BACHELOR THESIS

What, can't you take a Compliment?

A Qualitative Study of Catcalling

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Sociology

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Sammanfattning på svenska:

Denna studie är baserad på intervjuer med unga svenska kvinnor. Syftet med intervjuerna är att studera hur de förstår vad catcalls är; vem blir och inte blir catcalled; och vilka konsekvenser som kan komma till följd av denna handling?

Tidigare studier har varit gjorda på Sexuella- och Främlingstrakasserier. Sexuella Trakasserier är utförda av en bekant på en arbetsplats eller i en skolmiljö. Främlingstrakasserier är utförda av främlingar på offentliga platser. Catcalls klassas som en typ av trakasseri inom Främlingstrakasserier. Potentiella konsekvenser av detta beteende är: objektifierande; skam av kroppen; rädsla för våldtäkt; självanklagelser; och offentlig osäkerhet. Utifrån denna studie är catcalls diskuterad från feministiska perspektiv med teorier som Romantiskt Traditionell och Politiserad Feminist; och även i relation till de fem härskarteknikerna. Det insamlade empiriska materialet till denna studie är baserat på Grounded Theory och kvalitativa intervjuer med fem unga svenska kvinnor. Intervjupersonerna presenterade deras syn på catcalling och vilka potentiella konsekvenser som kunde komma från catcalls. Intervjuerna är presenterade i resultatdelen och diskuterade från de feministiska teorierna ovan. Samtliga frågeställningar från syftet av denna essä är besvarade i ett diskussionsavsnitt.

Kvinnorna förstod att catcalls var en dikotomi mellan ett oskyldigt flirtigt beteende och en trakassering som kunde eskalera till våld. Samtliga talade ur både ett feministiskt perspektiv och ett traditionellt sådant. De intervjuade kvinnorna förstod att om förövaren ansåg att kvinnan var till synes tillgänglig, och han var medvetet säker nog att utföra en catcall, så skulle han catcalla henne. Catcalls kan användas till att förtrycka en kvinna på, men så länge som det kan upplevas som något upplyftande för henne, så kommer samhället alltid att vara mansdominerat. Fler studier skulle kunna vara gjorde från mäns perspektiv; och om kvinnan är villig att offra det roliga i en catcall för att kunna eliminera konsekvenserna.

Nyckelord: Catcalling, Främlingstrakasserier, Kvinnors erfarenheter.

Summary in English:

Empirically drawing on interviews with women, the aim of this study is to understand what catcalls are; who is or is not catcalled; what consequences could grow out of this practice?

Past studies have been done on Sexual- and Stranger Harassment. Sexual Harassment is performed by an acquaintance and explored in work and school environments. Stranger Harassment is executed by strangers in public places. Catcalls are a type of Stranger Harassment. The potential consequences of behaviours are: Sexual objectification; body-shaming; fear of rape; self-blaming; and public safety. Analysing this study, catcalls are discussed in relation to feminist theories contrasting the Romanticized Traditionalist position and Politicized Feminist position; and in relation to five master suppression techniques. The collection of data was done using Grounded Theory and qualitative interviews with five Swedish young women. The interviewed persons explained their perception of catcalling and what potential consequences could come from catcalls and Stranger Harassment. The interviews are presented in the results and discussed from feminist theories presented above. Each key question from the purpose if this thesis is answered in a concluding discussions.

The women understood catcalls as a dichotomy between an innocent flirtatious act and a harassment that could escalate violence. They all spoke from both feminist and traditional positions, floating between them. The interviewed women assumed that if the perpetrator feels safe enough to catcall and the woman is available, he will pursue his act. Catcalls could be used as a way to suppress women but as long as catcalls could be perceived as flirtatious, society will always be patriarchy. Further studies could be done from men's perspective and whether women are willing to sacrifice the fun to eliminate catcalls.

Key words: Catcalling, Stranger Harassment, Women's experiences.

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Introduction:

This thesis explores what catcall are and what consequences might follow from this behaviour. Fairchild and Rudman (2008) suggest that catcalls happen all around the world in most often larger cities, and are most often practised by men on younger women. Unfamiliar men shout and whistle after women in public places, and it could be experienced as both pleasurable and uncomfortable for the woman depending on various different reasons. A YouTube video (*10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman*) went viral in 2014 and it created huge discussions on the Internet and in my social groups.

The reason I decided to write this thesis about catcalls was because I had a change of location where I lived and studied; from a northern town in Sweden to the capital of Scotland. This change made me realise how different people act towards one and another, depending on where I lived and how I was dressed. People catcalled me in Scotland, in a way that almost never happened in northern Sweden. At first I was shocked, but then, as I was exposed to this repetitive pattern long enough, I got used to it. However, when I moved back to northern Sweden, the catcalls immediately stopped. In the same time period as when I lived in Scotland, a video on YouTube had gone viral in all social media. A woman walked down the streets of New York City in total silence for 10 hours. She was filmed doing so and the results shocked many of the viewers (see comments below video, 10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman, 2014). This piqued my curiosity to further explore what a catcall actually is, and what are the consequences with a society that catcalls.

According to the English Dictionary *http://www.thefreedictionary.com/catcalling*, did the word have a significant since 1991 and meant *disapproval*. When searching for articles in ProQuest database, there was limited articles with this particular concept to be found. By contrast, many references were found in videos on YouTube, in blogs and in evening papers that continuously demonstrate what women on a daily basis might experience around the world.

Women around the world write about catcalls and share their experiences on Internet pages for other people to read and leave comments on. An account on an Internet page called http://catcalled.tumblr.com/ has been set up for women to feel free to share their experiences of being catcalled. Browsing through it, many of their stories have some similarities. These following comments interested me, because the first one young woman describe what she was wearing, the second one said how it made her feel, and the last one report how her neighbours were shocked to see what young women had to put up with on daily/weekly/monthly basis.

> *"I was wearing leggings, and a long flannel shirt that went about halfway down my thigh" -Tumblr comment.*
> *"It made me feel so vulnerable, scared, and angry. One man even walked by me and said "hi little slut". It made me so angry but I don't know what I can do." -Tumblr comment.*
> *"My young neighbours were outside and they probably almost had a heart attack when they heard those obnoxious douches. They asked me why those*

guys had said it, and I had to tell them that it's just something that happens when ur a girl". - Tumblr comment.

It was hard to find academic written articles about catcalling. I searched the ProQuest data basis with words such as; catcalling, wolf-whistles, street harassment, sexual harassment, feminism, etc. An article by Fairchild and Rudman (2008) introduced the term of Stranger Harassment, which lead on to other studies done by Fairchild (2010); Macmillan et al. (2000), and Gardner (1995). In *Everyday Stranger Harassment and Women's Objectification* (2008) by Fairchild and Rudman, the authors confirmed that there was a lack of studies done in this field. They said themselves that only a few amount of studies has been done on catcalled-like experiments, but their paper was broader in topic than this, as this thesis is specifically about catcalls. Fairchild and Rudman discussed the topic of two different kind of harassments. Firstly they described Sexual Harassment, a theory which has exclusively been applied to work and school environment. Secondly they described Stranger Harassment, a broader field of public harassments were catcalls are included.

Sexual Harassment has, according to Fairchild and Rudman (2008), been divided up into three different categories, which are *sexual coercion*, *gender harassment*, and *unwanted sexual attention*. *Sexual coercion* a type of harassment where students will receive better grades from their teacher, or co-workers will have a sudden raise, only because of a certain sexual tension between the teacher/manager and their student/worker. This is difficult to prove, and is hard to report. Also, few people report their superior when they have received a benefit as a side effect of the coercion. *Gender harassment* is addressed to a group of women. For example, this could be men jokingly posting pictures of erotic women around the place, significantly objectifying them as sex objects and not as intelligent persons. *Unwanted sexual attention* is aimed to individuals. These women most often receive unwanted sexual e-mails from men, they get leered at, or even grabbed. Both gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention are easier to report, and are illegal in countries. As previously mentioned, Sexual Harassment has only been researched in the work and school field. Sexual Harassments are also issued by an acquaintance, not by strangers.

Stranger Harassment is a public typed of harassment performed by total strangers. Bowman (1993, in Fairchild and Rudman 2008) described it as an harassment that *"includes both verbal and nonverbal behaviour, such as wolf-whistles, leers, winks, grabs, pinches, catcalls, and stranger remarks; the remarks are frequently sexual in nature and comment evaluatively on a woman's physical appearance of on her present in public"* (Fairchild and Rudman 2008, p. 341). Stranger Harassment has had even more limited studies done to its subject. Bowman (1993, in Fairchild and Rudman 2008) and Nielsen (2000, in Fairchild and Rudman 2008), both suggested that there have been so few studies about this issue, because there are no legal recourse to hold the perpetrators to account. It is so hard to prove that a stranger in the street had sexually harassed you, when he easily could dismiss the action by saying it was a compliment. Bowman and Nielsen guessed that few would back up the proposal of enforcing a law that limit might the freedom of speech. Gardner (1995) imply that this issue is so

common and part of our daily lives, that there is no use in taking action to try to stop this type of harassment. It is not considered to be important.

Some countries do, on the contrary, according to Fairchild and Rudman (2008), consider Stranger Harassment as something that may be harmful. About a decade ago Japan started using women-only train carriages for safer transport during rush hours. Women in their 20-30s had experienced grabbing, leering and all sorts of harassments while travelling in trains with men, so eventually, they were granted special train cars so they did not have to put up with it all. At the same time as Japan was developing, women in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, had similar problems and solutions. They too, had female-only, pink-striped subways for the women to use during rush hours. So apparently, some places in the world considered Stranger Harassment to be a serious issue (Fairchild and Rudman 2008).

According to Fairchild and Rudman (2008. p 341), more women are exposed to Stranger Harassment than Sexual Harassment. They presented studies done by Fitzgerald, Hulin and Drasgow (1995, in Fairchild and Rudman 2008) that proposed that Sexual Harassments could lead to reduced job satisfaction and physical well-being. This was proven in a study when they compared women who had been experiencing a high level, moderate level and low level of Sexual Harassment. The results showed clear differences between the levels and most negative was women who were subjected to high levels of Sexual Harassments. It is possible that similar consequences could happen to victims of Stranger Harassment.

Sexual objectification is a common component to both Stranger Harassment and Sexual Harassment. In both situations, a female are regarded as a sex-object to be shouted, touched and looked at. She will not be seen as an intelligent person, she is just a body, or even just parts of a body (breast, bottom, legs etc.). Fredrickson and Roberts (1997, in Fairchild and Rudman 2008) worked on a theory they called self-objectification theory, which is when the human body is not only a biological system, but more an object for society to construct in an idyllic way. In other words, if a culture regards curvy half-naked women as sexy, media will go on with the trend and produce these images to sell just about anything. The self-objectification theory was created to evaluate what psychological experiences one has when being seen as exclusively a sexual object. When these images surround her every day, a woman could start to compare themselves to the pictures, eventually objectifying herself as body parts, consequentially body-shaming herself. Fredrickson and Roberts hypothesize that women who are exposed to Stranger Harassment frequently will be more likely to self-objectify (Fairchild and Rudman 2008).

Research systematically shows that females feel unsafe in social environments, especially after dark (Gordon and Riger 1989; Skogan and Maxfield 1981, in Macmillan et al. 2000). Despite the fact that Sexual Harassment occurs both around strangers and people known by the victim, the strangers seem to be more intimidating than an acquaintance. This could be perhaps because strangers are perceived as less predictable. Macmillan et al. (2000) proved from a survey done on Canadian young women in 1993, that Stranger Harassment decreased women's feeling of being safe in public places. More that 80 percent reported that they had at

some point experienced some type of Stranger Harassment in public environments. Nonstranger Harassment was less frequent. Macmillan et al. (2000) suggest that we can prevent Stranger Harassment in open environments by working together with local police forces, but does not dive deeper into it.

MacMillan et al. (2000) hypothesize that Stranger Harassment may cause an increase women's fear of rape, and therefore also might limit women's liberty of movement. Although women are aware that most cases of rape are caused by an acquaintance, they still fear being raped by a stranger more. Women will probably avoid specific places after dark and choose different and safer roots home (Hickman and Muehlenhard 1997, in Fairchild and Rudman 2008, p. 343-344).

Garofalo (1979, in Macmillan et al. 2000) and Gruber (1989, in Fairchild and Rudman 2008) suggest that women are socialized into being more passive and dependent than men. Fairchild and Rudman (2008) present Gruber's review of the literature in 1989, showing that only 20 percent of women actively confront men who Sexual Harass them. Furthermore, although they confront them, they will not always win the battle. Men who Sexual Harass women are often experts in manipulating the situation to their benefit. They will use strategies, such as ridiculing her (Ås 1979), to present themselves as innocent and the woman is the crazy one. They could say that she has misjudged the whole situation; they were actually complimenting her and then shaming her for her response. They make sure that she is the guilty one for the awkward outcome of the situation, by for example saying *"You shouldn't have worn those skinny jeans if you did not want this kind of attention"*. These techniques are used for her to feel guilty and self-blame (a similar analysis is made by Ås 1979, which is discussed later in this thesis). The other 80 percent of women that use a non-assertive coping strategy are more likely to be objectified than the confronting ones. The passive ones may think *"I will pretend that did not just happen"*, whereas the active ones will think *"I let him know that what he did to me was not OK"*. Passive coping women may think that they brought the uncomfortable situation on themselves, i.e. self-blaming (Fairchild and Rudman 2008).

Purpose of this thesis:

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how a small number of women understand what catcalls is. In order to answer the purpose, a number of key questions has been created.

- What is a catcall?
- What kind of woman, according to the interview persons, is and is not catcalled?
- What consequences do they think could develop from catcalls?

Deposition

To begin with, I will describe what theories will be used throughout this thesis. Adding to the already existing theories in my introduction, I will give examples in how Fairchild and Rudman analysed Stranger Harassment from an Enjoyable or Frightening point of view. In addition, Stranger Harassment is also discussed form a Romanticized Traditionalist or Politicized Feminist standing positions. To complement these theories, I further explored Ås' Five Master Suppression Techniques, and how someone could practise them.

Following up, I will explain what types of method I used to pursue this thesis. Firstly by, explaining Grounded Theory, and then how I applied it and how I did my interviews. Lastly, I describe how I executed the interviews.

The next chapter is an edited selection from my Empirical material, where each interview is divided up under headlines and key questions. Each paragraph is discussed and analysed from a theoretical point of view.

I finish off this thesis with a chapter of discussion and final conclusions where I answer the purpose if this essay and analyse my results from a theoretical perspective.

Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I will present the theoretical framework used. To analyse what catcalls are, theoretical concepts have been derived from the past studies previously presented in the introduction. Based on these concepts, catcalls can be understood in accordance to two different dualism, as Romanitized or Politized, or as Enjoyable or Frightning. To analyse what consequences can come out of the subject of catcalls, I use Berit Ås' five master suppression techniques.

Romanticized traditionalist or politicized feminist?

Gardner (1995) discussed the issue of being Sexually Harassed from two different point of views; being a romanticized traditionalist or a politicized feminist. Being a modern politicized feminist has fundamentally grown out of the second wave feminism in 1960-70s.

The typical romanticized traditional woman Gardner interviewed could say that she were flattered and found something quite erotic about being catcalled. She accepts that men will give her compliments, because society is built that way. When she is dressed in an "inviting" way, she almost expects that she will have someone compliment her. Her perception of compliments could include; wolf-whistles, catcalls, leers, etc. She regards these claims as a type of appreciation, she feels sexy, esteemed and empowered by her beauty. The way she looks at it, is that she "acts like a lady", and he "as a gentleman". He is just flirting and showing his appreciation when claiming her attention. It is her obligation as a woman to fill his needs and appear attractive. A man, from a traditional point of view, would also feel that it is his obligation to recognize her when she has made an effort to look good. He thinks that if he does not whistle at her, she might be disappointed. Not every time he whistles is because he want to jump in to bed with her, it could simply be because he feels obligated to acknowledge her for her physical appearance.

A politicized feminist would say, accordingly to Gardner (1995), Humm (1992) and Gemzöe (2004), that even though a total stranger puts his hand on her behind, he can justify the situation by simply saying that she are "pretty". It could cloud the harassment from being seen for what it is, with an illusion of it being romantic. Apparently she have to just put up with it, because he can defend himself by excusing that it was a compliment, so she should accept it. He will always be able to dismiss his harassment if he can make sure that he has witnesses that can hear, and confirm, him say these beautiful words. Bear in mind, his friends could always look the other way and deny seeing his actions, but confirming his language. Perpetrators use their verbal language as a shield, but their body as a weapon. Regardless of what norms society has, a politicized feminist would never "put up with it". She can come to an agreement that society looks a certain way, but will never accept that it is the only way society has to be. She firmly believes that without remedy or some kind of radical solution, women will continue to be the underdog. Men, women and all in between could be feminists, and they all fundamentally believe that all sexes should be perceived as equal from an economic, political and social point of views (Humm 1992, Gemzöe 2004). The way

feminists work towards that goal is different, depending on your how liberal or radical you are.

Enjoyable or Frightening?

Fairchild and Rudman (2008) explored a third response besides active and passive actions; to enjoy a catcall or to be frightened by it. Because a catcall happens in such a small amount of time, your reaction are automatic. If you have a strong romanticized traditional ground, you would probably in most cases enjoy the extra attention, but if you are more politically feminist, you would probably be frightened and offended by it.

Fairchild and Rudman (2008) found that there are some women who sometimes enjoy the extra attention. These women could consider the whistles and leering as something flattering, even flirting, and turn the situation around as a positive self-esteem boost. These women are uplifted by a sudden benign event, and walk a little taller and prouder after a catcall. However, it might be possible that these women also already have a high self-objectification. They expect society to be this way and respond accordingly (Fairchild and Rudman 2008).

Rudman's (2010) main part of her study is how victims of Stranger Harassment perceive their perpetrators. She proved that men who are attractive “get away” with harassing people, because of their “halo effect”. A good looking person is believed to be good, and therefore can be excused for his harassing behaviour. Hence, a woman who is catcalled by a good looking man is in general more flattered than offended when he whistles after her. However, if he does not have the looks, he will in most cases not “get away” with it, and the victim perceives the situation as more frightening. Summarising, a man's action can be protected because of how he looks.

Only the victim can decide whether he or she is being harassed. If the victim does not perceive him- or herself as being a victim, it too cannot call the situation a harassment (Fairchild 2010; Hearn and Parkin 2001). The person need to know what harassment is in order to recognise what is happening to them. If they do not know what harassment is, they might think that what is happening to them, could be regarded as “normal” (Hearn and Parkin 2001, p. 48). Though the victim could perceive herself as a “victim”, the perpetrator could still try to influence her, manipulate her to believing that nothing wrong has been done, or even blame her, the victim herself, for what has happened.

A difficulty throughout all of these presented studies and theories, is that all (but Rudman and Fairchild 2008), divide all women into two different categories; either being a romanticized traditionalist/more enjoying/passive responding-type of woman OR a politicized feminist/more frightened/active responding-type of woman. As will be seen in my chapter Result, when I interviewed my five young women, none of them fit into only one of the two categories. All floated like liquid in and out of different categories. Some, like Rosie and Bell, seemed to lean more towards being a politicized feminist/more frightened/active responding-

type of women, but as the interviews went on, they also sniffed in romanticized traditionalist/more enjoying/passive responding territories.

Berit Ås' five master suppression techniques

Though I found a (limited) collection of articles about previous studies done on Stranger Harassment, it was still not quite grasping the concept of what exactly happens in the process of catcalls. To understand what happens when a person is suppressed and overpowered, the five master suppression techniques developed by Ås (1979) could explain the mechanism through which an individual or group dominate one single person. Ås (1979) is a Norwegian social psychologist who received a variety of awards for her feminist work. After many years of working on the 5 suppression techniques, she finally presented them as the following: **Made invisible, ridiculing, withholding information, double punishment,** and **the imposition of guilt and shame.** These suppression techniques are used by both men and women to take power from another individual.

- **Made invisible** is when people do not pay attention or give you credit for what you are doing; when your actions are overlooked and deliberately do not get the attentions they deserve. It could also be ostracism and that people do not respond when you try to get attention. Often, you may become forgotten, "run over" and overlooked. As the victims, you feel that it is irrelevant and does not need to be right there.
- **Ridiculing** is when you try to get a message across or something that you wants to share and is greeted by laughter and mockery. You feel as if there is no point to share any longer, because you knows that it is not worth being embarrassed and laughed at. You are stamped on and not taken seriously, not because of what you have to say, but because of the fact that you are just a woman. You can be seen as hypersensitive and hence not to be taken seriously.
- **Withholding information** is when it feels as if all the others know what it happening, and you have no idea. For example, there are secret codes that every Tuesday your “friends” wear a pink shirt, and you show up with a purple one, because you were not allowed to share the information.
- **Double punishment** is when you metaphorically become split in two because you cannot meet opposed expectations. Whatever you do, there will always be people who are disappointed in you. Damn you if you do, damn you if you do not, whatever you do, you will be punished and cannot win.
- A **penalty of guilt and shame** are results of double punishment and ridiculing. Shame and guilt washes over and you know that you "should" have done what they expected of you, but cannot fix it.

One relating illustration of Ås’ theory in action could be found in web pages that discusses catcalling. Browsing through YouTube- and blog comments, many (mostly) men use the word “feminazi” against a woman whom stand up for her rights. This word could be used as one of Ås’ suppression techniques **Ridiculing**. Some men may use the term “feminazi” as an insult

to ridicule women, when they have failed to overpower and dominate women using their masculinity alone.

Pat Robertson, a conservative extremist, declared in 1992 that feminism is actually a man-hating term. He stated that feminist women wanted to leave their husbands, murder their own babies, practice witchcraft, stick together and all become lesbians (Moi 2006). Moi reflected on this when writing her paper *"I Am Not a Feminist, But...": How Feminism Became the F-Word,* and heavily criticized Robertson by basing the term Feminism on a fight for equal rights, and not a takeover of the human race. Moi used Simone de Beauvoir's famous book *The second sex* to prove Robertson wrong, by setting de Beauvoir's theory as a foundation for a modern second wave of feminism in the late 1940's, by acclaiming feminism as gender equality. Robertson was described by Moi as uneducated, for saying that feminist women were feminazi.

Methodology

The methods I will use to execute this thesis are Grounded Theory and qualitative interviews. I will begin by giving a background on what Grounded Theory is all about. Then, I will explain how I used this theory in my research for this. Next, I will explain on how the interviews were executed, and finally how I found relevant literature to this thesis.

Grounded theory

Anselm Strauss (1916-1996) developed his Grounded Theory during his time at University of California at San Francisco (UCSF) from 1960 (Lessor 2000). Through personal experiences in his own life, Strauss understood that data could be collected from anyone and anywhere by just being, living and observing. If one took notes of one's everyday life he would be able to collect a massive amount of data to analyse. To begin a data collecting process using Grounded Theory, you have to start with observing and writing down all you see and explore in your subject, then coding what you have collected. These codes are similarities between all subjects you have found. Moving on, you arrange key questions to structure what you have gathered, and after that you can begin to draw some conclusions. To fully embrace the whole Grounded Theory experience, you need to test your work through this lap a few times, before finally creating a new theory. According to Lessor (2000), Strauss encouraged his fellow colleagues and students to live through a sociological way of life. He told them all to grasp and absorb *all* type of experiences that we do in our everyday life, to fully appreciate what we were experiencing, even if it was only reading a book, walking in the park or eating a well cooked dinner. Every experience was unique and worth exploring as analytic insights.

How I applied Grounded Theory to this thesis

The same way Strauss urged his students to embrace what goes on around them, I too noticed that my fellow friends had a lot to say about catcalling. The collection of the first data started when I moved to a larger city and at the same time seeing the YouTube video “10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman, 2014” that went viral all over the social media. The video started large discussions (see comments below YouTube video). The first time I saw the video, I had a strong reaction to what I saw. I was horrified, chocked and angry, and each time following, I could see how wearing this was for the young woman, and also which techniques the men used to catch her attention. This video stimulated many conversations amongst my friends. From these conversations we had, I decided to use parts of what they said to formulate key questions for qualitative interviews. Whenever I brought the topic up, everyone seemed to have an opinion about it. This was my first lap in the Grounded Theory process. When I continued to collect data I used my key questions in formally structured interviews with five young Swedish women. All the collected data was transcribed and coded to their common denominators, which fundamentally set the base of the headlines for this thesis.

Interviews

To protect IP's identity, all their names has been changed. The interview person's fiction names are *Rosie, Gabriella, Bell, Petra* and *Greta.* I chose to do this study as a qualitative study, because I wish to explore in depth in a small number of people's opinions, rather than a numerical survey. I based my interview method on J. K. Jacobsen's book *Intervju: Konsten att lyssna och fråga* (1993), which gave details on how to pursue a professional interview. Five interview persons (IP) seemed reasonable, and they all needed to fulfil some criteria. Each had to be a young woman between ages of 20-30 years old. Her location was not too important, although she had to at some point have lived for a longer time in Sweden. I noticed that because of their broader geographical distribution, I profited from a broader range of data to analyse. The reason I chose these women was because I suspected that they had either experienced catcalls themselves, or at least had strong opinions about them. Though Strauss took notes every day, I decided not to ask IPs do the same because of a 10 week time limit, and I would have asked way too much from IP if I asked them to do so. However, I noticed that, after casually just talking to them about catcalling, they had noticed it happen around themselves.

When I decided to go through with specifically *catcalling* as my topic, my supervisor suggested that I should show the video at the beginning of every interview. Before I started with any interviews, I wrote some key questions, so they would all follow the same pattern and answer the same questions. However, then the interviews were running I asked follow-up questions, based on what they said. All interviews were grounded on the same basis: first telling them it was all totally anonymous and voluntary, they could quit at any time. After agreeing to proceed, I showed them the YouTube video and then aimed for a 30 minutes long interview. All interviews were recorded (as I also informed them) and after each, I transcribed it all. Later I undertook a process to high lighting (coding as Strauss too did with his collected work) parts of each interview that were relevant for this thesis. Two of my IPs were living in the same town as me, so we met in a safe and non-disturbing environment, offering them a beverage, small talk as a warm up, before eventually beginning the interview. The remaining three IPs lived at a greater distance from me, so we set up a Skype meeting and followed the same procedure.

There were three found disadvantages to this methodology. Firstly, they were all friends of mine. They all knew my personal opinions about catcalls, and it is possible that they answers were influenced by wish to please me. Secondly, I am not a professional interviewer, so all interviews were a learning process for me, therefore there was a difference in quality from the first interview to the last one. If I had chosen to collect my empirical material using a quantitative method, such as surveys, I would have lost out in IP's stories. In order to fully gather their experiences I had to be involved in a two way communication where I as an interviewer can ask follow-up questions and delve further into what reasons were behind their motivations and passive and active responses. Hence thirdly, because I chose a qualitative method, I lost out on knowing what a larger group of women thought about catcalling.

Results

This chapter will be divided into three parts. First, I will clarify what the term “catcall” actually is. The English Dictionary has one relevant synonym for it. However, because “catcalling” is more complex than just one synonym, I asked IP what they thought it might be. Their answers are longer than one synonym. They tell stories of when they have been catcalled; they clarify the differences between a catcall and a compliment; when in women's lives catcalls begin, who are not catcalled; and how a women's appearance make difference. The second part will be about what consequences could come out of catcalls; how catcalls could affect women positively and negatively; how women try to avoid it; when and where catcalls are most common; and how their perception their perpetrators makes a difference in experiencing catcalls. The last part will be about how to eliminate catcalls from our society. Because of IP's previous answers, I understood that their overall experience of catcalls was negative, which prompted why the last question was asked.

What is catcalling?

Asking the question “What is catcalling for you?” to IP, they all had similar versions of what it might be. It was a sudden verbal or non-verbal happening when someone (a perpetrator, and in these cases: a man) in a public place demanded her attention, without really respecting her privacy. It had a sexual tension to it when a man went into her personal space without her permission. A catcall happened in a limited and short amount of time, most often in just a few seconds. As long as she was in their presence, she could be catcalled.

Several IP were shocked after seeing the YouTube video. They said that they suspected that catcalls happen frequently to women, but not as extreme as the video showed them. This “wake up call” changed Gabriella's perception of what catcalling after seeing the video. She thought:

> “*Before the video, I though that catcalls were only when people whistled at you, saying “Hi gorgeous.”. Now I understand that it is not only whistles, it is that they walk close to you and comment your worth. You feel like a little dog, that if they whistle you should come running after them. That's how worthwhile you are! It like, it is so much more invading than I first thought.” “It went from something being so innocent to suddenly escalating so something much more.” “Before the video, I thought that it was just something I had to put up with. Ah well, it happens. I've got a great body, what am I gonna do? Now I'm just repelled by it all.” - Gabriella*

Many other IPs did not understand exactly how exposed some women were in New York City. One said, if that is what happens over there, she did not want to visit there any longer. The experience she saw scared her, and I noticed too that she was angry after seeing the video. She could not believe that these men in the video refused to take her hints that she was not interested, “*And he didn't even take no for an answer!*”. They kept on pushing her and then ridiculed (Ås 1979) her when she did not react. IP suspected that the men wanted some

kind of reaction from her, in order to know how to play further. When she refused to react, many men became angry, and started yelling at her.

I suspect, from a feminist perspective, that because she did not respond to them, the men did not know how to manipulate her. If she had reacted, they would have something to work on, but since she remained silent, the catcallers could not go on any further. Some IP said that men who catcall are after some bedroom company. It had gone way beyond an innocent act, to actually telling you what to do. Not only did some guys in the video tell her how she should react, they commented on her body, whether she agreed to it or not.

> "*A catcall is when someone is shouting after you, and you do not have a relationship with them. There is no dialogue. I think it is a way for men to get some attention from the woman." - Petra*

> *"Somewhere along the road we are taught that female bodies are meant to be only for men to enjoy. They have a liberty to invade our bodies, and will also do so, whether we like it or not." - Rosie*

One IP, Petra, was at first more liberal to men who catcall. Through a more traditionally romanticized view, she defended his actions by saying that he does not want to harm you in any way. Rapidly she adjusted what she just said and clarified that she did not mean it as their excuse to catcall, it was actually according to her an awful act. The perpetrators objectify the women when they judge her for her appearance.

> "*They probably don't mean any harm doing it, but they do objectify you, and that is so wrong. You cannot even walk down the streets without someone whistling after you, wanting your attention.*
> *They see you as their possession, something they have a right to. Sex object. It is a macho culture." - Petra*

Each IP had their own stories to share when they had felt unsafe. Most of them had experienced catcalls directly, others had only seen it happen to others from a distance. Below are their own stories:

> "*I was in London for a long weekend. A guy shouted after me from his car. Only 2 minutes later a man came up to me and stopped me. He almost asked for forgiveness and asked for my permission before telling me I was beautiful. And then he apologised again. Despite the fact that they said almost the same thing, they said it in so different ways. This whole London-trip was so extreme. But when I came back to Edinburgh and wanted to walk to Lidl, only 5 minutes away, and it was dark outside, I was too afraid to do so. I actually waited, because I didn't have anyone to walk next to me, until the next morning. Only because I was too scared to walk outside alone. I felt unsafe on the streets." - Rosie*

> "*When I'm whistled at, I usually just ignore it. However, when they start talking to me, it all gets a little more personal. Like, "hey, you don't want to talk to me?*

Come on, let's go home together." then I usually put my foot down and say I have a boyfriend. But even then I've had them say back to me "I can't see him here now.". I give them the response they are after, since I tell them off. So, it is probably something like that that I react. But when I've been catcalled I feel disgusted in my own skin. I cannot allow my boyfriend to come and kiss me as soon as I walk through the door. I need some space." - Gabriella

Not all IPs had experienced catcalls. Bell and Greta had limited first hand experiences when being catcalled.

"*I have never felt unsettled when I've walked alone in the streets. It is probably because of my attitude. I actually cannot recall that I've ever been catcalled. But if I was her in the video I would probably have been humiliated." - Bell*

She has never been catcalled. It was obvious that there was a shift in the atmosphere after she said that. There was a certain, just slight, sadness about it. I suspect that she felt a little left out, that she was not recognised as being beautiful and sexy by the guys. Although she obviously did not approve of being catcalled, I picked up on a hint that she still envied girls who were. One anecdotal theory could be that she was not displaying herself as available to the public. Although, she lives in a larger city and has the expected age to be catcalled at, she might not dress in an inviting way, and therefore has never been catcalled.

Greta had not experienced personally directed catcalls many times before. She was, however, in an uncomfortable situation when she visited another larger town, she saw it happen to others, and freaked out. She did not actively confront the man with what he was doing, she was passive in her actions.

"*I remember a time when I was in Linköping. There were two younger women standing further away from me and some guy walked up to them and started disturbing them. I could tell that they were uncomfortable by it, and eventually he walked away from them and just powerfully leered at them. I remember that I sat opposite to them and was so frightened, even though it wasn't me he was after. But I remember that I thought "shit, he's coming for me next. What shall I do??" I wanted to go and sit somewhere else. But he kept his distance. It was not a large thing, but still, it scared the shit out of me. Awful!" - Greta*

Because Greta is from a smaller town, she said that she had only been catcalled once. When that happened, she lust laughed at it and thought it was a funny thing. Clearly, she has a traditional romanticizes point it to catcalls, and does not see it as harassment (Gardner 1995). Also, perhaps she is from a smaller town, she might not be aware that she is being harassed by a stranger because it does not happen to her that often (Hearn and Parkin 2001).

When they shout after you. I don't really have a lot of experience when it comes to catcalls. I think it has happened to me one, haha! In Kalix! - Greta

When a man catcalls a woman, he can shout out things like "Hey beautiful! Hi sexy!, I just saw a million dollars! How are you doing? Would you call me if I gave you my number?"

(from the YouTube video). In the comments field there are large debates about whether these comments they leave are catcalls or compliments. There are strong voices from both parties and everyone has an argument for their beliefs. When IP was asked what they believed was the difference, they too gave a variety of answers, however, all had one common denominator. Saying similar comments as those above had to be done in the "right" way in order to be a compliment.

> "*When men have my permission to come within my personal space and they tell me I'm beautiful or whatever, then that is a compliment. But when they are not interacting with me, having a dialogue, excusing themselves, or being polite, then they are catcalling me. And even when they think that you should take it as a compliment, it is not a compliment hearing that you are fuckable." – Rosie*

> "*The thing is, come up and say "Hi" instead. Talk to me if you can't give me a compliment. It has to be a social interaction. When both persons involved are positive about the contact, then it is a compliment." – Bell*

Summarising what they said; the correct way to give a compliment without it becoming a catcall is when you are first inviting yourself, then excusing you, and finally accepted by the person into a dialogue. Nevertheless, there is more to it than just having a dialogue. It has to be, according to IPs, a right place and time for it too. If she is in a hurry or just not in the mood for social stranger interactions, she will probably not appreciate being stopped in the street. Also, a kind tone of voice can set a mood. Then, it too depends a lot from girl to girl:

> "*Everyone's perception is different. Some girls appreciate when men say that her butt is sweet, and others are disgusted by it, thinking "fucking idiot". So I think that a lot lies in the receiver, and also how they say it." - Greta*

Do catcalls have a starting point? Two IP suggested that women begin to be catcalled around puberty; when girls gain shape and teenage hormones spin around in the air.

> *"I guess it all starts in high-school. When men become men and women women, and hormones go bananas in their bodies. When girls have breasts and hips. When you start to find your sexuality." – Petra*

> "*When the body hits puberty and you begin to form breasts and bottom, when you become a woman." - Bell*

The other three IP suggested that sexist treatment started at a really early age. Sexist treatment does not, according to IPs, just involve Sexual- or Stranger Harassment. They assumed that society divide people by their sex from the day they were born. Boys would be treated differently from girls, and therefore IP presume that children learn from early ages that they also should treat each other differently.

> "*At kindergarten they divide boys and girls. Blue and pink. Boys should not cry. He hits you just because he is in love with you, so actually, it is alright. Boys will be boys, it is what they do." - Greta*

Historically viewed, one IP supposed that catcalls is a modern thing, something that has appeared in the last decades, as a combination of new technology and an opposition of a new found left-wing politics. I suspect though, because of the new feminist left wing wave, people are now more encouraged to report Sexual- and Stranger harassments, and therefor Gabriella had never heard about catcalls from her mother.

> "*Whistles and such could be a modern thing, something that has escalated just these most recent years. Back in the days, men showed women more respect. I cannot recall that my mum ever has told me that she was catcalled in her youth." - Gabriella*

As the young women expressed on http://catcalled.tumblr.com/, they assumed that their clothes were the reason they had unwanted attention drawn to them from catcalling men. IP too assumed that women's clothes and physical appearance matter to how people take advantage of you and your personal space. We do live in a society that judges us by our appearance, but whether we should do that is a different matter. IP were not totally in agreement whether we should continue this or not. Some people, both women and men, think that women who dress as available or provocative deserve the treatment they get from strangers in the streets. Because Petra expressed that she thinks young women are "asking for it", she is aware if what consequences it could bring upon them. Therefore, she deliberately chooses to dress herself in a non-inviting way, for example, never in too short or reviling dresses.

> "*I, unfortunately, think that women who show off too much skin bring it upon themselves when they end up in unwelcome situations. If you dress that way, you will have to expect that men will react to it. It is so wrong that I think this way, but I do." - Petra*

Though cloths could be seen as a gateway to be catcalled, all IPs supposed that women's bodies played its part in this subject. Good looking women with iconic bodies, and also wearing revealing clothes are most likely victims of catcalls.

> "*Women with large breasts, big butts, and beautiful bodies are more catcalled. Not people with beautiful personalities, no. It's women with the ideal bodies. Wearing dresses and showing off their cleavage." - Bell*

> "*Young women are mostly catcalled. They who appear to be attractive from society's perception. Because they (catcallers) do not have a direct relationship to the woman, they will catcall her only because of her looks." - Petra*

Rosie presumed at first that women who dress and looks attractive and available are most catcalled, but then realised that she is catcalled regardless of what she wears.

> "*I think that women who are good looking, according to what norms society has, and those who show off some skin. However, I've never noticed any difference in whatever I wear. I'm catcalled regardless of what I wear." – Rosie*

I was interested in knowing what my IP though about the women that were not catcalled. Also, when women stop being catcalled. Firstly they gave me an age when catcalls terminate, then some gave a reason why they believed so. If you are above a certain age and do not dress in an inviting way, catcalls decrease. Gabriella thought it was a pain to always be conscious of how you want to present yourself before leaving the house. She wished that she could wear anything, but deliberately chose not to, because it would draw too much unwanted attention.

> "*When I have a dress and heals on, it's hopeless out there. I love my boots, I would live in them if I could, but the harassment make it impossible. I purposely choose not to wear them, they bring me too much attention." - Gabriella*

Continuing what Gabriella said about adjusting her outfit every day, she also said that other women in the world deliberately dress every day in uninviting garments. Some Muslim women are forced to wear garments as Hijab to cover up themselves. In this YouTube video was a woman walking for five hours in casual clothing, and then she changed and walked another five hours in the Muslim garment Hijab. When she wore casual clothes she was catcalled and stalked, much like the other woman in *10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman* (2014). However, when she changed into Hijab, she was completely left alone, and no one even looked twice at her.

> *In another video a young woman wore jeans, cardigan and a Hijab (10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman in Hijab, 2014). She was left alone, never catcalled. Should we also have to wear that to protect ourselves? There is no justice! I'm so angry! What the hell? Aren't we allowed to wear jeans? You are wearing jeans!" - Gabriella*

As it has now been identified, not everyone is catcalled. Most IP guessed that catcalls become less and less common when the woman is in her 35-50s. She loose her tight figure and become less attractive for men.

> "*After about 35, I guess it will decrease. But I'm not sure." - Rosie*

Though most said catcalls decrease around the age of 35, some IP though that there could also perhaps be an excitement for men to catcall some older ladies. IP thought that women has gained more experience over her years and this could challenge men to catcall them. The men could maybe find an excitement in having some resistance when being "on a hunt".

> "*Women are catcalled until they are in their 50's and 60's. It's a cougar thing." - Gabriella*

> "*Around their 30's. I mean, you get a bit saggier then. But there are of course MILFs[Mother I would Like to Fuck]. Bubbafet is probably not catcalled. Women who are ugly, and fat, and yeah.. Being catcalled has a straight connection to her body. How could they possibly know what kind of personality she has? It has only something to do with her body." - Bell*

After IP saw the YouTube video they all shared some thoughts of what they had just seen. Some reacted with horror. Most were scared and confused, and did not quite understand that

this behaviour was so extreme in New York City. All IP said that they were scared and uncomfortable after seeing the video. A strong sense of fear increased within all of them, both because they recalled own past experiences and also imagined how the woman in the video might have felt.

> *"I would have felt pretty scared, vulnerable and just wanted to get away from it all. I would probably have told them off, but honestly, I would have wished that someone external helped us. If I stood up for myself, become angry or sad, the men would have used it to their advantage." - Rosie*

> *"I would have been angry, scared and uncomfortable. When the man says that you should be grateful, thankful and smile more, he defines her value and automatically pushes her down by saying how she should respond." - Gabriella*

A catcall is according to IPs when a total stranger leaves comments after someone who is passing by. The perpetrator will try to manipulate you through Ås' suppression techniques (1979). This sudden happening could turn into his advantage, all depending on how you react to his catcall. He can stalk you, leer at you, yell, or even be physically touch your body. He could use those methods to catch your attention and from there continue the interaction to his fundamental goal. IPs said that catcallers try to manipulate you (Ås 1979) until you give in to what they want. Using suppression techniques they can manipulate you to their advantage, through your actions. What his purpose with the catcall is, does not really matter for IP, just the fact that they lack respect for you put IP off.

From a feminist perspective (Humm 1992; Gemzöe 2004), he is taking the liberty to invading your privacy and do not respect you as a person. He has not genuinely asked for your permission to have contact with you, and therefore does not care about you. Because he only judge you for what he can see - your body, he is objectifying you. Is he likes what he is seeing, he could if he wanted to, try to catch your attention with catcalls.

Consequences of Stranger Harassment:

From a feminist perspective (Humm 1992; Gemzöe 2004), it could be said that when perpetrators harass these women, both in video and IP, they do not consider how she might take it at all. It is a selfish act from perpetrators; why should they think of how she will take it? If perpetrators catcall they do it for themselves, to get confirmation from their fellows and to get recognition for their masculinity. A victim of catcall does not directly affect them, whether she is active or passive in her responses (Fairchild and Rudman 2008). She is the one who has to live with the guilt and shame (Ås 1979). If Stranger Harassment happens to someone on a continues basis, she will learn how to manoeuvre in order to avoid them:

> *"Most of my routines today are a product of my past actions. Whenever I see some guy or group of guys, as I walk down the street, I never have eye contact with them, I'll try to change to the other side of the street and I might even go on detours, just to avoid them." - Rosie*

“Catcalls happen to me on a daily basis. It's so sad, but it is true. I react differently depending on the situation. Sometimes I tell them off, sometimes ignore them, and sometimes they've just pissed me off so I yell back at them and storm away. Worst case scenario, if you have PMS you might just slap them! But, really, it's all a grey scale.” – Petra

Three of Ås' (1979) theory of suppression techniques were the *double punishment, ridiculing* and *penalty of guilt and shame*. Though most people are not aware that they are using them, they are most effective when trying to take control a situation by metaphorically pushing someone else to the ground. When Rosie tries to smooth over an awkward situation, she would begin to lighten up the mood as a reflex by laughing or talking her way out of it. She is desperately trying to make the situation into something advantageous and positive, when she actually is just embarrassed and uncomfortable. Though her efforts are high, she will never win. The perpetrators are in most cases skilled men that know exactly how to overcome her, by manipulating the situation to their advantage. One effective way to suppress anyone is to *ridicule* whomever you want to be above. In the quote, she said that they usually outmanoeuvre on anything she does and turn it around to their advantage. She is “little and cute”, and will never be taken seriously. She is *double punished* either way: she is damned if she tries to speak up, and she is damned if she does not do anything. Either way, she will never win when she is uncomfortable about being catcalled. According to Ås, when they ridicule her, she will feel a *penalty of guilt and shame* for having tried to stand up for herself. The shame and embarrassment for not being taken seriously can pull her down, and by being pulled down the perpetrators win. A result there is a shift in power.

“*When I become nervous or exposed I usually laugh or chat a lot. They manipulate whatever you say so they always will be above you. They'll say that I'm little, cute and innocent. Either way, I will never win. It is emotionally tough. I feel as if they pull down my personal value.” – Rosie*

Many of IP mentioned the word “rape” several times during their interviews. Bell said the word four times in her thirty minutes. As Macmillan et al (2000) hypothesize, and IP confirmed, there is clearly a sense of fear of being raped by a stranger when someone forces themselves within your personal space. A radical feminist would also express that catcalls are a gateway to a rape culture. Because it could be argued by romanticized traditionalists that catcalls are an innocent and titillating act, many people who are using catcalls for their own benefit, could easily pretend it to be a compliment, when they really just want your body for sex. There is a great danger when perpetrators frame their actions as something innocent, when they really just want to manipulate you to be their possession.

“*When men acclaim women's bodies to be theirs, I suspect that it could lead the way to some kind of rape culture. Therefore, we always have to keep up our guard.” - Rosie*

“*You cannot ignore and work against a whole culture where particular unwritten codes say that we accept to being judged by our appearance. If you do not play by the rules, it is your own fault for ending up in trouble. I would*

choose different routes home, if that increased my chances of not being raped." – Petra

Gardner (1995) would probably class woman who are positive to catcalls as a romanticized traditionalists. These women find it exciting to have some extra attention drawn to then, and would probably adjust the way they present themselves, in order to gain more attention (Gardner 1995). Presumably, these women feel safer in social contexts (MacMillan et al. 2000).

"There are many girls/women who appreciate catcalling, they maybe gain some confidence boosts from it. Of course, if I receive a nice comment from a stranger, I think it is a bit fun. Women want to be seen as women, and have sex." - Petra

"*You'll become happy, and take it as a compliment. Then it's positive. But fundamentally, it doesn't feel very positive." - Greta*

As Fairchild (2010) said, we judge each other by how we present ourselves. If someone who is good looking catcalls you, you are more likely to forgive them. Though, because we live in a judgemental society, we could suppose that victims of catcalls too feel as if they are judged by their appearance. Gabriella supposed that if a young woman is not catcalled, she would self-blame, thinking her physical appearance is not enough for men to appreciate. She assumed that many need the extra attention as a confirmation to be considered as attractive and sexy.

"And I hope that all women are catcalled. It is kind of a big deal." – Gabriella

From a politicized feminist point of view, catcalls can be seen as negative and frightening (Gardner 1995). This kind of women who is a victims of catcalls understand that other men take the liberty to invade their personal sphere. The perpetrators do not, from a feminist perspective, respect the woman when he totally ignores to ask for her permission to give her a "compliment".

"*Negative, it probably means that a woman doesn't feel as if she is worth anything." – Gabriella*

"I would want to take my muscle man with me wherever I went." - Bell

Though perpetrators say words that are positive, the way they say them are essential to how the victim will perceive it. Feminists (Humm 1992; Gemzöe 2004) say that romanticized traditionalists are after a confirmation from other strangers, and therefore can become intrigued to carry on this behaviour to find this kind of recognition.

"Catcalls are an oppression and objectification, and it could eventually shatter her self-esteem. For some women, catcalls are essential as a way to be recognised by men. It could almost become a contest for some insecure women. I suspect that if a woman is not catcalled, she could feel a bit left out and not part of being included." - Petra

When women go out in the evenings, many are aware of consequences that might happen to them, so in order to feel safer, some women prepare themselves in various different ways. Macmillan et al. (2000) and Fairchild and Rudman (2008) firmly pointed out that there is a strong connection between going out late at night and fear of being attacked/raped by a stranger. My IPs confirmed this, especially when they revealed how they prepare themselves before leaving their house. A collection of what IP has said about feeling safer when walking outside in the evenings, is that most keep their home keys in their hand, have a full battery on their mobile phone and travel in groups.

> "*I travel in groups, and never alone. You should never have music in your ears in the late evenings. Always keep track of the people around you, and try to walk behind everyone.*
> *I used to, when I was younger, keep a small hairspray and alarm in my purse when I went out late. Now I just make sure to have a full battery on my phone. If I sense that someone is following me, I will call someone or just pretend to call someone. I talk loudly and say "I'm soon there, see you around the corner!".*" - *Petra*

However, not all IP said that they prepared themselves when they went out. What can be picked up here is that the women who had never been catcalled, also did not prepare themselves.

> "*I feel pretty safe here in Sweden. If I'm abroad I always make sure to walk home together with someone. I do not usually prepare myself with any equipment when I go out late at night. I still live in my safe bubble. Although, I should probably not be so naïve. I could be raped and lalala.*" – *Bell*

MacMillan et al. (2000) proved that public places are where most Stranger Harassment occur. Because of the Stranger Harassment, places like parks and public transports feel less safe for women who experience catcalls frequently.

Summarising what my IPs said, a person is stereotypically catcalled in public areas in larger cities, after lunch and well into the late evenings. IP's theories of why in these specific circumstances vary somewhat; Greta proposed that there were more women to choose from in larger cities, but Rosie stated that perpetrators were more anonymous in a crowd and hence the risk of being exposed is tiny. The anonymity protects the perpetrators.

Some IPs guessed that when men are influenced by alcohol they work up their courage to catcall a woman. Also, because it seems to be a macho thing, they will most often do so in groups, IPs assumed that they needed the confirmation from each other, in order to seem macho.

> "*Larger cities. And according to the video, women are catcalled all around the clock. But, probably, mostly likely to happen in the evening. Especially when they've had a drink.*" - *Bell*

> "*Larger cities, out in the streets and in nightclubs, in the evenings and especially when men have had a drink. Underground trains, buses and other public transports are unpleasant places for me. Most of it happens when they are in groups.*" - *Petra*

Fairchild's study published in 2010 was partly grounded in how a "victim" respond to her perpetrators' physical appearance. She proved that women who find the catcaller attractive, will not be as offended as if he was unattractive. Similarities could be found from what IP said for this study. However, Rosie did not at all care about his looks. She did have an age limit for when it disgusted her more.

> "*His appearance does not matter at all to me. It is equally disgusting regardless of how he looks. Only when he has passed the age of 50, the ick!-factor increases. He could be my father! So awkward.*" - *Rosie*

Gabriella's quote was a brilliant example of exactly how complex a catcall could actually be:

> "*It wouldn't matter if it was George Clooney, okay, I would have been flattered, but even so. I would not have appreciated it, even if he was the world's hottest guy. I have a boyfriend. But if I was single I would probably have walked a little taller and prouder if he catcalled me. I might have thought, an opportunity! Haha, but I guess that's wrong too..*" - *Gabriella*

She changed her mind 5 times, in just one paragraph. Some theorists, such as Gardner (1995), want to categorize one person into being either this or that, but Gabriella show how one person floats between different categories. Catcalling seems to be such a complex subject that some people do not fit into just one category. Fairchild (2010) proposed that many different factors could play their parts in this subject; such as his appearance, whether he is in a group etc. Gabriella's quote is so much more complex than surrounding factors. She said that her availability too does matter. If she is on a "hunt" or not contributes to how she approaches a catcall. She said that she can use a catcall to her advantage, turn it around and invite him to her personal space. However, she is fully aware that there are huge risks in doing so. She knows that she is judged exclusively by her appearance, which she does and does not appreciate.

Bell confirmed Fairchild's (2010) theory that men who look good are excused by his behaviour, only because he has some kind of "halo effect". Greta also picks up on this theory, when saying that if he looks scary or dangerous, she will immediately become more suspicious and avoid him.

> "*I think people might appreciate catcalls more if it was a hot looking dude doing it. But still, I don't really care about his looks. Please, come and talk to me instead!*" - *Bell*

> "*If he looks dangerous. Tattoos, piercings, and in general pretty rough. I judge them on their appearance and become stereotypical.*" - *Greta*

Since most of IP expressed a negativity towards catcalls, it was appropriate to ask them **how we should work to eliminate catcalls.** All of IPs had suggestions in how to manage catcalls and Stranger Harassment. All but Bell suggested that they wanted parents to step up and step in. Rosie, Gabriella and Bell suggested that all men should raise their voices. They find comfort in believing that men can help women, and not only women/other adults could help women. They seem to suspect that men respect each other more than respecting women. Bell even went so far as to say that men are dim, and the only way for them to understand, is if they could figure it out themselves.

> "*I think guys listen more to each other than if women asked guys to stop this behaviour." - Rosie*

> "*Men are pretty slow.. Maybe men themselves should work against it. I think they could influence each other more than anyone else." - Bell*

Whether men would want to change their behaviour is a totally different matter. When they catcall they could do it for two different reasons. A romanticized traditionalist would do it to uplift the woman and "make her day" by acknowledging her beauty (Gardner 1995). They would never see the act as something harassing, but instead feel as if they are duty-bound to do it. Other men would, from a feminist point of view (Gardner 1995), do it as a selfish act to go within her personal space and take her power. These men do not consider what consequences they might bring upon women they catcall.

Macmillan et al.'s (2000) suggestions that policemen should actively work against Stranger Harassment was nothing any of IP picked up on. Instead they all agreed that adults, especially parents needed to show a commitment and solidarity to teach all young children how to behave. However, this means that parents firstly need to realise what is happening around them.

> "*Parents need more information. I think they live unaware of their children's behaviour. They live in denial, my child would never do that! Educate parents in how to raise their kids. The importance of a "no" and such things, what you can say to a girl. This preventive work is so important." - Greta*

> "*The main responsibility lies upon parents. We have to start immediately when they are born! It's not about eliminating gender roles, it is about how to treat and respect a man and a woman." - Petra*

Some IPs thought schools and politicians could help in this issue, perhaps by creating new campaigns or including a new subject in school:

> "*School should step- and shape up too. I know that if a girl acted like a swine, she would be punished with detention, but if a guy had the same behaviour he would be excused with boys will be boys." - Rosie*

"*But the whole society in general has to react to change these norms. We have to tech our boys how to treat women. It should not matter what she is wearing, the fault is not hers, men are the perpetrators because we teach them to be at an early age. They have norms that tell them that they have to be macho." – Petra*

Final quotes:

Two IP finished their interviews with similar contents. They wanted us, all people in general, to treat each other the same way we all want to be treated: with respect.

"*Why can we not show each other more respect than this? Because, really, that is what it is all about, respect for each other." - Gabriella*

"*Fundamentally, I think that it is not OK until both parties are alright with it." - Bell*

Concluding discussions

Through my key questions for this thesis, I will answer the purpose: *The purpose of this thesis is to explore how a small number of women understand what catcalls is; and based on their description analyse what consequences could grow out of this subject.*

What is a catcall, and who is or is not catcalled?

Catcalling proved to be a complex subject, because there was never any clear answer as to whether it is was something positive or negative. Because all five women I interviewed had different experiences and opinions about what catcalling is and academic writing on the subject is limited, it has been a challenge to draw any straight conclusions.

Catcalls are, from IPs point of view, when men shout, leer, wink, honk, and whistle after them in the streets. This action is most times unpredictable because it happens in such a short time period. It is not physically invasive, it happens from a distance. Therefore it could also be experienced as positive. He will never physically touch you through a catcall. Is does not physically harm you, but it harms the relationship between men and women. The words themselves are intimate and have a positive vibe *"hey beautiful"*, but actually it is a mild form of harassment, and a power move in disguise. It is invasive, because they have not asked for permission, and it appears to be a disrespectful act. Metaphorically, it is a wolf in sheep's clothing.

At the extreme, one woman I interviewed said one thing at one part, and then the next minute said something that totally contraindicated what she had just said. In some ways, that sums it up: catcalling is very complex and depends on herself; her self-objectification; her appearance; his appearance; whether she and/or he is single or in a group; his age; what time of the day it is; and location, a catcall could be either a positive or negative experience. Though we can see some positive aspects in catcalls, "*You'll become happy, and take it as a compliment. Then it's positive. But fundamentally, it doesn't feel very positive*." - *Greta*, we do not wish to be judged only by our appearances; whether we are sexy/attractive or not.

Even though Fairchild and Rudman (2008) stated that women who enjoyed being catcalled had a high self-objectification, I suspect that it is not the whole truth. These positive women could actually just enjoy being sexy and finding a confidence boost by being sexy. They get a kick from being on the edge between what is right and wrong. Though some women enjoy the extra attention, they are playing with fire. Because perpetrators objectify them only for their physical appearance, they do not care about the consequences that could come out of catcalls. Also, because there is an acceptance and something positive to be found in being catcalled, women who dress "available" cannot escape being catcalled. While they get confirmed as being attractive, the women who are not dressed "available", miss out on being regarded as sexy and attractive. Either way, you are damned if you dress available, and you are damned if you do not dress available, because then you are left out from being one of the attractive girls. Clearly there was a sadness to not being catcalled, and there was a sadness to being catcalled.

We live in a society which accepts that we judge each other from our physical appearance. It instantly give us norms in how to dress and how to behave. If a person does not fulfil those norms, people will react to it and in some ways let you know that you do not fit it. Whether it is through "complimentary" catcalls to women that dress available, or in contrast she is "fat and ugly" is shouted at, no matter how she appears, people judge her before they get to know her.

All IP had some kind of feminist point of view regarding catcalls. They all said that they were discomforted by Stranger Harassment. However, some were more liberal than others, but in general, they were all not in favour of catcalls. Though they were scared and disgusted by catcalls, most still found something enjoyable and a little tingling to be found. IPs had some kind of romanticized traditional delight in being courted by strangers in the streets. These women were holding a tension between a feminist perspective and traditional views. Any move to reduce catcalling would need to take account of this tension, or it would fail as women would not give it wholehearted support.

Based on what Fairchild and Rudman (2008) said, they thought that catcalls were one part of the concept Stranger Harassment. The previous list that IP said, is also included in Stranger Harassment. The great difference between IP's description of catcalls and Fairchild and Rudman's description of Stranger Harassment is that IP's catcalls are just a sudden happening from a distance, but Stranger Harassment includes both physical and non-physical contact. Catcalling is at a mild form of Harassment, whereas grabbing is at the opposite end of Stranger Harassment.

IP saw a clear connection between an innocent flirtation and how it could escalate to an extreme sexual violence, such as rape. All but one IP could enjoy a catcall from time to time, suggesting that they had roots coming from a traditional romanticized direction. However, they also recognised the threat when someone invaded their personal space and understood the feminist warnings (Gardner 1995). They had two incompatible theories going on within their own minds. They seemed to use both theories quite comfortably and did not mind switching between them. The confusion happens because just a few decades ago, the norm was to be traditionally romanticized, but in the present time feminism is still a minority, although rising steadily to becoming more a force in society. In the future, feminism could become the norm, though I suspect that a few people will still believe in traditionally romanticized ways. As an author, I could understand how IP switched in between these two beliefs, because our society is also in transition.

I cannot find a truth about who exactly is catcalled, but it would seem as if younger and smaller women are easier targets for perpetrators to catcall. Her clothes, physical appearance and presumed availability could also be factors.

If you are located in a larger city, you are more likely to be catcalled. This could be because the perpetrators are more anonymous and therefore shielded by it, and perhaps also because there are more women for the perpetrators to choose from to catcall. According to the video,

the woman walking for 10 hours in New York City was catcalled continuously throughout the whole video, and presumably all 10 hours. IP thought that women were more likely to be catcalled after lunch and into late evenings, especially after the men have had a few drinks.

I can see how a perpetrator lack respect for women. He instantly judges her physical appearance after what seem to be listed in the criteria previously discussed. The perpetrator has to calculate his act before catcalling anyone. The difference between smaller and larger cities would imply that anonymity is a factor in catcalling behaviour. He is aware of the fact that he can "get away with it" if no one can criticise him for his act.

Analysed from a traditional point of view, a man has to act macho to be accepted. Boys will be boys, and could therefore could be excused for this behaviour. A politicalized feminist might view the same behaviour as an example of patriarchy in action. If the man successfully catcalls a woman and gets away with it, he will gain power and domination. All IP analysed this from a feminist perspective, even the ones who enjoyed it did not encourage catcalls to proceed.

Women have been made unavailable for Stranger Harassment through different solutions. The governments in Japan and Rio de Janeiro used pink subways, they helped their women avoid Stranger Harassment by selectively excluding them from a united public transport. A parallel solution can be seen in Muslim societies, where they encourage women to wear a Hijab, as a way to segregate and protect them from the inappropriate gaze of men. Perhaps because of the Hijab's religious feature and its total concealment, people do not catcall the person wearing it. Though these might be seen as a solution, it does not address the underlying problem: men's behaviour. From a feminist perspective, men's behaviour and attitude is what fundamentally has to change for women to feel safe in public places. Though society has used these solutions, they are done from a traditional perspective. Society maintain men's behaviour and the solution still restricts women's liberty of movement and self-expression.

What consequences do they think could develop from catcalls?

I will use Ås (1979) theory of suppression techniques to analyse what consequences could come out of catcalls.

The first suppression I wish to analyse is *ridicule*. If IP tries to defend herself, she reported that catcallers could use the suppression technique ridicule (Ås 1979) in order to reclaim the power in the situation. Their description of the process fit well with Ås' concept of double punishment.

The second suppression technique is *double punishment.* If she try to ignore the perpetrators – she is embarrassed and damned for not standing up for herself, or if she snaps back at them and they ridicule her – she is embarrassed too and damned for trying to defend herself. If a woman goes out dressed up in fancy clothing, she could become frightened if she if catcalled.

The fear is confusing if you are traditionally romanticized, because you do not understand why you are frightened. Only from a politically feminist perspective can you understand that you are an underdog and being punished for dressing up. This could embarrass the feminist, because she is aware that she should not support patriarchal behaviour, even by accident.

The third suppression technique *made invisible* has already been addressed in the previous sections when women are excluded from society on the subway, and when women's sexuality is hidden behind a Hijab. Other kinds of violence could happen to women in general, whether they seek invisibility or not. Feminist women, including IP, said that they choose to not wear certain clothing because it draws too much attention to them when they just want to go shopping. The only way they can become invisible is when they themselves choose to become so by adjusting what they is wearing. They will the use their clothes as a self-defence technique to support their strength and power. Because of this awareness, they is always the oppressed person who has to adjust their way of living, as opposed to men who do not have to adjust their behaviour in this way.

The fourth suppression technique *a penalty of guilt and shame* is a result of double punishment and ridicule, because persons self-blame when they try to stand up for themselves and fail. It is an internal experience which could colour other aspects of their lives. Radical feminist could use anger to resist guilt and shame.

Only the fifth suppression technique of *withholding of information* does not seem to fit in to this subject

Ås' theory five master suppression techniques is very useful when analysing what consequences could happen after a woman has been catcalled. IP and previous studies prove Ås' theory to work in social contexts.

The consequences for society as a whole can be seen as emerging from the suppression techniques above. The consequences for women are an increased sense of fear, and they feel as if they need to protect themselves with, for example, keys and alarms. Women clearly use strategies to feel safer by taking detours home and avoiding certain places after hours. Men do not have the same amount of limitations as women. The fundamental effect is to keep women subordinate, so men can remain dominant. If we want to reduce Stranger -and Sexual Harassment, IP has mentioned an enormous range of possible strategies. If catcalling and other type of harassment did not exist, we could use the massive amount of energy that is put in to managing these behaviours to other resources.

Further studies could be done from men's perspective of catcalls, in how they experience the thrill of catcalling, and why they catcall women. They could be asked whether if they were aware of the consequences catcalls bring upon women and if they would stop this behaviour, knowing what the consequences are? Other women, perhaps elder ones, could also be interviewed in order to hear their point of view about catcalls. It would be interesting to

explore what more traditional women think about this concept. Given that there is an element of enjoyment found in catcalls, are women happy to give it up in order for catcalls to be eliminated?

From a politicized feminist point of view, catcalls are never acceptable and should be eradicated. From a romanticized traditional point of view, catcalls may feel pleasing, but the price we pay is that women are not equal.

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