Chapter 5

The Politics of Recognition and Representation

Introduction

Since the 1970s, feminist activists have been persistent in their efforts to expose the pervasiveness of rape. As noted in Chapter 2, consciousness-raising sessions brought to light the widespread experiences of sexual violence experienced by women in intimate relationships, challenging the perception that rape was something physically violent and perpetrated by a stranger. The prevalence of rape in intimate relationships established the discourse of marital rape, eventually leading to the criminalisation of rape in marriage throughout most Western legal jurisdictions. By the 1980s, researchers in the US shifted their focus onto the experiences of college-aged women, revealing that as many as one in four women on US campuses have experienced unwanted physical sexual experiences that met the legal definition of rape (Koss, 1985; Koss, Dinero, Seibel, & Cox, 1988; Koss et al., 1987). The findings from these studies were widely circulated in the feminist magazine *Ms.* as well as published in the book *I Never Called It Rape* by Robin Warshaw in 1988. The effect of these publications was the generation of a new cultural discourse surrounding rape – 'date rape' and 'acquaintance rape'. However, these publications were met with resistance. Some questioned the figures and suggested that the fault lay with women and their behaviour, that women were crying rape to cover up their promiscuity or that rape was a natural part of the dating scene (Paglia, 1992; Roiphe, 1993; Sommers, 1994). Journalist Katie Roiphe (1993) was particularly concerned that such claims depicted women as perpetual victims, physically and emotionally wounded and incapable of acting or speaking, and thus rendered powerless by their experiences. In essence, anti-rape activists and researchers were accused of valorising victimhood and victim identity politics.

Historically, the representation of rape within anti-rape activism, particularly of victim-survivors speaking out, has tended to depict and focus on (or at least been criticised for focussing on) rape's exceptionalism. It has been framed as something that is inherently violent and traumatic (Gavey & Schmidt, 2011),

as something to be legally repaired not fought (Marcus, 1992) and as the worst of crimes (Halley, 2008). This focus on rape's 'exceptionalism' has relied on particular modes of representation and identity politics that narrow, rather than broaden, understandings about the nature of rape and its prevalence reinforcing assumptions associated with 'real rape' – and they are almost always white women. Yet, as Hypatia said, she wanted her blog to show that 'anybody can become a rape victim … to show how ordinary it is, how normal it is'. Although the previous chapter explored the ways in which experiences of rape regularly fail to fit within the confines of the hegemonic rape script, representations of victim-survivors in the public domain regularly draw on these forms of representation.

In many respects, as I discussed in relation to consciousness-raising in these digital spaces in Chapter 3, the widespread availability and relatively cheap accessibility of ICTs has enabled women who have previously been unable to participate in social activism the ability to have their voices heard. Some of these online spaces provide an opportunity to challenge the dominant discourses that govern hegemonic rape scripts and provide an alternative framework for imparting recognition through peer-to-peer witnessing, as discussed in Chapter 4. As such, they challenge the way rape victim-survivors' testimonies are expected to conform in different social, legal and political contexts, in order to obtain recognition. In this sense, online anti-rape activism can provide the opportunity to remake and unmake victim-survivor identities, as well as recast the depiction of masculinity and femininity in ways that resist, subvert and at times reinforce assumptions about victimhood and victimisation.

Although in the previous chapter I argued that these digital spaces create an opportunity to challenge the dominant narratives inherent in the hegemonic rape script, this chapter interrogates on a deeper level who exactly is permitted, and how, to challenge those scripts. In particular, I explore the ways the case studies in this book navigate these tensions that have historically manifested in the representation of victimisation within anti-rape activism. I pay close attention to the way perceptions of feminism are understood and mobilised within these online anti-rape campaigns, the impact this has on the modes of representation within these spaces, and what this reveals about the way activists negotiate between the personal and the political. As Tanya Serisier (2005, 2007, 2018) notes, the relationship between feminism and anti-rape activism is not inherently given; many survivors who speak publicly about their experiences do not necessarily identify as feminists, nor are they necessarily affiliated with feminist anti-rape campaigns. Activism, in turn, is not always aligned with feminist goals of liberation and emancipation but rather, as I explore in more detail in Chapter 6, is often directed at criminal justice reforms. The case studies in this project illustrate not only a complex relationship with feminism but also their interpretations of feminism, which influences the way victim-survivor identities and claims making are framed in these digital spaces.

'Victim' and 'Survivor' Identity Politics

As I outlined in the introduction of this book, social movements that arose in the 1970s shifted away from claims for economic redistribution to calls for cultural and social recognition (Fraser, 1995; Melucci, 1985). Unlike movements that call

for the redistribution of wealth, claims for recognition are shaped by the collective mobilisation of particular identities, such as gender, sexual orientation, race or, more specifically for the topic of this book, the recognition of sexual victimisation. However, social movements utilising 'identity' as a driving force for recognition often operate in exclusionary ways because they fail to deconstruct institutionalised patterns and cultural values held by particular actors, and their power to reify certain identity categories (Fraser, 2000). Efforts by anti-rape activists and feminism more broadly to construct a collective identity in pursuit of social justice have been heavily critiqued for failing to capture and acknowledging intersectional experiences and the ways in which institutional recognition and responses to rape disproportionately impact on men and women of colour (Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 1983). Moreover, attempts to draw attention to women's experiences of rape and other forms of violence under patriarchy resulted in backlash in the late 1980s and early 1990s for casting all women as victims (Wolf, 1993). Being classified or identified as a 'victim' in general has subsequently come to have negative connotations in contemporary society; however, it is particularly heightened in the context of feminism (Lamb, 1999). While certain sectors of second-wave feminism sought to proclaim that *all* women are victims of patriarchy, highlighting a plethora of social, cultural and institutional examples of women's systemic marginalisation, the backlash against their victimisation approach, both internal and external to the anti-rape movement, focussed on two key things:

(1) That claiming *all* women are victims (and *all* men are rapists), or that all women experience victimhood in the same way, collapses differences and fails to acknowledge that different women experience different kinds of oppression, and they do not all respond to violence in a uniform way; and

(2) That in referring to women as 'victims' denies them agency and an inability to recover from violence. (Stringer, 2014)

Despite the backlash against the victimhood discourses of feminism, it has not been entirely abandoned, with the neoliberal discourses of personal responsibility and risk management further complicating victim identity politics in the anti-rape movement (Stringer, 2014). There still remains space for the 'good' rape victim identity in the context of criminal justice settings and in broader social narratives. This individual is characterised by their ability to demonstrate 'sexual safekeeping', specifically their personal capacity to mitigate the risk of being raped (Gotell, 2008). As such, the logics of neoliberalism have had the effect of splintering the identity category of 'victim' into two: the good, 'agentic' victim who is able to demonstrate her propensity to manage and take responsibility for her own sexual safekeeping, and the bad 'vengeful' victim who blames others for her victimisation – the patriarchy or men, for example (Stringer, 2014). It is this 'bad victim' who is disavowed by public discourse. The victim who fails to practise sexual safekeeping – by wearing revealing clothing, getting drunk, not making her 'no' audible or clear or failing to demonstrate resistance in any other way than freezing – is rendered responsible for her own victimisation. Such an approach further entrenches 'rape myths' and victim-blaming, effectively marking the boundaries of deviant and acceptable

forms of femininity, and subsequently, *the rules for recognition* as a victim of sexual violence (see Gotell, 2008). In this sense, 'the ideal reasonable victim … actively resists becoming a victim all together' and seeks to demonstrate why and how they are not a victim (Laster & Erez, 2000, p. 249).

The performative and representational elements of victimhood are so narrow that individuals cannot possibly align with the discourses that seek to police it. Victimhood is characterised by contradictions, and assumptions about victims are very much rooted in the demands and limited expectations of the sociopolitical environment (Van Dijk, 2009). The label of 'victim' is constantly shifting, but it remains a 'product of social relations, culture, and language' (Lamb, 1999, p. 3). In this sense, victimhood, under neoliberalism, has become 'about the quality of the sufferer' rather than the event of violence and trauma itself, constructing a hierarchy of worthy and unworthy victims, authentic and inauthentic victims of rape (Stringer, 2014, p. 41). As such, activists and victim-survivors are required to make strategic decisions with regard to the representation of victimisation.

Survivor-activists involved in this study drew on their own experiences when reflecting on the notion of victimisation and the extent to which this informed the ways in which they presented their own experiences of rape as well as their thoughts on rape culture in these digital spaces. While there was resistance to the term 'victim' or 'victimhood', the participants in my study described victimhood in terms of emotional death (see McCaffrey, 1998). Kelly described the feeling of victimhood as:

> [Being] broken, like I could not function … I thought about jumping in front of the train tracks, I was on a ridiculous amount of medication … I couldn't do anything … when I was just a victim of sexual assault that's all I was, that was my identity.

What Kelly is describing is a common response to sexual trauma (see Herman, 2001). However, Kelly is not suggesting that being a victim per se is negative, but rather a state of mind in response to trauma and it was not until she had recovered from this `broken' state of mind that she felt able to write her blog. However, in contrast Angela viewed the term 'victim' as disempowering, and went so far as to claim that *all* victim-survivors detest being referred to as such. Specifically, Angela said:

> If you talk to any survivor they hate the word 'victim', they don't like it … yes you've been a victim but you know if you're alive and you're healing, and you're working really hard to rebuild your life … [You really do not want to] have them go through trauma again or whatever. This [calling them a victim] is not helping!

Here, Angela frames victimhood in terms of 'woundedness, passivity, oppression and innocence … woman as powerless victim of domination' (Stringer, 2014, p. 5). In addition, Angela is suggesting here that to label someone a victim is to re-traumatise them; reflecting Dawn McCaffrey's research which suggests that survivor status is something that is *achieved* once a victim stops blaming herself or allowing herself to be victimised by others (1998). For Angela, referring

to someone who has experienced rape as a 'victim' is a reminder of the pain and suffering they have gone through, rather than accentuating the positive – personal growth, healing and recuperation. In other words, victimhood is a reminder of the failure of the body and the mind to recover (Herman, 2001). Subsequently, Angela said the *Pixel Project* never uses the word `victim' on their website or social media pages. Such negative assumptions about victim identity politics reflect the extent to which the language of 'victimhood' is stuck in a fixed set of ideas and meanings – it comes to signify only passivity and powerlessness (Stringer, 2014, p. 6).

Feminism has sought to counteract negative 'victim' talk through the language of 'survivorship' popularised by rape-crisis feminism through reframing identities as 'rape survivors' rather than 'rape victims'. This has been part of a shift away from the focus on suffering not only linguistically, but also, as I will discuss later in this chapter, through the imagery used in campaigning. However, while anti-rape activists almost exclusively utilise survivor discourse, sometimes it is presented or used in depoliticised ways as the language of the 'survivor' is also guided by the logics of neoliberal discourses (Stringer, 2014) with the ethos of survivorship further individualising the experience of sexual violence. Its strong emphasis on healing, personal growth and moving beyond the experience of rape, for example, positions survivorship in the realm of the therapeutic – and subsequently, outside of the political. This emphasis on the *personal* within the discourse of survivorship is thus at odds with constructing collective claims making that addresses the underlying structural and *political* causes of violence against women. Far from subverting the logics of risk and responsibility for preventing victimisation, survivorship in this context can reinforce them, with survivors expected to take personal responsibility for healing and recovering from violence and trauma.

Most interview participants, however, constructed their own meanings behind the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' for personal and political reasons in their activism online and in reference to their own identities and the identities of others. Some, for example, refused the term 'victim' and embraced the use of survivor, like Angela, while others preferred victim or rejected both terms. Alana used the term 'victim' only to point out the problems of representing: 'African women solely as *victims*' (my emphasis); elsewhere she used the term 'survivor' and the *Stop Rape in Conflict*'s flagship campaign is titled: 'Survivors United for Action'. Lynn, from Rape Crisis Scotland, also never used the term 'victim' in her interview, opting for 'survivor' at all times. Rape-crisis feminism has been successful at subverting the notion of 'victim identity' through the ethos of survivorship, which is designed to challenge the normalisation of self-blame within 'rape culture' but also capture the broad spectrum of victim-survivor experiences (Stringer, 2014). Just the labelling of the Rape Crisis Scotland campaign's *Not Ever* and *This Is Not an Invitation to Rape Me* is challenging the responsibility paradigms of victim-blaming and subsequently repositioning self-blame as a product of social and political attitudes about victim-blaming, *rather* than a reflection of women's lack of responsibility to prevent rape. The campaigns also invite a reading that suggests 'this is not an invitation to *blame* me'. It is through the subversion of these victim-blaming tendencies that the campaigns propagate a *refusal* on the part of victim-survivors to accept responsibility for rape.

A pattern did emerge with respect to when the term 'victim' or 'survivor' was employed, however. Maya, for example, used the term 'victim' to refer to people engaged with the criminal justice system, whereas 'survivor' was used to describe the personal healing process. Specifically, she used the term 'victim' to demonstrate that it is the *victim* who is on trial, victim-blaming discourses in which the *victim* is blamed for wearing certain clothes or drinking, or because the *victim* failed to resist or show signs of resistance. Hypatia, however, took a different approach to identifying herself and others as victims. Hypatia never used the term 'survivor' in her interview, referring to herself and others solely as victims, and this terminology was also consistent on her blog. The early posts on her blog were specifically about how she explicitly became a 'rape victim'. Prior to her experience, Hypatia had been convinced by 'rape culture' that rape was only rape if: 'it was (perpetrated by) the balaclava man in the dark alley with a knife'. Through the process of describing how she became a victim of rape, she goes beyond issues pertaining to victim-blaming and self-blame, articulates the challenges associated with labelling her experience as rape and calling the perpetrator a rapist. Hypatia's experience forced her to confront her own assumptions about what a real rape victim identity looks like, and she used her blog as a way of working through the complexities and contradictions associated with victim-survivor identity politics. Unlike Kelly, who felt like a 'real' victim – broken and could not function after being raped – Hypatia describes feeling uncertain about whether or not she could call herself a 'real' victim. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Hypatia did not feel emotionally traumatised, although she noted on her blog that she blamed herself for letting her rapist for having power over her, which allowed her to become a rape victim:

> [I gave him] the power to penetrate my body again when he knew I didn't want him to, the power to pretend that he wasn't a rapist … Now, I blame the society which convinced an intelligent, popular teenager, that the only way to make rape OK, would be to date her rapist.

Hypatia's statement suggests, in the same way that rape-crisis feminism has sought to use the term 'survivor' to capture the broad spectrum of recovery or responses to rape, it is clear that the term 'victim' can also capture this. Rather than the victim identity being exclusively a reference to powerlessness, vulnerability, unspeakability and trauma, the victim identity also seeks to capture the structural conditions which not only enable rape to happen but also attempt to *convince* rape victim-survivors that they are not victims at all (Mardorossian, 2002) – they have simply had a bad sexual experience. In referring to herself and others as rape 'victims', Hypatia is thus taking control of the discourse and reinterpreting its meaning, 'rejecting particular images in favour of new self-representation of their own making' (Fraser, 2000, p. 110). The seeming disparate identities of 'victim' and 'survivor' are thus not clear-cut, nor wholly distinguishable.

Labelling an identity as either 'victim' or 'survivor' can be problematic, because it forces people into a binary of being either one or the other when most of the time,

neither category sufficiently captures their experience (Kelly, Burton, & Regan, 1996). Indeed, throughout this book, I had referred to individuals as victim-survivors, to avoid placing my own assumptions or interpretations on their experiences and to highlight that these categories are not separate but fluid and dynamic. Yet as captured above by Angela, there is a lot of negativity and disempowerment associated with the language of victimhood that means mainstream activism has widely adopted the terminology of survivorship in their advocacy work. Katie, however, did not use either the term 'survivor' or 'victim' to describe her identity or the identities of others, but rather spoke about: 'things that happened to me'. Katie felt there was no language available to capture the trauma of her experience or identity as a victim-survivor. While Katie can speak out about her experience, the ongoing trauma inflicted upon her body and mind defies identity categorisation. However, Katie's narrative might also represent a refusal to be categorised or to fix her identity as either a victim or a survivor. This refusal was evident on Katie's blog, in which she had an entire post dedicated to the terminology she uses, including her opinions about the terms 'survivor' and 'victim'.[1] In the post, Katie highlighted how problematic it can be using the term 'survivor', because it does not capture the instability of PTSD and uneven nature of recovery from rape. Specifically, Katie described the term 'survivor' as too generic because:

> For the decade after I was raped, survival was a pretty precarious business … Telling, for instance, an individual suffering from post-traumatic distress order, 'You're a survivor! You have survived!' strikes me as missing the point.

Conversely, Katie had disdain for the term 'victim'. Specifically, Katie stated on her blog:

> I hate using this word; I have enormous issues with it. The mindset of 'victimhood' has been written about by many people, with the emphasis on ceasing to see oneself as a victim, and reclaiming control over one's life. The reality of crimes of sexual violence, however, is that the perpetrator *took* control. While it is important to feel in control of life, day to day, I think that recognising that temporary, non-consensual loss of control is an important part of coming to terms with one's experience of sexual violence. So, I would not say, 'I *am* a victim of sexual violence' but, when talking about the crimes that were committed against me, I might say, 'I *was* a victim of sexual violence'. (Katie's emphasis)

Katie's analysis of victimhood echoes that of Hypatia's, who viewed her status as a rape victim being derived from the power exercised by the perpetrator over the victim. Victimhood is thus expressed as an identity that manifests at

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[1]http://notmysecrets.blogspot.com.au/2014/08/terminology.html

one specific moment in time, rather than something perpetually fixed to an individual. Katie suggests that instead of fighting over which labels or identities to conform to, talking about sexual violence and 'drowning out' the silences surrounding sexual violence was the more important political work. Nonetheless, the ways in which the interview participants framed their assumptions, and in some cases identities around the survivor-victim paradox influenced who participated in their consciousness-raising networks, how they positioned their claims about violence, 'rape culture', feminism and the response they received from non-social movement actors. Some of the case studies in this project resisted representing women's (or their own) sexual suffering and victimhood, and when they did, trigger warnings were put in place to indicate that images or narratives might be upsetting to some viewers. Other campaigns, however, attempted to re-signify the meaning and impact of victimhood and survivorship. In this sense, the campaigns strike an interesting balance between the personal and political in their modes of representation. In addition, as I turn to later in this chapter, fighting over labels further influences the identities and experiences of victim-survivors represented within these online campaigns.

Resisting the Representation of Victimisation

Lynn Higgins and Brenda Silver (1991) argue:

> Representations of rape after the event are almost always framed by a masculine perspective premised on men's fantasies about female sexuality and their fears of false accusation, as well as their codified access to women's bodies. (p. 2)

Subsequently, a greater emphasis needs to be placed on tracing how women represent themselves and their experiences of rape, discerning how or where they: 'break through the discourses that have circumscribed perceptions of the causes and nature of sexual violation [that have] contributed to what amounts to a cultural cover-up' (Higgins & Silver, 1991, p. 4). Rather than reproducing images that reinforce sexual violence and victimisation as the manifestation of masculine social power, activists ought to: 'expose sexual violence as the signifier of the impotence of masculine social power' (Heberle, 1996, p. 68). To do so, anti-rape activists ought to move beyond representing victim-survivors as victims 'through and through', because it reinforces masculine power rather than disrupts it (Heberle, 1996, p. 75). Rather, anti-rape activists should seek out as many ways as possible to enable victim-survivors to represent themselves on their own terms, rather than have someone speak on their behalf (Mardorossian, 2002).

While I am speaking of representation in very loose terms, I am specifically referring to 'representation' in terms of an image or text, as well as political representation – that is, the opportunity of participation in claims making. I want to reflect briefly on the ways in which 'representation as parity of participation' (Fraser, 2005, p. 5) is fostered in these online spaces in modes that resist the logics of normative 'victimhood', which I discussed above. I will then turn to discuss the

ways in which representation in the form of text, images or videos are used in these online campaigns to subvert 'good' victimhood discourses. Following this, I then examine how the language of feminist anti-rape activism has changed from a 'fighting' or militant response, to a more rational, 'calculated' one, revealing some of the tensions around the relationship between feminism and anti-rape activism.

Representation is a key to parity of participation in social justice movements, however, misrepresentation is a common feature, whereby particular groups are excluded from political decision making or are denied the opportunity to participate in their own claims making (Fraser, 2005). Digital spaces have created unprecedented platforms for women and minority groups around the world to speak out about violence, inequality and oppression, and to lobby for political and legislative reforms in ways that had previously been unavailable. However, we must be mindful of the 'double talk' that emerges in online spaces that simultaneously provides multiple access points to digital mouth pieces while at the same time reinforces experiences of violence along hierarchies of gender, race and class with respect to visibility (Daniels, 2009). Digital spaces can and do reproduce hierarchies of speaking and acting-power among women, and the reproduction of offline hierarchies has enabled predominantly white, middle-class women to make claims on behalf of 'other' women's experiences online, perpetuating the whitewashing of anti-rape activism and the feminist movement more broadly (Friedman, 2005; Gajjala & Dako-Gyeke, 2010; Loney-Howes, 2015; Trott, 2020).

Providing platforms for victim-survivors to represent their own experiences, either through testimony or participating in social change, is indicative of a significant shift in activist tactics, as some have suggested that victim-survivors' voices and their role in campaigning has become marginalised (see Corrigan, 2013). However, it is clear from the survey data that these digital spaces remain very much occupied by white women. A major criticism of mainstream second-wave anti-rape activism through to the #MeToo movement (see Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019) has been the ways it failed to include, address and represent the multiple intersections of violence experienced by women of colour, which make their experiences of rape distinctly different to white, middle-class American women (hooks, 1984). While African-American women were heavily involved in the anti-rape movement, they often organised separately from mainstream activists because they felt excluded or their experiences did not reflect those expressed by white women (Bevacqua, 2000). As a result, their voices have been pushed to the margins or rendered invisible. In the online context, Kolko, Nakamura and Rodman (2013) suggest that race is either invisible or hyper-visible, particularly for women of colour, and few feminist-activist spaces seem engaged with, or at least to interrogate, issues pertaining to the intersection of class, race and gender (Daniels, 2009; Rapp et al., 2010). This lack of focus on the intersection of gender and race (and sexuality for that matter) online creates problems when it comes to inclusive representation and recognition without essentialising women's experiences of violence. For example, when race and ethnicity is the feature of claims making online, it often manifests in ways that position women of colour as in need of rescue (see Loney-Howes, 2015). In other words, women of colour find themselves spoken on behalf of or for.

Although the online anti-rape projects in this study attempted to be inclusive and diverse, survey data indicated that those participating in the spaces in this research mostly identified as Anglo-Europeans (66%). There was variation within this label, however, with some identifying as 'European Australian', 'European-Scottish', 'Scottish', 'British', 'European Canadian', 'European New Zealand', 'Jewish European', 'German European', 'Dutch European', 'European Italian' and 'American'. The different geographic locations listed here adds further weight to what I said in Chapter 3 about cyberspace's capacity to facilitate consciousness-raising in a way that transcends space and place; however, some of the managers and creators of these digital spaces expressed the view that online anti-rape activism in general was still 'very white' and not particularly diverse. Kelly specifically said, in response to my question, 'who do you think are using online spaces for anti-rape activism?': 'from what I've experienced most of the women are white … It feels very white'.

Lynn said that Rape Crisis Scotland had received some criticism about *This Is Not an Invitation to Rape Me* because they had very little racial and ethnic diversity in the campaign, depicting instead mostly young, white, Scottish women. The representation of white women in the Rape Crisis Scotland campaigns may be attributed to the fact that Scotland has a significant population of people who identify as 'white: Scottish', which sits at 84% according to the 2011 census (National Records of Scotland, 2015). Additionally, over 96% of the population identify as 'white' but from varying nationalities – such as Irish, British and Polish (National Records of Scotland, 2015). However, it could also be reflective of what McNicol (2015) calls the 'white visual economy' (p. 246), which, she argues, dominated media representations of *SlutWalk*. For instance, despite the *SlutWalk* movement being quite diverse in terms of who participates, McNicol (2015) and Mendes (2015) argue that the media promotion and analysis of the event tended to focus on the white women who were involved. In this sense, the use of white women to promote the anti-rape message is not necessarily reflective of Rape Crisis Scotland's desire to minimise the experiences of non-white women but to use the white visual economy to generate greater visibility in the public domain. However, this nonetheless contributes to the erasure of women of colours' experiences of sexual violence.

Despite the whiteness in some campaigns, other spaces were diverse in whose experiences they represented. *Project Unbreakable*, for example, sought to capture the experiences of women of colour from across the world, publishing posts in languages other than English, such as French, Spanish, Korean, Japanese and Hindi. In addition, *Project Unbreakable* also publishes posts of men's experiences of rape and rape experienced by members of the LGBTQI+ community, which I discuss later in this chapter. The Stop Rape in Conflict campaign also sought to avoid using digital communications technologies to mobilise on behalf of supposedly 'oppressed' woman of colour (see Friedman, 2005; Gajjala & Dako-Gyeke, 2010; Ray, 2014). Both *Project Unbreakable* and *Stop Rape in Conflict* actively facilitate involving the voices of victim-survivors and are thus instrumental in helping survivors to develop an activist identity. Moreover, the Stop Rape in Conflict campaign generates opportunities to connect activists globally and fosters a non-hierarchical approach to building networks and solidarity. Those involved in

advocacy work are located globally, with representatives in Mexico, Colombia, Egypt, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Canada and the United States.

The upshot of excluding the experiences and voices of a spectrum of victim-survivors can have the effect of producing misrepresentation (Loney-Howes, 2015). Misrepresentation in social justice movements can be compounded by 'misframing' (Fraser, 2005), where various forms of misrepresentation ensure that only certain claims are framed as legitimate, excluding experiences outside the normative discourse. The Stop Rape in Conflict campaign was particularly conscious of how African women, in particular, have historically been depicted in anti-rape and anti-violence social justice campaigns. According to Alana, 'one-dimensional images of African women feed into the narrative that they are incapable of providing solutions or being the drivers of important social and political change' (see also Loney-Howes, 2015). The campaign has sought to create an online platform, or a network as described in Chapter 3, for survivor-activists to come together and unite for action. Alana described the campaign as creating the possibility of 'standing *with* and *behind* as opposed to standing *for*' survivors. Alana also indicated that while the campaign is survivor-led, they are not targeting survivors. Crucially, 'a lot of what the campaign is doing now is not so much targeted at survivors but targeted *by* survivors' (Alana, her emphasis), in order to instigate change and to include survivor's voices in decision making at the level of law and policy. In this way, the *Stop Rape in Conflict* campaign is reconfiguring the modes of representation that have reinforced their victimised status, which subsequently denied victim-survivors of rape in conflict the opportunity to participate in policy and law reform. These survivors are using their experiences to instigate 'calls to action' (Alana), and transform perceptions about their victimised social and political status and their capacity to contribute to structural change.

Enabling victim-survivors to represent themselves may have initiated unintended political opportunities for other online campaigns. *Project Unbreakable*, for example, was initially set up for victim-survivors to tell their stories not necessarily political action. However, Anna noted that the role of their voices in the campaign has changed due to its popularity:

> The project was created, and runs primarily, for survivors to have a place to share their story and heal within a community. However, because of the popularity that it's gained I would hope that it's doing its part in spreading awareness and shedding light on these stories that happen every day. Not everyone realizes what an issue sexual assault truly is.

Project Unbreakable's capacity to 'spread awareness' and 'shed light on these stories that happen every day' is evident not only because of the significant number of victim-survivors who have shared their stories but also the cultural recognition the project has received. As discussed in Chapter 3, the role of the media, as well the power of celebrity investment, is a key to obtaining greater recognition and 'going viral'. However, the cultural notoriety achieved by *Project*

Unbreakable is a testament not only to enabling victim-survivors to represent themselves but also the lack of barriers or limitations on who can and cannot participate. Anna said they encourage submissions from *all* victim-survivors of rape irrespective of gender, sex, sexuality, age (unless under 18 – although participants can share stories of historical child sexual abuse), location and language. Additionally, posts to *Project Unbreakable* highlight just how prevalent the perpetration of rape is by someone known to the survivor. The majority of posts name fathers, stepfathers, sports coaches, the boy next door, babysitters, partners, boyfriends or husbands as the person who raped them. More than this, however, *Project Unbreakable* moves beyond focussing on suffering and victimisation insofar as it has sought to represent the strength and resilience of victim-survivors, rather than focus on trauma, powerlessness, brokenness and helplessness. The use of the term '*unbreakable*' is present in almost every submission to the website, with many participants stating that they themselves are now '*unbreakable*'. This is also reflected in the feedback the campaign has received – Anna said that she thinks many who participate 'truly believe they are now Unbreakable [*sic*.]'. In other words, being `unbreakable' becomes a proxy for `survivor' - although as Katie mentioned in the previous section, recovering from sexual violence is not a linear path, thus being `unbreakable' may not necessarily attend to the precarity and complexities of PTSD.

This shift in subjectivity towards being 'unbreakable' is also reflected in what is depicted in the images. For instance, although the project accepts submissions from anyone, images of the physical impact of sexual violence are not published on the website. According to Anna, the only circumstances in which submissions to *Project Unbreakable* have been rejected is if the image is too 'problematic'. Specifically, they

> Never turn away a submission unless there is a visibly graphic element to it … [because] *Project Unbreakable* is centred on sexual assault, which is obviously already a very triggering and sensitive topic – why we are sure to tag all of the photos as #triggerwarning. So if a submission comes in that may be even more upsetting – for instance, showing a recent physical injury – we have to be careful.

It is interesting to note though that some of the submissions to *Project Unbreakable* do feature bodily trauma or injury (one where the victim-survivor has a black eye and another shows scars on their wrist from where the survivor had self-harmed). Others, instead of using the poster format for writing about one's experience as in the majority of the submissions, have written on their bodies. One woman wrote a variety of different feelings associated with being a victim-survivor of rape all over her face, capturing the complexities and coexistence of different feelings and therefore identities. One side of her face contained words associated with 'victimhood', such as 'worthless', 'broken' and 'deserving of abuse', and the other side captured the discourses of 'survivorship', specifically the terms 'healed', 'determined' and 'hopeful'. These 'survivor selfies' (see Wood et al., 2018) or 'pain memes' (Dobson, 2015; Harrington, 2019; Mendes, Belisário, et al., 2019) therefore depict the survivors as an 'image for the online

voyeur of pain' (Wood et al., 2018) constructing a hierarchy of victimhood that may incite a particular affective response. Anna did say: 'once in a while someone will send in a photo that leans towards being pretty graphic'. However, she said:

> The project isn't about shock value or drawing in attention with potentially very triggering images. Doing more damage [by posting triggering images] than good isn't helpful … I don't think people are trying to be disrespectful when they send in the [triggering] photos, they're just not thinking about how it may affect others. (Anna)

Anna's comment that *Project Unbreakable* is not about 'shock value' suggests an attempt to avoid constructing a hierarchy of victimisation or positioning rape victim-survivors as a victims 'through and through' (Heberle, 1996, p. 75). However, while there may only be a small number of submissions that depict the physical impact of violence, there are multiple descriptions of physical pain and the impact of rape on the body present in some of these survivor selfies. For example, some of the posts describe how the victim-survivor was bleeding (or the perpetrator noted that they were not bleeding when they thought they should be) or referenced other bodily fluids such as semen or vomit; other survivor selfies displayed or discussed their bruises. These terms therefore pay reference to the abject nature of bodies that experience violence; what we find unsettling about bodies in trauma that we are both simultaneously fascinated and disgusted by (Kristeva, 1982). However, the abject is not just something that repulses in a corporeal sense. The abject also manifests as a subjectivity, as a 'revolting subject' (Tyler, 2013), emerging in these online anti-rape campaigns through the ways perpetrators seek to cast victim-survivors as abject subjects. Posts on *Project Unbreakable*, for example, reveal how perpetrators refer to victim-survivors as 'sluts', 'whores' and 'bitches', positioning them as revolting, less than human, and therefore deserving of rape. However, in positioning themselves as 'unbreakable', victim-survivors resist being cast as abject subjects and victims through-and-through.

Angela said she also avoids using triggering images on the *Pixel Project* 'out of respect for survivors' but also suggested that:

> [People] Get turned off by those images or they, or they just feel like they can't do anything … I think in a way we're being more radical than the more traditional violence against women campaigns, non-profits and charities because they've been using shock and awe for the last many, many decades and … when I founded the *Pixel Project* I basically told everybody who is working for us 'we're just going to run the other way'.… [As] anti-violence against women organisations we really shouldn't be capitalising off their suffering, it's disrespectful.

However, in their attempts to distance themselves from the use of triggering images or descriptions of victim-survivors' injuries, campaigns like *Project Unbreakable* and the *Pixel Project* have replaced them with triggering descriptions

of the trauma associated with sexual violence. The 'Survivors Stories'[2] on the *Pixel Project* website, as well as number of posts on *Project Unbreakable* and posts on other blogs, often include triggering information not just about a rape or assault but also experiences of PTSD. Vivid descriptions of violence (and sometimes trauma) are increasingly accompanied by a hashtag #triggerwarning, to signal that the content on the page might be distressing for people to read. The use of #triggerwarning is part of new media protocol, preparing and therefore giving people permission to avert their gaze for what is to come (Halberstam, 2017; Rentschler, 2014). Trigger warnings are a way of alerting an audience, particularly survivors of violence, that what they are about to read may trigger traumatic memories as part of a politics of care (Rentschler, 2014). However, trigger warnings (unlike content warnings) can also function in a way that presupposes their audience as already inherently vulnerable, 'unstable and damaged and could at any moment collapse into crisis' (Halberstam, 2017, p. 537).

In a way, the use of trigger warnings in online anti-rape activism can reinforce particular assumptions about rape's exceptionalism in terms of the kinds of violence and trauma that are imagined to be associated with such experiences. It assumes, for instance, that victim-survivors are irredeemably broken and controlled by their inner-turmoil and emotions (Mardorossian, 2002). Perhaps, this is why Hypatia did not use any trigger warnings on her blog, and they were never mentioned in our interview because she wanted as many people to see how 'bloody mundane' (Hypatia's words) rape really is. By 'bloody mundane', Hypatia referred to rape being: 'something that happens every Saturday night', and that 'anyone can become a rape victim'. Katie too did not use trigger warnings on her blog, and, as I discussed in the previous chapter, this may be because she wanted people to understand the realities of sexual violence, 'even if it's squeamish and difficult'. However, it is clear from what some of the managers and creators of these digital spaces said that their own personal experiences of sexual violence do render them vulnerable to triggering stories. While a number of activist-survivors do share stories and network online, supporting each other through witnessing, when I asked Katie if she follows other blogs or campaigns, she said:

> I can't always read very much, it can be quite *triggering* sometimes. I have only ever really dipped into other sexual violence blogs. There aren't any that I actually follow. *I can find it too upsetting*. (My emphasis)

Katie's comment indicates some further complexities associated with wanting to speak out or find a way to represent experiences, and the difficulties involved in reliving experiences (and the associated trauma) through encounters of violence experienced by others. As Katie reminds us in Chapter 4, it is important not to shy away from the realities of sexual violence, yet we must remember that obligation to do so should not fall squarely on survivor-activists putting their stories out

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[2]http://www.thepixelproject.net/category/survivor-stories/

into the public sphere. Shifting towards ethical modes of listening, witnessing and representation that account for intersectionality and the complexities of trauma and PTSD are vital if we are to develop a transformative agenda within anti-rape activism, but this is not the responsibility of survivors themselves.

Subverting the Logics of 'Good Victimhood'

Focussing on a victim's behaviour and women's responsibility, in particular, to protect themselves from being rape has been a reoccurring theme in Public Service Announcements seeking to prevent rape (Bevacqua, 2000). As a result, practices of 'sexual safekeeping' are deeply entrenched within the discourse of 'good victimhood', while the perpetrator and their actions are overlooked or ignored (Stringer, 2014). However, *Project Unbreakable* subverts this rhetoric. Rather than focus on the victim-survivor's behaviour, for example, many posts on *Project Unbreakable* attempt to centre the perpetrator and their actions, specifically the things they may have said to the victim-survivor during a rape or afterwards, and reveal the ways in which perpetrators of rape attempt to blame their victims for being raped. Statements such as 'you were asking for it', 'you're the first to complain' and 'I can't help myself – you are so beautiful' are illustrative of how perpetrators seek to justify their behaviour through victim-blaming or undermining victim-survivors' lived experiences. Other comments reflect the sense of entitlement and access that men have to women's bodies, with some posts demonstrating that perpetrators acknowledged that they were raping their victims, but felt it was their right to do so. One post describes the perpetrator's response when the victim-survivor confronted him as to why he had raped her as: 'when the opportunity presents itself'. Another post reads: 'What! Am I raping you? I'm just showing you how much I love you'. Other posts from victim-survivors highlight that rapists are aware that their actions were tantamount to rape, with quotes captured from the perpetrators such as 'this isn't right'.

In addition to focussing on the perpetrator, many posts on *Project Unbreakable* also highlight pervasive victim-blaming attitudes regarding victim-survivors' responsibility to prevent themselves from being raped. Some posters demonstrate the ways the criminal justice system perpetuates victim-blaming attitudes, with one poster containing the following comments from a police officer: 'what were you wearing?', 'why didn't you fight him off?' and 'do you usually have guys over?' Victim-blaming responses also came from family members, with many posters indicating what their parents or friends had said to them when they told them they had been raped. In one post, a mother blames her daughter for being raped or at least suggests that she put herself in harm's way, stating: 'you really shouldn't have slept in the room with him'. Another post claims the victim-survivor lied about being raped, with someone's sister commenting that: 'everyone thinks you're lying about what *really* happened' (my emphasis). The suggestion that 'you're lying about what *really* happened', for instance, implies that the survivor simply had a regretful sexual encounter. In doing so, the victim-blaming attitudes undermine and deny the victim-survivor permission to call her experience rape, reflecting attitudes that women cry rape when they have had a bad sexual experience or are ashamed of being seen as promiscuous (Roiphe, 1993).

The two campaigns *This Is Not an Invitation to Rape Me* and *Not Ever* also sought to subvert representations of rape that historically focussed on women's behaviour and their personal responsibility to prevent rape. Lynn said Rape Crisis Scotland wanted to present a

> Completely different kind of message to what people are used to seeing … Previous campaigns had been very much focusing on women's behaviour, safety, those kinds of things, and accompanied usually by sort of negative images of like frightened or um, you know, distraught women or whatever. Whereas this is completely different.

The images in the campaign *This Is Not an Invitation to Rape Me* depict women behaving in ways that might normally assert assumptions associated with victim-blaming, as I discussed in Chapter 3. These images include a group of young women drinking alcohol and out partying, a woman wearing revealing clothing, a young couple kissing and a husband and wife on their wedding day – all contexts in which consent is perceived to be negated or at least implied, or victim-survivors were 'asking for it'. However, Lynn noted that these images were still nonetheless 'shocking' because of how the accompanying strapline 'This is Not an Invitation to Rape Me' subverted the meaning and impact of that which such images are typically associated. Lynn stated:

> I think visually it's [the campaign *This is Not an Invitation to Rape Me*] very arresting. They're quite distinctive images of people … people were quite shocked when they [first saw them]. If you look at these images at first you're not quite getting the message that you expect to. These are quite almost glamour images … When you traditionally see images like that … in advertising to sell things maybe like perfume or fashion or something like that … we wanted to use it for a valid, worthwhile purpose [to challenge rape myths and victim-blaming].

As the quote from Lynn above suggests, in addition to subverting the gaze on women's behaviour and their responsibility for sexual safekeeping, the campaign also manipulates the ways sexual violence is used by consumer capitalism to sell certain products. These 'glamorous images' typically associated with advertising that sells 'perfume or fashion', without the strapline 'This is Not an Invitation to Rape Me', could appear in almost any television commercial or on a billboard. Two images – one of the young woman wearing a see-through top, and the two lovers in the back of a taxi, for example – appear to be almost mocking particular advertisements that have been criticised by feminist-activists for inciting 'rape culture' and glamorising sexual violence (see Stampler, 2014).

One of the major ironies with the victim-blaming attitudes that assert that women 'ask for it' if they 'dress like sluts' is that commodity culture sells that particular type of image and encourages women to dress in a way that is based on

promoting their sex appeal. This critique by Rape Crisis Scotland of consumer culture reinforcing myths about rape is further explored in the *Not Ever* video, where a young woman goes shopping for a skirt so she can 'be raped'. The scene cuts to a bar later that night where the woman is talking to a man, who says to his friend: 'look at that skirt! She's asking for it'. The woman then turns to the camera and says 'as if' she was asking to be raped. The entire *Not Ever* video puts the myth that women 'ask for it' because of what they are wearing, at the centre of the conversation. The assumptions associated with the meaning of the skirt purchased by the main character then becomes the object of critique, rather than the woman and her behaviour. The video further problematises the myth that women 'ask for it', when the potential rapist in the video says to his friends, 'look at that skirt, she's asking for it!' and the woman responds: 'as if'.

The line in the video delivered by the woman to the sales assistant – 'I'm going out tonight and I want to be raped. I need a skirt that will get a guy to have sex with me against my will' – is darkly comical, as if any woman would ever deliberately purchase a 'rape skirt' and asks the audience to think about the logics of this line of defence routinely espoused by perpetrators and defence lawyers. The *Not Ever* campaign is therefore a further example of the multiple uses of humour in online spaces to challenge 'rape culture' and online sexual harassment (Keller et al., 2016; Kramer, 2011; Rentschler, 2014, 2015; Vitis & Gilmour, 2016). Rentschler (2014) in particular identifies that online spaces use humour to help to mobilise another kind of feminist political response to 'rape culture', by challenging the ways women are deemed responsible for sexual assault. She uses the example of a hijacked Twitter feed #safetytipsforwomen, in which women posted images of themselves wearing 'rape-preventative' clothing, such as chainmail or a sleeping bag, to demonstrate how the responsibilisation rhetoric in 'rape culture' is merely a tool to regulate women's behaviour rather than rape prevention (2014, p. 70). Through these processes, anti-rape activists shift the responsibility back onto those who support and perpetrate 'rape myths' (Rentschler, 2014). In doing so, the problematic discourse itself, and those who believe it, becomes the object of discussion rather than women's behaviour or responsibility - indeed as one comment on the discussion board on the Not Ever website said `skirts don't cause rape, rapists do'.

A Rational Rather Than a 'Fighting' Response

In the 1970s, radical feminist activists called for a 'fighting' response to rape, in which women were encouraged to 'disarm rapists', 'smash sexism' and learn self-defence (Gavey, 2009). Much of this rhetoric was aimed at preventing stranger rape rather than acquaintance or marital rape; however, through this process, anti-rape activism sought to challenge the supposed powerlessness of women by rewriting the rape script and repositioning themselves as agents capable of resisting rape, thereby making women, rather than men, the subjects of fear (Marcus, 1992). Through self-defence training, it has been suggested that women can recodify their bodies, turning them into defensive weapons to the extent that this will prevent sexual assault from occurring (Cahill, 2001). However, these 'fighting' responses have been criticised for reinforcing women's responsibility to prevent rape (Mardorossian,

2002; Stringer, 2014). The militant attitudes of some second-wave feminist activists, mentioned in Chapter 2, also faced criticism for being too radical and disruptive, responsible (in part) for creating feminism's bad name (Echols, 1989).

The participants in this study were all too aware of this history and subsequently wary of taking a 'fighting' or militaristic approach to their activism, with their primary concern about alienating potential activists and allies. Some participants sought to distance their campaigns from what Alana called 'militaristic' representations within anti-rape activism. There was a fear that using 'militaristic language', in particular, would put people off engaging with the campaigns. Alana said:

> We're very clear about the idea that violence doesn't beget violence; we don't use militaristic language … We don't say 'we're fighting for this' or 'we're crushing the whatever'… We encourage non-militaristic ways of communicating about these issues.

Significantly, Alana went on to say she believed that because they took a more 'cautious' approach to their activism, they did not receive as much abuse as more radical, or 'militaristic' feminist-activists received:

> We don't receive the kind of abuse that other feminists receive [because] I think we're very clear and very cautious about the way we express things. We're not afraid to express displeasure with decisions, we're not afraid to call out government inaction, but again without using that militaristic language … It's [militaristic language] very common in activist spaces [and] I think that that sort of tempers some of the reactions that we receive.

Angela also felt that many activist spaces drew on militaristic language, and was outspoken about the negative impact 'fighting' responses espoused by anti-rape activists had on the movement, citing 'radical feminism' as the cause of this, which has (according to her) led to infighting between feminist groups in their struggles for control over representation. Angela wanted to distance the *Pixel Project* from these approaches, stating radical feminist-activists (seem to) demand that change happens overnight, which also resulted in infighting about how to best address the causes and therefore prevent sexual violence. A more 'rational' approach, according to Angela, was to

> Do it one person at a time – eventually [after] one person at a time it becomes a small group, a small group will become a community, and if you go after the right people … eventually, it's going to change … Radical activists demand change but they're not telling people how to get there. And so it ends up with bloodshed, it ends up with people at each other's throats. It ends up with men not listening to us and accusing us of being feminazis, and when people don't listen to you that's when you've lost the battle … You have to be patient and that's what a lot of radical activists don't understand.

These more 'rational' as opposed to 'fighting' responses reveal something about the role and popular understandings of 'feminism' in anti-rape activism, as well as feminist activism more broadly. Angela points to it quite clearly in the above quote that there is a fear among activists of being labelled 'feminazis' if their ideas are too controversial or 'radical'. The use of the term 'feminism' was notably absent from many of these online campaigns, even if they identified as 'feminist'. On the Stop Rape in Conflict campaign and *Pixel Project* websites, as well as *Project Unbreakable*, there was a lack of references to 'feminism'. While Lynn from Rape Crisis Scotland spoke at length in her interview about the role of feminism in helping to shape the direction of their campaigns, as well as noting the history of, and relationship between, the rape-crisis movement and feminism, there was no explicit mention of 'feminism' on their campaign websites.

Given that second-wave anti-rape activists positioned rape as inextricably bound to the question of women's liberation more broadly, I asked the participants to reflect on the role of feminism in their activist projects. The baseline assumption put forward was that feminism is about 'equality' between men and women, and Anna, for example, viewed sexual violence as a barrier to achieving that. In addition, some of my participants only came to 'feminism' because of their experience of rape or did not see themselves as feminists until they started their projects. Maya, for example, did not consider herself a 'feminist' until someone pointed out to her that her ideas were 'feminist' – to which she replied: 'what does that mean?' Given the amount of backlash feminists have received, Anna suggested that people are scared 'at the thought of being labelled as a person in support of women earning equal rights'. As such, explicitly avoiding associating oneself with 'feminism' may perhaps be an attempt to depoliticise rape, in order to garner greater public support.

In the same way that liberation, empowerment and feminism are choices that can be exercised through consumption (see e.g. Gill, 2016; Gill & Scharff, 2013; McRobbie, 2008), the lack, or exclusion of 'feminism', is also a part of the discourse of 'choice'. Most liberal political movements are placed within a double bind if they want to get their message on the public agenda (Bean, 2007). In this sense, rather than ceding ground to neoliberalism, as some feminist scholars have argued, feminism has had to negotiate with a neoliberal state hostile to feminism, meaning that many of its best ideas have been co-opted and sold to women through the rhetoric of 'choice' (Gill & Scharff, 2011; McRobbie, 2008). However, positioning feminism as a 'choice' not only contributes to its erasure but also covers up – or worse, denies – feminism's history, including the gains made by feminism and the systematic backlash (Silva et al., 2015). The interview participants had differing views and knowledge about the relationship between their activism in these digital spaces and earlier forms of feminist activism that came before them. While Lynn, Angela, Alana and Kelly had clear ideas about this – or at least had thoughts about their project's connection to feminism, others did not. When I asked Anna about her knowledge of feminism and how she perceived the role of feminism in *Project Unbreakable*, she said:

> I think that feminist ideas (essentially, equality) certainly play a role considering that rape culture is a very prominent issue … I have always considered myself a supporter of equality … I don't think feminism was a forethought in my mind [in] joining the project.

Conversely, Katie was critical of the absence of feminism within some of the spaces with which she engaged and communicated that this stopped her from wanting to become more involved in activism online and offline. For example, in addition to finding it triggering to read other blogs about people's experience, Katie also said that she finds it 'quite galling' when people use digital spaces to speak out about their experiences but then say things like "and now I have a husband/baby/shiny perfect hair, so I'm totally over what happened!" Katie's comment here reveals a deeper tension associated with the history of speaking out and its relationship with feminism, which I did not explicitly address in chapter 4 – namely that many survivors who speak out about their experiences of rape do not necessarily identify with feminist ideas nor do they identify as feminists (Serisier, 2018). As such, it is important to distinguish between the personal politics that sit behind speaking out as inherently different from anti-rape activism. For Katie, who continues to struggle with PTSD and the other persistent reminders of her experiences of sexual violence, glossing over the struggle to survive derails the political nature of both the experience of rape and the recovery. Although, as I highlighted in the previous chapter that some survivors do not necessarily experience a traumatic response to rape, this does not undermine the seriousness of the violence nor does it detract from the challenges associated with recovering and healing from sexual assault. It is the forgetting or the getting over of the experience that does not incite rage or a desire to change things that Katie is particularly upset about, which speaks to the competing agendas within anti-rape activism and the ongoing tensions between the personal and the political.

Anti-Rape activists have had long-standing competing agendas that have caused tension over how to best respond to the issue of rape (Bevacqua, 2000). On the one hand, activists sought to overhaul of sociocultural norms regarding women's sexual subordination, while other focussed more on legislative recognition and reforms as preventative strategies as well as increasing legal safeguards for victim-survivors. These tensions also appear in the online context, although much of this tension emerges in relation to how best to speak out and address some of the structural causes of sexual violence. Angela claimed that there are factions within online feminist groups, which foster a sense of competition between feminists and causes infighting between activists, effectively inhibiting the possibility for collective action. Angela singled out 'radical feminists' specifically as the problem in online spaces. Her description of and accusations about radical feminism is highly reminiscent of the story of a past feminism (Hemmings, 2011) that has gotten in the way of true political emancipation (Wolf, 1993, p. xvi). This past feminism is considered aggressive, misguided and hostile; something that contemporary feminism – if it is to survive and remain relevant – must distance itself from (Hemmings, 2011). Angela's approach to distancing the *Pixel Project* from such associations with a past feminism was to take a more collaborative approach to anti-rape activism and gender-based violence prevention more broadly:

> It's about a 360-degree approach, it's about working and collaborating – everybody collaborating and not competing … We don't like the catfights and take-down culture that happens online and offline in the feminist community and the you know anti-violence against women movement … We, our allies, partners and collaborators all believe that everyone's better off if everyone works together [and] stops pointing fingers. Obviously, we're going to point our fingers at patriarchy and the people who uphold it … I see online bust-ups and take-down culture … feminists attacking other feminists online making many feminists and women's rights activists afraid to say what they think … It instigates in-fighting. It makes a lot of moderate feminists, whether they're white or not white or women of colour, afraid to speak up … So radical feminists, you know, I respect that they want the same things as, they want the change that we want – we're all part of the same community – but sometimes I do think that they cause more damage than progress. (Angela)

Katie also noted the infighting between feminists online, suggesting that such arguments over whose experience 'counts', or whose victim-survivor subjectivity is more authentic, means activists end up arguing among themselves rather than focussing on patriarchy and the structural causes of violence against women:

> I'm quite cross with the online feminist movement at the moment … We've got things to focus on, the things that affect all of us, and yet we are arguing with each other [about whose experience counts] … How are we going to deal with important issues like domestic abuse, and intimate partner violence, and sexual violence, and the whole world of patriarchal bullshit if we can't agree with each other to just accept the differences and focus on what's important. (Katie)

'Feminism' is thus a powerful discursive tool that can be deployed in positive and negative ways that hinder the capacity to bridge the connection between the individual and the collective. Online anti-rape activist spaces can help individuals explore their feminist ideas and identities (Keller, 2012; Keller et al., 2016; Mendes, Ringrose, et al., 2019; Sills et al., 2016). However, the deployment of particular forms of feminism online function as regulatory discourses governing the framework for whose identity 'counts', and the ideas mobilised within the anti-rape movement, as Katie and Angela's comments highlight. While feminism might be 'trending' online, as I discussed in Chapter 3, its role in anti-rape activism in digital spaces is highly contentious.

Men, Masculinity and Anti-Rape Activism

It is clear that the changes in the modes of representation in online anti-rape activism are a critical response to the backlash against the movement in the 1990s.

The focus on women's victimisation, powerlessness, violence and militancy in earlier activism has now been replaced by discursive representations of strength and resilience in response to violence. In particular, being 'unbreakable', a shift towards centring the perpetrator and their behaviour rather than focussing on women's behaviour, subversions of rape myths that responsivities women for their experiences of sexual violence and moving from a 'fighting' or militaristic response to rape towards prevention through education. At the same time, some anti-rape activism has sought to downplay the role of feminism in claims making or has compromised on politics in order to garner greater public support by focussing on the personal cost of and response to rape.

While 'feminism' seems to be discursively absent from these online anti-rape campaigns, this did not stop people from inquiring as to 'where are all the men [who experience sexual violence]?' (Alana, Angela and Kelly) or 'why can't we be humanists [instead of feminists]?' (Angela). As I discussed in the previous chapters, particularly around negative responses to attempts to raise consciousness on the websites *Not Ever* and *This Is Not an Invitation to Rape Me*, there are levels of resentment towards activists who fail to represent men's experiences or those that (apparently) blame all men for causing rape. Certainly, it is important to acknowledge the claim 'men can't be raped' is another myth that fuels victim-blaming, prevents men from accessing the services they might need to help them recover from their experiences and denies them status as legitimate rape victim-survivors (Rumney, 2009; Weiss, 2010).

Part of the problem when it comes to representing both rape and victims is the assumption that rape is only a 'woman's problem' (Mardorossian, 2014) – it is only women who can be victims and it is women's responsibility to prevent rape and indeed reinforces a further rape myth that men cannot be raped. Yet rape is neither a women's issue, nor is it men's issue, rather it is a 'problem of and with hegemonic masculinity and only secondarily … as a woman's problem' (Mardorossian, 2014, p. 3). More specifically:

> Analysing victimisation through the lens of a reframed masculinity means bringing rape to public attention not as [a] 'woman's issue' but as an issue that saturates culture and defines structural masculinity's relation to femininity and *not* women's relation to men. (Mardorossian, 2014, p. 3 – my emphasis)

Mardorossian (2014, p. 4) suggests that 'it is structural femininity, not the female subject [or women], that is rape's victim'. Structural femininity's inferior status, as a symbol of weakness and passivity, juxtaposed against structural masculinity, representative of power and agency, produces the 'gendered grammar of violence'. These hegemonic discourses, in turn, enforce the rape script whereby 'one person auditions for the role of the rapist and strives to manoeuvre another person into the role of the victim' (Marcus, 1992, p. 391). In this sense, rape is not an issue that primarily affects women by virtue of them being 'women', but rather because of their structurally and politically subordinate position, which rape reinforces. The hegemonic rape script thus attempts to reinscribe or imprint a

feminised identity on the rape victim (Marcus, 1992, p. 391). Crucially, this occurs irrespective of a gendered or sexual identity. For example, men who rape other men may be seeking to 'feminise' their victims as a form of power and control (Mardorossian, 2014), and there is growing evidence to suggest that sexual violence in queer relationships reveals what Bedera and Nordmeyer (2020) describe as 'righteous masculinity', whereby perpetrators engaged in acts of violence do so to reclaim or exert power over their partners. In other words, 'sexual violence cannot be separated from the desire to dominate and … the desire to dominate through sexual violence cannot be separated from masculinity' (Bedera & Nordmeyer, 2020, p. 18).

Although rape is a gendered crime in which women are predominantly the victims and men are predominantly the perpetrators, statistics suggest that around 1 in 20 men have experienced rape or sexual assault (RAIIN, 2016). While this figure is significantly lower than the number of women reported to experience sexual violence (around one in five), deeply engrained assumptions about sexuality and gender roles, as well as popular and institutional responses to men's experiences of rape, significantly impact on whether men and boys formally or informally coming forward about their experiences (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2008). Much of this is bound up with the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990); in particular, the stigma associated with homosexuality and the subsequent fear of being labelled 'gay' if a heterosexual man is raped by another man. Indeed, the shame concomitant with being labelled 'gay' presents an ongoing barrier for men reporting sexual victimisation to the police and continues to underscore perceptions about rape experienced by men (Rumney, 2009). Additionally, the idea that a woman could rape a man generates an affront to hegemonic masculinity and gender roles in the context of heterosexual sex (Flood & Pease, 2009; Kassing, Beesley, & Frey, 2005).

Despite these challenges that create significant barriers for men speaking out or indeed developing an effectively consciousness around men's experiences, *Project Unbreakable* was the only case study that sought to include men's experiences of sexual assault. These experiences ranged from sexual violence perpetrated by men, as well as men who had been raped by women. There are also some posts on the website that illustrate young boys having been raped by, in some instances, other boys after they came out as gay. As one poster reads:

> 'You're **gay**. You should want **this**'. One of my best friends, right before he beat me with an electrical cord to make me stop resisting. I was 13, he was 14. I had just come out to him the week before. (Emphasis in the original text)

This post also indicates how men can be taken advantage of by perpetrators they thought they could trust. The above quote highlights the extent to which the victim-survivor sought to confide his sexuality in his friend, only to be raped for doing so. The violent nature of the assault also suggests that the perpetrator may have been punishing the victim for being gay. Other posts highlight incidences of men being raped by women, with one quote reading: '"Real men can't be raped by women", Spokane, WA Police Department'. This latter example

points to deeply held assumptions about heterosexual sex in relation to rape myths whereby 'real' men are expected to initiate and pursue sex with women, and men who admit to not wanting sex or are 'forced into sex', 'violate [the] codes of male [heterosexuality]' (Weiss, 2010, p. 277).

It is significant to note that the majority of the posts made by men on *Project Unbreakable* reflect experiences of rape or sexual abuse when they were children or adolescents and illustrate the ways in which many perpetrators in positions of power groom and then violate the trust of victims. These examples also demonstrate the ways offenders seek to cast their behaviour as normal sexual interactions – or initiate young boys into expected sexual practices. For instance, one post reads, "I'm just trying to teach you how to wank, like my brother taught me'. Teacher and family friend'. In addition, representations of men's experiences of rape and sexual violence as adults also highlight the same dynamics of power and control that can manifest in accounts of heterosexual women's experiences, whereby perpetrators seek to either downplay the seriousness of their actions or that such acts were expressions of attention and love. For example, there are common statements reflected in men's experiences of rape, such as 'You should be thankful that I even messaged you' (emphasis in original text), and 'no one is going to love you, no one is going to care, you are damaged now', that are echoed in comments expressed by women on *Project Unbreakable*. Many posts from female victim-survivors also indicated that the perpetrator made them feel as though they should be grateful for the 'attention', or that they were worthless or damaged. However, the posts also indicate that perpetrators used significantly more derogatory language towards women-identified survivors, referring to them as 'sluts' or 'whores' as a way of reinforcing that they deserved to be raped.

In addition to a lack of representation of men's experiences of rape in these online anti-rape campaigns, men are not significantly involved in the activism itself. Demographic data collected from the survey indicate that only 9% of those who participated were men. The comments sections on the Rape Crisis Scotland campaigns included a number of 'opinions' from men; however, they were not necessarily positive in their reactions or receptive of the campaigns' messages. One survey participant responded to the question 'what more do you think needs to be done', by reiterating that it is not women's responsibility to prevent rape but that of perpetrators, indicating that more men needed to be included in anti-rape activism and awareness raising because they are the primary perpetrators:

> Fair enough victims pool together, but it is not them who need the altering, it is the abusers who need changing. While the abusers see this as OK to do, this [sexual violence] will continue. (Anonymous – survey respondent)

However, some commenters in the *Not Ever* forum who were men felt that the campaign was an important move towards including men in the discussion about preventing rape and encouraging men to hold each other accountable for their behaviour. As 'Des', a participant in the forum, explained:

> It's about time someone put something like this out! I live on the other side of the world in New Zealand and this video has made its way here. I'm here to plead to other men to help end sexual violence. Next time your mate makes a sexist remark about a woman, call him out on it! Next time your mate won't leave that girl in the club alone, tell him to back off because she isn't interested! You may think that a little one-off comment does no harm, but that one comment encourages rape culture. Rape culture is something kept alive by men, and if the decent guys amongst us decide to take a stand, we can make a difference. Men, time to show how tough you really are; let's keep the women in our lives safe from sexual assault!

This comment by Des illustrates the power and potential of campaigns like *Not Ever* to bring men to conversations about rape. Yet typically, like sex education, attempts to bring men into the conversation about rape prevention are carried out in the absence of women and in doing so overemphasise (and reinforce) sexual difference (Murphy, 2009). Campaigns that emerged in the 2000s, such as 'Men can stop rape',[3] have been praised by scholars for positioning masculine traits, such as strength, which inherently imply the capacity to be violent, in non-violent ways (Flood, 2003). Using statements like 'are you man enough to turn away from violence', according to Flood (2003), draws on 'existing investments in male identity … in order to invite non-violence' (p. 27). However, such an approach can reinforce problematic beliefs about sex, gender and sexuality by appealing to the trope of 'masculine honour' (Messner, 2016, p. 62). The previous quote from Des illustrates this through his claim: '[It's] time to show how tough you [men] really are; let's keep the women in our lives safe from sexual assault!', which draws on the hegemonic discourse of masculinity equalling strength to indicate how men can use their 'toughness' to prevent rape. His language also draws on the masculine protectionist discourse, by virtue of suggesting that men can and should 'protect' women from rape.

What comments, like those from Des, reveal is a hierarchy of masculinity, and this is a feature of some anti-rape campaigns (not included in this study) that draw on strong gendered-behaviour paradigms of 'good masculinity' and 'bad masculinity' (see Masters, 2010). In campaigns like 'My strength is not for hurting', there is an attempt to disrupt the gendered grammar of violence in so far as they challenge the position that masculine heterosexuality is something agentic, powerful and uncontrollable, with women functioning as the gatekeepers who 'relentlessly thwart masculine desire' (Murphy, 2009, p. 120). Yet the campaign seems to rely on the production of 'good masculinity', positioning the rapist as someone who embodies 'bad' masculinity (Messner, 2016) – something that 'good' men can stop. Sexual behaviour is thus used to delineate the boundary/binary between good non-rapist masculinity and bad rapist masculinity, and as

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[3]http://mencanstoprape.blogspot.com.au/2011/12/saying-goodbye-to-my-strength-is-not.html

such, rape is constructed as something that the other 'bad' man does (Masters, 2010). Although it is beyond the scope of this book to explore anti-rape campaigns specifically addressing men the role of masculinity as causal feature of sexual violence as they were not part of the initial case studies, I do want to mention another recent example of an online campaign that attempts to engage with men and their behaviour, called 'Don't be that guy'. I mention this example because survey participants indicated they were connected with this campaign in their digital activist networks (see Table 2). Again, the language 'don't be *that guy*' (my emphasis) positions the rapist as 'other' and reinforces a 'good' kind of masculinity; one that does not take advantage of intoxicated women, for example. In these examples, men's responsibility to guide other men's social and sexual behaviour is the key in facilitating this 'othering' process. It implies that these men can purify and reinforce a particular type of 'good' masculinity through monitoring other men's behaviour (Cover, 2019; Masters, 2010).

The use of normative representations of masculinity within anti-rape campaigns is also reflected in a Scottish Police campaign released in 2012, available on YouTube called 'We can stop it'.[4] Featuring a rugby player, a personal trainer, a joiner (builder), a graphic designer and a student, the campaign attempts to draw on a particular type of masculinity to show 'I'm the kind of guy that doesn't have sex with a girl when she's too drunk', 'I listen when a girl (or a guy) says "no"', 'I know that when she's asleep it's a "no"' and 'I'm the kind of guy that doesn't pressure his girlfriend to have sex'. These statements are all followed by a question to the audience: 'do you?' or: 'are you?' Again, such language seeks to rearticulate the meaning of masculinity and sexual entitlement through using the statement: 'I'm the kind of guy who doesn't (rape)' and subsequently asks the male audience to question their own behaviour. While the campaign seeks to shift this facet of masculine sexual entitlement, it also reminds the audience that you can still be a 'real' man – no matter what your sexual orientation or occupation, so long as you do not rape someone. In doing so, they construct 'hybrid masculinities' (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014) that attempt to symbolically distance themselves from elements of hegemonic masculinity, such as violence, and at the same time incorporate attributes of alternative masculine identities (Cover, 2019; Masters, 2010).

While the campaigns directly involved in this project attempt to centre perpetrators as responsible for rape rather than focussing on women and their behaviour as the cause of rape, only the *Pixel Project* sought to target men directly and actively engage them in activism. On the *Pixel Project*'s website, there is a 'Men's Room'[5] that provides men with an overview of what gender-based violence is, highlighting that it is not 'a women's issue', and the steps men can take to help prevent violence against women such as 'prevention through example and education', intervention, activism and self-awareness. The *Pixel Project* also acknowledges that perpetrators, or men who might not be willing to admit they have acted violently towards women, might be accessing the website. For example, underneath the 'self-awareness' section

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[4]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypVzXpKkFiU
[5]http://www.thepixelproject.net/the-mens-room/what-you-can-do/

on the 'Men's Room' page, there is a disclaimer that reads, 'If you are emotionally, psychologically, physically, financially/economically, or sexually abusive or violent towards women, or have been in the past, be responsible – seek professional help NOW' (*Pixel Project* emphasis). It is unlikely that any perpetrators of rape would be visiting anti-rape campaigns except to troll them, although they may be seeking help. For example, I asked Anna if perpetrators ever contact *Project Unbreakable*, and she said that it happens 'very infrequently', but 'they are usually asking for help' and are forwarded to the 'appropriate organisation'.

Although most of the case studies involved in this project did not represent men as victim-survivors of rape, some worked directly with external organisations to help bring men into the conversation. For example, the Scottish Police campaign 'We can stop it' mentioned above was developed in partnership with Rape Crisis Scotland to complement their campaigns. Lynn felt that having a campaign like 'We can stop it' focussing on potential perpetrators rather than the potential victims was 'another useful approach' to tackling rape prevention because

> That's not something that's really been done before either. It's always been very much about women having to look after themselves and make sure that they don't do X Y or Z.

In this way, sexual violence prevention is presented as something that is not just a 'women's issue' but rather an issue associated with 'masculinity' (Mardorossian, 2014, p. 3 – my emphasis), as I noted earlier in this section. Using masculinity as a tool to shift consciousness may also be a useful tool to meet men where they are (Flood, 2003), which is the approach taken by the *Pixel Project*, who incorporate what Angela called 'male allies' into their activism. Angela said using male allies is 'about being practical and pragmatic because these men are going to listen to another man … It's called peer-to-peer intervention'. Such a position reflects the stance taken by bell hooks (1984) who advocates for the inclusion of men within the feminist movement because women alone cannot achieve the goals of the feminist movement. Specifically, hooks (1984) argues:

> Men are the primary agents maintaining and supporting sexism and sexist oppression, they can only be eradicated if men are compelled to assume responsibility for transforming their consciousness and the consciousness of society as a whole. (p. 83)

However, the 'good man' approach to rape prevention has contributed to the weakening politics of anti-rape work, and visions of social transformation, because their recodification of masculinity fails to address the structural advantages (heterosexual) men have in many parts of the world, which reinforces their access and entitlement to women's bodies (Messner, 2016). Moreover, most men would like to think they are 'good' men and strive to position themselves as 'not rapists' – even if they are. This distancing, or demarcation, between the 'good' non-rapist and the 'bad' rapist was also evident in the comments section on *This Is Not an Invitation to Rape Me*, as I highlighted in Chapter 4, where comments

such as 'not all men' position rape as perpetrated by 'other' men but not those who participate in or support these campaigns.

Hypatia too noticed good non-rapist/bad rapist masculinity binary in her interview when I asked her what she thinks could be done to bring about change. Hypatia said, 'Most rapists want to think of themselves as *good guys*' (my emphasis); men think they have not done anything wrong either because of the narrow ways in which rape is understood (as something violent and perpetrated by a stranger), or the culture in which they live privileges masculine sexual desire and denies women sexual agency. Yet, it remains difficult to get men to understand or at the very least acknowledge their own role in perpetuating 'rape culture'. In suggesting that 'I am not a rapist' or 'not all men', men who challenge the claims made by anti-rape activists distance themselves not only from the subjectivity of 'a rapist' but also from the broader social and cultural structures that sustain 'rape culture'. As a result, they resist the possibility of collectively acknowledging their own sexual autonomy and privilege and continue to position rape as the product of a few 'bad' individual men, rather than something enabled through a cultural and political system that denies women sexual agency. Engaging men and boys in anti-rape activism clearly remains an ongoing issue; however, as I discuss in the conclusion of this book, there have been some promising attempts to address this through hashtag activism, such as #HowIWillChange which emerged in the wake of the #MeToo movement. Although not unproblematic, it demonstrates some positive steps taken by men to understand and transform their own power and privilege in meaningful ways, facilitated by digital media.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Visibility

In addition to criticism regarding the lack of inclusion for men, the case studies in this project took a very heteronormative approach to their anti-rape activism. This is despite the fact that sexual violence experienced by the LGBTQ community takes place within the confines of compulsory heterosexuality governed by (Rich, 1980, cited in Bedera & Nordmeyer, 2020, p. 5) and is therefore still the product of culture that favours masculine entitlement to bodies and sex irrespective of gender or sexuality. Moreover, queer and lesbian women have historically been heavily involved in developing and sustaining anti-rape activism alongside heterosexual women since the 1970s (Taylor & Rupp, 1993). Lesbian women in *Take Back the Night* marches, and more recently the *Slut-Walk* movements, were significant collaborators and participants in these forms of activism, along with transgender women (Carr, 2013). However, in addition to focussing predominantly on women's experiences of rape, most of the case studies presented in this book focussed exclusively on heterosexual women's experiences of rape. Indeed, most respondents to the survey identified as 'heterosexual' (64%), with 24% identifying as or bisexual, and only 6% listed their sexual orientation as 'lesbian', and the rest described themselves as queer or pansexual.

This lack of diversity from the campaigns involved in this study may well simply be a reflection of the dominant sexual identity of individuals engaged in these spaces. However, the demographic data clearly illustrate that over 30% of survey respondents identified their sexuality as not explicitly heterosexual. It is therefore imperative that anti-rape activists take a stronger approach to understanding and incorporating the experiences of the LGBTQI+ community in their activism. Certainly, Rape Crisis Scotland expressed a desire to 'introduce more diversity in future campaigns', because a number of comments on the campaign websites wanted to see broader representations of victim-survivors of sexual violence who fall outside the heterosexual matrix. Survey respondents too felt that *This Is Not an Invitation to Rape Me* lacked diversity. One particular comment stated, 'More campaigns [are needed] including women who are targeted by women, men who are targeted by men, [and] women who are targeted by men'. Experiences of transgender women and men, however, remained markedly absent from these digital spaces, despite lesbian, queer and transgender women disproportionately experience sexual violence (Bedera & Nordmeyer, 2020; Guadalupe-Diaz, 2019; Meyer, 2016; Mortimer, Powell, & Sandy, 2019). It is essential that the parameters of recognition and representation are broadened within anti-rape activism, as there is a dearth of research and knowledge on the experiences of LGBTQ sexual violence survivors, which is reflected in the way support services and primary respondents are insufficiently equipped to address their needs (Guadalupe-Diaz, 2019; Mortimer et al., 2019).

The victim-survivors who identified as lesbians within these online anti-rape spaces tended to describe experiences of rape that were more often than not perpetrated by heterosexual men asserting misogynistic attitudes of sexual entitlement to, or conquests over these women's bodies (Bedera & Nordmeyer, 2020). Their experiences might therefore also be classified as hate crimes, or 'corrective' rape, seeking to reinforce heterosexuality as the 'norm'. These perspectives are reflected in the following posts on *Project Unbreakable*, with one poster stating the perpetrator's words: 'I'll prove you're straight'. Another post reads:

> He said you consented, it's his word against yours. Obviously you made a drunken mistake and maybe you're a bit embarrassed because you're a lesbian (response from Sexual Offences Investigator Trainee).

The investigator's response reflects broader issues inherent in victim-blaming attitudes and rape myths – saying that the victim-survivor's experience was a 'drunken mistake' and that she is 'embarrassed' about what happened, seems to imply that if the victim-survivor was a 'real' lesbian, she would not have consented to having sex with a man, subsequently invalidating her experience. These attitudes are also present in support services, with many mainstream sexual assault and rape crisis groups struggling to appropriately provide support for members of the LGBTQ community (Guadalupe-Diaz, 2019; Mortimer et al., 2019). This is compounded, as Mortimer et al. (2019) have identified, through the ways in which service providers often rely on heterosexist and cis-gendered assumptions about bodies, sex and violence that reinforce heteronormative scripts about rape.

The upshot of these attitudes impacts on LGBTQ victim-survivors speaking out about their experiences but also casts them as group with specific needs that are considered too difficult for activist campaigns to address. For example, the *Pixel Project* chose not to focus on LGBTQ experiences in their activism because they 'have a very specific set of needs' according to Angela, and 'we don't have any expertise in the LGBT issue [*sic*.]'. However, as I outlined above, the underlying contributing cause in many instances of sexual assault, irrespective of sexuality and gender identity, is masculinity (Bedera & Nordmeyer, 2020). Angela noted that this decision to exclude the LGBTQ community had resulted in transgender folk, in particular, being aggressive towards the project. Specifically, she said, 'some of the worst attacks on us are by transgender people', not men's rights activists or other feminists. Angela stated, 'it's not because we're transphobic'; yet paradoxically, she said, 'they [transgender people] feel like they are not being included'. Angela also claimed that 'the way they [LGBTQ people] experience violence … has a very different dynamic' to heterosexual women's experiences, although she did not elaborate on what these differences were. The *Pixel Project*'s approach in responding to the needs of transgender victim-survivors was to refer them to appropriate services, because, as I noted in Chapter 4, they are not a 'frontline' service. While Angela said the *Pixel Project* is not 'transphobic', the lack of representation of LGBT experiences does reinforce assumptions about 'real' women, and thus 'real' rape.

This fixation on women as 'real' victims and heterosexual contexts as 'real' experiences of rape was brought up by Katie, who noticed on a feminist Facebook group a significant amount of transphobia directed towards non-cis-gendered women's experiences of rape, which she found upsetting. Katie said that these attitudes were espoused by TERFs – or Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists – who historically have drawn on a biology-based and sex-essentialist way of framing gendered experiences of violence (Williams, 2016). Radical feminism is grounded in the belief that women's subordination stems from patriarchal gender roles derived from biological sex differences (Echols, 1989). From a TERF perspective, masculinity, and by extension misogyny, is something learned, internalised an embodied by men, and therefore, transwomen can never know the lived experience of women's oppression. In this sense, TERFs argue that transwomen do not experience rape in the same way that heterosexual or even lesbian women do because their embodied and political subjectivity has historically benefitted from masculine privilege. However, it is problematic to conflate 'radical feminism' with TERF politics (Williams, 2016). Radical feminists have also sought to disrupt the ways in which patriarchy and male dominance reduce women to a discrete biological category (see e.g. Catharine MacKinnon). In this sense, radical feminism has actively resisted sex essentialism as the defining categorisation of 'women' and paved the way for post-structuralist thinking around gender and sex as social constructions. Nonetheless, radical feminism remains poorly understood and has found itself aligned with the discourses of TERFs, who have become increasingly prevalent online, creating a further tension between the personal and the political with anti-rape activism, entrenching particular conditions around authentic rape scripts not only in relation to who can experience rape but who can judge the experience as credible. This issue was

noted by Katie, who said she did not think 'cis-people have the right to make judgements about how …' 'real' 'a transperson's experience is'. Katie felt that the fighting that has ensued between some feminists about whether or not a transwoman can call herself a 'woman' or claim her experience 'rape', deflected feminist attention away from the real problem – that of misogyny, patriarchy, power and compulsory heterosexuality, which create the conditions that both enable and deny the existence of rape regardless of gender identity.

It was beyond the scope of this research project to investigate digital spaces where trans activism relating to sexual violence was taking place; however, given the issues highlighted above around TERFs and resistance to addressing the needs of trans victim-survivors' experiences of rape, it is likely to be taking place in less visible spaces online. Moreover, as a cis-gendered heterosexual woman, I did not feel it was appropriate to approach activists working in this area without first establishing a strong rapport with those engaged in these digital spaces. Given the prevalence of violence in LGBTQ relationships and the persistent failure to effectively believe and support these individuals (Bedera & Nordmeyer, 2020; Guadalupe-Diaz, 2019), I regret this decision. However, I strongly advocate for further research to explore the ways in which digital spaces enable LGBTQ victim-survivors to connect as well as breakdown heterosexist and cissexist assumptions about rape and sexual assault (Mortimer et al., 2019). It is only through gaining a more thorough understanding of the complexities and dynamics underscoring all experiences of sexual assault that we can hope to address the problem – and this includes being more inclusive and diverse in the modes of recognition and representation of victim-survivor identities within activist spaces.

Conclusion

In many ways, this chapter has been primarily concerned with anti-rape activism's relationship to feminism, and how this tension is negotiated in the case studies involved in this project through various modes of representation and engagement. Historically, anti-rape activists and scholars pushing the victim-feminism agenda have received a significant amount of criticism for framing rape victim-survivors as 'victims through and through' (Heberle, 1996, p. 75). This backlash was compounded by neoliberalism's influence on therapy culture and carceral politics, splintering victimhood into two identities: the 'good' victim and the 'bad' victim, within law and popular culture (Stringer, 2014). The good victim, as I described above, squeezes 'the complex ambiguities of coercive hetero sex into the binary, individuated logic of the consent/coercion dichotomy' (Gotell, 2007, p. 142, see also Larcombe, 2002). Juxtaposed against the 'good' victim is the bad victim who supposedly seeks power through claiming a victimised identity status and blames others for their victimisation – namely patriarchy.

While they are not mutually exclusive identities, in this chapter I suggested that survivorship, or identifying as a survivor, is commonplace within anti-rape activism, even though, as Mardorossian (2002, p. 767) notes, being a 'victim' never meant powerlessness, but rather 'a determined and angry (although not pathologically resentful) agent of change'. This has influenced the ways in which anti-rape

activists in these online campaigns have sought to resist and subvert the logics of 'good victimhood' at the level of the individual and the collective through a variety of discursive tropes.

At the level of the visual, a break has been made with historical representations of rape that focussed on the suffering caused by sexual violence, with the emphasis now on survivorship or being 'unbreakable'. However, juxtaposed against these shifts in representation remain few signs that the discourse has been transformative in the ways early activists might have envisioned. While there are indeed fewer triggering images, I suggested that there is an omnipresent abject residing in what is not visible, materialising in particular descriptions about rape. As such, trigger warnings have become commonplace to alert people to the potential harms imagining the abject may cause, but this seems to assume that victim-survivors are governed by their inner-turmoil and trauma. There has also been a shift away from a 'fighting' or militaristic response to rape, towards a more pragmatic or calculated one, at the expense of exerting an overt feminist agenda.

This chapter has also explored the place of men in these online spaces as both victim-survivors and activists. I indicated that there are some attempts to capture men's experiences of rape on *Project Unbreakable*, for example, and others see them as allies in preventing sexual violence. These anti-rape campaigns, however, seem to be reluctant to engage in conversations about sexual violence beyond the heterosexual matrix. While there is some truth in Angela's claim that LGBTQ victim-survivors have a specific set of needs requiring a certain skillset to understand and respond to their experiences, the decision not to represent the LGBTQ community results in the perpetuation of assumptions and representations about 'real' rape and 'real' women. This further reinforces problematic gatekeeping around containing the 'rape script', as I discussed in Chapter 4, whereby cis-gendered (and heterosexual) women remain the benchmarks for determining the credibility of victim-survivors and their experiences.

Under neoliberalism, rape has been cast as an individual problem – caused by the individual actions (or inactions) of victim-survivors who failed to protect themselves from being assaulted or the individual actions of offenders who are opportunistic, sick or deviant. Challenging these logics to examine the broader structural conditions under which survivors experience sexual violence, as well as the popular cultural narratives about 'real rape' and 'real' victims, is incredibly difficult. However, the campaigns run by Rape Crisis Scotland creatively achieve this through positioning women as autonomous agents who do not invite rape and in doing so expose the social and cultural logics that maintain 'rape myths' and victim-blaming attitudes. The modes of representation on *Project Unbreakable* too highlight the extent to which masculine privilege and entitlement operates in the context of rape, and point to the widespread acceptance of 'rape myths' in the community and within institutional contexts. In doing so, posts by survivors subtly highlight the operationalisation of power, both the institutional power expressed by police as the gatekeepers of recognition of experiences and that possessed by perpetrators to exercise various forms of power over survivors. Yet, while these victim-survivors are exceptionally brave and courageous for participating in *Project Unbreakable*, the project seems to be focussed on the impact rape has on an individual and their ability to 'survive'

and become 'unbreakable', rather than collective action aimed at challenging 'rape culture'. In this sense, *Project Unbreakable* may be stuck in the 'consciousness raising' phase of activism (see Rosewarne, 2019); however, the affective political work being done by creating a community for healing should not be dismissed. Moreover, healing – as opposed to therapy – ought to be considered a radical political act in a culture that fails to recognise and honour the strength of women. As Page and Arcy (2019) argue about the #MeToo movement, 'mass healing' or collective healing is an affront to both the neoliberal discourses of individual empowerment as well as offers a critique of claims pertaining to carceral feminism's emphasis on criminalisation. focussing on the sharing of experiences fosters collective support and a politics of care central to a transformative feminist agenda (Rentschler, 2017).

Bound up with these challenges surrounding representation as well as the responsibility for preventing rape is the contentious nature and discourse of feminism itself. In these digital spaces, the complexities of feminism manifest in two ways. First, in public perceptions of feminism and the claims made by feminists regarding the best way to represent victim-survivors and who counts as a legitimate victim-survivor and the targeting of men and masculinity as one of the causes of but also instrumental in the prevention of rape. Second, in the internal conflicts within these digital media campaigns surrounding the meaning, mobilisation and their relationship to feminism. I do not want to suggest that any of the approaches utilised by the case studies in this research project are right or wrong, nor do I wish to assert that a particular version or form of feminism may be used or expressed better in online anti-rape activism. Rather, what I claim is that the uptake and resistance to and the uptake of different ways of engaging with feminism reveal is the shifts inherent in the tension between the personal and the political and that happens within and external to anti-rape activism as activists seek to advance their agendas for change. In this sense, the critiques of anti-rape activism in relation to neoliberalism fail to account for the significant agency exercised by those who create and manage these spaces. They are taken up, resisted and manipulated in ways that reflect their own complex assumptions and knowledge about feminism and the history of anti-rape activism, as well as the agenda they wish to pursue. In the final substantive chapter of this book, I turn to how these challenges play out in relation to the potential of these online spaces to foster alternative pathways for victim-survivors seeking rape justice, as well as explore some of the ethical challenges that arise from the different justices practices engaged with in these digital spaces.