



Storying the unexceptional 'shadow pandemic': The Im/mobilities of gender-based violence in the Covid 19 pandemic

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Changes in GBV in the Covid 19 pandemic

UN report last June described a worldwide increase in domestic abuse as a “shadow pandemic” that saw many victims trapped at home with their abuser.

UK – 7th highest no. cases, 20th highest no. deaths/1 m pop.
National lockdowns (March 2020, November 2020, January 2021)
local lockdowns

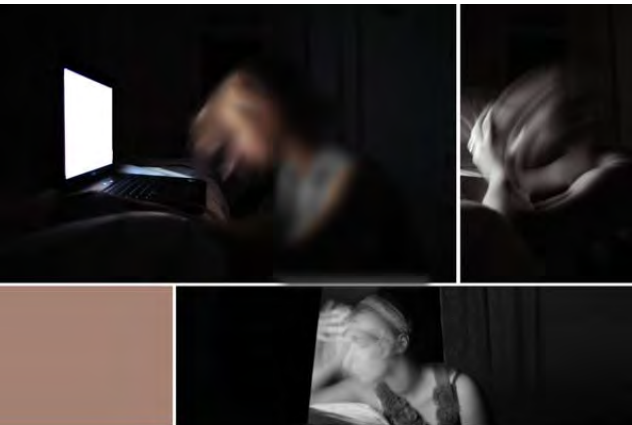
The national domestic abuse helpline in the UK received 49% more calls than usual in the week ending 5 April 2020.

A survey by children’s charity Plan International and the campaign group Our Streets Now found that 19% of young women and girls (aged 14 – 21) in the UK experienced street harassment during the spring lockdown, rising to 51% during the summer as restrictions were lifted.

Nations of UK – England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland -
different policy approaches



Image from Our Streets Now
<https://www.ourstreetsnow.org/our-stories>



Our project

Taking a mobilities approach to investigate experiences of GBV across multiple spaces in different nations of the UK

Trans/feminist (Pryse 2000) approach – sociology criminology, creative writing

UKRI (AHRC) Covid 19 Rapid Response funding January 2021-December 2021

Methodological strategy – Storying GBV in Covid 19

Methodology

Many Versions of Me



Create a mini comic book all about the different sides of you:
*public/private/past/present/future/thi
n/fat/dreamy/spotty/smooth/happy/s
ad/ changing hairstyles...*

Storytelling Through Objects



A combination of stitch and text to support the telling and sharing of stories about your lived experiences

Autobiography and Story



Using story to explore our lived experiences. A welcoming space in which to connect with others as well as your own creative self

Imprised—sharing stories through image and collage



Wednesday 7 July, 12-3

A creative workshop inviting you to explore memory and imagination to make a paper object that can be used to unfold lived experiences.

Inviting new stories - experiences of GBV in Covid 19 pandemic or from the perspective of the Covid 19 pandemic

Creative workshops: six different story-making workshops – Walking and Storytelling; Mapping your story; Many versions of me (comic book); Storying through objects (stitch and text); Autobiography and story; and Imprised—sharing stories through image and collage.

Website – focus of project and platform to upload stories

<https://immobsgbv.edublogs.org>

Narrative analysis of existing stories (in public domain) – over 100 collected so far

Trans/feminist collaborative and reflexive storying – fragments of experience

RENGA - Japanese collaborative poem as method

The importance of Storying GBV

Stories have the ability to provide insights into contextual circumstances most people may not have experienced first-hand (Garro and Mattingly, 2000)

Research exploring human stories is often considered as the 'flip-side' of established academic debates (Bamberg, 2004), able to challenge dominant societal narratives and "carry rhetorical weight" (Garro and Mattingly, 2000, p. 5)

Highly appropriate for feminist qualitative research seeking to challenge patriarchal and misogynistic discourse.

Difficulties in storying GBV – our experience

Trans/feminist reflexive collaborative storying

RENGA (36 stanzas)



Silent Footsteps

lockdown walk, I would
lose myself to bluebell haze,
blackbird song, cracked mud
but burrowed deep in my mind
behind a stop sign, lives fear

Regardless I walk
No sounds, no chatter of life
Like clocks pushed forward
Eeriness hangs in the air
Missing the eyes on the street

I've walked here a lot
It's in my own neighborhood
But at night it changes
Monsters out and angels home
Alert, from my lookout post

Even when I'm still
At home, alone, in my house
Violence seeps in
Another young woman killed
Reads the news. Could have been you

Your hand reaches back
across the years, finds me in
lockdown. Memory
bangs hard on my door. But you
are only scant vapour now

The Im/mobilities of gender-based violence in Covid 19

Understanding GBV as a mobilities phenomenon – understanding that it cannot be fully understood without taking into account its multiple spaces

Intersectional approach – not only women

Mobilised perpetrators – more/different opportunities for GBV

Im/mobilises - people or limits/controls their movement - particularly in Covid 19 pandemic.

GBV in Covid is unexceptional - Reconfigurations of patterns of GBV in Covid 19 – for example, surge in domestic abuse coupled with decrease in street harassment and violence –



GBV is about mobilities

Multiple spaces of GBV – home, school, work, transport (bus, car, taxi, train, bike...), street, online - spaces are connected

Gendered mobilities (Uteng and Cresswell 2008)

Gendered im/mobilities (Murray and Khan 2020)

Moving is 'dangerous' for women (Murray and Vincent 2014) – vigilance required

Gendered kinetic (Young 1990) and phenomenology of gendered violence (Vera-Gray 2018)

Across mobile spaces - Mapping GBV on the Underground (Lewis 2019)

On 5 June 2021 a man in a Land Rover pulled up alongside Nanw Beard on Penarth Road, Cardiff, UK. The man shouted at her from his car.

"He told me I should have a health warning because my backside was going to cause an accident," she said.

"When I told him that was disgusting, he drove away laughing."

Nanw rode after and confronted the man.

Christine Boston, Director of Sustrans Cymru, a cycling campaign group praised Nanw for her actions saying that "right to freedom of movement without

Intersectional understanding of GBV/mobilities

Our approach is intersectional (Collins and Bilge 2016; Crenshaw 1991), attending to both the dynamic nature of gender and its intersections with generation, race, sexuality, ethnicity, class and disability, and the dynamic nature of the GBV.

'Mobility and control over mobility both reflect and reinforce power. Mobility is a resource to which not everyone has an equal relationship'. (Cars et al. 2005)

GBV in lockdown affects some more than others – intersected with mobilities e.g. forced migrants, Romani and Irish travellers

Dual pandemic (Imkaan 2020) – disproportionate effect on Black and minoritised women and girls

Lo Lo's story

I was in that accommodation for the start of this lockdown and I felt so unsafe there. I have serious health problems that mean it would be particularly dangerous for me to catch the virus. But it was impossible to self-isolate in that place. I was terrified because men kept coming into my room without permission, even while I was sleeping. I felt so stressed and my depression got worse. ... In the end, I felt too afraid to be there so I left. For a week during lockdown, I slept on buses. I went from one side of London to the other, because it was free to travel on the bus then. I didn't have any money for hand sanitiser or a facemask but at least people were keeping their distance on the bus

Mobilised perpetrators

Tactic for coercive control -
misinformation

Perpetrators on the move

Empty streets, Underground/train
platforms, buses...

I am staying in a hostel after leaving an abusive relationship. Because of Covid-19, all of my court proceedings about getting a divorce, my case against him, and my immigration status have been stopped and my solicitor is on furlough. I am getting support on the phone from Rape Crisis Scotland and Shakti Women's Aid and they are wonderful, but it is so difficult. Most days I just don't leave my room. Meanwhile, my ex is using his free time to contact all of my friends and family and spread vicious rumours about me as well as sharing intimate details.
<https://www.engender.org.uk/covid-19/>

Rhiannon's story

Rhiannon Linington-Payne is the former Wales 400m champion. In the Covid 19 lockdown in the UK she, like other athletes has had to train in the streets rather than in sports facilities. Since doing so, she has experienced abuse from men in cars while out running.

I've had inappropriate comments about my figure, I've had wolf-whistling...I've had people slowing done in cars, inappropriately heckle me whilst I'm running.

BBC 2021

Immobilised in Covid 19 and GBV

Those who experience GBV are immobilised – pushed off their mobile trajectory, forced to side-track.

Immobilised in a continuum of mobile space

Immobilised - not absence of movement - sometimes mobile and sometimes not and often in-between (Murray and Khan 2020)

In June 2021 Four women reported their experience of sexual harassment at a number of different Covid 19 quarantine hotels in the UK, where travellers are required to stay for 10 days when returning from 'red list' destinations.. Security guards, who were employed by a private company, G4S had harassed them verbally and physically encroached on their personal space, including walking up and down the corridor outside their rooms.

"I couldn't believe it really, I was so shocked and just shut the door straight away," she told the BBC, speaking from her room on 28 May. "I called my mum and she's saying I need to report him but I'm scared to do that as I already told them and he's still around my room. I feel very uncomfortable. They know I'm by myself and the hotel is full of male security guards."

Reconfiguring GBV in Covid 19 pandemic

GBV reconfigured in lockdown –
mobilized perpetrators and
im/mobilized GBV experiences

Constrained mobilities

Opportunities to be mobile/escape

Limited opportunities for intervention

But GBV in Covid is unexceptional

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Another story

...my abusive ex partner...has taken me to court as the children have refused to visit him. I had made a police report and social work report for serious issues, but due to the pandemic he was not properly interviewed and a serious child related incident and years of historic abuse were lessened to "just a joke" by him over the phone and the cases were closed without further investigation...

<https://www.engender.org.uk/covid-19/>