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Abstract

This article examines the Tumblr site Fedoras of OK Cupid which emerged in 2012 amidst a growing trend in feminists and other activists online that used shaming as an activist strategy. Fedoras of OK Cupid displays images and excerpts from men who wear fedora hats in their OK Cupid dating profile pictures, often highlighting worrying or even downright dangerous attitudes towards women revealed by their profiles. To understand this practice this article draws on work identifying feminist discursive activism in online communities, to examine the Tumblr site in the context of reintegrative shaming in order to evaluate the practice of deploying shame for activist ends. While shame is often seen as having stigmatising effects, the author of the Fedoras of OK Cupid Tumblr illustrates how the process of reintegrative shaming may work in the context of online activism by offering earnest commentary on negative attitudes while also offering the possibility of social reintegration.

Keywords: Discursive Activism, Feminism, Internet Activism, Internet Communities, Reintegrative Shame, Shaming, Social Media, Tumblr

In the following paper I present new research into a genre of feminist activism conducted on the social media site Tumblr, involving the curious choice to shame wearers of a certain type of hat. This choice might seem bizarre at first, but *Fedoras of OK Cupid* (FOOKC)¹ belongs to an emerging form of feminist discursive activism that seeks to attach affective shame to the tropes and cultural objects associated with sexist and misogynistic attitudes and behaviours. Foundational research into online feminist activist communities has been done by Francis Shaw, who contextualises her research into “feminist discursive activism” within a larger challenge to theories of online publics and the problematic utopian ideals of participation. Much of the activism Shaw discusses is found across social media networks, a trend which FOOKC continues, however the site adds an extra dimension to the tactics it employs by involving the use of shame.

But there is a question hanging over such utilisation of shame, articulated best by Jill Locke who argues that a history of shaming *women* has been the norm, and that this history entreats feminists to strive to minimise shame rather than propagate it (or, by implication utilise it for any kind of purposive ends). An important contribution, and perhaps justification, for this question of shame is made by Elspeth Probyn, who argues for an adaption of the work of pioneering criminologist John Braithwaite’s conception of shame, as potentially either ‘stigmatizing’ or ‘reintegrative’, performing a kind of socialising function. The latter use of shaming, which Braithwaite found to be an incredibly useful alternative to more traditional forms of punishment (provided certain conditions are met) which I argue offers an important possible tactic for feminists, and it is possible to see this at work in FOOKC. Reintegrative shame works through a community (in this case, a community of feminist activists) to challenge deleterious norms—goals similar to that of discursive activism’s in challenging dominant discourses and norms, and exposing them to those more oriented towards feminist approaches.

Fedoras of OK Cupid

In October of 2012 in a piece of cultural criticism for the popular website Boing Boing, journalist and critic Leigh Alexander (2012) attempted to explain ‘Why the Fedora Grosses Out Geekdom.’ Inspired by a popular new Tumblr that had gone viral called Fedoras of OK Cupid (<http://fedorasofokcupid.tumblr.com>), Alexander explained that the fedora hat is at the crest of a series of cultural waves with some worrisome characteristics. Through no fault of its own, the fedora hat has become a symbol closely associated with a particular kind of young, socially awkward “geek” male, frequently aligned with some of the more openly misogynistic regions of the of the internet.

The conceit is extremely simple: the author (who goes by the pseudonym “misandristcutie”) trawls the popular dating site OK Cupid for pictures of men in fedora hats and posts them to the site, often including excerpts from their dating profile highlighting some undesirable, frequently sexist, and occasionally downright worrying aspect of their stated views and attitudes. These frequently include responses to OK Cupid’s hundreds of profiling questions, as well as sometimes elaborate comments that the profile owners have left to elucidate their responses to questions like “Do you feel there are any circumstances under which a person is obligated to have sex with you?” or their responses to whether “no means no” (The common answer: “A No is just a Yes that needs a little convincing!”). These images displayed on the Tumblr are often accompanied by some form of commentary or reaction, frequently expressions of fear, dismay, etc, expressed by misandristcutie herself at some aspect or another of the profile.

The site’s success in garnering viral attention tapped into a widely shared reaction to wearers of the hat, and through the sheer persuasiveness of its plentiful examples of fedora wearers who exhibit ‘red flag’ attitudes, suggests to readers of FOOKC the existence of (for lack of a better term) something akin to a *fedora culture*. The site points towards a troubling correlation between wearers of the hat and holders of regressive, sexist or dangerous attitudes towards women. Towards the beginning of the site’s somewhat controversial existence, however, it was common enough for the posts to limit themselves to criticisms of the appearance of the fedora, as the fully developed critique of the fedora-cultural complex took time to emerge. While the tone of the site has remained constant (it has always maintained that fedoras ‘look bad’), it took time and the appearance of similar site *Nice Guys of OK Cupid*² to clarify and deepen the criticism to more than just one based on appearance. The now-defunct site, which existed from late 2012 to January 2013 oriented itself *explicitly* towards an activist and educational role, highlighting the disparity between the self-professed “nice guy” statements of young men on dating sites with their regressive and often sexist attitudes, all while downplaying and attempting to mitigate the ‘individual’ nature of the problem by obscuring identifying information and so on. *Nice Guys of OK Cupid* also used the same ‘image and caption’ technique, as did other lesser-known fedora-focussed tumblrs’ that appeared around the same time including *Fedoras: Forever Alone*, and *Should You Wear That Fedora* (the unspoken answer being, no you should not).

How the fedora came to be associated with a very distinct ‘type’ of young male with such negative or regressive attitudes towards women is likely to be related to an increased awareness and popularity of Pick Up Artists (PUAs) and their strategies, following Neil Strauss’ *The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pick-up Artists* (2005) and its numerous cultural spin-offs, including a VH1 television series *The Pickup Artist* (2007-2008). The quintessential image of the PUA is the swaggering, middle-class white, often geeky male, between 18 and 30, who imitates the dress code and flair of a pimp (in PUA terminology called ‘peacocking’) and ‘negs’ (a form of calculated, back-handed compliment) his way into the bed of the many women who would otherwise be

uninterested, or ‘out-of-his-league’. ‘Negging’ and the PUA ethos in general represents a resurgent strain of misogyny that views women as fair game for psychological and emotional manipulation, since they are seen as the gatekeepers to sex, which the PUA attitude views itself as entitled to. Consideration for the women targeted by these tactics is never entered into beyond a functional *will they or won't they sleep with me* calculation. Highly ranked in Google searches for ‘pickup artist style guide’ is a 2009 post on a Pick Up Artist forum in which the author gives the following “peacock tip”:

If you wear a hat, make it memorable, easy to spot, and something to work with your style. This is usually easier than it sounds. Try the fedora...it portrays you're [sic] a stylish man that knows what he's doing, and it's a great lock-in prop (Smith, 2008).

FOOKC picks up on this connection, and as Leigh Alexander notes, draws humour from the emerging consensus that FOOKC taps into: ‘that the fedora-wearers think they look much more suave than they do.’ (Alexander, 2012). It’s a form of cultural push-back that, as we shall see in a moment, may have a deliberate activist impulse underneath its fedora-shaming surface. Alexander also crucially locates the meaning of this type of site within a larger phenomenon, describing the cultural storm into which the Fedora has entered as one in which:

...a peculiar subculture of love-entitled male nerds whose social inexperience and awkwardness manifests in a world rocked by a gender revolution—a tectonic shift in the makeup of formerly cloistered, rule-bound clubs (Alexander, 2012).

To get a sense of the consensus into which FOOKC is tapping and the explicitness of her criticisms of the fedora, it’s necessary to look at a number of the “questions” that other Tumblr users and anonymous readers have sent into the site. This is the primary method of feedback and communication with readers, and the following comments illustrate an awareness of negative connotations associated with fedora culture (all comment are as written, with their particular spellings and capitalisations retained).

For example, fellow Tumblr user “wretchedoftheearth” left the following comment for FOOKC: ‘I have yet to have someone who likes fedoras, frequents reddit, and is a brony³ message me and not be horrible.’ (FOOKC, 2012b) FOOKC’s owner misandristcutie posted this question to the tumblr adding only a simple ‘yes thank you’ by way of agreement (FOOKC, 2012b). Another comment FOOKC responded to asks, “omg what is it with these guys calling themselves ‘gentlemen’ or ‘classy’ because they own a fedora?? I can smell the benevolent sexism from here” to which misandristcutie offered the following telling insight: “trade secret: i find a good amount of fedoras from searching keywords and ‘gentleman’ is a goldmine” (FOOKC, 2012c). A similar comment expressed bemusement at the fedora type: “It’s funny how many people think they’re chivalrous, yet wear hats from the 1900's. I’d like to see one woman want to live out those years.” (FOOKC, 2012j)

Here we see catch a glimpse of the impulse behind FOOKC, thought one only made explicit by a reader, in a process of communal clarification of purpose that was repeated when, a few months into FOOKC’s existence, *Nice Guys of OK Cupid* gained an even greater level of attention in the media. The activist impulse lies in forging a connection between fedoras and the sexist attitudes held during historical periods, and by claiming it is not incidental but central to the fedora culture and why women are turned off by it. This is a challenge to the construction of the fedora as ‘cool’ or ‘suave’, and an attempt to shame those who wear them.

This is the primary method in which FOOKC conducts its shaming – by holding fedora culture up to the light of a fairly critical and engaged community. Specifically by highlighting the appearance (the fedora) and the statements of men on *OK Cupid* and judging them, often in collaboration with a community of likeminded readers and commenters. In the following sections I will position this shaming as a novel form of what Frances Shaw calls feminist discursive activism, before discuss the question of the appropriateness of shame’s utility.

Shaming as feminist discursive activism

The question of how to ‘do’ activism online post-slacktivism critiques is an open and ongoing one. Frances Shaw’s research into the Australian feminist activist blogosphere provides important insight into the areas fruitful and productive activism is taking place online, and she pairs her observations with a number of pertinent critiques of the dominant social research paradigms of the past several years. In two papers, *The Politics of Blogs: Theories of Discursive Activism Online* (Shaw, 2012a) and *Hottest 100 Women; Cross-platform Discursive Activism in Feminist Blogging Networks* (Shaw, 2012c), she makes persuasive claims regarding online practices that demonstrate a need to revise theories of deliberative democracy, as well as arguing for a turn towards conceptions of social movements (especially feminist activist blog networks) as counterpublics. According to Shaw (2012a: 42), a more agonistic understanding of online discussion that can incorporate and account for inequalities is needed and these critiques form the basis of her argument for a discursive activism, which she describes as:

...speech or texts that seek to challenge opposing discourses by exposing power relations within these discourses, denaturalising what appears natural (Fine, 1992: 221) and demonstrating the flawed assumptions and situatedness of mainstream social discourse.

From her research into the strategies employed by the Australian feminist blogosphere, Shaw suggests that public sphere theory suffers from a lack of awareness of ‘the inevitability of power relations and inequality in social life’ (Shaw, 2012a: 43). This lack is only exacerbated online, as according to Shaw, ‘internet researchers must exclude from analysis debate that takes place in non-universal, or non-heterogeneous publics’ (2012a: 43) or else fail to meet the criteria for deliberative democracy. Shaw’s crucial objection is that, whilst desirable, the normative openness of deliberative democracy fails to reflect conditions as we find them actually existing online, and indeed the unequal power relations reflected in who is listened to online is a major concern, and discursive target, for feminist activists.

Somewhat more practically explanatory than her published papers are the results of her PhD research, which detail the techniques of discursive activism themselves. Presented most accessibly as a talk delivered on 27th of August 2013 at the University of Sydney’s Online Media Group meeting, Shaw detailed a number of activities and strategies that the feminist blogosphere had developed to combat certain types of commonly encountered arguments. Many of these techniques have been widely taken up outside the Australian feminist blogosphere, and there is a strong sense of cross-pollination across international lines (Shaw, 2012b). Shaw lists five strategies which she found the Australian feminist blogosphere to be employing: “Play Bingo”, “Disemvowelling”, “Splaining”, “Concern Troll”, and “Fauxpology”. Each strategy

involves some form of subversion, or the creation of new terminology that reveals the ideological or normative content of mainstream discourses. The first two, 'Play Bingo' and 'Disemvowelling' are extra-discursive strategies that target discourses, while the latter three are specific words or phrase coined in order to give a name to repeated tropes or tactics frequently employed by those arguing for sexist or bigoted positions. For the sake of brevity, I will only describe the first tactic "playing bingo", however, each performs a unique discursive activity that highlights or challenges some otherwise hidden feature of sexism in mainstream discourses. Importantly, though Shaw does not discuss it explicitly, these tactics frequently also invoke tacit or explicit shaming strategies, and are often most effective when they involve the participation of a whole community, having less effect when employed individually. 'Playing Bingo' illustrates this point.

To "Play Bingo" means to metaphorically tick off squares on a bingo card image (often in a comment thread, or on social media) that was created beforehand featuring common or stock phrases, rhetorical devices or techniques typically employed in the defence of sexist, misogynistic or bigoted positions. Shaw gives examples of phrases included on such cards: 'Patriarchy hurts men too', 'We gave you the vote now shut up', 'You're being silly and overemotional', 'You've just got a victim mentality', and 'Is it that time of the month' (Shaw, 2012b). The purpose of this activity, is twofold: embodied in the prior creation of the card is a 'pre-empting' of the clichéd, repeated sentiments of the sexist interlocutor, and which goes some way to demonstrating its unoriginality. It sends the message that your argument for a sexist or bigoted position is neither novel nor as clever as you think it is. In this way the feminist discursive activist makes a powerful rhetorical case for the opponent's lack of originality, and the wearying banality of these arguments – so repetitive are they that they have ossified into a bingo card, ready to be mocked and discounted.

The importance of this type of discursive activism as communal is not to be overlooked. As in many of Shaw's examples of discursive activism, for the proprietor of FOOKC her work building a community, presumably largely composed of feminists, is an important element of the activism she engages in. Again, comments in the form of 'ask' questions reveal this aspect: "You are a treasure and and [sic] your blog is a delight. These men are nightmarish and shameful and I can't even with any of it" (FOOKC, 2012i) was one such comment, FOOKC replying, "you are just a peach!! i hope you have a lovely evening or whatever time it is where you are" (2012i). Similar sentiments crop up, with an "i luv u" (FOOKC, 2012g) comment ("luv u 2" comes the reply), and "no questions, just adulation: pages like this are pretty much the saving grace of Tumblr." (FOOKC, 2012h) Misandristcutie herself here replies with a beatific, "bless u have a great day" (FOOKC, 2012h). Recognition, expressions of love, and expressions of solidarity form a large part of the positive comments FOOKC receives, and contributes without doubt to the sense of fun, solidarity and inclusiveness, contrasting strongly with the language she uses to describe the profiles of the men in fedoras, frequently described as 'scary' or 'creepy'.

The importance of the communal dimension might not entirely be evident. Partially, it serves to enable some of the social dimensions of Shaw's discursive activism – Playing Bingo for instance doesn't carry the same persuasive force if done on one's own, and the solidarity extended amongst activist communities seems to be an important component. But further, it constitutes an important pre-requisite for what John Braithwaite describes as reintegrative shame, which will be discussed in a moment.

There is also evidence that the Tumblr site's efforts are having some real impact, with a number of so-called 'testimonials' of the effects of fedora shaming. One anonymous question asker left the following comment:

Oh hey I made the site. I'd like to confirm with you that I removed my fedora from my household months ago. Just never got around to up-dating the old page. <3 you guys for spreading the truth, ashamed I ever wore one in the first place. (FOOKC, 2012k)

FOOKC's response was characteristically enthusiastic: “!!! testimonials r so inspiring” (FOOKC, 2012k). It is a gesture of enthusiasm for having achieved some level of influence, as well as an extension of acceptance and beneficence. The tumblr author is ‘inspired’ and her language is a clear departure from her usually dry commentary on the site. Like the previous commenter’s testimonial, another former-Fedora wearer featured on the site wrote in simply, “I’m one of the recently-posted fedoras. Happy to say I’ve seen the light.” (FOOKC, 2012f) FOOKC replied with a jubilant “hallelujah”. It is plain that misandristcutie derives *more fun* engaging with her fans and like-minded readers than from shaming Fedora culture. But to reach such an effective place from which to exercise a form of cultural criticism of the trappings and tropes of PUA culture, ‘nice guy’ culture, and the sexism of *OK Cupid* users, the site relies on the persuasive force of shaming.

Shame’s Reintegrative or Stigmatizing Potential

But there is a moral question hanging over this use of ‘shaming’ worth examining in some detail, namely whether it is appropriate to use shaming as an activist strategy. Shaming tactics appear to be reaching a critical mainstream awareness, with a July 2013 Wired editorial arguing somewhat hyperbolically that, “Shaming, it seems, has become a core competency of the Internet, and it’s one that can destroy both lives and livelihoods” (Hudson 2013). Discussing the unfortunate result of the incident at Pycon 2013 in which Adria Richards Twitter shamed two men making inappropriate jokes at the conference. In classic Wired fashion the editorial foregoes consideration of the power disparities involved based on historical, gender, or racial factors instead focussing solely on the more technical power resulting from one party possessing a large network of followers on twitter, in this case, Richards herself. Her actions at Pycon join other instances of shaming that Hudson’s editorial mentions, identifying what appears to be a growing movement among women and minorities cultivating more agonistic activist strategies online, everywhere from Twitter to Tumblr, as we shall see in a moment, and even surprisingly in the online gaming service Xbox Live with its player culture that is notoriously hostile to women and minorities (Gray 2013).

Most critical in her appraisal of the use of shaming is Jill Locke (2007), who brings a deliberative democracy perspective to the issue of the deployment of shame, asking valuable questions about its appropriateness. She begins by noting that shaming tactics, particularly those involved with protest and activist movements, have a

...long and proud tradition within feminist, gay and lesbian, civil rights, and labor politics. From muckrakers to lefty bloggers to progressive marchers, shaming occupies a well-established place in the activist's toolkit (Locke 2007, p. 146).

Condensing a wealth of somewhat divergent scholarship on the issue of shame, and particularly shame as experienced by women, Locke cautions against shame’s unilateral utility, for “complicating this...is the extent to which shame has been deployed against [feminist activist] concerns” (Locke 2007, p. 147). For Locke, all forms of shame appear implicated by this history of hegemonic-deployment, and she cites a number of

occasions in which shame was used to undermine progressive goals, such as by supporters of the (US) Defense Against Marriage Act, during certain state level bans on same-sex-marriage and notes that it's often deployed by anti-welfare and anti-gay activists. (Locke 2007, p 147)

Here it is worth elaborating the theory of shame proposed by the criminologist John Braithwaite, as explained by Elspeth Probyn (2005, p. 88):

The core idea in Braithwaite's articulation of shaming is that shame can be either reintegrative or stigmatizing. It all depends on the context in which shaming takes place. Braithwaite took the idea originally from a New Zealand legal initiative that had been based on Maori traditions. It is argued that within close communities, shaming the offender works better than other more formal sanctions, because individuals care about what their family and friends think about them.

Braithwaite's conception of both the positive potential of reintegrative shaming and the dangers of stigmatizing shame comes from a pragmatic position on human behavior and criminality that is rare in a climate of extremes. His approach has a clarity and surprising lucidity to it, as according to Braithwaite (1989, p. 71), "people comply with the law most of the time not through fear of punishment, or even fear of shaming, but because criminal behaviour is simply abhorrent to them." Braithwaite also maintains there is a powerful connection between shame and socialisation or *moral conduct*, citing the moral-symbolic content of shame as a powerful socialising force in an individual's development (1989, p. 72). This is a critical point about the effect of shaming:

Shaming is more pregnant with symbolic content than punishment. Punishment is a denial of confidence in the morality of the offender by reducing norm compliance to a crude cost-benefit calculation; shaming can be a reaffirmation of the morality of the offender by expressing personal disappointment that the offender should do something so out of character, and, if the shaming is reintegrative, by expressing personal satisfaction in seeing the character of the offender restored (Braithwaite 1989, pp. 72-3).

Braithwaite maintains that, when possible, shaming is actually a better mechanism for maintaining a moral order than punishment. So powerful is the effect of shaming on maintaining this order that Braithwaite (1989, p. 74) observes it in action in Japanese ceremonies that perform reintegrative shame: "the moral order derives a very special kind of credibility when even he who has breached it openly comes out and affirms the evil of the breach." This echoes the above comment from a former 'fedora wearer' who was 'happy' to have sworn off wearing the cultural indicator of sexism, only too happy to have 'seen the light'.

The reintegration occurs via apology, and what Goffman (1971, p. 113) calls disassociation, in which one splits from and repudiates the former offending self. However Braithwaite (1989, p. 76) acknowledges that "...shaming can be both reintegrative and disintegrative, and... ..much turns on this distinction." Indeed, Braithwaite emphasises the importance of the offer of forgiveness and the possibility of reintegration in avoiding stigmatising shame, dependent on a context of respect. Probyn (2005, pp. 88-9), quoting Braithwaite (2000, pp. 281), summarises the conditions for reintegrative shame, noting that:

The capacity for interdependency is crucial to a good outcome of shaming, as in a context of respect. In this way, "reintegrative shaming communicates

disapproval within a continuum of respect for the offender: the offender is treated as a good person who has done a bad deed.”

Misandristcutie’s criticisms of the fedora wearers, it should be noted, rarely extend to necessary judgments of character—usually instead receiving relational descriptions and emotive reactions, such as finding their appearance ‘scary’ etc. This perhaps holds open the door to reintegration, in which the ‘offending’ Fedora wearer repudiates the trappings of a dangerous culture. I want to suggest that it may be this very important and contingent extension of *forgiveness* which is what Locke is recognising and reacting to, with the alternative being a stigmatising shame precisely the kind of shaming that feminist activists would be most likely subject to. Especially since the moral regimes of these anti-gay, anti-welfare and anti-feminist cultures cannot countenance, cannot reintegrate, the existence or presence of women without ‘repudiating’ their feminist beliefs. Adding to the case for the utility of a feminist reintegrative shame, Probyn (2005, pp. 87-8) notes that:

...it makes a certain sense that the subordinated may have more nuanced skills at shaming than the privileged. The common sense of this proposition is evidence in shaming slogans used by queers and feminists: from the queer epithet ‘breeders,’ directed at straights (and indeed the appellation ‘straight’), to the more complex equations familiar to feminism, such as ‘porn is the theory, rape the practise’ and ‘a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle.’

It is worth taking on Locke’s appropriate concern for the shamed, as the generosity of her attitude of care represents an important component of the context of respect so important to establishing Braithwaite’s ‘reintegrative shame,’ rather than the often toxic and exclusionary ‘stigmatizing shame’.

Discussion

It’s worth emphasising that, in light of the above, the impetus behind the shaming FOOKC does not seem to be one of retaliation, adding credence to the theory that the shaming may be reintegrative. When asked whether anyone ever writes in with angry comments or asks for their image to be removed from the site, FOOKC replied, “never had a request to be taken down but i’d certainly honor their wishes if they asked!! ofc it would be sad cuz i treasure my nerds” (FOOKC, 2012a). While this response could be interpreted as condescension, in the context of her other comments it reads to me as earnest, if cloaked in the particular typo-strewn mode of writing prevalent on Tumblr which tends to mimic slang, orality and play (Danet, 2001: 6), as well as earlier forms of ‘text speak’. Eschewing capitalisation, this mode of writing seems to prefer personalisation and immediacy over carefully crafted and cultivated expressions (fitting with theories around microblogging in general as orienting towards ‘real time’). (Grace, et al., 2010; Bruns, 2012; Sakaki et al., 2010) In the context of the blog and the rest of FOOKC’s comments, I read misandristcutie’s comments about ‘treasuring’ her nerds as sincere, as an expression of care, and an extension of the possibility of reintegration.

Similarly, when informed (again, via anonymous question) that someone had been visiting the profiles of the people FOOKC had featured, expressing that they seemed ‘like solidly decent people’, and asked whether FOOKC thought the blog was bullying, FOOKC replied (again, in the particular Tumblr speak) “i don’t mean 2 hurt anyone i just want 2 laugh at bad hats” (FOOKC, 2012d). This comment, posted in the period

towards the beginning of FOOKC's existence and perhaps before the full critique of fedora culture was worked out (led in part by the more explicitly activist educational work of *Nice Guys of OK Cupid* as mentioned above) perhaps explains the retreat into insistence on "laughing at bad hats." I understand her comment as possibly being an expression of not quite understanding her own project in FOOKC, resulting in a poor apologia for the shaming of their wearers, but one that retreats from personal commentary (and stigmatising shame) nonetheless. It can be read as an attempt to objectify the shaming, so that the object itself becomes the target of shame, and not the people themselves, but the difficulty and contingency of expressing this argument is great, requiring a more complex articulation than simply wanting to laugh at bad hats.

The relative failure of this explanation also serves as a reminder of the human cost of shaming, with the experience of those shamed likely to be at least unpleasant— notwithstanding the above commenter who ultimately agreed with the critique and was "Happy to say I've seen the light" (FOOKC, 2012f). Indeed for those reintegrated into the community, there appears to be significant benefits as we shall see below. Misandristcutie's withdrawal into "just wanting to laugh at bad hats," as well as her other comments regarding "treasuring [her] nerds" seem to reflect the same kind of concern Jill Locke (2007) extended to the victims of shame above, even those ordinarily considered the enemies of or hostile to feminism. It is difficult to see how one could criticise fedora culture to the same extent without holding up individuals as examples. Even *Nice Guys of OK Cupid*, with its brand of activist criticisms of the 'nice guy' trope closely aligned with fedora culture, attracted only the mildest of criticism (likely due to its more successful orientation towards shaming behaviour) from, for example, Laurie Penny, who added that,

...there has to be an answer to these guys that isn't just pointing and laughing. Calling out rapists and online predators is a more than legitimate strategy for dealing with abuse. But how are we supposed to handle common-or-garden sexist dickwaddery when it puts photos on the internet and asks to be loved... (Penny, 2012)

Even Penny (2012), however, could not resist ending on a conciliatory note, wondering whether she herself 'should stop being such a Nice Girl' in light of the dubious obligation impressed upon women to 'be understanding' with these often problematic men. What I am suggesting here is that, whether deserved or not, reintegrative shaming as described by Braithwaite might be a partial 'answer' to what Penny is seeking, with the potential for hugely important and transformative reintegration for the shamed men, as the following comment demonstrates. Shortly after the comment mentioned earlier that questioned whether FOOKC was bullying the young men featured on the site, another anonymous commenter, presumably male, wrote in the following, responding to the allegation:

the blog isn't bullying its a fucking mass intervention. i used to dress like an awful shitty nerd with mutton chops and a soul patch in college, then one time at a party i got taken to task by a sassy designer dude that was big into fashion. it stung a little at the time, but i took his advice and now i look like and actually am a guy that manages to get laid on occasion, so I owe you and the rest of the world's fashion police a debt of gratitude, much respect (FOOKC, 2012e).

This comment makes something like a claim for the long-term benefit or transformative value for the shamed, and his expression is coming from one that, presumably, is now

reintegrated into the broader feminist community. As the success of FOOKC, as well as the size and vocal nature of communities around the site makes clear, there is a significant population of young women who these *OK Cupid* users could be dating if only they weren't scaring them away with fedoras and dangerous attitudes. Through projects like FOOKC and even *Nice Guys of OK Cupid*, these generous activist communities have also demonstrated that they are invested in the project of men not being sexist, and in dropping both the 'benevolent sexism' as one commenter described it earlier and the cultural markers associated with fedora culture. The form that this activism takes is discursive—by challenging the 'geek mainstream' constructions of fedoras as cool, fashionable headwear, and encouraging men to ditch these cultural trappings through shaming, with the extended offer of a reintegration into more feminist friendly communities.

Conclusion

In this paper I have looked at the Tumblr site *Fedoras of OK Cupid* and its engagement in shaming tactics, consolidating a growing consensus that fedoras are not cool, based largely on the frequently deleterious, dangerous or regressive attitudes of their wearers. I have articulated this practise within existing social movement research into discursive activism, cultivating both a community to exercise this activism, which largely takes the form of shaming. This novel addition to identified discursive activist tactics carries with it a question of whether shame is a legitimate activist tactic, or whether it is irredeemably tainted by its problematic history of deployment against women as a method of oppression and control. I have argued that criminologist John Braithwaite's conception of reintegrative shame provides a useful theoretical frame for understanding 'good' forms of shame that extend the possibility of reintegration and socialisation. Misandriscutie's 'treasuring' of her nerds and similar statements position the targets of her criticism and shaming as possible candidates for reintegration into the broader feminist community, in line with Braithwaite's explanation. I claim that members of the community paint a picture of the benefits of reintegration, and of taking these feminist's concerns seriously, adding credence to the notion of legitimate shaming deployed by feminist discursive activists.

Notes

¹ <http://fedorasofokcupid.tumblr.com>

² <http://niceguysofokcupid.tumblr.com>

³ The term 'brony' is the name adopted by the subculture of male fans of the *My Little Pony* television show—a portmanteau of 'bro' and 'pony'.

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