



THE AMERICAN
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Gender and Street Harassment: Women's Access and Claims to Public Space

Nadia Ilahi

Dept. of Anthropology/Sociology

Questions



- How is Women's Access to Public Space Compromised in Egypt?
- How are our movements managed by urban and social organization in Cairo?

(http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6164798.stm)

What is Street Harassment?

- Uninvited behavior that is sexual in nature
 - Makes women feel unsafe/uncomfortable
 - Comments, Stalking, fondling, indecent exposure

(taken from the ECWR Press Conference 2007)

- Form of discrimination against minorities, embedded within issues of power, masculinity and social control (Feagin 1991, Rizzo 2003:6).

Effects of Street Harassment



- Exclusion from public space
- Implies feelings of Discrimination
- Impairs self-dignity

Research

- Do non-veiled women receive more harassment and to greater degrees than veiled women?
- Do women feel safe in the streets?
- How does class and race affect harassment?

Parameters

- Sample Size: 40 women
- Median Age: 25 years
- 53% Students
- 47% Employed in Particular Sectors
- 43% Egyptian
- 57% Non-Egyptian (European, African, Other)

Some Findings

- Veiled women and non-veiled women both receive high rates of harassment
- Multiple forms: staring, touching following, cat-calling, etc...
- Male Public Space which excludes women

Further Findings

- Experience changes in order to adapt to the gender dynamic in the streets
- Women monitor their own movements
 - Time of day they spend walking in particular areas
 - How they dress
 - Where they look, who they look at/ talk to
- Race and Class play critical roles

Space and Negotiation

- Although fear exists in public spaces, women refuse to be victims
 - Protest
 - Responding/Reacting to harassment
(Limitations to this)
 - Demanding recognition of their civil and human rights
 - NGOs: The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR)

Why is this Happening ?

- Socio-Economic?
- Religious?
 - Piety and increased veiling
 - Sex segregation
- Lack of Sex Education?

Conclusions

- Masculinization of public spaces
 - Street harassment targets all women
 - Privilege or class status does not always protect one from harassment
 - Women negotiate their space in multiple ways...However, there are multiple exclusions existing at the same time

Conclusions...

- ACTION Is Necessary
 - Accountable police force
 - Laws that apply
 - Citizens who care