Special Thematic Section on "Rethinking Health and Social Justice Activism in Changing Times"

Exploring the Threats to Sociable Scholarship: An Autoethnographic Viewing of Participatory News Making

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Abstract

Sociable scholarship is the activity of engaging in, and disseminating academic thinking through social media as part of a commitment to be held accountable by the communities a scholar serves. Doing so has both benefits, such as increasing the people impacted by an article, and drawbacks, like ad hominem attacks. In this piece, we use collaborative autoethnography to explore common threats to sociable scholarship. We are activist scholars who are recognised internationally as experts in our field and as committed activists for social change. Marewa is a community psychologist and long-time advocate for reducing the harm caused by smoking tobacco; Cat is a Fat Studies scholar and fat activist who works to ensure fat people have the same rights as non-fat people. We reflect on our own experiences with a specific venue, Facebook Live, to share tips and tools for managing negative encounters, and suggest that universities have a responsibility to protect staff who engage as public intellectuals in digital spaces.

Keywords: sociable scholarship, activist academic, Web 2.0, social media

Global social media is being used by communities to demand and enact the changes they want. To stay relevant, scholars must engage in these new public spaces (Pausé & Russell, 2016). This requires a willingness to debate with the very people we 'study': community practitioners, our critics, and other activists or scholars with opposing views (as well as with traditional journalists). Tensions arise for scholars unskilled in or unfamiliar with the culture of social media. Pausé and Russell have called for research identifying the barriers for academics' use of social media.

Using an autoethnographic approach we discuss the threats to sociable scholarship. Recognised as 'activist' scholars, we are frequently called upon by the media for comment. Individually we have both participated in a

new format being trialled by a national television channel in New Zealand: a panel discussion livestreamed to Facebook that draws on audience comments in real time.

Marewa, a community psychologist and long-time advocate for reducing the harm caused by smoking tobacco, was called upon to debate if cigarettes should be sold in pharmacies only. On the panel were a tobacco control advocate arguing for the proposal and a smoker arguing against Government intervention. Whilst an uncomfortable experience for Marewa, this case is instructive for our purposes of illustrating the risks of sociable scholarship.

Cat, a Fat Studies scholar who studies the impact of fat stigma on the health and well-being of fat people, was invited to give a taped interview about whether the fat acceptance movement encouraged obesity; on the panel were a plus size fashion blogger and a fitness campaigner. Cat was dismayed when her interview was edited to a single comment and taken out of context; it is yet another risk of sociable scholarship, but also an opportunity to consider ways for scholars to mitigate the potential harm.

The incidents examined illustrate the importance of 'performing' ethically. As scholars we must protect our professions' reputation. We also have a duty as public servants to diligently perform our role as social critic and conscience, which includes responding to public requests for our expert opinion and to serve as educators. That includes responding positively, workload permitting, to media requests for evidence-based information and opinion, including to participate in being interviewed. But, what are our obligations when the platform for communication is commercially dependent upon an adversarial performance? How are we to respond to abuse? The participating audience wanted real, as opposed to alternative, facts, expert versus lay opinion. They saw themselves as the 'lay voice', the community, in these formats and were rejecting of a lay voice claiming 'expert' space. The comments on the show Marewa was in, revealed an expectation of value, not just infotainment. The audience wanted to have their say, and they expected to be given arguments for and against that they could adjudicate.

Background

Web 2.0 tools, such as Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, and others, have created large holes in the walls of the Ivory Tower. These forms of social media allow for lay people to create knowledge, challenge existing paradigms, and engage in debate with scholars about their scholarship in public forums for the world to see. Communities themselves are able to use social media tools to push their demands into public spaces, force those in positions of power into public debates, and enact the changes they want to see. Scholars often find themselves in the centre of these spaces, especially ones who are committed to pursuing social justice through their scholarship.

Many academics embrace these new forms of engagement (Pausé & Russell, 2016; Veletsianos, 2013). They write about their work on blogs and online magazines like The Conversation. They host platforms on Twitter and Facebook, and join academic networking sites such as Academia.edu and Research Gate. And new scholarships have arisen to explore these new activities; Veletsianos (2013) and Weller (2011), for example, have explored how technology is transforming how some academics engage in their scholarship.

There are threats, however, when scholars engage in sociable scholarship. Some of these threats are familiar, like the tensions that may arise when scholars engage in activism. Or the tensions that arise when engaging with the mass media, as noted by McCormack (1965) in the middle of the twentieth century. Other threats are new, such as whether scholarship done in these social media spaces "count" for anything within the traditional academy. It also requires scholars to have the language and ability to speak on their work with others who may not have

the same background knowledge in the field, or consideration for their status as experts. For many, these threats are perceived as barriers to engaging in sociable scholarship. For others, the desire to engage exists, but uncertainty as to how to proceed, or respond to threats, remains.

Weller (2011) has called upon scholars who are engaging in digital scholarship to share their experiences, and bring to the light the affordances, tensions, and threats. And Veletsianos (2016) has echoed this call for scholars doing this work to build an evidence base about the ways these technologies are used and *experienced* by scholars. We both are regularly invited by national media to give comment on our respective topics, and have watched as mainstream media within New Zealand has begun engaging more with social media. For this piece, we will use our experiences as participants in a new format being used by a national New Zealand television channel's news show, Newshub Live on Facebook Live.

Cat was invited to give a taped interview about whether the fat acceptance movement encouraged obesity. On the panel were a plus size fashion blogger arguing for fat positivity and body autonomy and a fitness campaigner who was disgusted by the idea of fat positivity and believed it to be harmful. Viewed over 80k times, with over 550 comments, this first episode of Newshub live on Facebook was consumed widely within New Zealand. Marewa was called upon to debate if cigarettes should be sold in pharmacies only. On the panel, viewed over 22k times, were a tobacco control advocate arguing for the proposal and a smoker arguing against Government intervention. Viewers posted over 600 comments on the show at the time and afterwards.

Sociable Scholarship

Sociable scholarship refers to the way that scholars use social media, specifically Web 2.0 tools, to conduct their research, disseminate their research, and are held responsible for their research. Sociable scholars may be considered a subset of digital scholars, defined by Weller (2011) as "someone who employs digital, networked and open approaches to demonstrate specialism in a particular field" (p. 4). Sociable scholars embrace the affordance of Web 2.0 tools, in allowing users to create their own content and co-construct content with an untold amount of others with whom they are physically disconnected. Veletsianos and Kimmons (2013) have identified a networked scholar as one who uses digital neworks to promote their work and engage with others. We see sociable scholars as similar to both digital scholars and networked scholars, but unique in their motivation to engage in sociable scholarship. What drives a sociable scholar is their commitment to social justice, and their invitation to be held accountable by the communities they claim to serve.

Scholarship is changing in the age of social media (Pausé & Russell, 2016). Many scholars are embracing social media as a way to engage in research collaborations, disseminate their work to large audiences, and support and interact with the very communities they are studying. Others use social media to live Tweet conferences, maintain blogs, share syllabi, engage in debate, live stream teaching or research presentations, and crowd source help for professional activities (Veletsianos, 2013).

Faculty who engage in sociable scholarship report numerous benefits, including engagement in international networks, collaboration, and faster feedback from peers on their work (Crookes, 2016; Gruzd, Staves, & Wilk, 2012). Promoting scholarship through social media increases the impact and reach of the research (Green, 2015; Puustinen & Edwards, 2012), and allows for academic research to become part of conversations outside of academia (Lupton, 2014; Maslen, 2011). It also allows for engagement and interaction, in real time, with individuals across the world (Daniels, 2013; Pausé & Russell, 2016). These interactions allow for scholars to learn and ben-

efit from the experiences of other scholars, but also the experiences of those being studied (Pausé & Russell, 2016). It provides a platform for scholars to use their voices to highlight social justice issues, unpack commonly held myths, and fulfil their role of critic and conscience of society (Pausé & Russell, 2016).

Engaging in sociable scholarship necessitates that the scholar be visible online, but being visible online opens the scholar up to engagement and interaction with (and criticism from) lay people, and opposition in one's sector and the press. Faculty identify a variety of threats they associate with sociable scholarship, including issues of privacy, time pressures, user error, and plagiarism of their unpublished work (Gruzd, Staves, & Wilk, 2012; Lupton, 2014; Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2013). The exclusion of sociable scholarship from promotion and tenure consideration is another concern; "scholars' digital participation may at times stand in stark contrast to and defy the evaluation metrics traditionally used to judge their work" (Veletsianos, 2013, p. 648). Many have called for the inclusion of sociable scholarship in traditional evaluations of academic performance (Biswas & Kirchherr, 2015; Pausé & Russell, 2016).

Other concerns include the blurring of professional and personal boundaries and coming under attack online (Gruzd, Staves, & Wilk, 2012; Lupton, 2014; Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2013). Being attacked is experienced most often by women, through sexual harassment, rape threats, and death threats (Lupton, 2014), and is especially worse for women in marginalized groups (fat women, women of colour, etc.) (McMillan Cottom, 2012). This is true for women outside of academia also. It is a common experience shared by women who engage online, regardless of their employment (Graham, 2017).

In a 2015 survey of 21,399 faculty members from across tertiary institutions in the United States, participants reported being concerned about scholars being attacked for social media activity, but did not report this influencing their own professional social media use (Straumshein, Jaschik, & Lederman, 2015). It is worth noting that most of the faculty surveyed did not report engaging in sociable scholarship. In contrast, Lupton's (2014) survey of 711 academics from around the world (most respondents were from Western countries) who engaged in sociable scholarship did report that their social media use was influenced by their awareness of the threats of being attacked/taken out of context/being put in a position that would damage their credibility as scholars or jeopardise their careers. The threats of career jeopardy to those who engage in sociable scholarship can be very real. Online engagement has resulted in academic faculty being reprimanded (including suspensions, being disavowed in the press, and being denied an appointment) (Sugimoto, 2016); the Board of Regents in Kansas, Nebraska, approved a policy in 2013 that gave senior administrators in the state universities the power to fire academic staff for their social media use (Lupton, 2014); this was condemned by the American Association of University Professors (2013b) as a "gross violation of the fundamental principles of academic freedom" (para 4).

For those that do engage in sociable scholarship, mitigating these threats is a real concern, as are adapting to the new platforms and Web 2.0 tools that are developed and introduced to what can feel like an already saturated space. New apps appear every day, and it seems like whatever platform was in vogue today, like Snapchat, may be considered old news by the time a scholar learns how to harness the platform for their purposes. One such recent addition to the social media field is Facebook Live.

Facebook Live was launched in August 2015. Integrated within the Facebook app, Facebook Live allows for users to post live streamed videos on their Facebook accounts. According to the "About" page, "Live is the best way to interact with viewers in real time. Field their burning questions, hear what's on their mind and check out their Live Reactions to gauge how your broadcast is going" (Facebook Live, "About"). When the Live session ends, Facebook

Live videos are published to the appropriate page or profile so the video can be watched on demand. Producing a Facebook Live video is relatively easy. The user simply selects "Live Video" from the options when updating a status, and the streaming begins. Candace Payne (aka, Chewbacca Mom) did this on her smartphone in her car after purchasing a Chewbacca mask for her son. Her Facebook Live video, which is approximately four minutes of her wearing the mask, "roaring", and laughing, was the most watched Facebook Live video of 2016 with 162 million views (Spangler, 2016). Other well-known Facebook Live videos include Buzzfeed's "Countdown to the 2020 Presidential Election" and the video of Minnesota police murdering Philando Castile while he sat in the driver's seat of his car, next to his girlfriend and small child.

While uptake among users has been slower than hoped, media companies were early adopters of the format (Hern, 2017). Facebook Live videos are pushed to the top of relevant newsfeeds to encourage real time interactions with the audience. And this real time interaction is connecting with viewers. Facebook Live videos receive 10 times more comments than other videos posted on Facebook (Greenberg, 2016). Spayd (2016) suggests that Facebook Live represents a "potentially transformational form of journalism because they let stories unfold organically, live, and with the audience able to change the experience" (para 4). This appeal is likely what drew traditional media in New Zealand to the Facebook Live format.

In 2017, Newshub began a weekly live panel show on Facebook Live. Each panel was centered on answering a question which was promoted to the Newshub audience via social media over several days preceding the show to excite users to participate and have their voices heard. Viewers were encouraged to post comments, ask questions of the panel members, and share "whose side you're on". Newshub instructs that a "FB like" expresses support for panel member A while a "FB love" shows support for panel member B (the designations vary; other signifiers used have been the "thumbs up" emoji, the "FB wow", and the "heart" emoji). Topics explored have included, for example, fat acceptance (8 February 2017; 85k viewers), racism in New Zealand (15 February 2017; 35k viewers), and decriminalising methamphetamine (2 March 2017; 25k viewers).

In March 2017, Newshub increased their use of the format to a daily 30 minute show including live content and studio interviews. The show was promoted as presenting the news at "a faster pace than traditional 6pm or late programmes" (Newshub staff, 2017, para 1). According to MediaWorks Chief News Officer Hal Crawford, this was a step the network took to meet audience demand while increasing the amount of news broadcast. Panel topics that have been part of this daily format include the gender pay gap (22 March 2017; 13k viewers), plastic surgery (6 April 2017; 31k viewers), and tobacco sales (13 April 2017; 22k viewers).

The show begins with the reporter introducing the panel members and their credentials are made clear. The reporter then introduces the question at hand before a short prepared video is played giving some context to the question. A debate between the panelists then ensues, with the reporter asking questions, inviting feedback from the audience, and occasionally introducing pre-recorded video clips of other speakers on the topic. At times during the show the reporter will stand and move to read audience posts which are displayed on a large screen. In this way, viewer input is used to direct the tone and following content of the show in real time.

Methodology

Collaborative autoethnography proved a useful method for exploring our experiences with sociable scholarship and the risks associated with being a scholar engaging with the public in a live streamed spotlight. Autoethnography encourages scholars to reflect on personal experiences and how they relate to, and refract from, existing theoretical frameworks and literature (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Geist-Martin, 2010). It is especially useful for exploration of topics and questions that have yet to produce other empirical work; while emerging, the literature on sociable scholarship is limited. By sharing our own experiences wrapped in the theory of sociable scholarship and understood through the lens of the research that does exist, we help build the literature in this area and contribute to the growing body of knowledge on sociable scholarship.

We used a concurrent collaborative autoethnography model (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010) which began with us sharing our recollections of our individual Facebook Live experiences, including reflecting on what we remembered most. This took place several months after our appearances on the show. We then independently wrote full narratives recounting the sequence of events, our emotional lived experience of them, and after-effects and behaviours we used to retain our commitment to social scholarship. Each of us were able to re-view our segments of Facebook Live as they are preserved online. Next, we independently read each others' story. We then discussed the common themes across our narratives, the range and variance in our feelings triggered by our experiences, and where our experience connected with contextually specific elements of the live social media experience and the broader social phenomenon of political polarisation and associated suppression of science (Sagner et al., 2017). Using a somewhat deductive analytic approach we identified content specific to the focus of our investigation, that is, we further reflected on the risks we could identify in engaging in this kind of scholarship, and whether our backgrounds as activists provided useful tools to negotiate the risks. We repeated this process several times, and each discussion included posing probing questions of each other. This is a vital step in the collaborative process as it mitigates against settling in one's own perspective and enables new insights (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010). Subsequently we updated our narratives to highlight excerpts that illustrated the key themes and lessons we had independently and collaboratively identified. At this stage we eliminated content outside the scope of this paper's investigation. For example, content about the viewers' opinions on the Facebook Live question, or fine detail about the chronology of events.

Autoethnography as a method is not without limitations and critics. Our experience reflects our historical, socio-political and professional contexts which are sometimes similar (we are both cis-gendered highly qualified employed women) and also very different (e.g. colonised Indigenous versus American expat). Our experience of live social media broadcasts cannot be extrapolated to how others would experience being publicly misrepresented or subjected to ad hominem attacks within such a context. Autoethnography has been criticised for not being objective, seeming to be just opinion. If the content is intimate in nature some readers may experience discomfort which can trigger a defensive reaction such as minimising the reported experience, needing to reframe it.

Sharing such stories and vulnerabilities opens us up to other risks; risks that are common to the autoethnographic method, such as the risk of disclosure, risk of shame, and risk to our reputations (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Lee & Pausé, 2016). Opening ourselves up in this way leaves us vulnerable to those who may suggest that there is nothing of substance behind the curtain; or to those who would seek to discredit our work and expertise by highlighting our human insecurities and pain.

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Our Experiences – Two Cases

Cat –

It began like any other request from the media - am I willing to participate in a story they are doing about fatness? In this particular case, the invitation was from Newshub, to participate in a new format they were testing on Facebook: using Facebook Live to host short debates. Each segment would ask a question, and encourage viewers to answer the question through likes and loves on Facebook, as well as through comments throughout the show.

I wasn't quite sure I wanted to participate for two reasons. First, the topic, "The fat acceptance movement – does it encourage obesity", is about as clickbaity as you can get. (Can anyone out there explain to me what it means to encourage, or promote, obesity? This rhetoric is tossed around a lot, usually when a fat person is asking to be treated with respect or allowed to not hate themselves, but no one can ever actually explain to me what it means when I ask.) But, when dealing with mainstream media, clickbait is unfortunately par for the course in the days of the Interwebs. My second concern was related to the format proposed: the Live part wasn't a problem, as I've done lots of Live media before (TV and radio), but the idea that people watching the segment would be commenting in real time – and then those comments would become part of the story – that part gave me pause. I don't read the comments online, and the idea of coming face-to-face per se with a living breathing comments section didn't appeal to me at all.

I wouldn't normally agree to participate in a media story like this. I've long learned to say "no" to stories that I know will be exploitative. I also have riders that usually accompany my agreement to participate in a story, including that the information is factual (no claiming that New Zealand is one of the fattest countries in the world), and that the images associated with the story are not headless fatties (fat people without heads; presented as bulging abdomens only; Cooper, 2007). In the end, I agreed, largely to support the fat activist who I knew was going to be live in the studio for the segment. I did a short interview with a producer, going over my credentials, some basic Fat 101 Qs, and the details of the recorded interview. They then pre-recorded the interview for them to use during the Facebook Live stream when appropriate. The interview itself lasted around 30 minutes, and none of the questions were unexpected. I tried not to let myself be baited into any statements that they could clip away from the rest and use as an incendiary soundbite, but that's almost impossible when your footage is going to an editing room.

When the episode aired, I watched, along with around eighty five thousand other New Zealanders. From the start of the segment, I knew it was going to be bad. The opening clip package was full of fallacies and headless fatties, and I found myself grateful that I wasn't in the studio watching this unfold while others were watching me. It turned out, I played an almost insignificant role in the segment. My thirty minute interview was edited down into a clip of less than thirty seconds that was a slice of several different responses. This resulted in my contribution being a jumbled mess of reflections on what constitutes an epidemic, evolutionary trends of demographics and health, and the impact of telling fat people they can never be healthy. It was difficult to watch, even by myself in my office.

Cutting back to the panel after my pre-recorded bit, the reporter turned to the physical trainer on the panel and asked his response to my comments. He responded by calling me "delusional." Delusional!

According to Google, delusional means "characterized by or holding idiosyncratic beliefs or impressions that are contradicted by reality or rational argument, typically as a symptom of mental disorder." From his perspective, I'm out of touch with reality or rational argument; possibly insane. And now maybe the audience is agreeing (I'm trying very hard to ignore the comments that are popping up on the video as I watch; I never ever read the comments as a method of self-care). It isn't an uncommon attack on those who push back against structures of power – even more common when the individual making trouble is a woman. Witch. Delusional. They mean the same thing; hold the same purpose. And while the reporter makes an incredulous noise to this, she doesn't challenge him to back up his attack on my expertise or credibility with any evidence.

It's difficult for me to pay attention after this. I keep watching, almost in a daze, as the fat activist on the show does her best to hold her own – and the idea that fat people deserve the same rights and dignity as non-fat people – amidst the growing jeers of the others in the room with her and those who are participating from their own spaces through the Internet.

Marewa –

I was interested to participate in the show both to present an argument against the proposal to restrict sales of tobacco products to pharmacies, but also because this was a new communication platform reaching, as explained to me by the journalist, a younger audience that prefers social media platforms as sources of information. I saw it as a learning opportunity for me to experience this innovative format.

The programme started out with the journalist introducing the other panelist in the studio who was a tobacco control spokesperson known to me. I was introduced as an academic who had spent the previous 20 years focused on tobacco control and health promotion. The journalist then pointed out that given that we both wanted people to stop smoking we'd presumably have the same view on the topic but in talking with us prior to the show she'd found we had "conflicting views". This established the adversarial nature of the programme, which I had come to expect as New Zealand media had an obligation to present a 'balance' of both sides of an argument.

An innovative feature of the show was the inclusion of questions and comments from viewers. The first viewer comment introduced into the discussion was that further restrictions on access to tobacco would cause more black market activity. This was an unintended negative effect of tobacco tax hikes that I had been trying to raise awareness of. At this point in the show, my fellow panelist tried to stop me talking by speaking over me and raising her voice. Silenced, since I did not want to engage in a shouting match, I shook my head. The journalist took control and invited me to speak but my counterpart became animated and interrupted again. The journalist shifted to report viewer comments posted on the Facebook page over the previous 24 hours.

I liked the audience comments as they were aligned with my efforts to reveal the illogical premise underpinning restricting tobacco sales to pharmacies which as one viewer said are "supposed to sell medications that are good for you." At this point in the show a pre-recorded Skype interview with Joshua Geddy, representing a smoker's view was played. He argued against government infringing his self-determination over his own body. The journalist invited the other panelist to comment on this first. In her response she used a common tobacco control rhetorical strategy of justifying denial of adult autonomy to protect children

from initiating smoking. When invited, I challenged the portrayal that children were as at risk as implied by reporting that New Zealand had been very successful at reducing uptake of smoking among kids.

Again my counterpart reacted sharply and interrupted: "You know what? You sound more and more like you're coming from the place of tobacco industry thinking more than the public and the community and the future of our Māori children."

I was shocked by this attack on my credibility. I knew people in tobacco control globally had been levelling this kind of attack against anyone who challenged their proposals, but none had gone so far as to publicly frame me as aligned with, if not speaking for, the tobacco industry. I felt fear. This triggered an internal struggle to calm myself and maintain a professional composure.

I thought it appropriate to show a bit of dismay and, despite the internal panic I was feeling I said "Yeah so just trying to discredit me isn't very professional I think. What we really want to do is discuss and debate the actual issue [opposing panelist begins to interrupt] and not get into personal attacks."

I recognised these jibes on my identity as a Māori woman and as an 'ivory tower' academic, - hurtful comments I'd experienced before. This was a time when my history of having experienced numerous sorts of abuse as a child, as a young woman, as an adult partner and as an employee, did not serve me well. Internally, I dissociated - one stream of thought riled against what I felt was an abusive attack, another thought stream forecast the damage her portrayal of me could result in triggering more fear, fear that was well founded given the many things people in the sector had already done to undermine my career or drive me to abandon tobacco control. Meanwhile, one part of my mind worked to manage my external composure, to continue to carefully but quickly and authoritatively respond to the journalist's questions as you must always do regardless of the medium.

The journalist recovered control and changed the direction of the debate giving me an opportunity to speak uninterrupted for the longest time yet in the show. This helped me. The journalist also seemed to be sympathetic to my concern for the way minorities were being stigmatised and this helped quell my internal panic. Still, I felt trapped. The struggle between fear and anger had me wanting to walk out, but this would have appeared unprofessional. I believed that viewers wouldn't understand -they'd see such a behaviour as an over-reaction. I felt out of place because of the damage I had survived.

Avoiding Threats to Sociable Scholarship

Our common experience was that of dismay and hurt. We were both used as adversarial fodder in a live show reminiscent of reality TV shows that trade on unscripted displays of uncontrolled emotion (preferably shock, anger and hurt) wrested from unsuspecting players. This was facilitated by the programme journalist and directors framing the question as controversial and the panelists as polarised. Imagery was used in the show Cat appeared in, that deliberately attempted to dehumanise and ridicule fat people, including the two fat activist panelists. By contrast, the producers and journalist sought to mock the unjust prohibitionist ideas of tobacco control in the show Marewa appeared in. In each case, the audience was encouraged to pick a side and comment. The forum however lacks the traditional protections of academic professionalism or the shared values for engaging in mutually respectful debate. The audience got to 'enjoy' freely passing judgement on the tobacco control worker for her

"rude" behaviour and want to intrude upon people's rights to make their own decisions. Fat women were clearly the presented target for the audience to 'hate on' in the show Cat was part of. The wider social normalisation of abuse of women contributes to newscasters in New Zealand reporting that Facebook comments are the most abusive and gendered remarks they receive (Graham, 2017). These negative comments are also, unsurprisingly, related to the appearance of the woman herself.

Whilst an uncomfortable experience for both of us, the experiences we present are instructive for our purposes of illustrating the risks of sociable scholarship, and for considering ways to mitigate harm.

Ways to Mitigate Threats

At an individual level, it is important to understand the format and genre of a platform in order to make an informed choice about how or whether to participate. If Cat was informed that the show was going to incite abuse of fat people by dehumanising (e.g. cutting their heads off) and ridiculing them, and thus her, as she said, she wouldn't have participated. Second, it is important to know who will be opposing you. With a deliberately adversarial format, anticipating the counter argument and preparing reasoned evidence-based responses can help carry you through unexpected ad hominem attacks on your credibility. The old adage 'know your stuff' holds true here – you're going to need more than empty rhetoric to achieve cut through with a blood-baying audience.

The comments on the show Marewa was in revealed an expectation of value, not just infotainment. The audience wanted to have their say, and they expected to be given arguments for and against that they could adjudicate. They wanted real, as opposed to alternative facts, expert versus lay opinion. They saw themselves as the 'lay voice,' the community, in these formats and were rejecting of a lay voice claiming 'expert' space.

Another truism is 'be prepared.' Undertake training in speaking to the media. Attend talks and workshops offered by sociable scholars. Practice by participating on other platforms that afford more distance and protections, such as being able to block abusive Tweeters.

A pretty standard rule of thumb for surviving online, especially if you are a woman, is never ever read the comments (Graham, 2017; Williams, 2015). Comment sections, whether on news stories, blog posts, or elsewhere, are some of the most grim places on earth. Often filled with sexism, racism, comments related to women and women's issues, especially, are less likely to be about the issue or topic at hand, and more likely to be focused on reinforcing misogyny and targeting a woman's appearance. As Cat reflects,

> I never ever read the comments; this is part of how I stay active online. If I read the comments, which I can predict with alarming certainty, I would struggle to maintain an online presence. Why would I want to invite that kind of vitriol and nastiness into my life? As a fat woman, I consume a great deal of anti-fat hatred every day of my life. Through the media, in the common room at work, government policies on obesity, etc. I do not need to consume even more voluntarily by reading what people online think of my work or my activism (or my fat body).

While some news sites, like Popular Science, NPR, and Radio New Zealand, have closed their sites to comments (Goujard, 2016), social media companies like Facebook tout user comments as a key feature of what the site offers to advertisers. And Newshub Live promotes this as a key feature of their platform, inviting viewers to guide the

segments with their real time feedback. Marewa found reading the comments to her Newshub Live video comforting, as they reinforced her own experience of an abusive situation where she was unfairly belittled and harassed by her fellow panelist:

> Once the show ended, I told the other panelist that I had found her behaviour abusive and unacceptable. This was empowering for me since many times I had never been able to name the abuse at the time or come out of shock fast enough to do so. I left for the nearest cafe for a cup of tea hoping to settle myself in time for another TV news interview on a different topic.

> Cup of tea on its way, I accessed the Newshub Facebook page on my iPad to read the comments. There were hundreds of posts. I skimmed through to the comments made during the airing of the show. I was comforted to read many comments from viewers expressing disgust at the other woman's behaviour. They disliked her interrupting, preventing me from speaking and her attack. This was incredibly healing for me. I had been abused in public and for once, the public saw it as I did and they disliked it.

At an institutional level, employers can help to mitigate potential threats to faculty who engage in sociable scholarship. Unlike workplace harassment, scientific bullying in the public domain often goes unpunished (Sagner et al., 2017). Strong institutional support when being trolled or piled on ensures that the faculty member has access to resources if required and doesn't have to worry that their University may be the next to join the pile. Tertiary institutions, then, must have clear social media policies that outline how they will support faculty members who engage in sociable scholarship, as McMillan Cotton (2012) have said "making public scholarship less dangerous requires institutional commitment, allies, and advocates" (para 2). It is estimated that less than one quarter of universities in the United States have social media policies (Pomerantz, Hank, & Sugimoto, 2015); no study has been located to examine this worldwide, or in other countries. These policies usually address three issues: the legality of social media use, the appropriateness of social media use, and the branding/image of the institution being represented. In order to protect faculty, tertiary institutions should work with faculty and their Unions to craft policies on social media. These policies must balance the academic freedom of faculty with mitigating potential risk to the institution (Sugimoto, 2016). The AAUP (2013a) suggests that "any such policy must recognise that social media can be used to make extramural utterances, which are protected under the principles of academic freedom" (para 7). And while they should clearly identify the institution's expectations for the faculty engaging in sociable scholarship, they must also clearly identify what support the faculty can expect from the institution if they come under fire online. Further research is needed into what institutions are doing or can do to protect, train, and support faculty to extend their sociable scholarship.

For clear and extreme harmful acts of defamation or bullying there may be national laws that academics supported by their employer can appeal to. In New Zealand, for example, in addition to there being broadcasting standards and laws against defamation, harassment and discrimination, a 'Harmful Digital Communications Bill' was passed in 2015 to specifically prohibit cyber-bullying of individuals.

Conclusion

Social media offers a far-reaching platform for raising awareness of social injustices, lobbying for change, building collaborative action, and supporting community development. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of like-minded lay persons, academics and social and community activists working online on almost every socially unjust

issue there is. Much of the communication is "For Good" (Diaz-Ortiz, 2011). We, as academics, need to participate in this work. As Sagner et al. (2017) reminds us, "Genuine experts debating content are intrinsic to the scientific method, while non-experts implying improprieties, merely because they disagree... are a hindrance to it" (p. 523). As academics, we also need to study this phenomenon as social scholarship is fast becoming an everyday communication and dissemination tool.

Our paper provides a unique contribution to the literature highlighting the democratising opportunities that social media presents. Whilst autoethnography can be a challenging methodology for scientists unfamiliar with it, utilising non-traditional research methods, especially reflexive methods that reduce the artificial distancing of researcher from researched, is part of the changing role of intellectuals engaged in activism, as we are. Autoethnographic accounts appear highly personal, risking minimisation as mere subjective opinion rather than the empiricism that it is. Unfortunately ad hominem attacks on scientists are not uncommon and more research of all sorts is needed to expose the strategies being used to suppress science, understand why it is happening, and inform prevention efforts. Our tale is useful for alerting academics to the ambiguities, threats and harms which social media can present. There are risks, but these can be mindfully navigated rather than prohibitive of our involvement. If we allow uncivility to silence us it is science itself that will suffer. Thus we urge you to extend your reach and support of the lay public and their communities, and your peer-activitist – get online and get amongst it.

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