



AdChoices



C. Christine Fair, Contributor

Provost's Distinguished Associate Professor, Georgetown University

# I'm Not the Cooperative Target You'd Like Me to Be: And I'm Not Apologizing

05/25/2017 08:51 pm ET



This week several journalists interviewed me regarding my role in the ouster of Richard Spencer—the Abercrombie and Fitch Nazi who has relocated his hate operations to Alexandria, Virginia—from his local gym. They were shocked that I was returning fire with fire. Even Spencer has conceded that I give as well as



I'm Not the Cooperative Target You'd Like Me to Be: And I'm No...



But I'm not apologizing and here's why.

Mr. Spencer believes that because he didn't bring his torch to the gym, he was a model gym member who worked out then, upon leaving the weight room, returned to spreading his vile hate which has inspired a legion of amphibian-abusing despicables. While it was the gym—not me—that made the ultimate decision to jettison Spencer for reasons known only to it and its legal team, his legions of vile followers have unleashed a torrent of abuses upon me that are anti-Semitic, misogynist, rapist, racist, body-shaming, and frequently violent through virtually every platform possible, including my home phone number. This is not my first rodeo with smug vulgarians with an epic sense of entitlement who have attacked me online and at the work place. In fact, like many women in male-dominated fields with a public persona, I am routinely attacked – mostly by men. While such harassment of women has reached epidemic levels, few policy makers or law enforcement agencies take it seriously or can.

The science of the uncooperative “agentic” woman who refuses to conform to well-honed and recalcitrant gender expectations is empirically well-known. Given the prevalence of gender stereotypes, research has repeatedly demonstrated that women who violate these norms elicit negative reactions, even if they do so simply out of necessity to succeed in traditionally male-dominated domains. Abundant evidence now attests to the punitive and potentially debilitating social and economic repercussions that female agency elicits while disconfirming gender stereotypes. Put straightforwardly without the scientific jargon, women are punished for succeeding in male-dominated spaces. Studies of “women not behaving” find that such women may be seen as highly competent and even capable, but they are also seen as unlikable by both men and women as well as socially deficient. (Women do not need to be reminded of this. We already know.)

Not only are women punished in the workplace and always vulnerable while on the streets where we are subject to all manner of harassment by strangers and even violence, the rise of the internet has also made us more vulnerable to online menaces many of whom lurk pusillanimously behind anonymous personas. Much of the online harassment mimics the offline harassment. Men make crude, even rapaciously noxious comments about us. However, the anonymity that social media provides emboldens men to behave in ever-more genuinely vile and despicable ways because, unlike harassment off-line, they are generally immune from consequences.

While the science of cyber bullying of children and even college students is expanding, few studies have seriously examined online harassment of adults and its effects. According to a 2014 Pew Research Center Report, while males and females both experience online harassment, the data show that while “men are more likely to experience name-calling and embarrassment...young women are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment and stalking.” Despite the high costs of being present online, it is simply not an option to disengage without incurring further professional and even economic harm. Moreover, “the fact that that violence has always suppressed women's free speech is only now becoming too obvious to ignore.” (In fact, misogynists are precisely aiming for this goal: one notorious defender of pederasty and woman-hater has argued in a fanatical purveyor of “fake news” that “the solution to online ‘harassment’ is simple: women



Given the costs of engaging and not engaging, young women frequently ask me how best to respond to the online harassment that includes Twitter attacks, disgusting commentary on my Youtube videos and editorials. Unfortunately, there is no good answer for every woman. I've endured crude, rapacious, misogynist, body-shaming and slut-shaming since joining Twitter in 2010. However, Twitter has been enormously important in disseminating my research and marketing books that I have written. The same goes for my Youtube channel and other social media. I tell women that they have to figure out what works for them and that can only be found by experimentation and recording how each strategy makes them feel. It is a canard to say that if you behave like a good girl, you will be spared the punishing blows of men—and their peculiar coterie of women-hating women—who are discomfited that you exist, have a fact-based opinion and assert your well-earned authority without deferring to the male-dominated starchamber for approbation or permission. I decided early on that I would assert my agency and confront my harassers head on. Why? Because I found that doing so made me feel better than simply absorbing their hate like a lady. I also found that ignoring their filth made me feel worse. It reminded me of how I felt when I was a student in Pakistan travelling to class on a crowded bus when men frequently slipped their fingers under my seat to assault me and I could not identify—much less clobber—the offender who did it.

After November 22, 2016, the kinds of harassment I received began to increase geometrically. On that date, I posted a series of caustically critical tweets to a right-wing shill who wrote a vapid editorial for the *Washington Post* titled “I’m a Muslim, a woman and an immigrant. I voted for Trump” in which she monetized her demographic niche to illiberal elements who enjoy hearing a Muslim woman validate their anti-Muslim stereotypes. After a series of public exchanges, she privately messaged me a treachy note stating her disingenuous interest in “dialogue.” I told her privately to “go #uck herself.” Later, when she wrote to a scholar misrepresenting herself as a journalist who was harassed for her pro-Trump views, I pointed out to the academic in question that the author of the noxious piece is not a journalist and has not been a journalist since 2004. The former journalist also claimed to be a Georgetown professor when in fact she only taught one course for one year several years ago and led a project espousing conspiracy theories about the death of Daniel Pearl from 2008 to 2011. Upon being exposed, once again, for being disingenuous she launched a harassment campaign against me and my employer for two months beginning on December 5, 2016. I remarked upon this event on a Facebook post that same day when I redoubled my opposition to this person who, in 2010, testified before the U.S. Congress that women who veil are at heightened risk for radicalization (they are not, by the way) and advocated profiling Muslims even though such a suggestion is not constitutional. She also supports Trump’s illegal Muslim ban and proposed registry.

## THE MORNING EMAIL

Start your workday the right way with the news that matters most.

address@email.com

SUBSCRIBE



I'm Not the Cooperative Target You'd Like Me to Be: And I'm No...



Unhappy that my employer did not respond as she had hoped, she enlisted the conservative fringe media outlet, *The Daily Failer*, to advocate on her behalf. In a series of slanderous and mendacious articles, this venue accused me of harassing said charlatan for two months. Oddly, even a regular consumer of *The Daily Failer* should have been able to examine the “evidence” presented and conclude that the allegations were absurd. This fallacious account was subsequently picked up by Fox News and a host of ever-more derelict venues known for extremely bilious anti-Semitism and other hate speech. The articles published of the account deliberately included dog whistles to solicit targeted harassment of me based upon the facts that I am a Black Live Matter Supporter, believe in gun control and find the hypocrisy in the Republican Party when it comes to women to be insufferable. What followed was predictable: an unrelenting parade of vitriolic and misogynist men—and a few women—who felt empowered to leave messages on my phones, email and all manner of social media. Most were rapacious, violent, threatening, racist and sexist as well as anti-Semitic.

In the wake of that assault, I launched a micro-blog called #ShitMenSay where I routinely post original noxious missives and any other publicly available information about the abuser. I usually include sarcastic criticism about the adlepatated misogynist who sent the repulsive note in the first instance. My goal is ensuring that these persons have an internet footprint associated with their bullying of a woman they do not know simply because they disagree with what she says, does, or that she exists at all.

In addition to regularly updating #ShitMenSay with some of the more special messages (as I literally do not have time to post all of the abuse I receive), I regularly fight back on Twitter and other media. Again, I do so selectively because I do have a day job and actual research to conduct. If a troll, for example, tells me “What you need is a big, white d\*ck” I am very likely to respond “I may or may not need one. But you don’t have one. So why are you contacting me.” I believe that these men should not be allowed to simply harass women with impunity. And I am taking steps to make sure that this is the case.

Many people have been appalled at the fact that I fight back using their own crude language. (Why would I use any other language if I actually want to communicate with said rube? He is unlikely to use a dictionary should I confuse him with polysyllabic words.) Journalists who have interviewed me recently have asked with some frequency, “don’t you think your response is inappropriate?” I am sure these journalists believe their question is well-intended even though the premise of the question is victim blaming. Would the same journalist ask a woman, who successfully fended off an attacker by crushing his trachea, “Did you really have to hurt that poor man’s trachea?” Most sentient people would immediately recognize the absurdity of the question. Yet the same persons think nothing of criticizing me when I fight back against online—or off line—harassment.

Some have even had the temerity to equate my self-defense with the actual offense in the first place. I do not pro-actively troll people. I do not find persons whose views I object to and harangue them. I do not send them sordid epistles in which I detail how I will violate them or why I disagree with them. I do not search for “normal, white men”, in the words of Richard Spencer, to intimidate and silence. (This assertion belies the white supremacist’s preposterous fears of agentic women by the way.) The only way a man—or woman—ends up in my blog #ShitMenSay is if they initiate harassment. The assertion that these men have a right to



she was clearly asking for it just by virtue of participating in public life. This is, simply put, victim shaming and victim blaming.

It turns out that I have science on my side. The few studies that look at harassment find that the old adage that well-behaved girls should just “lay back and take it” is harmful. In a 2008 study of stranger harassment, the authors find that such harassment is a frequent experience for young women and has negative and significant impacts upon their well-being. However, the ways in which women responded to this harassment produced varying psychological impacts. Women who coped with this harassment using passive strategies tended to exhibit “self-objectification,” by which they regarded themselves as “mere sex objects, to experience body shame, and to chronically monitor their external appearance.” The experience of “self-objectification” also correlated with women’s fear of rape or risk of rape and compelled them to restrict their freedom of movement. In contrast, women who managed stranger harassment actively (e.g. by confronting the harasser) did not. In another study of women’s experience with and responses to street harassment, women who took action (by taking a photo of the harasser or reporting the harassment to an official) “appeared to experience less negative emotional impact than those who did not.” Whereas those who assertively responded tended to “describe emotional responses that were targeted outward (e.g., anger, surprise)” those who responded passively “described emotions that focused inwardly (e.g., embarrassment, helplessness, fear).” Unfortunately, there are no such similar studies of online harassment and the varying impacts of coping strategies, despite the urgent need for such studies.

The next time you are shocked or even appalled that a woman is fighting back on-line, maybe you should ask yourself why you are judging her. Instead of disparaging her for exerting her agency and exposing the revolting behavior of her abuser, you should instead focus your discomfiture and outrage with the harasser whose conduct precipitated the response. Any other response enables the abuser and further blames and shames a woman whose crime is that she refuses to take this abuse “like a lady.” And frankly, being a lady is over-rated.

## You May Like

Sponsored Links by Taboola

### Split Side Tie Waist Floral Kimono

\$24 - us.shein.com

### Alexandria, Virginia: This Brilliant Company Is Disrupting a \$200 Billion Industry

EverQuote Insurance Quotes

### How Long Did the Beauty Last for These 53 Supermodels?

MSN

### Focus on Innovation to Improve Health and Cut Costs.

--



I'm Not the Cooperative Target You'd Like Me to Be: And I'm No...

