
Perceptions of Professional and Non-Professional Millennial Men Towards the Street Harassment of Women in San Pedro, San José, Costa Rica

Percepciones de los hombres millennial profesionales y no profesionales hacia el acoso callejero de las mujeres en San Pedro, San José, Costa Rica

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RESUMEN: El acoso callejero se refiere a todos aquellos gestos, acciones y comentarios no deseados que personas extrañas dirigen a sus víctimas en lugares públicos sin el consentimiento de las personas afectadas. En nuestro país, a pesar de que todas las personas sin importar su género pueden experimentar acoso callejero, este problema tiene una mayor incidencia en las mujeres según lo han demostrado estudios como el de la Encuesta Actualidades de la Escuela de Estadística de la UCR en 2015 (Umaña, 2016). Dicho estudio afirma que un 61,7 % de las mujeres encuestadas aseguraron haber sido víctimas de acoso callejero frente a un 32,8% de hombres encuestados que indicaron lo mismo (Umaña, 2016). Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo examinar la percepción de hombres profesionales y no profesionales de la generación millennial respecto al acoso callejero en San Pedro, San José, Costa Rica, con el fin de determinar si el grado de escolaridad de este grupo etario de los participantes fungía como factor que diferencia a las personas que perpetran acoso callejero hacia las mujeres. El investigador encuestó a 52 hombres profesionales y no profesionales de la generación millennial y los resultados revelaron que la escolaridad no es un factor determinante que diferencia a los perpetradores de acoso callejero, pues tanto profesionales como no profesionales acosan casi de igual forma y la mayoría de estas personas desconocen la definición de acoso callejero y sus tipos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: acoso callejero, género, hombres millennials, violencia, sexismo.

ABSTRACT: Street harassment refers to the unwanted comments, gestures, and actions that strangers address to people in public places without the consent of the affected individuals. In Costa Rica, even though anyone regardless of their gender can experience street harassment, this issue has a major incidence on women as shown on studies such as the Encuesta Actualidades conducted by the School of Statistics of UCR in 2015 (Umaña, 2016). This study highlights that 61,7% of all women surveyed indicated having been victims of street harassment while 32,8% of men indicated the same (Umaña, 2016). This research aimed to examine the perceptions of professional and non-professional millennial men towards the street harassment of women in San Pedro, San José, Costa Rica, with the purpose of determining if the academic educational level of this age group stands as a differentiating factor of people who perpetrate street harassment against women. The researcher surveyed fifty-two millennial men and results revealed that the academic educational level is not a determinant factor that differentiates the perpetrators of street harassment as both professional and non-professional men harass women almost evenly, and many of them ignore the definition of street harassment and their types.

KEYWORDS: street harassment, gender, millennial men, violence, sexism

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Perceptions of Professional and Non-Professional Millennial Men Towards the Street Harassment of Women in San Pedro, San José, Costa Rica

The street harassment of women is a human rights violation and a form of gender violence that has increased in the last decades in Costa Rica and the world. Statistics of recent studies of the University of Costa Rica indicate that 61,7% of women suffered street harassment in our country during 2015 (Umaña, 2016). The present research includes both old and recent studies in the field of gender violence and women subjugation. Such studies conclude, for the most part, that the major causes of the issue are the impregnation of patriarchal societal values in both men and women, the imminent economic dominance of men over women, and the conception of women as sexual objects and second-class citizens. Even though some studies have surveyed the perceptions of men towards women suffering harassment on the streets, very few of them have approached the perceptions of professional and non-professional millennial men, specifically. In Costa Rica, some governmental campaigns have tried to raise people's awareness of the real implications of this type of violence. Nonetheless, those projects have not included the perceptions of the perpetrators of harassment, but only that of the victims. To narrow the existing gap on this field, this research focused on examining the perceptions of professional and non-professional millennial men towards the problem of the street harassment of women in San Pedro, San José, Costa Rica. This study tried to prove or discard the hypothesis that professional men harass women less frequently than non-professional ones. The main findings of the study were that both groups of men harass women almost evenly, many of them ignore the real concept of street harassment and its socio-emotional implications, and that their perceptions towards the practice of street harassing women are ambiguous. This research, therefore, is relevant as it set the beginning of a field of study that must be explored more eagerly.

Review of the Literature

People's understanding of the definition and implications of street harassment has varied over the years. This section surveys those evolving conceptions and focuses on considering the street harassment of women as a human rights violation and a form of gender violence. Despite the constant increase in the cases of street harassment of women in Costa Rica, few studies have examined the perceptions of men towards this social issue. Some initiatives, on the other token, have recently appeared to try to raise people's awareness of this consolidated problem. For instance, the government has launched a campaign to combat vulgar catcalling and groping in public places, and a program from the *Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (INAMU)* on gender-based violence aims to educate people on the topic and to motivate them to act against it (Arias, 2016). Nevertheless, these two initiatives do not approach the perceptions of men towards the issue, so the lack of knowledge in this field remains. Therefore, unlike the various existent studies on this issue from women's perspectives, this literature review encompasses positions from studies on the street harassment of women focusing on men's theory and perspectives. It also explains the agreements and disagreements that authors have gotten to in their work on this controversial though worth-to-investigate topic. This section follows a chronological organization pattern to give rise to contrast old theories on street harassment to current ones, which goes along with the main purpose of the investigation that is to study the perspective of professional and non-professional millennial men towards street harassment of women.

Conceptions of Street Harassment over the Years

Since this research aimed to study the perceptions of millennial men towards the street harassment that women suffer, a chronological review of the conceived definitions of street harassment, its types, and its perpetrators were key for the investigation. First, the target population of this study was millennial men, individuals who reached adulthood around the turn of the 21st century. This means that the millennial men cohort consists of men born between 1982 and 2004 (Howe & Strauss, 2000). However, since the population sample surveyed for this research was above 18 years

because of legal regulations, this research redefined the term “millennial men” to those who were born between 1980 and 1998. Additionally, the millennial men that this research was interested in were those who had completed their higher education cycle as well as those who had not. Second, the evolution of the concept of street harassment over the years is fundamental to understand the purpose of this research. Starting from the decade of 1980, Di Leonardo (1981) claims that street harassment occurs when one or more strange men accost one or more women in a public place which is not the women’s worksite, through looks, words, or gestures, forcing her to interact with him (52). Although this definition resembles many of the traits of the current conception of street harassment, it does not include the sexually explicit connotation of the gestures or words. In this respect, the majority of the 1990’s definitions already point out that sexual aspect as well as the pattern of the accost recurrence. For example, Grant (1993) says that street harassment occurs when unfamiliar men accost women in public, on one or more occasions, with language or actions that are explicitly or implicitly sexual. She asserts that harassment includes “references to female genitalia, body parts or to sexual activities, solicitation of sex, or reference by word or action to the target of the harassment as the object of sexual desire” (Grant, 1993). In the two more recent decades, the concept of street harassment of women has “gained” the attributes of being inevitable and an act of terrorism. Fogg-Davis (2006) states that it is an act of sexual terrorism, inevitable in essence, as all women know that they will certainly suffer it at some point. Finally, a current definition of the term of discussion involves the ideas of understanding it as a way of complimenting and flattering women. In addition to that, Valenti (2008) refers to the idea that in current society, men believe that they are allowed to say anything that they want to women when they want to, just like they probably did in the past. Ultimately, recent definitions of street harassment categorize the issue as an insidious form of sexism (Valenti, 2008). The definition of street harassment has, therefore, evolved over the time.

Definition of Street Harassment Adopted on this Paper

For the purpose of this paper, the definition of street harassment is a compendium of the definitions stated above, those pro-

vided by specialized organizations such as RAINN which is one of the largest anti-sexual violence organizations around the world, and the ones disclosed on the Costa Rica's law. As of 2016, street harassment was not typified as a crime of any kind in Costa Rica. However, the Civil Penal Code in its article 392 states that all obscene words and acts, disrespectful or indecent propositions, groping and flashing towards people are contraventions of the socially accepted good customs and are to be punished (Código Penal, 1970). In addition, the Costa Rica Law for Penalization of Violence Against Women in its article 25 states that there is a punishment of prison to a person who offends women verbally, affecting their dignity or decorum, be it that person's spouse, partner or not (Ley 8559, 2007).

According to RAINN (2016) and aligned with what is stated in Costa Rica's laws, street harassment can be defined as the reception of unwanted comments, gestures, or acts in a public space without people's consent and that go against people's social code of conduct and decency. This is the definition that is used throughout this paper to refer to street harassment. It differs from the definition of sexual harassment as that refers to all unwanted sexual behaviors that cause negative effects on the person who receives them in a work or study environment (Ley 7476, 1995). The types of street harassment are detailed in the following section.

Types of Street Harassment

In order to understand the perceptions of men towards the street harassment of women, delving into the different categories and types of the social problem over the years becomes necessary. In the 1990's, Heben (1994) categorized street harassment of women into three groups: least severe, moderately severe, and severe. In this case, the least severe actions include staring at them, whistling at them, and making politically incorrect comments to them. Unlike the first category, the moderately severe group encompasses subtle glimpses of sexually explicit comments. Some examples of street harassment in this category are sexual insinuations through complex rhetoric, comments referencing the submissive conditions of the female gender, and appeals to their body parts using no sexual vocabulary. The last category comprises the least socially accepted manifestations of street harassment for the 1990's as they

are actions essentially related to the desire of sexual intercourse. Some of the actions of this category are the explicit reference to a woman's body and the request to sexual activities linked to it, acts such as following them (persecution), touching them against their will, pinching them, and poking them (Heben, 1994). In the 2010's authors no longer resorted to Heben's categorization system to refer to the types of harassment that women deal with in the streets. In a study conducted in 2016, the *Stop Street Harassment* foundation identifies different manifestations of harassment, and rates them according to their frequency of occurrence and the seriousness of their consequences. The first actions on the list are a) honking and whistling and b) catcalling (calling out phrases like "hey baby", "hey shorty", and "pssst sounds"). The persistent requests for a name, number, or date (usually after being denied) compose the intermediate level of the rating. Finally, all those actions related to the desire of establishing sexual intercourse appear at the bottom of the rate, meaning they are the most damaging and serious of the manifestations of sexual harassment. Some examples of these actions are sexist comments both evaluative like "nice legs" and demanding comments like "look at me, baby", vulgar gestures with the face and body, flashing or public masturbation, grabbing and rubbing genitals against them, persecuting them, and ultimately, sexually assaulting them (*Stop Street Harassment*, 2016). To sum up, over the time, society has categorized expressions of street harassment differently, highlighting some and diminishing other. However, the types of street harassment that are considered for the purpose of this investigation can be summarized in the way RA-INN (2016) proposes, which encompasses all the different types that have been mentioned and explained before from the Costa Rica's laws and other authors' contributions:

- Unwanted comments, requests, and demands
- Commenting on physical appearance, such as someone's body or the clothing they're wearing
- Continuing to talk to someone after they have asked to be left alone
- Flashing
- Following or stalking

- Groping
- Intentionally invading personal space or blocking the way
- Persistent requests for someone's name, number, or other information
- Public masturbation or touching
- Sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic slurs, or any comments insulting or demeaning an aspect of someone's identity
- Showing pornographic images without someone's consent
- Staring
- Taking a photo of someone without their consent
- Telling someone to smile
- Up-skirting, which is taking a photo up a skirt or dress without that person's permission
- Using a mirror to look up someone's skirt or dress without their permission
- Whistling or honking

Causes of Street Harassment

The explanatory theories of the reasons why street harassment is a consolidated issue in society vary among authors. Some authors highlight the following as causes of street harassment: the economic dominance of men over women, the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in society, and the violence as a way of power. In the case of economic power over women, Schultz (1998) points out that it is very likely that the street harassment of women is linked to the fact that the most highly rewarded forms of work are domains of masculine competence, which may lead to sex-based harassment. The perpetuation of gender stereotypes is another theory that authors like Franke (1997) have claimed as a potential cause of the issue. He says that society is a system in which fundamental gender stereotypes play the role of binary oppositions between men and women. For example, men are "sexual conquerors", and women are "sexually conquered", men are "physically strong" and "women are weak", which at the end of the day reflects

the possibility that “men’s desire to exploit or dominate women sexually may or may not be the primary motivation for harassing women” (Schultz, 1998). Talking about gender roles, the topic of violence as a way of exerting power over women becomes relevant. According to a study conducted by the International Labor Organization in 1992, “sexual harassment is inextricably linked with power and takes place in societies which often treat women as sex objects and second-class citizens.” (International Labor Organization, 1992). This position reinforces the ideas of Franke (1997) who suggests that the street harassment of women is a matter of power possession. In conclusion, some experts claim that the most evident reason why the street harassment exists is the patriarchal values that compose most of societies.

The positions of old and new researchers collaborate to understand the possible causes of the issue. One of the main claims from “old researchers” (from the 1980’s and the 1990’s) is that all types of men can be harassers. Gardner (1995) states that public harassment is pervasive, which means that the perpetrators and victims can be of any age, race, and class. In addition, researchers on the topic have exposed the men’s underestimation of the consequences of their harassment acts as a possible cause of the issue. Gardner (1995) supports this position and says that male reviewers of the topic have had a biased attitude towards the real implications of the street harassment:

Street harassment is a phenomenon that has not generally been viewed by academics, judges, or legislators as a problem requiring legal redress, either because these mostly male observers have not noticed the behavior or because they have considered it trivial and thus not within the proper scope of the law (22).

On the other hand, the positions from new researchers reinforce the idea that men are overwhelmingly the harassers of women. They say that men harass women as a way to prove their masculinity, sometimes using the media as a social model. Recent research projects like the one that the *Stop Street Harassment* foundation has conducted have claimed that men are the most frequent harassers of both women and men. The actual motivations for men to exert harassment continue to be unclear. Tarrant (2012) says that they harass as a way to reinforce to themselves and society their

masculine role:

Our culture repeatedly tells boys and men that one way to prove their masculinity is by putting someone else down. This is a form of hyper-masculinity that relies on exerting power over people who are perceived as less valuable. Harassment is a way to make that happen (18)

With the influential appearance and consolidation of the media, society has found a source to promote the stereotyped masculinity models, which can be one of the reasons why men are street harassers. For example, since music, TV, and movies showing women as sexual objects are easily accessible, men may think about women as sexually available objects. In addition, Tarrant (2012) continues this line of thought by saying that boys and men learn through the media that they can access other people's bodies and invade the personal space of those who are less powerful. In conclusion, both old and recent studies fail at identifying all causes of the street harassment of women, but they situate men as the most prone people to perpetrate street harassment towards women.

Millennials and Street Harassment

Very few studies have approached the perceptions of millennial men towards the issue of street harassment of women, and even fewer have explored the influence of a university degree in the perpetuation of this type of harassment. Some authors agree with the idea that, for the most part, men ignore the reasons why they harass women on the streets. According to Naldos et al. (2013), harassers usually provide excuses which find no support from a scientific point of view. For instance, men argue that they do it to flatter women while others assert that women are the ones who provoke them to "flatter them" because of their outfits. However, the School of Statistics of the University of Costa Rica in its publication "*Encuesta Anualidades*" in 2015 concludes that women dislike the "flattering compliments" that they receive from men on the streets, contrary to the traditional perceptions of men (Umaña, 2016). In addition, some studies have considered the perceptions of men towards women who suffer harassment on the streets. The *Stop Street Harassment* foundation, through its thorough survey program on the identification of harassers, states that some men have shown proactive responses towards the victims and victimi-

zers (*Stop Street Harassment*, 2015). The case of Gerardo Cruz, the Costa Rican millennial man who exposed the street harassment that a young woman suffered in San Jose in 2015, serves as a support for that proactivity that seems to come from men currently. Some men believe that they can take actions to stop harassment if they, for example, confront the harasser, encourage the victim to speak up, and educate themselves and their peers on the importance of not perpetuating street harassment (*Stop Street Harassment*, 2015). In Costa Rica, although men do not lead them, several groups are working on campaigns to stop the street harassment of women: *Acción Respeto*, *Piropos o Acoso CR*, *Este es mi cuerpo Cr*, *Colectivo Furia Rosa*, *Proyecto Lyra*, *Activista Independiente Tío Hugo* y *Community Psychology* are some examples of those campaigns. These groups work together with the *Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres* or Women's Institute (INAMU) and the *Defensoría de los Habitantes* or People's Defense Institution in order to raise people's awareness of this taboo social issue and empower them to expose the cases to the authorities (Guerrero, 2015). To wrap up, although some studies on the perceptions of men toward the street harassment of women exist, they are scarce and, therefore, do not encompass the interpretations of millennial professional and non-professional men.

In conclusion, the review of the available literature on the topic supported the research in different ways. It shows that the definitions of street harassment over the years have evolved, and so have done the conceptions of the different types of street harassment. The authors and studies that this paper reviewed differed in the findings of the causes that motivate men to harass women. In this respect, it concluded that very few studies on the perceptions of millennial men towards the street harassment of women exist in either Costa Rica or the world. Costa Ricans, in general, are currently more aware of this social issue, which has led organizations such as INAMU to come up with campaigns to work on possible solutions. However, the review of the literature pointed out that those efforts still do not focus on surveying the perceptions of men, especially those representing the subjects of study of this research. Therefore, this review reinforced the importance of the research project as it addresses a real issue which few authors have approached.

Methods

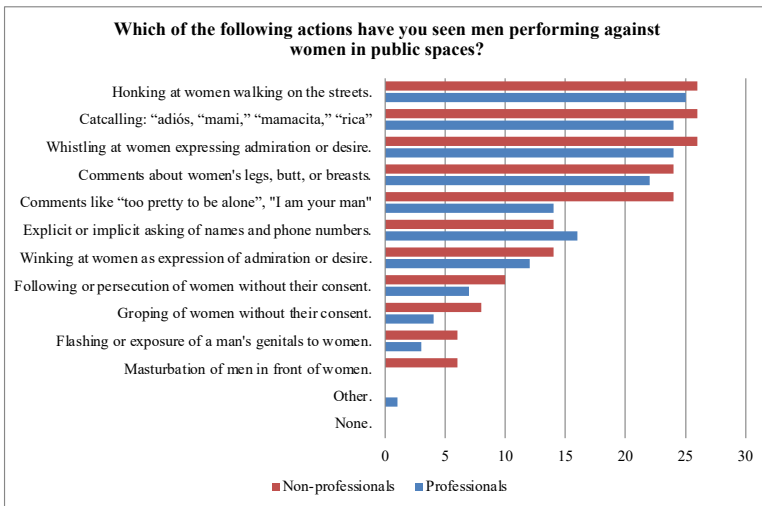
This research project focused on examining the perceptions of professional and non-professional millennial men towards the street harassment of women in San Pedro, San José, Costa Rica. For the specificity of this research paper and the lack of available sources on its exact subject matter, this was conceived as exploratory research. The author resorted to two main primary source instruments to collect reliable data: the interview to an expert and the survey (containing open and closed questions) to a male sample. The application of both instruments (in Spanish) took place in the surroundings of San Pedro city during the last two weeks of September 2016. Although millennial men are those who were born between 1980 and 2000, the respondents of the survey were only legally adult men between 18 and 36 years old. In total, 60 men responded the survey and 52 of them met the requirements of the study in terms of the characteristics of the target sample: heterosexual men who identified themselves as such. The author interviewed the psychologist Licda. Karla Carrillo Molina who is also the founder of the campaign “*No más acoso callejero.*” She approached the interview’s questions from her experience as an activist and using positions from the feminist point of view to explain causes and consequences of this social issue. Regarding the survey’s results, the analysis of the data consisted in the explanation of findings, behavioral patterns, and diverse perceptions of the respondents. For this purpose, the research included tables and graphs for the analysis of closed questions and textual explanations in the case of the open ones. The research included the relationship between other authors’ theories and the perceptions of the survey’s respondents. In the same manner, in the analysis of the interview instrument, the paper included the relevant responses of the expert in conjunction with the theory from the literature review to compare her answers with other investigations.

Results and Discussion

As previous sections of this paper explained, the purpose of the present research was to examine the perceptions of professional and non-professional millennial men towards the problem of the

street harassment of women in San Pedro, San José, Costa Rica. The results of the data collection showed that both groups of participants performed actions of street harassment against women, and that they were aware of the existence of this problem in society but not of its real implications and scope. The following graph shows the responses to the initial question of the survey, which aimed at determining how aware millennial men were of situations of street harassment of women in our society. The blue bars represent men with a higher academic degree (from now on “the professionals”), and the red bars represent men without any higher academic degree (from now on, the “non-professionals”).

FIGURE 1
RESPONSES OF PROFESSIONAL AND NON-PROFESSIONAL MEN TO THE INITIAL QUESTION OF THE SURVEY



Note. The data are from [Unpublished raw data on perceptions of professional and non-professional millennial men towards the street harassment of women in San Pedro, San José, Costa Rica] by Sanabria, 2016.

The responses of the initial question revealed that the perceptions of the two groups of men (the professionals and the non-professionals) do not differ much in terms of the most frequent acts of harassment that they have witnessed against women. While the first group indicated in 100% of the cases that they had seen men

honking at women from their vehicles, the second group indicated with a 98% of the cases that they also had witnessed men catcalling women and expressing them phrases like “hey baby”, “*adiós*”, and “*rica*”. Some differences to remark on are that professional men stated that they had never seen acts of masturbation of men in front of women while up to 6 people from the non-professional group stated otherwise. In addition, a man from the professional group pointed out another kind of street harassment that he had witnessed, which is the rubbing of the genitals of men against women in public transportation, especially in the train. In 2014, users of the train to Cartago identified a man who would constantly rub his penis on standing women’s buttocks, taking advantage of the movement of the train (Estrada, 2014). Both professional and non-professional millennial men are fairly evenly aware of the varied situations of street harassment that women suffer.

When answering the first question, the respondents had not come to the item about whether they knew what street harassment meant. Interestingly, several men from both groups ignored the definition and implications of the concept “street harassment”, even considering that the survey provided them with it. The following chart summarizes the result of this question:

TABLE 1

RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION: “DID YOU KNOW THE DEFINITIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF “STREET HARASSMENT”?”

Target sample’s group	Yes, I know the concept and implications	No, I ignore the concept and implications
Professionals (men with a higher academic degree)	19	6
Non-professionals (men without a higher academic degree)	23	4

Note. The data are from [Unpublished raw data on perceptions of professional and non-professional millennial men towards the street harassment of women in San Pedro, San José, Costa Rica] by Sanabria, 2016.

Contrary to the researcher’s suppositions, more professional men than non-professional ones were not aware of the definition and implications of street harassment. Some of them acknowledged to the researcher that they believed that this concept did not

have as much of a sexual connotation as the definition provided in the survey indicated: *Street harassment is a form of sexual harassment that consists of receiving unwanted comments, whistles, and other similar actions from unknown persons in public spaces. Intimidating looks, catcalling, inappropriate approaches, rubbing of genitals on the body of the harassed, exhibitionism (public nudity and masturbation), and persecution are some types of street harassment.* As an explanation for this surprising result, the psychologist Karla Carrillo indicated in her interview that no scientific data support the idea that the younger or more educated men are, the less they harass women. In other words, in many instances, the professional men are unaware of the implications and seriousness of this social issue, especially because universities and their majors do not encompass Women Studies, and sometimes men's families do not talk about this issue either (Carrillo, 2016). The same expert assured that the government of Costa Rica invests very little resources in the creation of campaigns to fight against the street harassment of women and in popularizing the existing ones. In the survey, most participants ignored the existence of current campaigns on the subject and about the law bill that is currently in the congress. Clearly, both professional and non-professional millennial men are still unaware of the concept and implications of the street harassment of women.

In regard to the unawareness of the concept, implications, and types of street harassment, and, taking into account that all items of the question were real ways of street harassment, the following chart shows the perceptions of professional and non-professional men towards the actions that they considered as types of street harassment.

TABLE 2
 RESPONSES TO THE ITEM: CHOOSE THE ACTIONS THAT YOU CONSIDER AS TYPES OF STREET HARASSMENT AGAINST WOMEN

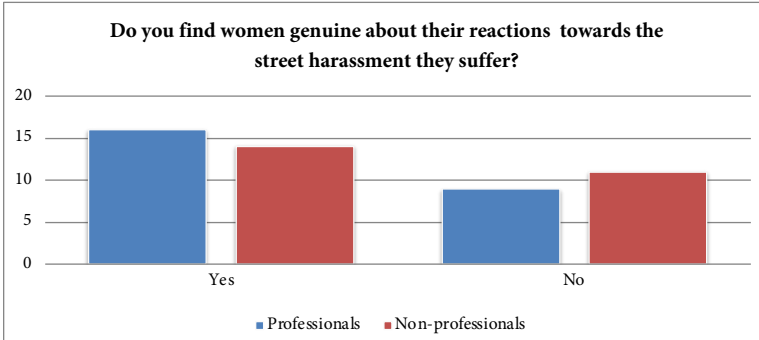
Type of street harassment of women	Number of professional respondents	Number of non-professional respondents
1. Honking at women walking on the streets.	12	7
2. Catcalling: “ <i>adiós</i> ,” “ <i>mami</i> ,” “ <i>mamacita</i> ,” “ <i>rica</i> ”	19	23
3. Explicit or implicit asking of names and phone numbers.	7	9
4. Winking at women as an expression of admiration or desire.	11	7
5. Comments about women’s legs, butt, or breasts.	22	26
6. Whistling at women expressing admiration or desire.	20	15
7. Comments like “too pretty to be alone,” “I am your man”	22	19
8. Masturbation of men in front of women.	24	27
9. Flashing or exposure of a man’s genitals to women.	24	27
10. Groping of women without their consent.	25	27
11. Following or persecution of women without their consent.	23	27
12. Other.	1	0
13. None.	0	0

Note. The data are from [Unpublished raw data on perceptions of professional and non-professional millennial men towards the street harassment of women in San Pedro, San José, Costa Rica] by Sanabria, 2016.

The results of this item give room to interesting interpretation. On the one hand, they show that the participants considered that all the actions that the survey provided were actually types of the street harassment of women. As *Table 2* shows, 100% of the non-professionals and 98% of the professionals considered that masturbation in front of women, grabbing and showing of the men's genitals in front of women, groping, and persecution are types of street harassment. Heben (1994) places these types of harassment in the highest category in terms of seriousness as they imply an explicit reference to a woman's body and the request to sexual activities linked to it. On the other hand, less than the half of the respondents of both the professional and the non-professional groups believed that winking at women, glancing them lustfully, honking from men's vehicles at them, and asking their names or numbers without knowing them are not ways of street harassment (see the yellow highlighted cells on *Table 3*). The following Carrillo's position serves to support and interpret the results of this item: "because of the patriarchal society in which we live in Costa Rica, many men do not believe that certain actions they perform such as complimenting a woman with 'nice' words or glancing them stilly to call their attention are ways of street harassment." Also, Carrillo (2016) say that since many women would not speak up about this social issue in the past, and, rather, they would dismiss the comments that they received, men do not consider many of their actions as types of street harassment. In fact, when asked "Do you believe that some women overreact towards the street harassment that men exert on them?" most men from both groups replied affirmatively; this perception reinforces the idea of men not considering certain acts as types of street harassment. The following chart shows the responses to this question:

FIGURE 2

PERCEPTIONS OF MEN TOWARDS WHETHER OR NOT SOME WOMEN
OVERREACT TO THE STREET HARASSMENT THEY SUFFER



Note. The data are from [Unpublished raw data on perceptions of professional and non-professional millennial men towards the street harassment of women in San Pedro, San José, Costa Rica] by Sanabria, 2016.

As Figure 2 shows, 16 out of 25 professional respondents and 14 out of 27 non-professional ones indicated that women indeed overreact towards the situations of street harassment that they live. This item leads us to conclude that the misinformation of men about what is and what is not street harassment blurs their ability to understand the reactions of women towards this social issue.

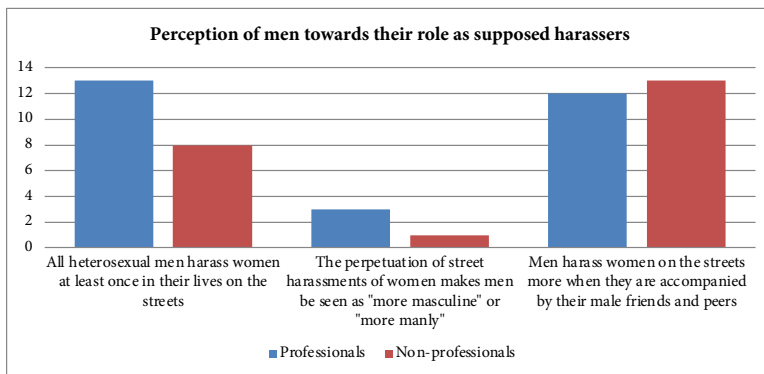
Two of the research questions of this project aimed at determining whether professional and non-professional millennial men harass women on the streets. While 56% of the professional men stated that they had exerted at least one of the types of the street harassment of women, 46% of the non-professional men had. None of the participants indicated having exerted any of the forms of the “least socially accepted manifestations of street harassment” (see the review of the literature) such as persecuting them, groping them against their will, pinching them, or assaulting them (Heben, 1994). The actions that the participants indicated having performed against women were mostly honking at them from their vehicles, catcalling them like “hey baby”, “*adiós*” (inciting way to say hello), and “*rica*” (juicy), and expressing them comments related to their bodies like: “nice butt”, and “nice legs”. One of the participants pointed out that he did not perform any way of harassment and wrote that he only told them non-obscene “*piropos*” (compli-

ments). However, this is, according to the literature review, just a way of softening the fact that he is a harasser, as those comments are most of the times unwanted. In general terms, the survey's results showed that millennial men do harass women on the streets.

Finally, in order to answer the research questions about how professional and non-professional men perceive the problem of street harassment of women, the following chart presents the perceptions of men towards their role as supposed harassers.

FIGURE 3

PERCEPTIONS OF MEN TOWARDS THEIR SUPPOSED ROLE AS HARASSERS



Note. The data are from [Unpublished raw data on perceptions of professional and non-professional millennial men towards the street harassment of women in San Pedro, San José, Costa Rica] by Sanabria, 2016.

Contrary to the expectations of the researcher, these results somehow support the position of Browman & Gardner (1995) who stated that public harassment is pervasive, which means that all types of men can be harassers. However, the results failed at proving that all heterosexual men are harassers, as more than half of all the respondents indicated not to believe that that statement was true. These results also contrast with what Tarrant (2012) states when he says that men harass women on the streets as a way to prove their masculinity. Only 3 out of 25 professional men and only 1 out of 27 non-professional men considered this position as valid. What is clear here is the evenness in the responses of professional and non-professional men to the question of whether men harass a woman more when their friends are around than when they are

on their own. Both groups' opinions were affirmative, which the researcher expected as a result. Although these perceptions are not included in the chart, the surveyed men also showed to be empathic with women in the sense that they recognized that women, when harassed, should feel bad and outraged. For this purpose, the survey included two open questions, which were: "*How do you believe women feel after being street harassed by men?*" and "*How do you interpret the scenario of a man helping a woman who is being harassed (i.e. by exposing the harasser)?*" The answers to the first question were positive as most of the respondents recognized that women do not enjoy any kind of harassment and that, in contrast, they feel uncomfortable, assaulted, scared, upset, and insecure. In the second question, the participants indicated that helping out women when they are harassed is a fair action, and that everyone should do it. Interestingly, none of the respondents associated this help with the negative consequences that helping men can face, just as Gerardo Cruz did. In conclusion, this research showed that not all heterosexual men are harassers, and that although they know the harm that harassment causes to women, they knowingly perpetuate this way of violence.

The results of the data collection instruments clearly position professional and non-professional men as perpetrators of street harassment. As Carrillo (2016) exposed, there seems not to be revealing relationships between age or education and the fact of harassing women on the streets. Most respondents assured to have witnessed most types of the street harassment of women, but not all of them agreed with the categorization of those actions as actual portrayals of street harassment. The research found a clear tendency of men not identifying as harassment actions like catcalling women, asking their names on the street, or honking at them from vehicles. They seem to consider as types of street harassment mainly the actions with explicit sexual connotations such as groping, persecution, and assault. Interestingly, many of these millennial men indicated to have been victims of street harassment from women, which demystifies the idea of women being the only population that is street harassed. To sum up, the results of the instruments revealed that both professional and non-professional millennial men harass women, and that some of these men had also been harassed. In addition, men's empathy towards women who suffer harassment is ambiguous.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The present study showed that the street harassment of women represents an issue in Costa Rica. The misinformation that people have obtained regarding what street harassment means is alarming, and it should be addressed not by studying the victims only, but the harassers as well. This research's results make us reckon that the solution for this social issue may be nearer than we believe: at home. The hypothesis of the investigation positioned the academic educational level as a possible factor that differentiates the perpetrators of street harassment, positioning millennial professional men as less prone to exert street harassment of women in comparison to non-professional men. Nonetheless, the results show that this factor is not determinant to claim this as both professional and non-professional millennial men were found to be equally prone to perpetrate this act. This evidences that age and educational level are not reliable factors to exempting men from the perpetration of street harassment. One may believe that Costa Rican authorities should approach this recurrent issue with effective tools and strategies, but the reality shows otherwise. Not even one of the studies that this research included was Costa Rican, which reflects that the country may be addressing the issue by trying to raise awareness in people, but not by working directly with the harassers. This research concluded that even the actual harassers ignore why they harass, exactly; they seem to be following the patriarchal societal pattern that has been present for decades. Their ignorance, however, does not grant them the permission to violent the rights of women, but the status quo will never change if these men are not correctly educated. Honking at women on the streets, catcalling them, and telling them *piropos* (catcalls) are actions that, even though they are types of harassment, men consider them compliments for women. Is this entirely men's fault? It is, in part. However, we will not come far if the authorities do not start producing scientific research that helps us fill the gaps that even experts on the subject matter have about whether men are biological harassers (as some men believe) and if educational programs are effective tools in elementary school, high school, and college for diminishing this issue.

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