

Who Controls the Streets?

Piropos in Buenos Aires: Women's Experiences and Interpretations

by

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ABSTRACT

This research study analyzes the use of piropos as a dominant part of Buenos Aires street culture. Piropos are locally defined as advances made by male strangers toward women in the public sphere, and they typically include: following, staring, unsolicited sexual/romantic comments and physical contact. Although these amorous or sexually expressive advances have been historically viewed as harmless, the local development of anti-piropo campaigns in Buenos Aires indicates that this flirtatious public act is more damaging than previously recognized. The current debate in Buenos Aires concerning the use of piropos in public has rendered this social practice worthy of investigation. Throughout this study, I examine women's experiences with and interpretations of piropos by utilizing participant observation, surveys, focus groups, and semi-structured individual interviews. I explore women's diverse emotional and verbal responses to these interactions, and I analyze how the use of piropos has impacted some women's sense of wellbeing and security in the public realm. In order to demonstrate the effect of piropos on women's daily lives in the public sphere, I examine the ways in which women alter their behavior in order to avoid piropos. Furthermore, this investigation examines how piropos are often interpreted by female recipients as a public display of gender-based power differences. Thus, I argue that piropos are consistently used to reflect and sustain machismo, and they consequently restrict women's equal access to public spaces in Buenos Aires. The quantitative and qualitative data presented throughout this thesis unveil the weighty ramifications of a social practice that has often been overlooked.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview

This thesis explores Argentine women's experiences with piropos on the streets of Buenos Aires, as well as their interpretations of this culturally embedded public act.

Piropos can be defined as advances made by male strangers toward women in the public sphere, and they typically include: following, staring, unsolicited sexual/romantic comments and physical contact. Throughout this study, I will examine the experiences of women who are the recipients of this verbal and occasionally physical social practice. I will also assess the prevalence of piropos in Buenos Aires, the varying nature of piropos, the emotional and verbal responses of the female recipients, and the behavioral changes adopted by women in order to avoid these public interactions. This study explores how machismo is evident in Buenos Aires street culture, and how piropos are a manifestation of traditional gender roles and gendered power relations.

Buenos Aires is an industrialized and highly urbanized metropolis. It is the capital city of Argentina with approximately 15.6 million inhabitants (INDEC, 2010). Buenos Aires residents are commonly referred to as Porteños because of the city's port and the pivotal role it plays as Argentina's "gateway to the world" (Keeling, 1996, p. 2). The city is the political and economic hub of the nation. Buenos Aires is often praised for its cosmopolitan feel, cultural richness, and European-style architecture that reflect its long history of immigration. Nevertheless, like most large Latin American cities, Buenos Aires is home to startling contrasts. Elegant high-rises overlook extensive slum developments, and homeless children sleep near the entrances of elaborate shopping centers. In spite of

its prominent international standing, Buenos Aires remains a vast metropolis with great inequalities. These inequalities are apparent in many aspects of Porteño society, and they are especially pronounced in relation to gender roles and differences, which constitute the focus of this study.

In April 2014, just days after the International Anti-Street Harassment Week came to a close, the Mayor of Buenos Aires publicized his opinion that all Argentine women love to receive piropos. During an interview, Mayor Mauricio Macri stated,

En el fondo, a todas las mujeres les gusta que les digan un piropo. Hay aquellas que dicen que no, que se ofenden... no les creo nada. No me puedo [imaginar] nada más lindo que te digan “qué lindos ojos”... por más que esté acompañado de una grosería, como “qué lindo culo que tenés,” está todo bien.¹ (TV10cordoba, 2014)

The Mayor’s comments sparked considerable backlash, and his opinion raised critical questions pertaining to the use of piropos on the streets of Buenos Aires and women’s varying interpretations of this widespread phenomenon. Although Macri’s comments may have been graphic, they speak to the tradition of piropos in Latin America and to power structures and gender in politics. In response to Macri’s comments and in recognition of those Porteña women who feel that their voices have been overshadowed by that of a male public figure, this study explores the weighty ramifications of a social practice that has historically been perceived as harmless.

Researcher’s Background and Interest in Subject Matter

I took personal interest in the subject of piropos after living and working in the city of Buenos Aires for several years. While in Buenos Aires, I became more aware of

my own cultural background, and I gained rapid appreciation for the cultural differences that I found myself facing. I took an interest in learning the cultural norms of Buenos Aires, and I became particularly interested in exploring both the subtle and obvious differences in gender relations. For me, the widespread use of piropos in public spaces quickly fell into the category of obvious differences in gender relations from my own background.

Having grown up in a close-knit community with a small town feel, I was personally unfamiliar with the practice of catcalling, but upon arrival to Buenos Aires, I began to witness the pervasive use of piropos as both a target and a bystander. As a foreigner to the country and to this social practice, I began formulating my own opinion of this public flirtatious act. My emotional reactions to each piropo ranged from amused to deeply disturbed. Nevertheless, I understood my reactions to be indicative of my position as a cultural outsider, someone who was unacquainted with this particular social custom. Over time, I stopped thinking about my own interpretations of these social interactions, and instead began to wonder how Porteña women feel about the use of piropos and the general treatment of women in public spaces. This growing curiosity, further compounded by Mauricio Macri's adamant stance that all women love piropos, was the foundation for this qualitative research.

This study allowed me, as a researcher, to open in-depth discussions regarding a local social practice, and it provided a safe space for Porteña women to freely reflect on and express their opinions about piropos. It became clear during both the one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions that, for many of the participants, this was the first time in which they had recounted their experiences and contemplated the motivation

behind the widespread use of piropos in the public sphere. For me personally, this detail confirmed the value of this study, as it ensured the reflection and conscious acknowledgement of current social structures that were previously unrecognized by some participants. This budding dialogue and increased awareness are tools for empowerment for the women of Buenos Aires, as they are essential elements in advocating for changes in social behavior and consequently a shift in Buenos Aires street culture.

Problem Statement

In Latin American culture, as in many other cultures, there is a dominance of the masculine (Labarca & Halty-Pfaff, 1991). A strong history of Argentine hyper-masculinity, or machismo, has played an important role in the formation and perpetuation of local gender inequalities. The legacy left by Spanish colonialism served as the basis for orthodox gender roles in Argentina, which in turn contributed to the widespread acceptance of a *machista* society (Lavrin, 1987). The term *machismo* has been widely utilized in gender studies in Latin America (Achugar, 2001; Archetti, 1977; Connell, 2005; Labarca & Halty-Pfaff, 1991; Lavrin, 1987; Stobbe, 2005; Tamez, 1987), and it is defined in the *American Heritage Dictionary* as a “strong or exaggerated sense of masculinity stressing attributes such as physical courage, virility, domination of women, aggressiveness, and an exaggerated sense of strength and toughness” (Schaefer, 2008, p. 863). Since the 1970s, the concept of machismo has been identified by scholars as a cultural force behind the behavioral patterns that sustain male supremacy in the public realm (Lavrin, 1987). Gender studies guided by Latino cultures have determined that, in a *machista* society,

There is a need to affirm the macho's independence from the woman and to display publicly men's power over women. The machismo of Spanish speaking communities is evidenced in the alienation of women on many levels of life: social, political and economic. (Achugar, 2001, p. 128)

Although the meaning of machismo varies in relation to geographic location and cultural context, research has shown that machismo is a social construction inherently tied to masculinity and power (Stobbe, 2005; Jackson & Balaji, 2011). The exact origin of the term machismo is unknown, but some social scientists argue that ethnographers coined the term while studying Latin American culture (Schaefer, 2008). Despite its vague origins, the term machismo is almost exclusively associated with Latin American culture in both popular and scholarly discourse (Schaefer, 2008).

According to Lineke Stobbe (2005), a Dutch researcher who conducted gender discrimination studies in Argentina, machismo is a hegemonic force in the Latin American cultural context. Stobbe's research demonstrated that, in Argentina, machismo represents "four images of the dominant idea of manhood in the Argentine society. These images are the authoritarian image, the breadwinner image, the virility image and the chivalry image" (2005, p. 105). Although machismo is slowly eroding in the public sphere as women are increasingly attaining economic independence and power in the political arena, its prevalence is still palpable in Argentina and in most other Latin American countries (Achugar, 2001). One clear example of women's growing political power in Argentina is Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, Argentina's first elected female president, who is currently completing her second term in office. However, according to a recent marketing study conducted on the Argentine website Entremujeres, eighty-five

percent of women believe that Argentine men are *machista* (Tendencias, 2014). This widespread belief held by the female population has been acknowledged by Argentine men, and within the last several years, Argentina has adopted multiple anti-machismo television campaigns in order to redefine traditional gender roles that influence attitudes and behaviors in Buenos Aires (Aguirre et al., 2012). This is an enormous step for the Argentine community in the battle for gender equality because past research has confirmed the importance of male participation in diminishing the pervasiveness of machismo in Latin American cultures. Elsa Tamez (1987) concluded,

If Latin American men do not recognize the reality of women's oppression, if they do not admit that they are promoters or accomplices of the ideology of machismo that permeates our culture, if they do not realize how great the riches that are lost to society due to the marginalization of women, [...] if they do not join in solidarity with women in their struggle, the path of the feminist movement in Latin America will be longer, the progress slower and often more bitter, with more frustrations than joys.
(p. vii)

Nevertheless, in order to understand the current situation for women in Argentina, it is necessary to expound upon the country's women's rights movement and successes, as well as ongoing gender-based disparities.

Gender discrimination and stringent gender roles are still present in both the private and public sectors of contemporary Argentine society. After achieving women's suffrage in 1947 (Hammond, 2011), Argentina was one of the first Latin American countries to enact legislation concerning women's rights, including domestic and family

violence (Friedman, 2009) and working conditions for women and children (Aguirre et al., 2012). Moreover, Buenos Aires gained international attention in the 1970s and 1980s as its renowned human rights activists, the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, defied the limitations of women and motherhood and served as a source of inspiration for other Latin American activists (Bejarano, 2002). Although the Argentine feminist movement has gained momentum in the last decades and has contributed to the continent's fight for women's rights (Aguirre et al., 2012), women in Buenos Aires continue to battle gender discrimination and gender divisions in both social and professional settings.

As previously mentioned, in December 2007, Argentina voted Cristina Fernández de Kirchner to be the first elected female president, which was an enormous achievement for the advancement of Argentine women in the public sphere (Aguirre et al., 2012). However, Fernandez de Kirchner's election caused critics to question whether her success was solely attributable to her politically prominent husband and presidential predecessor, Nestor Kirchner (Gaucho, 2007). This too was the case for Isabel Perón, who served as president of Argentina from 1974 to 1976 after her husband, President Juan Perón, died during his third term in office. It is clear that, despite having an important female political presence on the national level and laws prohibiting gender discrimination, gender-based disparities in Buenos Aires have remained strong.

Economic participation and opportunity for women in Argentina is a clear indicator of this existing inequity. Women now make up approximately 45% of the national non-agricultural workforce, but they hold a disproportionate number of low-paying jobs (Report on Human Rights, 2008). This economic discrimination is further

compounded by profound income disparities between men and women in the overall labor market, as women earn approximately 64 percent of what men earn for equivalent work (Aguirre et al., 2012; Mujer, 2013). The Argentine National Women's Council confirms that, despite recent improvements, women have limited access to employment and advancement opportunities, and traditional gender roles often discourage women from seeking formal employment (Mujer, 2013).

Apart from the nation's economic gender disparities, many men and women in Buenos Aires continue to uphold traditional gender structures that perpetuate gender divisions (Stobbe, 2005). A study conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) shows that women are typically expected to perform domestic chores, and that seventy percent of men living in Buenos Aires do not assist with any domestic work (Valente, 2007). Although employment opportunities for women in Buenos Aires have increased since the 1980s and the gap in economic opportunities between men and women has narrowed significantly (*Women*, 2010), much of society continues to instill the expectation that women perform domestic chores while men occupy the role of the family's main source of income. This means that Argentine women are often forced to work double shifts – working in the formal, professional sector as well as doing household chores after they arrive home. In Buenos Aires, this traditional model of “the man as breadwinner and the woman as homemaker both reflects and propagates long-held perceptions of gender roles and ‘machismo’ in the workplace” and beyond (Aguirre et al., 2012, p. 33).

Gender inequalities pervade most aspects of Porteño society. Thus, for the purpose of this study, I will analyze the use of piropos on the streets of Buenos Aires as a

reflection of these larger structural inequalities. Moreover, I will draw on the collected data in order to discuss how the use of piropos in public spaces has upheld machismo and stringent gender roles in Buenos Aires.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the history of piropos in Buenos Aires, and I provide a brief review of previously published literature that focuses on the use of piropos in Latin America. Based on this literature review, I explain why this study is crucial in gaining a better understanding of this social custom and its meaning for Porteña women.

In Chapter 3, I explain in detail the methodological approaches that I employed as part of this research study. I explain the four data collection methods that I utilized, as well as my motivation for employing each method. I also describe the way in which I coded my data in order to appropriately analyze recurring themes and sentiments.

In Chapter 4, I present the results and data analyses of the study. The results are divided according to ten main subject areas: 1) Participant Demographics, 2) Prevalence of Piropos, 3) Examples of Piropos, 4) Participants' Expressed Opinions of Piropos, 5) Emotional Reactions to Piropos, 6) Verbal Responses to Piropos, 7) Self-Worth from Public Objectification, 8) Participants' Behavioral Changes Due to Piropos, 9) Piropos and Gendered Power Relations, and 10) Internalization and Acceptance of Machismo.

In Chapter 5, I present my recommendations for future research, as well as the final conclusions of this research study.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Background

Machismo and traditional gender roles in Argentina are manifested not only in the home and professional settings, but on the streets as well. Unsolicited advances toward women, also known as piropos, have been researched and documented since the mid 20th century (Kellerman, 1969). In fact, by the mid 1970s, reporters and researchers estimated that the use of piropos in Buenos Aires was a dying tradition that would not last much longer (Andrews, 1977). Nevertheless, the ongoing prevalence of piropos in the public sphere renders it quite far from extinction. These flirtatious interactions can be witnessed on a daily basis in any of Buenos Aires' 48 *barrios*.

Mariana Achugar (2001), an Associate Professor at Carnegie Mellon University, has defined piropos as “compliments with an amorous or sexual expressive tone, usually said by men to women. The setting is usually the street where the participants do not know each other and can remain anonymous” (p. 127). In Latin America, the time-honored practice of delivering piropos was historically perceived as a pleasant way to approach a woman on the street with a refined comment about her beauty (Andrews, 1977). In fact, past research has claimed that the function of piropos was for women “to develop and maintain their feminine self-awareness and self-esteem” (Andrews, 1977, p. 58). However, recent studies have shown that the way in which women are addressed on the streets of Buenos Aires has evolved with time. What were once considered purely poetic and elegant comments have become increasingly more vulgar and chauvinistic in practice (Kissling, 1991). In fact, research conducted on the history and evolution of the

piropo shows that most of the crude, sexist comments made on the streets of Buenos Aires today would not be considered a piropo by its traditional definition (Andrews, 1977). This does not mean that romantic comments are no longer used by men in Buenos Aires to express their appreciation of a woman's beauty, but the number of distasteful comments appears to be on the rise. Accordingly, Latin American women traditionally found piropos to be flattering, but recent research demonstrates that women's opinions of this discourse practice are changing (Achugar, 2001). According to one source, the practice of delivering piropos is now considered a form of street harassment (Kissling, 1991).

The widespread use of piropos in Buenos Aires has triggered recent anti-piropo campaigns and movements. One of the most prominent campaigns in Buenos Aires is called *Acción Respeto*, which was founded in March 2014 (Garsd, 2014). The campaign aims to raise awareness about the street harassment that women face on a daily basis and to create a more respectful society in which street-based violence is no longer underplayed (Acción Respeto, 2015). Furthermore, *Hollaback!*, the international campaign to end street harassment, launched a satellite operation in Buenos Aires in early 2011 (Hollaback!, 2015).

In addition to the recent development of these anti-piropo organizations, many individuals and groups of women have taken to the streets in order to voice their opinion of piropos. Besides talking publically about their experiences, some women have posted flyers and posters around the city in demonstration of their disapproval of this social practice. Although the flyers vary in intensity and meaning, they often include messages

similar to those that I photographed in the *barrrios* of Caballito and Retiro (See Figures 1 through 5).

Figure 1

Your Piropo is Violence



Figure 2

My Body Didn't Ask for Your Opinion

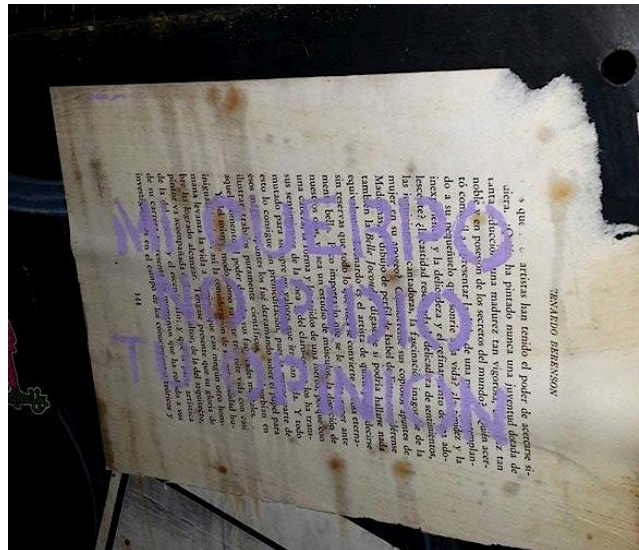


Figure 3

Insisting Won't Get You Laid - Respect My Personal Space



Figure 4

I Don't Want Your Piropo, I Want Your Respect



Figure 5

It's Not a Compliment, It's Violence



Although the word choice varies, the message is clear: some women take offense to the use of piropos and want to put an end to this disturbing social practice.

Nevertheless, the presence of these anti-piropo campaigns in Buenos Aires only represents one side of the local discourse. Despite some change in public opinion, a large portion of the Argentine population still continues to view the use of piropos as innocuous, and many have publically voiced their opinions on the matter. For example, when Inti María Tidball-Binz, the founder of *Hollaback/Atrévete Buenos Aires* was featured in Argentina's *El Guardián* magazine in March 2011, one of the magazine's writers publically ridiculed the campaign (Valente, 2011). Writer Juan Terranova argued that many other issues are more urgent and warrant more attention than the use of

piropos, and he concluded his article by saying that if he were to meet Tidball-Binz, he would love to “romperle el culo a pijazos²” (Wilkins, 2011, p. 1). Although Terranova was eventually dismissed from *El Guardián*, his argument and his comments were supported by a number of Porteños (Badkar, 2011; Cadenas, 2011).

Not surprisingly, this divisive social practice has become a significant political issue in Buenos Aires. While some local legislators have deemed the practice degrading and misogynistic (Valente, 2011), others have shown their full support for the use of piropos in the public sphere. In 2010, Porteño legislator Enzo Pagani even proposed making June 15th a nationally recognized “Piropo Day” (La Mañana, 2010). In this initiative, Pagani argued that the piropo is an important ingredient of Porteño culture, describing it as “una costumbre oral y popular totalmente arraigada en el imaginario social argentino³” (La Mañana, 2010). Pagani’s initiative was ultimately unsuccessful, and Porteña legislator Diana Maffía argued that the initiative’s failure was largely due to the fact that many Argentines are increasingly unsympathetic to this socio-culturally embedded component of Buenos Aires street culture. Maffía described the local use of piropos by saying, “nos dicen cómo nos ven, qué les parece nuestro frente y nuestro dorso, qué nos harían, y eso es una forma de hostigamiento que se oculta detrás de la idea de un supuesto halago⁴” (Valente, 2011).

Officially, the use of intimidating and degrading piropos is legally prohibited in Buenos Aires. The city’s contravention code states that anyone who intimidates, harasses or physically mistreats another person is to be penalized with a fine from AR\$200 to AR\$1,000, mandatory public utility work or 1-5 days imprisonment (Hollaback!, 2015).

Nevertheless, reporting of verbal harassment is extremely uncommon in Buenos Aires, and the debate as to whether or not piropos constitute harassment is ongoing.

Literature Review

Overall, an extremely limited number of academic studies have been conducted on the topic of piropos in Latin America. In 1977, the *Journal of Popular Culture* published David H. Andrews' study on piropos, which provided the academic community with some important information regarding the social practice. Although his study was based out of Lima, Peru, Andrews was able to incorporate additional data that he had collected from several interviews with men and women from other Latin American countries (1977). Andrews' publication was largely descriptive, and his study was focused primarily on the following elements of the discourse practice: the context in which piropos take place, the content and linguistic structure of piropos, women's immediate reactions to the advances, and possible social functions of this Latin American tradition.

Andrews' publication, *Flirtation Walk*, expounded upon the most common ways in which men express their "appreciation of a female's beauty" (p. 50). When explicating the context in which piropos take place, Andrews' data showed that not only do women receive piropos from men that they pass on the street, but also from men on buses and in cars. Andrews' informants also confirmed the existence of various types of piropos, and the diversity was often viewed "as being arranged along a continuum" (p. 54). Andrews reported that comments are not only elegant and flattering, but also tasteless and offensive. Andrews' study thus attests to the fact that, in much of Latin America, crude

and vulgar comments have been a fundamental part of this social tradition for nearly forty years.

Andrews concluded his study by saying that Latin American men appear to say piropos in order to “establish and maintain their sense of manliness (*hombria*) and masculinity (*machismo*)” (1977, p. 58), and that women’s reactions to the advances are mixed. While some women involved in his study were bothered and insulted by the comments they received, others claimed that when public recognition of a female’s beauty does not take place, it “offends the feminine psyche” (1977, p. 58). While this data is extremely valuable in attempting to understand the significance and implications of this practice for women of Latin America, it is nonetheless essential to conduct a geographically specific study in order to account for the fact that Porteña women’s interpretations of this practice may be influenced by local culture and context. Moreover, a new study is necessary in order to reveal the myriad ways in which gender roles have inevitably changed over the last several decades in Buenos Aires, as well as to capture the possible ways in which women’s attitudes towards the practice have changed over the years.

The most recent influential paper related to the Latin American tradition of piropos was written by Mariana Achugar and published in *The Journal of Pragmatics* in 2001. Unlike Andrews’ study, Achugar’s work incorporated many findings from multiple Latin American countries. While much of Achugar’s study focused on the originality of the piropos as well as the metaphoric and hyperbolic nature of the comments made, she included enlightening observations regarding the social function of piropos (2001). Achugar based her analysis on the idea that language and discourse practices reflect and

sustain culture and cultural associations that exist within any given society. By analyzing the use of piropos in Spanish-speaking countries, Achugar (2001) revealed a pronounced link between a culture and its ideology, and she argued that piropos demonstrate “a very defined place for each sex in society” (p. 135). In her study, “Piropos as Metaphors for Gender Roles in Spanish Speaking Cultures,” she argued that piropos often reproduce traditional gender structures by reinforcing the notion that women are passive recipients and men are active producers and initiators in Latin America (2001).

Despite her edifying examination of the use of piropos in Spanish-Speaking countries, there are certain limitations to Achugar’s research and analysis that I intend to address in my investigation. In her publication, Achugar (2001) examined how this discourse practice is likely representative of gender-based power differences in Latin America, but she does not incorporate the opinions or perspectives of her informants in order to substantiate these claims. When conducting research on a foreign culture and its practices, I personally believe that the inclusion of these perspectives is vital in order to ensure authenticity of the data and to avoid inflicting the researcher’s own personal values or perceptions on the process of analysis. What’s more, Achugar (2001) argued that there seem to be “conceptual changes in the ways women understand the experience of gender relations in the public sphere” because there have been noticeable changes in the ways women interpret and react to piropos (p. 136). While these statements are hugely relevant in understanding changes to both this social practice and to larger societal structures, I feel that the incorporation of women’s personal experiences and impressions would add strength and legitimacy to her assertions.

Based on my research, no studies have been conducted specifically on the practice of piropos in Buenos Aires. Nor have I found a study that discusses the social implications and effects that piropos and other advances have on women in Buenos Aires. In this study, I intend to examine how piropos affect women's comfort and security in the public realm. I feel that these topics warrant further investigation in order to gain an increased understanding of Porteño culture, as well as a better understanding of this local manifestation of the marked distinctions between Porteño men and women. I believe that current literature on the subject of piropos in Buenos Aires does not adequately describe or deduce the effects that this street-based practice may have on women. What's more, I believe that this study would be beneficial to Porteño society in that it allows for in-depth discussion of an outdated social practice, and it provides Porteña women with a springboard to further understand and express their opinions concerning the custom.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Determination and Implementation of Research Design

I employed a combination of data collection methods in order to ensure the authenticity and credibility of my findings. These methods included: participant observation, surveys, prearranged one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions. I recruited forty participants for this study, and each participant partook in at least one of the data collection methods listed above. I cannot compare this number to similar studies conducted by Andrews (1977) and Achugar (2001) because they did not disclose the number of informants in their respective studies. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that graduate students have a sample size of approximately twenty for a master's thesis (Baker & Edwards, 2012). For the purpose of my research, I believe that forty participants was sufficient to garner an in-depth understanding of this social practice and its meaning for Porteña women.

The first way in which I collected data was through participant observation. This data-collecting procedure was used by Andrews (1977) to facilitate his understanding of piropos within their local contexts. I used this same observation technique in order to better learn how and when piropos are delivered in Buenos Aires. Andrews (1977) identified the difficulties he encountered in his research when he attempted to create a list of common piropos by probing his informants in individual interviews. He suggested that observation and focus group discussions are better options for achieving this goal. For my direct observation, I walked along the streets unaccompanied, and I took field note descriptions of the piropos that I heard. I described the men delivering the piropo as well

as the verbal or physical interaction that took place between the man and the intended recipient of the piropo. I conducted participant observation as my initial data-collecting method because it enhanced my exposure to this Latin American custom and encouraged the generation of new research questions and theories derived from on-the-scene observation (DeWalt, 2011). Thus, participant observation helped me gain a stronger familiarity with the use of piropos in Buenos Aires before carrying out any interviews or group discussions. I conducted approximately six hours of participant observation. My observation took place in both Belgrano and Palermo, near the Juramento and Plaza Italia subway stations. I chose these two specific locations because they have particularly heavy foot traffic for the city of Buenos Aires. What's more, men often attempt to flirtatiously engage with women in these two densely populated locations.

After collecting data through participant observation on the streets, I later augmented my field notes to include any additional details that I left out. I translated my field notes from Spanish to English. After completing the translations, I began to organize the data by patterns or themes that arose as I compiled my field notes. I looked for patterns characterized by similarities, differences, frequency, sequence, correspondence and causation (Saldaña, 2013). I revisited the data that I had collected on multiple occasions throughout the project in order to fully understand the patterns and explanations that were originally buried within the data. Furthermore, I used this data to help me better comprehend the participants' personal experiences with piropos and to prepare additional questions for the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.

Following the traditional anthropological technique of observation, I recruited 33 female participants to complete one-page questionnaires about their experiences with unsolicited advances on the streets of Buenos Aires (see Appendices C & D). The questionnaire included both open-ended and closed-ended questions regarding the frequency of their exposure to piropos, their general opinion of piropos, as well as their emotional reactions to these flirtatious interactions. While some of these female participants were recruited on the street, others were friends or relatives of acquaintances. For those participants who were recruited on the street, I utilized a recruitment script that had been previously approved by the IRB (see Appendices E & F), and each participant was asked to sign a consent form (see Appendices A & B). These encounters did not last more than 15 minutes.

As with my field notes from participant observation, I coded the data that I collected from the questionnaires. I used these codes to organize and group together similarly coded data, which allowed for easier interpretation (Saldaña, 2013). The process of coding “manages, filters, highlights, and focuses the salient features of the qualitative data record for generating categories, themes, and concepts, grasping meaning, and/or building theory” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 8). Furthermore, by systematically reviewing the data collected from the questionnaires, I was able to improve and, when necessary, redirect my interview questions for the one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions.

I also conducted two focus group discussions while in Buenos Aires. In order to recruit participants for the two focus groups, I sent out a recruitment email to my female acquaintances in Buenos Aires, as well as to other women whom I was told were interested in the study (see Appendices G & H). The first focus group consisted of six

women ages 25 to 35. The second consisted of three women ages 31 to 40. The two focus group discussions took place two weeks apart.

I originally planned on interviewing all of the female informants in this study in one-on-one semi-structured interviews, but several of the participants informed me that they would feel more comfortable discussing the use of piropos and their personal opinions in a group setting. In an effort to ensure the participants' comfort and contentment, I arranged these two focus groups. Moreover, Andrews (1977) suggested that focus groups were one of the most productive data collection processes used in his study because they allowed participants to bounce ideas off one another and recount similar or differing experiences and perspectives, much like *the group effect* described by Carey and Smith (1994). I believe that conducting focus groups enhanced my study by ensuring the comfort of the informants and by providing the informants with a good deal of control over their own interactions (Morgan, 1996; Nichols-Casebolt & Spakes, 1995). The women who agreed to participate in the focus groups were provided a monetary compensation of \$50 pesos argentinos, which is equivalent to US\$ 5. The open-ended questions posed during the focus groups were centered around the participants' personal experiences with piropos on the streets of Buenos Aires. The focus group discussions lasted approximately 90 minutes, and all focus group participants were asked to sign a consent form prior to any discussion (see Appendices A & B). Audiotape was utilized during the group discussions, and the tape will be erased upon completion of the study.

During my stay in Buenos Aires, I reviewed the focus group discussion transcripts in order to write appropriate follow-up questions for the individual interviews that came after the focus groups. I made sure that the follow-up questions stuck to the themes and

topics that arose during the focus groups, and I was therefore able to gain an increased understanding of each specific informant's thoughts or experiences regarding piropos. I translated the comments made during the focus group discussions. I then used similar data coding processes as those mentioned above. The main categories of analysis that were pulled from the data were as follows: women's general opinion of piropos, emotional reactions to piropos (anger, irritation, fear, intimidation, embarrassment, shame, amusement, feigned amusement, contentment), frequency of piropos, verbal responses, a sense of self-worth derived from public objectification, acceptance and/or internalization of machismo as part of Porteño street culture, traditional gender roles and gendered power relations, women's understanding of the use of piropos, behavioral changes due to these interactions, and examples of piropos. As with the other collected data, I continually revisited the focus group transcripts in order to reflect on the coded segments, to search for combinations of categories and to better understand the relationship between distinct categories.

According to Saldaña, "the act of coding requires that you wear your researcher's analytic lens. But how you perceive and interpret what is happening in the data depends on what type of filter covers that lens" (2013, p. 6). For the purpose of this study, I addressed and interpreted the data with a focus on gender equality and equal rights. Nevertheless, I understood that my role as researcher meant that I was entering a culture that was not my own, and I took extra precaution to not let my ideals or beliefs influence my interpretation of the data. Rather, I attempted to let the quotes and statistics speak for themselves.

The final data collection method that I utilized for this study was a semi-structured individual interview. These individual interviews were utilized by both Andrews (1977) and Achugar (2001) with success, and I believe it was necessary to include these interviews in order gain a stronger in-depth understanding of women's personal experiences with piropos, which they may not have been willing to discuss in a group setting. However, as previously mentioned, I included supplementary research methods in addition to one-on-one interviews so as to limit the effect of the cultural and power differences between the informants and myself, an effect that has been referred to as *the interviewer effect* (Denscombe, 2007). I conducted 10 individual interviews, and in order to recruit the participants, I used the same recruitment email that I had used for the focus groups (see Appendices G & H). While some of these interviews were used as a follow-up to focus group discussions, some informants solely participated in individual interviews. In the interviews, the informants were asked in-depth, open-ended questions regarding their experiences with piropos in Buenos Aires. The individual interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes, and the informants were provided monetary compensation of \$50 pesos for their time. A signed consent form was required from each participant before the individual interview began (see Appendices A & B). Audiotape was utilized during the interviews, and the tapes will be erased upon completion of the study. The data collected from the one-on-one interviews was coded alongside the focus group discussions and according to the same categories of analysis.

As previously mentioned, I put together a recruitment form that was sent out via email to my female Argentine acquaintances in order to recruit participants for the prearranged individual interviews and focus groups. I also prepared a verbal recruitment

statement in order to ask Porteña women if they would be willing to complete a one-page questionnaire regarding their experiences with piropos. The questions for the interviews and focus groups were prepared in advance, as well a consent form that all participants were asked to sign. The interview questions were altered slightly when deemed necessary. As required for all research with human subjects, I received full approval from the Institutional Review Board before beginning the data collection processes of this investigation.

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSES AND RESULTS

In this next chapter, I will present a synopsis of the results and an analysis of the data collected during this study. I will discuss and summarize my findings regarding Porteña women's experiences with piropos in the public sphere and their various interpretations of the social practice. The results and analyses will incorporate both quantitative and qualitative data that was collected by way of participant observation, surveys, focus groups and individual interviews. As I organized the collected data and prepared for analysis, I arranged the data according to patterns characterized by similarities, differences, frequency and causation. The collected data will therefore be presented in accordance with the following ten subsections: 1) Participant Demographics, 2) Prevalence of Piropos, 3) Examples of Piropos, 4) Participants' General Opinion of Piropos, 5) Emotional Reactions to Piropos, 6) Verbal Responses to Piropos, 7) Self-Worth Derived from Public Objectification, 8) Participants' Behavioral Changes Due to Piropos, 9) Piropos and Gendered Power Relations, and 10) Internalization and Acceptance of Machismo. The information presented in this chapter will be interpreted and analyzed to allow for an evaluation of the findings and to determine whether the data can relate to previous research.

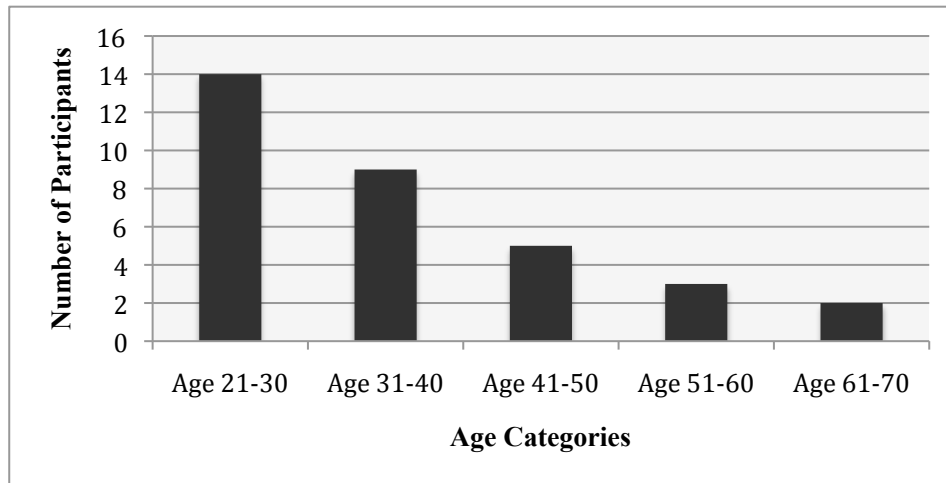
Participant Demographics

The age range of the thirty-three participants who completed the one-page questionnaire (see Appendices C & D) varied considerably. In order to analyze the collected data more easily and to identify patterns according to age group, I divided the survey participants into five distinct age categories. Of the 33 participants who completed

the questionnaire, fourteen were between the ages of 21 and 30, nine were between the ages of 31 and 40, five were between the ages of 41 and 50, three were between the ages of 51 and 60, and two were between the ages of 61 and 70. See Table 1 for a visual breakdown of survey participants according to age category.

Table 1

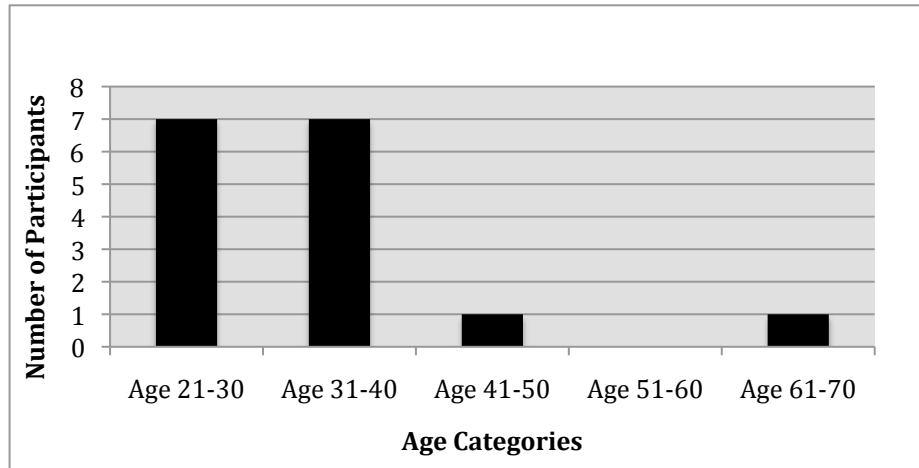
Age Distribution of Survey Participants



The ten participants who partook in the focus groups and individual interviews also varied significantly in age. The youngest participant was 23 and the eldest was 69. Nevertheless, the large majority of the focus group and interview participants were under the age of 40. Table 2 shows the age range of focus group and survey participants.

Table 2

Age Distribution of Focus Group and Interview Participants



When recruiting participants to take part in this research study, I intentionally sought women that were age 40 or younger, because previous research has shown that most piropos are intended for younger women (Andrews, 1977). In the end, 69.7% of the survey participants and 87.5% of the focus group and interview participants were under the age of 40. By focusing my study on younger women, I feel that I was able to speak with the participants about their current and recent experiences with piropos, at a time when their exposure to this flirtatious social practice was theoretically at its peak.

All forty of the participants in this study were female residents of the city of Buenos Aires. All of the participants were raised in Capital Federal, the country's largest urban center. It was important for me to limit my recruitment to participants who were raised in the city of Buenos Aires so that I could draw on their lifelong experiences with the local use of piropos. Due to the fact that the chosen participants had been raised in Buenos Aires, they were able to give an account of their experiences with piropos as both an adolescent and as an adult. They were also able to contribute to discussions on the

changing interpretations of this custom. Moreover, by only including Porteña women in this study, I was able to analyze the collected data as representative of the opinions and interpretations of a specific population, as their opinions were likely influenced by local culture and context.

Prevalence of Piropos

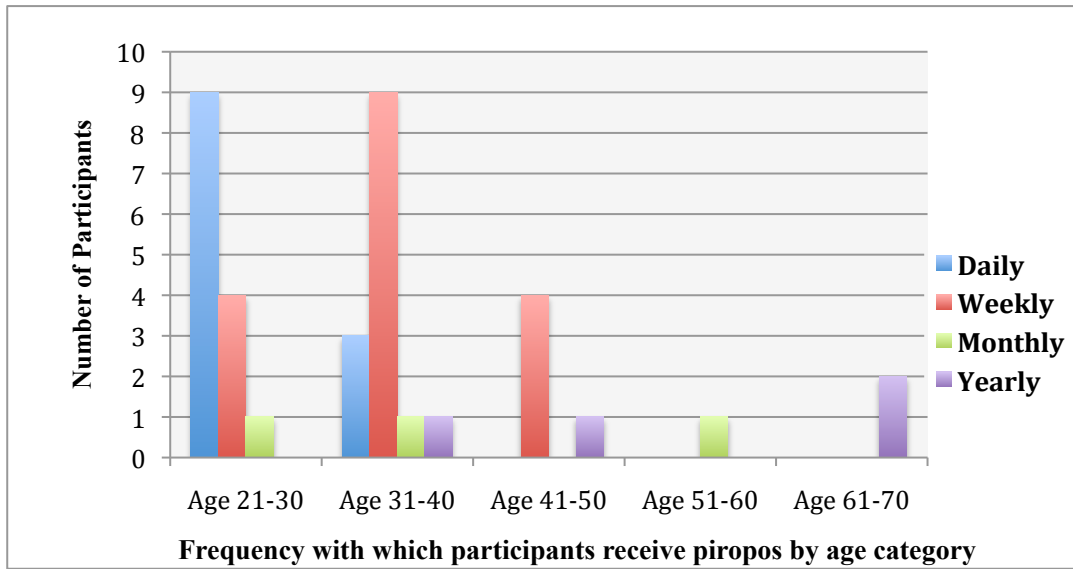
Throughout this section, I will examine the overall presence of piropos in Buenos Aires. I will present my findings on the frequency with which the survey participants receive piropos, and I will further support these findings with passages from focus groups and individual interviews. Subsequently, I will discuss the age at which most girls begin receiving piropos in the public sphere, as I feel it is an important element in understanding Porteña women's interpretations of this social practice. I will then discuss the use of the various types of piropos in Buenos Aires, which range from whistling and honking to vulgar gestures and physical contact. I will refer to the focus group discussions in order to describe the prevalence of offensive and degrading piropos, and I will draw on survey results to determine which types of piropos are the most frequent. This will provide the reader with a more in-depth understanding of the participants' constant exposure to piropos, which, in turn, will help the reader appreciate their understanding of and responses to these public interactions (to be discussed in subsequent subsections of this chapter).

All participants were asked to identify the frequency with which they receive piropos, and they were given the following list of options: daily, weekly, monthly and yearly. After linking the participants' responses to their respective age groups, the data collected from the one-page questionnaires substantiated the earlier determination that the

frequency with which women receive piropos is directly correlated to their age. See Table 3 for a clear itemization of the pronounced relationship between the recipient’s age and the frequency with which they experience these public interactions.

Table 3

Frequency of Piropos According to Age



Of the survey participants who were between the ages of 21 and 30, 64.2% reported that they receive piropos on a daily basis in the public sphere, and several reported that they often receive more than one piropo per day. Furthermore, 28.5% of the participants who were between the ages of 21 and 30 reported that they receive piropos on a weekly basis, and only one participant in this age group reported that her exposure to this practice is on a monthly basis.

As we continue to evaluate the frequency of piropos according to age category, it becomes clear that the frequency of these interactions progressively lessens as the age of the recipient increases. For those participants who ranged in age from 31 to 40 and 41 to

50, the majority said that they typically receive one piropo per week. For those women between the ages of 51 and 60 the frequency lessens to once a month, and for those participants between the ages of 61 and 70, the frequency lessens to just once or twice a year. These values show not only that the bulk of piropos are indeed targeted at younger women, but also that this social practice is nonetheless an integral part of street culture for Porteña women of all ages.

These survey results were further bolstered by the data that I collected through focus groups and individual interviews. Most participants who fell into the first age bracket (21-30 years old) explained that they typically receive piropos on a daily basis. During the first focus group discussion, Sofía, who was twenty-nine at the time of her interview, explained that she receives piropos every time she enters a public space. She said, “Capaz que camino mucho, pero cada vez que camino, me pasa que algún bestia me dice algo. O sea, que no es *piropo*, pero siempre hay algún tipo que se da vuelta y te tira alguno.”⁵ Furthermore, Angela, who was twenty-three at the time of our individual interview, agreed with Sofía that piropos of all types are ubiquitous in the public sphere. When I asked her to state the frequency with which she receives piropos from random men in public, she responded, “Siempre. Siempre alguien te dice algo o hace algún gesto. Te tocan bocina o lo que sea. Pero todos los días seguro.”⁶ These comments aligned seamlessly with the data collected from the one-page surveys, as shown in Table 3.

Nearly half of the participants who partook in the focus groups and individual interviews were between the ages of 31 and 40, and they, therefore, fell into the second age category. These participants’ comments also strengthened the results of the survey.

Most of their comments suggested that they receive piropos on a weekly basis, which was the most highly reported response for women of the same age category on the survey.

The three participants in the second focus group all fell into this age category (31-40). When I asked them to describe their exposure to piropos, they replied,

Mónica: Yo creo que una vez por semana.

Marcela: Una vez por semana.

Marta: Yo diría entre 2 y 3 veces por semana. Ni todos los días ni una vez por semana. Un intermedio.⁷

Victoria, a thirty-one year old participant, also described her exposure to piropos as a weekly occurrence. When asked how often she is the recipient of a piropo, she laughed and said, “Jamás lo pensé. Seguro que en la semana, sí. Como mínimo, una vez por semana. Camino mucho y por eso estoy más expuesta a que me digan cosas.”⁸

Like Victoria, there were other interview participants who had never before thought about or discussed their exposure to piropos. It was clear that some participants felt uncomfortable explaining how often they receive piropos in the public sphere, as if they were boasting or bragging about their own beauty. Some, like Victoria, felt the need to give an explanation for their high frequency of exposure to piropos, such as being in public spaces more often than others or walking in public regularly, which makes the woman a more likely target of piropos. Others, however, understood that piropos are such a pervasive element of public life that they affect all women in the public sphere, and they did not feel the need to justify their experiences. After noticing this behavior in several of my first individual interviews, I consequently tried to encourage the participants not to feel shame or embarrassment when discussing their exposure to

piropos, and I believe that this helped the participants be more open and candid when providing me with this information.

All of the participants in the focus groups and individual interviews explained that most girls begin receiving piropos at a very young age in Buenos Aires. When I asked the second focus group to provide me with more detailed information about when girls typically become more frequently exposed to this social practice, the participants responded,

Mónica: A los trece.

Marta: Sí, cuando te desarrollás.

Marcela: Más o menos cuando cambia tu cuerpo, cuando te desarrollás.

Marta: Quizás empiezan a decirte a los 13, y después cada vez más. A los 14, a los 15...

Mónica: Y también es cuando uno empieza a andar solo, me parece.

Quizás cuando vas caminando con tu vieja con 12 no te dicen. O te dicen pero a mí me pasó muy pocas veces.

Marta: A mí me pasó que me dijeron “A la hija y a la madre!”

Mónica: “Tan linda como la mamá!” Esas boludeces, pero cuando tenés 13 o 14 y ya caminás sola...⁹

These participants explained how girls learn at an extremely young age that sexual objectification is a central part of Buenos Aires street culture. Mónica stated that she received her first piropos before she entered her teen years, and her exposure to them became increasingly more frequent as she grew older.

For many of the interview participants, their first experiences with piropos are remembered in great detail because of the fear and distress that they triggered. During her individual interview, Carina described her first experience with piropos in public. She recalled,

Me quedó muy marcado un día que iba a la educación física... salí de la escuela e iba a la educación física. Tendría 13 años porque era el primer año que empezaba a andar sola. Tenía puesta una remera larga grande y un jogging feo. O sea, estaba muy desarreglada. Pasó un tipo muy viejo y me dijo, “cómo te chuparía las tetitas, mami.” Y fue muy feo para mí. Ese día lo recuerdo como el primer piropo que me dijeron. Fue muy invasivo porque era muy chica.¹⁰

In line with Carina’s narration, many participants agreed that teenage girls tend to be the target of more inappropriate, sexually aggressive piropos. In a separate interview, Claudia explained that when she walks down the street with her little sister, she is disgusted by the comments that are made toward her. She said,

A partir de que se desarrolla la chica, cuando empieza a tener más cuerpo de mujer, te dicen cosas en la calle. [...] Voy caminando con mi hermanita que tiene 16 y está muy desarrollada, le gritan cosas y yo les digo “¿Vos estás loco? ¿No te das cuenta que es una nena? ¿Cómo le vas a gritar semejante guasada a una nena?”¹¹

Most participants acknowledged that young girls are the target of more offensive piropos. During the second focus group discussion, the participants explained their understanding of this sordid reality.

Mónica: Lo que pasa es que es más por un tema quizás de que la ven más chica, más indefensa. Quizás por eso te faltan más el respeto. Quizás con una mina más grande, quizás tengan más cagazo de decirte algo así.

Marta: Claro, porque sabe que podés reaccionar de otra manera.

Mónica: Quizás reaccionan mal. En cambio, una chica de 15 años no sabe qué hacer. Se asusta. No va a reaccionar me parece.¹²

Thus, it appears that men take advantage of the powerlessness and vulnerability of young girls by bombarding them with offensive and oftentimes violent comments and gestures. I do not mean to imply that older women do not receive aggressive piropos, but nearly every woman I interviewed stated that she does not currently receive as many offensive comments as she did during her adolescence.

Nevertheless, I was astounded to hear how many piropos do not have the intention of flattery, but rather intimidation and occasionally embarrassment. During the first focus group discussion, I asked the participants to tell me what fraction of the piropos they receive are outwardly offensive. They responded,

Paula: Quizás un 50/50.

Laura: Para mí, un 80/20. Más feos que lindos.

Daniela: Más feos que lindos seguro.

Laura: Sí, se zarpan.

Natalia: No, más lindos que feos. Al menos en mi caso.

Laura: No, ni en pedo. Se zarpan.

Sofía: No, para mí son más zarpados que lindos.

Paula: Para mí, un 50/50.

Daniela: “Qué culo, mamita.” Esas cosas son típicas.

Sofía: A mí me dicen más piropos chocantes que no. Como un 80/20.

Daniela: Y también está ese piropo, “qué buena que está tu amiga, bicho!” No es un piropo, pero pasa. Mi novio dice esas cosas también. “Gorrrrda! Caminá, hija de puta! Dejá los postres!”

Sofía: A mí lo que me pasó es - no eso - pero sí de pasar del amor al odio. O sea, me dijeron algo que era supuestamente lindo, y como yo puse cara de culo o no contesté, después resulté ser la más fea del mundo. Entonces me gritaron “Ahhh, qué fea que sos!” O sea, a mí me ha pasado ese cambio pero no que uno me bardea así de una en la calle.

Daniela: Una vez estuve cruzando un puente, venía con una campera de animal print. Y un chico me cruzó y me dijo “Prefiero a Garfield que a vos!” No creo que pase mucho pero me ha pasado.

Paula: Yo creo que si hay un grupo de chicos, eso también les da pie a decir cualquier cosa. Pasan chicas y les dicen cosas lindas o feas, no importa. A veces es de despecho porque saben que no las van a tener.

Florencia: A mí me ha pasado. Me estoy acordando. De adolescente.. a los 20 más o menos me han dicho en el colectivo o yendo a bailar “Gorda! Gorda!” Todo bien, tengo unos kilos demás pero nunca fui gorda para que me lo digas así en la calle.¹³

These participants, with the exception of Natalie, agreed that they receive just as many offensive piropos as flattering piropos. These percentages were repeated throughout my individual interviews, with few exceptions. Susana, for example, stated that she received

more flattering comments than offensive comments, but she did refer to the discourteous nature of some piropos. She said,

Yo diría que era más un 80% no ofensivos. Un 80% halagadores y un 20% negativos. Eran negativos porque generalmente buscaban un defecto. Como “Qué culo gordo que tenés” o “Qué carota” o “Qué feas piernas.” Qué sé yo. Yo siempre entendí que una gran parte del piropo es resaltar un defecto. A veces una virtud, pero también los defectos.¹⁴

These women’s experiences with piropos are contradictory to what many Porteños think of when they discuss the use of piropos. Rather than utilizing this discourse practice to shower women with romantic or poetic comments about their beauty, it appears that some men are intent on purposely shaming or belittling women in the public sphere with their brazen comments.

But verbal comments are not the only type of piropo that pervades the streets of Buenos Aires. Staring, honking, whistling, vulgar gestures, being followed and physical contact are also important elements of women’s everyday experiences in the public sphere. On the one-page survey that I distributed to thirty-three participants (see Appendices C & D), I asked each woman to report the different types of piropos that she experiences, either sometimes or often/always, while in the public sphere. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Types of Piropos Reported by Survey Participants

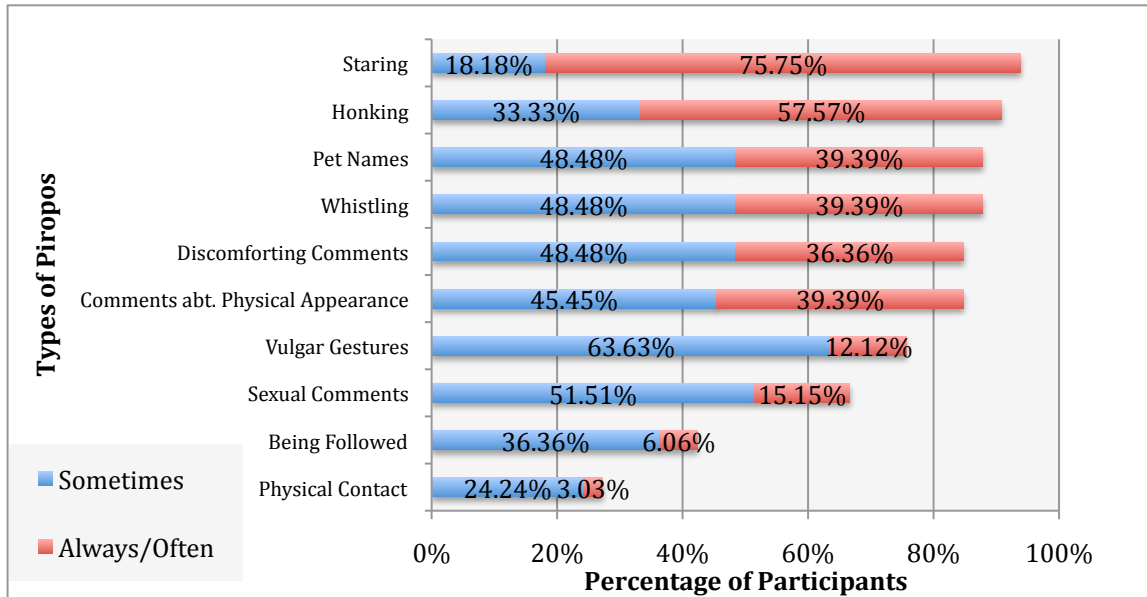


Table 4 substantiates the widespread use of piropos in Buenos Aires. Staring was the most highly reported type of piropo, as 93.93% of participants acknowledged that men stare at them, either sometimes or often/always, while they occupy public spaces. Honking was reported by 90.90% of participants, and whistling and pet names were reported by 87.87% of participants. Comments about the recipient’s physical appearance and comments that make the recipient feel uncomfortable were both reported by 84.84% of participants. Vulgar gestures were reported by 75.75% of participants, and sexual comments were reported by 66.67%. Moreover, 42.42% of participants acknowledged their experience with men following them in public spaces, and 24.24% reported personal experience with unwanted physical contact.

While I am not surprised by the overall omnipresence of piropos, I was astounded to learn that nearly 43% of participants have had men follow them in public and nearly

25% of them have experienced unwanted physical contact in Buenos Aires. These statistics speak to the diminishing sense of security and wellbeing that a woman has in the public sphere in Buenos Aires. Not only does she have to tolerate a wide range of comments about her physical appearance, but she must also fear for her safety in public because of her treatment at the hands of anonymous men. In the following sections of this chapter, I will discuss in further detail how women respond to the different types of piropos, and I will explore how piropos affect women's comfort and security in the public realm.

Examples of Piropos

Throughout this research study, I was exposed to examples of verbal piropos in every methodological approach that I employed. I personally received several verbal piropos in the course of participant observation, survey participants were asked to report the last verbal piropo that they received, and focus group and individual interview participants provided me with an abundance of examples of verbal piropos from their past personal experiences. In order to give the reader a deeper understanding of the language used in piropos, I have compiled four distinct lists that reveal the various intentions and attitudes of the comments made toward women in public spaces in Buenos Aires. When I initiated the compilation of this collected data, it quickly became apparent that the style and objective of verbal piropos could vary drastically from one interaction to the next, and it became essential to separate these diverse comments according to the various intentions. Therefore, I have divided the verbal piropos into the following four categories: 1) Straightforward, seemingly complimentary comments, 2) Poetic or creative

comments, 3) Invasive or discomforting comments, and 4) Aggressive and sexually explicit comments.

The lists below are compilations of verbal piropos from the focus group discussions, individual interviews, surveys and participant observation. This first particular list of piropos includes comments with a simple structure that appear to have the sole intention of flattery. Of course, as I will discuss in the following subsections of this chapter, simple comments can be also intimidating and discomforting for the recipient in accordance with the man's tone of voice and implied intention. Nevertheless, this initial list does not include comments or phrases with inappropriate language.

1. Sos un bombón.
2. Qué divina.
3. Chau, mi amor.
4. Qué florcita.
5. Qué linda que sos.
6. Ay, mi amor.
7. Qué hermosa.
8. Sos una bomba.
9. Qué linda chica.
10. Qué buena que estás.
11. Diosa, ¿cómo andás?
12. Qué bonita.
13. Ay, por favor.
14. Casáte conmigo.
15. Qué linda mujer.
16. Sos hermosa.
17. Hermosa, mi amor.
18. Hola, rubia.
19. Morocha linda.
20. Hola, diosa.
21. Qué linda que sos, morocha.¹⁵

Next, from the collected data, I have compiled a list of piropos that are more elaborate and poetic in nature. These piropos utilize conceptual metaphors, hyperboles or simply more original, creative language.

1. Se te cayó un papel... el que te envuelve bombón.
2. Andá por la sombra que te vas a derretir, bombón.
3. Qué adelantada está la ciencia que hasta los bombones caminan.
4. ¿Tenés 25 centavos?
Sí, ¿para qué?
 Para llamar a mi mamá porque encontré un ángel.
5. Adiós corazón de arroz, todo lo que tengo es para vos.
6. Sos una fuente de placer.
7. Sos un monumento a la belleza.
8. Con esas curvas, me estrello.
9. Tené cuidado en la esquina de la calle.
¿Por qué?
 Porque están robando muñecas.
10. Ay, salió el sol.
11. Sin vos, no habría un día de la primavera.
12. Yo plancho, cocino... soy el marido perfecto.
13. Si la AFIP cobrara impuestos por la belleza, estarías jodida.
14. No es la bicisenda sino la bombonsenda.
15. ¡Cómo me gustaría ser asiento! (When the recipient is riding a bike)
16. Si le digo a mamá que cocine, ¿venís?
17. ¿Es su hija, señora?
Sí.
 Muy bien, ¡eh! Siga fabricando.¹⁶

By and large, the participants' reactions to this type of piropo were positive. During the individual interviews and focus group discussions, most participants reported feeling flattered and amused when they received a piropo of this nature.

The next list is a compilation of verbal piropos that typically cause the recipients to feel uncomfortable. In general, the recipients often view these comments as invasive or irritating. The comments vary in creativity and structure.

1. Mucho pan para ese salame. (When recipient is with boyfriend)
2. Qué linda que es tu novia. (When recipient is with boyfriend)
3. ¡Suegra! ¡Suegra! A vos también te damos. (When recipient is with her mother)
4. ¡A la hija y a la madre! (When recipient is with her mother)
5. Me hago cargo. (When recipient is with her children)
6. ¿Te hago una pregunta, hermosa?
7. ¿Te llevo? No te cobro.
8. ¿Para dónde vas, nena?
9. Qué boquita.

10. Hola, mamita.
11. Qué pan dulce, Pamela!
12. Sos más fuerte que el pis de la mañana.
13. Mamaza, con esa cola te invito a hacer caca en mi casa.
14. Mamita, con ese culo cagáme en el ojo y decíme pirata de mierda.
15. Vas a tener frío en el pechito, mi amor.
16. Qué lomo.
17. Qué cuerpazo.¹⁷

The final list that I have compiled includes sexually explicit comments that are generally delivered with the intention of intimidating or upsetting the recipient. Although not always the case, the typical reaction to this type of piropo is negative.

1. Vení linda que te violamos.
2. Qué ganas de cogerte.
3. Cómo te parto.
4. Con ese culo, quiero que me cagues.
5. Te haría cinco hijos.
6. Cómo te chuparía toda la argolla.
7. Te parto ese culo en veinte.
8. Te hago de todo.
9. Te violaría toda.
10. Cómo te chuparía las tetitas, mami.
11. Mamita, te llevo y te hago de todo.
12. Con ese culo, tiramos la concha a la mierda.
13. Te hago otro hijo.
14. Te la chupo toda.
15. Qué lindo culo, mamita.
16. Te chupo la concha.
17. Te cojo toda la noche.
18. Qué culo que tenés.
19. Qué tetas hermosas.
20. Te voy a romper el culo. Te lo voy a dejar todo roto.
21. Te agarro y te doy 30 vueltas.¹⁸

Although these lists do not include every verbal piropo that was mentioned during the various data collection processes, I believe that these lists are adequate in proving the fluctuating nature of piropos and the various intentions of men delivering them. By presenting these disparities among the piropos themselves and the piropedores, I am

able to gain a greater appreciation for Porteña women's daily experiences. This increased awareness facilitates the breakdown of any generalizations about piropos and the emotional reactions that a woman may have in response to piropos.

Participants' Expressed Opinions of Piropos:

Throughout my research, I was able to record a wide range of opinions held by the participants with respect to the use of piropos. Of course, an overall opinion of piropos is difficult to convey due to the varying nature of comments and other advances. For the purpose of this study, I will list the opinions expressed in the individual interviews, focus groups, and one-page surveys. Due to the fact that the surveys were completed in an anonymous fashion (the participants did not sign their names to the surveys), their opinions will be listed without a name. I have divided the opinions into two distinct groups: 1) those that speak negatively of both mild and offensive/intimidating piropos, and 2) those that speak indifferently or positively about mild piropos and negatively about offensive/intimidating piropos. The two lists are found below.

Negative Opinions of Both Mild and Offensive/Intimidating Piropos:

1. **Daniela:** El piropo en realidad es una frase para halagar a la mujer. Lo que pasa es que se fue deformando. Las frases ya no son muy acordes y son más subidas de tono. Son más groseras. Y parecen un acoso.¹⁹
2. **Claudia:** El 100% de los piropos, de cualquier interacción, que me parece arbitraria y forzada, me molestan. El 100% me molestan. Me van a molestar siempre. Un 10% pueden ser cosas que no me molesten tanto, pero el 90% me parecen ofensivos. [...] Mirá, si hoy me preguntarás qué es un piropo, suena como algo lindo. Porque a lo que yo estoy acostumbrada no es un piropo. Es una grosería. Es una masturbación mental del pibe. Es una cosa totalmente violenta. Tal vez haya personas que no te digan todas las cosas que te estoy diciendo de los piropos. No todo el mundo lo vive igual. Pero en mi caso, yo creo que es una conducta violenta y sexual, llena de groserías. Obviamente hay de todo, ¿no? Te

pueden decir “qué linda que sos” y te puede parece inofensivo pero también te pueden llegar a decir cosas mucho más feas.²⁰

3. **Marta:** Por eso siento que puede ser invasivo el piropo, sea el que sea, porque si vos no tenés ganas de recibirlo... no está bien.²¹
4. **Paula:** A mí no me gustan para nada los piropos porque te pueden sacar una sonrisa un día pero la verdad es que en general, quiero caminar por la calle y al ver un hombre adelante, no quiero estar pensando si se me va a acercar y me va a decir algo, o los cinco mecánicos que están en su taller mecánico... Entonces prefiero no escuchar piropos. No me gustan. La verdad es que no me gusta escucharlos. [...] Me parece que son incómodos, desubicados y que realmente uno no quiere escuchar cosas así.²²
5. **Carina:** No me gustan. No de desconocidos. Si me lo dice un amigo o una amiga, eso sí me gusta porque me parece sensato y real. Pero de un desconocido, no. No me interesa su opinión. Me parece que está tratando de ponerse por encima. Y está menospreciando a la mujer.²³
6. **María:** Ojalá no existieran todos los piropos. Ojalá podría salir a la calle y no tener que preocuparme por lo que me pongo. Hasta yo no salgo en ciertos horarios para evitar. [...] Desearía que no existieran. Pero ya que estoy acostumbrada a la costumbre, no me molesta mucho y ya lo tengo aceptado. Sé que me van a decir cosas pero no va a cambiar. Qué sé yo. Sería bueno que no fuera tan seguida. Alguna que otra vez te dicen algo lindo, podrías pensar, “mirá qué bien.” Una vez cada tanto... Por eso te digo que a veces el piropo en sí no es que molesta, pero te pasa tan seguido que llega a molestar... No tener derecho de salir a la calle y que no te digan nada.²⁴
7. **Ángela:** No me gustan. Me molestan. Son molestos. Incluso si te dicen algo lindo. Igual, yo soy una persona muy poco romántica. Así que olvidáte que me vaya a gustar algo así y menos de una persona que no conozco. Un viejo verde. No sé. [...] Para mí, el piropo ya perdió el valor. Te lo dice cualquier persona y todo el tiempo. Ya no le das valor. Eso es lo que pasa, al menos acá en Buenos Aires. Es constante y omnipresente. Cuando volví de Italia a los 16, no estaba acostumbrada. Y cuando me empecé a dar cuenta que todo el mundo te decía algo... no sé, es feo.²⁵
8. **Victoria:** Para mí, ponen incómoda a la persona. Lo que pasa es que estamos muy acostumbrados. Entonces, no es algo fácil de evaluar o de analizar del todo. Te puede hasta causar gracia o qué sé yo, pero incómodo te pone. Y cuanto más así... si son más desagradables, ahí no. Pienso que es como exponer a la persona. Pero esos ya no son piropos. Deben tener otro nombre. Te hacen sentir incómoda, pero también puede ser una cosa más de vergüenza. [...] Hay piropos que se dicen piropos pero no son piropos. El tipo dice que es un piropo y dice,

“ay, ¿por qué te ponés así? Es un piropo.” Pero no es un piropo. Usan la palabra piropo para decir una cosa que es desagradable. Que es casi un insulto. Degradar a alguien. [...] [El piropo] es una cosa muy de Buenos Aires. Es una cosa de mi lugar. Me identifica eso. En realidad lo que me molesta es que se asuma que a vos te tiene que caer bien. No me gusta eso. En todos lados existen los piropos me parece, pero acá se van del límite. No hay registro de que la mujer no es... La mujer también puede sentir no ganas de escuchar eso. No me gusta eso.²⁶

9. **Susana:** Queda como algo machista. Por ejemplo, yo voy por la calle y veo un muchacho que pasa, y yo no digo, “Ay, qué canoso” o “Ay, qué gordo.” El hombre siempre tiene que comentar en tu aspecto físico. “Ay, qué bonita” o “Ay, qué petiza” o “Ay, qué chueca.” Te pueden llegar a marcar los defectos tuyos también, además de decirte algo lindo de tu cuerpo. [...] Vos podés comentar con tu amiga, “mirá qué lomito que tiene aquel” o “qué pinta.” Pero no le decís, “Qué feo.” “Qué horrible.” “Qué mono.” “Qué lindo.” Te la bancás. Eso es lo que me molesta a mí. ¿Por qué te tienen que decir algo en la calle si no te conocen? Lo tomo como una agresión. En general te digo que no me gusta.²⁷
10. En general son desubicados, sobre todo si te hacen comentarios sexuales o hay persecución.²⁸
11. Creo que si fuera a la inversa, respetaría a la persona.²⁹
12. La mayoría me parecen desubicados y me molesta que se naturalicen.³⁰
13. Me parece machista y cobarde.³¹
14. No estoy de acuerdo porque algunos incomodan.³²
15. ¡No me gustan!³³
16. Son invasivos.³⁴
17. Que es una costumbre innecesaria, y no le interesa o hace bien a la mujer.³⁵
18. No son agradables.³⁶
19. Para mí, representan a hombres vulgares.³⁷
20. Los piropos en la calle son escasos. En su mayoría son solo groserías de personas maleducadas y de poca formación.³⁸
21. Los piropos son una demostración de machismo.³⁹

22. Los detesto. No me gusta que me hablen porque sí. No me gusta que evalúen mi físico o cómo me veo.⁴⁰

23. Les falta ingenio para seducir.⁴¹

Indifferent or Positive Opinions of Mild Piropos and Negative Opinions of Offensive/Intimidating Piropos:

1. **Mónica:** A mí, la verdad, a menos que no sean muy groseros, no me molestan. Tampoco entiendo muy bien para qué lo hacen.⁴²
2. **Sofía:** Me parece que mientras esté dentro de lo respetuoso, lúdico e inocente, lo acepto y me parece que está bien. Ahora, cuando pasa esa línea y es agresivo y irrespetuoso o más intimidante, ahí ya me parece que está mal. No corresponde. Está mal. Los divido en dos. El piropo que es piropo o que es chiste, y el que se zarpa.⁴³
3. **Marcela:** Es una costumbre. Me parece más una costumbre de Argentina, que si no es feo, si no es agresivo, si no es desubicado, no me parece que esté mal.⁴⁴
4. Me parecen bien los piropos tranquilos. Todo lo demás me parece desubicado.⁴⁵
5. Si son piropos lindos, está bien. De lo contrario, me parece que es una agresión injustificada.⁴⁶
6. Depende del tipo de piropo. Puede parecerme lindo, indiferente o desubicado. No me preocupo por los piropos.⁴⁷
7. Que mientras no sean groseros no me molestan.⁴⁸
8. No me molestan, siempre que no sean muy groseros.⁴⁹
9. Muchas veces nos hacen poner en situaciones incómodas y a veces nos sentimos halagadas al punto de levantarnos el ánimo.⁵⁰
10. Depende del contexto.⁵¹
11. Si no es insultante no me parece mal.⁵²
12. Son una expresión folklórica en nuestra sociedad. El contenido hace la diferencia entre un halago y un acoso. Es una costumbre social como cualquier otra. Si se persigue molestan o avergüenzan a una mujer, es una conducta perversa.⁵³
13. Depende del piropo.⁵⁴
14. Me tienen sin cuidado.⁵⁵

15. Si se trata de piropos “lindos” me parece que son bien recibidos y hacen sentir bien. Los piropos desagradables causan molestia e incomodidad.⁵⁶
16. Dependiendo de la clase de piropo, es un halago o un insulto. Siempre que sea con respeto, no me resultan molestos los piropos, ni los hombres que los hacen. A los que se zarpan deberían coserles la boca.⁵⁷
17. Son sanos y parte de nuestro folklore - siempre y cuando sean respetuosos y divertidos.⁵⁸

As these lists convey, the participants have extremely varied opinions of piropos. Some women enjoy more mild piropos, as they find them flattering, amusing or even comical. Others appreciate the fact that piropos have a rich folkloric history in Argentina, and they culturally identify with the custom.

On the other hand, there are some participants that express disgust and dislike for all piropos, regardless of their level of aggression. During my individual interview with Claudia, she gave a possible explanation for this general aversion toward all piropos. She argued,

Cada piropo es como una gota de agua que cae en un vaso gigante. Una gota o dos gotas no van a afectar al volumen, pero si vos dejás el vaso diez años, se va a rebalsar. Y la gota que al principio no afectaba o no debería afectar al que rebalse el vaso, en exceso es inevitable que rebalse y es inevitable que te afecte. Porque somos seres humanos y porque tenemos sentimientos. Hay algunas mujeres que no les molesta que les digan “qué linda que estás” con un lindo tono. A mí no me gusta ya.⁵⁹

I found this quote to be very moving and utterly sincere. Claudia explained how years of being the target of piropos has emotionally and psychologically exhausted her.

María echoed this same sentiment during her individual interview. She stated, “Los hombres piensan que a las mujeres les gusta. No pueden entender que, en realidad, molesta. Si pasa muy seguido, ya pasa a ser molesta por más lindo que sea el comentario.⁶⁰” Instead of looking to piropos as a source of flattery or amusement, Claudia and María, like other participants, yearn for freedom from these socio-cultural restraints.

Despite the differences of opinion among the participants, it was apparent that none of the participants in this study was either amused or flattered by every single type of piropo. All participants understood the distinction between more mild, seemingly inconsequential piropos, and those that make them feel offended or intimidated.

Emotional Reactions to Piropos

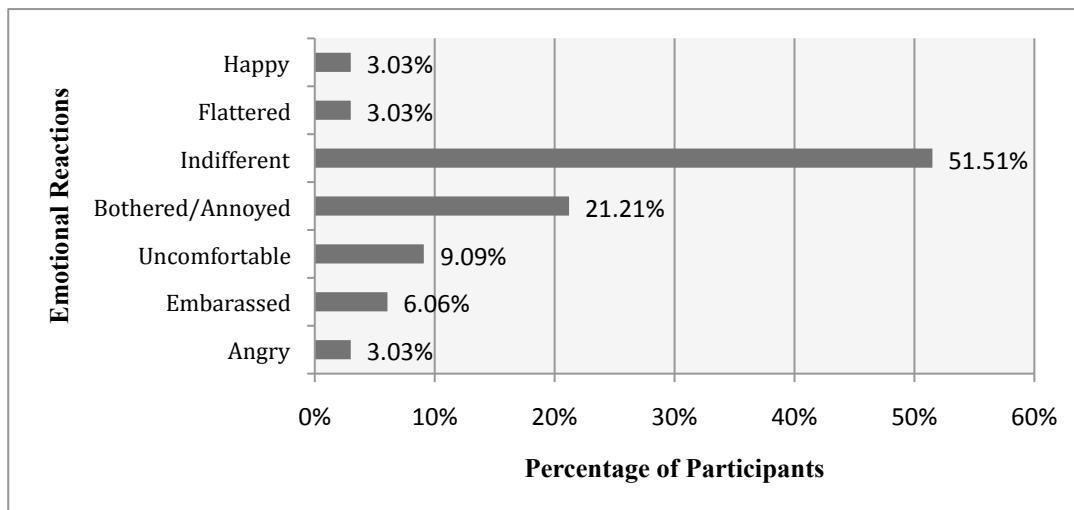
This section will explore the various emotional reactions that the participants have in response to specific examples of piropos. In order to substantiate the prevalence of these emotional reactions, I will reference the results of the one-page survey and passages from both individual interviews and focus group discussions. The emotional reactions that will be discussed in this section are those that were mentioned with the highest frequency on the surveys and in the interviews. The thirty-three participants who completed the one-page survey (see Appendices C & D) were asked to record their emotional reactions to the following public interactions: whistling, honking, staring, pet names, comments about physical appearance, being followed, discomfoting comments, vulgar gestures, sexual comments, and physical contact. This data collected from the surveys was further supplemented by detailed personal experiences and emotional reactions conveyed during individual interviews and focus groups. Overall, the reported

emotional reactions included: happy, indifferent, flattered, amused, uncomfortable, angry, bothered/annoyed, scared, intimidated, embarrassed/shamed, powerless, and relieved.

In response to whistling, the majority of survey participants (51.51%) reported that they usually feel indifferent (see Table 5). This indifference is likely related to the participants' high exposure to whistling; nearly 90% of the survey participants reported some experience with whistling in the public sphere (see Table 4). Nevertheless, a broad range of emotional reactions was experienced by the survey participants in response to whistling, as was the case for all the various types of piropos.

Table 5

Emotional Reactions to Whistling



While a small number of participants expressed feeling happy and flattered when men whistle at them in public, others expressed anger and irritation. The second most frequent emotional reaction (21.21% of participants) reported in the surveys was feeling bothered or annoyed by whistling.

During an individual interview, Paula expressed her irritation with this specific type of piropo.

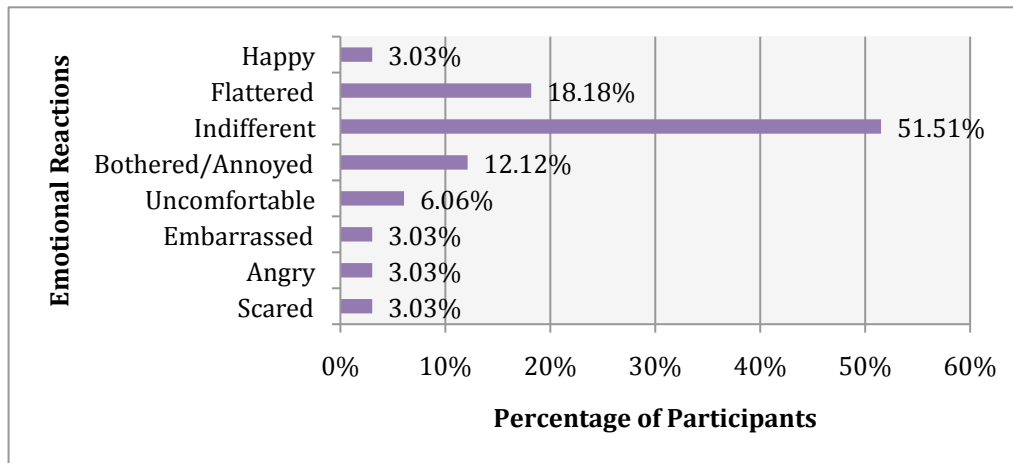
Ahí siento que el hombre te pone en la posición de un perro. Te chifla como si fueras un perro. Y vos, al darte vuelta, lo único que hacés es alimentar esa fantasía de que te chiflen como un perro y vos te des vuelta y le mueves la cola prácticamente.⁶¹

Daniela echoed this sentiment during her individual interview. She said that when a man whistles at her, she refuses to turn around. She stated, “No me doy vuelta. No haga nada. No soy un perro. He contestado, ‘No soy un perro’ y sigo caminando.⁶²” Here, both Paula and Daniela expressed their annoyance with this type of piropo. These brief excerpts show that while some women feel indifferent and even flattered by the attention, whistling can be interpreted as male domination. In both of these instances, the participants felt that they were being likened to animals and were therefore forced into a position of inferiority.

Much like whistling, the majority (51.51%) of survey participants claimed that they feel indifferent when strangers honk their car horn at them (see Table 6).

Table 6

Emotional Reactions to Honking



The participants' indifference toward honking, as in the case with whistling, is likely due to the fact that these non-verbal behaviors are viewed as more innocuous than other types of piropos. In the case of honking, the initiator is distanced from the recipient and any fear of physical harassment is consequently reduced. Moreover, many interview participants agreed that it is much less likely for a man to make an offensive or sexually explicit comment if he is not standing in close proximity to the recipient. Therefore, when a man honks at a random woman on the street, most Porteña women are undaunted and untroubled by the practice. After all, it is unlikely that the woman will ever see the face of the man who is honking the horn of anonymity.

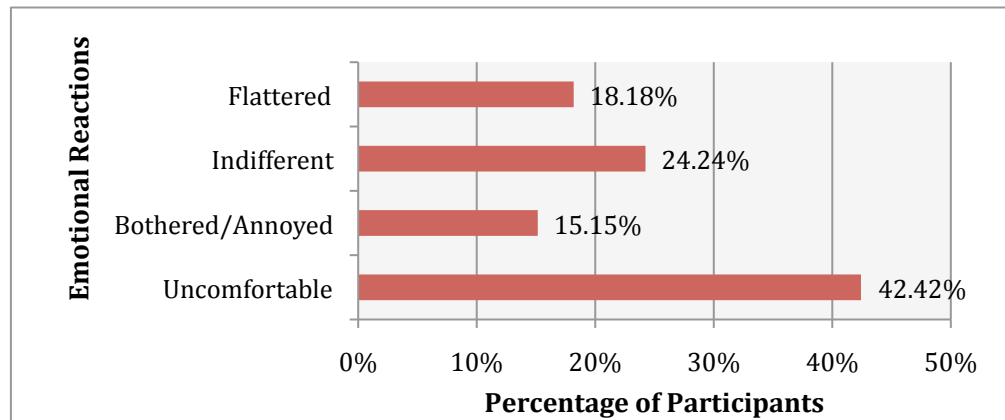
The next type of piropo that was brought into question was staring. Staring, in fact, was the most highly reported type of piropo on the one-page survey. Nearly 94% of all survey participants reported experience with staring, and over 75% of the participants testified that it happens often or always while in the public sphere (see Table 4).

According to the data collected from the surveys, staring at women in public spaces

frequently causes them to feel uncomfortable (see Table 7). Over 42% of survey participants reported feeling uncomfortable in this situation.

Table 7

Emotional Reactions to Staring



However, there were some expected disparities in the participants' emotional reactions to staring. Over 15% of the participants reported feeling bothered or annoyed, over 18% reported feeling flattered, and over 24% reported feeling indifferent when men stare at them on the street.

During the individual interviews and focus group discussions, the participants were eager to express irritation with respect to this aspect of their daily experiences. During my interview with Sofía, she tried to explain exactly how men stare at women in public. She asserted,

Un hombre que te mira acá en la calle, te sigue con la mirada. Te mira antes de cruzarte, te mira cuando te está cruzando y se da vuelta para mirarte. Eso es mirarte. Y en el subte, también. Es fijo. Es una recorrida

que hacen. Te sacan una radiografía. Te escanean con los ojos. Acá decimos “me desnudó con la mirada.” Es eso. Te miran arriba abajo.⁶³

During a focus group discussion, Mónica added to this description. She explained that the way in which men often stare at women on the streets of Buenos Aires is far from innocent. She testified,

Casi toda la gente mira en general, pero hay miradas que son más intencionadas. Te miran para que vos te des cuenta. No es que a un chabón le gusta una mina y la mira pero se hace el distraído. Hay gente que es más invasiva, más atrevida, más descarada.⁶⁴

These explanations feed our understanding of why a woman can feel so uncomfortable when she is the target of a stranger’s gaze. One participant in particular, Victoria, explained that, for her, staring has the potential to be more uncomfortable for the recipient than any verbal interaction. She confessed, “Para mí la mirada es peor. Que no diga nada. Porque no sabés qué mierda está pensando.”⁶⁵

Many of the participants reported feeling that they are constantly being watched and sexually objectified every time that they venture into a public space. Daniela briefly explained her interpretation of this social norm as clear example of sexual objectification. She said, “No me gusta que te miren de arriba abajo. Y te hagan un estudio de mercado. No me gusta. No soy un pedazo de carne que camina por la calle.”⁶⁶ In a separate interview, Paula described the sheer ubiquity of this practice. She said,

El hombre acá es muy mirón. Siempre te están mirando. Al hombre le gusta mirar a la mujer. Está bien que aprecien la belleza pero es incómodo sentir que te van a mirar cuando salís a la calle. Y te va a mirar desde el kioskeró,

hasta el viejo, hasta el colectivero, hasta el taxista, y cuando voy al banco también. La verdad es que es muy incómodo.⁶⁷

Paula described the distress and aggravation that the practice of staring causes her. Not only does she have to prepare herself with the expectation that this will happen when she leaves the house, but she also anticipates this source of discomfort around every corner and with every male interaction.

In a later individual interview with Claudia, she touched on the pervasiveness and commonality of staring in the public sphere. She showed that although many women have begun to view this practice as a natural and normal part of everyday life, it enables large-scale gender inequalities. Claudia professed,

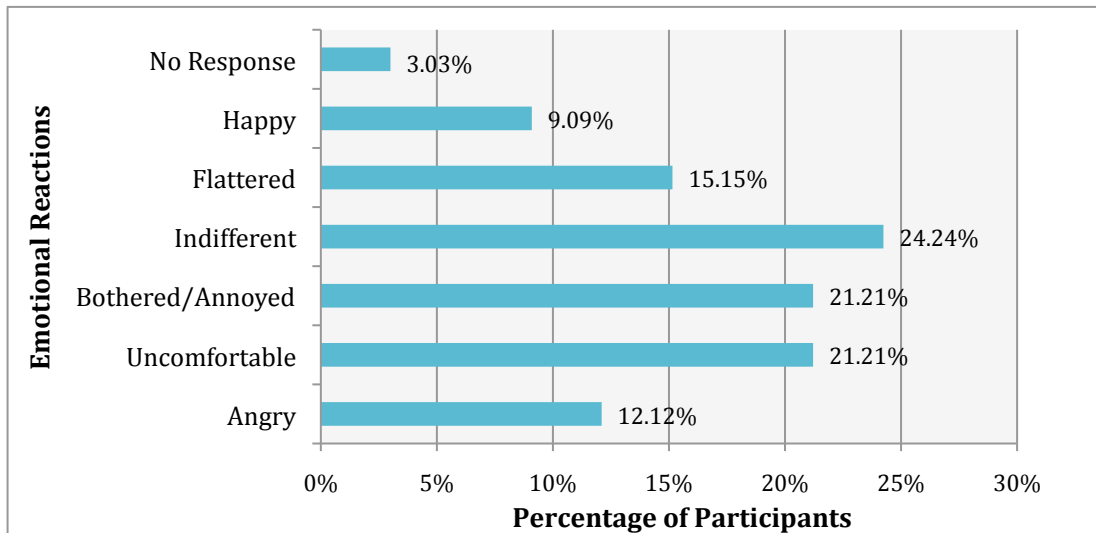
Olvidáte de esto de que te miren, que te claven la mirada, tenés que mirar al piso. Hay un montón de cosas que a uno ya le parecen normales pero no son normales. Empezás a actuar así porque te acostumbraste. Eso es un acoso.⁶⁸

In this quote, Claudia explained how her behaviour in public has been affected by this everyday interaction. Due to the frequency of this occurrence and her discomfort with it, she is forced to avoid eye contact with strangers. This emotional reaction and resulting physical response was common among many of the participants.

The next type of piropo that was examined was the use of pet names. According to the survey results (see Table 8), the emotional reactions to this type of piropo were mixed. The most highly mentioned emotional reactions included: indifferent (24.24%), bothered/annoyed (21.21%), uncomfortable (21.21%), and flattered (15.15%).

Table 8

Emotional Reactions to Pet Names



During the first focus group, the participants discussed the use of pet names and the way in which it can make some women feel better about themselves.

Mia: ¿Qué opinan de los hombres que te hacen comentarios no ofensivos en la calle? Por ejemplo, ¿“hola, linda” o “hola, hermosa”?

Daniela: Si me lo dicen, me río y me pongo colorada. Porque me gusta. Porque te levanta el ego.

Natalia: Te hace bien.

Sofía: Sí, a full.⁶⁹

In this brief excerpt, three women agreed that when they are the recipients of a mild comment that includes a pet name, they are genuinely flattered.

Claudia, on the other hand, described how this situation could become uncomfortable for her. She stated, “Que te griten “linda” está todo bien. Pero bueno... no

sé. ¿Qué tengo que decirle? ¿Le tengo que decir algo? ¿Lo tengo que aceptar? No sé. Ya te pone en una situación rara.⁷⁰” Here, Claudia conveyed her uneasiness with these interactions. Rather than feeling flattered or pleased like the participants mentioned previously, it appears that Claudia does not understand the meaning behind the interaction, nor does she fully understand its effect on her.

In the second focus group discussion, Marta attempted to explicate why seemingly harmless comments, like pet names, can provoke negative emotional reactions among the recipients. Marta expounded,

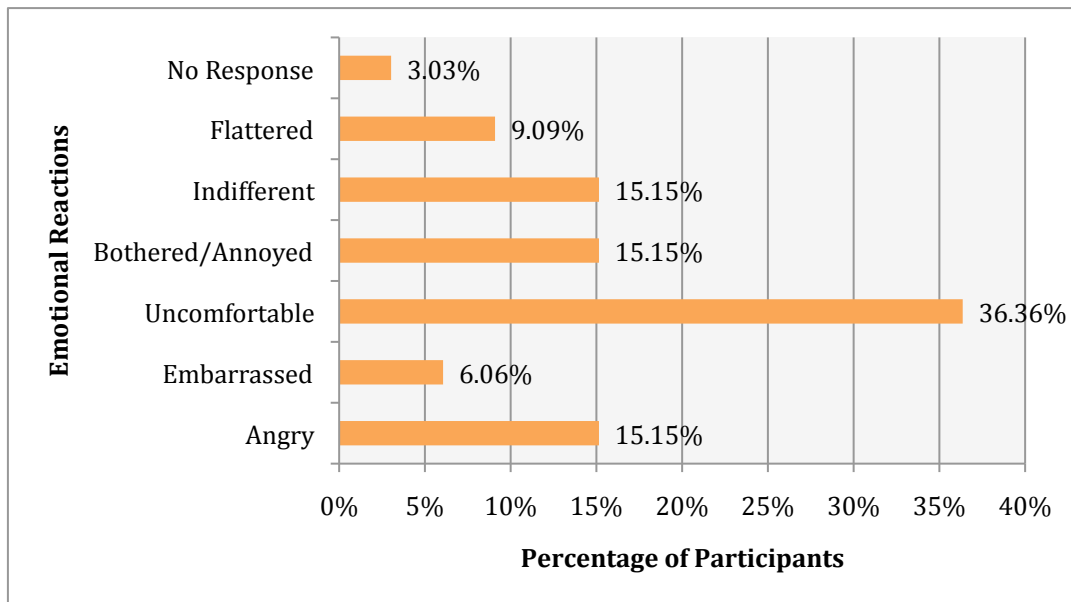
A veces no tenés ganas de pasar y que te digan algo o que te miren. Tenés ganas de estar tranquila. Y más allá de que sean agresivos o no, te están invadiendo tu espacio personal. [...] Está bien, qué sé yo. Midiéndolos, y estando tan acostumbrada a recibir piropos durante toda la vida, podés decir que hay algunos que son más ofensivos. Pero en realidad, todos molestan. No tenés por qué bancártelos. Me parece que todo ese tipo de halagos son cosas que tienen que formar parte de la intimidad y entre personas que tienen una relación. No que un desconocido venga y que te diga cualquier cosa. No tenés por qué recibir ese tipo de información.⁷¹

In this quotation, Marta explained how the accumulation of these experiences, whether intentionally offensive or not, begin to wear on the female psyche. Everything, from a sexually explicit comment to a simple pet name, starts to invade the recipient’s personal space and diminish her equal entitlement to public space.

The next type of piropo that was discussed included comments about the recipient’s physical appearance. Of the thirty-three survey participants, 36.36% reported that this type of comment makes them feel uncomfortable (see Table 9).

Table 9

Emotional Reactions to Comments about Physical Appearance



Again, the emotional reactions varied significantly among the participants but, in this case, the large majority (72.72%) of the reactions were negative (bothered/annoyed, uncomfortable, embarrassed, angry).

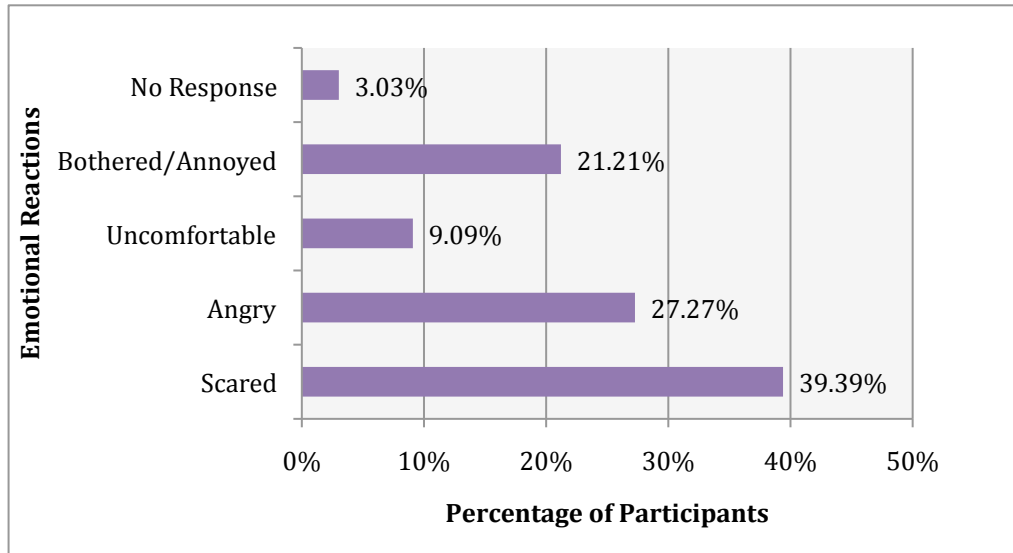
María described the discomfort that comments about one’s physical appearance can engender in the recipient. She said that sometimes the comments are “más ofensivos o más molestos, como ‘qué lindo culo que tenés.’ Y molestan... ‘Qué cuerpazo’ también. Supongo que para alguien podría ser algo lindo, pero me molesta. Me molesta que me estén mirando el cuerpo y las curvas.⁷²” María, similar to Marta in her interpretation, feels that these comments and thoughts should only exist in a circumstance of intimacy.

Nevertheless, comments about women's physical appearance are among the most common types of piropos. According to Claudia, "si es un piropo para halagarte, generalmente está directamente relacionado con cómo te ves físicamente. No tiene nada que ver con tus atributos como persona."⁷³ This assertion is the motivation for irritation and discomfort among many of the participants. When women enter the public realm in Buenos Aires, they are subjected to the judgment of random men who determine their worth based solely upon their physical appearance. In an individual interview, Susana explained why this is so discomfoting for her. She professed, "Yo no siento que tengo solamente cola y pechos. Soy más que eso, ¿entendés? Soy mujer en otro aspecto. No solamente por la parte física."⁷⁴

The next unsolicited advance listed on the survey was the act of being followed by a stranger in public. This interaction, according to the survey results, provokes the most fear among recipients. Table 10 shows that nearly 40% of survey participants responded that they feel scared in this situation. Of the other emotional reactions to being followed, the most common responses included feeling angry (27.27%) and bothered or annoyed (21.21%).

Table 10

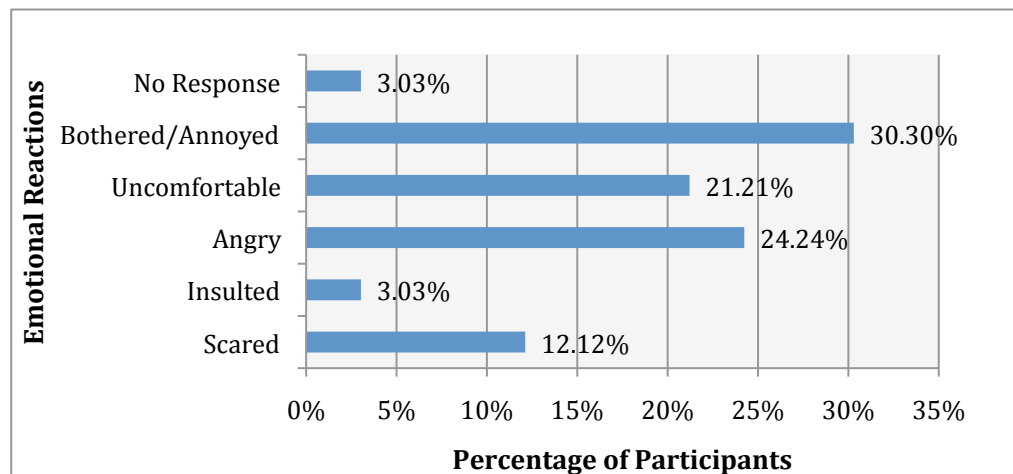
Emotional Reactions to Being Followed



For the category of discomfoting comments, the emotional reactions were mixed (see Table 11). The majority of survey participants reported that they feel bothered or annoyed (30.30%), angry (24.24%) or uncomfortable (21.21%).

Table 11

Emotional Reactions to Discomfoting Comments



For the survey participants, there was a wide range of interpretation for what constitutes a discomfoting comment. However, in both the focus groups and in nearly all of the individual interviews that were conducted throughout the study, the participants agreed that many men use piropos as a way to make women feel uncomfortable. In an individual interview, María explained her understanding of why men purposely make discomfoting comments to women on the street. She stated,

Algunos hombres lo hacen para incomodar a la mujer. Es un juego. Se ríen entre ellos. “Mirá cómo se puso.” “Se puso colorada.” Lo hacen para molestar. No porque te quieren decir algo lindo. Si están en grupo y dicen algo lindo, muchas veces no lo tomo como que me están diciendo linda porque les parezco linda. Creo que lo están haciendo porque están en grupo y simplemente están jodiendo entre ellos. Y a veces me pasa con hombres que están trabajando. Pero ahí es más creíble quizás. Como que les parecés linda y te dicen lo que piensan. En cambio, con un grupo de chicos por ahí te dicen algo y se ríen entre ellos y no lo tomás como un halago. No sé si es porque te quieren hacer sentir incómoda, pero te sentís incómoda. Se entretienen con eso.⁷⁵

The participants in the first focus group also discussed how the only objective of many piropos is to provoke discomfort in the recipient.

Paula: Es desubicado pero los hombres ya se acostumbraron a piroppear aunque sepan que quizás hasta es molesto. Yo creo que deben saber que nos ponemos incómodas.

Sofía: Sí, obvio.

Paula: Y les gusta saber eso. Como que sienten que tienen el poder.

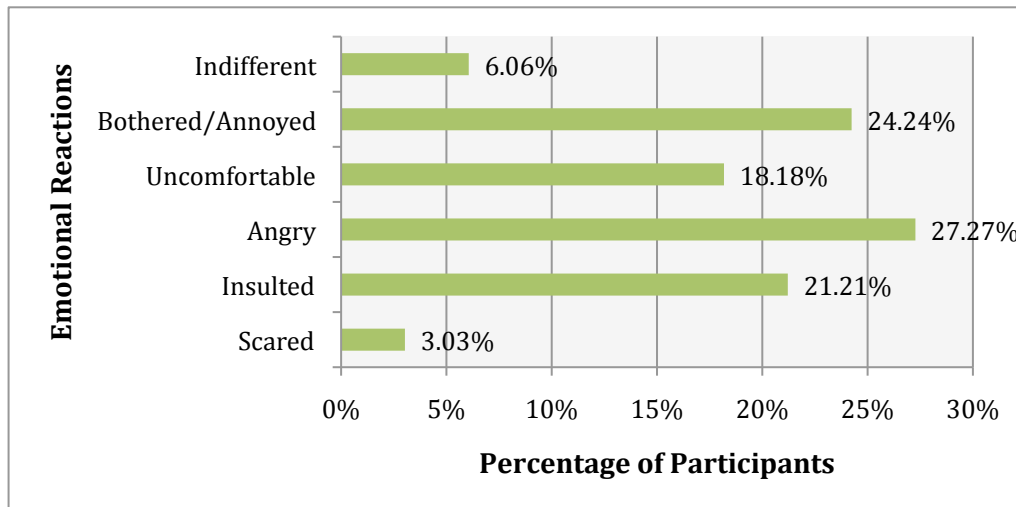
Sofía: Y uno se da cuenta también cuando la otra persona lo está haciendo y sintiendo ese placer de hacerte sentir incómoda y cuando no. O sea, yo siento que me doy cuenta de eso. [...] Este tipo que, de repente, te dice algo y te mira y te sigue con la mirada, parece que está disfrutando de esa incomodidad que a vos te da.⁷⁶

These participants feel that, in many cases, piropos are employed by Porteño men as a means of manipulation. They feel that this once romantic social practice has morphed into a *game* in which men reinforce their power over women by purposely making them feel uncomfortable.

For the final three types of piropos mentioned on the survey (vulgar gestures, sexual comments and physical contact), the most common emotional reaction was anger. Table 12 reveals that, in response to vulgar gestures, 27.27% of survey participants reported that they feel angry.

Table 12

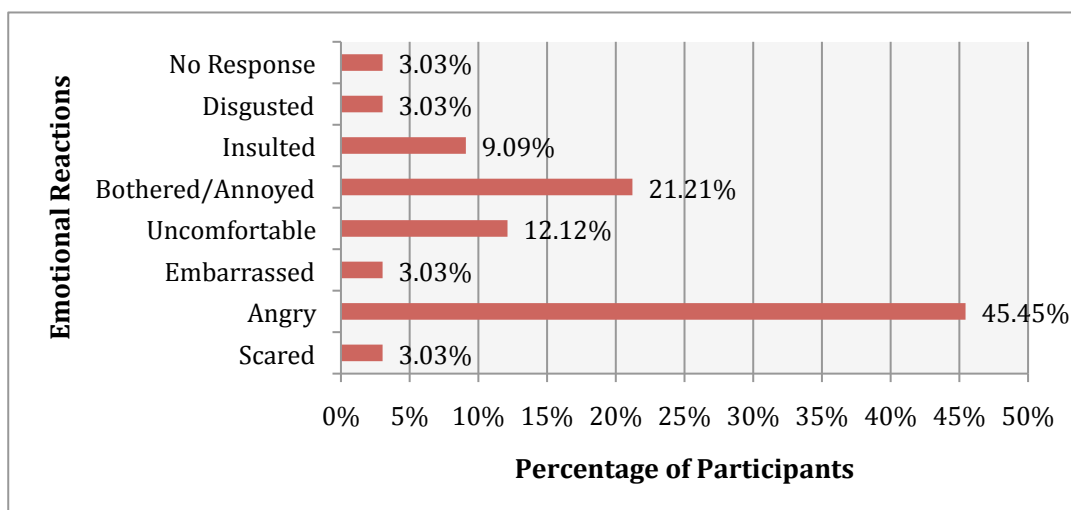
Emotional Reactions to Vulgar Gestures



In response to sexual comments, 45.45% of survey participants reported that they feel angry (see Table 13). In this category, anger overshadowed the other emotional reactions.

Table 13

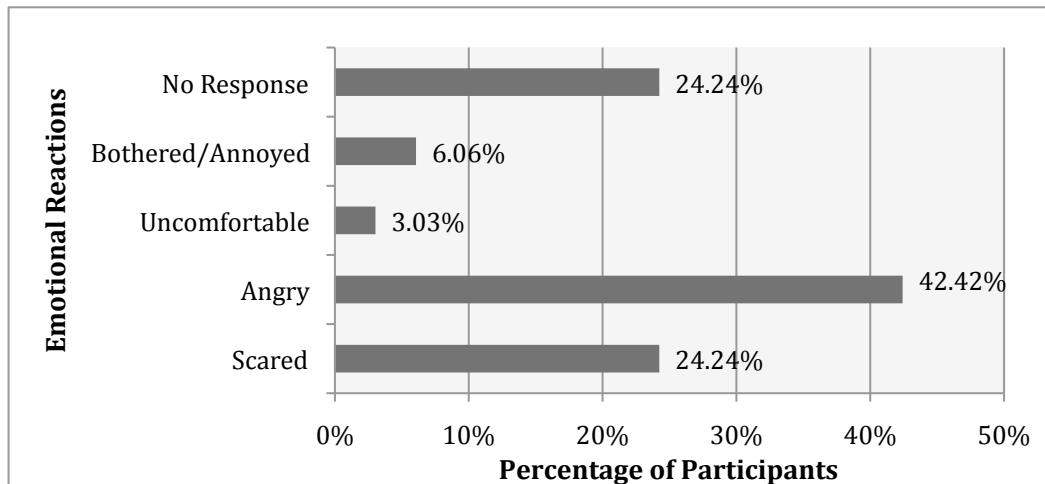
Emotional Reactions to Sexual Comments



And lastly, in response to physical contact, 42.42% of survey participants reported that they feel angry (see Table 14).

Table 14

Emotional Reactions to Physical Contact



For these final three categories, anger surpassed the other emotional reactions.

Nevertheless, there were expected discrepancies in the emotional reactions of the participants due to their individual perspectives and personal experiences.

Although physical contact is not an extremely common occurrence for women in Buenos Aires, several participants reported experiences of physical contact on the street and on different means of public transportation. During the second focus group, the women discussed the possibility of unwanted physical contact.

Marcela: Ah bueno, muchas veces los hombres te tocan cuando estás arriba del colectivo. En el subte también lo he visto mucho. Te tocan el culo o te apoyan. Se conforman con eso. Y después en la calle, no sé. Calculo que alguno te puede agarrar el culo y salir corriendo.

Marta: Bueno, a mí me pasó eso. Venía caminando y sentí una mano en el culo y después el pibe salió corriendo. Y en otro momento, venía

caminando un hombre de frente, y cuando llegó a mi altura, cruzó la mano y me tocó una teta. Y yo se la saqué. El tipo siguió caminando rápido. Yo lo puteé y seguí caminando. No pasó de eso.⁷⁷

In a later interview, Claudia described her own experiences with physical contact on both the street and in the train. When I asked for more detail, she elaborated,

Claudia: Cuando pasás vos para un lado y el hombre para otro lado, se da vuelta y te toca. Lo puteás. Pero no pasa muy seguido. Pero una vez en el tren, un tipo hizo una situación... estaba muy lleno el tren y fue una situación más abusiva. Yo estaba con mi hermana, y un tipo me empezó a tocar. Yo no podía moverme porque estaba llenísimo el tren. Me paralicé. Que sé yo. Puedo contestar si me dicen algo, pero esto fue otra cosa. Me puse pálida, y mi hermana me dijo “Qué te pasa? Qué te pasa?” Y le dije “El tipo que está al lado me está tocando” y ahí todo el mundo saltó, lo agarró a piñas y lo bajaron del tren. Eso sucede mucho igual acá en los trasportes públicos.

Mia: ¿Te tocaba la cola?

Claudia: No, me estaba tocando adelante. Mis partes íntimas. Muy feo. Hasta mi mamá cuenta anécdotas. Por ejemplo, estando en el colectivo y de que un tipo le esté tocando el culo, y mi mamá, al agarrar la mano rápido dice “¿de quién es ésta mano?” Mi mamá tiene 70 años. Imaginate que esto lo hacían cuando tenía 30 años. Hace 40 años. O sea, acá siempre sucedió. [...] Tal vez tiene que ver con que el hombre ya no tiene tanto

pudor. Como que, se fueron rompiendo límites, ¿me entendés? El piropo es lo básico. Todo el mundo somos víctimas de esa situación.⁷⁸

By recounting her own experiences as well as that of her mother, Claudia demonstrated that physical contact is not as rare an occurrence as one might imagine. What's more, Claudia revealed that these unwanted physical interactions have been taking place in the public sphere for nearly half a century. As these examples clearly illustrate, not only are these brief moments of harassment unsolicited, but they are also received with fear and distress on behalf of the recipient.

Overall, the participants' emotional reactions to the different types of piropos varied significantly. On the whole, however, most of the provoked emotions were negative. These results aligned with my expectations. Before conducting research for this study, I had very brief conversations with both female friends and acquaintances in Buenos Aires about their experience with piropos, and most of their feedback indicated negative emotional reactions. I was surprised to learn how many women reported feeling happy or flattered in response to certain types of piropos, but I found that these positive reactions were, for the most part, experienced by women over the age of 40. As a result of this study, I found that middle-age women in Buenos Aires tend to receive fewer piropos, and those piropos that they do receive tend to be less offensive. Therefore, middle-aged women are more likely to welcome and value the piropos that they receive. This theory is consistent with my finding that several middle-age women reported feeling happy or flattered in response to certain types of piropos.

Verbal Responses to Piropos

In addition to the participants' varied emotional reactions to piropos, many participants acknowledged that they sometimes respond verbally to the man who delivers the piropo. Data collected in the individual interviews and focus groups demonstrated that the majority of the participants' verbal reactions are generally incited by anger and irritation in response to aggressive comments and gestures. However, as a matter of course, there are exceptions to this general rule. Throughout this section, I will provide several examples of the participants' verbal responses to piropos and their justifications for it.

During the first focus group discussion, several of the participants discussed the option of verbally responding to the man who delivers the piropo.

Laura: Algún día me voy a juntar fuerzas y me voy a dar vuelta y decirle algo.

Paula: Sí, yo a veces contesto.

Sofía: Yo contesto. Un montón de veces. Me acuerdo que una vez mi vieja me cagó a pedos porque no daba para que yo le conteste. Y no sabés qué el tipo va a hacer. Pero te da una impotencia que no podés más...⁷⁹

Here, the participants suggested that they typically do not respond to piropos unless they find the piropo to be particularly offensive or impertinent. In her comment, Sofía acknowledged the danger of responding to a random man on the street. Sofía was scolded by her mother for responding to the piropo because there was the possibility that the man could react even more aggressively. It became obvious throughout the focus groups and individual interviews that many women are discouraged from voicing their frustrations or

disapproval because they fear that the man may react in a violent manner. In her individual interview, Angela echoed this sentiment. She said, “A veces los puteo. Los mando a la mierda. O les digo, ‘callate!’ Pero no es aconsejable, ¿no? Uno nunca sabe cómo pueden reaccionar. Más que nada por seguridad.”⁸⁰ Nevertheless, certain participants, like Sofia, expressed an overwhelming sensation of powerlessness and lack of agency that often prompts a verbal response.

Claudia, too, responds verbally to piropos that she finds offensive. She stated, “Yo soy una persona que contesta generalmente. No me quedo callada. Me molesta y lo digo.”⁸¹ When I asked her to give me an example of a situation in which she responded verbally to a piropo, she replied,

Es la impotencia que uno se siente porque, ¿qué podés hacer? A mí me agarra violencia. Lo quiero matar. Y generalmente contesto, insulto. Me pasa mucho el clásico de la obra, de los obreros. El otro día un tipo me dijo, “Qué linda que estás hoy.” Y frené y le dije “Disculpá, ¿vos no tenés que estar trabajando? ¿No tenés nada mejor que hacer que hablarme a mí? O sea, ¿no tenés nada importante que hacer en tu trabajo? ¿Qué hacés molestándome a mí cuando debes estar trabajando?” Pero a la gente no le importa, además yo quedo como una loca. Yo no sé cuántas mujeres se defienden en esa situación pero es como que nosotras somos las locas. Pero es todo muy molesto. Después empezás a evitar lugares...⁸²

In this example, Claudia expressed the anger and feeling of defenseless that the use of piropos often incites in her, and she made her feelings known to the man who delivered the piropo. However, it appears that, at least in this case, her frustration was not

necessarily alleviated because of how she was viewed for her response. Rather than taking Claudia's irritation to heart, the man and his coworkers acted as if she was crazy and unable to accept a compliment. This, as Victoria explained, is not uncommon. Sometimes, when she responds verbally to an offensive comment, the man will respond, "Ay, ¿por qué te ponés así? Es un piropo."⁸³ But, according to Victoria, it isn't a compliment. She says that men "usan la palabra piropo para decir una cosa que es desagradable. Que es casi un insulto. Degradar a alguien."⁸⁴

During the second focus group, I asked the participants if they typically respond to piropos. They replied,

Marta: Sí, cuando me dicen cosas muy groseras, por ahí contesto.

Marcela: Yo los puteo, sí.

Mia: Entonces, ¿sólo contestan si los hombres dicen algo que les ofende?

Marta: No... [...] A veces cuando me miran mucho les digo "qué mirás?" Eso es un hecho. Pero lo que pasa es que cuando te piropean como "qué hermosa" o "qué linda" ya se van. No es que dice "qué hermosa" y se queda como para tener una conversación con vos.

Marcela: Igual si es leve, no me jode.

Mónica: Y bueno, si un chico te dice "chau, hermosa" tampoco sé si da para que le contestes.

Marta: No, es algo más indiferente.

Mónica: Sí, indiferente. Seguí caminando y listo. Pero bueno, si te dicen algo más ofensivo, eso te jode. Si te dicen algo así y te faltan el respeto, es molesto. Seguí caminando pero los puteás en el camino.⁸⁵

These participants explained why they typically only respond to those comments that they find the most offensive. Some participants are indifferent to the simple, less offensive comments, and they do not believe that they warrant a verbal response. However, as Marta commented, she will sometimes respond verbally to men that stare at her.

Overall, it appears that the participants' verbal responses to piropos are limited. Most participants acknowledged that they do not respond to the more mild piropos, and only some women respond to the more offensive piropos. Generally speaking, it appears that women will only respond when the piropo is particularly insulting or offensive to them, or if they are simply not in the mood to receive the piropo. Paula explained,

Tengo que tener un mal día para que me caiga muy mal o que la actitud o la energía de la otra persona sea tan agresiva que realmente me moleste y contestarle “Qué idiota” o “Qué estúpido.” Con la misma intención que él me lo dijo.⁸⁶

In general, however, most women avoid expressing their annoyance or anger in these interactions because they fear it may incite escalated violence.

Self-Worth Derived from Public Objectification

While conducting an analysis of the collected data, I identified a re-emerging pattern among several of the focus group and individual interview participants. When asked to describe their emotional responses to specific types of piropos, it became evident that some participants derive a sense of self-worth from the public objectification that characterizes most piropos. It appears that, as in the case of some participants, a woman's dignity and self-confidence can be directly affected by her exposure to and experiences

with piropos. In order to evidence this assertion, I will present quotes and excerpts from both individual interviews and the focus groups.

In one of my first individual interviews, Daniela described the contradictory standpoint that some Porteña women have with respect to the use of piropos. She argued that although most women regard most piropos as invasive and impertinent, it appears that some women depend on these comments and other forms of unsolicited advances to support their self-image and self-esteem. Daniela confessed, “En algún punto te molesta pero en otro punto también te gustaría. Es la gata flora. Si me lo dicen, ¿por qué me lo dicen? Si no me lo dicen, ¿por qué no me lo dicen?”⁸⁷

In my individual interview with Claudia, she explained that this inconsistent attitude toward piropos is widely prevalent in Buenos Aires. She insisted, “Es verdad que las mujeres estamos muy acostumbradas a que nos digan cosas y cuando no te dicen nada, decís, ‘uy, salí horrible’ o ‘ya no soy linda.’ Uno empieza a medirse por la mirada del otro.”⁸⁸ Here, Claudia explained that the use of piropos can have significant psychological consequences on the recipient. If a woman allows piropos to build up or influence her self-confidence, her self-worth becomes dependent on public opinion of her physical qualities. As a result, when the woman does not receive a piropo, she can experience disappointment and insecurity.

During my interview with Sofía, she described her experience with this conflicting reality. She stated,

Es mentira si una mujer dice que le molesta y no le levanta el autoestima. Siempre pasa. Es lindo que te digan algo. De hecho, si vos pasás por un lugar donde hay 20 pibes y no te dijeron nada, te puedo asegurar que no

hay mina que no piense, “ay, no me dijeron nada.” Posta. Es así. Somos así. Y las personas somos así. Tenemos un egocentrismo... Por más que te moleste, también te levanta un toque. Es tal cual.⁸⁹

In this excerpt, Sofía made the generalization that many women have a deeply rooted egocentric desire to receive this type of public approval, despite their outward condemnation of the social practice. Although this is clearly not the case for all Porteña women, several of the participants in this study expressed similar sentiments.

In the first focus group discussion, the participants touched on this dichotomy of emotions. Not ten minutes after they came to the conclusion that nearly all piropos are discomfoting and an invasion of their personal space, several of the participants admitted that they have become so accustomed to this practice of public flattery that they can feel dejected when they do not receive it.

Natalia: Uno se llega a acostumbrar... Quiero decir, estoy esperando, a veces, que me digan cosas. A mí me pasa a veces que yo voy caminando por la calle, y ya veo que un pibe viene de enfrente... y cuando me pasa por al lado y el pibe ni me miró, digo, “¡No me dijo nada!”

Florencia: Claro.

Laura: Claro. Sí, sí, sí. Es verdad.

Natalia: ¿Entendés? No digo que uno va por la calle provocando que se lo digan, pero cuando no te lo dicen, a veces, te llama la atención.⁹⁰

Although these participants did not explicitly state that they feel insecure or a lack of confidence when they do not receive a piropo, it was clear that they are neither relieved nor content to be overlooked.

Later in this same focus group discussion, Daniela explained how this public objectification, or lack thereof, has had significant impacts on her self-esteem. Daniela described how she has grown to seek validation through these public comments or gestures. She stated, “A mí me levanta el autoestima el piropo lindo. Más que nada últimamente. Últimamente si me dicen algo yo digo, ‘Ay, qué suerte. No soy tan vieja.’⁹¹” But just as the complimentary piropos can boost her ego, the lack of comments can also play with her emotional wellbeing and sense of worth. During our follow-up individual interview, I asked Daniela if she ever feels bad about herself when she is not the recipient of any comments or other piropos. She responded,

Me ha pasado de salir con amigas y no salgo predispuesta a que me digan algo, no me arreglo, no nada... y por ahí he salido con amigas que son chicas que llaman la atención y estás al lado de ellas. Y todos los piropos van a ir para ellas. Entonces vos te sentís como el bichito que está ahí pensando “Ay, ¿por qué nadie me mira?” Pero es obvio. Si no te arreglás, si no estás predispuesta, si no le ponés onda, no te van a decir nada de cosas lindas. Al contrario. Van a decir, “Che, necesito conseguir un amigo para tu amiga que tiene cara de nada.” Pero sí, me he sentido mal. Me ha pasado. Me ha pasado muy seguido eso. Muy seguido, sí.⁹²

In this excerpt, Daniela reported feeling a diminished sense of self-worth as she was overlooked by men on the street. It appears that she has grown to depend on this public attention, which ultimately means that her self-confidence stems from a bystander’s opinion, and she has a heightened awareness of her own physical appearance. This data shows how, on the one hand, many participants are made to feel unsafe and, on the other

hand, others are made to feel unworthy while in the public sphere. This ambivalence reveals how the patriarchal social system entitles men to invade women's personal space and make them feel uncomfortable, scared or unsafe, and simultaneously encourages women to seek male validation.

Victoria, too, explained that her self-confidence is sometimes influenced by the use of piropos. But unlike Daniela, Victoria is able to overcome these outside influences so that her self-worth is not entirely contingent upon a stranger's estimation of her beauty. In her interview, she asserted, "A veces jodíamos con eso, diciendo, 'hoy ni un albañil me dijo un piropo.' O 'salí tan horrible...' pero no. Porque también por otro lado decís, le dicen a cualquiera, no es que te dicen eso a vos, ¿me entendés?"⁹³ When I asked her to explain this sensation to me in further detail, she expounded,

A veces podés llegar a pensar, ah bueno, se ve que esa ropa me queda bien... o el corte de pelo me queda bien... pero lo pensás rápido, no de verdad. Posta. Si te ponés a pensar, no creés eso. Pero capaz que se te pasa por la cabeza en un momento.⁹⁴

Here, Victoria explained that, for her, these thoughts are purely fleeting. She is able to use her own reasoning to invalidate these thoughts. Nevertheless, it was apparent that some participants in the study were more deeply affected than Victoria.

Claudia, on the other hand, argued that the use of piropos does not have any bearing on her self-confidence. During her individual interview, she said,

El otro día en Facebook escribí algo como puteando por un piropo que me habían dicho, y la mamá de una amiga me dijo, "Nena, preocupate

cuando ya no te digan más.” Está bien. Yo entiendo. Pero yo no me considero ni más linda ni más fea, ni más flaca ni más gorda porque alguien me lo diga en la calle. Yo me conozco a mí y me quiero como soy.⁹⁵

Rather than allowing her self-worth to be governed by an observer’s perspective, Claudia maintains her own sense of dignity and confidence through self-reliance. Instead of feeling disappointed and insecure when she does not receive a piropo, Claudia claimed that she feels relieved. She said,

Si pasás por un lugar y hay un montón de pibes, ya lo estás esperando. Y si no sucede, a mí me alivia. No digo, “Ay, qué mal. No me dijeron nada. Voy a volver con una mini pollera a ver si ahora...” No.⁹⁶

Unlike several other participants, it appears that Claudia does not seek public approval. Moreover, it appears that she does not experience a dichotomy of emotions, and her thoughts appear to align with her feelings.

In this subsection, I hope to have demonstrated that, while clearly not the case for all participants, some women have come to derive their self-worth from this extremely prevalent social practice. As a cultural outsider, I was surprised to hear about these contradictory sensations that are manifested in some Porteña women’s perceptions of piropos. It appears that these mixed feelings arise because piropos encourage women to see value only in their physical traits, rather than viewing themselves as whole intellectual, emotional and skilled beings. During an individual interview, Susana reiterated this notion by saying that Porteña women “vemos la importancia que los hombres le dan al aspecto físico y terminamos cosificándonos a nosotras mismas.”⁹⁷

When this happens, women often depend on piropos as a vital source of self-confidence because they internalize the observer's perspective, and they consequently develop an appearance-contingent self-worth.

Participants' Behavioral Changes Due to Piropos

When commencing my research for this study, one of my greatest interests was in discovering the channels through which Porteña women attempt to avoid piropos. I wanted to learn the various ways in which women are forced to change their behavior in the public sphere as a result of these flirtatious interactions. I know that I, as a foreigner and occasional recipient of piropos, made alterations to my style of dress and public demeanor in an attempt to avert any unwanted attention. I was uncertain if Porteña women often do the same, or if their long-standing exposure to piropos made them impervious to their various effects. In an attempt to answer this query, I posed the question to both survey participants and interview contributors.

It quickly became clear that, although not the case for all participants, most women do alter their behavior in public in order to avoid piropos. This same conclusion was reached in every methodological approach that I employed. The data collected from the one-page surveys, the individual interviews and the focus group discussions showed that nearly all the participants alter their behavior, in some way, as a consequence of this social norm.

On the survey, the thirty-three informants were asked to report if they make certain changes in public in an attempt to avoid piropos (i.e. cross the street or take a different route, avoid being alone, wear headphones, etc.). If the informants do make these changes, they were asked to specify if they do so "sometimes" or "often/always."

Table 15 reveals the results of the survey.

Table 15

Ways Participants Change Their Behavior in Public to Avoid Piropos

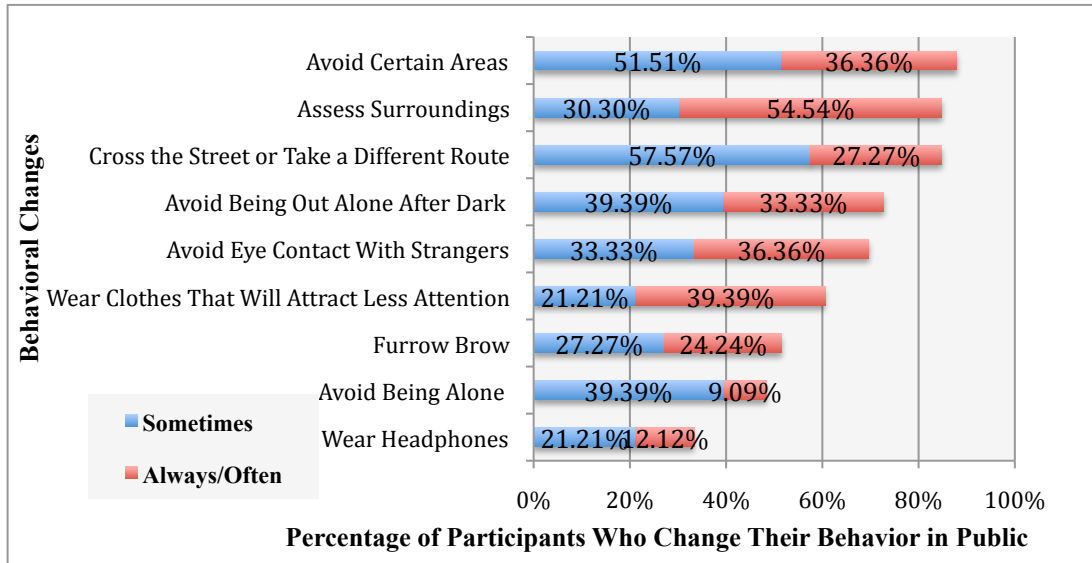


Table 15 demonstrates that Porteña women clearly take certain measures to avoid these public interactions. As previously mentioned, Table 15 above indicates the percentage of participants who sometimes change their behavior in public as well as the percentage of participants who always/often change their behavior in public. Here, I will discuss the combined percentages. First and most importantly, 93.9% of all survey participants acknowledged that they alter their behavior in some way in order to avoid piropos. Nearly 88% of the survey participants reported that they avoid certain areas, either sometimes or always, in order to avoid piropos. Moreover, approximately 85% of the participants acknowledged that they assess their surroundings and cross the street or take a different route because they feel uncomfortable in some public spaces. Nearly 72% of the participants acknowledged that they avoid being out alone after dark, whereas

roughly 49% of participants admitted that they avoid being alone in public, regardless of the time of day. Almost 70% of participants stated that they, either sometimes or always, avoid eye contact with strangers on the street because they think this brief visual interaction might encourage unwanted attention. Roughly 61% of participants admitted that they allow the use of piropos to affect their style of dress, and almost 52% said that they furrow their brow in order to avoid piropos. Although many participants were not familiar with the phrase “frown your brow,” many participants acknowledged their use of “cara de culo⁹⁸” in an attempt to prevent unwelcome comments. Lastly, 33% of participants admitted that they wear headphones in order to avoid hearing the comments that are made to them on the street.

When tallying up these statistics, I was overwhelmed by the sheer number of Porteña women who claimed to modify their public demeanor in response to the use of piropos, and I understood this to be indicative of their attitude toward and opinion of this social practice. On account of my focus group discussions and individual interviews, I was able to further substantiate these claims.

Several interview participants discussed the ways in which they purposely alter their route, either by avoiding certain areas or crossing the street, in order to avoid piropos. During an individual interview, I asked Claudia to describe her reaction when she sees a group of men or boys on the sidewalk. Claudia did not wait for me to finish my question before giving me the following response:

Me cruzo. Cruzo la calle o pongo más fuerte la música. Pero aunque vos no escuches lo que te dicen, lo ves. Ves la intención. Se te acercan o

cambia la dinámica del grupo, entonces prefiero cruzar la calle y no tener que bancarme eso. Yo soy muy fóbica igual a los piropos.⁹⁹

Later in the interview, Claudia acknowledged that she also avoids certain areas near her home. After telling me about an uncomfortable experience when walking past a construction site, Claudia stated, “Ese lugar de la obra está cerca de mi casa y no paso porque no quiero que me digan cosas.¹⁰⁰” Here, Claudia made the conscious decision that changing her route was more suitable and safe for her psychological wellbeing than resigning herself to public interactions over which she has no control.

During the second focus group discussion, several of the participants echoed Claudia’s feelings about crossing the street solely to avoid unwelcome comments or stares from strangers.

Marta: Si ves un grupo de pibes que te están mirando, no vas a pasar por en medio del grupo. Bueno, yo al menos no voy a hacer eso.

Marcela: Pero no sé si es para evitar un piropo... es para evitar cualquier cosa.

Marta: No, yo lo hago por la incomodidad. No porque tengo miedo de que me hagan algo. Simplemente porque quiero evitar la situación. [...] Si veo que lo puedo evitar, cruzo la calle. Si ves un grupo y decís, “estos algo van a decir...”¹⁰¹

Just like Claudia, Marta feels that she must cross the street when she sees a group of guys on the sidewalk. Marta has experienced the unwanted attention from groups of random men before, and she would rather avoid the situation altogether by crossing the street. This reaction gives us a better understanding of the distress and discomfort that such an

interaction must provoke in the recipient if so many women take premeditated measures to avoid future interactions.

Other participants admitted that they avoid eye contact with strangers because they think that making eye contact can encourage these interactions. Paula explained that avoiding eye contact is a part of her daily routine. She stated, “No me gusta tener que evitar mirar a la gente porque me van a decir algo, pero me pasa desde subir al colectivo hasta el médico porque a los hombres les gusta piropear y quizás mis ojos llaman la atención.¹⁰²” Nevertheless, there were other participants, like Carina, who does not let the use of piropos influence her behavior in this way. She argued,

No evito mirar. Si tengo que mirar, miro. Y si hay algo más importante en otro lado, miro para otro lado. En eso no me escondo para que no me vean. No es que voy a hacer contacto visual. No, eso no. Pero uno va caminando y va mirando con los ojos abiertos. No es que voy a buscar la mirada con una intención, pero si viene alguien, lo miro. Si es un hombre o una mujer, no importa.¹⁰³

One of the most popular topics that the participants brought up in nearly all the individual interviews was the way in which they change their style of dress in order to prevent these public interactions. Many participants reported wearing more conservative clothing because they feel that it will attract less attention on the street. In a one-on-one interview, Angela said, “Es verdad que te condiciona. Si salgo a las cinco de la mañana para ir a trabajar, trato de taparme lo más que pueda para no llamar la atención. Para evitar que me digan cosas.¹⁰⁴” Cecilia also described this defense mechanism that many Porteña women take into consideration on a daily basis before they leave the house.

Cecilia confessed,

Incomoda. En la calle, incomoda. Es horrible tener que decir “si me pongo tacos... si me pongo un pantalón ajustado... si me pongo una pollera... ¿Cómo viajo en colectivo?” [...] En todos lados dicen [piropos]. Que sé yo. Según donde vas, vas adoptando la forma de vestirte.¹⁰⁵

Claudia added to this sentiment by explaining how this behavioral change is a result of years of constant public objectification. She maintained,

Acá son muchos años de que te dicen y te dicen y te dicen y que uno obviamente empieza a elegir. Yo no uso ni polleras cortas ni escotes. Para salir me trato de poner un tapado que me tape.¹⁰⁶

Later in the interview, Claudia explained her perception that provocative clothing can encourage the use of piropos in public. She described her clothing choices and limitations as a consequence of this unfortunate reality.

Te da vergüenza un poco. Decís, tal vez está mal que yo use una remera un poco escotada o está mal que me ponga un jean muy apretado. Tal vez yo lo estoy provocando. Empieza ese juego donde un poco uno se protege y otro poco dice, “bueno, no voy a poner la cabeza para que me la corten.” No me voy a poner una remera súper escotada apretada para que me digan groserías. Es más, el otro día, yo iba caminando muy pegadita a una chica a propósito porque ella estaba vestida muy provocativa y yo no, por si en caso de que griten algo, que lo griten a ella. Porque uno sabe que mientras más provocativa estás, más incentivas eso.¹⁰⁷

María explained in detail how she personally alters her wardrobe with the purpose of attracting less attention. In her individual interview, she stated,

Ya no uso vestidos cortos, shortcitos, pantalones ajustados, calzas... El pantalón que te marca el cuerpo, en realidad, me gusta. Que me quede bien. Pero trato de evitar que la cola esté a la vista, por ejemplo en una calza. Se te ve el cuerpo tal cual es. Me gustaría usar alguna calza a veces, pero lo evito siempre. A algunas mujeres no les importa, pero a mí me molesta que me miren el cuerpo o la cola.¹⁰⁸

Paula contributed to this discussion by describing how adapting her wardrobe while in public spaces helps her cope with these public interactions. She said,

Paula: Yo no salgo con ropa muy provocativa pero también escucho que si una chica sale con un pantalón ajustado le van a decir un comentario súper agresivo de la cola.

Mia: ¿Y vos no te vestís de esa forma simplemente porque así te gusta vestirti o por qué estás evitando esos comentarios?

Paula: Yo lo hago para evitar los comentarios. Si me llego a vestir bien, me voy a tapar seguramente con un saco largo para poder llegar tranquila a donde tengo que llegar sabiendo que después me voy a ir de alguna forma que no corra peligro en la calle. Que no me baje del colectivo y camine seis cuadras y me encuentro con cinco borrachos aburridos que me digan “Ey, rubia, mami, ¿estás sola? ¿Venís sola?” Y que alguno sea violenta y se le ocurra algo más. Entonces sí, me condiciona para salir.¹⁰⁹

Despite many acknowledgements of behavioral change, there were several participants who refused to let piropos have any effect on their style of dress. During the second focus group discussion, Mónica stated, “Yo no voy a dejar de usar un jean que me quede al cuerpo apretado para que no me miren el culo.”¹¹⁰ Furthermore, during both the first focus group and a follow-up individual interview, Sofía expressed her opinion that clothing has little effect on the use of piropos. She made it clear that she would not alter her style of dress to avoid piropos, chiefly because she does not think that attire influences the frequency of piropos. Sofía explicated,

Yo creo que aunque no estés súper vestida, si quieren decirte un piropo, te lo dicen igual. Hay momentos en que se da más – a la noche y eso. Pero yo no creo que tiene mucho que ver con la ropa. Es raro, en realidad. A veces me pasa que voy vestida más ajustada y siento que me dicen más. Pero creo que es porque uno está más perseguida entonces lo toma más en cuenta. Yo creo que igual te dicen. Digo más perseguida porque de repente salís ajustada y sabés que puede ser provocador entonces vas más atenta. Por ahí, uno siente que dicen más. Pero no creo que tenga mucho que ver con tu ropa.¹¹¹

Lastly, there were several participants who expressed how they do not like to go out into public spaces alone, either at night or during the day, because they fear being the recipient of piropos. During her individual interview, María explained this sentiment on a personal level. She said,

[Los piropos] me afectan porque a veces no estoy de humor y no quiero que me digan nada. Y bueno, no lo puedo evitar. Me influye en mi forma

de vestir, a qué hora voy a salir, a qué hora voy a volver... trato de evitar estar sola. Cuando salgo con amigas, siento más segura. Que estamos protegidas entre nosotras. Me voy a sentir incómoda si salgo sola, pero si salgo con amigas no. [...] Cambié la forma de vestirme porque soy más grande y porque no quiero que me digan tantas cosas. También los horarios que salgo... y también evito estar sola. Si no existieran los piropos, yo saldría mucho más y saldría sola. O volvería tarde a casa.¹¹²

Each of these behavioural changes authenticates the notion that a woman's right to public space is limited and controlled by men who employ piropos. As such, the use of piropos undermines any progress that has been made toward gender equality in Buenos Aires. Not only do women take calculated steps to avoid these public interactions, but they also often instinctively prepare themselves both mentally and physically for the unwelcome attention that they receive from random men on the street.

Piropos & Gendered Power Relations

This section will examine how the use of piropos has been understood and interpreted by recipients as a demonstration of gendered power relations in Buenos Aires. I will evidence this claim by referencing my own personal experiences through participant observation and by providing quotes from individual interviews and excerpts from focus groups.

During the first focus group, many of the women agreed that it does not matter how you look or who you are as a woman on the streets of Buenos Aires, because all women receive piropos. During the focus group discussion, Paula asserted,

El hombre acá no discrimina nada. Ni que seas mamá, ni que tengas hijos, ni que estés con tu mamá, ni que seas linda, ni que seas flaca, ni que seas rubia. O sea, al hombre le gusta piroppear a la mujer en general.¹¹³

Here, Paula stressed that a woman's appearance and circumstance do not affect the overall likelihood of being a recipient of piropos in the public sphere.

This idea was repeated during several subsequent individual interviews. During an interview with Carina, she expressed confusion regarding the motive behind piropos. When asked if she thinks men single out only those women they think are beautiful, Carina responded,

Un poco generalizará, sí. A veces, yo veo hombres diciéndole piropos a otra mujer, y por ahí le dicen una cosa como, “sos un monumento a la belleza,” y la mina es una flaca normal que está yendo a laburar. Está apurada. Está con el café en la mano. Entonces, no sé porque lo dice. Qué sé yo.¹¹⁴

In this case, Carina explains that, in her opinion, men do not always restrict the delivery of piropos to the women they find most attractive. Instead, it appears that Porteño men have found a way to universalize this discourse practice to apply to the entire female population. As a result, little more than a woman's biological sex now entitles her to be the target of objectification and hypersexualization in the public sphere.

During Sofia's one-on-one interview, she supported the argument that a woman's physical appearance has little to do with the prevalence of this social practice. Although Sofia stated that this is surely not the case for all men, she maintained that, in Buenos Aires,

El piropeador piropea a todas. Seguramente hay hombres que sólo piropean a algunas, pero no creo que haya muchos. El que dice “Ey, mami. Qué linda que sos” no discrimina. [...] El que te dice “Ey, mami” yo creo que ni te mira.¹¹⁵

Here, Sofia concluded that a woman’s physical appearance plays such a small role in the delivery of piropos that men often pay no attention to it. In a later interview, Angela reiterated the notion by stating, “El piropeador piropea y ya. La mujer que pasa no tiene mucha importancia, me parece.¹¹⁶” Angela further expounded on this idea when asked if she ever attempts to avoid piropos. Angela said,

Te re condiciona. Quizás no cambié para evitar los piropos, pero sí cuando lo puedo evitar, lo evito. Igual evitar un piropo no logré hacerlo ni encapuchada con bufanda. No te miran la cara o no sé... No es que te dicen piropos porque sos linda. No es eso. Es otra cosa.¹¹⁷

Sofia’s and Angela’s assertion that men occasionally do not look at the woman before saying a piropo is perhaps unexpected and even comical, but it is an impression that I, too, had when conducting participant observation.

On one particular occasion, I received a piropo from a construction worker who did not set eyes on me. In the moments before, during and after our interaction, he did not look up from his work. He did not see my face, my body or my clothing, but that did not get in the way of him saying “Qué linda que sos¹¹⁸” as I walked past. I kept my eye on him as I turned the corner, but he never turned to face me. Instead of appearing amused by our interaction, the man looked as if he were carrying out a repetitive part of his daily routine. There seemed to be nothing extraordinary or unique about our interaction. I

certainly did not feel that I had been recognized for my beauty. Having heard the click of my boot heel, I was immediately identified as female, and as such, I was marked an appropriate target for piropos.

Both my experience and these participants' comments conflict with the general interpretation of this public act - that the *piropo* is a social tool employed by men to express their appreciation of a woman's beauty. According to these local interpretations, a woman's beauty is a trivial factor in the use of piropos. In fact, according to nearly all of the participants in this study, it is believed that very few Porteño men who say piropos have a genuine interest in the woman, and even less have the intention of approaching the woman in order to get to know her or to invite her on a date. During an individual interview, Daniela broached this topic when explaining her general opinion of piropos and other forms of unsolicited advances.

Yo creo que estamos acostumbrados a que nos digan piropos. No sé si está bien... porque estaría bueno que la persona que nos dice el piropo tenga interés en vos y quiera algo con vos. No que cualquiera te puede decir un piropo. Eso sí me parece que no está bien. Pero también somos animales de costumbre. Entonces ya te acostumbrás a que te griten. Pero en realidad tendría que ser de alguien que quiere halagar a la mujer porque tiene un interés mayor. No solamente decirle algo por la calle y ya está.¹¹⁹

Daniela explains that, in her opinion, the piropo has very little personal significance. For her, the piropo does not represent sincere interest, but is rather a random public interaction that is defined by its anonymity and irrelevance.

This notion was also discussed in length during the first focus group. I will provide a brief excerpt from the discussion so that the comparable opinions and perspectives of the participants are apparent.

Natalia: A veces te dicen “que linda que sos” pero no sé si van a pedirte el número de teléfono. Lo gritan desde los colectivos. “Ey! Rubia!” El “rubia” es un clásico. Sí, una mina hecha rubia... sí.

Sofía: Sí, es verdad eso. Es verdad.

Natalia: Si vos le decís “vení”, sale cagando. No va a bajar. Vos pensás que si le digo, “te amo”, ¿va a frenar? No. Es solo por decir algo.

Sofía: Tal vez es una cuestión mucho más profunda y social y que tiene más que ver con el machismo y el feminismo que con algo que puede llegar a algo más que eso. Es también una demostración de poder... de decir, bueno yo voy arriba del bondi, o de lo que sea, y te grito algo y vos te la tenés que bancar porque es así.

Paula: Y para que todos lo escuchen también.

Natalia: Claro, y eso es porque es macho.

Sofía: Porque es verdad eso, como que, no es que va a bajar del bondi...

Paula: Quizás no es para un levante pero sí es como para marcar una postura de macho, de yo digo lo que quiero...¹²⁰

This conversation raises important questions about the real function of piropos in Buenos Aires. Why would a man make such an advance toward a woman whom he has not set eyes on? Or in whom he has no particular interest? Rather than representing an individualized praise of beauty, the piropo appears to have become a common way in

which men publically exert their power over women. This insight into the use and function of piropos was brought up by nearly all of the participants in this study, in the focus group discussions, one-on-one interviews, and on several of the questionnaires.

Most participants argued that machismo, previously defined as male supremacy and domination of women, plays a major role in the use of piropos. By and large, the participants maintained that piropos are rooted in machismo. However, given that much of society has become so habituated to the practice of delivering, observing and receiving piropos, many people are unaware of the meaning behind this public act and the social alienation that stems from it.

Nonetheless, the focus groups and individual interviews provided a space for participants to candidly discuss how piropos are a verbal expression of machismo and gendered power differences in Buenos Aires. According to Susana, when a man says piropos to random women on the street, he is taking on

Una actitud machista. Como que, “yo te puedo decir lo que quiero. Yo soy más que vos.” Nosotras, las mujeres, vemos hombres lindos, hombres feos, hombres comunes. Y no le decimos lo que pensamos. Lo mirás y guardás el comentario. No lo decís en voz alta.¹²¹

In this dialogue, Susana recognized the desire for men to publically objectify women in public spaces. Although women may have similar opinions about men that they pass on the street, Susana spoke to the fact that it is unusual for a woman to voice her opinion of a man’s appearance on the streets of Buenos Aires. Consequently, this public act is largely one-sided. Just as Achugar (2001) revealed in her study, Porteño men appear to be

reinforcing traditional gender roles by taking on the function of active initiator while the woman remains passive.

Another participant, Paula, referred directly to these gender differences during her interview, and agreed that the practice of delivering piropos in public is tied to the country's long history of machismo.

Este país siempre fue machista y el hombre siempre pudo hacer y decir lo que quería. Y la mujer siempre se quedó en su casa y nunca dijo nada. Entonces, es una costumbre social que el hombre pueda demostrar su machismo o su masculinidad diciendo algo que lo escuche todo el mundo y que nadie le va a decir nada porque uno no contesta el piropo de mala manera, si le cae bien o le cae mal... sólo sigue caminando. Yo creo que lo dicen para demostrar su hombría porque nosotras siempre fuimos mujeres sumisas, en general. [...] Sienten que ellos pueden abrir la boca y decir cualquier cosa y que nosotras agachamos la cabeza porque nos incomoda o cruzamos la calle. Entonces, saben que están diciendo algo que incomoda. Y disfrutan ver que con sólo abrir la boca nosotras actuamos del modo que ellos quieren.¹²²

In this brief discourse, Paula sheds light on several extremely important aspects of this social practice. She draws on Argentina's historically embedded patriarchal structure of gendered relations in order to explain how gender inequalities have been carried into the twenty-first century through practices like these. Although women have made advances in civil liberties, economic opportunities and political leadership positions in Argentina, Paula implies that traditional concepts about gender roles have been perpetuated by this

misogynistic social norm. Paula further suggests that the true function of piropos is to maintain gender-based power differences by giving men freedom to publically exert their dominance over women. By making women feel uncomfortable, piropos are often used, intentionally or otherwise, to restrict and control women's access to public spaces.

In line with Paula's argument, numerous other participants mentioned machismo as a motive for this antiquated social practice. The participants broached the topic of machismo at different stages of the interviews. Many initiated their discussion of machismo when describing the use of piropos in Buenos Aires, and others waited until I prodded them with questions about why men are typically the only sex to say piropos to strangers on the streets.

In an individual interview, Claudia promptly addressed the traces of machismo and patriarchal entitlement that shape her daily interactions in the public sphere. She said,

Si me preguntás a mí cual es el fin de un piropo... no es para halagar a la mujer, es para que el hombre se sienta bien consigo mismo. No creo que sea algo que le está brindando a la mujer, sino noto satisfacción de sentirse más macho y más hombre animándose a decirle algo.¹²³

Here, Claudia referred back to the idea that the recipient is not the true focus of this social practice. She added to the idea that the woman who receives the piropo has little importance by saying that flattery is not the objective either. Instead, Claudia feels that the piropo serves as a way in which men can externalize machismo. By saying a piropo to a random woman on the street, it appears that men feel the need to prove their masculinity by being assertive and dominant over the female sex.

Victoria, too, touched on the role of power and control that define this pervasive social norm. For Victoria, the use of piropos is a normalized form of gender-based violence that is persistent and omnipresent in the public sector. She argued,

Para mí, es del machismo. La demostración de su poder sobre la mujer. [...] [Los piropos] después dan pie a un montón de otras cosas. Borran los límites a veces. El control lo tiene la persona que lo dice. Pero como un insulto también. Yo puedo decir “qué boludo, qué boludo” pero si te lo digo 28 veces al día, por más que sea una palabra, ya empieza a ser invasivo y te afecta. Y más que es siempre de un género a otro.¹²⁴

In this quote, Victoria explains how piropos can be interpreted and understood as a form of psychological harassment. Although the use of piropos has been historically perceived as harmless, most participants reported experience with intimidating, degrading, and aggressive gestures and comments. These experiences, when undergone on a daily basis in the public sphere, can have damaging psychological effects. As Victoria implies, piropos constitute a form of social control because they establish an imbalance of power between those involved in the interaction, and therefore between genders. The man who delivers the piropo is the dominant figure in this interaction due to the fact that he expresses an unsolicited and often unwelcome opinion of the woman’s physical appearance.

Carina, another participant, described in added detail how this interaction perpetuates patriarchal values by putting men in a position of superiority. Carina explained that when a man delivers a piropo to a random woman on the street,

Es como ponerse por encima de la mujer. Si yo me refiero a vos, y te digo ‘vos sos tal cosa’ y vos no podés responderme o no sabés qué responderme, me pongo por encima y te molesto. Quiero sentirme más macho y más groso de lo que soy. Me pongo en una posición superior. [...] El hecho de que el hombre piropea tiene que ver con esta situación de machismo, de no respetar, de no valorar, de hacer un objeto a la mujer, de hacer un icono de belleza, de sexualidad y de curvas... y no una mujer pensante, inteligente y profesional. No están pensando en la mujer como un ser sensible. La transforma en objeto y por eso le puede decir lo que quiera.¹²⁵

In line with the perspectives mentioned earlier, Carina confirmed the role of machismo in this component of Buenos Aires street culture. However, Carina delved deeper in explaining how Porteño men objectify women in order to sustain the gender gap between men and women. Carina described the way in which men, through this social practice, are able to reduce a woman’s worth or role in society. By overlooking a woman’s personal and intellectual abilities, the man reduces the woman to a mere instrument to be used for the objectifier’s purposes.

These participants all explained, in their own ways, how piropos contribute to continued gender-based power differences in Buenos Aires. Some participants explained how piropos are not synonymous with flattery, and they described how this practice has evolved into a systemic means of demeaning the female sex. Other participants described how the use of piropos makes them feel subordinate, as if their access to public space is restricted or even, at times, unwelcome. Many attribute this social norm to the

longstanding culture of machismo in Argentina, and they agree that it reinforces men's power and control over women. Due to the popularity and consequent normalization of piropos in Buenos Aires, men can say whatever they want to whomever they want, regardless of the way it makes women feel. It appears that, albeit unconsciously, many of the men who instigate these public interactions want to ensure that women do not forget their inferior role in a patriarchal society.

Internalization and Acceptance of Machismo

Throughout this research study, I discerned certain behaviors and opinions among the participants that indicated an internalization or acceptance of machismo. As previously mentioned, Argentina has a long-standing history of machismo, and this cultural force has sustained patterns of male dominance in both the public and private realms. Machismo has influenced social expectations and gender-based stereotypes in Buenos Aires, and this has consequently resulted in restricted gender role-making for both men and women. Although women in Argentina have fought for equal treatment and have achieved certain advances, many of the participants in this study demonstrated a clear acceptance and compliance with the unequal treatment that they receive in the public sphere. In order to evidence this claim, I will provide excerpts from the focus groups and individual interviews, and I will also refer back to the survey results.

During the second focus group discussion, Mónica described her own acceptance of the use of piropos as a part of everyday life. She acknowledged, “Es algo cultural. Ellos aprenden a decir los piropos, y las mujeres aprenden a aceptarlos. Es algo natural.”¹²⁶ Sofia, too, agreed that she has accepts this behavior as a normal part of Porteño street culture. She said, “Así es la vida. No es tan grave. Hay cosas peores que un

hombre que te diga un piropo como ‘Qué linda que sos’ en la calle y que siga caminando.¹²⁷”

Even Paula, who is adamantly opposed to the use of piropos, understands that the social practice is still widely accepted in Buenos Aires. She said,

Para mí está aceptado totalmente. Les gusta a los hombres de acá decir piropos y a algunas mujeres les gusta escucharlos. Pero sí, es algo súper natural. No es que un hombre va a pensar que está incomodando a la mujer porque la saluda y le dice un piropo. [...] Es algo natural. No lo acepto pero la verdad es que tengo que salir pensando en que tengo que escuchar piropos. Ya está. Lo asumí.¹²⁸

Like these other women, María explained her acceptance of this social custom and its implications for her role in society. Although she does not approve of the practice, she has internalized it, nonetheless.

Ya es una costumbre. Salís a la calle y sabés que te van a decir algo. Capaz que un día no te dicen nada, pero generalmente te dicen cada vez que salís. Creo que las chicas están acostumbradas y lo toman como algo normal. Quizás a algunas les molesta, pero no hay nada que podemos hacer al respecto. Se usa muchísimo y ya está. Ya está. Estamos acostumbradas.¹²⁹

Angela agreed that, like most Porteña women, she is “resignada a que [me] digan piropos.¹³⁰” Rather than being non-compliant and irritated by every piropo that they encounter on the street, most women learn to accept these interactions as a consistent part

of public life. In order to cope with the unsolicited attention and comments, many women become indifferent to the entire social practice.

During the second focus group, Marcela described this common onset of indifference. She explained,

Lo que cambia es que uno ya no le da tanta pelota a los comentarios. Tampoco le doy tanta bola al tema. Quizás ahora ni me doy cuenta. Quizás me dicen algo y sigo caminando. No les presto atención. [...] Cuando era más chica me ponía más incómoda cuando alguien me decía algo, y hoy en día me molesta menos.¹³¹

Here, Marcela described the emotional resistance that she developed after years of exposure to piropos. Rather than allowing the piropos to continue to affect her emotionally or psychologically, she now tunes them out almost entirely.

In her individual interview, Sofia expressed how one can become indifferent to this social practice and therefore be unaffected by a stranger's words. Although she argued that she will never accept or endorse blatantly offensive piropos, Sofia said that she is unmoved by and unconcerned with more mild piropos.

Ya está. No estoy diciendo que esté bien, pero yo ya lo naturalicé. Ya dejó de molestarme el “hola mami” o “qué linda que sos.” Ya es algo más. Es como un colectivo que pasa. No es algo que me molesta realmente. [...] Un “hola mami” o “Ah, qué linda” es como bueno... ya está. Ya sé que es así. Pasa y a los dos segundos, me olvidé. Y el tipo también se olvidó. Es eso. Es un segundo. Sí, molesta pero tampoco es algo que tenga demasiada relevancia.¹³²

This acceptance of machismo as a part of everyday life was also evident in the results of the one-page survey. Indifference was reported as an emotional reaction to the following types of piropos: whistling (51.51%), honking (51.51%), staring (24.24%), pet names (24.24%), comments about physical appearance (15.15%) and vulgar gestures (6.06%). Even more disquieting is the fact that a number of women also had positive emotional responses to these interactions, such as feeling happy and flattered. These participants, whether intentionally or not, support the reality that men are entitled to evaluate and judge women sexually or aesthetically in public spaces. These results unquestionably demonstrate the acceptance of sexual objectification of women by some participants.

During the first focus group discussion, the participants tried to understand this subconscious acceptance of machismo, as well as the objectification and gender stereotyping of the female figure in Argentina. During this brief excerpt, the participants attributed much of the problem to the media. They argued,

Natalia: Está naturalizado pero por un montón de factores. Hay un montón de factores que ayudan a que esté naturalizado el uso de piropos. Por ejemplo, el programa de Tinelli que salen todas las minas en orto.

Sofía: Eso es el ejemplo perfecto.

Florencia: Mujer objeto.

Sofía: Lo que ella dice es tal cual porque ese programa legitima que después pasen todas estas cosas.

Laura: Es obvio que si una mina sale en tanga en la tele y la ve todo el país y no se queja nadie, un hombre que ves en la vereda te va a decir “qué

orto que tenés.” Es obvio. Estamos creando eso.

Sofía: Sí, eso es tal cual lo que decís. Y además, las mujeres en ese programa se ponen en un lugar de aceptación de eso. No quiero echarle la culpa a la mujer tampoco, pero la mujer misma en el programa de Tinelli se pone en ese lugar de “Ey, qué buen culo” y ella dice “Ayyy, gracias.” De aceptación y hasta que está bueno que te digan eso.

Paula: Sí, ponen a la mujer como un objeto. Como un objeto de admiración. Entonces, es como ver un cuadro y decís “qué lindo.” Y la mujer, que la ponen en un pedestal desnuda y le llegan a decir cosas más zarpadas. Pero es ponerte en un lugar donde te pueden admirar, o te pueden insultar, o te pueden intimidar porque la tele muestra eso.¹³³

In this excerpt, the participants discussed how women are openly objectified on the Argentine TV show *ShowMatch*, which is hosted by Marcelo Tinelli. The participants argued that the objectification that women face on a daily basis in the public sphere is a reflection of this media portrayal of the female figure and her role as a sexual instrument. By viewing women as objects, Paula pointed out, men are able to admire, insult or intimidate them. According to feminist and media activist Jean Kilbourne, “Turning a human being into a thing is almost always the first step toward justifying violence against that person” (Siebel Newsom & Costanzo, 2011).

Media portrayals such as these exhibit gender stereotypes that reinforce machismo, and these stereotypes have the potential to strongly impact the local gender belief system. In other words, these gender portrayals can shape local beliefs and opinions about what constitutes appropriate behaviors, attitudes, and roles for men and

women. The participants in this first focus group argued that media has influenced perception and, in turn, reality.

Although the media is not the only sustaining source of machismo and traditional gender role ideologies in Buenos Aires, the participants believe that the environment in which Porteña women grow up has encouraged them to internalize the submissive but sexualized role constantly transmitted to them by their *machista* surroundings. These gender stereotypes, presented to Porteña women from an early age, begin to have an effect on the way that women view themselves and others. According to the expectancy role theory, societal expectations shape individual behavior, which consequently results in a self-fulfilling prophecy (Geis, 1993). Younger generations, especially, internalize societal expectations and assumptions and “become what they believe they are to be” (Vasquez, 1998, p. 327). Thus, Porteña women may learn to accept existing gender-based stereotypes that promote male dominance and female submission. They may learn to accept unequal treatment as a normal element of street culture, and they may learn to brush off or even derive pleasure from behaviors that can be considered offensive or demeaning.

Although not all participants demonstrated an internalization of machismo or an acceptance of stringent gender roles, most participants have come to accept the use of piropos as a part of their daily interactions and have little hope that it will change in the near future. Claudia expressed her skepticism that the use of piropos will ever be deterred in Buenos Aires. She stated,

Siento que no van a cambiar de ninguna manera. Ya está establecido, ya está aceptado. No hay manera de que cambie. Y los argentinos te van a

decir, “Y bueno, los latinos somos así. Los latinos somos unos pasionales.” Pero no tiene que ver con ser pasional, tiene que ver con ser respetuoso. Eso no va a cambiar en Argentina porque están orgullosos de eso... en el lugar que se auto posicionaron ese poder que ellos sienten que tienen para hablar con una mujer cómo se les cante, cuándo se les cante.¹³⁴

Claudia argued that, for the time being, this social practice will not come to an end. She, like many other participants, expressed the importance of male solidarity in bringing this social practice to a halt. If men do not understand or acknowledge that they are promoting machismo and that they are accomplices in sustaining local gender inequalities, the use of piropos will likely persist and women’s access to public space will continue to be restricted.

For now, most participants do not trust that men will bring this social practice to an end. According to many of the participants, this lack of confidence is tied to the attitudes expressed by male public figures in Buenos Aires. For example, as mentioned above, Buenos Aires Mayor Mauricio Macri recently stated that all women love piropos (TV10cordoba, 2014). By making this public statement, Mauricio Macri practically put his stamp of approval on this demeaning social practice. During an individual interview, Victoria described her reaction to Macri’s comments. She said,

Es impresentable Macri porque, primero, él está ejerciendo un rol y con ese rol de autoridad no puede asumir y hablar por las mujeres. Ya es violento eso. El decide si a la mujer le incomoda. La mujer dice que le incomoda, y él le dice, “No, es mentira, te gusta.” Me parece que está mal.

Vos podés opinar dentro de tu casa pero como figura pública no puede legitimar esa actitud.¹³⁵

Victoria argued that by making such a boorish statement about piropos, Macri virtually expressed his endorsement for the use of piropos in public spaces.

Cecilia, too, was disgusted and discouraged by Macri's comments. She stated,

Me parece que es paupérrimo que el gobernador de nuestra ciudad, que nos debería cuidar a nosotras como mujeres y a nuestros intereses y escucharnos... que avale una situación de violencia de género... Me parece que te da una medida de cómo son los hombres argentinos.¹³⁶

Here, Cecilia explained why she cannot currently depend on male figures to support the elimination of piropos in public. For now, she argued, men do not understand women's experiences with piropos, and men are thus unable to appreciate women's disapproval of the social practice. Therefore, at present, Cecilia and many other participants in this study, are forced to accept these interactions as a permanent and customary part of public life.

In conclusion, it appears that begrudging acceptance currently overrules the hope that piropos will cease to exist. For now, most of the participants in this study are resigned to accept this demonstration of gendered power differences as an element of Buenos Aires street culture, and they will continue to brace themselves for it upon entrance into the public sphere.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

The data presented throughout this study adds to the growing understanding of women's experiences with piropos in the public realm. This investigation has demonstrated that, although Porteña women interpret this social custom in a myriad of ways, piropos are currently restricting women's equal access to public space. The use of piropos permits men to invade women's personal space and exert control and superiority over them as they publically exhibit gender-based power differences. As a result, women are often left feeling helpless and aggravated as they are forced to change their public behavior in order to avoid piropos.

Despite the crucial findings that surfaced throughout this investigation, there were several limitations to this research that command further discussion. In order to address these limitations, I will present several recommendations for future investigations that will allow this topic to be addressed from additional perspectives.

Recommendations for Future Research

Due to various limitations of my research, I would make several suggestions for possible future research studies. I believe that future research should be attentive to the influence of the participants' socioeconomic status and education on their experiences with and interpretations of this social practice. In this study, I did not inquire about the participants' education, social status or financial standing, and I believe it would be important to record how education and socioeconomic status can influence Porteña women's experiences and/or understandings of these interactions. Likewise, future research should also include participants who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or

transgender. The forty participants who took part in this research study identified as heterosexual. Therefore, I was unable to document if or how sexual identity and sexual orientation affect women's experiences and their interpretations of this local custom. I believe it would be important to consider this intersectionality in understanding women's different experiences and opinions.

For future research, I would also propose that researchers delve deeper in attempting to understand what factors make these interactions more or less intimidating for the recipient. I believe that this could be accomplished by asking informants to specify, on a survey, which factors (i.e. tone of voice, time of day, proximity to the man delivering the piropo) most threaten their sense of security on a scale of 1 to 10. By gaining a better understanding of the factors that affect women's sense of security in Buenos Aires, it might be possible to better advocate against those behaviors that are the most discomfoting.

Another important limitation of this investigation stems from the fact that I, as researcher, held outsider status. That is, I was an outsider to the community being studied. Therefore, this investigation was conducted through an etic perspective (Naaeke et al., 2010), and a portion of the analysis was dependent on my interpretation of the local culture. While I took certain measures to prevent any personal or cultural bias, I believe that it would be important for a similar study to be conducted by a researcher from within the community being studied. Insider status of the researcher would be valuable in better understanding this social practice and reaching conclusions based on the collected data. For example, a female researcher born and raised in Buenos Aires may formulate more

appropriate research questions and better understand the experiences and emotional reactions of the participants.

I would also recommend that future researchers employ a distinct methodological approach in addition to those that I employed in this study. I would suggest that the researcher follow closely behind the informants as they walk through the streets of Buenos Aires. This would allow the researcher to record both the slew of piropos that women receive, as well as the immediate emotional reactions that they experience. Throughout my study, informants often struggled to remember the piropos that they received, and many acknowledged that this is likely due to the fact that they have internalized these behaviors and interactions as a normal part of their daily experiences. By following the participants and directly observing their interactions, it would be possible to compile a more complete list of piropos, both verbal and non-verbal, and to gain a deeper understanding of women's emotional reactions. In this case, the women's emotional reactions may be influenced by the researcher's presence (i.e., they may feel less scared or less vulnerable), but I believe that incorporating this methodological approach would be beneficial if the researcher also plans to employ semi-structured interviews. When I established the research design for this study, I originally wanted to employ a similar technique. I had planned on approaching random women on the street after they received a piropo with the aim of questioning them about their emotional and verbal responses. However, I had to do away with this methodological approach when I realized the difficulty of witnessing a piropo targeted at another woman and getting the woman to respond to my line of questioning. Nevertheless, if an individual has already

agreed to participate in the study, observing them on the street could potentially be beneficial in the data collection process.

Lastly, I believe it is absolutely necessary to conduct research on the men who deliver piropos in Buenos Aires. The research I have conducted and the conclusions I have drawn throughout this paper are based entirely on women's experiences and interpretations, and I believe that incorporating a male perspective is critical for a thorough understanding of the issue and for possible future intervention.

If future researchers adhere to my recommendations, Porteño society will benefit from a more thorough examination and analysis of women's experiences with piropos. Researchers will be able to identify trends and patterns that arise when taking women's sexual identity and socioeconomic status into account. Furthermore, advocates in Buenos Aires will be able to strengthen anti-piropo campaigns and bolster local legislation if future research further explores the factors that make these public interactions more threatening. These topics of research will supplement the qualitative and quantitative data that has already been collected on women's experience with piropos in Buenos Aires, and they will likely prove useful in both the academic understanding of this social practice and in real-life applications.

Final Conclusions

The recent development of anti-piropo campaigns in Buenos Aires suggested that the use of piropos in the public sphere was a social conflict worthy of investigation. The use of piropos in Buenos Aires is a human rights issue, as it concerns gender equality in the public sphere. Piropos are often used in Buenos Aires to exert power over women, to treat women with disrespect, and to sexually objectify women without their consent. This

research study attempted to augment the limited data on the subject of women's experiences with piropos, as well as the emotional and psychological bearing that piropos can have on the recipient. This study examined the frequency of women's exposure to piropos, provided examples of verbal piropos, documented women's emotional reactions and verbal responses to the varying types of piropos, and explored the cultural functions and gender implications of this social practice. This research required that Porteña women recount their experiences with piropos and explore their feelings about the social practice. As a result, the study encouraged increased dialogue and greater awareness about the use of piropos in Buenos Aires. This growing consciousness acts as a tool of empowerment for women to resist and dismantle this public display of gendered power differences. In conclusion, I believe that participation in the study, as well as the qualitative and quantitative data collected throughout the investigation, will ultimately be beneficial to Porteño society by allowing for enhanced consciousness and familiarity with the implications of this social practice.

The findings of this study prove that Porteña women's experiences with piropos and their interpretations of the social practice should not be universalized. While some women recognize the use of certain piropos as harassment or gender-based violence, others view piropos as inoffensive and representative of local folkloric culture and behavior. Clearly, a consensus on the use of piropos has not been reached by Porteña women, and to suggest otherwise would be imprudent and inaccurate. The research did, however, demonstrate that many Porteña women have incorporated different strategies for avoiding piropos and staying safe while in public spaces. This implies a general

feeling of discomfort and a diminished sense of safety for women in the public sphere on account of this social custom.

Beyond my recommendations for changes in methodology, I believe that some future research might be needed to more sharply define the problem and to propose potential solutions. To start, I believe that it would be beneficial to look at specific social groups to see who is more “attacked” in the public sphere. For example, it would be important to study the differing experiences of school girls, working women and the LGBTQ community. Secondly, I feel it would be important to conduct research on teenagers who can respond to questions about their first experiences with piropos and what they learned about this social custom and their expected behavior from their parents, friends and peers. This would help understand how the use of piropos is perpetuated from one generation to the next. Moreover, this would also help determine if teenagers are the greatest target and the most vulnerable population to receive piropos, and therefore perhaps an ideal place to begin addressing the situation. Thirdly, I would suggest that future researchers explore in greater detail the health effects of this unwanted sexual attention. It would be valuable to learn the immediate physical health effects of these interactions (sweating, palpitations, etc.), as well as the long-term mental health effects (diminishing sense of self, self-consciousness, unresolved anger, etc.). Lastly, I would recommend future research on women’s employment of different coping methods for dealing with this public objectification. This research can provide greater insight into the severity of this social conflict, and it can help lead to potential interventions and solutions.

Overall, I believe that the data collected in this study relates to previous research on the use of piropos in Latin America. Similar to the data and analyses presented by Andrews (1977) and Achugar (2001), the use of piropos in Buenos Aires demonstrates a defined place for each sex in Porteño society. Despite women's mixed reactions to this discourse practice, piropos consistently reproduce stringent gender roles and gender-based power differences. Thus, it becomes clear how language and discourse practices, like piropos, can both reflect and sustain cultural attitudes like machismo. The participants in this study have a growing awareness of the societal function of this custom, and there appears to be an increased tendency to question and challenge these gendered differences in social behavior.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM – ENGLISH VERSION

Consent Form: Social Behavioral

Title of research study:

Unsolicited Advances in Buenos Aires: Responses and Social Implications

Investigator:

Mia Lael Mitchell under the direction of Professor Alejandra Elenes at Arizona State University.

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?

We invite you to take part in a research study because you have personally experienced being the target of unsolicited advances on the streets of Buenos Aires, Argentina. All participants must be at least 18 years of age.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this research is to study the ramifications of and women's responses to unsolicited advances by strangers on the streets of Buenos Aires. These advances are directed at women from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances on a regular basis in the public sphere, and they constitute a common social practice. These advances often include: following, staring, unsolicited sexual/romantic comments, and physical contact by strangers. This study will reveal how and when this social practice takes place, as well as how it shapes gender roles in Buenos Aires based on the participants' reactions to and interpretations of this widespread phenomenon.

How long will the research last?

We expect that individuals will spend 15 - 90 minutes participating in the proposed activities.

How many people will be studied?

We expect approximately 35 individuals will participate in this research study.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

If you decide to take part in this study, there are potentially three different ways in which you may participate. You can take part in on-street interviews, prearranged individual interviews, or focus group discussions. You are free to decide whether you wish to participate in this study. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used. The three different ways in which you may participate are described below:

- For on-street interviews, you will be asked to respond to questions provided on a one-page survey. The questions posed are regarding your personal experiences with unsolicited advances on the streets of Buenos Aires. You will be asked questions regarding the frequency of your exposure to these advances, your responses and emotional reactions to the advances, your opinion of the advances as well as your attitude toward the men making the advances. These brief interviews should not last longer than 15 minutes. Neither audiotape nor videotape will be utilized during the interviews.

- For prearranged individual interviews, you will be asked to respond to more in-depth questions regarding your experience with unsolicited advances in Buenos Aires. The questions posed are regarding the frequency of your exposure to the advances, your responses and emotional reactions to the advances, your opinion of the advances as well as your attitude toward the men making the advances. The individual interviews will last approximately 60 minutes. Audiotape will be utilized during these interviews. The tapes will be erased upon completion of the study. Individuals participating in prearranged one-on-one interviews will be awarded monetary compensation of approximately \$50 pesos argentinos.
- For focus group discussions, you will be asked to respond to more in-depth questions regarding your experience with unsolicited advances in a group setting. The questions posed are regarding the frequency of your exposure to these advances, your responses and emotional reactions to the advances, your opinion of the advances as well as your attitude toward the men making the advances. Focus groups will consist of approximately five female participants who are willing to openly respond to this line of questioning. Focus group discussions will last approximately 90 minutes. Audiotape will be utilized during focus group discussions. The tapes will be erased upon completion of the study. Individuals participating in focus group discussions will be awarded monetary compensation of approximately \$50 pesos argentinos. Complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the group nature of the discussions.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You may leave the research at any time and it will not be held against you. Participation is voluntary.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

The minimal risk involved in this research study is no more than what the participant encounters in everyday life. Participants may feel uncomfortable recounting past experiences of unsolicited advances, but the participants are free to withhold any information that they feel would jeopardize their comfort or wellbeing.

Will being in this study help me in any way?

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits include: being given the opportunity to voice your opinion and perspective regarding unsolicited advances in Buenos Aires.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, talk to the research team at: mlmitche@asu.edu or ELENES@asu.edu. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Social Behavioral IRB. You may talk to them at (480) 965-6788 or by email at research.integrity@asu.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.

- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

_____ Signature of participant	_____ Date
_____ Printed name of participant	
_____ Signature of person obtaining consent	_____ Date
_____ Printed name of person obtaining consent	_____

APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM – SPANISH VERSION

Formulario de Consentimiento

Título de la investigación:

Insinuaciones no solicitadas en Buenos Aires: Reacciones e implicaciones sociales

Investigador:

Mia Lael Mitchell, bajo la dirección de Alejandra Elenes, Profesora de la Universidad del Estado de Arizona.

¿Por qué me invitan a participar en esta investigación?

La invitamos a participar en esta investigación porque ha experimentado personalmente ser objeto de las insinuaciones no solicitadas que se realizan en las calles de Buenos Aires, Argentina. Todas las participantes deben tener más de 18 años de edad.

¿Por qué se realiza esta investigación?

El propósito de esta investigación es estudiar las reacciones de las mujeres a las insinuaciones no solicitadas realizadas por desconocidos en las calles de Buenos Aires tanto como las consecuencias de los piropos. Estas insinuaciones se dirigen a mujeres de una variedad de procedencias y circunstancias sociales de forma regular en la esfera pública, y constituyen una práctica social cotidiana. Las insinuaciones no solicitadas incluyen: ser seguidas, miradas sostenidas, comentarios sexuales y/o románticos no invitados, y a veces hasta contacto físico por desconocidos. Este estudio revelará cómo y cuándo toma lugar esta práctica social, además de cómo formula los roles de género en Buenos Aires basándose en las reacciones e interpretaciones de las participantes con respecto a este fenómeno.

¿Cuánto tiempo durarán las entrevistas?

Se estima que las participantes pasarán entre 15 a 90 minutos al participar en las actividades aquí propuestas.

¿Cuánta gente participará en la investigación?

Se espera que aproximadamente 35 personas participarán en la investigación.

¿Qué pasará si acepto participar en la investigación?

Si Usted decide formar parte de esta investigación, hay potencialmente tres maneras distintas de participar: Se puede participar en entrevistas en la calle sin cita previa, en entrevistas individuales previamente concertadas, o en conversaciones en grupo de enfoque. Cada persona es libre de decidir si quiere participar en la investigación. Los resultados de esta investigación se podrán incluir en informes, presentaciones, o publicaciones pero no se usarán los nombres de las participantes. Las tres formas en que una puede participar se detallan abajo:

- En las entrevistas en la calle, pediremos que Usted complete una encuesta de una página. Las preguntas están relacionadas a sus experiencias personales con las insinuaciones no solicitadas en las calles de Buenos Aires. Le haremos preguntas

acerca de la frecuencia de su exposición, sus respuestas y reacciones emocionales a los piropos, su opinión personal de los mismos, además de su actitud hacia los hombres que los realizan. Estas entrevistas no durarán más de 15 minutos. No se grabarán ni con video ni con audio estas entrevistas.

- En las entrevistas individuales previamente concertadas, pediremos que Usted responda a preguntas más detalladas con respecto a sus experiencias con las insinuaciones no solicitadas en las calles de Buenos Aires. Las preguntas están relacionadas a la frecuencia de su exposición, sus respuestas y reacciones emocionales a los piropos, su opinión de los mismos, además de su actitud hacia los hombres que los realizan. Las entrevistas individuales durarán aproximadamente 60 minutos. Se grabarán las entrevistas con audio y se borrarán dichas entrevistas en cuanto se termine la investigación. Las personas que participan en las entrevistas individuales recibirán una indemnización de aproximadamente \$50 pesos argentinos.
- En las conversaciones en grupo, pediremos que las participantes respondan a preguntas más detalladas con respecto a sus experiencias con las insinuaciones no solicitadas en forma grupal. Las preguntas están relacionadas a la frecuencia de su exposición, sus respuestas y reacciones emocionales a los piropos, su opinión de los mismos, además de su actitud hacia los hombres que los realizan. Los grupos consistirán de aproximadamente cinco participantes quienes están dispuestas a responder abiertamente en esta línea de investigación. Los grupos de discusión durarán aproximadamente 90 minutos. Se grabarán en audio las conversaciones y se borrarán dichas conversaciones en cuanto se termine la investigación. Las personas que participan en los grupos de conversación recibirán una indemnización de aproximadamente \$50 pesos argentinos. No se puede garantizar confidencialidad total debido a la naturaleza de discusiones grupales.

¿Qué pasará si acepto participar pero cambio de opinión después?

Usted puede dejar la investigación en cualquier momento sin repercusiones.

¿Podría esta investigación afectarme de forma negativa?

El mínimo riesgo asociado con esta investigación no es más de lo que las participantes enfrentan en la vida cotidiana. Las participantes pueden sentirse incómodas al relatar sus experiencias de estas insinuaciones no solicitadas, pero las participantes pueden guardar cualquier información que sientan que podría poner en riesgo su comodidad o bienestar.

¿Podría ayudarme esta investigación de alguna manera?

No le podemos prometer beneficios a Usted ni a otros por participar en esta investigación. Sin embargo, un posible beneficio podría ser: tener la oportunidad de expresar su opinión y perspectiva con respecto a las insinuaciones no solicitadas en Buenos Aires.

¿Con quién puedo hablar?

Si Usted tiene alguna pregunta, duda, o queja, hable con el equipo de investigación: mlmitche@asu.edu o ELENES@asu.edu. Esta investigación ha sido revisada y aprobada

por el Comité Institucional de Revisión de Protocolos en cuanto a la investigación social y conductual. Puede comunicarse con ellos por teléfono a 001 (480) 965-6788 o por correo electrónico a research.integrity@asu.edu si:

- El equipo de investigación no responde a sus preguntas, dudas o quejas.
- No puede comunicarse con el equipo de investigación.
- Quiere hablar con un coordinador del equipo de investigación.
- Tiene preguntas acerca de sus derechos como participante en una investigación.
- Quiere obtener información o dejar un comentario sobre esta investigación.

Su firma implica su consentimiento a formar parte de esta investigación.

Firma de la Participante

Fecha

Aclaración

Firma de la Persona Quien Pide Consentimiento

Fecha

Aclaración de la Persona Quien Pide Consentimiento

APPENDIX C

PIROPO QUESTIONNAIRE – ENGLISH VERSION

Piropos in Buenos Aires: Questionnaire

What was the piropo that you just received? How did it make you feel?

How often are you the target of piropos in public?

Daily? _____ Weekly? _____ Monthly? _____ Yearly? _____

How often have you experienced the following interactions with a stranger?

	Never	Rarely	Often / Always
Whistling?	_____	_____	_____
Staring?	_____	_____	_____
Calling you a pet name?	_____	_____	_____
Making a comment about your appearance?	_____	_____	_____
Following you?	_____	_____	_____
Talking to you in a way that made you uncomfortable?	_____	_____	_____
Making vulgar gestures toward you?	_____	_____	_____
Making sexual comments about you?	_____	_____	_____
Touching you in a sexual way?	_____	_____	_____
Honking?	_____	_____	_____

How do each of these interactions make you feel?

(Annoyed, Angry, Happy, Flattered, Neutral, Awkward, Uncomfortable, Scared, Insulted, etc)

Whistling?	_____
Honking a car horn?	_____
Staring?	_____
Calling you a pet name?	_____
Making a comment about your appearance?	_____
Following you?	_____
Making vulgar gestures toward you?	_____
Making sexual comments about you?	_____
Touching you in a sexual way?	_____

Have you changed your behavior to avoid piropos in public?

	Never	Rarely	Often / Always
Do you avoid eye contact?	_____	_____	_____
Avoid being alone?	_____	_____	_____
Wear headphones?	_____	_____	_____
Avoid specific areas?	_____	_____	_____
Regularly assess your surroundings?	_____	_____	_____
Dress in more conservative clothing?	_____	_____	_____
Avoid being alone at night?	_____	_____	_____
Scowl?	_____	_____	_____
Cross the street / take a different route?	_____	_____	_____

What is your opinion of the strangers that deliver piropos to women on the streets?

What is your opinion of piropos and other forms of unsolicited advances?

APPENDIX D

PIROPO QUESTIONNAIRE – SPANISH VERSION

Piropos en Buenos Aires: Encuesta

¿Cuál fue el piropo que te acaban de decir? ¿Cómo te hizo sentir?

¿Con qué frecuencia te dicen piropos en la calle? ¿Una vez por...?

¿Día? _____ ¿Semana? _____ ¿Mes? _____ ¿Año? _____

¿Con qué frecuencia experimentás las insinuaciones no solicitadas?

	Nunca	Pocas Veces	Seguido/Siempre
¿Chiflido?	_____	_____	_____
¿Miradas?	_____	_____	_____
¿Nombres cariñosos?	_____	_____	_____
¿Comentarios sobre tu aspecto físico?	_____	_____	_____
¿Persecución?	_____	_____	_____
¿Hablar de una manera que incomoda?	_____	_____	_____
¿Gestos vulgares?	_____	_____	_____
¿Comentarios sexuales?	_____	_____	_____
¿Contact físico? (Si lo hay)	_____	_____	_____
¿Bocinas?	_____	_____	_____

¿Cómo te hacen sentir estas acciones?

(molesta, enojada, contenta, halagada, indiferente, avergonzada, incómoda, asustada, insultada etc.)

¿Chiflido?	_____
¿Miradas?	_____
¿Nombres cariñosos?	_____
¿Comentarios sobre tu aspecto físico?	_____
¿Persecución?	_____
¿Hablar de una manera que incomoda?	_____
¿Gestos vulgares?	_____
¿Comentarios sexuales?	_____
¿Contact físico? (Si lo hay)	_____
¿Bocinas?	_____

¿Has cambiado tu comportamiento para evitar los piropos en público?

	Nunca	Pocas Veces	Seguido/Siempre
¿Evitás mirar a los ojos?	_____	_____	_____
¿Evitás estar sola?	_____	_____	_____
¿Usás auriculares?	_____	_____	_____
¿Evitás ciertas zonas?	_____	_____	_____
¿Evaluás el entorno?	_____	_____	_____
¿Te ponés ropa más conservadora?	_____	_____	_____
¿Evitás salir sola a la noche?	_____	_____	_____
¿Fruncís el ceño?	_____	_____	_____
¿Cruzás la calle o tomás otra ruta?	_____	_____	_____

¿Cuál es tu opinión de los hombres que hacen piropos en la calle?

¿Cuál es tu opinión de los piropos y otras formas de insinuaciones no solicitadas?

APPENDIX E

VERBAL RECRUITMENT SCRIPT FOR ONE-PAGE QUESTIONNAIRE

ENGLISH VERSION

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Alejandra Elenes at the New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study on the responses to and social implications of piropos advances on the streets of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

I am recruiting individuals over 18 years of age to answer questions regarding their personal experiences with piropos in Buenos Aires. The questions will relate to the frequency of exposure to unsolicited advances, responses and emotional reactions to the advances, opinion of the advances and attitude toward individuals making the advances. The questioning will take approximately 15 minutes.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please email the research team at mlmitche@asu.edu or ELENES@asu.edu.

APPENDIX F

VERBAL RECRUITMENT SCRIPT FOR ONE-PAGE QUESTIONNAIRES

SPANISH VERSION

Soy estudiante de la maestría en Justicia Social y Derechos Humanos bajo la dirección de Profesora Alejandra Elenes en la Universidad del Estado de Arizona. Estoy realizando una investigación sobre las respuestas e implicaciones sociales en relación con insinuaciones no solicitadas en las calles de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires.

Estoy buscando a personas mayores a 18 años de edad para responder preguntas acerca de sus experiencias personales con los piropos y otras insinuaciones no solicitadas en Buenos Aires. Las preguntas son acerca de la frecuencia de tu exposición a los piropos, tus respuestas, tus reacciones emocionales, tus opiniones, además de tu actitud hacia los individuos que realizan estos piropos. Las entrevistas no durarán más de 15 minutos

Tu participación en esta investigación es voluntaria. Si elegís participar, te pediremos que firmes un formulario de consentimiento. Si tenés alguna pregunta acerca de la investigación, por favor contactá al equipo de la investigación: mlmitche@asu.edu o ELENES@asu.edu.

APPENDIX G

RECRUITMENT EMAIL FOR FOCUS GROUPS AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

ENGLISH VERSION

Subject: Research Participation Invitation

I am a graduate student in the MA in Social Justice and Human Rights under the direction of Professor Alejandra Elenes at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study on the responses to and social implications of piropos on the streets of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

I am recruiting individuals over 18 years of age to answer questions regarding their personal experiences with piropos in Buenos Aires. The questions will relate to the frequency of your exposure to piropos, your responses, emotional reactions, and opinion of piropos, as well as your attitude toward individuals delivering the piropos.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Depending on your willingness and availability, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview and/or focus group discussion. The individual interviews will last approximately 60 minutes, and the focus group discussion will last approximately 90 minutes.

If you choose to participate in the study, you will be awarded a monetary compensation of \$50 pesos argentinos, and you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please email the research team at mlmitche@asu.edu or ELENES@asu.edu.

Mia Mitchell
MASJHR Student
Arizona State University

APPENDIX H
RECRUITMENT EMAIL FOR FOCUS GROUPS AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS
SPANISH VERSION

Tema: Invitación de Participación en una Investigación

Soy estudiante de la maestría en Justicia Social y Derechos Humanos bajo la dirección de Profesora Alejandra Elenes en la Universidad del Estado de Arizona. Estoy realizando una investigación sobre las respuestas e implicaciones sociales con relación a las insinuaciones (sexuales) no solicitadas en las calles de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Estoy buscando personas mayores a 18 años de edad para responder a preguntas acerca de sus experiencias personales con los piropos y otras insinuaciones no solicitadas en Buenos Aires. Las preguntas son sobre la frecuencia de tu exposición a los piropos, tus respuestas, tus reacciones emocionales, tus opiniones, además de tu actitud hacia los individuos que realizan estos piropos.

Tu participación en esta investigación es voluntaria. Dependiendo de tu voluntad y disponibilidad, te pediremos que participes en una entrevista individual y/o en una conversación en grupo. Las entrevistas individuales durarán aproximadamente 60 minutos, y la conversación en grupo durará aproximadamente 90 minutos.

Si elegís participar en esta investigación, recibirás una indemnización de \$50 pesos argentinos, y pediremos que firmes un formulario de consentimiento. Si tenés alguna pregunta acerca de la investigación, por favor contactá al equipo de investigación: mlmitche@asu.edu o ELENES@asu.edu.

Mia Mitchell
Estudiante de MASJHR
Universidad del Estado de Arizona

APPENDIX I
TRANSLATION OF QUOTATIONS

¹ Deep down, all women love to receive piropos. There are some women who say they don't like it, that they are offended by it... I don't believe them one bit. I can't imagine anything nicer than someone telling you 'what beautiful eyes you have'... even if it's accompanied by something offensive like 'what a nice ass you have', it's all good.

² Bust her ass with cock-blows

³ A popular oral tradition that is rooted in the Argentine imaginary.

⁴ They tell us what they think of us, what they think of our front and back, what they would do to us, and that is a form of harassment that is hidden behind the façade of a compliment.

⁵ Maybe I walk a lot, but every time I'm out walking some guy says something to me. I mean, it's not a real *piropo*, but there's always some guy that turns around and yells something at you.

⁶ Always. Someone always says something or makes some gesture. They honk at you or whatever. But definitely every day.

⁷ **Mónica:** I think just once a week.

Marcela: Once a week.

Marta: I would say between two and three times a week. Not every day nor once a week. Somewhere in between.

⁸ I've never thought about it. Definitely during the week, yes. At least once a week. I walk a lot and therefore I'm more exposed to their comments.

⁹ **Mónica:** When you're thirteen.

Marta: Yeah, when you start developing.

Marcela: More or less when your body starts to change, when you start developing.

Marta: Maybe they start telling you piropos when you're 13, and then it becomes increasingly more common. When you're 14, 15...

Mónica: And maybe it happens when you start to walk alone, I think. Maybe when you're walking with your mother when you're 12 years old they don't say anything to you. Or they say some things, but that only happened to me a few times.

Marta: They said to me, 'I'd do the mother and the daughter!'

Mónica: "She's as beautiful as her mother!" Those silly comments, but when you're 13 or 14 and you start to walk alone...

¹⁰ I will always remember this day that I was going to P.E. class... I left school and I was headed to P.E. I must have been 13 years old because it was the first year that I was allowed to walk alone. I was wearing this big, long shirt and an ugly pair of sweatpants. I mean, I was a mess. This old man walked by and he said to me, "Oh, how I would love to

lick your tits, baby.” It was really terrible for me. I remember that day as the first time someone told me a piropo. It was really invasive because I was so young.

¹¹ As soon as a girl starts to develop, when she starts to have more of a womanly body, they say things to you on the street. [...] I walk with my little sister who is 16 and she’s already fully developed. They yell things at her and I say, “Are you insane? Don’t you realize that she’s a young girl? How are you going to yell such a filthy thing to a young girl?”

¹² **Mónica:** Yes. What happens is that they see them as younger, more defenseless. Maybe that’s why they are so disrespectful to them. Maybe with an older woman, they would be more afraid to say something like that.

Marta: Yeah, because he knows you could react differently.

Mónica: Maybe older women would react badly. On the other hand, a girl who is fifteen years old doesn’t know what to do. She gets scared. I don’t think she would react.

¹³ **Paula:** Maybe 50/50.

Laura: For me, it’s 80/20. More offensive than nice piropos.

Daniela: More offensive than nice, for sure.

Laura: Yeah, they cross the line.

Natalia: No, more complimentary than offensive. At least in my case.

Laura: No, no way. They cross the line.

Sofía: No, for me they are more offensive than complimentary.

Paula: For me, it’s 50/50.

Daniela: “What a great ass, baby.” Those comments are typical.

Sofía: They tell me more shocking piropos than complimentary. Maybe 80/20.

Daniela: And then there’s that type of piropo such as, “You’re friend is really hot, but you’re a dog!” It’s not a piropo, but it happens. My boyfriend says stuff like that too. “Fatty! Walk, you bitch! Lay off the desserts!”

Sofía: What’s happened to me is – not that – but I have experienced the transition from love to hatred. I mean, they said something to me that was supposedly complimentary, and when I made a face or didn’t respond, I then became the ugliest girl in the world. So they yelled at me, “Ahhh, you’re so ugly!” I’ve experienced that transition but not that someone directly insults me on the street.

Daniela: One time I was crossing a bridge, and I was wearing an animal print jacket. A boy walked by me and he said “I prefer Garfield to you!” I don’t think it happens very often but it has happened to me.

Paula: I think that if there is a group of boys, that gives them a sense of entitlement to say anything. Girls walk by and they say nice and ugly things to them, it doesn’t matter. Sometimes they do it out of spite because they know they’ll never get those girls.

Florencia: That has happened to me. Now I remember. When I was younger... when I was about 20, I was on the bus on my way to a club when some guys called me, “Fatty! Fatty!” Okay, fine. I’ve always been a few pounds overweight but not so fat that you should be saying it to me like that on the street.

¹⁴ I would say it was more like 80% inoffensive piropos. 80% flattering and 20% negative. They were negative because they usually described a flaw of yours. Like “what a fat ass you have” or “what an ugly face” or “what ugly legs.” I don’t know. I always understood that an important part of piropos is pointing out a woman’s flaws. Sometimes a virtue, but also the flaws.

15

You’re a beauty.
How divine.
Ciao, my love.
You’re a flower.
You’re so cute.
Oh, my love.
You’re beautiful.
You’re a bomb.
What a pretty girl.
You’re really hot.
Goddess, ¿how are you?
How beautiful.
Oh, please.
Marry me.
What a pretty woman.
You’re beautiful.
Beautiful, my love.
Hello, blondie.
Beautiful brunette.
Hello, goddess.
You’re so beautiful, brunette.

16

You dropped a piece of paper... that which wraps you up, chocolate.
Walk in the shade or else you will melt, chocolate.
Science is now so advanced that even chocolate walks.
¿Do you have 25 cents?
Yes, why?
So that I can call my mother and tell her I’ve found an angel.
Goodbye heart, everything I have is yours.
You’re a fountain of pleasure.
You’re a monument to beauty.
With curves like that, I might just crash.
Be careful on the street corner.
Why?
Because someone is stealing dolls.
Oh, the sun has come out.

Without you, there wouldn't be a day of spring.
I iron, I cook... I'm the perfect husband.
If the AFIP charged taxes for beauty, you would be screwed.
It's not a bikepath but a chocolate path!
¡Oh, how I would love to be a bikeseat! (When the recipient is riding a bike)
If I tell my mom to cook, will you come?
Is that your daughter, ma'am?
Yes.
Very nice! Keep manufacturing.

17

A lot bread for that salami. (When recipient is with boyfriend)
You're girlfriend is beautiful. (When recipient is with boyfriend)
¡Mother-in-law! ¡Mother-in-law! We'd do you too! (When recipient is with her mother)
I'd do the daughter and the mother! (When recipient is with her mother)
I'll take care of them. (When recipient is with her children)
Can I ask you a question, beautiful?
Can I drive you? I won't charge you.
Where are you going, baby?
What a cute little mouth.
Hi, baby.
What a body, Pamela!
You're as satisfying as a morning piss.
Baby, with an ass like that, you can shit at my house any time.
Baby, with an ass like that, poop in my eye and call me a shit pirate.
You're chest is going to be cold, my love.
What nice abs.
You have a rockin' body.

18

Come here, beautiful, so we can rape you.
How I'd like to fuck you.
Oh, how I'd fuck you.
With an ass like that, I'd like you to shit on me.
I'd give you five kids.
How I would suck your pussy.
I would break your ass into twenty pieces.
I would do everything to you.
Oh, how I would rape you.
Oh, how I'd like to lick your tits, baby.
Baby, I'll take you and do everything to you.
With an ass like that, who needs a vagina?
I would give you another kid.
I'd suck your pussy.
What a nice ass, baby.

I'll eat your pussy.
I would fuck you all night.
What an ass you have.
What beautiful tits you have.
I'm going to tear your ass apart. I'm going to leave it all torn apart.
I'll grab you and spin you around 30 times.

¹⁹ **Daniela:** A piropo, in actuality, is a phrase used to flatter a woman. What happened is that it became distorted. The phrases aren't very appropriate anymore and they are more aggressive. They are more offensive. And they are like harassment.

²⁰ **Claudia:** 100% of all piropos, of any type of interaction that appears arbitrary and forced, bother me. 100% of them bother me. They will always bother me. Maybe 10% are comments that don't bother me that much, but I find 90% of them offensive. [...] Look, if today you ask me what a piropo is, I would say it sounds like something nice. Because what I'm used to hearing is not a piropo. It's offensive. It's the man's mental masturbation. It's a totally violent thing. Maybe there are people who won't say all these things to you that I'm saying about piropos. Not everyone experiences it the same way. But in my case, I think it's a violent and sexual conduct, full of vulgarity. Obviously there's a bit of everything, right? They can say "you're so beautiful" and it can seem inoffensive but they can also say things that are much uglier.

²¹ **Marta:** That's why I feel that a piropo can be invasive. Because whatever type of piropo it is, if you don't feel like hearing it, it's not okay.

²² **Paula:** I don't like piropos at all because maybe one day they can make you smile but the truth is, in general, I want to walk down the street and when I see a man walking toward me, I don't want to be thinking about whether or not he's going to come up to me or if he's going to say something to me, or if the five mechanics in their workshop will... So I prefer not to hear any piropos. I don't like them. The truth is that I don't like to hear them. [...] I think they are uncomfortable, inappropriate and people really don't want to hear things like that.

²³ **Carina:** I don't like them. Not from strangers. If a friend tells me a piropo, I like it because it seems sensible and real. But not from a stranger. I'm not interested in a stranger's opinion. It feels like he is trying to show his superiority. And he is looking down on the woman.

²⁴ **María:** I wish piropos didn't exist. I wish I could go out onto the street and not have to worry about what I wear. I even avoid going out at certain times to avoid piropos. [...] I wish they didn't exist. But I'm already used to the custom, it doesn't bother me that much anymore and I've already accepted it. I know I will receive comments and that it won't change. I don't know. It would be nice if it didn't happen so often. If they said something nice to you every once in a while you might think, "look how nice." Every once in a while... That's why I say that the sometimes the piropo itself isn't bothersome, but you

hear piropos so often that they become bothersome.... We don't have the right to go out onto the street and not receive comments.

²⁵ **Ángela:** I don't like them. They bother me. They are bothersome. Even if they say something nice to you. I'm not a very romantic person anyway. So forget it if you think I'm going to like something like that and especially from a person that I don't know. Some dirty old man. I don't know. [...] For me, the piropo has lost its value. Anyone can tell you a piropo and they do it all the time. It has no value anymore. That's what happens, at least here in Buenos Aires. It's constant and omnipresent. When I moved back from Italy when I was 16, I wasn't accustomed to it. And when I started to realize that everyone says something to you... I don't know, it's horrible.

²⁶ **Victoria:** For me, they make the person uncomfortable. What happens is that we become accustomed to it. So, it's not an easy thing to evaluate or analyze entirely. Sometimes they can make you laugh or I don't know, but they make you uncomfortable. And when they're more... If they are more insulting, no way. I think it's a way to show superiority. But those aren't really *piropos*. The guy says that it's a piropo and he says, "hey, why are you getting upset? It's a piropo." But it's not a piropo. They use the word piropo to say something unpleasant. To insult you. To demean you. [...] [The piropo] is a Buenos Aires custom. It's a custom from my city. I identify with that. In reality, what bothers me is that people assume that you will like it. I don't like that. I think that piropos exist everywhere, but here they cross the line. They don't take into account that the woman isn't... The woman may not want to hear that. I don't like that.

²⁷ **Susana:** It seems very machista. For example, when I'm walking down the street and I see a man who passes me, I don't say "Oh, what grey hair" or "Oh, you're so fat." The man always has to comment on your physical appearance. "Oh, how beautiful" or "Oh, how petite" or "Oh, how bow-legged." They can point out your flaws too, in addition to saying something nice about your body. [...] You can comment to your friend, "look at that guy's body" or "how cute," but you don't say to him, "how ugly." Or "how horrible." "How handsome." "How cute." You keep it to yourself. That's what bothers me. Why do they have to say something to you on the street if they don't even know you? I view it as an aggression. I'm telling you, in general, I don't like it.

²⁸ In general, they are inappropriate, especially if they make a sexual comment or if they follow you.

²⁹ I think that if it were the other way around, I would respect the person.

³⁰ I think the majority are inappropriate and it bothers me that it has become normalized.

³¹ I think it's machista and cowardly.

³² I don't agree [with the use of piropos] because some are discomfoting.

³³ I don't like them!

³⁴ They are invasive.

³⁵ It's an unnecessary custom, and it doesn't interest or benefit women.

³⁶ They are not pleasant.

³⁷ For me, they represent vulgar men.

³⁸ Real piropos on the street are rare. The majority are crude comments made by uneducated and ignorant people.

³⁹ Piropos are a demonstration of machismo.

⁴⁰ I detest them. I don't like that they talk to me just because they can. I don't like that they evaluate my body and my physical appearance.

⁴¹ They lack the skill to seduce women.

⁴² **Mónica:** For me, honestly... as long as they aren't too offensive, they don't bother me. I don't really understand why they do it though.

⁴³ **Sofía:** I think that as long as what they are saying is respectful, playful and innocent, I accept it and I think it's okay. Now, when it crosses that line and it becomes aggressive and disrespectful or more intimidating, that's when I think it's not okay. It's inappropriate. It's wrong. I divide the piropos into two different groups. There's the piropo that is a compliment or a joke, and then there's the other kind that is offensive.

⁴⁴ **Marcela:** It's a custom. I think it's an Argentine custom, and if it's not ugly... if it's not inappropriate, I don't think it's bad.

⁴⁵ I think the more mild piropos are fine. I think everything else is out of line.

⁴⁶ If they are nice piropos, it's okay. If it's not nice, I think it's an unjustified aggression.

⁴⁷ It depends on the type of piropo. I may think one is nice, I may feel indifferent to another, and I can think one is out of line. I don't worry about piropos.

⁴⁸ As long as they aren't offensive, I don't mind them.

⁴⁹ I don't mind them, as long as they aren't too offensive.

⁵⁰ Oftentimes they make us feel uncomfortable but sometimes we feel flattered to the point that it lifts our spirits.

⁵¹ It depends on the context.

⁵² If it's not insulting, I think it's okay.

⁵³ They are a folkloric expression of our society. The content determines whether it is a compliment or a form of harassment. It's a social practice like any other. If the man bothers or embarrasses the woman, it's a perverse behavior.

⁵⁴ It depends on the piropo.

⁵⁵ I don't worry about piropos.

⁵⁶ If we're talking about "nice" piropos then I think they are welcome and they make you feel good. The unpleasant piropos are bothersome and discomforting.

⁵⁷ Depending on the type of piropo, it can be a compliment or an insult. As long as it is respectful, the piropo doesn't bother me nor does the man who says it. Those men who are disrespectful should have their mouths sewn shut.

⁵⁸ They are healthy and part of our folklore – Only when they are respectful and fun.

⁵⁹ Every piropo is like a drop of water that falls into a giant glass. One drop or two drops aren't going to affect the total volume, but if you leave the glass for ten years, it will overflow. And the one drop that, at first, didn't affect or shouldn't have affected whether or not the glass would overflow, in excess it is inevitable that it overflows and it is inevitable that it affects you. Because we are human beings and because we have feelings. There are some women that aren't bothered by men who say, "you look so beautiful" with a nice tone of voice. I can't stand it anymore.

⁶⁰ Men think that women like it. They can't understand that, in reality, it's bothersome. If it happens so often, it becomes bothersome no matter how nice the comment is.

⁶¹ There, I feel like the man is putting you in the position of a dog. He whistles at you as if you were a dog. And you, by turning around, the only thing you're doing is adding to his fantasy that he can whistle at you like a dog and you turn around and wag your tail basically.

⁶² I don't turn around. I don't do anything. I'm not a dog. I've responded, "I'm not a dog" and I keep walking.

⁶³ A man that stares at you on the street follows you with his eyes. He looks at you before he passes you, he looks at you as he's passing you, and he turns around to look at you. That is what it means to stare. And it happens on the subway too. They stare. They look at you from head to toe. They take an x-ray of you. They scan you with their eyes. Here we say he 'undressed me with his eyes.' They look you up and down.

⁶⁴ In general, almost everyone looks, but there are some stares that are more intentional. They look at you so that you will realize. It's not that a guy likes a girl and he looks at her but pretends to be distracted by something else. These people are more invasive, more shameless, and more bold.

⁶⁵ For me staring is the worst. When he doesn't say anything. Because you have no idea what the hell he's thinking.

⁶⁶ I don't like when they look me up and down. When they completely study you. I don't like it. I'm not a piece of meat that's walking down the street.

⁶⁷ Men here like to look. They're always looking at you. Men like to look at women. It's fine if he wants to appreciate a woman's beauty but it's uncomfortable to know that they are all going to be looking at you when you walk out onto the street. And they are all going to look at you: the man working in the kiosk, the old man, the bus driver, the taxi driver, even the banker. The truth is that it's really uncomfortable.

⁶⁸ Forget about the fact that they look at you, they stare at you... you have to look down at the ground. There are a ton of things that already seem normal to us but they aren't normal. You start to act a certain way because you grew accustomed to it. That is harassment.

⁶⁹ **Mia:** What do you think of men that say inoffensive comments to you on the street? For example, "hello, beautiful" or "hello, precious?"

Daniela: If they say it to me, I laugh and I blush. Because I like it. It boosts your ego.

Natalia: It makes you feel good.

Sofia: Yeah, definitely.

⁷⁰ When they call you "beautiful," it's okay. But... I don't know. What do I tell him? Do I have to say something to him? Do I have to accept it? I don't know. It already puts you in a strange situation.

⁷¹ Sometimes you want to walk down the street and you don't want to hear their comments or feel them stare at you. You feel like being left alone. And whether or not they are aggressive, they are invading your personal space. [...] OK, I don't know. Comparing them, and being so accustomed to receiving piropos throughout your whole life, you can say that some piropos are more offensive than others. But, in reality, they are all bothersome. You shouldn't have to put up with them. I think that those types of compliments should exist only in intimacy and between people that are in a relationship. A stranger shouldn't come up to you and tell you whatever he wants. You shouldn't have to receive that type of information.

⁷² More offensive or more bothersome, like ‘what a nice ass you have.’ They are annoying... “What a great body” too. I suppose that it could be a nice comment for some women, but it bothers me. I don’t like that they are looking at my body and my curves.

⁷³ If it’s a piropo that’s meant to flatter you, generally it is directly related to how you look physically. It has nothing to do with your attributes as a person.

⁷⁴ I don’t think that I’m just a butt and breasts. I’m more than that, you know? I’m a woman in another sense. Not just for the physical part.

⁷⁵ Some may do it to make the woman feel uncomfortable. It’s a game. They laugh among themselves. “Look at her now.” “She’s blushing.” They do it to bother you. Not because they want to compliment you. If they are in a group and they say something nice, I don’t usually think that they are saying something nice to me because they think I’m cute. I think they’re doing it because they are part of a group and they are just joking amongst themselves. And sometimes it happens to me with men who are working. But maybe then it’s more believable. Maybe they think I’m cute and they are saying what they think. However, with a group of boys, I think they will say something to you just to laugh about it with their friends and I don’t take it as a compliment. I don’t know if they want to make you feel uncomfortable, but you feel uncomfortable. And they do it to amuse themselves.

⁷⁶ **Paula:** It’s out of line but men are accustomed to saying piropos even if they know that it can be bothersome sometimes. I think that they must know that it makes us uncomfortable.

Sofía: Yes, of course.

Paula: And they like knowing that. They feel like they have the power.

Sofía: And when the other person is doing it, you realize when they enjoy making you feel uncomfortable and when they don’t. I mean, I recognize that. [...] That guy that suddenly says something to you and he stares at you, it seems like he’s enjoying that discomfort that he’s provoking in you.

⁷⁷ **Marcela:** Oh well, sometimes men touch you inappropriately when you’re on the bus. On the subway I’ve seen that happen too. They touch your ass or they lean up against you. That’s enough for them. And then in the street, I’m not sure. I suppose that someone can grab your ass and then take off running.

Marta: Well, that’s exactly what happened to me. I was walking down the street when I felt a hand on my ass and the kid took off running. And another time, a man was walking toward me on the street, and when we were about to pass each other, he reached over and touched my boob. I pulled his hand off me. The guy kept walking quickly. I cussed at him and kept walking. It didn’t escalate further.

⁷⁸ **Claudia:** When you’re going one way and the guy is going the other way, he turns around and touches you. You cuss at him. But it doesn’t happen very often. But one time in the train, this man caused a whole situation... the train was really full and it was a very

abusive situation. I was with my sister, and a man started to touch me. I couldn't move because the train was packed. I was paralyzed. I don't know. I can respond if they say something to me, but this was different. I went pale and my sister said, "What's wrong? What's wrong?" And I said, "This man next to me is touching me" and everyone got up and grabbed him and forced him off the train. That happens a lot here on all public transportation.

Mia: Was he touching your butt?

Claudia: No, he was touching me from the front. My intimate parts. Terrible. Even my mom tells stories like that. For example, she was on the bus and a guy was touching her ass, and my mom grabbed his hand quickly and said "To whom does this hand belong?" My mom is 70 years old. This happened when she was thirty years old. Forty years ago. I mean, this has always happened here. [...] Maybe it has to do with the fact that men aren't very reserved anymore. Like, limits were constantly being broken, do you know what I mean? The piropo is the most basic form. Everyone is a victim of that situation.

⁷⁹ **Laura:** One day I am going to get up the nerve and turn around and say something to them.

Paula: Yeah, I respond sometimes.

Sofía: I respond. Pretty often. I remember one time my mother yelled at me because I shouldn't have responded. You don't know how the man will react. But you feel so helpless that you can't stand it anymore...

⁸⁰ Sometimes I cuss at them. I tell them to go to hell. Or I say, "Shut up!" But it's not advisable, you know? You never know how they might react. More than anything for your safety.

⁸¹ I'm a person who usually responds. I don't stay quiet. It bothers me and I tell them so.

⁸² It's the helplessness that you feel because, what can you do? It makes me violent. I want to kill them. And I usually respond. I insult them. It often happens to me near construction sites. The other day a guy said to me, "You look beautiful today." I stopped and I said, "Excuse me, shouldn't you be working? Don't you have anything better to do than to talk to me? I mean, don't you have anything important to do at your job? What are you doing bothering me when you should be working?" But they don't care, and then people think I'm crazy. I don't know how many women defend themselves in that situation but they always turn it around and make us into the crazy ones. It's so annoying. Then you start avoiding certain places...

⁸³ Hey, why are you getting upset? It's a piropo.

⁸⁴ They use the word piropo to say something unpleasant. To insult you. To demean you.

⁸⁵ **Marta:** Yes, when they say something really offensive to me, I might respond.

Marcela: I cuss at them, yes.

Mia: So you only respond if the man says something that offends you?

Marta: No... [...] Sometimes when they are staring at me for a long time I say, “what are you looking at?” That’s a given. But what happens is that when they say “how beautiful” or “how pretty” they usually walk away quickly. They don’t say “how beautiful” and then stand around and have a conversation with you.

Marcela: But if it’s mild, it doesn’t bother me.

Mónica: And well, if a guy says “goodbye, beautiful” I really don’t know if it makes sense to respond to him.

Marta: No, that’s more irrelevant.

Mónica: Yes, irrelevant. You keep walking and that’s it. But if they say something that’s more offensive, it bothers you. If they say something like that and they disrespect you, it’s bothersome. You keep walking but you cuss at them as you walk away.

⁸⁶ I have to be having a bad day for something to really bother me... or the attitude of the other person has to be so aggressive that it really bothers me for me to reply with a comment like “What an idiot” or “How stupid.” With the same intention that he made his comment to me.

⁸⁷ In one way it bothers you but in another way you like it. There’s no pleasing us. If they say something to me, why do they say it? If they don’t say something to me, why don’t they say it?

⁸⁸ It’s true that women are accustomed to receiving piropos and when they don’t say anything to you, you think, “I must look horrible” or “I’m not pretty anymore.” You start judging yourself based on how others view you.

⁸⁹ A woman is lying if she says that she doesn’t like it and that it doesn’t boost her self-esteem. That always happens. It’s nice that they are saying something to you. In fact, if you pass by a place where there are 20 guys and nobody says anything to you, I bet you that there is not one woman who won’t think, “Oh, they didn’t say anything to me.” Seriously. That’s how it is. That’s how we are. People are like that. We are egocentric. Even if it bothers you, it makes you feel better. It’s exactly like that.

⁹⁰ **Natalia:** You get used to it... I mean, sometimes I’m waiting for them to tell me a piropo. Sometimes when I’m walking down the street and I see a guy coming toward me... and when he walks by me and the boy didn’t even look at me, I think ‘He didn’t say anything to me!’”

Florencia: Right.

Laura: Right. Yes, yes, yes. It’s true.

Natalia: ¿Do you understand? I don’t mean to say that we go walking down the street provoking men to tell us piropos, but sometimes when they don’t say anything, it can take you by surprise.

⁹¹ Complimentary piropos boost my self-esteem. Especially recently. Recently, if they say something to me, I think, “Oh, how lucky! I guess I’m not so old.”

⁹² There are times that I have gone out with friends and I haven't really gotten dressed up so I'm not really predisposed to receiving comments... and maybe I've gone out with friends that attract a lot of attention and you're standing next to them. And all of the piropos go toward those girls. So you feel like a dog that's thinking, "hey, why isn't anyone looking at me?" But it's obvious. If you don't get dressed up, if you aren't predisposed, if you don't try, they won't say nice things to you. On the contrary. They are going to say, "Hey, I need to find a friend for your friend who has a boring face." But yes, I have felt bad. It has happened to me. It has happened very often. Very often, yes.

⁹³ We used to joke about that, and we'd say, "today not even a construction worker told me a piropo." Or "I must look so terrible..." but no. Because on the other hand you think, they say piropos to anyone, it's not like they are really saying them to *you*, you know what I mean?

⁹⁴ Sometimes you might think, well, it's clear that this outfit looks good on me... or this haircut suits me... but it's a fleeting thought, it's not real. Seriously. If you actually think about it, you don't believe that. But maybe it will cross your mind just for a second.

⁹⁵ The other day on Facebook, I posted a complaint about a piropo that someone told me, and my mom's friend said, "Start worrying when they stop telling you piropos." Ok, fine. I understand. But I don't consider myself more beautiful or less beautiful, or skinnier or fatter because someone tells me so on the street. I know myself and I like myself just how I am.

⁹⁶ If you walk by a spot where there are a ton of guys, you're expecting it to happen. And when it doesn't happen, I feel relieved. I don't say, "Oh, how terrible. They didn't say anything to me. I'm going to go back with a miniskirt to see if maybe this time..." No.

⁹⁷ We see the importance that men place on our physical appearance and we end up objectifying ourselves.

⁹⁸ An angry facial expression

⁹⁹ I cross the street. I cross the street or I turn my music up louder. But even though you can't hear what they're saying, you can see it. You see their intention. They get close to you or the dynamic of the group changes, so I prefer to cross the street so that I don't have to put up with it. I'm terrified of piropos.

¹⁰⁰ That construction site is near my house and I don't go by there anymore because I don't want them to say anything to me.

¹⁰¹ **Marta:** If you see a group of guys that are looking at you, you won't walk by the group. Well, at least I won't do that.

Marcela: But I don't know if it's because you are trying to avoid piropos... you do it to avoid everything.

Marta: No, I do it because it makes me uncomfortable. Not because I'm afraid they will do something to me. I just want to avoid the situation. [...] If I see that I can avoid it, I cross the street. If you see a group and you think, "these guys are going to say something..."

¹⁰² I don't like that I have to avoid eye contact with people just because they are going to make comments, but I have to do it from when I get on the bus to my doctor's office because men like to say piropos and maybe my eyes are drawing them to me.

¹⁰³ I don't avoid looking. If I have to look, I look. If there is something more important in another direction, I will look the other direction. I don't hide so that people won't see me. But that doesn't mean I make eye contact. I don't do that. But I do walk with my eyes open. It's not that I'm going to try to catch someone's gaze, but if someone is coming, I look at the person. If it's a man or a woman, it doesn't matter.

¹⁰⁴ It's true that it conditions you. If I leave at 5:00 in the morning to go to work, I try to cover up as much as possible so that I don't attract attention. I try to avoid those interactions.

¹⁰⁵ It's uncomfortable. In the street, it's uncomfortable. It's horrible that we have to think, "if I wear high heels... if I wear tight pants... if I wear a skirt... how am I going to travel by bus?" [...] They say piropos everywhere. I don't know. Depending on where you're going, you have to adjust the way that you're dressed.

¹⁰⁶ Here, there are many years of your life that you receive comments, comments, comments and you start to choose. I don't wear short skirts or low-cut shirts. When I go out, I try to wear a big coat that covers me.

¹⁰⁷ It's a little embarrassing. You think, maybe it's not right that I'm wearing a low-cut shirt or maybe I shouldn't be wearing these tight jeans. Maybe I'm provoking this. That game starts where you start to protect yourself a little bit and another part of you says, "well, I'm not going to stick my neck out so that they can cut my head off." I'm not going to wear a really low-cut shirt so that they will tell me offensive comments. The other day, I was walking home really close to another girl on purpose because she was dressed really provocatively and I wasn't, so if they shouted a piropo, it would go to her and not to me. Because we all know that the more provocatively you're dressed, the more it encourages men to say piropos.

¹⁰⁸ I don't wear short dresses, short shorts, tight pants, or leggings anymore... I actually like tight pants that show your body. I think they look good on me. But I try to avoid having my butt in plain sight, for example when I wear leggings. You can see your body exactly as it is. I would like to wear leggings sometimes, but I always avoid it. Some women don't care, but it bothers me when they look at my body or my butt.

¹⁰⁹ **Paula:** I don't wear really provocative clothing but I have heard that when girls wear tight pants they are going to receive really aggressive comments about their butt.

Mia: Do you not dress provocatively because that's how you like to dress or do you do it to avoid piropos?

Paula: I do it to avoid the comments. If I do dress well, I will wear a long coat over my clothes so that I can get to where I need to go and I won't run any risks in the street later. I don't want to get off the bus and walk six blocks to find myself alone with five drunk, bored guys who are saying "Hey, blondie, baby, are you alone? Are you walking alone?" What if one is violent and he tries to do something else. So yes, it conditions me when I go out.

¹¹⁰ I'm not going to avoid wearing a pair of tight jeans just so they won't look at my ass.

¹¹¹ I think that even if you're not really dressed up, if they want to tell you a piropo they will tell it to you anyway. There are moments when it happens more frequently – at night and whatnot. But I don't think that it has a whole lot to do with your clothing. It's weird, really. Sometimes when I'm wearing tighter clothes I think that I'm receiving more piropos, but I think it's because you are more aware and so you are noticing more comments. I think they always say piropos. I mean that you're more aware because when you go out wearing tighter clothes, you realize that it can be more provocative so you are more attentive. Maybe that's why women think they receive more piropos when they are dressed provocatively. But I don't think it has much to do with your clothes.

¹¹² [Piropos] affect me because sometimes I'm not in the mood and I don't want anyone to tell me anything. And well, I can't avoid it. It influences the way that I dress, the time that I go out, what time I'm going to come home... I try to avoid being alone. When I go out with my friends, I feel safer. We protect each other. I will feel uncomfortable if I go out alone, but not if I go out with my friends. [...] I changed the way I dress because I'm older and because I don't want to receive so many comments. I've also changed the time of day that I go out... and I avoid being alone. If piropos didn't exist, I would go out a lot more and I would go out alone. Or I would come home later.

¹¹³ Men here don't single out women. It doesn't matter if you're a mother, if you have children, if you're with your mother, if you're pretty, if you're skinny or if you're blonde. Men like to say piropos to all women.

¹¹⁴ They generalize a little bit, yes. Sometimes I see men saying piropos to other women, and they might say something like "You are a monument to beauty" and the woman is a normal girl who's on her way to work. She's in a hurry. She has a coffee in her hand. So, I don't know why he says it. I don't know.

¹¹⁵ A man who says piropos delivers piropos to all women. Surely there are some guys that only say piropos to a few women, but I don't think there are a lot. The guys that say "Hey, baby. You're so beautiful" don't single women out. [...] The men who say "Hey, baby" probably don't even look at you.

¹¹⁶ Men who say piropos don't discriminate. The woman doesn't play an important role, I think.

¹¹⁷ It really conditions you. Maybe I haven't changed to avoid piropos, but when I think I can avoid it, I avoid it. But I haven't even really avoided a piropo even by covering my face with a hood and a scarf. They don't look at your face or I don't know... They don't tell you piropos because you're pretty. It's not that. It's something else.

¹¹⁸ You're so pretty.

¹¹⁹ I think that we're accustomed to receiving piropos. I don't know if it's a good thing... because it would be nice if the person that tells you a piropo has a real interest in getting to know you. Not that any random person can tell you a piropo. That's not okay. But we're creatures of habit. So you get accustomed to comments like that. But in reality, it should be someone that wants to flatter the woman because he has a real interest in her. Not just to say something on the street and that's the end of it.

¹²⁰ **Natalia:** Sometimes they say "you're so beautiful" but I don't know if they would ask for your phone number. They even shout it from the bus. "Hey, Blondie!" The "Blondie" is a classic. Yes, a blonde woman, yes.

Sofia: Yes, that's so true. So true.

Natalia: If you say to him, "come here," he'll run away. He won't get off the bus. Do you think if I say "I love you" he will get off the bus? No. He just wants to say it.

Sofia: Maybe it's a much deeper and social question that has to do with machismo and femininity than a romantic interaction that will lead to something else. It's also a demonstration of power... of saying, I'm on this bus, or whatever, and I'm yelling something at you and you have to put up with it because that's how it is.

Paula: And so that everyone else can hear it.

Natalia: Exactly, and it's because he's macho.

Sofia: Because it's true... he's not going to get off the bus...

Paula: Maybe he's not trying to pick the woman up but rather he's trying to demonstrate his position of machismo, of 'I'll say whatever I want...'

¹²¹ A macho attitude. Like, I'll say whatever I want. I am more than you. We, women, see handsome men, ugly men, plain men. And we don't tell them what we're thinking. You see them and you keep your comment to yourself. You don't say it aloud.

¹²² This country was always sexist and men could always do and say whatever they wanted. And the women always stayed at home and didn't say anything. So, it's a social custom that men can demonstrate their machismo or masculinity by saying something that the whole world can hear and no one is going to say anything because you don't respond to a piropo in a negative way, even if you don't like it... You just keep walking. I think that they say it to demonstrate their manliness because we were always submissive women, in general. [...] They feel that they can open their mouth and say anything and

that we will lower our head because we're uncomfortable or we will cross the street. So, they know that what they are saying is uncomfortable. And they enjoy seeing that just by opening their mouths we will act the way that they want us to.

¹²³ If you ask me what the purpose of a piropo is... it's not to flatter a woman, it's so that the man can feel good about himself. I don't think that it's something he's doing for the woman. Rather I think he feels more macho and more manly for having the courage to say something to the woman.

¹²⁴ For me, it stems from machismo. The demonstration of his power over the woman. [...] [Piropos] then give rise to so many other things. They wash away limits sometimes. The person who says the piropo has the control. The same as an insult. I can say "what an idiot, what an idiot" but if I say it to you 28 times a day, even if it's just a word, it becomes invasive and it affects you. Especially if it's always from one gender to another.

¹²⁵ It's showing your superiority over the woman. If I'm referring to you and I say "You are this or that" and you can't respond to me or you don't know how to respond to me, I show that I'm superior and I can bother you. I want to feel more macho and more important than I really am. I put myself into a superior position. [...] The fact that the man is the one to deliver the piropo has to do with this situation of machismo... of disrespecting, undervaluing, and objectifying the woman... of turning the woman into a symbol of beauty, sexuality and curves... not a thoughtful, intelligent and professional woman. They aren't thinking of the woman as a sensitive being. They transform her into an object so that they can say whatever they want about her.

¹²⁶ It's cultural. They learn to say piropos and the women learn to accept them. It's natural.

¹²⁷ This is life. It's not so bad. There are worse things than a guy who tells you a piropo such as "you're so beautiful" in the street and keeps walking.

¹²⁸ For me, it is totally accepted. Here, men like to say piropos and some women like to receive them. But yes, it's super natural. The man is not thinking about how he is making the woman uncomfortable when he says hello and tells her a piropo. [...] It's natural. I don't accept it but the truth is that I have to go outside every day knowing that I will receive piropos. That's it. I've come to terms with it.

¹²⁹ It's a social custom. You go out into the street and you know that they will say something to you. Maybe one day they won't say anything, but usually they say something to you every time you go out. I think the girls are used to it and they accept it as a normal part of life. Maybe it bothers some, but there's nothing we can do about it. It's used everywhere and that's it. That's it. We're used to it.

¹³⁰ Resigned to the fact that I will receive piropos.

¹³¹ What happens is that you stop caring about the comments. I don't really think about piropos. Maybe now I don't even realize when it happens. Maybe they say something to me and I keep walking. I don't pay them any attention. [...] When I was younger, I would get more uncomfortable when someone said something to me and nowadays it bothers me less.

¹³² That's it. I'm not saying that it's okay, but I've already accepted it. The "hello baby" or the "you're so beautiful" has already stopped bothering me. It's just one more thing. Like a bus that passes by. It's not something that really bothers me. [...] A "hello baby" or "Oh, how beautiful" is, well... that's it. I already know that's how things are. It happens and two seconds later, I forgot about it. And the man also forgot about it. That's it. It's one second. Yes, it can be bothersome but it's not that important either.

¹³³ **Natalia:** It's naturalized as a result of many different factors. There are so many factors that have caused the use of piropos to become naturalized. For example, Tinelli's TV program where all the women show their asses.

Sofía: That's the perfect example.

Florencia: Female objects.

Sofía: What she's saying is so true because that program provides justification for the fact that all of these other things happen.

Laura: It's obvious that if a girl wears a thong on TV and the whole country sees it and nobody complains, a man that you see on the street is going to say, "you've got a great ass." It's obvious. We're creating that.

Sofía: Yes, that's exactly right. Also, women on that show demonstrate an acceptance of that behavior. I don't want to blame the women, but the girls on that same Tinelli show put themselves in that position of "Hey, what a nice ass" and they say "Ohhh, thank you." They show acceptance and even act as if it's a positive thing to receive that comment.

Paula: Yes, they turn the women into objects. Objects of admiration. It's like looking at a work of art where you can say "how beautiful." And the woman, who is put on a pedestal naked, starts to receive more inappropriate comments. But, on TV, we see women being put into that position where men can admire you, insult you or intimidate you.

¹³⁴ I don't think it will change at all. It's already established and it's already accepted. There's no way it will change. And the Argentine men will say, "Well, Latinos are like this. Latinos are passionate." But it has nothing to do with being passionate, it has to do with being respectful. That will not change in Argentina because they are proud of that... of the position men have made for themselves where they feel they can talk about a woman however they want, whenever they want.

¹³⁵ Macri is a disgrace because, first of all, he is acting as mayor and with that role of authority he cannot assume and speak for women. That is already violent. He is deciding whether or not it makes women uncomfortable. A woman says it makes her uncomfortable and he says, "No, that's a lie, you like it." I think that's so wrong. You can express your own opinion inside your house but as a public figure you can't justify that attitude.

¹³⁶ I think it is in extremely poor taste that the mayor of our city, who should be taking care of us as women, taking care of our interests and listening to us... supports a situation of gender-based violence... I think that it gives you a good understanding of how Argentine men are.