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Chapter 10

Creeps and Casanovas: Experiences, Explanations, and Effects of Street Harassment

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On a daily basis, women in public places are the targets of catcalls, unwanted touches, crude comments about their appearance or sexual predilections, and all other manner of harassment. Two of the first scholars to study the phenomenon of gender-based street harassment, Cheryl Benard and Edit Schlaffer (1981), found that women on the streets of Vienna were harassed regardless of their age, weight, clothing, or race by men of every different race and socioeconomic level. Carol Gardner found the same thing to be true in the United States when she interviewed hundreds of men and women on the streets of Indianapolis. She eloquently defined street harassment as "that group of abuses, harryings, and annoyances characteristic of public places and uniquely facilitated by communication in public" (1995, p. 4). These researchers have described street harassment as a violation of a woman's right to walk down the street unmolested and without being constantly reminded of men's position of privilege. The prevailing societal opinion on street harassment, however, is that it is annoying but not really such a big deal. It is just "boys being boys."

This chapter offers support for Carol Gardner, Cheryl Benard, Edit Schlaffer, and the other researchers, theorists, and activists who emphatically refuse to dismiss street harassment as a trivial fact of life for women. The fact that street harassment is a daily reality for most women does not make it trivial. No one would claim that daily physical or emotional abuse is trivial. Indeed, research shows that the effects of long-term, daily abuse are often more harmful than the effects of a single trauma. The reader may laugh uneasily and say, "Oh, but being catcalled is not the same as being raped!"—and the reader would be right: they are different. Even so, both events exist on a continuum of violence against women, with mundane street harassment at one end and rape on the other. This chapter presents empirical and theoretical evidence suggesting that street harassment causes serious and insidious negative effects on a woman's emotional well-being and causes her to feel unsafe and unwelcome in her own world. It also discusses personal and collective responses to street harassment with the conviction that societal change is possible.

CONCEPTUALIZING STREET HARASSMENT

Although street harassment is directed toward individuals belonging to various groups, including people of ethnic minorities, those with disabilities, and those who identify as gay, lesbian, and transgender (Fogg-Davis, 2006; Gardner, 1995), this chapter focuses on gender-based street harassment, referred to hereafter simply as "street harassment" for the sake of space.

This category encompasses many different types of harassing behaviors, ranging from staring openly at a woman's breasts to complimenting her on her breasts to grabbing her breasts. Verbal comments can seem flattering, such as telling a woman that she is beautiful, or they can appear flirtatious, such as asking a woman for her telephone number. They can also be blatantly hostile, such as calling a woman a bitch or a whore. However, the characteristics that unite all of these behaviors under the banner of street harassment are the following: (1) the targets of street harassment are usually female; (2) the harassers are usually male; (3) the harassers are unacquainted with their targets; (4) the encounter is of a face-to-face nature; (5) the forum is a public one, such as a street, sidewalk, bus, bus station, taxi, or other place to which the public generally has access; but (6) the content of the speech, if any, is not intended as public discourse. Rather, the remarks are aimed at the individual (although the harasser may intend that they be overheard by comrades or passersby), and they are objectively degrading, objectifying, humiliating, and frequently threatening in nature (Bowman, 1993, p. 524).

In a study by Tracy Lord (2009), female undergraduates at a public university in the mid-Atlantic region were asked to provide examples of

harassment they had experienced. Many of the women reported being the targets of whistling, being followed (on foot or in a car), purposeful and "accidental" touching, staring, and horn honking. Several participants reported that unwanted touching came from patrons at their places of employment, particularly if they worked as restaurant servers. Participants also specified that unwanted touching frequently occurred at parties. Some women described a frightening escalation of the harassment when they tried to ignore the initial "compliments." The harassers moved quickly from these purported compliments to shouted insults.

In her ground-breaking ethnographic study of street harassment, Carol Gardner (1995) identified specific types and subtle characteristics of harassment. After interviewing 506 targets and perpetrators of street harassment, Gardner concluded that harassment can be categorized as an "access information intrusion," an "exploitation of presence," a "street remark," or a combination of all three. Harassment that attempts to access a woman's information can range in severity from asking for a woman's phone number on a busy street to following her at night for many blocks. Exploitation of presence violates a woman's physical space and ruffles her calm, dignified exterior. Examples of this type of harassment include blocking a woman's path, touching, hitting, tripping, or poking. Street remarks are most often evaluative and sometimes come in the form of eloquent innuendos, effectively redefining a mundane activity or situation by giving it sexual undertones.

Obviously, these categories of harassment are not mutually exclusive; a harassing behavior may entail a combination of these types. For example, by following a woman, a harasser both intrudes on her private information, by seeking to know where she is going or where she lives, and exploits her presence in public. What does seem common to all types of street harassment is that it is often "stealthy, quick, silent and unseen" (Gardner, 1995, p. 148). As a consequence, the target's attention is often diverted and the harassment comes too unexpectedly and quickly for a woman to react satisfactorily. When harassment is more overt, harassers often inject humor into their behavior, thereby making the woman the butt of the joke and leaving her unable to make a serious or satisfactory response. It also depoliticizes the harassing behavior, making it seem lighthearted and nonthreatening (Gardner).

Another defining characteristic of street harassment is that it occurs in public spaces where specific, unspoken codes define appropriate behavior between strangers so that people can move about in public without feeling threatened. One of these social norms, described in detail by Erving Goffman (1963), is the norm of "civil inattention." Civil inattention generally forbids strangers from paying one another too much attention in public. Although strangers may say certain legitimate phrases to one another when passing on the street, such as a brief greeting or asking for the time,

all other speech is discouraged. The unspoken code of civil inattention also dictates how much eye contact is appropriate; when walking past a stranger on the street, we look each at each other for only a brief moment and then only in the face. Any additional eye contact causes us to feel uneasy or uncomfortable. In sum, civil inattention allows individuals to maintain a sense of privacy and to feel protected from the intrusion of strangers into their private space (Goffman).

When a man makes a sexually suggestive comment to or about a female stranger on the street, looks fixedly at her body as she walks past him, or reaches out to touch her, such behavior is a blatant violation of the social norm of civil inattention. If street harassment does, in fact, violate a social norm, then it would stand to reason that harassers form a special category of men and that such behavior is abnormal and infrequent. Interestingly, neither of these things appears to be true. Although most women and men alike assume that the majority of perpetrators of street harassment are working-class and of a minority race, interviews with perpetrators and targets indicate that harassers are men of every race, age, socioeconomic status, and cultural background (Gardner, 1995; Benard & Schlaffer, 1981).

PREVALENCE

Based on the authors' own experiences and our conversations with women friends and colleagues, street harassment seems to be a common experience that occurs quite often. Everyone has at least one personal story to tell about it. Unfortunately, empirical data about the frequency of street harassment are sparse. The only two large-scale surveys measuring the frequency of street harassment of women found that between 85 percent and 91 percent of the Canadian women sampled had experienced some type of street harassment after the age of 16, and 36 percent reported experiencing it in the last year (Lenton, Smith, Fox, & Morra, 1999; Macmillan, Nierobisz, & Welsh, 2000). Both of these surveys defined street harassment more narrowly than the definition used in this chapter; therefore, these numbers probably underestimate the real frequency.

After interviewing 100 women recruited from public spaces (in the United States), Nielsen (2000) found that 61 percent reported being made the target of sexually suggestive comments "every day" or "often." Most men (86%), by comparison, heard such comments only "sometimes," "rarely," or "never." Nielsen also found that nearly one fourth of women of color reported hearing suggestive comments on a daily basis, compared to only 14 percent of White women. As part of an anti-street harassment campaign, a group of female teenagers of varied races and ethnicities surveyed peers in their urban neighborhood and found that 36 percent of teenagers surveyed said that they were catcalled every day and often multiple times per day (Roberson, 2005).

In a recent study of street harassment, Tracy Lord (2009) surveyed 130 female undergraduate students about harassing behaviors they had experienced and their feelings about these behaviors. The behaviors ranged from subjectively mild (e.g., being stared at in a way that made the women uncomfortable) to more severe (e.g., indecent exposure, being followed, or unwanted touching). Each woman reported being subjected to at least two forms of harassing behavior, and each of the eight harassing behaviors was endorsed by at least 42 percent of the women. Results indicated that women of color are harassed significantly more frequently than are White women.

With the results from these various surveys indicating that most women experience harassing behavior from male strangers in public at least once in their lifetime and as often as every day, it would seem that street harassment is an accepted behavior guided by a separate code of conduct from the code of civil inattention. Goffman (1963) explained that although civil inattention discourages people from giving strangers too much attention, certain kinds of strangers may be exempt from this rule. He described these people as "open people." Examples of open people include children, people accompanied by children or pets, or someone wearing a funny costume. Individuals who do not meet society's standards for what is ideal may also fall into the open person category. Perhaps men have learned to treat women as open persons. Treating women differently than men in public simply because they are women seems to be the definition of sexism.

STREET HARASSMENT AS PROBLEM

Although most girls and women have experienced street harassment repeatedly, they are not encouraged to confront street harassers or to take harassment seriously. For example, Gardner (1995) described the ways in which women have been taught to interpret street harassment experiences. Gardner found that many women were likely to interpret public harassment from a romanticized perspective, in which street harassment was viewed as harmless or even complimentary. In this view, the comments, looks, and whistles are just men's ways of voicing their appreciation or approval of the way women look. In reality, not all the comments are complimentary; Gardner notes that even people with a romantic outlook on public harassment cannot always classify harassment as flattery.

As Natalie Nichols (2006) argues, harassment implies that men on the street have been accorded the opportunity to evaluate women's bodies and appearance: "Their 'compliments' make me feel angry and violated. I resent their sense of entitlement to comment on my body, to demand any piece of *my* mind" (www.LACITY.BEAT.com). Street commentary on women's attractiveness or lack of attractiveness places them in a beauty

pageant on a daily basis, a pageant they have not agreed to enter. Every man or any man can appoint himself the judge, and for every pageant winner there are losers. This aspect of harassment implies that women are in competition for men's attention, and that men have the right to judge women on their appearance in any and every context of their lives. Thus, even if public harassment is flattering and makes some women feel better about themselves, it reinforces traditional gender norms and the division of power between men and women. Moreover, it reinforces the view that men have the right to comment on a woman's appearance. Many women can attest to the fact that an initial compliment can easily become vulgar or turn into a different form of harassment (e.g., stalking, touching), or the ostensible compliment can be rescinded if the harasser does not get the response he wants.

Other women hold a politicized view (Gardner, 1995) in which public harassment is comparable to both racial comments and gay bashing in public and to workplace and school harassment. "Sexual harassment has been a dirty little secret for generations, an unacknowledged barrage of intrusive, threatening male behaviors that has limited women's freedoms and violated even their simple human right to ride a bus or walk down the street in peace" (Langelan, 1993, p. 22). Gender-based street harassment is seen as evidence of men's power over women in a male-dominated society. Lenton and her colleagues (1999) described harassment as a phenomena linked to power and control. They argue that street harassment—as a form of sexual harassment—is part of a larger structure in which men and women have unequal power because men have access to more resources (e.g., physical, political) than women do. Society is structured such that men have more power than women, and public harassment is a demonstration of men's power and privilege. For example, the website Holla Back NYC (www.hollabacknyc.blogspot.com) argues that "at its [street harassment's] core is a power dynamic that constantly reminds historically subordinated groups (women and LGBTQ folks, for example) of their vulnerability to assault in public spaces. Further, it reinforces the ubiquitous sexual objectification of these groups in everyday life." Street harassment is a reflection of and serves to perpetuate gender roles. Gender roles place males in a superior, dominant position to females. Our culture socializes men to be aggressive, dominant, and sexual, and women to be more submissive.

Moreover, street harassment is implicitly and explicitly heterosexist; the practice is based on assumptions of heteronormity—that is, the assumption that everyone is heterosexual. Harassers publicly display their own heterosexuality and act on the assumption that women on the street are heterosexual and are concerned with their (male) attraction to them.

Women's perceptions of and reactions to men's attention in public vary depending on their own personal history with violence and the

context in which the harassment occurs. Other factors include: what men are doing, age differences, race differences/similarities, socioeconomic differences, and how safe they feel at the time. No woman wants to be insulted, groped, stalked, or assaulted. Many women do not want to be bothered at all. Girls and women should have just as much right as boys and men to be in public spaces without being treated as public property and worse (<http://www.stopstreetharassment.com>).

STREET HARASSMENT AS EVERYDAY SEXISM

One way to think about street harassment is as a type of mundane sexist event that is one of innumerable hassles women go through on a daily basis. While major life events, such as the death of a family member or the loss of a job have long been thought to cause physical and mental illness, in the past few decades researchers have come to view smaller-scale, daily annoyances as potentially more detrimental to long-term health and well-being. Researchers studying daily hassles define them as "irritating, frustrating, distressing, demands that to some degree characterize everyday transactions with the environment" (Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, & Lazarus, 1981, p. 3). They consistently find that the more daily hassles a person endures, the more vulnerable he or she is to psychological distress and psychiatric symptoms (Evans, Jacobs, Dooley, & Catalano, 1987; Kanner et al., 1981; Weiten, 1998).

Not surprisingly, data from large-scale epidemiological surveys have shown that women experience significantly more daily hassles than do men (Kessler & McLeod, 1984). Hope Landrine and Elizabeth Klonoff (1997) proposed that one reason for this difference may be women's daily exposure to nonviolent sexist events, including "being ignored, treated as if they are stupid, excluded, ridiculed, called names, and treated in unfair ways by their families, lovers, employers, and coworkers" (p. 17). The two researchers began testing their theory by asking women about the "worst thing that [had] ever happened to or been done to them because they are women" (p. 12). They then used these data to create a quantitative measure of the frequency of both recent and lifelong exposure to daily sexist events, which they called the Schedule of Sexist Events (SSE). Using the SSE, Landrine and Klonoff found that 99 percent of women sampled, regardless of their educational attainment or income level, reported experiencing a sexist event at some point in their lifetime; an almost equally large percentage reported experiencing such an event in the past year. The authors also found that when using both the SSE and a measure of non-gender-related daily stressors, the SSE was the single best predictor of psychiatric and physical symptoms. Specifically, the more sexist events a woman went through on a daily basis, the more likely she was

to report symptoms of anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and even menstrual pain.

The theory that exposure to day-to-day sexism increases a woman's vulnerability to symptoms of anxiety, depression, and physical pain has been supported and expanded in the years since Landrine and Klonoff introduced it. Using a particularly innovative method, Janet Swim and her colleagues instructed women and men to keep daily diaries in which they described events perceived to be sexist as well as their own emotional reactions to those events. Because it is difficult to think back about events that occurred weeks, months, or even decades ago, diaries are useful in allowing the writer to more easily describe the details of experiences and emotional responses that occurred that day. The results from the diary studies indicated that sexist hassles are a common experience for women; these events occur on average once or twice a week for college-age women (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). The authors categorized the experiences as involving one or more of three types of incidents: (1) traditional gender role prejudice, (2) demeaning and derogatory comments and behavior, or (3) sexual objectification. Although male participants also reported experiencing sexist events, the frequency of women's experiences was much higher than that of men, especially in terms of sexual objectification. Perhaps most important finding was that the most common emotional response to sexist events was anger and the frequency of sexist events was positively correlated with higher levels of anger, depression, and feelings of discomfort.

What does all of this have to do with street harassment? Simply put, if street harassment is classified as a sexist event, then the frequency of these events could partially explain why women are so much more likely to suffer from clinical depression and anxiety than are men. In other words, perhaps being catcalled on a regular basis as a woman walks to work or waits for a friend on the sidewalk is more than just annoying; perhaps it causes psychological damage. For general sexist events, researchers have hypothesized that the pressure women feel to brush such behavior off as trivial causes even more damage because it forces women to disregard their own anger, discomfort, and immense frustration. This is certainly true of societal responses to street harassment. In fact, the mundane nature of such events makes them even more impactful.

STREET HARASSMENT AS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

A mounting body of evidence suggests that street harassment causes women to feel more aware of their sexual vulnerability and, therefore, more afraid of being raped. Using data from the 1993 Violence Against Women Survey of 12,300 Canadian women, Ross Macmillan and his colleagues (2000) found that the more experiences a woman had being

harassed in public and the more varied these experiences, the less safe she felt in public. In fact, stranger harassment had a much larger effect on women's perception of safety than did sexual harassment in the workplace. Stranger harassment was associated with increased fears about safety while walking alone at night, using public transportation, and walking alone in a parking garage. As a result of the harassment, nearly half of the women began using personal safety strategies such as bringing a companion or dog with them when they went out, avoiding certain places or men, staying more alert, or checking their cars before getting in. These authors argue that street harassment causes women to feel less safe in public because it entails a unique combination of unwanted sexualized interactions with people who are unknown. This factor may cue women to perceive the male harassers as potential rapists rather than as potential guardians, leading women to be aware of their own sexual vulnerability and, therefore, feel unsafe in public spaces (Macmillan et al., 2000).

Women are significantly more afraid than men of being the victims of crime (Gordon & Riger, 1989; Rozee, 2000). This discrepancy occurs despite clear evidence that men are actually more at risk than women of being robbed, murdered, assaulted, and victimized in countless other ways (Ferraro, 1996; Lenton et al., 1999). When studies control for the fear of rape and focus on fears of other crime, however, they find that men are actually more afraid of murder and assault than are women (Ferraro). It appears that the fear of rape actually causes women to fear all crime more because any face-to-face crime against women, such as burglary, could theoretically lead to rape. Warr (1985) surveyed urban women and found that young women fear rape more than any other criminal offense including murder, assault, and robbery. This fear causes women to take certain lifestyle precautions, such as limiting where and when they go out and whether they go places alone.

Although the fear of rape is a completely rational fear of men's violence, and one that develops from both personal and societal history of violence toward women in the home, workplace, and public, it is also inflamed and manipulated by the media, advertising, and society at large (Stanko, 1995). Women receive messages from the time they are quite young to both fear rape and to avoid situations that could lead to rape. Because rape is not under their control, this barrage of messages leads to a constant low-level fear whenever they leave the house (Gordon & Riger, 1989). It is probably for this reason that men are not aware of the fear that street harassment triggers. They simply do not have the same reasons to fear it because they are not socialized to fear rape.

Medea and Thompson (1974) referred to public harassment experiences as "little rapes" that psychologically undermine women's resistance to sexual assault. In their early analysis of the impact of daily harassment, Medea and Thompson argued that women are trained how to (not)

respond to such male transgressions. Women are socialized to not call attention to themselves, to be easily embarrassed in public, to avoid confrontation, and to ignore street harassment. They are taught to avert their eyes in public, to ignore street harassment, to walk quickly away from harassers, and to avoid streets and other public areas where harassment might occur. Although women are not encouraged to object to street harassment, they are expected to object strenuously—even violently—to sexual assault. Medea and Thompson argued that women's gender socialization in general, and their socialized responses to street harassment in particular, leave women vulnerable when a serious sexual assault occurs. Women who immediately resist rapists are less likely to be raped, but it is difficult to know that a man is planning to rape until it is too late. Therefore, attending to intuition and gut reactions is an important survival skill (Gordon & Riger, 1989). Unfortunately, women are also taught to ignore such reactions of fear, anger, and discomfort when they are harassed by unknown men on the street. This places women in a horrible double bind: if they react based on their feelings, they are discredited and often ridiculed; if they do not react and suppress those feelings, they disconnect themselves from important inner cues and may put themselves at risk for victimization (Bowman, 1993).

In their phone survey of 1,990 randomly selected Canadian women aged 18 to 65, Rhonda Lenton and her colleagues (1999) asked about the frequency of victimization of several types of crime, including harassment by unknown men in public. They also asked women about their fear of crime and strategies used to protect themselves. Of the 91 percent of sampled women who reported experiencing street harassment, 75 percent reported feeling fear immediately following the harassment; 20 percent reported feeling angry; and only 2.9 percent reported feeling nothing. Almost 20 percent reported still feeling upset or afraid about harassment that had occurred years before. In addition, the most commonly reported behavioral reaction to the harassment was an alteration of the woman's own behavior to reduce the risk of future victimization (Lenton et al.).

Harassment forces some women out of the public sphere, which men consider their territory, and back into the private sphere. Street harassment then becomes an expression of patriarchal power that can serve to constrain women's mobility. Lenton and her colleagues (1999) reported on research that supported the conclusion that harassment is related to the social control of women, with many of their respondents experiencing fear and limiting their activities as a result of being harassed. Similarly, Gardner (1995) found that women used multiple strategies to cope with being in public and experiencing public harassment, including staying home, not going out in public, and avoiding multiple arenas. McHugh (1996) argued that agoraphobia may not always be an irrational fear of public spaces, but rather a reasonable response to street harassment.

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In Lord's study of undergraduate women, negative feelings about being harassed were also associated with increasing avoidance of going out alone in public. Lord's research supported the proposition that street harassment may cause women to experience negative emotional reactions, including anger, discomfort, and fear, and that harassment may trigger women's awareness of their vulnerability to sexual assault.

Lenton and her colleagues (1999) argued that harassment is a "means of social control that serves to reproduce and maintain the status quo of male dominance" (p. 520). "It is seen as a micro-inequity, not a big deal," said Maggie Hadleigh-West, whose 1998 documentary *War Zone* detailed her personal encounters with street harassers. Nevertheless, street harassment, because it induces a kind of anxiety in women akin to the fear of rape, is not just an annoyance for Hadleigh-West but a real threat. Hawley Fogg-Davis (2006) eloquently states:

Just as rape is not about sex, street harassment is not about flirtation or courtship. Both acts are meant to assert male dominance over women in situations where women appear vulnerable, and both leave psychological wounds on women's lives that are rarely tended to, let alone acknowledged. (p. 65)

STREET HARASSMENT AS OBJECTIFICATION

In addition to the stress associated with daily hassles and reminding women about their sexual vulnerability, street harassment may also lead women to feel self-conscious and be concerned or embarrassed about their appearance. Feminist theory has discussed at length how the feeling of self-consciousness about one's body and appearance can be problematic for women. When a woman is regularly reminded that her appearance is the most important thing about her and that this appearance does not match the societal ideal, she may suffer a range of negative consequences.

In modern society, maintaining physical attractiveness is a daily obsession for many women. In the past, researchers and theorists speculated that this focus on maintaining one's beauty was due to women's innate narcissism; more recently, research has clarified that the cause lies not in women themselves but in the societal pressures placed upon them (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997; Kilbourne & Jhally, 2001). In particular, women face a daily onslaught of sexual objectification wherein they are viewed as a collection of physical attributes and body parts valued only in terms of how much pleasure they provide the viewer (Bartkey, 1990). One can readily see this perspective by flipping through the pages of a magazine or turning on the television where images of headless, faceless women accentuating breasts, legs, and buttocks are regularly used to draw

the viewer in and sell products. Objectification also occurs in interpersonal encounters, such as when a man looks at the breasts of the woman with whom he is speaking instead of into her eyes. Many types of street harassment are also clearly intended as sexually objectifying behaviors, such as when men comment on a woman's breasts or buttocks as she walks by on the street.

When a woman is sexually objectified, she loses the complexity that is common to all people and becomes simply a body to be ogled or derided. Although men can be sexually objectified, it is by and large women who are the victims of this behavior. Whether this pattern arises because objectification perpetuates societal norms regarding male dominance or whether it results from evolutionary directives is open for debate. What is clear is that women experience a constant onslaught of objectification, whether it occurs in the media (Kilbourne & Jhally, 2001) or takes place in interpersonal encounters (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). In short, they are constantly reminded that their level of physical attractiveness has an enormous impact on their success in life, love, and the workplace.

Because sexual objectification becomes an unavoidable part of a woman's daily life when she reaches puberty, it negatively affects her budding identity and, consequently, her mental and physical well-being. According to Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts (1997), pioneers in the study of objectification, "[A] critical repercussion of being viewed by others in sexually objectifying ways is that, over time, individuals may be coaxed to internalize an observer's perspective on self" (p. 179), a phenomenon they label "self-objectification." When a woman self-objectifies, she sees herself as a body to be seen and evaluated instead of as an agent of action. Competency becomes less important than beauty, and the woman spends an inordinate amount of mental energy monitoring her body for flaws.

At the core of self-objectification is a comparison between one's own body and the cultural ideal. Unfortunately, this ideal is very rarely achieved. As a consequence, such a comparison often leads to shame and a constant preoccupation with minimizing the discrepancy between one's own body and the cultural ideal. The shame and anxiety that self-objectification causes women to feel, along with its taxing of their mental energy, might explain the higher base rates of depression and anxiety disorders among women. According to Barbara McKinley and Janet Hyde (1996, p. 183):

Constant self-surveillance, seeing themselves as others see them, is necessary to ensure that women comply with cultural body standards and avoid negative judgments. Women's relationship to their bodies becomes that of object and external onlooker; they exist as objects to themselves. Women learn to associate body surveillance with self-love, health, and individual achievement.

Barbara Fredrickson and her colleagues came up with a particularly ingenious way to study self-objectification (Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998). In their experiment, male and female college students were randomly assigned to try on either a swimsuit or a sweater alone in a room with a full-length mirror and, while in the dressing room, were then asked to take a food taste test and a math test. Results showed that wearing a swimsuit caused both men and women to score significantly higher on measures of self-objectification. While this state of self-objectification caused men to feel silly and awkward, it caused women to feel disgust, revulsion, and body shame. In addition, the women who had tried on a bathing suit scored significantly worse on the math test and displayed more restrained eating than women wearing a sweater. No such differences were found for men. The authors concluded from these results that the negative consequences of self-objectification are not part of a general human condition but rather are socialized to primarily affect young women because of the cultural focus on objectification of the female body. In addition, they concluded that certain situations prime women to self-objectify and to feel "on display" (Fredrickson et al., 1998).

The subsequent results from a multitude of studies using various techniques to evoke self-objectification have supported the premise that self-objectification has negative effects on the well-being of women. In addition to causing shame and decreasing cognitive ability, self-objectification seems to be a contributing factor in the development of mood and eating disorders in women (Greenleaf & McGreer, 2006; Moradi, Dirks, & Matteson, 2005).

Inherent in objectification theory is the idea that self-objectification occurs when young women begin to internalize the male gaze. Feminist theorists describe the male gaze as the objectifying gaze that women endure daily and that they learn to anticipate and prepare for (Bartkey, 1990). Rachel Calogero (2004) sought to experimentally test the power of the male gaze by telling female participants that they were either going to meet with a male experimenter or a female experimenter or telling them nothing. Amazingly, the mere *anticipation* of talking to a man caused women to endorse significantly higher levels of body shame and social physique anxiety than women in the other two groups. Calogero concluded that these women anticipated the male gaze and, therefore, began self-objectifying so as to monitor their appearance in preparation.

Although no experimental studies have as yet investigated the effects of street harassment on self-objectification, the previous studies do suggest that street harassment increases self-objectification. The male gaze is inextricably linked to street harassment, as is the impression that women targets are on display. Certainly, male harassers sexually objectify their targets, either by ogling them or by verbally evaluating the target's body parts. The hypothesized connection between harassment and objectification was

partly supported by the results of Lord's recent study (2009), in which she surveyed undergraduate women. This researcher found that the more harassing behaviors undergraduate women reported experiencing, the more likely they were to report having a negative reaction, such as anger or fear. Also, the more negatively the women felt about being harassed, the more likely they were to report lower self-esteem, unhappiness with their appearance, and preoccupation with their weight.

What about the remarks made by strangers on the street that might be interpreted as complimentary? Do they cause harmful effects? Although no one has specifically studied the results of complimentary street remarks, Rachel Calogero and her colleagues have studied the effects of complimentary remarks made by acquaintances to women about their bodies and appearance. Results showed that both strong positive feelings about compliments and strong negative feelings about criticisms were associated with increased body dissatisfaction and body surveillance (Calogero, Herbozo, & Thompson, 2009). The findings from this study suggest that compliments about a woman's weight, shape, or appearance are associated with body dissatisfaction both among women who identify appearance as centrally important to their identity and among women who do not. Even when women feel good about the appearance compliment, such comments do not appear to have a beneficial effect on body image or satisfaction about one's appearance. Therefore, remarks by strangers on the street that appear to compliment a woman's appearance probably have a similarly—if not more severe—negative effect.

RESPONDING TO STREET HARASSMENT

Street harassment as an everyday form of sexism may feel normal or expected for many women. Women often report that they feel like they have *learned to live with* street harassment. In this chapter and elsewhere, women have asked, How does "living with" street harassment affect us? According to Cathy Ramos (n.d), "Living with street harassment means having to take the message about our bodies that harassers bring. It means accepting assault and disrespect as normal." Ramos, like Medea and Thompson (1974), notes that women are taught not to respond to harassers, to pretend the abuse is not happening. When women do say something or object to street harassment, they may be called a "bitch" or threatened with violence. "Living with street harassment means learning that in uncomfortable sexual situations, you should do nothing. It means that when you walk outside you do not walk with freedom. It means you have to come to expect and accept disrespect. Street harassment changes who you are and how you are allowed to live" (Ramos, n.d.).

In the classroom, this chapter's co-author Maureen McHugh invites young women to relate their own past responses to street harassment and to

carefully consider alternative responses to street harassment. Students typically report responses such as ignoring the behavior, yelling back or making rude gestures, or making a (loud) joke about the harasser. Using an assertiveness training approach, McHugh helps students to classify responses as passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, or assertive. In the class, the students analyze responses to harassment using a behavioral analysis. What are the likely outcomes and costs of each response type? Traditionally taught responses such as averting one's eyes or ignoring the harassment are passive and are not effective in terms of expressing the individual's feelings or reducing the likelihood of harassment in the future. When women pretend to ignore harassment, there is no consequence created for harassers. As a consequence of passivity, women may feel powerless and angry. Nevertheless, a passive or do-nothing response may, in some circumstances, be the safest course of action. When women do not respond or communicate their feelings, the harassers may continue to believe that their comments or actions are harmless or are appreciated. Certainly, the traditional passive responses have not curbed or extinguished street harassment.

Women may feel better when they make aggressive responses such as yelling obscenities at the harassers. These responses communicate to harassers that women do not find what is happening to be "cute," "fun," or "desired." Responding with an obscenity communicates women's anger and refusal to take harassment. Sometimes women report such incidents to their friends, proud of their resistance to being victimized. Confronting discrimination has the potential to decrease discrimination, but also poses possible threats (Dodd, Giuliano, Boutell, & Moran, 2001). For example, aggressive responses may result in an escalation of the aggression and they generally do not diminish the antagonistic attitudes of the harassers. Ramos (n.d.) notes that sometimes harassers get angrier or become threatening when women refuse to act politely—a response that reveals the coercive elements present in street harassment.

Although women may say that they would react with anger to sexual harassment, recent research suggests that there is a gap between what women *claim* they would do about confronting sexism in their lives and what they *actually* do when experiencing sexism (Swim & Hyers, 1999). The difference between women's endorsement of confrontational responses and their actual behavior may reflect the reality that women's safety or well-being feels threatened in some instances of sexism such as street harassment. Self-defense training suggests that any response, including defensive aggression, must be practiced extensively if it is to be enacted effectively in a threatening situation. Silence has often been the reinforced and encouraged response, and speaking up requires practice and encouragement. Some women report that they have been actively discouraged from expressing angry feelings or acting aggressively in response to public gender harassment.

Influenced by both women's self-defense approaches and principles of nonviolence, one strategy for direct action emphasizes assertiveness over aggressiveness or passivity. Advocates see this method as allowing women to take control away from harassers. Under the assertiveness training model used in the 1970s, both passive and aggressive responses were viewed as less than optimal. Assertiveness involves requesting what one wants, refusing what one does not want, and expressing positive and negative messages to others (Crawford, 1995); assertiveness training encouraged speakers to use "I" statements, to make direct requests without giving reasons, and to make repeated requests. Thus an assertive response would be one that conveys the woman's own feelings without being hostile or derogatory to the harasser. A typical nonviolent confrontation might go something like this: "Whistling at women when they walk by is disrespectful. No one likes it. Don't ever whistle at another woman you don't know again."

The difficulty of making an honest and assertive response can dissuade women from a romanticized perspective on harassment. If there is no negative intention in harassment, then why not relate to the harasser your authentic reaction to his intrusion? The political view of street harassment encourages women to recognize the dehumanizing aspects of harassment, and the assertive approach encourages them to state their feelings, thereby turning the harassment into a more human interaction. A few students have reported communicating their feelings directly to the harassers about their comments. In many harassing situations, however, it may not be feasible to say, "Your comments are offensive to me." For example, it is difficult to effectively state one's feelings to construction workers making catcalls from atop building sites. When might women be able to use an assertive strategy? Considering the possibility allows women to understand the power dynamics operating in the harassment situation and helps them to consider the complexities of each situation. What is the woman feeling? Does she feel safe? How might the harasser respond to her assertions?

Assertive and nonviolent strategies are sometimes endorsed as the "correct" response to street harassment. For example, the website Harassment 101 advocates a direct and assertive response to harassment. Marty Langelan (1993), in *Back Off*, provides an analysis and a guide to street harassment with details on this strategy and self-defense. The D.C. Anti-Street Harassment Squad, a new activist organization of women, promotes nonviolent confrontation techniques (<http://lists.mutualaid.org/mailman/listinfo/dontcallmebaby>). This organization and Langelan provide workshops and training on these techniques.

Conversely, Crawford (1995) concludes that assertion in some real-life situations may result in negative reactions, and that nonassertion may in some situations be a "positive and adaptive strategy for women" (p. 65).

Research by Ayers, Friedman, and Leaper (2009) indicates that confronting unwanted sexual attention, especially from unfamiliar others, is very difficult for girls and young women. Women respondents in their research perceived that confronting sexism in certain situations would compromise their physical safety. Further, Ayers and her co-authors conclude that confronting sexism is not always the best or most adaptive coping response.

While endorsing assertive responses, a behavioral analysis does not make prescriptive statements regarding reactions but rather encourages women to carefully consider the costs and consequences of their responses. Women do not make the decision to confront discrimination lightly but need to consider the costs and benefits of such confrontation (Swim & Hyers, 1999). What price do they pay for their passivity? How much risk is involved with confrontation of everyday sexism? Will confrontation result in women being disliked, derogated, or attacked? Will the harassment escalate? Even if women continue to avert their eyes and avoid confrontation, this response may result in different personal reactions if they make a careful and deliberate decision to not address the comments or actions of a complete stranger on the street. Women are less likely to feel powerless if they have decided not to invest their energy into such interaction on a particular day in a particular situation.

Counter-harassment is another tactic that has been used by women in groups. This strategy involves women heckling or harassing the harassers. For example, The Street Harassment Project (<http://wwwstreetharassmentproject.org>) conducts a version of this strategy, in which groups of 4 to 10 women go to different parts of the city and walk around. When a woman is harassed, she yells out for others and everyone surrounds the harasser. This gives women a safe and powerful context in which to perform resistance. Another form of collective action is a formal petition or boycott. If harassment occurs at a construction site, for example, a group of local women can call the building owners (e.g., a local bank) and threaten not to use their services or to write to the local paper if the harassment does not stop.

Women do not feel encouraged to report public harassment. In the past, authorities may have ridiculed or ignored women's reports of harassment. For example, the police failed to intervene when women were being harassed in Central Park during the Puerto Rican Day in New York City. Increasingly, however, some forms of public harassment such as frottage (rubbing against a person's body in public), exhibitionism (showing one's genitals to others in a public setting), and voyeurism (peeping on others in a state of undress or sexual activity) are becoming more likely to be viewed as harmful and prosecuted. Research indicates that these forms of harassment are a serious form of fetishism and have been associated with both pedophilia and sexual assault.

In 2006, police went undercover to arrest and charge 13 individuals with lewdness on New York subways (Lee, 2006). While public lewdness on the subway has been a problem for years, the police campaign came in the wake of increasing publicity in recent months over sexual misconduct, especially in Manhattan. In a number of cases, women used cell phone cameras to take pictures of people who harassed them and posted them on the Internet. These women's active resistance to being harassed, in turn, prompted the police action. Women subway riders said cases of indecent exposure on the trains were commonplace, describing their own experiences when men either touched themselves or women.

NEW ALTERNATIVE RESPONSES

In *War Zone*, a documentary film, Maggie Hadleigh-West (1998) introduced a new approach to addressing street harassment. Hadleigh-West took a video camera to the streets of New York City and turned the lens on the creeps and Casanovas who harassed her as she walked the streets of her neighborhood. The documentary detailed her personal encounters with street harassers. "It is seen as a micro-inequity, not a big deal," says Hadleigh-West, but "the violence and disrespect experienced daily by countless people in public spaces is a serious problem with real, material consequences."

In her documentary, Hadleigh-West provides an elaborate analysis of the effects of street harassment on herself and other women. For example, she contends that the passivity most women demonstrate in response to public harassment results in feeling stifled. "You have to allow yourself to feel what you're feeling," she says. "It is the intent behind words, behavior, gestures that we are responding to." Hadleigh-West connects harassment to women's anxieties about sexual assault and to feelings of anger and powerlessness. She uses the camera to turn the gaze back on men's bad behavior. Her documentary can be used to educate men and women about the impact of street harassment and has provided women with an alternative to passive acceptance of being accosted on the streets.

HollaBackNYC is a project that similarly uses the camera to confront street harassment. This blog is dedicated to the proposition that women do not have to put up with men's propositions. (www.hollabacknyc.blogspot.com). Holla Back! is one of several websites that encourage street-harassed women—in New York and numerous other places—to snap a photo of their harassers and post the photo online with a report of the incident. HollaBackNYC is a collective of men and women who believe in creating a community where everyone feels comfortable, safe, and respected. Many people, particularly men, are unaware of the frequency and severity of disrespect and intimidation that women experience in

public spaces on a daily basis. HollaBackNYC aims to expose and combat street harassment as well as provide an empowering forum in this struggle. On HollaBackNYC, women use their cell phones as weapons and as tools for social change. This website offers an outlet for women to vent and an education for the men who are oblivious to how often women get sexually intimidated on the street—and how it makes them feel. It connects the personal experience with political awareness. The stories of women's experiences bring awareness to the issue and keep everyone focused on the goal of ending street harassment (May, 2009).

Beyond its networking capacities, the blogosphere serves the movement against street harassment with a form of vigilantism. Here, the anonymous gaze is female and women become private perpetrators who publicly objectify harassers. "Some men assume they have a right to comment out loud about a woman, and we're supposed to just shrug it off," says the founder of Holla Back San Francisco. Jessica started the blog site (www.sfgate.com) as a result of her own frustration over the catcalls and kissing noises she received on the streets of her neighborhood. The point of Holla Back is to shift the power dynamic so that women have an alternative to simply hanging their heads and walking away (Adler, 2006). In Adler's piece on National Public Radio (NPR), Monica Cumming reported that her anger is subsiding now that she has a place to vent about the daily comments she gets on her way to work and school in Oakland. "Now the whole dynamic is less passive," Cumming said. "It can be risky to say something back when it happens, but now I have a way to deal with it that is more entertaining."

Internet reporter Natalie Nichols (2006) described HollaBack.com as "just a little patch of empowering catharsis in a woman's world besieged by subway flashers, tongue-waggers, boob-oglers, butt-eyeballers, and path-blockers." "We're trying to create a community where women feel safe speaking out against street harassment," said Emily May, one of the site's founders. "I think that's been exceptionally empowering for a lot of women."

CONCLUSION

On June 11, 2000, 1 million people participated in the Puerto Rican Day Parade in New York City. Although as many as 4,000 officers were assigned throughout the city and surrounded Central Park, none intervened when as many as 50 women found themselves surrounded by men who drenched them with water, grabbed at them, pulled off their clothes, and sexually assaulted them. The women who went to the police were ignored and ridiculed. How was this incident different from many other examples of street harassment and assault of women? More than 30 amateur videotapes

of the incidents were turned into the police, turned over to media sources, and made available online. Based on the videos, more than 30 young men were arrested.

The release of the tapes not only resulted in arrests and prosecution, it provoked a national discussion about the harassing behavior that in many circumstances had been ignored or viewed as normal. This incident may be a watershed moment in our society. It may come to represent the time when a substantial change began: when the public started to realize that it is not okay for random men to touch and comment on women's bodies. In this era, many women are putting harassers on their cell phones and on notice. Increasingly, women are refusing to tolerate sex harassment in any form. The change has been a long time in coming.

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Victims of Sexual Assault and Abuse

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Volume I

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