

Perceptions on Masculinity and its Relationship with Verbal Sexual Harassment

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Background: Throughout history, masculinity and its development, especially since the establishment of hegemonic masculinity, have been linked with violence. Though various studies have focused on physical aggression few have explored micro-aggressions such as cat-calls that serve as a different means to assert power over others. The following dissertation tries to explore the perceptions of Portuguese youth on the meaning of masculinity and its relationship with verbal (micro) sexual aggressions commonly known as cat-calls. The study was based on masculinity theories and its evolution throughout history, as well as its relationship with violence.

Research Questions: What motivates men to cat-call? Is such motivation linked to masculinity? Is there a relation between cat-calling and perceived masculinity?

Methods: The following is a qualitative investigation. We conducted 17 individual interviews to both male and female students between the ages of 18 and 25 (Mean=19.53; DP=1.81). A semi-structured guide along with videos having content related to the theme were used for the realization of the interviews. A deductive analysis of the interviews using QDA Miner Lite gave rise to two general themes: perception of masculinity and verbal sexual harassment.

Results: The results indicate that the vision of masculinity, its definition and its characteristics are in a process of transformation in the sense of a less deterministic concept giving way to a more fluid one, where personal individuality and acceptance of male actions and attitudes is longed for. Likewise, diverse opinions regarding how masculinity is linked to cat-calling were observed: from acceptance to complete rejection of the act; considered both violent and not; but, despite all, it seems to continue to be deeply connected to the traditional concept of masculinity and its demonstration.

Conclusions: Conclusions in this dissertation are limited to the universe in which it was realized, However, it was possible to see that masculinity as a concept continues to prove difficult to pinpoint accurately, having its definitions perceived differently by different people. Moreover, it was perceived through the interviews that cat-calling's acceptance is also polarized within society by both men and women, this may largely depend on the victim as well as the words uttered. Despite this, cat-calling, more than being "natural" to the man, is described as a tool to demonstrate masculinity within a group, a normalized mechanism to exert dominance and power over someone. It's recommended that other investigations in different contexts and universes are made to confirm and/or deny the perceptions revealed in this work.

Key Words: Masculinity, Sexual Harassment, Violence

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