

**“Hey Sexy!” A Compliment or Harassment?:  
Interpretations of and Experiences with Street  
Harassment**

Jennifer Herrera

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Dr. Bill McCarthy

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## **“Hey Sexy!” A Compliment or Harassment?: Interpretations of and Experiences with Street Harassment**

*Jennifer Herrera, Dr. Bill McCarthy, Sociology Department, University of California-Davis  
One Shields Avenue Davis, CA 95616*

Unwanted sexually explicit comments and physical gestures in public spaces are common experiences for women. Some encounter this daily. Some encounter this less frequently. Yet, most women have faced or witnessed them. Since the 1990's, street harassment research has primarily focused on its effect; this study extends previous work by investigating women's and men's perspectives of and experiences with stranger interactions in public settings through hypothetical scenarios in surveys, interviews, and data collection observations. Does a simple random sample of 80 participants view verbal remarks like “Can I Get a Smile?,” “Hey sexy!” or non-verbal cues like kissing noises as acceptable, complimentary or harassment? Ordinary least square regression of scale measures finds that people of color are least likely to consider strangers asking for smiles and making kissing noises as offensive than Whites and there are no significant gender differences. Interview data reveals that women are most critical of street harassing behavior. Insights from data collection observations suggest that the researcher's gender may have influenced male participant's responses. Street harassment is an international legal and human rights issue that, until recently, has garnered little attention in the public dialogue; this research address this oversight and enhances our understanding of it.

## Introduction

“[When] someone says ‘smile you’re beautiful’ its like naw, sometimes I don’t want to smile and I feel like I don’t owe anyone a smile.”

–Genderfluid, Asian, age 19-24

“Guys... [have] pulled upon me a couple of times and [have] asked me where I was going or for my number. I just walk away, I don’t say nothing. There was this onetime they kept following me and I started to walk towards a group of hecka people.”

–Female, Latina, age 19-24

“[When I am] walking down the street and they [strangers] say “[Hey] sexy”...it looks like you are a woman of the street. And then it makes *me* feel like I’m a woman of the street ... it’s wrong, it makes me feel wrong.”

–Female, Latina, age 25-30

“[Street harassment] makes me feel unsafe, sometimes I don’t know what could happen.”

–Female, Latina, age 19-24

### GENDER-BASED STREET HARASSMENT

The quotes above are first-hand testimonies from a recently completed study that I describe in detail below. They reflect experiences that, according to prior research (Kearl 2010), are not rare or unusual. Being commanded to smile in order to conform to a feminine gender role, being followed, feeling sexually objectified, and unsafe when walking in public spaces are common examples of gender-based street harassment that many women experience on a daily basis (Davis 1994; Kissling 1991; Olney 2015). According to di Leonardo (1981:51) this type of street harassment is pervasive, “perhaps more pervasive, than...other expressions of violence against women.” Gender-based street harassment is not unique to the United States; it is a worldwide phenomenon (Kearl 2015). It not only discourages and prohibits women from walking alone in public spaces, but also limits their geographic and physical mobility, and accomplishes an informal ghettoization of women (Bowman 1993: 520). It is a gender-based sexual violence that has profoundly observable psychological, physical, and social harms (Tuerkheimer 1997).

The seemingly worldwide prevalence of this gender-specific injury is not translated into academic research (Bowman 1993; Oshynko 2002; Kearn 2010). In fact, Oshynko (2002) critically proclaims that the street harassment void in academic research “says as much or more than any article on street harassment could ever express; the harassment of women in public is considered trivial and is all but invisible in our society” (10-11). Instead, street harassment literature is predominately found in popular news articles and nonacademic works like women’s magazines and newspapers that are deemed as “unworthy of scholarly attention” (Oshynko 2002: 11). This research study hopes to redirect the street harassment discourse in academia.

My research uses self-constructed hypothetical case-scenarios with closed-ended survey questions, a short interview and my observations during data collection to examine women’s and men’s views of and experiences with street harassment. I gathered a total of 80 participants, 56 of which consented to being interviewed. The analysis of the ordinary least squares of scales indicates that independent of gender, racial minorities such as Blacks and Latinos are least likely to view remarks like “Can I get a smile” as harassment in comparison to Whites. Stronger trends persist in the kissing noises scenario: Blacks, Latinos and Asian, multi-racial and other are least likely to view this as unacceptable, non-complimentary and as a form of harassment than Whites. In addition, for the smile and kissing noises scenario, those that most commonly engage in street harassing behavior are significantly least likely to view the behavior as offensive. The survey section also suggests that there are no significant gender differences. However, the qualitative section of the research study offers another dimension to my findings, as women were most critical of street harassing behavior. In addition, there were three most common themes throughout the interviews. The first interview question asked participants if they view street harassing remarks as compliments. Black and Latina women most commonly answered that they

are not compliments because the remarks are rude, offensive, inappropriate and/or invasive. Predominantly Black and Latina women provided this answer. The second interview question asked participants why they believe strangers engage in street harassing behavior. Whites females and Latino males were the most common groups to argue that strangers make catcalls or kissing noises in order to get attention for themselves or from the victim. The last interview question asked participants for their definition of street harassment and White females and Latino males most commonly defined it as making the victim feel uncomfortable. I also had another layer of research through my interactions with the participants. My observations show that my gender identity and presentation may have influenced the male participant's responses.

To offer a roadmap, I begin with an overview on the narrow, yet crucial and pertinent academic literature on stranger interactions in public spaces. The literature review provides a working definition of street harassment and includes several examples of the interaction. I then delve into the research that has focused on the contrasting perceptions of this phenomenon. This extensive review is the basis for my research questions. In the methodology section I describe the data collection procedures in detail and outline my survey and interview questions. In the results section I include the findings for the quantitative, qualitative and my personal observational analyses. I conclude with a discussion of the study's implications and limitations.

## **Literature Review**

Borrowing from feminist, sociological, and legal frameworks, this literature review begins with a discussion of the need to "name" and define "street harassment." It situates street harassment in a continuum of violence against women, compares it with other forms of aggression, focuses on its relation to women of color, and discusses its position in existing legal frameworks. It then summarizes research on the perceptions and consequences of street

harassment and introduces the key guiding questions that this current study addresses. It concludes with a summary of the theoretical framework that guides the study.

### DEFINING STREET HARASSMENT

Writing in the late 1980s, West (1987) argued that an injury sustained by a disempowered group will lack a name, linguistic reality, and discernable history. Davis (1994: 153) extended this declaration to street harassment, entitling it the “harm that has no name.” She advocated for naming the phenomenon, as it is “the first step in making the harm visible” (Davis 1994: 153).

However, making the harm visible has proven to be a difficult task. For example, Bowman (1993:580) claimed that there is an absence of interpersonal discussions on street harassment. She acknowledged that “women do not frequently talk about street harassment, not even with one another. Instead ... [they] suppress ... [their feelings] about it and may even repress the experience all together.” In a similar respect, Tuerkheimer (1997) acknowledged that women have “barely begun to articulate the nature of the harm” (Tuerkheimer 1997: 1). Because there is an absence of a widely used term, many rely on descriptions of street harassing encounters rather than names when discussing the issue (Kearl 2010). Currently, Dictionary.com does not have a definition for street harassment, which perpetuates the fact that social issues without labels or names stay hidden and inadequately addressed (Kearl 2010). As Mackinnon (2011) affirmed in an interview, the lack of a name makes it difficult—if not impossible, to confront an issue: “you can’t stop what you don’t name” (Edmonds and Warburton 2011).

di Leonardo (1981: 51-2) provided one of the earliest definitions of street harassment.

She defined it as:

street harassment occurs when one or more strange men accost one or more women whom they perceive as heterosexual in a public place which is not the woman’s/women’s worksite. Through looks, words, or gestures the man asserts his right to intrude on the woman’s attention, defining her as a sexual object, and forcing her to interact with him.

Other scholars since then 1980's have offered an array of definitions (Bowman 1993; Davis 1994; Heben 1994; Gardner 1995); yet, di Leonardo's grasps the fundamental characteristics of street harassment. It underscores that street harassment includes verbal remarks, as well as non-verbal and physical gestures. Verbal examples include, "nice legs," "nice tits," "nice ass" (Davis 1994), "hey, pretty" "hey whore," "what you doin' tonight," "look at them legs," "wanna fuck?" "give me a smile" (Kissling and Kramarae 1991) and other sexually charged bodily comments, as well as whistle or cat-calls. Non-verbal gestures include honks, leers, winks, following, and unwanted touching. Importantly, di Leonardo's (1981) definition also highlights the heterosexual male privilege that allows male harassers to deny women's sexual identity, objectify them and to assume that women are available to them. It draws attention to the power of the male gaze and the unequal power relationships.

Her definition also distinguishes street from workplace harassment, emphasizing that the former occurs in public spaces and that victims have little legal recourse. Furthermore, it acknowledges the gendered nature of street harassment: although some women harass men and other women, and some men harass other men, men are most often the perpetrators and women their victims. Females' street harassment of males is typically milder (Gardner 1995) and when directed toward other women it does not involve gender power in the ways embodied in men's comments about and behaviors toward women (Davis 1994: 139). di Leonardo's definition also sets aside, the issue of the victims' and perpetrators' interpretation. While some women may find street harassment flattering, Davis (1994) argues that women are taught that compliments from men are the highest accolade women can receive. Thus, women are socially conditioned to view these behaviors as inoffensive. Wise and Stanley (1987) emphasize that male intentions are irrelevant for understanding street harassment: it is difficult for women to know what men's

intentions are and “intent” is often a socially constructed interpretation of behavior that occurs only after a behavior has happened. By separating intention from impact, as di Leonardo (1981: 52) notes, male harassment ultimately interrupts the woman’s “time and energy, proving to her that he can force her to respond to him whether or not she wishes to.”

#### CONTINUUM OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

According to Olney (2015), male to female street harassment is part of a larger framework of violence against women. Other scholars have argued that street harassments is a vivid example of sexual terrorism (Kissling, 1991, Davis 1994; Sheffield 1995; Fogg-Davis 2006). Sheffield (1995: 1) defines sexual terrorism as “a system which males frighten, and by frightening, control and dominate females.” It includes an array of behaviors—rape, battery, incest, pornography—as well as nonviolent sexual intimidation and threats of violence. Sexual terrorism fundamentally reminds women that they are vulnerable to sexual and violent assaults in public and semipublic spaces and creates an environment of fear. Fogg-Davis (2006: 63) explains the appropriateness of the term:

[a]s a woman you know it will happen, but you never know for certain when or how it will happen. This makes street harassment hard to define and difficult to combat. Its insidiousness derives in large measure from its venue: the semiprivate, semipublic everyday activity of walking, sitting, or standing along city streets, in other public spaces.

The fear of street harassment is also captured in a comment by a Lebanese woman interviewed in Kissling’s (1991:456) ethnographic study: “It’s like being at war, at war with society! I was saying, you know, in Lebanon I’m afraid of bombs, but here I’m afraid of rape. And I don’t know what’s worse.” Benard and Shlaffer (1989: 395) also draw on the war metaphor, asserting that women have to “plan our routes and our timing as if we were passing through a minefield.”

## STREET HARASSMENT EXTENT

Although limited in number, studies on street harassment have documented both its extent and relative marginality. All of the 54 women interviewed in a San Francisco Bay area study said that they had been targets of offensively or sexually suggestive remarks at one time or another (Nielsen 2000: 1067). Research in Indianapolis also found that all of 293 women interviewed had experienced public harassment (Gardner 1995); moreover, every one of 213 men interviewed said that they had engaged in some form or another in public harassment. Kearl (2010) used a notably larger sample (n=811) than most studies and documented the extent to which women experienced, at least once, various types of harassment: 95 percent said they had been the target of leering or excessive staring; 94 percent reported being honked or whistled; 82 percent described being the target of a vulgar gesture (such as sticking out tongue); 81 percent had sexually explicit comments directed at them; 77 percent said they were targets of kissing noises; 62 percent said a man had purposefully blocked their path; 75 percent had been followed; 56 percent reported being touched or grabbed in a sexual way; 37 percent had a stranger masturbate at or in front of them; and 27 percent reported being assaulted.

Many women first experience street harassment when their bodies begin to develop sexually; there is then typically a gradual decline when men assume they are “too old” and no longer a sexual being (Bowman 1993). For many young women, street harassment is a “rite of passage”:

The moment a girl receives her first catcall, her first wolf-whistle, or her first grope, she can consider herself well on the way to adulthood ... [So powerful] is the brainwashing ... [that] she feels that she should be grateful because it's a compliment (Kearl 2015: 29; also see Chemaly 2015).

## STREET HARASSMENT AND WOMEN OF COLOR

Research suggests that women of color experience significantly more instances of street harassment than white women. In the San Francisco study described above, women of color reported the highest levels of harassment: 68 percent said they experienced offensive speech often or every day in comparison to 55 percent of white women (Nielsen 2000). Lord (2009) also found that women of color are subjected to more frequent gender-based public harassment than white women.

Some scholars note that gender is not the only source of oppression embodied in street harassment. For many African-American women, street harassment has a particular historical context; it evokes the institutional reminiscence of slavery and reminds them of existing slavery ideologies (Davis 1994). Street harassment is a forum that provides white men the opportunity to perpetuate the image of African-American women as “blackwomen,” that is, “[as] a slave women’s embodiment that resulted in a unique ‘other’ position” (Davis 1994: 174). It also perpetuates the image that black women “are promiscuous because they lack intellect, culture, and civilization. Animals do not have erotic lives; they merely fuck and reproduce” (Collins 2004: 100). According to Francis (2014) street harassment of black women is so pervasive that it can be seen as a “Black girl’s Bat Mitzvah.”

Harassment also targets women from other ethnic or racial minorities. Heben (1994) argues that stereotypes about Asian American women are pervasive, particularly the cultural stereotype of the Geisha legacy from Japan, and influence the street harassment they experience. Gardner (1995: 140) provides one example of an Asian American woman’s experience: “He was after my ass because I’m an oriental boy toy, or so he thought. I’ve had this happen before. White boys think that’s all I’m good for.” Gardner’s (1995:140) research also told the experience

of an Asian American woman spoke about being groped by a white man who said that her breasts compared unfavorably to those of most white women: “Don’t get mad. Honey, you haven’t got enough to be excited about.”

Street harassment also targets other historically marginalized and oppressed groups including people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender or queer (LGBTQ), and disability communities. In particular, male –to-female transgender people of color face alarming rates of street harassment. Unfortunately, research of street harassment towards this community is very narrow and is only documented in activist circles or popular news outlets. In the few studies that have focused on street harassment towards LGBTQ members (n=331), McNeil (2014) found that 90 percent of the gay and bisexual men respondents reported sometimes, often, or always feeling unwelcome in public spaces due to their sexual orientation.

#### INTERNATIONALITY OF STREET HARASSMENT

Street harassment is a seemingly worldwide phenomenon. Kissling (1991) reports that the descriptions of street harassment by women from Syria, Lebanon, West Germany, and Taiwan mirror those of women living in the United States. Likewise, Wise and Stanley (1987) notes that the experiences of women in Singapore, Australia, Pakistan, Guyana, Iran, and Malaysia were similar to those of women from the United Kingdom. In her interviews from six women in Europe, North America, and Australia, Cooke (1999) concluded that street remarks, a form of street harassment, appear to be universal.

#### PERCEPTIONS OF STREET HARASSMENT

Researchers theorize that men interpret street harassment as trivial, harmless, (Kissling and Kramarae 1991: 79) and even desired by women (Laniya 2005: 92). In one of the first studies to examine this claim, Benard and Shlaffer (1984) interviewed a total of 60 men from

various age and occupational groups. The men provided a number of justifications for harassing behaviors: fun, alleviates boredom, facilitates bonding and friendship, and because women find the attention complimentary. About 20 percent of the men admitted they would not engage in the behavior alone, but only in the company of male friends. This finding suggests that harassment of women is a way for males to demonstrate “solidarity and joint power” (Benard and Shlaffer 1984: 397). It is a male-bonding activity. Furthermore, fifteen percent of the men reported they were intending to anger, hurt, or harass women and used graphic sexual comments and threats.

In an examination of online discussions of street remarks, Kissling and Kramarae (1991) reported that many men view street harassment as a normative, “boys will be boys” behavior. Men defended their actions by blaming victims for being over-sensitive: “How can you be offended by so trivial a thing a whistle? YOU are the ones who put meaning into the whistle” (Kissling and Kramarae 1991: 79). Other men responded with “Come on. Rape and whistling are not comparable activities. If being whistled at in broad daylight makes a woman afraid, then it’s her problem” (Kissling and Kramarae 1991: 79). Other responses blamed women for dressing ‘provocatively.’

Gardner’s (1995) street harassment study is one of the few that interviewed both women (n=293) and men (n=213). The study’s interviews highlight two common interpretations of street harassment: the Romanticized Traditionalist and Politicized Feminist. The Romanticized Traditionalist interpretation views unwanted speech geared towards gender as flattering and as something that women cause by their choice of dress or physical appearance; it is embedded in romanticized heterosexual encounters and the presumption that “something significant could eventuate between opposite sex strangers” (Gardner 1995: 164). In Gardner’s (1995) study, most men supported the Romanticized Traditionalist viewpoint. Women, on the other hand, were more

likely to adopt the Politicized Feminist view, which sees street harassment as a consequence of inequalities between the sexes, as something that disadvantages women throughout their lives, and that is comparable to sexual harassment in school and the workplace (Gardner 1995: 164). Yet, some women gave Romanticized Traditionalist interpretations of street harassment and offered one of four explanations for it: 1) it is essentially innocuous; 2) men's nature, their ineluctable sexuality, or their adoption of allegedly boyish traits such as showing off or teasing, are to blame; they simply 'can't help it'; 3) many of these interactions are attempts to flatter women and are not meant to be insulting or anxiety causing; and 4) many instances are simply basic breaches of etiquette. These findings are consistent with Davis' (1994) claim that some women interpret street harassment as complimentary, flattering, or trivial.

#### FUNCTIONS OF STREET HARASSMENT

Scholars theorize street harassment has several functions. One function is that it reminds women that they exist to be sexually enjoyed by men. According to Kramarae (1992: 116), men use street harassing remarks as "reminders to women that they are subject to men's observations, criticisms, and control." Other scholars theorize that street harassers put women 'in their place' by commenting loudly on how well women meet conventional beauty standards or lack it (Saltzberg and Chrisler 1995).

Feminist theorists argue that street harassment is a bullying behavior motivated by power and disrespect (Kearl 2010: 5); thus, the harasser rarely has a genuine interest in developing a relationship with the target (Langelan 1993). In addition, stranger harassment is a form of humiliation and indignity that lowers the quality of women's lives (Fairchild and Rudman 2008). It is an expression of male dominance over women (Berdahl 2007), embodying and perpetuating women's sexual subordination (Tuerkiemer 1997). di Leonardo (1981) argues that street

harassment functions as one of the many controlling institutions of capitalist patriarchy. Another function is to act as a form of geographic and social control by denying women access to areas of public life (Bowman 1993; Mazey and Lee 1983). It forces women to alter their behavior and reminds them how men and society view them (Oshynko 2002: 15). Davis (1994) asserts that street harassment allows men to establish the boundaries of women's participation in public settings. For example, telling women to smile signals to women that their participation in public settings depends on their ability to provide pleasure to men.

### CONSEQUENCES

Victims of street harassment may experience several negative consequences; fundamentally, it negatively impacts their consciousness, physical well-being, liberty, and basic rights (Thompson 1993). According to Lord (2009), gender-based street harassment is associated with low self-esteem; preoccupation, dislike, or shame about one's body, its parts, or overall appearance; and a fear of being alone in public places (see also di Leonardo 1981; Bowman 1993; Gardner 1995; Macmillan, Nierobisz and Welsh 2000). Sharma and Sharma's (2014) research found that more than one third of the women, aged 20 to 28, perceived public spaces as unsafe and reported being afraid to go out alone during the day; 60 percent reported feeling afraid to go out at night.

di Leonardo (1981) argues that street harassment forces women to do "emotion-work." Such work is the process of forcing one's emotions to correspond to societal expectations. Examples include feeling the need to smile and acknowledge harassers in the hopes of managing their emotions in ways that will reduce the possibility that they will be harmed. In their research, Fairchild and Rudman (2008) uncovered that street harassment is associated with self-objectification, an emphasis on the body's appearance over its function, and feeling ashamed of a

less ideal body. This shame can lead to negative outcomes such as depression, eating disorders, and heightened fears of public places and rape. It can also trigger posttraumatic stress from other experiences with sexual trauma.

### LEGAL BARRIERS

The legal system provides little opportunity to challenge street harassment (Heben 1994). Verbal obscene calls or sexual shouting fall under legal exceptions in the First Amendment (Bowman 1993) but cases are often dismissed as ‘low-value speech’ and thus subject to minimal scrutiny. Low-value speech includes speech that has purely non-cognitive appeal and is not intended to communicate a substantive message (Bowman 1993: 545). Bowman (1993) argues that judges and legislatures generally do not view street harassment as a pressing problem. Benard and Schlaffer (1984:70) support this claim, emphasizing that “cities that regulate almost everything from bicycles to dogs and the use of roller skates in order to keep the traffic moving have no ordinances or rules to guarantee women the right to free passage.” When describing legal barriers of street harassment, di Leonardo (1981:51) frames street harassment as a “fail-safe crime, like hit-and-run murder without the tell-tale car and where police aren’t interested anyway.”

Some state statutes and municipal ordinances prohibit harassment in public spaces. Yet, as Bowman (1993) notes, courts and lawmakers usually only treat street harassment as an offense when it is repeated or obsessional. In addition, street harassment is not easily treated as an assault. The crime and tort of assault require an ‘objective’ reasonable apprehension by the victim and evidence that the defendant had the capacity to injure, used “more than mere words,” and demonstrated an intent to cause harm or offense (Bowman 1993). Most street harassment cases cannot demonstrate all of these and most offenders go unpunished (Bowman 1993). Laws

that address street harassment are uncommon; instead, the laws address the egregious elements of street harassment such as stalking and incident exposure (Bowman 1993: 198).

Despite the legal issues street harassment faces in many nations, The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women included clauses to prevent sexual harassment in public spaces around the world in 2013. The United Nations proclaimed:

The Commission expresses deep concern about violence against women and girls in public spaces, including sexual harassment, especially when it is being used to intimidate women and girls who are exercising any of their human rights and fundamental freedoms (United Nations Commission on the Status of Women: Report on the Fifty-Seventh Session 2013: 4).

This declaration argues that street harassment is a human rights issue that requires global attention. Equally as important, The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women endorses the “improvement in data collection, analysis and research” on street harassment (United Nations Commission on the Status of Women: Report on the Fifty-Seventh Session 2013: 5), which this study strives to contribute to.

### THIS STUDY

There has, of late, been a notable increase in interest in street harassment by the general public. In 2014, an anti-street-harassment group Hollaback’s released a video “10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman.” The video documents a woman dressed in casual attire being the victim of more than 100 verbal and nonverbal forms of harassment, as well as being followed for five minutes. Youtube comments on the video attest to the conflicting views of street harassment. For instance, a commentator wrote, “This video is terrible. Are u telling me that somebody saying have a nice day or hi OR even complimenting her is harassment...please this was just to get views”; this remark received 158 likes. Another commenter wrote, “The funny thing is, is that if this girl was walking for 10 hours and NO ONE said anything she’d feel ugly and

insecure;” this remark had 519 likes. The woman in the video also received several sexual assault and rape threats outside of the Youtube Channel. Although the video received several controversies for its “unintentional” racial bias, it initiated public conversations on street harassment.

A growing number of academics have also examined theoretical issues related to street harassment (e.g., Laniya 2005; Fogg-Davis 2006) as well as conducted empirical research on it (e.g., Kears 2010; Fairchild and Rudman 2008; Lord 2009; Fairchild 2010). Yet, as Kears (2010) notes, there is still relatively few studies on the origins of views about street harassment, especially ones that examine how views about street harassment are associated with gender or other factors, such as age, race, or education. As well, previous research has neglected to examine the how experiences as victims and as harassers influence these views. This study addresses these shortcomings with an analysis of survey, interview and observational data about public interactions with strangers of the opposite gender.

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This analysis is guided by two interpretational theories on street harassment. The first theoretical framework derives from Gardner’s (1995) research and her findings that participants had two main interpretations of street harassment: the Traditional Romanticized accounts and the Politicized Feminist consciousness (see also *Perspectives of Street Harassment*). The former argues that the behaviors people identify as street harassment are in actuality, a way of complimenting or flattering women and women receive such attention because of their physical appearance and dress (163). It also is embedded with the notion that heterosexual romantic attraction drives the behavior. The Politicized Feminist account argues that these behaviors are indeed harassment and are the result of longstanding gender inequalities. The second theoretical

framework is Benard and Shlaffer's (1984) male-bonding theory. This theory argues that making catcalls, whistles, and groping behaviors are expressions of male solidarity and bravado. It also argues that male-bonding operates along with other mechanisms to control and intimidate women. Therefore, men often engage in these behaviors when out in public with other men, but they also do them on their own, in part because they associate these behaviors with masculinity.

## Research Questions

I draw upon the theoretical and empirical work summarized above in a study that examines the following questions:

- 1) Do women and men differ in how they view remarks such as “Can I get a smile?” “Hey Sexy,” and gestures such as kissing noises? Are men more likely to view such interactions as acceptable ways of saying hello, complimentary, and not as a form of harassment? Do women’s views more closely align with a Politicized Feminist consciousness and men’s with a Romantic Traditional perspective? Are women more likely to view street harassing behavior as a form of male-bonding than men?
- 2) Does race or ethnicity influence how people view these behaviors?
- 3) Are other attributes, such as age, education, income, sexual orientation, and gender ideology associated with people’s views about these behaviors?
- 4) Does prior experience with these interactions affect how people view them? Are those that engage in this behavior less likely to consider this harassment?

## Methodology

My research involved collecting three types of data: a closed-ended 31-question survey, a three-question interview, and my observations during the collection of survey and interview data. I gathered data at four locations: Lake Merritt in Oakland, the Davis Farmers Market, the Hilltop Mall in Richmond, and the Folsom Fair Flea Market in Sacramento. I obtained permission to do my research from the Freedom of Speech coordinators at the Farmers Market, Hilltop Mall and Folsom Fair Flea Market. I chose these four sites for three reasons. First, the people in these sites likely vary in their race, income, gender, educational level, and age. Second, these public places are sites where potential participants may have been targets of street harassment or have seen it. Third, these sites were conveniently accessible for a wide array of potential participants.

At each location I set up a table with two chairs, pens, and a sign that read “UC Davis Study.” My research took 12 days over a period of eight weeks in the winter of 2016. I recruited participants for 2-4 hours on each day on weekends. At the Davis Farmers Market I also gathered data on one Wednesday afternoon. I used a systematic sampling to recruit participants. At each site I spoke with every 10<sup>th</sup> person that walked from right to left at a close distance and asked if he or she would like to participate in an 8-15 minute research study for my honors thesis. Just under half of the 161 people I asked to participate agreed to do the study for a response rate of approximately 50 percent. Oakland had the highest response rate at 67 percent, followed by Sacramento at 55 percent, Davis at 44 percent, and Richmond at 36 percent. I took note of the characteristics of those who declined to participate and observed that older people, and older males in particular, more often than others refused to take the survey.

In order to ensure that the participants were old enough to take my survey, I asked the following: “Before you begin the survey, what is your age?” I gave those aged 19 and older a

consent form in their preferred language (English or Spanish). After answering any questions about the study I asked participants if they wanted to do the 31-question survey online via Qualtrics or on paper. Most participants preferred the latter; only two participants completed the survey online. After the participants finished the survey, I asked them if they would be willing to take part in a three-question interview. I recorded all the interviews in my password-protected phone. A total of 56 of the 80 participants (70 percent) consented to an interview. The average interview lasted just under two minutes, yet some lasted for eight minutes.

### MEASURES

I used four case-scenarios to measure views about and experiences with street harassment. I also included twelve demographic questions about the participant. Three case-scenarios had five follow-up questions and the fourth had four. The first and second case-scenarios described hypothetical verbal interactions: 1) “A stranger from the opposite gender asks you ‘Can I get a smile?’ or something similar while you are walking down the street” and 2) “A stranger of the opposite gender says ‘Hey Sexy!’ or something similar while you were walking down the street.” The third- case-scenario described a nonverbal interaction: “A stranger of the opposite gender makes kissing noises to you as you walk by.” The final case-scenario concerned a physical form of street harassment. The scenario asked: “A woman boards BART or a city bus during rush hour. As she gets on the train, a stranger of the opposite gender intentionally touches her breast.” I do not analyze data on the fourth scenario in this thesis and do not describe data on it below.

I asked a similar set of questions after each scenario. The first two used Likert-scale categories (1=Strongly Agree ... 7=Strongly Disagree) to indicate the degree to which participants agreed or disagreed that statements like those described in the scenarios were: 1)

acceptable ways to say hello or to meet people and 2) were compliments (see Appendix). The third question asked participants how likely or unlikely it was that they would consider comments like these harassment (1= Very Likely ... 5= Very Unlikely). The answers to these three questions were highly correlated for each scenario ( $\alpha = .791; .639; .728$ , respectively) and so I created scale measures of the unacceptability for each of the actions described in the three scenarios.

The last two follow-up questions in each case-scenario asked for the participant's experiences with the interactions described. The first asked, "How often has someone said remarks like this to you when you have been walking down the street," the other asked: "How often have you said something like this to a stranger when walking down the street?" Both questions had five response categories (1= Daily, 2= A lot, 3= Occasionally, 4= Rarely, 5= Never). I varied the ordering of the answers for the question across the various scenarios to discourage a response set and to increase reliability.

I included three questions from the Illinois Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance (ISHMA) Scale (Lonsway, Cortina, Magley 2008) to measure gender ideology. The *ISHMA* scale focuses on sexual harassment in workplaces and examines the beliefs that women bring victimization upon themselves, enjoy attention, and that only extremely deviant men commit sexual harassment. It measures support for a sexual harassment mythology that, according to Lonsway, Cortina, and Magley (2008: 600), is "widely and persistently held, and that serve[s] to deny and justify male sexual harassment of women." Of the three questions I pulled from the *ISHMA* scale, I substituted "public spaces" for "work" to better suit my survey. The questions read: "1) Most women are flattered when they get sexual attention from men in public spaces; 2) Nearly all instances of sexual harassment would end if the woman simply told the man to stop;

3) It's inevitable that men will 'hit on' women in public spaces." The three questions had seven Likert-scale responses (1=Strongly ... 7=Strongly). Responses to these questions were not highly correlated ( $\alpha = .506$ ) and so I could not combine them in a scale; thus, instead I used the third question as my measure of gender ideology. A majority of participants, 64 percent, agreed to some degree that men will inevitably "hit" on women in public spaces (22 percent strongly agreed, 27 percent agreed, 15 percent agreed somewhat), 9 percent of participants were uncertain and only 27 percent disagreed (11 percent disagreed, 11 percent disagreed somewhat and 5 percent disagreed strongly).

I asked the following questions to participants who verbally consented to a short interview:

- 1) Do you think that remarks like 'Hey Sexy!' or 'cat-calls' given by strangers are compliments? Why or why not?
- 2) Why do you think people whistle, make kissing noises or 'cat-calls' at strangers?
- 3) What is your definition of harassment? What does it look like in the streets or in public settings?

I used Stata 14 to estimate cross-tabular and ordinary least squares regression for my quantitative analysis. I analyzed response to my three-open ended questions by listening to or reading participants' responses and taking notes on common themes. I then examine the backgrounds of participants who spoke about particular themes to see if these were associated with gender or other attributes. I also incorporated notes of my interactions and experiences with the participants.

## Results

This research study gathered data from three sources: self-reported surveys, interviews and observational data from interactions with the participants. This section begins with the descriptive statistics of the sample. It then presents the survey findings in the quantitative results section. It then outlines the common themes and responses found in the interviews in the qualitative results section and ends with my observations and experiences with the participants.

### QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

#### **Descriptive Statistics**

Table 1 (see Appendix) provides means, standard deviations, and where appropriate percentages, for variables used in this study. The gender distribution is almost equal: 51 percent female and 49 percent male. The largest race-ethnic group is Latinos (40 percent), followed by Whites (26 percent), and Blacks (20 percent). The number of people who identified as Asian, multi-racial, or other is too small to treat separately and so I put them into one group (14 percent). Most of the sample identified as heterosexual (92 percent), four percent identified as “other,” and one percent as gay/lesbian or bisexual. The average respondent was between 31 and 35 years old, had attended college, and an income of \$65,000. The three measures I used from the Gender Ideology scale (ISHMA) are not correlated strongly enough to make a scale measure ( $\alpha = .506$ ) and so I focus on one item, “It is inevitable that men will ‘hit’ on women in public spaces”; the average participant said that they agreed “somewhat” with this view ( $X = 3.16$ ).

On average, participants reported that they had “occasionally” experienced a stranger ask them “Can I get a smile?” ( $X = 2.67$ ) but had rarely ( $X = 1.59$ ) done this themselves. Other interactions were less common: on average, participants had rarely experienced a stranger making remarks like “Hey Sexy!” ( $X = 2.225$ ) and had rarely made these remarks ( $X = 1.508$ ). The

same pattern occurs for kissing noises: this had happened rarely for the average participant ( $X=2.20$ ) and few respondents reported doing it ( $X=1.28$ ).

I used three questions to measure participants' responses to each scenario; these asked people if they viewed the behavior described as unacceptable, non-complimentary, and as harassment (see Methods). Responses to the questions were strongly correlated for each scenario (Smile scale  $\alpha = .791$ ; Hey Sexy scale  $\alpha = .639$ ; Kissing Noises scale  $\alpha = .728$ ) and so I created scale measure for each. The scale means indicate that, on average, participants viewed kissing noises as the most problematic ( $X=15.06$ ), followed by a request for a smile ( $X=11.64$ ); they were more tolerant of a stranger saying "Hey, sexy ( $X=8.203$ ). The standard deviations for the scales are more similar.

### **Bivariate Analysis of Scales**

Tables 2.1-2.3 (see Appendix) describe bivariate associations between the examined variables in the study (gender, race, age, income, education, sexual orientation, gender ideology, frequency of experiencing an action and frequency of doing an action) and the scales. The results in Table 2.1 indicate that gender was not associated with views about the inappropriateness of asking someone for a smile, nor were the other demographic and attitude variables used in the analysis. Indeed, only one variable, frequency of having asked someone for a smile is significantly related to it ( $b = -2.491$ ,  $p = .001$ ). This association indicates that the more frequently one has asked others, "Can I get a smile?" or something similar, the more one believes the action is acceptable, complimentary and not a form of harassment. Compared to White participants, minority respondents were also less likely to see this behavior as inappropriate, but only the effect for identifying as Black approaches significance ( $b = -2.983$ ,  $p = .053$ ).

Table 2.2 (See Appendix) presents a bivariate association between the second case scenario, which is the 'Hey Sexy!' scale. There were no significant association for gender or race, or for any of the other variables used in the analysis.

Table 2.3 (See Appendix) presents several significant results for the Kissing Noises scale. Once again, gender is not strongly associated with views about the appropriateness of making kissing noises. There are, however, several notable effects for race. Compared to Whites, Blacks ( $b = -4.617$ ,  $p = .001$ ), Latinos ( $-3.434$ ,  $p = .003$ ) were significantly less likely to view this interaction as unacceptable, non-complimentary and as a form of harassment; the effect for the category for Asians, Multi-racial, and Other is also negative ( $b = -2.859$ ,  $p = .055$ ). Three variables, income ( $b = .000$ ,  $p = .004$ ), education ( $b = .863$ ,  $p = .027$ ), and believing that men will inevitably "hit" on women ( $b = .738$ ,  $b = .003$ ) are each significantly and positively associated with the view that this behavior is unacceptable. Similar to the results for the acceptability of asking for a smile, the frequency of having made making kissing noises at a stranger is negatively and significantly associated with the view that this act is unacceptable ( $p = .000$ ).

### **Multivariate Analysis of Scales**

Table 3.1 offers multivariate results for the Smile scale (see Appendix). There are six models: the first includes demographic attributes, whereas the subsequent ones introduce the other variables. Results for Model #1 show significant associations between race and attitudes once controls for gender and age are included. The effects for identifying as Black ( $b = -3.309$ ,  $p = .039$ ) or as Latino ( $b = -2.942$ ,  $p = .047$ ) are both significantly associated with views about this behavior. Both of these racial groups were least likely to view this behavior as unacceptable, and the effect for the Asian, multi-racial and other category is almost significant ( $b = -3.673$ ,  $p = .051$ ). These effects suggest that compared to Whites, members of racial minorities are less likely to see

saying remarks like “Can I get a smile?” as offensive. I add income and education in Models #2 and #3, but neither are significant. The same pattern occurs in Models #4 and #5 where I introduce the measure for participants’ beliefs about the inevitability of men hitting on women in public spaces, and the frequency of their having experienced remarks like this. In Model #6, I add the frequency of having done this; it has a significant negative effect ( $b = -2.022$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and including it leads to sizable reductions in the associations for race.

Table 3.2 has few significant multivariate results for the Hey Sexy scale. There are no significant associations for gender, race, or any of the other variables in Model #1. There is a significant finding for race in Model #3, for the Asian, multi-racial and other category ( $b = 3.177$ ,  $p = .034$ ), suggesting that, compared to Whites, people in this group are more likely to see this behavior as unacceptable.

Table 3.3 presents results for the Kissing Noises Scale. The results for Model #1 show significant effects for all three racial groups (Blacks  $b = -4.949$ ,  $p = .001$ ; Latinos  $b = -3.903$ ,  $p = .004$ ; and Asian, Multi-racial or other,  $b = -3.822$ ,  $p = .025$ ), indicating that compared to Whites, people from these groups are less likely to see this behavior as harassment. None of the variables added in Models #2 through #5 are significant, although including some (e.g., income) reduce substantially the effects for the race variables. There is also a significant effect for having made kissing noises or done similar behaviors ( $b = -2.498$ ,  $p = .000$ ), indicating that people who have done this are less likely to see these acts as unacceptable (see model #6 in Table 3.3).

### **Quantitative Conclusion**

Gender was not significantly associated throughout all three scales examined (Smile, “Hey Sexy!” and Kissing Noises scale). It was neither found in the bivariate or multivariate analysis. The Smile and Kissing Noises scale bivariate analysis revealed a similarity: those

engaging in this behavior were less likely to view this interaction (asking “Can I get a smile?” or making kissing/blowing kisses) as offensive. The Kissing Noises scale found a significant detection for race: Blacks and Latinos were less likely to view this interaction as offensive in comparison to Whites. Interestingly, the “Hey Sexy!” scale had no significant findings in the bivariate analysis.

In the multivariate analysis for the Smile and Kissing Noises scale reveal that racial minorities are least likely to view these behaviors as harassment than Whites. Although Asian, Multi-racial, and Others do not have a significant findings in the Smile scale, they approach it very closely ( $p=.051$ ). These two scales also show that those that engage in this behavior are less likely to view this as offensive, yet this finding is not prevalent in the “Hey Sexy!” scale. The “Hey Sexy!” multivariate analysis scale only had one significant finding: as Model #3 displays, those in the Asian, multi-racial and other category ( $b= 3.177$ ,  $p=.034$ ) were more likely to see this behavior as unacceptable than Whites.

## QUALITATIVE RESULTS

### **Interviewee Demographic Attributes**

Approximately 70 percent of the 80 participants ( $n=56$ ) consented to being interviewed. There is an almost even gender distribution: 52 percent female, 46 percent males and 2 percent other. Those that consented to being interviewed were predominantly Latinos (38 percent), followed by Whites (29 percent), Blacks (20 percent), and Asian, Multi-racial or Other (13 percent). In terms of the gender-race distribution, 23 percent of interviewees were Latina women, 14 percent Latino men, 16 percent White females, 13 percent White males, 9 percent Black females, 11 percent Black males, 4 percent Asian, Multi-racial, or other females and 8 percent

Asian, Multi-racial, or other males (several groups clearly have very small samples, see Interview Demographics Table in Appendix).

### **First Interview Question**

The first interview question asked participants if they view catcalls or remarks like ‘Hey Sexy!’ as compliments (see Methods). The overwhelming majority of the participants did not; instead, most participants interpreted such interactions as rude, inappropriate, offensive, and/or invasive. 39 percent of the interviewees responded this manner, with Black (60 percent) and Latina females (54 percent) being the most critical of this behavior. In addition, several participants also added that such comments are insulting because of the lack of preexisting relationship with the harasser. For example, participant 27 answered, “I don’t think they’re compliments, first of all, it’s a rude thing to say to someone if you don’t know them and I also think that if you want to get someone’s attention, catcalling at them is not the way to approach them” (female, Black, 19-24 years old). Similarly, participant 54 affirmed that such remarks by strangers are disrespectful: “they are not compliments, because if they are strangers I don’t know them, it’s a lack of respect” (female, Latina, 41-45 years old). Participant 65 added that this interaction is not only inappropriate, it can also create an emotionally charged reaction “no [they are not compliments] because...I feel like it affects how you feel sometimes its plain inappropriate. It makes me feel unsafe sometimes I don’t know what could happen sometimes and I don’t know how it will affect me” (female, Latina, 19-24 years old). Although I used gender-neutral language in the survey (i.e., the catcaller was not given a gender; see Survey Instrument in Appendix), some interviewees used gendered-language to emphasize that interactions like these usually involve women being catcalled. Participant 61 attested to this

response: “I don’t think they are compliments at all, it’s kind of rude and offensive to any girl that gets called like that” (male, Latino, 19-25 years old).

Other participants responded that such interactions are rude, inappropriate, offensive, and/or invasive because the interaction is not a normative behavior for meeting others.

Participant 1 also specified the social settings where this interaction takes place:

No I don’t think so, they’re inappropriate in my opinion, that’s not a way to go about meeting trying to meet and interact with someone, I think it’s kind of rude, I think the only time I hear it is at the bar, when people are drunk, if you were to do something like that it would get you fired” (male, Asian, 25-30 years old).

Participants 63 also replied that the behavior is verbally intrusive, “no they are [not compliments because they are] intrusive to another’s personal space” (male, White, 46+ years old).

The second most common theme in the responses to this question align with Gardner’s (1995) Politicized Feminist perspective: 18 percent of interviewees viewed interactions like these as objectifying, gendered, and reflective of gender inequality. This view was particularly prevalent among White (38 percent) and Latina females (31 percent). For example, participant 25 asserted that “I don’t think are compliments, they [the harassers] treat recipients as an object and not as a human being” (female, Latina, 25-30 years old). Likewise, Participant 4 echoed this concern and interpretation:

I don’t think they’re compliments because I feel like they are very geared towards the gender, it’s only given by men to women, and it’s not wanted. I don’t think any woman would want to be called hey sexy or given catcalls, its kind of embarrassing, and I just feel like those are things that don’t make you feel good about yourself, those are just very degrading” (female, Asian, 25-30 years old).

Some male participants (20 percent) also saw these interactions as objectifying and deeply rooted in power inequalities: “they are not compliments because they are more about asserting [a] power relationship than having a sincere relationship” (participant 45, male, White, 45+).

I found less evidence of Gardner's (1995) Romanticized Traditionalist perspective; this was the most common theme in her interviews, whereas it was a rare response in my study. Only 5 percent of the participants saw the catcalls as complimentary and they were all men. Each of these men said the words themselves—sexy, for example—are compliments. For instance, participant 57 argued that the compliment is not sexual or gender specific: “It is a compliment because it’s a sexy person. Every person is sexy. It is not sexual” (male, Latino, 36-40 years old). Two of the men noted that although remarks like these are acceptable, they may violate a social norm. Participant 44 remarked, “It is a compliment because they are saying that you do look good. The way it comes across does not get a good response. It’s probably not a good way to go about things” (male, race unknown, 25-30 years old). As well, Participant 79 answered, “Yes they are compliments. The person shouting them out might have the decency or wit to say something a little more socially acceptable, but they are compliments nevertheless” (male, Latino, 19-24 years old). One female respondent, Participant 13, noted that some women find this behavior complimentary, yet she usually did not: “I feel like it depends on the woman, there are some women that like that sort of thing, I typically don’t. Especially because number one, I’m in a committed relationship, I have a lot of self-worth” (female, Black, 25-30 years old). Several features of this respond are noteworthy: the interviewee uses a first-person narrative unlike the other previous responses; she separates herself from the other women that “like that sort of thing”; she argues that her committed relationship and self-worth influence her view that this behavior is not complimentary.

### **Second Interview Question**

The second question asked participants to speculate the origins of street harassing behavior. The most common response, by 32 percent of participants, was that strangers engage in

this behavior to either get attention from the recipient, or to draw attention to themselves. White females (56 percent) and Latino males (40 percent) offered this explanation the most. Some noted that this behavior is intertwined with humor: “They’re pretty much trying to get attention, it’s like, my way of thinking this is that you’re trying to make yourself look like a fool...it just depends on who you are” (participant 5, male, Latino, 19-24). Other participants gave very short and concise answers: “[strangers do this] because they want attention” (participant 12, female, White, 46+). A participant also responded that it is for attention yet is rooted in a character flaw: “all of it is for attention, sometimes people aren’t good with their communication skills, they do it because they think it’s funny or cute but in reality it’s ignorant” (participant 42, male, Black, 19-24 years old).

The second most common theme aligned with Gardner’s (1995) Traditional Romanticized perspective (see Theoretical Framework). There were no gender or racial majority that gave this response (1 White male, 1 Black female, 1 Black male, 1 Latina female).

A number of participants touched on several themes. For instance, participant 8’s response discussed themes such as drawing attention, yet emphasized the romantic affection component:

I think its’ uh, I think it’s a cultural thing, a social thing, it’s a learned behavior from society and cultural norms, so it’s very much engrained into you from your upbringing and how you perceive the world around you. Why do I think people do it in the first place? *I think it’s wanting affection, wanting to be loved, at the deepest of it* (laughs, long pause). I think it’s attention, and I think it’s wanting to show off for friends, I think its seen as a cool thing among guys to hit on women (male, White, 25-30 years old).

This explanation also resonates with Benard and Shlaffer’s (1984) argument that street harassment is a way for males to bond with each other. This participant also highlights that hitting on women is in a way a type of performance for it is a “cool thing” among other men to hit on a woman. Other participants argued that the physical appearance of the caller, rather than the victim, plays a crucial role:

Ok, this is going to sound a little shallow, but I think those that catcall, make kissing noises ... *aren't that attractive*. In laws of attraction, they are trying to get whatever they cant get, they're saying "if I can't put myself out there, no one is going to go up to me, because I'm not good looking" or you know all that, that's what I think. I think it's a combination, you know, like when people do the kissing or whistles I feel like they definitely are going after a lustful way of coming onto a woman, I think everyone wants to be loved, so yeah (participant 13, female, Black, 25-30 years old).

This person's remark emphasizes that comments like these originates with the caller ("if I can't put myself out there), but that some of the motivation is understandable and perhaps generally acceptable (everyone wants to be loved, so yeah).

### **Third Interview Question**

The last interview question asked for the participant's definition of harassment and also inquired what it looks like in public spaces (see Methods). This question was intended to uncover overlapping definitions a word that is ubiquitously known and asked for examples of the interaction. About one-quarter, 23 percent, defined harassment as making the victim feel uncomfortable: 25 percent of Latino males responded this way, as did 25 percent of White females. The participants who defined harassment this way tended to give much longer responses and more explicit, vivid, and detailed examples than those that defined harassment differently (for example, defining harassment as unwanted advancements or solely physical interactions). These participants also gave detailed answers of what harassment looks like in public settings. For instance, a participant not only proclaimed that this interaction extends beyond making the victim feel physically or verbally uncomfortable, but also mentally as well:

harassment in my point, is either making someone uncomfortable either physically, verbally or even mentally, its not just one physical state ... [if] a person feels uncomfortable by your actions ... it's ... harassing somebody... in the streets I see the name calling ... like people ... [say] "hey that girl lookin cute." I personally don't say it, I hear it a lot, and my friends kind of question me, "why don't you say that?" and I say "I just have respect for people and I should have respect for myself also." (Participant 5, male, Latino, 19-24).

This participants' acknowledgement of the pressure he feels from his peers to engage in this activity is consistent with Benard and Schlaffer's (1984) male-bonding thesis.

Other participants also integrated their own experiences when answering this question.

In the following example, a participant recognized that this behavior may give the victim attention but it is a *specific type of attention*:

harassment makes you feel uncomfortable ... I think some women take certain harassment as um compliments because it makes them feel better, because it gives you attention, but it's attention *that degrades you* as a being actually! In public I've seen a lot [of it], when girls are walking and guys ... say something really fast while they are driving. They pulled up on me a couple of times and ask me where I was going or for my number. I just walked away, I didn't say nothing. There was this onetime they kept following me and I started to walk towards a group of hecka people. (Participant 29, female, Latina, 19-24 years old).

Other participants said that harassment is difficult to define because it may depend on how the person being targeted views the interaction:

my definition of harassment would be any act towards another person that is uninvited that makes a person feel uncomfortable and what does it look like in the street or public settings? Um, I think it can be like glances, it can be statements that are made, it could be moving towards you, or saying something to a friend but I think also, it's hard to know if it's harassment on the streets because you don't know how the person is feeling that is being targeted (participant 11, female, White, 36-40 years old).

Another approximately 20 percent of the interviewees defined harassment as unwanted, unsolicited, and or unwelcomed actions. The majority of those that responded this way were White (57 percent) and Black males (33 percent). Some of the participants gave two-worded responses such as "[harassment is] unwelcomed advances" (participant 63, male, White, 46+ years old), whereas others gave longer responses:

[harassment is] any form of unacceptable behavior and it looks like pretty disturbing, pretty unwelcoming indoors and outdoors, examples for outdoors is whistling, making remarks like 'hey sexy what's going on can I get your number' anything that you

wouldn't want your mother to be exposed to I wouldn't say to a young woman either (male, Black, 19-24 years old).

Again, other participants, particularly women, integrated their own experiences when defining harassment:

my definition would be anything that is unsolicited because I didn't ask for it, I have a right to my own comfort and own personal space ... consent that is a big thing, I need to give you consent ... [examples are when] you are catcalling or trying to get ... [my] number, or even if a friend gives another person your number that's harassment, because if you give my number to some guy without my consent that's harassment to me (participant 28, female, Latina, 19-24 years old).

This participant's views align with Gardner's (1995) Politicized Feminist consciousness as she argues that she has a right to her comfort and personal space. Her definition reflects the view that the behaviors are harassment when they are unconsented.

The third most common response focused on physical encounters, but only 14 percent of participants answered this way. Although it is a least common response, it is worthy of analysis. For example, Black (40 percent) and White (25 percent) females most commonly gave this account. These participants differentiated physical from verbal encounters and asserted that harassment is physical. Some participants interpreted harassment in the context of sexual harassment, and argued that it is dependent on culture as well. For example, participant 6 answered:

I think when you get physical with a woman or anybody, touching them, is like way beyond the limit, that's sexual harassment. But if you say hey and you're walking by somebody and she looks beautiful, and you tell her "you look pretty today" "the sun looks nice in your hair" I don't see anything wrong with that. So you can't touch people that's what I'm saying. It's physical but you can't uh, get uh, um, you can't speak dirty shit to somebody, like hey bitch like you looking really fine, using swear words for compliments

After asking various clarification questions, the participant continued to answer:

I have Black friends that say [things like] that all the time, and Black women who don't even, don't even turn their head, so it's what class you come from. And what country

you're in. But I think things are very overblown right now, things have gotten too politically correct. And that really bothers me because we are now living in a society where you can't say anything, where someone being harmed or harassed which I think is complete bullshit, you should be able to tell a beautiful woman she's beautiful. You can't touch her but, [if] it's all in context [its] too right (male, Multi-Racial, 46+ years old).

It should be highlighted that this participant understands that harassment can be verbal; however he "should be able to tell a woman she's beautiful," in other words, it is his first amendment right (although the participant did not answer this in the interview, he said this to me personally after the interview was finished). Similarly, another participant argued that the first amendment gives people the right to say harassing remarks, however, when it is physical it is harassment. She proclaims:

Don't touch me. That's how I feel. It's a free country you can say what you want, but don't touch me, if it's repeated and I've already said no and you can stop your advances and you continue, then that's sexual harassment, if you touch me without consent then that's sexual harassment. Yeah if you're crossing the street and someone says 'hey sexy,' you're across the street, it is what it is. You said it, it's out there (participant 13, female, Black, 25-30 years old).

Interestingly, participants 6 and 13 were the only participants out of the 56 respondents to incorporate the term sexual harassment in their answers. Other participants, participant 14 for example, defined harassment as a persistent physical interaction and not as a verbal encounter:

Yeah, this is uh, that was interesting for me, with the like, are these kissing noises, hey sexy, are those harassment? *I don't, I guess for me personally I don't think of it harassment*, I think it's more as a certain way other people try to get others attention. Harassment is when someone is touching another person's body intentionally, if they're, I feel like when men do this to me, I make it clear that this is as far it's going to go. And if they persist then that's harassment (female, white, 25-30 years old).

### **Qualitative Conclusion**

The first interview question asked participants if they view verbal remarks by strangers in public spaces as complimentary. The majority of participants answered they do not because they view the remarks as rude, inappropriate, offensive, and invasive. The majority of respondents

that gave this perspective were Black (60 percent) and Latina (54 percent) women. Gardner's (1995) Politicized Feminist perspective was also a common response by White (38 percent) and Latina (31 percent) women, although it was secondary. I expected that the Romanticized Traditionalist perspective would be a common theme in response to the first question; however, it was mostly evident in responses to the second question. The second question asked why strangers engage in this behavior and there were two common responses: 1) to draw attention to themselves and 2) because they want a romantic interaction (Traditional Romanticized perspective). Those that most commonly answered that they do it for attention were White females (56 percent) and Latino males (40 percent).

The third question asked participants how they define harassment and what does it look like in public settings. The majority defined harassment as acts that made the victim feel uncomfortable, 25 percent Latino males and 25 percent White females responded this way. The second most common response defined harassment as unwanted, unsolicited, or unwelcomed actions which was mostly by White (57 percent) and Black males (33 percent). Lastly, a small number of the participants defined harassment solely as physical acts. Ultimately, these results provided some, but only partial evidence of patterns—the Politicized Feminist Account, the Traditional Romanticized Account, and Male-bonding—emphasized in other research. Setting the theoretical frameworks aside, these accounts reveal that there were gender differences in the responses which were not found in the quantitative results.

#### RESEARCHER'S EXPERIENCE

Various factors can influence participants in face-to-face data collection and my gender may have influenced their responses, principally male participants. While I was collecting data, various men asked me personal questions. For example, in Sacramento a participant asked me

“Do you feel flattered when guys make kissing noises *at you?*” or “Do *you* feel good when a guy asks you for your number?” When I reassured the participant that the goal of the interview was to better understand how *he* views such interactions, he looked down at the survey instrument, yet continued to study my facial expressions and body language. Another participant in Sacramento asked me if I constructed the questions myself. I explained that the questions were taken from a previous study, to which he answered “Oh wow, I was going to say, you are a really strong woman if you made these questions up!” After this participant completed the survey he slipped a note with his phone number on it and said “If you ever want to call someone that’s interested, here is my number.” Another participant in Sacramento asked for my phone number and insisted I “give him a chance.”

Other male participants seemed suspicious of the intention of the study. For example, a participant in Oakland asked me “Do you study this topic [human interactions] at UC Davis?” or “How long have you been studying this subject?” Another participant from Richmond asked something similar, “Is this for a class or something? What are you trying to get out of this?” as he completed the gender ideology section. Another participant at Davis acknowledged that I may not share his same viewpoint as he completed the survey, “You will probably not like my responses.” He consistently chuckled throughout the survey. In fact, most of the male participants laughed throughout the survey.

There were several instances where the encounters turned hostile, but all but one occurred only after I stopped the interview recording. A participant in Oakland claimed my survey was extremely biased and that I should reconsider my role as a researcher. He raised his voice at me several times and asserted that my study assumed that “sexual harassment is only harassment when it is done from a man to a woman” and no the other way around. This participant said that

*he answered the questions according to how he thought I wanted him to answer them.* Another male from Oakland called the survey biased and said “those questions you have on there just aren’t right.” He reiterated that it is his first amendment right to call me “pretty.” A participant in Sacramento also answered that “women ask to be catcalled because of the way they dress” and made several grunting noises and even muttered himself “wow she can’t be serious!” while completing the survey. In total, there were five men that said my survey was biased to me directly and one woman that said it indirectly. Two of the hostile men slammed the interview on the table and walked away vehemently.

Other men, who did not do the survey but who observed me collecting data, also made comments about me. For example, a man passing by at Davis said “I don’t want to take your survey but I do want to look into your pretty eyes.” A man at Richmond who walked by my table made several remarks about my physical appearance, including “Dang you’re beautiful girl.”

## **Discussion**

This research study contributes to the narrow yet growing literature on street harassment. It investigated the ways views of street harassment varied according to demographic characteristics and experiences. I used hypothetical case-scenarios that asked participants about their views about verbal remarks like “Can I get a smile,” “Hey Sexy!” or non-verbal gestures such as making kissing noises. I asked respondents if they saw these as acceptable, complimentary and harassing behavior. My research utilized two theoretical frameworks for interpreting the interview responses: Gardner’s (1995) Romantic Traditionalist and the Politicized Feminist perspectives and Bernard and Shlaffer’s (1984) male-bonding theory. Through cross-tabular and ordinary least squares regression analysis, interview interpretations, and observational data from encounters with the participants, I found several noteworthy

findings that raise considerations for future research. This section begins by reviewing the quantitative, qualitative and observational data of the study and their connection to relevant literature. I then discuss the limitations of the research and offer suggestions for subsequent research. I conclude with the implications of the study and advocate for street harassment research that extends beyond a gender-based focus.

### **Primary Results for Quantitative Findings**

I analyzed three of the four hypothetical case scenario questions in the survey. The first question asked participants how they interpret the question “Can I get a smile?” from a stranger of the opposite gender. Notably, this is the first academic study on street harassment to examine empirically how people perceive the questions I ask in the survey.

A number of scholars have analyzed requests for a smile through a gender inequality theoretical lens; Davis (1994:143) asserts that being asked to smile is an invasion of privacy and mentally distracting:

Street harassment also dominates women by controlling their emotional and intellectual growth. Returning to the “smile” genre of street harassment, the day I found out that my grandmother died, not one, but two men told me to “smile.” This invasion of privacy prevented me from processing and experiencing the emotions necessary to cope with my loss. Similarly, an incident of street harassment forces me to rechannel my energies away from my issues on my mind to the intrusive interaction, makes me lose my train of thought, and interrupts my thought process. As a result, my way of knowing is replaced by men’s thought of women.

Although few scholars have critically discussed this issue, an artist, Tatyana Fazalizadeh, is currently addressing this topic. She confronts street harassment with her campaign “Stop Telling Women to Smile.” Her work portrays women with captions aimed at the harassers reading “harassing women does not prove your masculinity” or “my name is not baby, shorty, sexy, sweetie, honey, pretty, boo, sweetheart, ma.” She has placed her posters in accessible and public

spaces. Her campaign and social media influence inspired the question in my survey, but also demonstrates the different approaches people can use to confront street harassment rather than through legal remedies as other scholars endorse (Bowman 1993, Heben 1995).

My bivariate and multivariate least squares regression results had overlapping results for the Smile Scale: there was a negative relationship between the frequency of asking others “Can I get a smile?” and viewing this as offensive. In other words, those that engage in this behavior were least likely to view it as harassment. Black respondents also saw this behavior as more acceptable than did white respondents; an association that is also independent of gender and age were taken into account in the multivariate analysis. Compared to Whites, Blacks, Latinos and Asian, multi-racial, and others were less likely to view making kissing noises as harassment.

There are various explanations that could account for race/ethnicity patterns. One argument is that people of color face higher rates of structural violence and inequality and may regard this interpersonal interaction as less pressing. Discrimination, the War on Drugs, the rise of incarceration and privatization of prisons disproportionately target people of color; minorities may, therefore, see street harassment as minor in comparison to these and other sources of inequality.

The street harassment literature offers another explanation. Scholars in this field argue that street harassment discourse often excludes the voices of African-American women (Davis 1994: 161), but this argument also applies to other women of color. The overwhelming majority of the street harassment literature minimally discusses the intersections of race and gender, and when it does, it is discussed in a subsection. Various scholars assert that street harassment affects women of all races, class and ages; however, these arguments rely on the premise that street harassment is primarily gender-based. For example, Kissling and Kramarae (1991) assert that the

women “who find street remarks disturbing, disgusting, or dangerous evidently hear them *more as sexist* than racist or classist” (emphasis mine; 90). Such essentialist perspectives focus solely on gender and overlooks how racism and other forms of oppression shape street harassment. For most women, street harassment is at the *very least* genderized *and* racialized (Davis 1994). Previous research studies report that women of color experience street harassment at higher rates (Nielsen 2000; Lord 2009), yet these experiences are often lumped into a monolithic conceptualization of street harassment. This approach argues that all women experience unwanted remarks, gestures and/or physical encounters; yet, such remarks are heavily shaped by the victim’s identity. For example, Nielsen’s (2000:1068) research uncovered that nearly half (46%) of people of color reported hearing racist comments everyday or often, as did almost two-thirds (64%) of African-Americans, in contrast to 5% of white respondents. Every African-American in this study reported that she or he had been the target of a race-related remark from a stranger in public spaces. Evidently, future research should explore the intersection of race and street harassment.

For all three scales, those that most experience street harassment were less likely to view this interaction as offensive. It is unclear why this occurs; it could be that the frequency of these types of interactions becomes normalized and thus seen as trivial. As Davis (1994:153) notes, “women do not talk about it and are thus silenced. This reinforces the invisibility of street harassment and its effects...when a woman thinks about ending the silence, she may have a lot of doubt, given that street harassment—a pervasive part of everyday life—is so trivialized” (Davis 1994: 153).

The multivariate analysis for the “Hey Sexy!” scale exhibited an unexpected trend in comparison to other scales. Members of the Asian, Multi-racial and other racial category were

more likely to view such remarks as offensive than Whites. It is uncertain why this racial category were more likely to view this interaction as harassment than Whites. In addition, this engaging in this behavior was not associated with the view that it was less offensive (in contrast to Smile and Kissing noises scales). However, 13 respondents did not have access to the survey question asking how many times they made remarks like these and the smaller sample may have influenced the results. Future studies with larger samples should see if this is trend persists.

There were several bivariate associations for the Kissing Noises scale: race, age, income, and the belief that it is inevitable to “hit” on women in public spaces along with the frequency of doing this interaction. The physical nature of this type of encounter may have encouraged people to view this interaction as more offensive.

### **Primary Results for Qualitative Findings**

My qualitative analysis uncovered several complimentary findings. There were three common responses in my interviews and women contributed the majority of these. For example, Black (60 percent) and Latina (54 percent) women were more critical of remarks like “Hey sexy!” or catcalls given by strangers, seeing them as rude, offensive, inappropriate, and/or invasive. In addition, White (38 percent) and Latina (31percent) women supported Gardner’s (1995) Politicized Feminist perspective and said that catcalls are not compliments because they are rooted in gender inequality and power relations. These criticisms are underdeveloped in the quantitative analysis. The quantitative analysis also sets aside a detailed examination of women’s experiences with street harassment—such as feeling afraid or being followed by strangers.

The second question in the survey asked the participants why they think strangers engage in street harassing behavior. White females (56 percent) and Latino males (40 percent) most commonly answered that strangers catcall or make kissing noises to call attention to themselves

or to get the victim's attention. This response echoes di Leonardo's (1981) definition of street harassment as acts that force victims to interact with their harasser (52). The second most common theme for this question supported Gardner's (1995) Romantic Traditionalist interpretation; there were, however, no gender or racial patterns for his response.

The last question asked participants for their definition of street harassing behavior; the most common response was that it made the victim feel uncomfortable. White females (25 percent) and Latino males (25 percent) were the most common racial and gender group to answer this way. Interestingly, White (57 percent) and Black (33 percent) males were the most common racial group to define harassment as unwanted advances. That is, the second most common response gave the legal definition of sexual harassment. According to the U.S. Department of State, the, sexual harassment is defined as "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature." Thus far, only one other empirical study has asked participants how they define street harassment (McNeil 2010) and it is in reference to gay and bisexual men. Future studies with larger samples should focus on the intersections of gender and race and definitions of harassment and the influence of workplace definitions.

### **Primary Results for Observational Data Findings**

My gender and assumed sexual orientation may have influenced how participants answered questions. As noted earlier, a number of male participants asked me personal questions about the survey questions, such as "Do you feel flattered when guys make kissing noises *at you?*" and were some hostile toward me. Researchers play a vital role in the research process, but as Ross (2015:184) argues, it is "simplistic and indeed patriarchal to assume that the researcher will have the most power in the research process." In various interactions across all four research

locations, many male-identified respondents enacted their power by asking me the purpose and intention of the study. Some also requested that I change the instrument because it is biased. In effect, they questioned the validity of the research study and my role. Ultimately, as Ross (2015) emphasizes, it is necessary to acknowledge the gendered and possibly violent acts one may experience while conducting research or collecting data.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Although this research study was carefully constructed, there were unavoidable limitations. First, although I found no effect of gender in my quantitative analysis, my interviews and experiences gathering the data suggest that there are, in fact, gender differences. These inconsistencies need to be explored in subsequent studies by using male and female-identified data collectors to see if the pattern I observed persists.

Second, due to the time and financial constraint, I only recruited 80 participants, and of those, a smaller group (70 percent) agreed to an interview. The size of the sample limits the generalizability of this study; however, I did find several significant findings in my quantitative analysis, even with the small sample. Generally speaking, in smaller samples it is difficult to find significant effects.

Third, some participants seemed uncomfortable with the questions. I reassured them that the survey was anonymous and that they did not have to answer questions that they found uncomfortable. Nonetheless, some people may have given answers that they thought were more social acceptable or that I wanted, rather than providing accurate information about their attitudes and experiences.

Fourth, there were several Spanish-speaking participants that had never taken surveys and were confused by the language of the survey. For example, several participants were

perplexed by the sexual orientation question and asked what the term “heterosexual” meant. I explained the various categories and walked away in the hopes that they would feel more comfortable disclosing their sexual identity; subsequent research could include a dictionary of key words in the study.

Given these limitations, there are several strengths of the study. This study used a random sample and it went beyond studying college students, the group surveyed in most studies on street harassment. In addition, there was considerable racial, age, educational and income variation among the participants. This study also considered gender ideology as a factor that could influence views about street harassment. Most important, this was the first study in street harassment literature to use bilingual surveys.

### **Implications of the research**

Collectively, my self-reported surveys, interviews, and personal observations suggest several key findings. The quantitative analysis uncovered that racial minorities, independent of gender, are less likely to view remarks like “Can I get a smile?” and kissing noises as harassment, but not for the “Hey Sexy!” scenario. In addition, those that make remarks like “Can I get a smile” and make kissing noises at strangers are less likely to view it as offensive. Although there were no significant gender differences in the quantitative analysis, several interview responses, along with my experiences with the participants, suggest there were gender associations. Indeed, it also revealed that gender influences responses in face-to-face research gathering. The study’s significant findings for race and gender within the different methods of data collection suggest that future studies should also examine how race and gender shape views of street harassment. I hope this study can influence researchers to incorporate mixed-methods approaches in street harassment future studies.

Importantly, as noted in the theoretical framework, street harassment is not particular to gender. Several people of oppressed and marginalized groups experience street harassment at disproportionate rates, particularly in the queer, LGBT and trans\* (transgender) community. Future studies should consider the overlapping ways members of such groups experience street harassment.

## Appendix

Tables

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics**

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Smile Scale	11.638	4.518
'Hey Sexy' Scale	8.203	2.743
Kissing Noises Scale	15.063	4.253
Age	2.938	1.898
Income	64972.22	49883.3
Education	2.463	1.222
Inevitable to "hit" on women in public spaces	3.165	1.877
Frequency of being told to smile	2.675	1.134
Frequency of telling others to smile	1.588	.837
Frequency of being told 'Hey Sexy!'	2.225	1.091
Frequency of telling others 'Hey Sexy!'	1.508	.954
Frequency of experiencing kissing noises	2.2	1.152
Frequency making kissing noises at others	1.275	.711
Variables	Percent	
Female	51%	
Male	49%	
Latina/o	40%	
White	26%	
Black	20%	
Asian, multi-racial, other	14%	
Heterosexual	92%	
Other Sexual Orientation	4%	
Gay/Lesbian	1%	
Bisexual	1%	

**Table 2.1: Bivariate Ordinary Least Squares Regression Results for Smile Scale**

<b>Variable Name</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>Standard Error</b>	<b>P-Value</b>	<b>Confidence Interval</b>	
Gender	.947	.106	1.029	.360	-1.103	2.998
Black (White is comparison Group)	-2.983	-.265	1.514	.053	-6.001	.034
Asian, Multi-Racial, Other	-2.723	-.214	1.664	.106	-6.039	.594
Latina/o	-1.934	-.213	1.271	.133	-4.468	.600
Age	-.259	-.109	.268	.336	-.793	.274
Income	.000	.247	.000	.071	.000	.000
Education	.419	.113	.416	.317	-.409	1.247
Sexual Orientation	.521	.084	.727	.476	.521	.727
Inevitable to "hit" on women in public spaces	.254	.105	.274	.358	-.293	.800
Frequency of experiencing this	-.103	-.026	.451	.821	-1.000	.795
Frequency of doing this	-2.491	-.462	.542	<b>.000**</b>	-3.570	-1.412

**\*\* p-value  $\leq$  .05 (Statistically Significant)**

**Table 2.2: Bivariate Ordinary Least Squares Results for “Hey Sexy!” Scale**

Variable Name	b	Beta	Standard Error	P-Value	Confidence Interval	
Gender	-.812	-.148	.635	.205	-2.077	.453
Black (White is comparison Group)	.983	.147	.924	.291	-.859	2.826
Asian, Multi-Racial, Other	.75	.095	1.048	.477	-1.340	2.840
Latina/o	.089	.016	.776	.909	-1.459	1.636
Age	.052	.036	.164	.751	-.274	.378
Income	.000	.063	.000	.656	-.000	.000
Education	.037	.017	.257	.885	-.474	.548
Sexual Orientation	-2.69	-.072	.440	.542	-1.142	.607
Inevitable to “hit” on women in public spaces	.094	.064	.166	.575	.094	.166
Frequency of experiencing this	.080	.033	.278	.755	-.473	.633
Frequency of doing this	.429	.129	.375	.256	-.317	1.175

**Table 2.3: Bivariate Ordinary Least Squares Results for Kissing Noises Scale**

Variable Name	b	Beta	Standard Error	P-Value	Confidence Interval	
Gender	.023	.003	.983	.981	-1.935	.191
Black (White is comparison Group)	-4.617	-.439	1.336	<b>.001**</b>	-7.279	-1.954
Asian, Multi-Racial, Other	-2.859	-.240	1.468	.055	-5.785	.067
Latina/o	-3.434	-.404	1.122	<b>.003**</b>	-5.670	-1.198
Age	.177	.079	.253	.487	-.327	.680
Income	.000	.382	.000	<b>.004**</b>	.000	.000
Education	.863	.248	.382	<b>.027**</b>	.102	1.623
Sexual Orientation	.7	.123	.663	.294	-.620	2.020
Inevitable to "hit" on women in public spaces	.738	.325	.244	<b>.003**</b>	.251	1.224
Frequency of experiencing this	-.658	-.178	.411	.114	-1.477	.161
Frequency of doing this	-2.713	-.454	.603	<b>.000**</b>	-3.914	-1.511

**\*\* p-value  $\leq$  .05 (Statistically Significant)**

**Table 3.1: Multivariate Associations for Smile Scale**

	Model #1				Model #2				Model #3			
Variable Name	b	Beta	S.E.	P	b	Beta	S.E.	P	b	Beta	S.E.	P
Gender	.358	.040	1.046	.733	.297	.033	1.048	.778	-0.072	-.008	1.246	.954
Black (White is comparison group)	-3.309	-.299	1.573	<b>.039**</b>	-3.131	-.282	1.584	<b>.052**</b>	-1.726	-.147	1.834	.352
Asian, multi-racial, other	-3.673	-.282	1.846	.051	-3.369	-.258	1.873	.077	-1.300	-.105	2.225	.562
Latina/o	-2.942	-.327	1.452	<b>.047**</b>	-2.152	-.239	1.667	.201	-.752	.084	1.845	.685
Age	-.565	-.244	.304	.068	-.611	-.264	.308	<b>.051**</b>	-.681	-.318	.340	.051
Education					.503	.140	.520	.337				
Income									.000	.300	.000	.093

	Model #4				Model #5				Model #6			
Variable Name	b	Beta	S.E.	P	b	Beta	S.E.	P	b	Beta	S.E.	P
Gender	.366	.041	1.065	.732	1.098	.124	1.218	.370	-.015	-.002	.983	.988
Black (White is comparison group)	-3.362	-.303	1.688	<b>.050**</b>	-2.889	-.261	1.608	.077	-1.991	-.180	1.521	.195
Asian, multi-racial, other	-3.738	-.286	1.990	.065	-3.526	-.270	1.845	.060	-2.319	-.178	1.771	.195
Latina/o	-3.006	-.331	1.655	.074	-2.565	-.285	1.483	.088	-1.396	-.155	1.434	.334
Age	-.568	-.243	.310	.071	-.643	-.277	.310	<b>.042**</b>	-.382	-.164	.289	.192
Gender Ideology	-.030	-.013	.313	.925								
Frequency of experiencing this					-.662	-.170	.563	.244				
Frequency of doing this									-2.022	-.381	.607	<b>.001**</b>

**\*\* p-value  $\leq$  .05 (Statistically Significant)**

**Table 3.2: Multivariate Associations for “Hey Sexy!” Scale**

	Model #1				Model #2				Model #3			
Variable Name	b	Beta	S.E.	P	b	Beta	S.E.	P	b	Beta	S.E.	P
Gender	-.498	-.092	.659	.453	-.501	-.093	.665	.454	.740	.138	.801	.360
Black (White is comparison group)	1.142	.170	.988	.252	1.156	.172	1.003	.253	2.015	.274	1.171	.093
Asian, multi-racial, other	1.039	.129	1.188	.385	1.055	.128	1.207	.385	3.177	.384	1.452	<b>.034**</b>
Latina/o	.516	.094	.913	.574	.574	.105	1.061	.590	2.212	.395	1.182	.068
Age	.151	.108	.191	.432	.148	.105	.195	.451	.306	.228	.217	.166
Education					.037	.017	.335	.913				
Income									.000	.270	.000	.137

	Model #4				Model #5				Model #6			
Variable Name	b	Beta	S.E.	P	b	Beta	S.E.	P	b	Beta	S.E.	P
Gender	-.445	-.083	.657	.501	-.998	-.185	.774	.202	-.503	-.093	.664	.452
Black (White is comparison group)	1.618	.243	1.039	.124	1.061	.158	.987	.286	1.176	.175	1.009	.248
Asian, multi-racial, other	1.593	.195	1.247	.206	1.099	.133	1.185	.357	1.084	.131	1.217	.376
Latina/o	1.222	.223	1.019	.235	.379	.069	.916	.680	.554	.101	.938	.557
Age	.146	.104	.191	.446	.195	.139	.194	.318	.153	.109	.193	.431
Gender Ideology	.274	.195	.193	.161								
Frequency of experiencing this					.431	.181	.353	.227				
Frequency of doing this									-.096	-.025	.472	.840

**\*\* p-value  $\leq$  .05 (Statistically Significant)**

**Table 3.3: Multivariate Associations for Kissing Noises Scale**

	Model #1				Model #2				Model #3			
Variable Name	b	Beta	S.E.	P	b	Beta	S.E.	P	b	Beta	S.E.	P
Gender	-.562	-.067	.945	.554	-.655	-.078	.936	.486	-.104	-.016	.920	.911
Black (White is comparison group)	-4.949	-.474	1.421	<b>.001**</b>	-4.680	-.449	1.414	<b>.001**</b>	-2.592	-.284	1.355	.062
Asian, multi-racial, other	-3.822	-.311	1.668	<b>.025**</b>	-3.362	-.274	1.672	<b>.048**</b>	-2.722	-.282	1.643	.105
Latina/o	-3.903	-.461	1.313	<b>.004**</b>	-2.710	-.320	1.488	.073	-1.712	-.247	1.363	.216
Age	-.238	-.109	.275	.389	-.308	-.141	.275	.267	-.254	-.153	.251	.317
Education					.760	.225	.464	.106				
Income												
	<b>Model #4</b>				<b>Model #5</b>				<b>Model #6</b>			
Variable Name	b	Beta	S.E.	P	b	Beta	S.E.	P	b	Beta	S.E.	P
Gender	-.662	-.079	.941	.484	.297	.036	1.060	.780	-.769	-.092	.847	.367
Black (White is comparison group)	-4.291	-.413	1.492	<b>.005**</b>	-4.820	-.462	1.404	<b>.001**</b>	-4.109	-.394	1.287	<b>.002**</b>
Asian, Multi-Racial, Other	-.662	-.079	.941	.484	.297	.036	1.060	.780	-.769	-.092	.847	.367
Latina/o	-4.291	-.413	1.492	<b>.005**</b>	-4.820	-.462	1.404	<b>.001**</b>	-4.109	-.394	1.287	<b>.002**</b>
Age	-3.011	-.246	1.758	<b>.091**</b>	-3.673	-.299	1.648	<b>.026**</b>	-2.307	-.188	1.534	<b>.037**</b>
Frequency of experiencing Ideology	-3.114	-.366	1.463	<b>.037**</b>	-3.671	-.433	1.302	<b>.006**</b>	-2.924	-.345	1.196	<b>.017**</b>
Frequency of doing this	-.203	-.093	.274	.460	-.326	-.149	.276	.242	-.201	-.092	.246	.417
Frequency of experiencing Ideology	.368	.168	.277	.188	-.782	-.219	.459	.093				
Frequency of doing this									-2.498	-.435	.585	<b>.000**</b>
Frequency of doing this									-2.498	-.435	.585	<b>.000**</b>

\*\* p-value  $\leq$  .05 (Statistically Significant)

**Table 4: Interviewee Race and Gender Demographic Attributes Table**

<b>Race and Gender Demographic Attributes</b>	<b>Total (n=56)</b>
Latina Females	13
Latino Males	8
Black Female	5
Black Males	6
White Females	9
White Males	7
Asian, multi-racial, other Females	2
Asian, multi-racial, other Males	4
Asian Gender-fluid	1
Male Race N/A	1

Survey Instrument

Interactions in Public Settings Survey

Jennifer Herrera  
UC Davis  
Class of 2016

This survey asks questions about interactions in public settings. Your responses are very much appreciated!

**In what city are you taking this survey?**

- Davis
- Richmond
- Oakland
- Sacramento

**In what age range do you fall?**

- 19-24
- 25-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-45
- 46+

**What is your primary means of transportation to get to work?**

- Driving
- Walking
- Biking
- Public transportation (*Please specify bus, train?*): \_\_\_\_\_

**What is your occupation? (*Please fill in the blank*):**

---

The following questions ask about your opinions about interactions between men and women in public spaces.

**Most women are flattered when they get sexual attention from men in public spaces.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Nearly all instances of sexual harassment would end if the woman simply told the man to stop.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**It's inevitable that men will 'hit on' women in public spaces.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Disagree

Strongly Disagree

I am now going to ask you questions about some situations. It does not matter if you have or have not experienced them.

**A stranger of the opposite gender asks you ‘Can I get a smile?’ or something similar while you are walking down the street.**

**Do you agree or disagree that comments like these are acceptable ways to say hello or to meet people?**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Do you agree or disagree that comments like these are compliments?**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**How likely or unlikely is it that you would consider comments like these harassment?**

- Very Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Unsure
- Somewhat Unlikely

Very Unlikely

**How often has someone said remarks like this to you when you have been walking down the street?**

Daily

A lot

Occasionally

Rarely

Never

**How often have you said something like this to a stranger when walking down the street?**

Daily

A lot

Occasionally

Rarely

Never

**A stranger of the opposite gender said “Hey sexy!” or something similar while you are walking down the street.**

**Do you disagree or agree that comments like these are acceptable ways to say hello or to meet people?**

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neither Agree Nor Disagree

Somewhat Agree

Agree

Strongly Agree

**Do you disagree or agree that comments like these are compliments?**

Strongly Disagree

- Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

**How unlikely or likely is it that you would consider comments like these harassment?**

- Very Unlikely
- Somewhat Unlikely
- Unsure
- Somewhat Likely
- Very Likely

**How often has someone said remarks like this to you when you have been walking down the street?**

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- A lot
- Daily

**How often have you made remarks like this when you have been walking down the street?**

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- A lot
- Daily

**A stranger of the opposite gender makes kissing noises at you as you walk by.**

**Would you agree or disagree that this is an appropriate way to flirt?**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Do you agree or disagree that this would be a compliment?**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**How likely or unlikely is it that you would consider this harassment?**

- Very Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Unsure
- Somewhat Unlikely
- Very Unlikely

**How often has someone made noises like this to you when you have been walking down the street?**

- Daily
- A lot
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

**How often have you made noises like this when you have been walking down the street?**

- Daily
- A lot
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

**A woman boards BART or a city bus during rush hour. As she gets on the train, a stranger of the opposite gender intentionally touches her breast.**

**How often have you seen this happen?**

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- A lot
- Daily

**How unlikely or likely is it that you would consider this a form of harassment?**

- Very Unlikely
- Somewhat Unlikely
- Unsure

- Somewhat Likely
- Very Likely

**How often has this happened to you?**

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- A lot
- Daily

**How often have you done this?**

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- A lot
- Daily

**Please check the category that describes your education:**

- 8<sup>th</sup> grade or less
- More than 8<sup>th</sup> grade, but did not graduate from high school
- Went to a business, trade, or vocational school instead of high school
- High School graduate
- Completed a GED
- Went to college, but did not graduate
- Graduated from a 2-year college or university
- Professional training beyond a 4-year college or university
- Never went to school

**About how much total income, before taxes did your family receive in 2014? Include your own income, the income of everyone else in your household, and income from welfare benefits, dividends, and all other sources.**

*(Please specify)* : \_\_\_\_\_

**How would you describe your gender identity?**

- Female
- Male
- Other *(Please specify)*: \_\_\_\_\_

**Which race do you identify as?**

- Black
- White
- Asian
- Latina/o
- Multi-racial *(Please specify)*: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other *(Please specify)*: \_\_\_\_\_

**How would you describe your sexual identity?**

- Heterosexual
- Gay/Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Other *(Please specify)* : \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill out this survey.

If you are interested I would like to ask you three follow-up questions about this topic.

**1) Do you think that remarks like ‘hey sexy’ or ‘cat-calls’ given by strangers are compliments? Why or why not?**

**2) Why do you think people whistle, make kissing noises or cat-calls at strangers?**

**3) What is your definition of harassment? What does it look like in the streets or public settings?**

Please let me know if you are willing to spend five minutes telling me your thoughts about these questions.

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