel outside at home because of the intimacy that they are submitted in outside world. They assert "fear of judgments", "fear of violence" and "fear of rejection" in the same perspective that Millet (2000) and Castañeda (1999) advocate regarding public realm is not for women. From the moment they decide to face a sphere that they are not welcome, they face all of patriarchy embedded in the society. Corroborant with this concept, women in their testimonies asserted that "nobody knows about this happening", they could not talk to nobody however could find in the cyberspace a comfortable place to expose their fears and scars.

"I did not tell to my husband with fear of rejection"

"I never had courage to tell to my mom."

"I already told to my family about this but all of them think it is just from my mind, so I did not insist anymore."

"I feel safe in writing here again."

"It is really relieved that you are not alone."

(Cantada de Rua/ Chega de Fiu Fiu, from June to August, 2014)

As Castells argues, cyberspace allows women to speak out and discuss everyday sexism that they have to face. Asa Heuser, founder and manager of Cantada de Rua, 57 years old, said that she decided to create this online project to "understand in a deeply way what 'catcall' means." According to her, the result of the website surprisingly revealed how serious public harassment is to entire society. "Many women told me that they need the website because they do not have another place to talk about harassment. I remember that a woman sent a message to me and I told her it was not our profile. Immediately she argued: 'please, I do not have any place to open my heart. It's my only space.' From this moment I understand what this kind of website represents to women." (Asa Heuser, 2014) Asa Heuser considers the lack of space and protection of anonymity as main reasons to women go online. Cochrane (2013) identifies cyberspace as new feminist landscape that promote self-expression and support to women from diverse backgrounds.

Findings of the Interviews with the founders and managers

Juliana de Faria, founder and manager of Chega de Fiu Fiu, 30 years old, discusses the role of the internet as a place that “minorities finally have their own voices” and immediately find others sharing similar situations. To her, women have been feeling uncomfortable; they already perceived that things are not right and fair. “People feel encouraged to engage because they see thousands of others sharing the same need. People realized the problem but they could not verbalize it. The availability of the internet allows women to expose harassment because they find support.” (Juliana de Faria, 2014)

“I already shared my harassment story in this page before, so I feel comfortable to share one more.”

“Wow! I have so many testimonies.”

“Since I found this page it was a memory immersion.”

“I did not tell this to anyone. (...) I feel so relieved because someone has read it. Thank you.”

“I decided to talk about this as a way to free me of this burden.”

(Cantada de Rua/ Chega de Fiu Fiu, from June to August, 2014)

The need of women to be heard had contributed to the raise of women’s cyberactivism (Daniel, 2009; Castells, 2013; Piela, 2012). Previously they are not able to express their opinions nor were represented by dominant opinion in public spaces. Public harassment were not only ignored but also neglected and negated in the public arena by public discussions. Women could not expose their discordance with this “normal behavior”, popularly called ‘catcall’, provoking the inception of this attitude of intimacy as common and natural connoting synonymous. Actually, public harassment, accepted as innocent catcall, are commoner than the surveys had revealed and less normal than women are educated to believe. The possibility of a channel of expression has unveiled that ‘catcalls’ are real social problems.

“What happened this morning was not different than usual.”

“It was 7 am and I was wearing jeans and t-shirt, it’s impossible to blame me.”

“Harassment undermines women’s rights to come and go. Who is responsible for this?”

(Cantada de Rua/ Chega de Fiu Fiu, from June to August, 2014)

Women cyberactivists advocate the role of the internet to create a community to embrace first the right of self-expression and then, based on support, to promote awareness concerning harassment. Both webpages were developed to expose that the problem exists from the viewpoint of victims. To Asa Heuser, *Cantada de Rua* was firstly a personal curiosity.

I would just like to understand the controversy within the word/behavior ‘catcall’. To my shock, hundreds of testimonies came to me involving more than ‘innocent catcalls’ but hard stories of harassment. I remember that a woman was responsible to change my mind related to harassment. She sent her story I told her: ‘Sorry, but it is not catcall, it is abuse, harassment.’ She said: ‘Please, it is the only place that I found to unburden. I do not have any other place to talk about this.’ I believe that through our page we are

contributing to raise awareness of people about harassment, including men.
(Asa Heuser, 2014)

Juliana de Faria, *Chega de Fiu Fiu*, decided to create her page after she received feedback from readers of her weblog. The map represents women saying “stop” and “no more” to this situation. The possibility that the internet has given to women to share what occurs in their everyday life is considered “big step” against gender violence. (Juliana de Faria, 2014)

When I throw my revolt and dissatisfaction in the internet, there are 10, 20, 30 haters. However, there are 10, 20, 30, 400, 8000 women who reinforce the debate. (...) Everybody felt that something was wrong but they could not verbalize it. In the internet people feel and share. Women have perceived they are not alone. (Juliana de Faria, 2014)

The invisible machismo from Castañeda’s perspective is perceived in different parts of testimonies of women. They usually and frequently describe clothes, behaviors and context in their shared stories. Perhaps they want to justify their status of real victims and also expose that definitely they are not guilty of any kind of harassment that they suffer. Moreover, they make question concerning their role in the society and the discussion on cyberspace corroborates with Castells (2012) understanding of “the need of self-expression” to be empowered.

Discussion

Women’s cyberactivism is controversial in concept, nevertheless the emergence of the fourth-wave of feminism or even what is “the third-wave feminism” reinforce the use of the internet by women to self-expression and change their reality. They do not feel represented by mass media or by the dominant discourse. This study is an excerpt of a research that intends to expose and discuss that the use of cyberspace through feminist pages and groups is promoting not only women’s but also their active participation.

Digital divide is still a problem around the world, particularly gender gap within women from base of pyramid. The access to information and their participation giving their testimonies might contribute to expose more than public harassment but different issues that women are involved.

As Piela (2012) and Castells (2012) assert, go online is a way to agitate “often-controversial positions.”

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Interviews

Nana Queiroz, journalist. Interview by e-mail and Skype on July and August, 2014.

Asa Heuser, founder and manager of Online Project “Cantada de Rua: Conte seu caso” on Facebook and webpage. Interviews by Facebook messenger and Skype on July, August, September and October, 2014.

Thays Prado, Public Relations of UN Women in Brazil. Interviews by e-mail and Skype on July, 2014.

Juliana de Faria, founder and manager of Online Project “Chega de Fiu Fiu”, part of Weblog and Fan Page *Think Olga*. Interviews by Facebook and Hangouts on July, August, September and October, 2014.

Links

Testimonies collected in two Online Project:

- “**Cantada de Rua**”: conte seu caso (Street Catcall: tell your case) www.cantadaderua.com.br

- **Think Olga** – “**Chega de Fiu Fiu**” (Stop Catcall) www.thinkolga.com and www.thinkolga.com/chega-de-fiu-fiu/

Ipea - Institute for Applied Economic Research – Social Perception. http://www.ipea.gov.br/portal/images/stories/PDFs/SIPS/140327_sips_violencia_mulheres_novo.pdf

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