At war on Twitter? The impact of gendered harassment across digital platforms on high-profile women in broadcast journalism

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Abstract

This research project explores the impact of gendered harassment across digital platforms on high-profile women in broadcast journalism. The journalistic feature article collated stories of gendered harassment that women journalists had experienced online, most of which they had not spoken publicly about before. The interviews conducted for this feature found a lack of policy in newsrooms to address gendered harassment, and no strong awareness or understanding of the issue in other places journalists might expect to be able to seek redress, such as ACC, counselling services, or their union. Scholarly research into the effects of repeated exposure to trauma on journalists is a fledgling field, and journalists' exposure to trauma in digital spaces is even less examined or understood. This leaves a broad scope for further research. This project found, through a content analysis, evidence that women broadcasters were subject to more gendered feedback than men. While women broadcasters interviewed said they could weather abuse, most acknowledged that gendered harassment took some form of toll, and that they had been forced to develop mechanisms to cope with it. In keeping with global trends, this project found most New Zealand newsrooms surveyed are not proactively addressing the problem.

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This research is dedicated to my late mother, Paula, and to my family, Michael and Aleisha Graham.

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Introduction

This research project aimed to find out the impact of gendered harassment across digital platforms on high-profile women in broadcast journalism.

I came to this subject as a woman broadcaster myself; I've filled in as an on-air host on RNZ since 2013. After more than a decade in broadcast journalism, I'm no longer fazed or upset by listener criticism. But I was taken aback, particularly as I took more on-air roles, by how much of it mentioned, or was entirely centred on, the fact that I was a woman. A text or email mentioning my gender unfavourably (or mentioning my voice unfavourably in a way that is linked to my gender) is a predictably regular, almost mundane, occurrence. But then I started to hear stories of women colleagues receiving much worse gender-based abuse.

In 2016, I shut down my only professional social media account for six months after a particularly bad instance of being harassed on Twitter while I was hosting a radio programme. As a freelancer, I worried that I would lose work because I was no longer accessible or visible online. I wondered what kind of toll the cumulative effects of such comments took on long-time women broadcasters. I also realised that when asked to write or speak about sexism, I made mental calculations about whether I not only had time to prepare and perform the work to a high standard, but also whether I could afford the unpaid labour, after the writing was published, of blocking Twitter trolls or dealing with people who wanted to make it clear in abusive terms how much they disliked my work. Although I love writing and speaking about gender, this phenomenon started to feel like an added tax on my professional time and energy. In one instance, I turned down a writing commission about a gender issue because I did not have the extra time required to deal with the fallout from social media trolls after it was published. Three other mainstream media outlets published opinion pieces on the same issue that week, all written by men. I wondered whether the weariness over trolling and abuse was serving to marginalise women's voices in the conversation entirely, just as I'd side-lined myself in that instance.

While I'd read several personal essays and a book that discussed the experiences in the digital space of individual female journalists – mostly American – a quick scan of journalism

literature suggested the discussion had not moved beyond the personal, into academia. Thus, a literature review in this project draws on a number of interrelated theoretical concepts and areas to establish the size and nature of the gap in literature on this issue.

I'd found, anecdotally, that the subject of gendered digital harassment was discussed at length, and vociferously, in all-female professional contexts, or privately through electronic messaging, but these conversations were not continued formally in newsrooms. I was unsure how many high-profile women would want to draw more attention to themselves, or risk stirring up trouble, by participating in this research. As a woman broadcaster myself, I had relatively easy access to approach the women in question for interviews and they talked to me as they would to a colleague. This was a privileged position to be in as a researcher, and such interviews would have been more difficult to secure for a researcher who did not work in broadcasting. This level of access, and candour from my subjects, meant I was careful to make clear to them that this work would be published, and read with their names attached. I need not have worried. All of the women I interviewed were remarkably forthcoming in sharing their experiences. Some were buoyed by the fact that others were doing so; a kind of "safety in numbers," while others were sick of ruminating on the subject privately and were happy to be asked to talk about it. Only one journalist turned down an interview due to fear of the consequences, despite being interested in taking part. An instance where she'd publicly pointed out sexism in the past had drawn such aggressive and sustained attacks on her that she was unwilling to risk it again.

By framing my study through the lens of how repeated exposure to trauma affects journalists, I believe this research builds a compelling case for newsrooms to take more notice of how their reporters are treated online. There is a gap not only in academic literature on gendered harassment of women journalists in digital spaces, but a gap in professional acknowledgement of the problem, and moves to address it.

My aim is that the study will give both media consumers, and media employers, food for thought; the former on how they speak to journalists, and the latter on how to best protect their employees from harm. I also aim to highlight for women journalists the shared components of their experiences, which can be difficult to compare when the problem is borne in silence.

Long-form journalism

[A version of this article was published at The Spinoff on 6 September 2017.]

As newsrooms push for their reporters and audiences to engage with each other on digital platforms, some women journalists say gendered harassment and abuse from media consumers has become an exhausting, and accepted, part of the job. Charlotte Graham-McLay has worked in broadcast journalism for more than a decade, including in on-air roles. She investigates women's stories of coming under attack online and whether anything is being done to prevent it.

Sitting at the presenter's on-air desk at a radio station in 2017 is like being plugged into the Matrix. It's incredibly exciting, the cut and thrust of the morning, everything happening at once, before most people have even had their breakfast. Through their headphones, the show's host can hear both the guest they're interviewing and the studio producer giving them cues.

The next guest is late. We're crossing to London after this.

On the screen in front of the host, news alerts from around the world roll in. Instant messages from producers next door in the newsroom keep them across the story as it changes. And in this digital age, increasingly, they're watching the listeners react in real time. Text messages, emails, and tweets auto-update on the screen. Often, it's incredibly helpful, being able to take the pulse of the nation while an interview is still on air. But sometimes, a host is midway through interviewing the Prime Minister and can see, in real time, that a listener has texted to tell them they're a stupid bitch.

Susie Ferguson is a veteran journalist, former war correspondent, and co-host of RNZ's flagship news programme, Morning Report. About once a week, a listener will text or tweet in feedback to the programme that disparages her gender, usually insulting her intelligence as well. Sometimes the abusive feedback is more creative; that tends to come in clusters based on the story being discussed.

It surprised Ferguson, when she started reading the messages sent to Morning Report, how many took issue with her gender.

“To get to nearly the grand old age of 40 and hear from people that they don’t think I should do what I do, I find antiquated and laughable and astonishing,” Ferguson said.

“Eventually I thought, why do I have to put up with this shit myself? Why should I be the one going away at the end of the programme feeling like crap having all these bloody woman-haters on me all morning?”

A year ago, Ferguson decided to stop keeping the sexist comments to herself. She wanted, too, to see what the rest of the listeners thought about the messages she received. So she posted an abusive text message, with the sender’s identifying details removed, on her Twitter account. The response was overwhelming. Her Twitter followers were shocked that this kind of feedback was standard, and they enjoyed mocking what the man had said.

“People were funny about it,” she said, “and it’s such a great way to take the heat and the angst and the hurt out of it, being funny about it. Why should the people saying those things have any power over me?”

Ferguson now tweets examples of gendered feedback regularly. And while she has found a way to make it funny, experts say that globally, sexist abuse of women journalists on digital platforms is no laughing matter. Elisa Lees Muñoz is the head of the International Women’s Media Federation, a Washington DC-based advocacy organisation for women journalists. Muñoz’s frustration at both the scale of the problem, and the lack of action being taken about it, is palpable and laced through everything she says. Muñoz believes that online harassment and abuse of female reporters online will soon be the biggest problem Western newsrooms face, if it isn’t already.

She reels off examples from countries where social media threats often turn into terrifying real-world encounters. Muñoz said that in some societies, including some African and Middle Eastern countries, women are stigmatised for their work as journalists. Smear campaigns are conducted against them, she said; they’re shamed and their families are targeted.

But Muñoz said women journalists in Western countries are also leaving the profession because of sexist abuse. The expectation they should be able to separate their online and professional lives was unrealistic, she said.

She's sick of talking about the scale of the problem and now she's only interested in solutions. The ones she knows about are mostly driven by journalists: a former reporter in the US has created an anti-trolling app. A woman in Turkey runs a support group for other journalists. Muñoz said newsrooms can't wait for social media platforms to finally do something about abuse their users face.

"Newsrooms should have the same responsibility for their journalists online as they would for journalists they're sending into conflict zones. They should get training, psychological support and legal support, to combat the effects of it," she said.

Muñoz urged newsrooms to see the problem for what she says it is: online violence. She says when a journalist's livelihood depends on social media, and women are prevented from using it, or are attacked in such a public way, "psychological violence" is the most apt thing to call it.

While *don't read the comments* is an adage for the digital age, for RNZ's Community Engagement Editor, Megan Whelan, and her second in command, Leilani Momoisea, reading the comments is in their job descriptions.

The pair sees every post, tweet, email or text made to the public broadcaster's programmes or pages.

Both are experienced journalists, with a couple of decades' experience between them; Whelan is also a regular fill-in host on RNZ. With the advance of technology, it might seem strange that two human beings are still required to manually moderate comments and debate, but filters to catch inappropriate language only go so far.

"People have some creative spellings," Whelan said, and made a face.

Facebook itself announced in May a plan to boost the number of moderators checking its users' content from 4500 to 7500, after a spate of suicides and other violence live-streamed in videos on the site.

Even the tech giant still needs real people to decide what's appropriate. And Megan Whelan is clear about what attracts the most negative feedback to RNZ's page.

"The most vitriolic comments we get on any story we cover is not race or the Treaty of Waitangi or the All Blacks and homophobia. It's stories about the gender wage gap. People saying, 'This is bullshit, why are you reporting on this? The gender wage gap doesn't exist and if you think it does, you're a stupid feminazi who doesn't know what she's talking about.'"

Whelan and Momoisea carefully monitor the comments, removing the most offensive and giving the commenters a link to RNZ's feedback policy if they are in breach of it. Whelan said all comments have to be manually checked and approved on stories about two particular female politicians – both National Party MPs – because abusive posts about the pair are so prevalent and so appalling that RNZ can't risk allowing comments unfiltered.

Whelan said the overall effect, once a comment thread descends into sexist abuse, is that women stop leaving comments on that thread entirely. She doesn't want women to self-censor in the comments because they're scared of getting attacked; she wants the public discourse to be for everyone.

That requires round the clock moderation; she regularly checks her phone at 11 at night, or during the evening while out at events.

This year, RNZ ran a podcast series interviewing a number of former New Zealand Prime Ministers. Whelan said an analysis of the Facebook comments on each episode was revealing. She found there was one abusive comment was posted about each of Mike Moore, Jim Bolger, and Sir Geoffrey Palmer, calling them things like "boring" or "idiots." But she said Dame Jenny Shipley's interview led to more than 60 abusive messages, using words like bitch, hag, and c**t.

Most journalists spoken to for this story were in no doubt that the phenomenon of gendered feedback is a real one. Both Megan Whelan, and Morning Report's Susie Ferguson, recognised that programmes fronted by women, or featuring women interviewing other women, seemed to provoke the worst comments. In 2016, Ferguson co-hosted Morning Report for brief stints with fellow veteran broadcaster, Kim Hill. The show was praised in many quarters for showcasing two women journalists at the top of their game, but Ferguson says there was gendered criticism too.

"We do get 'feminazis' a lot, even more in the past year, really," Ferguson said. "I just think in 2017 it's such a weird idea, that having two women present a show is something that people would even comment on."

Megan Whelan found the same effect recently when she filled in for a few days for veteran broadcaster Jim Mora on RNZ's drive-time show, The Panel. Each day the show brings on two commentators to discuss the day's news, and for two of the days Whelan hosted, the show followed its usual model of one male and one female commentator.

But on the day Whelan hosted the programme with two female commentators – believed to be the first all-female show in its history – the listeners noticed. While some enjoyed the change, others took issue.

"A bloody teenage gigglefest," texted one listener. "We don't need a bunch of old girls chewing the fat and gossiping," said another. "God you women can talk some f**ken bullshit," said a man who signed the text message with his real name.

There were more of the same. None of those who took issue with the gender of those fronting the show mentioned any particular content or opinion that angered them – just who was doing the talking.

The show's executive producer, Caitlin Cherry said she had only once had a complaint about an all-male show. A case of her scheduling the guests too far ahead accidentally resulted in three men booked to front the programme on International Women's Day. When the all-male show was promoted ahead of the broadcast, listeners noticed and complained. Cherry had

time to book women for the show before it went to air. Other all-male shows passed without comment.

Guyon Espiner is another high-profile, experienced broadcast journalist, and Susie Ferguson's regular co-host on Morning Report. He readily agreed that Ferguson sometimes gets messages that target her gender rather than her opinions.

"Some of the feedback we get in, especially the text message feedback, is completely vile and you wonder, who would think, let alone make the effort to send that in?" he said.

While Espiner acknowledged women's experiences in this area, he also sent a link to a tweet from that morning's show. In it, a listener disparaged a question Espiner had asked and suggested the host had a small penis.

Espiner said he'd had regular and hurtful criticism along these lines over his 15 years in broadcasting.

"Is this similar to being called a 'stupid bitch'?" He asked. "I don't know."

For a number of the high-profile broadcast journalists interviewed for this story, blowing off steam to colleagues or partners at home was how they best coped with the messages they got, with a few hardy souls taking to social media to share the worst of it. Most women agreed the comments they get would be considered egregiously inappropriate or offensive in a normal office job – if a co-worker or a customer had called them a bitch or a whore.

But most accepted it as normal in the jobs they currently have, and some no longer find it upsetting.

In researching this story, all of New Zealand's major mainstream media outlets were approached and asked for their social media guidelines for reporters. Four outlets provided them; NZME and Māori Television did not respond to three months of repeated requests for comment.

The results from those who did respond were stark: most newsrooms have nothing in their social media guidelines for journalists to tell them what they should do if they're harassed or abused online by members of the public.

Most newsrooms give journalists fairly strict rules about how *they* should behave on the web, intended to help uphold the company's reputation and preserve the reporter's neutrality. For instance, TVNZ's guidelines tell reporters to "speak to a manager" if they're concerned about an online interaction. RNZ is the only media outlet surveyed to have guidelines cautioning about the impact of online attacks on women specifically, because Megan Whelan – who is aware of the problem – wrote it in herself.

Research for this story showed the approach of most New Zealand newsrooms fits global trends. Most employers prohibit reporters from abusing members of the public, without considering what happens when the abuse flows the other way.

An online editor at UK-based newspaper The Guardian, where a study showed women and people of colour came in for the worst abuse on their opinion pages, said there's no policy set in stone there either. She said individual editors tended to coach writers about what to expect from a particular piece, including advising them to spend some time offline after it was published, or remove especially inflammatory content. But she said there was no written guide to what should happen when a journalist was harassed online. Everyone dealt with it on an ad hoc basis.

Most journalists interviewed said some gendered comments were hurtful, and the cumulative effect of abusive feedback took a toll. But they went to pains to point out they didn't want pity or sympathy. Journalists shouldn't be treated like heroes just for doing their jobs, they said, and nasty comments wouldn't force them out of theirs.

However, dealing with such harassment was a time sink, and discussing the exact nature of the things said about reporters online could provoke embarrassing conversations with their bosses. Megan Whelan found just that in a recent instance where a man who had been searching for how to send feedback to RNZ had spotted a picture of her and publicly posted an abusive critique of her appearance instead. He included her Twitter handle to make sure she saw it.

Whelan would have ignored something so crass, except that in this man's case, he wasn't an obvious troll. His account had a reasonably large following and he used his real name. She tried to keep it light, retweeting the comment with a witty riposte. After other Twitter users came to Whelan's defence, the man deleted his comment and apologised.

Whelan considered the engagement, overall, a success. But she resented the fact that she lay awake later than night wondering if she'd done the right thing. Had she conducted herself properly? Had she been fair and professional according to the RNZ social media guidelines – which she wrote? Having to second-guess her own decisions in the face of base, petty harassment frustrated her.

"The time it takes up hurts your productivity," she said. Even though she wasn't at work in this case, the engagement took up time she could have been knitting, or otherwise relaxing from her day at work. And even though her boss was supportive, she hated that she had to initiate a conversation with him about it, repeating the things the man online had said about her looks.

When talking about the impact of such messages, experienced broadcaster and Morning Report host Susie Ferguson was clear that she wouldn't "go home and cry about it." Her real anger was aimed at the way gendered harassment undermines her professional experience "The frustrating thing, when people disparage you, is that they're robbing you of your experience. And in any job, but especially in this job, your experience is your currency," she said.

She feared when someone questioned what she could possibly know about an issue on the basis of her gender, that it eroded the capital she'd built up over years over hard work, leaving her with nothing else to trade on.

Recently, Ferguson attended a book launch about the New Zealand Defence Force's involvement in Afghanistan. The next morning, she discussed the events of the book on air with RNZ's Political Editor Jane Patterson, who had also been at the launch.

“If you have not the stomach for war, go back to the kitchen,” one listener texted, in response to the interview. There were more in the same vein.

Ironically Patterson, in her years as a gallery reporter, had spent time in Afghanistan, and Ferguson, over six years as a war correspondent, had been there five times.

Ferguson said it was made clear that both women had attended the book launch under discussion, and that listeners didn’t seem to be taking issue with the facts of the story – just the gender of the two people discussing it.

After another interview, a man criticising Ferguson on Twitter asked what on earth she knew about Middle Eastern politics. When she replied that she’d been a war reporter in the Middle East, the man accused her of lying.

"If people don't give weight to your background, you start thinking, well if they didn't know that I did this, then what *do* they think I've done?" Ferguson said.

Several reporters suggested the rise of now US President Donald Trump had emboldened people to say things they’d long been thinking about women. The old journalistic caveat that you should never become the story was tossed to one side for American journalists during the campaign. Trump targeted NBC correspondent Katy Tur several times by name in speeches; her employers had to hire security for her, and Trump’s own security detail helped ensure she left his rallies safely when the candidate pointed her out from the stage.

Teen Vogue writer Lauren Duca came to public attention for her fiery political columns during the campaign, shocking people who thought Teen Vogue readers only cared about thigh high boots. The campaign made a name for Tur, and Duca received a book deal and a letter from Hillary Clinton professing her admiration. In some ways the attention was positive.

But the professional landscape for both of them has changed in other ways. Fox News host Tucker Carlson has devoted several segments of his TV show to analysing “what’s wrong

with Lauren Duca," and every tweet she posts gets responses not only from admirers but from bots and trolls. On her website, she asks that people refrain from sending her threats of rape.

In niche or specialty areas of journalism, the kinds of spaces usually populated mostly by men, these discussions have been gathering pace for some time. There has been coverage of rape threats and other sexually-motivated abuse received by US-based sports journalists, and the online journalist and feminist writer Lindy West last year published a book about the abuse she'd experienced.

In *Shrill,* West details the physical and emotional toll taken by years of death threats, rape threats, and violation of her privacy incurred in her work as a journalist. She started out her career as a comedy reviewer, and never wanted to become specifically a feminist journalist. But her insistence that rape jokes usually weren't funny and that fat people deserved the same treatment as everyone else, catapulted her onto a list of women writers who are targeted for online harassment and abuse. One troll pretended to be West's father, who had died. West developed a reputation for putting down her worst harassers publicly on social media, but the abuse got worse and worse.

Earlier this year, West deleted her Twitter account, saying the platform was "unusable for anyone but trolls, robots, and dictators."

"It is a roiling rat-king of Nazis," she wrote.

In our personal lives, social media seems a fun way to blow off steam, rather than an essential tool, and it's easy to wonder why journalists would bother with platforms like Twitter when things get so nasty.

But many journalists feel like their newsrooms expect them to be online, engaged, and accessible.

Megan Whelan, whose role at RNZ includes monitoring the performance of the broadcaster's content across platforms, said social media had become an essential part of the job.

“We became journalists because we liked telling stories. We became journalists because we wanted to expose the truth. We wanted to tell people how the world is, and social media is one of the tools that helps us do that now.”

Partly because of her own experiences, Whelan said she would not demand that a journalist maintain personal social media accounts, and would understand if they found the public’s easy access to reporters on such platforms was too much to handle.

“It’s not a price you have to pay for the job,” she said.

But others I spoke to questioned whether a woman would be curtailing her own career if she made such a choice.

Catherine Adams, a veteran former journalist and now researcher at Nottingham Trent University, conducted one of the only studies carried out anywhere in the world into the gendered harassment of women journalists online.

She focused on gaming and technology reporters, another area where women with opinions have not been welcomed to the public debate.

Adams found that 62% of the 100 journalists she surveyed had experienced sexist abuse, and 39% of them had changed how they worked in some way because of it. For some, that meant changing their name or presented gender when they published their stories. Others gave stories to colleagues to publish, made themselves inaccessible online, or stopped reporting altogether for periods of time.

A third of women said the abuse had worsened in recent years, and 86% said more needed to be done to stop it. Adams said a significant number of women she spoke to had disengaged from their audiences altogether.

“A journalist’s job these days relies on engagement with the audience,” she said. “My conclusion I drew from this study is that these women were less engaged in the job they wanted to do, and were less represented in gaming and tech journalism. They were also

working on a different playing field to men. Men would engage with their audiences without fear of abuse, so you've got two different types of journalism going on."

Adams pointed out that women disguising their genders or using pseudonyms when they write is not new, and nor is the phenomenon of people harassing women for taking up public-facing jobs. But digital technologies have changed things.

RNZ host Kathryn Ryan presents the show Nine to Noon. The experienced political journalist balances hard-hitting questions in the programme's current events hour with warmth and gentle curiosity during the show's feature content. She remembers being a child and sitting around the TV discussing the evening news with her family.

"When politicians were on, or journalists, or the weather presenter, the same kind of comments got made as you see online now. The same kind of rudeness existed; the same kind of comments you'd never say to anyone's face," she said.

"The difference is, it got said in the living room. The problem now is the living room is everybody's living room, and the poor person who's on the television sees it and hears it." Ryan is clear that neither gendered nor abusive feedback is a noticeable component of what she gets from the public, though she points out that the sheer volume of what the programme receives means that much of it is read by producers first. She can't possibly read it all, though she browses widely across the feedback platforms, and replies, occasionally, where she feels it's warranted.

Ryan works to share some of herself with the listeners, leaving regulars feeling that they know her, without giving too much personal information away. She, at present, doesn't keep personal social media accounts, and while she tries to scope ideas and views across the breadth of RNZ's diverse listenership, she doesn't visit sites she knows harbour abusive commentary.

"I limit my exposure to what is professionally useful. It's not personal; listeners don't know me, even though they know a bit about me," she said.

Leilani Momoisea at RNZ, who Megan Whelan handpicked as her deputy, is in the rare position of being a Millennial-aged journalist whose social media is not intimately linked to her work. She deliberately does not use her full name on public social media accounts, and doesn't use them for work purposes.

As was the case for a number of journalists interviewed, the systemic solution to online abuse wasn't immediately apparent to her. Momoisea rejected the idea that it might be a problem you'd take to your boss; women spoken to for this story mostly said their newsrooms had been broadly supportive, and they didn't want anyone to think they couldn't cope.

Journalism has long been considered a profession for tough people. But the union E tū, which represents 800 people in the New Zealand news media, said that's not a good enough reason for newsrooms to avoid dealing with the problem of online abuse.

The union warned that new legislation required employers to tackle the stress caused by things like gendered harassment. The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015, which came into effect in April 2016, demands that employers mitigate threats to employees' mental health. Breaches of the Act can be punished by fines or imprisonment.

Finding a way to mitigate the stress of a near-constant stream of public feedback journalists receive seems like a tough ask in workplaces. But the union was clear that newsrooms have to do it. E tū media spokesperson, Paul Tolich, said the problem must be addressed even though public engagement is built into the very fabric of journalism. He said the union would need to see a case to say specifically how it would expect employers to address the issue. No case has arisen so far. But Tolich was firm: complying with the law means newsrooms must address, in policy, mental health or stress threats to their employees.

As well as the risks to journalists' mental health, a number of those interviewed for this piece shared stories about harassment threatening to spill over into the real world after starting online. RNZ's Megan Whelan had two rape threats sent to her direct message inbox on Twitter, prompting her to close her inbox to anyone she didn't mutually "follow" on the platform.

Journalists often use private messaging on social media to receive useful feedback or story tips. But Whelan has had experience with a stalker before. It wasn't in a work context, but sexually threatening messages sent privately to her work account reminded her of how scary it was, knowing someone could find her at any time. She's also had men email her with disgusting requests after media appearances.

"I was on TV, in one instance, talking about women's representation in Parliament in the Pacific, and what this man had taken from it was that I was potentially available for sex. The effect it has is to say, 'You're not safe at work either. We can get to you here.'"

On another occasion, a man messaged her to say he liked her voice, then told her what he enjoyed doing while he listened to it. She is nervous when opening emails from addresses she doesn't recognise.

Shockingly, Whelan wasn't the only one. Other journalists I spoke to recounted propositions on Facebook or over email for sex. One television reporter came to our interview with screenshots her colleagues had provided, Facebook messages from a serial offender who does the rounds of their newsroom, using private messages to make inappropriate overtures to reporters. At least one reporter was upset by the messages because she felt they were threatening. The same man had showed up at a reporter's live cross location after learning from the news that she was there.

For TV journalists, being so visible on screen has always come with the risk of being recognised approached in public. TVNZ political journalist Katie Bradford has 14 years of experience across TV, radio and print, in New Zealand and overseas. People come up to her in the supermarket and at the pub, sometimes to talk politics, which she enjoys; often to talk about her physical appearance, which she doesn't.

But Bradford said online assignments for journalists had brought new ways for viewers to engage with her, sometimes in more intimate ways than ever before.

A number of the women interviewed for this piece suggested Facebook comments on news stories were where the most abusive comments happened. Katie Bradford said her appearance and speculation about her personal life had been discussed there, on posts about political stories she'd done.

But Facebook critique goes even further. TVNZ is now among the newsrooms choosing to broadcast live crosses straight onto social media using Facebook Live. The journalist sitting in front of the computer, filing the live report, is able to watch comments appear on screen as they're posted. In a recent Facebook Live stream in which Katie Bradford and her male colleague Corin Dann talked politics, viewers discussed amongst themselves how to "fix" Bradford's hair. Almost 9,000 people watched the video.

Unlike on radio, where hosts also see text messages coming in live, TV reporters must keep a poker face while they read the incoming comments, knowing their facial expressions are still being broadcast live as they report. A number of journalists interviewed were shocked by the level of vitriol on Facebook, particularly because commenters usually use their real name and profile picture, and others can see them making the comments. The women were shocked that someone using their real identity to comment online wasn't enough to dissuade them from being abusive.

If there are ways for journalists to seek redress for hurt they feel from such abuse, it is difficult to find them. New Zealand's Accident Compensation Corporation covers the costs of injuries sustained at work, including counselling for mental injuries. This writer approached ACC to find out whether sexually-motivated harassment online, incurred during the course of the job, would fit the bill.

A spokesperson said ACC couldn't say whether any such claims had been made, as there aren't specific numbers kept for mental injury coverage following an incident of online abuse. But the spokesperson said approval of such a claim was unlikely, unless the claimant was under the age of 16. The only other possibility for redress was reporting a specific online threat to the police under the Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015.

The journalists' union, E tū, said they would expect any accounts to which an employee was receiving abuse to be shut down – be they email or social media. But ask any journalist, eager to receive hot tips on stories or meet "real people" who might help illustrate their next package, and you'll hear it's more complicated than that. Most journalists spoken to for this feature felt that getting to talk to some people, unfiltered, was crucial to doing their job. But many admitted it was hard to draw a line on how accessible to make themselves.

Even among women in the profession, some come in for worse abuse than others. One Māori journalist reported the racist abuse she received far outstripped remarks that mentioned her gender, and bosses didn't always understand the additional stress it put her under.

Yvonne Tahana is an experienced newspaper journalist who now works in TV, and said feedback mentioned her race frequently, and bluntly. There was no need to read between the lines, and Māori men she worked with came in for the same abuse.

Tahana reports good support from her current employers, TVNZ, but news bosses haven't always understood the effect such abuse has on her. In a newsroom she previously worked for, she ended up packing off to employer-provided counselling to help her deal with racist abuse from readers. She felt hurt and let down when her boss told her to ignore it, rather than acknowledging how bad it was.

A number of newsrooms make counselling available to their employees, who can access it for free any time. One of those providers is EAP Services, whose spokesperson Greg Ford said the organisation had no record of journalists coming to counselling specifically for help dealing with online abuse, although at least two women interviewed for this story said they had. The discrepancy could be because the primary reason for attending counselling was likely recorded as something else, and the subject came up in the course of their sessions. Ford, also a clinical psychologist, said repeated instances of low-level stress at work could spill over into the rest of an employee's work or personal life, making it harder to deal with other stresses, or resulting in out-of-proportion reactions to smaller problems.

He said that in industries across New Zealand, employers are increasingly wrestling with social media and device use, both in and out of work hours. He expects the problem is only

going to get bigger, and employers will need to know where they stand on the level of availability and engagement they expect from employees.

Ford doesn't think social media notifications delivered to the home screen of your phone every 30 seconds – a scenario some journalists described – is good for anyone.

Journalism is a privileged and exciting job that interviewees for this story felt lucky to do. But RNZ's Megan Whelan said the public should care about the harassment of women reporters, especially if they felt invested in the idea that journalism was important. She said there was a real risk that reporters would get sick of the abuse and leave their jobs.

Long-time current events host Kathryn Ryan has sympathy for the often young reporters at the cutting edge of online journalism, making themselves more accessible, and their private lives more public, than reporters ever have before.

She relishes getting to make her own decisions about what she shares, and worries for those who are pioneering social media-heavy reporting when "the rules haven't been set yet and there are no safety barriers in place," especially for civility and decency in the conversation.

Ryan recalled the transition to digital, and a sense of urgency and anxiety among media companies that there was no future for them without social media, instant updates, and highly accessible journalists. She said outlets must now figure out how much of that engagement and access to journalists and media outlets the majority of the public really wants.

"Media companies need to support freedom of speech by building practical protections around our staff, and others who want to participate in our sphere."

Megan Whelan at RNZ said she understood why she and other women journalists kept putting themselves at the mercy of digital and social channels in the face of abusive responses. She loves engaging with people, and still believes in the power of a great public discourse. It's just harder, these days, for her to believe it's possible.

“I’m utterly exhausted,” she said. “Every time there’s a story about rape culture and I have to spend a week moderating comments on it, it’s exhausting. Seeing what feels like the worst of humanity is tiring.”

She feels worse about the state of public debate after 18 months of moderating RNZ’s comments.

“I think it’s really important that we have conversations about these important issues. I want to help find a way that we can have grown-up, sensible conversations about these really difficult issues the world is facing.

“So I’m an idealist, but I’m also a massive cynic because I don’t know if we can ever do that.”

Literature review

> Online harassment is not virtual – it is physical. Flooding in through every possible channel, it moves and changes my body: it puts me on the phone with the FBI, it gives me tension headaches and anxiety attacks; it alters my day-to-day behavior (am I safe? Is that guy staring at me? Is he a troll?); it alienates my friends; it steals time from my family. The goal is to traumatise me, erode my mental health, force me to quit my job (West, 2016, p. 116).

Introduction

In recent years, women journalists have started to discuss, in anecdotal ways, the kind of gendered and harassment and abuse they receive online (Gardiner et al., 2016; Greenslade, 2015; Hess, 2014; Taylor, 2016; TVNZ, 2014; West, 2017; Willis, 2013). As seen in the excerpt from West (2016), above, these are usually richly descriptive first-person accounts, outlining the deep impacts of online harassment on the women journalists experiencing abuse. However, these effects have been neither qualified nor quantified, as scholarly research on the subject is almost non-existent. The first study of the effects of gendered online harassment of women journalists was carried out in 2015 by a researcher at Nottingham Trent University, who is also a veteran former broadcast journalist (C. Adams, personal communication, 6 April 2017). The study focused exclusively on technology and gaming journalists, and is awaiting publication academically, though some of the results have been published in the media (Adams, 2015). When interviewed for the feature journalism portion of this project, Adams was not aware of any other research or studies conducted on the gendered harassment of women journalists in digital spaces, although her research made it clear that the problem was real (ibid).

Thus, it is necessary to map the issue using other, interconnected fields. Based on interviewees' descriptions of upsetting experiences involving gendered feedback via texts, emails, or social media, this literature review will examine the study of trauma's effect on journalists as a framework for understanding the effects of gendered abuse in digital spaces.

The review will explore acknowledgements of the problem, and supports put in place by newsrooms, and whether these have helped to mitigate the effects of trauma on journalists. This study will then examine the digital context in which such harassing messages are received, by reviewing the literature on digital pressures for journalists, and expectations around their engagement with comments and audiences.

Gendered harassment in of women digital spaces

There is no published scholarly research that directly addresses gendered harassment of journalists in digital spaces. However, broader research about the types of harassment women receive online, by other online users, is useful to ascertain an understanding of what sorts of gendered harassment take place.

Megarry (2014) found online attacks on women frequently took the form of criticism of their femininity, and mentions of their "female biology" (p. 50) and other physical attributes. The author hypothesised that because words for women's anatomy have historically been considered insulting, these are easier to use to harass women than male biological terms are. The idea that harassers focus on specifically female insults or threats was supported by a Pew Forum study (Duggan, 2014), which found that a greater percentage of men reported being harassed online than women did. But the types of harassment men reported more often included being called offensive names or purposely embarrassed. Women reported higher rates than men of being stalked online, or receiving sexually-based harassment.

When examining whether the online or digital context makes harassment feel worse than it seems offline, Franks (2012) suggests that the anonymity and depersonalisation of the web causes people to say abusive things they would never normally have said in person. This is in keeping with a popular mainstream media narrative: that online sexual harassment operates in a vacuum, where trolls *only* say awful things online (Martin, 2013). Suler (2004) termed this the online disinhibition effect.

In contrast, Biber, Doverspike, Baznik, Cober, and Ritter (2002) challenge the idea that people behave worse online than they otherwise would. They found that contrary to their hypotheses, neither men nor women held looser or lower standards for online behavior than

in traditional spaces. However, the study participants did rate certain acts of sexual harassment as being more harassing when they were conducted online. Misogynist comments, using nicknames, and comments about dress were all considered more harassing online than they were in traditional, offline spaces. The researchers said that "these behaviours may seem more threatening if they are written down and in print rather than expressed verbally" (ibid, p. 38). This was due to the lack of context to online comments about dress, or the use of nicknames, especially if they were by a stranger, and the added effort and premeditated nature of having to compose a sexist comment in writing. Requests for company were seen as being more harassing offline, because of the added problem of the harasser being physically present. This research indicates that assuming the technology is to blame for sexual harassment could be a red herring. Blaming the tools or the medium risks the behaviour of online sexual harassers remaining unexplored. This is underscored by research such as that of Fox, Cruz, and Lee (2015), who found people who participated in a sexist hashtag on social media were more likely to also rank female job candidates as less competent offline.

Megarry (2014) urges that gendered harassment online should be conceptualised as "online sexual harassment," thus explicitly tying it to the concept of sexual harassment in traditional spaces. She says this is necessary in recognition of the effect such acts have: encouraging women to censor themselves online, or shutting them out of public discussions altogether. The author says this directly challenges the idea of the internet, and of social media platforms, acting as a Habermasian (1991) public sphere, which would allow for open and equal discourse between publics. Instead, Megarry (2014) says the internet has reinforced existing patriarchal societal structures that lead to sexual harassment. The way structural power imbalances are reinforced in digital spaces is supported by a number of other writers. Dahlberg (2007), for example, warns that "asymmetries in power offline are being replicated online, leading to inequalities in how different discourses are enabled and fostered online" (p. 838). However, studies such as Dahlberg's reveal another reason that specific research is needed into the online gendered harassment of women *journalists* specifically. While the studies show that women experience sexual harassment online, journalists are often considered to be a mainstream elite public (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2015), as opposed to an embattled online counterpublic engaging in a discursive battle to be heard (Dahlberg, 2011). This intersection of a privileged role (high-profile broadcast journalist) and a marginalised online group (women) has considerable scope for further research.

There are two significant pieces of non-scholarly information to examine in the specific field of this study, and the authors of both pieces were interviewed by this researcher for the feature journalism portion of this project. Lees Muñoz (2016), who is also the head of the Washington DC-based advocacy group the International Women's Media Federation, in 2013 conducted an email survey of 149 women journalists. Almost two thirds reported they had been threatened or abused in the course of their work, and 25% of those women said it had happened online. This was a global survey, and 27% of the women who had been harassed online said the abuse was perpetrated by a government official, while 15% had been harassed by the Police. This indicates some cultural and societal differences in some of the countries surveyed that would likely not be replicated in a New Zealand context. There are no figures known about how much abuse is perpetrated by media audiences and members of the general public.

It is Lees Muñoz's conclusion that such abuse of women journalists online is putting "lives and careers in danger" (p. 29), a conclusion that is shared by Adams (2015), who conducted a scholarly study of the online harassment of women technology journalists, which is awaiting publication. Adams' results are discussed here by way of media coverage, and an interview this researcher conducted with her. The study Adams conducted, through surveying 100 women technology and gaming journalists, found that women had stopped writing or left the profession as a result of sexist abuse (2015). Some of the women surveyed had experienced rape threats, written their work under assumed names or male identities, or deleted their social media accounts, thus putting them at a tremendous disadvantage in the highly networked world of technology journalism (C. Adams, personal communication, 6 April 2017).

Lees Muñoz (personal communication, 17 May 2017) admitted there are no clear figures on how many women have left the journalism profession, and that this might be a difficult figure to ascertain, especially if those women left the sector feeling silenced, marginalised, or scared. However, she said she had seen severe enough consequences of sexist online abuse that action from newsrooms and law enforcement was urgently needed on the matter (2016).

Trauma theory and journalism

Lees Muñoz (personal communication, 17 May 2017) suggested that sexual harassment of women journalists in digital spaces was a form of online violence, and should be approached by newsrooms in the same way as they would trauma from war or physical violence. Anecdotal, first-person accounts, such as those by journalists West (2016) and Hess (2014), seem to describe a physical and emotionally traumatised response to online abuse. Thus it is useful to examine the problem of gendered online harassment of women reporters through a lens of how journalists react to other, traditional forms of trauma. However, an exploration of the literature on journalism and trauma reveals that the traumatic effects of witnessing even traditional, offline trauma (war, crime, or car accidents, for example) are not being adequately addressed by newsrooms.

Keats and Buchanan have conducted three major studies on journalism and trauma, the effects of trauma on journalists, and what newsrooms are doing about it (2009, 2011, 2013). These are helpful to examine for a steer on how online gendered harassment of journalists should be addressed. The authors describe research into the "silencing and stigma associated with traumatic effects of reporting the news" (2011, p. 134) as "scant" (ibid). However, their examination of the issue is fleshed out by a more significant body of work that investigates the effects of witnessing trauma on first responders, such as fire fighters and police officers (2011).

Keats and Buchanan coined the idea of assignment stress injury (ASI) to describe the way that traumatic assignments, and tough newsroom cultures that discourage vulnerability, can combine to form a potent cocktail (2009). ASI can lead, the authors say, to a variety of mental health conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression (ibid). If online gendered abuse of women journalists is viewed as a kind of trauma, Keats and Buchanan's studies show the risk of prolonged exposure to such abuse.

The authors also found that, both deliberately and accidentally, journalists had developed ways to cope with witnessing trauma. The most commonly reported strategies were: "avoidance strategies at work, use of black humour, controlling one's emotions and memories, exercise and other physical activities, focusing on the technical aspects, and using

substances" (2011, p. 127). Most are self-explanatory, although the concept of avoidance strategies bears further explaining. Keats and Buchanan found journalists who had experienced trauma in the past might lie to get out of doing so again, or would ignore a news flash, or show up late to a scene where something traumatic might have taken place. The following part of this writer's project will examine whether journalists trying to mitigate the effect of online gendered abuse engage any of these coping mechanisms. If they do, it will shore up the case for online sexual harassment of women reporters to be considered and treated as a form of trauma by newsrooms.

Trauma and newsroom culture

Simply acknowledging that online gendered harassment could be considered trauma is not the only obstacle to seeing it addressed. Monteiro and Marques Pinto (2017) found in a study of 25 Portuguese journalists that many reporters felt they lacked any support from their newsrooms to deal with traditional forms of trauma, such as real-world violence. This led to the journalists feeling abandoned and isolated. Reporters said the types of support they wanted from their newsrooms were primarily "material; logistic; bureaucratic; psychological support; and training" (p. 478). While Keats and Buchanan (2009) found that understanding of trauma has improved in Canadian newsrooms, the authors said there was still often a disconnect between the magnitude of trauma that reporters had witnessed, and often mismatched or inadequate responses. This left reporters feeling isolated. However, Keats and Buchanan note that even when help is provided, such as free counselling or stress leave, reporters were sometimes sceptical or reluctant to take it, or they wanted to know if a colleague had found it helpful first (ibid). This was partly because they feared that there would still be consequences of admitting they couldn't cope. Keats and Buchanan highlight peer support programmes and opportunities to reflect on experiences with peers as supports that journalists found useful (2009). This indicates journalists might be more willing to trust each other with vulnerable experiences than they would newsroom management. The question of whether women journalists rely on such peer support mechanisms when they are sexually harassed online will be investigated later in this journalism project.

Writings by Barnes (2013, 2015) are most helpful for mapping the landscape of approaches to grief and trauma within the New Zealand media industry. Dishearteningly, Barnes found

that as of 2015, there was still confusion and lack of clear guidelines among journalism educators about what to teach on trauma. In this area, Barnes writes, New Zealand journalism schools are lagging behind American and Australian educators, who have been exploring trauma training for the past two decades (2013). Barnes' study indicates that New Zealand's journalism landscape resembles the picture painted by Dworznik and Grubb (2007). Those authors noted that young or newly graduated journalists covering very general news rounds were the most likely to be sent to traumatising news stories or situations. The authors hypothesised that young journalists believed they could cope with a higher level of trauma than they actually could (ibid). This is a potentially dangerous situation when viewed in combination with earlier findings by Simpson and Boggs (1999) and Ricchiardi and Gerzynski (1999) that reporters of all experience levels are often disinclined to ever admit they cannot cope with trauma. This is supported by Ward (2004), who says journalists see admission of vulnerability as potentially career-limiting. This reluctance to admit vulnerability after being confronted by traditional, accepted trauma (war, crime, court reporting, and so on) does not bode well for the recognition of online gendered harassment of reporters as a specific subset of trauma.

In addition to this, literature has firmly established that women still face sexism internally within newsrooms (North, 2012). Adams' study of women technology journalists found that many women felt their sexist newsrooms fostered, or furthered, the sexist abuse they received online (C. Adams, personal communication, 6 April 2017). The journalists said online sexism was validated and encouraged in the newsroom through coverage decisions, and selection of angles, headlines, and images (ibid). Adams also found that journalists who worked for the largest mainstream media newsrooms said they had experienced the most sexism at work, separate from the online harassment they had also received (ibid). These cultural challenges for newsrooms are complex. The literature on sexism in newsrooms shows obvious obstacles for media employers in creating not only good guidelines to support journalists who are exposed to online trauma, but also guidelines that acknowledge and consider the specific harms suffered by gendered harassment.

Journalists and the pressures of digital

The factors that could contribute to the traumatising effects of online gendered harassment of women journalists are increased when viewed in the light of newsrooms' growing reliance on digital technologies. Literature is emerging about the pressures of online reporting for journalists. However, the focus of this scholarly work tends to be on factors such as increased time pressures on journalists and need for multitasking (Gonzalez Fernandes & De Mendonca Jorge, 2017), as well as the longer hours required due to increased workloads brought about by digital demands (Hollings, Hanusch, Balasubramanian, & Lealand, 2016). The experiences of journalists online, and specifically their experiences when carrying out online tasks demanded of them by newsrooms, is not a well-explored field. However, researchers including Vu (2014) have documented the way an increased reliance by media outlets on web metrics (i.e. clicks) has elevated the role of the audience to a position of power in the news decision-making process that they did not previously enjoy. It would be interesting to know what effect this has had on newsrooms' expectations of their journalists around audience engagement online, for example, whether newsrooms encourage journalists to cultivate social media presence and make themselves available online because they think it will drive more traffic.

Franks (2012), who was writing about the experiences of all women online, not only journalists, opposes the idea that those who do not want to be harassed can simply choose not to engage in digital spaces. Franks writes that "one has few options to effectively avoid or exit cyber harassment" (p. 682), particularly given how entwined the internet has become with daily life. She adds that any sexist abuse made publicly, or on social media, is indexed by Google and could be brought up whenever someone searches the woman's name online (ibid). Furthermore, a Pew Forum study (Duggan, 2014) found that people whose online lives were inextricably linked to their work were more likely to be harassed online, especially when contact or personal details were available about them on the internet. This is likely to include journalists. Researchers such as Adams (personal communication, 6 April 2017) have found that women journalists feel at a disadvantage if they decline to cultivate an online presence. There is scope for further research, therefore, into how newsrooms balance the demands they make of journalists to be available online, and a growing elevation of audience

opinion, with an expectation that those journalists should then be kept safe from trauma sustained through sexist abuse.

Discussion

INTRODUCTION

The preceding literature review showed there is a significant gap, with considerable scope for further research, when the existing study on how journalists are affected by trauma is examined through a digital lens. Furthermore, most of the literature about the pressures on journalists from the media's push to digital and social platforms focuses on matters such as deadline pressure and multitasking. There is a lack of consideration given to digital interactions with members of the public and what effect such interactions would have when conducted at a high volume over an extended period of time. There is another gap in the literature about digital media, too: studies of the pressures on journalists in the digital space rarely examine the effect a reporter's gender might have on interactions they have with members of the public.

The literature review also noted that even research into the effects of more traditional trauma on journalists – wars, crime, and so on – is still in its relative infancy. There have been gaps identified in newsrooms' understanding of the effect of trauma on their reporters, and what their obligations are, as well as what would work to minimise it.

This study aims to ascertain the effects of gendered harassment and abuse across digital platforms on high-profile women broadcasters. It is clear that there are a number of gaps in the literature that could potentially be addressed in this research. After an examination of the theory about journalists and trauma, and interviews with high profile women broadcasters for the preceding feature article, the hypothesis of this research project is that gendered abuse of women reporters on digital platforms would have the same effect on them as exposure to offline trauma in their work. This writer hypothesizes that this would especially be the case when the exposure has happened repeatedly over a long period of time.

Three studies conducted by the psychologists Keats and Buchanan (2009, 2011, 2013) form a useful framework for this project. The authors established a list of factors journalists used as coping strategies when exposed to trauma at work (2011), and a list of ways their media employers could better address trauma on the job (2009). Their work serves as a framework for two of the three components of this research project.

This study was conducted in three parts. The first, a content analysis, attempts to establish whether women do in fact receive more gendered harassment than men in broadcast journalism.

The second part, interview analysis, examines the interviews conducted for the long-form journalism feature presented at the start of this project. It uses rich, experiential narratives to establish the stories of gendered harassment that high-profile New Zealand women journalists receive on digital platforms and what impact they report it has on them, and on their work practices. It compares the impacts they report to those reported in Keats and Buchanan (2011) as hallmarks of Assignment Stress Injury, a form of trauma, in journalists.

Finally, the project establishes scope for further research by carrying out a document analysis of New Zealand newsrooms' social media guidelines. This is to ascertain whether newsrooms are acknowledging the problem in company policy and whether they have processes in place for what women reporters should do when they feel they are under attack online.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

Approach: content analysis

When interviewing experts in the field of women and media for the journalistic feature in this project, the leader of one global advocacy organisation was concerned that there aren't firm figures known about the amount of, or content of, gendered feedback directed at women journalists (E. Lees Muñoz, personal communication, 17 May 2017). However, an online survey her organisation carried out suggested it was prevalent (Lees Muñoz, 2016). The literature review revealed only one scholarly study completed to date that attempts to

ascertain whether harassment of women journalists online is a problem. This project was published in the news media (Adams, 2015) but is awaiting scholarly publication, and this writer had the opportunity to interview the researcher who conducted the study. The researcher, Catherine Adams of Nottingham Trent University, interviewed 100 female technology and gaming journalists, revealing that 62% said they had received sexist abuse in the course of doing their work, both on and offline (C. Adams, personal communication, 6 April 2017). 31% said sexist abuse had become worse in recent years.

While one of the aims for this research project was to centre the narratives of women journalists, rather than to analyse the mindsets of those giving gendered feedback, it is helpful to understand a little of the context in which the women interviewed made their comments.

The content analysis in this project set out to quantify in real terms whether women in the mainstream news media received more sexist abuse via digital channels than men did. It also aims for an insight into the nature of gendered feedback; participants in the Nottingham Trent study reported attacks on their knowledge, name-calling, and rape threats were normal (C. Adams, personal communication, 6 April 2017).

Methodology: content analysis

Radio New Zealand (hereafter RNZ) is New Zealand's national public radio broadcaster (RNZ, 2017c), with a weekly cumulative audience of 579,400 making it the most listened-to talk station in the country (RNZ, 2017a). The Panel is a one-hour drive time talk programme aired on RNZ National (RNZ, 2017b), with a weekly cumulative audience of 207,500 listeners (RNZ, 2017a). The programme, broadcast from 4-5p.m. on weekdays, discusses the top and most controversial news stories of the day with a regular host and two commentators who are rostered on a rotating basis (C. Cherry, personal communication, 23 June 2017). The commentators are primarily high-profile New Zealanders from a range of backgrounds (ibid).

The show actively elicits opinion from, and interaction with, listeners through text messages, emails, and Twitter (RNZ, 2017b). This makes the programme a useful study of the sorts of feedback listeners send when expressly asked to give opinions which could be read out live on air.

The main method of communication used by listeners to the show is text messages (C. Cherry, personal communication, 23 June 2017), so this was selected as the format for study. A period of two weeks in May 2017, when the programme was hosted for three consecutive days by a woman, instead of the regular male host, provided a rare and data-rich opportunity for comparative content analysis. Both the regular male host, and the fill-in female host, are veteran radio journalists with long histories at RNZ.

This study compared three days of text messages sent by listeners when the male presenter hosted the show, with three days of text messages when the show was hosted by a woman. The sample was a total of 438 text messages, 194 sent across the days the show was hosted by a man, and 244 across the days it was hosted by a woman.

Each text message was assigned a number 1-438, and was then analysed on each of four variables. They were:

a. Gender of host. There were two variations: male and female.
b. Gender of the two commentators rostered on to discuss the news of the day. There were two variations: one man and one woman; and two women.
c. Content of the message. There were three variations: the subject material or news story being discussed on the show; the host or guest commentators; and production and editorial decisions, such as audio quality.
d. The text messages coded as being about the host or guest commentators (N=58 of 438 received) were then coded by tone. There were five variations: positive comment; positive gendered comment; neutral comment (asking questions of the host, or making observations about the host that used neither positive nor negative language); negative comment; and negative gendered comment.

For examples and description of variables and variations, see Appendix A. The text messages were analysed by a single coder.

Results: Content analysis

Table 1: Three days of text messages about male host

Type of feedback	Number of texts	% of host feedback	% of total show feedback
Positive	7	21.2	3.6
Positive gendered	0	0	0
Neutral	7	21.2	3.6
Negative	17	51.5	8.8
Negative gendered	2	6.1	1.0

When a man hosted the show, there were 30 pieces of feedback about the host and two guest commentators out of 194 pieces of text message feedback. The vast majority of the total feedback related to the subject matter being discussed, rather than the host.

There were no pieces of feedback that were specifically positive about the male host's gender. There were two pieces of negative feedback that referenced gender. This formed 6.1% of the feedback about the host. These comments were, "This guy is a dickhead," and, "Don't be such a miserable old man," the latter in connection to a particular opinion the host had voiced about one of the day's stories.

Table 2: Three days of text feedback about female host

Type of feedback	Number of texts	% of host feedback	% of total show feedback
Positive	3	10.7	1.2
Positive gendered	2	7.1	0.8
Neutral	1	3.6	0.4
Negative	16	57.1	6.6
Negative gendered	6	21.4	2.7

When a woman hosted the show, there were 28 pieces of feedback about the host and guest commentators, out of 244 pieces of text message feedback. Again, the vast majority of the total number of text messages related to the subject matter being discussed on the programme. There were fewer positive and neutral text messages about the female host, although two listeners did text to say they appreciated a woman on air (coded as positive gendered feedback).

There were six pieces of negative gendered feedback, with five of the six text messages sent on a day when the female host was joined by two female guest commentators on the programme. Seven of the 16 negative text messages were also sent on that day. The show's Executive Producer believed this was the first all-female fronted show in the programme's history (C. Cherry, personal communication, May 5, 2017).

The negative gendered feedback for the female host was exclusively about the host's style and sound, for example that the show "sounds like womans weekly" [sic], like a "chat show," a "bloody teenage gigglefest," and "a few old girls chewing the fat and gossiping." The listeners seemed to take issue with the way the women spoke, or their gender (one text message said, "God you women can talk some f**ken bullshit"). In no cases was the negative gendered feedback deployed in connection with an opinion or point that one of the women was making. Gendered feedback made up 21.4% of the feedback about the female host, as opposed to 6.1% of feedback about the male host.

Discussion: Content analysis

As Tables 1 and 2 show, the feedback for the female host was more polarising than that for the man, and she received more negative gendered comments. These comments were more likely to be solely based on her gender, rather than on her opinions.

Both negative and negative gendered text messages about the host were most prevalent on the day that she presented the programme with an all-female line-up of commentators. The negative gendered messages that day included the "chat show" and "womans weekly" [sic] comments, which seemed to allude to the fact that the show was comprised entirely of women and thus sounded like a daytime talk show, rather than a news programme.

This research establishes that more negative gendered text messages were sent to a show hosted by a woman, and that this effect was exacerbated on the day when there were no men on the show at all. Interestingly, only the female host received positive gendered feedback (positive acknowledgement of a woman on air). It seems that a woman journalist hosting the show was overall something listeners actively noticed and saw fit to comment on, even if that comment was positive.

The woman host also received fewer neutral comments. This could mean listeners were more polarised by a female host, although it could also suggest they are more comfortable asking questions and making observations to the regular presenter, who they might feel as though they "know."

In conclusion, this study found that the woman host did receive more gendered feedback than the male host did; that this feedback was less likely to be connected to the substance of what she was saying; and that such feedback was more likely when the show was exclusively fronted by women.

This study provides a useful basis for further research; there are rich possibilities for this. First, the motivations of, and possible coded language used by, listeners is ripe for further study. To ensure accurate and fair comparison in this research, only explicitly gendered text messages were coded as negative gendered comments. However, there were several about the woman host that were coded as merely "negative" but which might have been motivated by gender. Examples include listeners texting that the discussion was not "mature" enough, that the show sounded like "amateur hour," and that the host was saying "um" too much and it was annoying.

This researcher is regularly on-air on the radio and finds anecdotally that such messages tend to proliferate around women speakers or hosts; whether this amounts to listeners unknowingly or knowingly giving gendered feedback would be useful further research.

While this was a rare opportunity to compare the feedback given to two veteran journalists hosting the same show over a short space of time, it would be useful to replicate this study on a wider scale, over a longer period of time, to see whether the results were commensurate

with this study. However, it is challenging to find situations where similarly experienced journalists of different genders are hosting the same programme.

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

Framework: Interview analysis

The work of Keats and Buchanan (2011) in ascertaining journalists' coping methods for dealing with trauma forms a useful framework for analysing women journalists' coping methods in the face of Twitter abuse. The authors found in an earlier study (Keats & Buchanan, 2009) that journalists avoided talking openly to their employers about the problem for fear of being perceived as weak and incompetent. Instead, the 2011 study found, journalists developed their own coping mechanisms, both deliberately and accidentally, that most commonly included:

- Avoidance strategies at work
- Use of black humour
- Controlling one's emotions and memories
- Exercise and other physical activity
- Focusing on the technical aspects of the job
- Using substances (Keats & Buchanan, 2009, p. 127)

Using a similar methodology of analysing long-form interviews, this research explores whether journalists' reaction to traditional trauma as mapped by Keats and Buchanan is replicated when the trauma entails gendered abuse in the digital sphere.

Methodology: Interview analysis

For the journalistic feature portion of this project, long-form interviews were conducted with seven of New Zealand's highest profile female broadcast journalists. These interviews were then analysed, with a view to establishing whether the women believed they had experienced gendered harassment from members of the public, and what impact this had on them. A narrative approach of interviewing and analysis (Sandelowski, 1991) was employed because

it allowed the stories of the women to be centred, rather than the words of online internet commenters. It also allowed for the fact that what the interviewees chose to share and highlight was a crucial part of the story.

This researcher is a broadcast journalist of a decade's experience who had worked with, or knew, many of the potential interviewees for the long-form feature portion of the project. This was an excellent opportunity to access high-profile women who might otherwise be difficult to access, or reticent to talk about problems in their jobs, lest they be seen as complaining. This put the researcher in something of a participant-observer role (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000) of being able to build rapport and relate to statements made by interviewees. However, it was made clear in the approach, and again at the outset of the conversations, that these were journalistic interviews, on the record, and for publication. All interviewees gave permission for their names to be used in connection with their interview material. As highly professional journalists themselves, the interviewees all understood the process and were, for the most part, surprisingly happy to participate, especially when they knew others would be too. On the advice of Herzog (2005), interviewees were invited to select the interview location so they were comfortable disclosing potentially intimate information.

The pool of potential interviewees in a country such as New Zealand is relatively small, especially when the definition of "high-profile women in broadcast journalism" is considered. In order to be able to make fair comparisons, only those who worked in mainstream news and current events were considered. Presenters who are primarily entertainment-oriented hosts, or work in opinion or commentary, were excluded, in order to be able to compare interviewees' stories as closely as possible.

A combination purposive sampling strategy (Patton, 2015) was used to select interviewees. One sampling method employed was extreme case sampling (ibid), in cases where the journalist was in a particularly public and high-profile position, and the researcher was already aware the journalist had experienced gendered abuse (for example, the female co-host of New Zealand's most listened to morning news programme). The other sampling method was a stratified purposeful sample (ibid), where interviewees were selected partly to ensure some diversity of age, location, and ethnicity. As most potential interviewees within the "high-profile women in broadcast journalism" definition were urban white women, it was not possible to employ maximum variation sampling (ibid), but a stratified approach ensured two

of the seven interviewees were not white, and interviewees ranged in age from their 20s to 50s.

Because these interviews were conducted journalistically, rather than academically, they were carried out in an informal and conversational tone, with the interviewer prioritising the search for particularly illustrative or interesting stories. The interviews were generally an hour in length, as interviewees often had a large number of examples to share.

However, this researcher was aware that the interviews would later be analysed for commonalities, and so took a semi-structured approach to the question line for each interview. This can be seen in Appendix B.

Results: Interview analysis

Table 3: Do you receive feedback of a negative gendered nature in digital spaces, i.e. by text, email, or social media?

Received negative gendered feedback	**Had not received negative gendered feedback**
6 (85.7%)	1 (14.3%)

All except one interviewee (85.7%) not only answered yes to this question, but also easily came up with multiple stories to illustrate her point. One qualified her answer by saying that she had received much more negative feedback related to her ethnicity – Māori – than she had for her gender, although gendered feedback was also an issue.

Qualitative examples when interviewees were asked to elaborate on instances of abuse included:

- One programme host estimated she receives a variation of "stupid bitch" once a week, although it is clustered around particular stories (she receives it more often on some and less on others).

- Two different reporters told me about men messaging them wanting sex. Another reporter said there is a serial offender who approaches, via Facebook Messenger, a number of reporters in her newsroom. One of her colleagues had felt threatened by his man's behaviour as he had referred to death in his messages – especially after he showed up to the scene of one reporter's live cross after seeing on TV that she was there.
- Feedback on physical appearance, including calling a reporter fat. She has a history of a serious eating disorder and was upset by the comment. She noted that such talk also happened in the newsroom and a male camera operator had commented on her body shape/size as well. Another woman had been called fat and ugly by a man who had looked her up to email her feedback about news content. For both of those women, the abuse had taken place on public platforms from accounts which used the men's real names.
- One show host received the comment, "If you have not the stomach for war, get back to the kitchen," when discussing a story about Afghanistan with the network's Political Editor, also a woman. The Political Editor had been to Afghanistan and the show host is a former war correspondent who had been to Afghanistan five times.
- One journalist had received two separate rape threats to the private message inbox on her work Twitter account.
- Journalists documented regular "lower level" sexism such as being told their voice was annoying, there were too many women on the radio, etc.

One interviewee (14.3%) said she did not receive negative feedback of a gendered nature. She acknowledged that her programme receives a very high volume of feedback, much of which is read first by producers, and that it is not possible for her to read it all. However, she felt she had a sense of the feedback's overall tone.

How often does this happen?

This was hard for journalists to quantify objectively as their answers were based entirely on their own experiences. Most felt it was fairly regular – some said weekly, or every time they were on air, or every time a picture of them appeared on the programme's Facebook page. A number of the women interviewed continued to send this researcher examples of the feedback they had received in the weeks since their interviews were conducted. One reporter whose job

involves moderating comments for her news outlet, and thus had a broader perspective, said gendered abuse was common and persistent, especially on the Facebook comment threads for stories about the gender wage gap.

Table 4: What effect does gendered feedback have on you? Either short term (in the moment), or over a period of time.

This question was asked of the six journalists who said they had received gendered feedback. All of them reported some kind of effect.

Effect/impact	**Number of participants (N=6)**	**Percentage**
A physical sense of stress/hyperawareness.	1	16.7%
Pressure on mental health.	3	50%
Anger	2	33.3%
Embarrassment	1	16.7%
Threatened or nervous	1	16.7%
A delayed response where respondent felt upset later in the day.	4	66.7%
Tiredness or exhaustion	4	66.7%
Professionally undermined	3	50%
More pessimistic about the possibility of a public discourse	2	33.3%

The most common reported impacts of gendered harassment on digital platforms were tiredness or exhaustion, or a delayed response where the respondent felt upset later in the day (both mentioned by 66.7% of the respondents). Other common effects reported included feeling professionally undermined by the feedback, and strain on existing mental health issues (both mentioned by 50% of respondents). 33.3% of respondents said they had felt

noticeably angry about the feedback; a third of respondents said they felt pessimistic, after seeing abusive feedback, about whether a good public discourse was possible.

Qualitative examples included:

- "Definitely, whether you like to admit it or not it affects you, and whether you even realise it or not it affects you. Something will happen later in the day and it'll come back, or you'll be feeling shitty for some reason later on in the day and you'll realise it was because of that."
- One journalist said it exacerbated her anxiety disorder and another two said they needed to work hard to ensure it did not impact on their mental health (histories of an eating disorder in one case and depression in another).
- One said the sexual propositions had made her feel embarrassed and threatened.
- Two journalists who had to moderate feedback as part of their jobs said they were feeling much less optimistic about "humanity" as a result of filtering so many comments. Both said they felt worn down by reading so many abusive comments and now believed sexism and racism in New Zealand were worse than when they had believed when they took the job. One said she was not sure how long she could put up with reading such messages for before she burned out.
- Several women mentioned tiredness or exhaustion.
- One felt the need to be much more outspoken so that the general public would know how bad gendered feedback was and that it was unacceptable.
- One regularly moderates comments before getting out of bed in the mornings, late at night, and while out socialising in the evenings and on weekends. She feels as though she is never switched off, but feels protective of the outlet's other female reporters.
- One reported feeling nervous when receiving emails from unknown addresses, or seeing she has a lot of new social media notifications.
- One reporter said she had struggled with anger about both racist feedback and her perception that a previous news employer did not understand the hurt it caused.

Table 5: What personal coping mechanisms have you developed to deal with gendered feedback?

Coping mechanism	**Number of participants (N=6)**	**Percentage**
Ranting about, swearing about, or mocking the feedback to colleague/partner/friends.	6	100%
Relaxing with wine.	2	33.3%
Exercise or running.	2	33.3%
Blaring loud music.	1	16.7%
Posting on public social media pages about the feedback received.	3	50%
Discussing it in employee-funded counselling.	2	33.3%

All journalists interviewed found "blowing off steam" (as one called it) to others was helpful in dealing with gendered harassment. Most of those surveyed said this conversation would take the form of a rant, or humorously mocking the feedback, including swearing or reading it out in a silly voice. None of those surveyed mentioned their boss as the other party in these conversations; instead interviewees said they spoke to colleagues (particularly women colleagues), and their friends and family (especially relationship partners) about feedback they received.

The next most engaged coping mechanism, used by 50% of those interviewed, could be considered the digital version of "blowing off steam," to a wider audience. Journalists posted screenshots or recounted gendered harassment they had received (with the harasser's identifying details removed) on their social media pages. Their followers were likely to mock or disagree with the feedback, and the journalists said this made them feel validated, or like the feedback was less upsetting than it had initially seemed.

Two journalists had raised the matter in employer-funded counselling sessions, although one of the journalists was already attending such counselling for other work-related matters.

Table 6: What effect has gendered harassment had on your journalistic practice?

Effect on journalistic practice	**Number of participants (N=6)**	**Percentage**
Does not affect anything about the journalism itself but does affect other professional decision-making.	5	83.3%
Does not use their full name on social media.	1	16.7%
Self-censoring on social media.	3	33.3%
Not giving location or personal details on social media.	1	16.7%
Not reading the comments or having someone else check comments or social media notifications.	3	33.3%
Working rebuttals to expected gendered arguments into articles/pieces.	1	16.7%

Most of the journalists interviewed (83.3%) pointed out that the actual content of their journalistic work would not change as a result of gendered feedback. This was in contrast to Adams' (2015) findings that journalists changed their writing practices or stopped writing altogether in response to sexist online abuse. However, the journalists interviewed for this project did change other professional practices, such as self-censoring comments on their professional social media pages that they knew would invite gendered harassment (33.3%) or avoiding the Facebook comments on stories they knew would be particularly controversial

(33.3%). One interviewee had asked someone to check her social media notifications for her after she had come under attack online, to check whether anyone had left abusive comments.

Women interviewed were also thoughtful about how much information they posted on social media, with one not using her full name so that the account was not tied to her work. Another stringently avoided posting information that might tell anyone where she was.

One woman whose job involved moderating comments regularly had to make decisions about how much this would impinge on her personal life in the evenings. She has found peak commenting time on Facebook is around 9p.m. This means if she is posting an article to her media outlet's Facebook page and she knows it will be controversial, she is forced to make decisions about priorities if she planned to be at a show or in a movie during the peak commenting window.

Table 7: Do you believe your employer recognises the scale of the digital harassment problem?

Employer recognised the scale of the problem	**Employer did not recognise the scale of the problem**
1 (14.3%)	6 (85.7%)

This question was answered by all seven interviewees. The interviewee who answered "no" in Table 1 was aware that younger female colleagues received gendered abuse when their jobs had a heavy digital engagement component. All of those interviewed said their current newsrooms were well-intentioned and supportive, but most did not feel gendered abuse in digital spaces was recognised as a specific problem. Two journalists said they had experienced problems in previous newsrooms, with managers who were unsupportive when the journalists received abusive feedback.

Most agreed that part of the reason the problem was not discussed enough was women journalists' unwillingness to raise the issue with their superiors, for fear of being seen as weak or unable to do the job.

One journalist said she wouldn't want her newsroom to be any more involved in the problem, because any solution they posed was likely to be embarrassing and awkward and she didn't want to talk to her male bosses about it. Another journalist confirmed this, saying she had felt embarrassed talking to her boss about feedback that targeted her appearance, even though he was supportive.

One journalist, also her newsroom's Community Engagement Editor, said she was trying to lead the way to a cultural change in the newsroom to make women feel more comfortable coming forward. She had personally advised women journalists on what they should do in cases when they were harassed and abused. A component of her advice focused on self-care and acknowledging the toll such abuse took. She had also written an acknowledgement into her newsroom's social media guidelines of the added negative attention women come under online.

One very high-profile news interviewer said she had become much freer with singling out gendered abuse from listeners whenever she saw it, including reading it on air and posting screenshots to social media. She acknowledged that newsrooms would have frowned on this practice several years ago, but had decided to take a stand due to the position of relative power she now has. She said she considered issues such as women's rights, pay equality, and rape culture to be accepted fact and she did not consider it editorialising if she spoke about them on air.

Discussion: Interview analysis

These results show evidence of an emerging serious problem with gendered feedback in the digital space. The research shows journalists are developing their own coping mechanisms in the absence of real recognition by their newsrooms of the scale of the problem. This is in keeping with the findings of Keats and Buchanan (2009) that coping mechanisms for journalists had sprung up in the absence of newsroom leadership on trauma. Between the six participants who reported receiving gendered harassment in digital spaces, the effects they reported covered the mental, emotional and physical, again in keeping with Keats and Buchanan (2009), who labelled the repeated exposure to such trauma at work as "assignment stress injury" (ibid, p. 163).

There were also strong parallels between the six most common coping mechanisms Keats and Buchanan (2011) reported, and those reported by journalists in this study. While journalists did not deploy avoidance strategies at work, they did sometimes avoid talking about certain topics, at certain times, on social media. The use of black humour was found in the tendency of journalists in this study to rant about or mock abusive feedback to colleagues or friends. Journalists reported having to be mentally disciplined so they didn't not allow the abuse to get to them, in keeping with the idea of controlling one's emotions and memories in Keats and Buchanan (2011). Journalists interviewed for this project also relied on exercise to cope, although when they mentioned using alcohol as a coping mechanism, it was framed as being in a controlled way, rather than the "substance misuse" discussed in Keats and Buchanan (2011, p. 133). The journalists did not mention a focus on the job's technical aspects, but did mention that planning and thought had to go into coverage and professional social media use that was likely to be controversial, which they did not feel their male colleagues needed to do. This is enough of a basis to recommend that digital sexist abuse is recognised as, and treated as, a form of trauma. This is supported by the global advocacy group the International Women's Media Federation, whose head likened online harassment of women reporters to "psychological violence" in an interview with this researcher (E. Lees Muñoz, personal communication, 17 May 2017).

If the problem is to be treated as trauma, or a kind of violence, newsrooms will need to respond appropriately. The journalists interviewed for this project mostly thought their employers were well-meaning and broadly supportive, but did not understand the scope of the problem, or what it would take to combat it. The heavy reliance on talking to colleagues to help cope with trauma was interesting, and in keeping with Keats and Buchanan's research. Those authors mention the formalised peer support networks being trialled by some media organisations, and this could be a direction for New Zealand newsrooms to explore.

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Approach and methodology: Document analysis

Keats and Buchanan (2009) emphasise the need for newsrooms to understand "how trauma manifests in journalists" (p. 174) and to advocate for their reporters in helping them deal with it. There are a number of suggestions given for how that could happen. However, based on the low level of awareness the journalists interviewed felt their newsrooms had about gendered digital harassment, the next stage of this research sets out to assess an initial step. It asks whether newsrooms have seen fit to include policy for reporters about how to deal with harassment or abuse within their social media guidelines. While newsrooms have instructed journalists about their own conduct on social media in official guidelines for some years (McBride, 2009), this researcher wanted to know whether there was a parallel acknowledgement that the traffic flowed both ways; in other words, whether there was recognition that members of the public might conduct themselves in less than ideal ways in digital spaces, what reporters should do about it, and any recognition of what the toll on reporters could be over time.

Document analysis was elected as the way to most fairly compare guidelines, rather than interviews where newsroom bosses could verbally give broad support on the issue without proving whether responses to gendered harassment were enshrined in policy. Social and digital media guidelines, or audience engagement guidelines, were requested from New Zealand's mainstream media outlets: Radio New Zealand, TVNZ, Fairfax, Mediaworks, NZME, and Māori Television. The outlets were informed of the three criteria being measured, in case those were addressed in other company policies. Where companies did not wish to provide internal documents in full, they were asked to provide simply the relevant parts of their guidelines. Four of the six outlets provided either the documents or confirmation of what was in their guideline documents; despite repeated efforts over a period of three months, I did not receive responses or comment from NZME or Māori Television.

The documents I received are compared to the Reuters guidelines for journalists, singled out by the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma as the first to include trauma guidelines in

their handbook (Shapiro, 2009), and as leaders in recognising the emotional toll journalism takes on interviewees (ibid).

The outlets were asked to share guidelines that included rules or advice on the following points, or to confirm that such guidelines did not exist:

1. Guidelines for what reporters should do if they were harassed or abused online.
2. Any guidelines around engaging with audiences or engaging with feedback.
3. Any mention of gendered or racially motivated abuse/harassment of reporters (for example, special precautions people should take, recognition that women or ethnic minorities might have different online experiences, etc).

Three media outlets provided internal documents, one was publically available online, and one outlet preferred to give a verbal interview, followed by yes/no answers by email as to whether the specific points inquired about were included in their guidelines.

Results: Document analysis

Table 8: Newsrooms' internal policies on abuse of reporters

Media outlet	**Guidelines for what reporters should do if harassed online**	**Guidelines about engaging with the audience**	**Mention in policy of gendered harassment of journalists**
Fairfax	N	Y	N
Māori Television	--	--	--
Mediaworks	N	N	N
NZME	--	--	--
Reuters	Y (qualified below)	Y	N
RNZ	Y	Y	Y
TVNZ	Y	Y	N

RNZ and new guidelines from TVNZ (updated in 2017), both instruct journalists to speak to a manager if they receive a piece of feedback that is particularly offensive. There is no further

detail given by either organisation about what reporters should expect to happen after they report abuse to a manager. RNZ's guidelines advise that programme social media pages be monitored several times a day for offensive comments, with such comments hidden (Facebook allows media outlets to hide offending comments to all but the person who posted it) and a link to RNZ's commenting policy posted. RNZ was the only outlet that provided this level of detail about monitoring comments on programme pages.

The Reuters Handbook receives a qualified "yes" to the question of guidelines addressing what reporters should do if harassed online. Reuters' guidelines require journalists to file an incident report to their supervisor when "staff members are injured, killed, imperilled or harassed" (Reuters, n.d., para. 19). However, there is no specific mention of online, digital, or social media harassment, only traditional, real-world forms. The only place Reuters mentions online engagement is elsewhere in the guide, when it instructs that reporters should not harass others. The Handbook explains how to file an incident report and notes that staff should "err on the side of caution" (ibid, para. 20), filing one if they are unsure. Likewise, Fairfax and Mediaworks did not provide guidance about what reporters should do if they were harassed in digital spaces.

Most organisations provided guidelines about engaging with audiences online, but the overwhelming focus was on ensuring that journalists did not harass or abuse anyone else, and that the company's reputation was not brought into disrepute. The Fairfax guidelines contained a considerable amount of advice about engaging with the audience, but it was entirely concerned with maintaining the reputation of the company. TVNZ's were similar, with an added focus on maintaining the semblance of neutrality of its journalists. Neither outlet gave much detail about how specifically such neutrality and reputation should be preserved.

RNZ went into more detail about specific ways with which different kinds of feedback should be engaged. These included how to get in touch with listeners who wanted to give story tips, what kinds of feedback to retweet or respond to, and a general test for whether to share something online or not: "Would I say this on the radio?" (M. Whelan, personal communication, 21 March 2017). Reuters goes into considerable detail about protecting victims and vulnerable interviewees in particular in its handbook. Its guidelines about how

journalists should conduct themselves in relation to interviewees is a greater focus than audience engagement.

The national public broadcaster RNZ was the only outlet with a policy specifically mentioning gendered harassment. It instructs journalists to be conscious of their own safety noting that, for example, "It can be difficult to be an outspoken woman online" (M. Whelan, personal communication, 21 March 2017). RNZ's Community Engagement Editor Megan Whelan, who created the guidelines, said in an interview that it was important to her to ensure the experiences of women journalists online were recognised, and that they felt comfortable speaking to her about their experiences.

Discussion: Document analysis

Analysing the documents showed New Zealand newsrooms were much more concerned with preserving their reputations when journalists engage online than they were with ensuring journalists were supported when harassed or abused. Only one media outlet specifically mentioned the gendered harassment women might receive; this was the public broadcaster RNZ. Its guidelines provided the most consideration for situations journalists might find themselves in online. Comparison with the Reuters guidelines shows RNZ could well be a world leader in this field. It is worth noting that RNZ journalists interviewed for this project *did* report experiencing gendered harassment and abuse, and that most of them had not referred specific messages to superiors. They gave reasons for this including that they did not want to be seen as unable to cope with such feedback, or that they had grown used to it or did not see what their employer could do.

Other newsrooms were supportive of journalists but had not yet given specific thought to gendered harassment. Mediaworks' spokesperson Shaun Davies, the Head of Digital News for NewsHub, was interviewed for the journalistic portion of this project. He acknowledged that women reporters in the newsroom did receive gendered abuse. Davies elaborated on the advice he gives reporters, verbally and on an ad hoc basis, as the need arises, but admitted the organisation did not have written guidelines on the points canvased for this project. Davies said the interview for this project had prompted him to consider the matter further, and later

emailed that, “We are now in the process of getting them [written guidelines] done, so you can pop that down as an achievement” (S. Davies, personal communication, 6 June 2017).

Outside the scope of this analysis of New Zealand newsrooms, there are indications that this study’s results were on par with global trends, in that gendered harassment in digital spaces was not recognised by newsrooms as being a matter of particular concern. If it was, it was not treated as seriously as physical threats, and policies had not been drawn up to deal with it. The Guardian Australia’s Deputy Audience Editor, Elle Hunt, said when interviewed that despite research showing the prevalence of abuse towards women and people of colour in its Comment is Free section (Gardiner et al., 2016), the Guardian still does not have specific written policies in place to protect such writers from abuse (E. Hunt, personal communication, 28 April 2017). Hunt described practices in the Guardian newsroom that mirrored what Shaun Davies described at NewsHub, in which individual editors would counsel reporters and writers about what they could expect from a controversial piece of writing (ibid). This included editors advising writers to take time away from the internet when a piece was published (E. Hunt, personal communication, 28 April 2017), but this was not official company policy.

The International Women’s Media Federation is a Washington DC-based advocacy organisation for women journalists around the world. Its head, Elisa Lees Muñoz, recounted in an interview initiatives she’d heard about to combat gendered harassment. Muñoz said these largely came from journalists themselves, rather than their employers (E. Munoz, personal communication, 17 May 2017), and included a support group run by a woman journalist in Turkey, and an anti-trolling app in the United States. Muñoz said newsrooms sorely needed to do more to protect their reporters from harassment online.

CONCLUSIONS

This research has established that gendered feedback is a real and persistent problem, with strong impact on high-profile women in broadcast journalism, and which has not been sufficiently acknowledged by their employers. The study used content analysis, interview analysis, and document analysis to establish three key premises, contributing knowledge to a sparsely-studied field. First, a content analysis of the text messages sent to a male host on a

public radio broadcaster compared to those sent to a woman hosting the same show, revealed the woman received more negative gendered feedback. 21.4% of feedback specifically about the female host was of a negative gendered nature, as opposed to 6.1% of feedback about the male host. The feedback for the woman was on the whole more polarising, with fewer positive and neutral comments about the host, even though both the male and female presenters were accomplished and experienced journalists. Such feedback tended to be entirely about the host's gender, tone, and style, and did not engage with the substance of what the host was saying. The male host received gendered feedback that also engaged with an opinion or position he had taken. This indicates that when listeners gave gendered feedback to a woman, their biggest annoyance was with her gender, rather than what she had to say. This was supported in the long-form interviewing portion of the study, where numerous women interviewed said they did not mind their journalism being criticised but felt gendered criticism rarely, if ever, engaged with the substance of their journalism.

The long-form interviews conducted with seven of New Zealand's highest profile women in broadcast journalism were revealing of the scale of gendered harassment from members of the public. 85.7% of those interviewed had experienced it, and most of them had numerous stories. Experiences ranged from rape threats, sexual propositions, generally abusive messages, and having their appearance criticised and professional experienced undermined, down to more regular, lower-level harassment insulting their intelligence or voices in relation to their gender. This research found strong parallels with studies by Keats and Buchanan (2009, 2011) on how journalists deal with trauma, indicating that exposure to abusive messages from members of the public, over a long period of time, might be evoking a trauma response in reporters. Journalists reported physical, emotional, and psychological effects and had devised their own coping mechanisms to deal with harassment. While most praised the overall culture of their newsrooms, those interviewed felt their employers did not understand the scale of gendered feedback they received and were not doing enough about it. Several did questions whether there was much newsrooms could do.

The final part of this study established that only one newsroom surveyed, the public broadcaster RNZ, had given any acknowledgement in policy to the problem of gendered harassment online. Social media and audience engagement guidelines from the outlets surveyed focused on how reporters should conduct themselves in relation to members of the public, with only RNZ and TVNZ (the latter briefly) mentioning what should happen if

negative interactions flowed the other way. This is in keeping with global trends established during interviews for this project's journalistic feature: that acknowledgement and understanding that women journalists are harassed by audiences on digital platforms, is practically non-existent. Keats and Buchanan (2009) wrote about healthy newsroom cultures that addressed traditional trauma head-on as being essential to helping journalists cope with it. This study shows a clear need for newsrooms to do the same in relation to trauma journalists are exposed to in digital spaces through audience harassment and abuse. Newsrooms have been quick to increase expectations around journalist participation in digital spaces, but this research indicates they have not taken responsible precautions to avoid trauma and burn-out, particularly among female staff.

Many of the areas addressed in this research are only now emerging in scholarly study, so there is much scope for further research that extends this project. Larger content analysis studies are needed to continue to establish the scale of gendered harassment that women reporters receive. There are no firm figures on how many women might have left the profession or taken on less high-profile roles in response to such abuse, and this would be useful further research. One Māori journalist reported that racist abuse she received from members of the public far outstripped gendered abuse, and this is an area worth exploring in future. There is scope for an ongoing scholarly focus on how newsrooms are mitigating digital pressures on reporters, particularly around negative engagements with members of the public. While this study addressed the existence of guidelines, future research could explore whether guidelines that do mention abusive feedback are being enacted, and how successful journalists feel the process is. Most of these fields have so far sparked little to no current research, and this project has started the process of tapping into a rich vein of potential study.

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Appendix A: Content analysis coding sheet

Variable	Code	Meaning	Examples (if applicable) - all spelling/grammar sic.
Gender of host	M	Male host	N/A
	F	Female host	N/A
Genders of guest commentators	YY	Two male commentators	N/A
	XY	One male and one female commentator	N/A
	XX	Two female commentators	N/A
Subject matter of text message	P	Content or subjects being discussed on the show.	"Put cigarettes to an ATM machine separate from the dairy shop. Worked for banks." "This kind of crime is driven by fundamental social dysfunction - not a lack of police" "It was the rimutaka tunnel-road replacement. They wanted to station

			an army base over in the wairarapa.”
	H	Host and/or commentators.	“Self-righteous fruitcakes” “Thank you [HOST NAME]. Love your work and miss you when you're gone. Hope you're just using up annual leave when you're away!” “What on earth have I tuned into??? It sounds like a bloody teenage gigglefest!!! Where are the grownups?”
	S	Something else, including the show’s production values, editorial decisions, or audio quality of the programme.	“He must be on vodafone connection, cant hear a word.” “That tape you just played of the crying child was horrific and totally inappropriate to play at

			this time of day. There are children travelling home in cars at this time of day. Use your brains!!" "Can we now hear why the RNZ internet time is always (perhaps) 15 seconds behind the radio time pips? Cheers [LISTENER NAME]"
Tone of text messages. Applied to those coded as being about the host or guest commentators.	A	Positive comment	"Can we keep u instead of [REGULAR HOST]? U r very good [LISTENER NAME] :-)" "Great fun today [HOST NAME]. [LISTENER NAME]" "I love [HOST NAME]."
	B	Positive, gendered comment	"Good Afternoon panelists, What a delicious atmosphere

			there today. A Women Space. I'm so loving it. No verbose posturing mansplaining. Go ahead; disrupt the rotor and reschedule the guys. They've got things to do late at Night (working). Your audience share can only go up. Kind regards. [LISTENER NAME]” “Not often an all women Panel. What a treat. Love [REGULAR HOST’S] style though. –[LISTENER NAME]” “Yes! A panel with women! Finally!”
	C	Neutral comment	“[HOST] is the only one not having Friday drinks at the office today?” “Well she's buzzing tonight 😂how are you keeping such a straight

			face [HOST NAME]? [LISTENER NAME] 😂” “Hello [HOST NAME]. How is it that interviewers on the radio always ask "interesting" or "good" questions? Do you ever ask dumb questions or are folk just too polite to say so??? 😀 [LISTENER NAME]”
	D	Negative comment	“Learn to pronounce 'Buckingham' you dipstick.” “Too many 'um's' in your [REGULAR HOST] replacement!!! Very annoying [LISTENER NAME]” “It seems to me that you guests are snobby Chardonnay Socialists,

			quite bizarre really, [LISTENER NAME]”
	E	Negative, gendered comment	“God you women can talk some f**ken bullshit signed [LISTENER NAME]” “Oh thanK God its the news l think those women must have forgotten they were on the radio! Sounded like they were out for a nice lunch together!” “What is going on hear- this is national radio- we dont need a few old girls chewing the fat and gossipping!!!!”

Appendix B: Semi-structured interview template

1. Do you receive feedback of a gendered nature?
   Explain this could include either explicitly gendered (getting called a bitch, c**t), or where it is implicit but you believe it is gendered (e.g. voice is shrill and annoying, sounds like a chat show, critiquing your hair).
   a. Where "yes": ask for elaboration of stories of when this has happened.
2. How often would you say you receive this kind of feedback?
3. Has the tone or regularity of such feedback changed over your time in journalism?
4. What is the impact of this feedback on you:
   a. In the short term (in the moment; that day or week)?
   b. Over time – the accumulation of more than one such instance.
5. What coping mechanisms do you find yourself engaging in when you receive gendered or abusive feedback?
6. Have you ever changed anything about your journalism or professional behaviour as a result of such feedback, or in anticipation of such feedback?
7. Do you speak publicly about, or publically engage with, gendered feedback?
   Explain this could mean taking screenshots of tweets or text messages and posting them on social media; responding to those giving digital feedback, etc.
8. In what ways has your newsroom:
   a. Recognised that you receive a particular kind of feedback based on gender?
   b. Supported you in dealing with abusive feedback?
   c. Given you guidance about responding to or publically talking about negative feedback?
9. How would you respond to the idea that journalists should "toughen up" about getting abuse or gendered feedback on their work?