

SCIR

THE USC UNDERGRADUATE JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

VOL. 11 NO. 1, SPRING 2021

Southern California International Review



FEATURED ARTICLES

The Future of the ICRMW:
European Union Discourse on the Rights of Migrant Workers
Sophia Carbone

Maintaining Deterrence in the Taiwan Strait:
Strategic Ambiguity versus Strategic Clarity
Justin Feng

When Aid Replaces Ideology:
Corruption as a Hegemonic Device in Post-Taliban Afghanistan
Connor Bulgrin

Gendered Transportation:
Problems of Federal Policy in Addressing Sexual Violence in Mexico City
Natasha Jain-Poster

USCCIS

Generously Sponsored By
The Robert L. Friedheim
Memorial Endowment

spring 2021 issue
[spring 2021](#)

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

Volume 11, Number 1 • Spring 2021

Gendered Transportation:

Problems of Federal Policy in Addressing Sexual Violence in Mexico City

Natasha Jain-Poster

This project aims to explore how gendered spaces within public transit, such as ‘pink’ transportation, may enable or limit the amount of sexual assault in Mexico City. It will draw upon information from academic scholars, urban planning professionals, and historical federal policy in order to explore its strategies and solutions. In this paper, I analyze the efficacy of three federal programs in addressing and resolving gender violence within public transportation in Mexico City. While each program approaches the issue within a unique conceptual framework (urban planning, institutional, and social media), none have demonstrated success in achieving safety for Mexican women and girls. This paper will offer a critique of such programs in combatting sexual violence on public transit. The larger objective is to create a safer environment within public transportation for women and young girls in Mexico City. This might involve—but is not limited to— seeking and imagining new metro designs and adjusting the metro schedules. My research questions include the following: Within public transportation in Mexico City, how successful have government-imposed programs been in reducing the rates of gender violence for working-class Mexican women? Why do men feel entitled to enter public transit as a form of sexual domination and violence? How should the government address the issue at hand—through infrastructure, policy, and/or city-planning?

1. Introduction

Mexico City is a vibrant and active metropolis, with over twenty-five million inhabitants. Here, 52.52% are women and 47.7% are men. A statistic echoed by scholars and feminist activists is that 11 girls and women are killed every day in Mexico.¹ Gender violence, assault, and harassment are not at all a hidden phenomena. Rather, they are so routine in public spaces that they even infect the city’s most efficient form of public transportation: the metro. In fact, public transportation has become a favorable space to stalk and assault women. This limits security, freedom and mobility for women in the urban environment.² Because three-fourths of women who travel daily utilize public transportation, women depend on public transit far more than men.³

Disturbingly, nine out of every ten women will be sexually assaulted at least once in their lifetime while using public transportation, according to the National Institute for

1 “PROGRAMA CIUDADES Y ESPACIOS PÚBLICOS SEGUROS PARA MUJERES Y NIÑAS EN MÉXICO,” December 2019.

2 Amy Dunckel Graglia, “Finding Mobility: Women Negotiating Fear and Violence in Mexico City’s Public Transit System,” *Gender, Place & Culture* 23, no. 5 (2015): pp. 624-640.

3 “PROGRAMA CIUDADES Y ESPACIOS PÚBLICOS SEGUROS PARA MUJERES Y NIÑAS EN MÉXICO,” December 2019.

NATASHA JAIN-POSTER is a senior at the University of California, Irvine, double-majoring in International Studies and Spanish.

Women (INMUJERES).⁴ In this way, transportation has become an institution through which hegemonic masculinity is maintained and perpetuated, connecting patriarchy and gender norms to physical spaces.

Stagnant and/or heightening statistics about violence against women remain, despite federal measures meant to address the issue. In 2019, The United Nations Program for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as UN Women (“ONU Mujeres” in Spanish), published a study about Mexico City with grim findings. It revealed that 81.3% of Mexican women fear being sexually assaulted in the streets and in public spaces, and 77.4% of Mexican women fear sexual assault in public transportation specifically.⁵ To make matters worse, 96.3% of the women reported being subjected to sexual violence at least once in their lives and 88.5% in the past year.⁶ Unfortunately, institutional means for reporting such crimes appear to be unsatisfactory. Only 26% of women subjected to sexual violence in the study knew where to report the crime, and a miniscule 14.6% of these women were able to report their assaults successfully.⁷

Many urban planning analyses demonstrate that public transportation systems favor men. In Mexico City, men’s travel is often characterized by linear, repetitive and long-distance patterns during peak hours. This contrasts to those of women who tend to follow shorter, complex, and frequent routes. Their travel is concentrated in areas closer to their homes, and usually involve bringing children or other family members with them. According to UN Women, it is critical that Mexico City improves its urban planning strategy to include better equipment, infrastructure, and designated security zones for peripheries, education and industrial centers, and feminized work spaces.⁸ This is due to the planification of Mexico City’s public spaces being rooted in a structural exclusion of women.⁹

Many programs, laws, and policies have been proposed to combat the problem. Scholars often echo each other in their discussions of the role of INMUJERES and other federally funded programs in being only somewhat useful at addressing the problem.¹⁰ One of these programs is *Viajemos Seguras* (Women Travel Safely) — a system of offices dispersed throughout the metro to provide assistance for women who report harassment and violence in public transportation. Because the problem persists, the Mexico City government and UN Women in Mexico have committed to achieving complete safety and

4 Amy Dunckel Graglia, pp. 624-640.

5 “PROGRAMA CIUDADES Y ESPACIOS PÚBLICOS SEGUROS PARA MUJERES Y NIÑAS EN MÉXICO,” December 2019.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Kanika Batra, “Transporting Metropolitanism: Road-Mapping Feminist Solutions to Sexual Violence in Delhi,” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 54, no. 3 (April 2018): pp. 387-397.

inclusion, as well as the empowerment of women and girls in public and private spaces by 2030.¹¹ In order to accomplish this, the Mexico City government and UN Women in Mexico have created a number of programs and organizations.

For this reason, this paper explores the history and development policies for tackling gender violence within public transit of Mexico City. The following section focuses on three major approaches to confronting gender violence on public transit: an urban planning, an institutional, and a social media perspective. The last section will provide a critique of such approaches and assess their potential to protect Mexican women.

2. Historical Developments in Addressing Gender Violence

As gender violence within public transportation has become an increasingly pressing concern in Mexico City, the municipal government has continuously attempted to address the problem. Since 2008, the government of Mexico City and UN Women in Mexico have worked together on a series of creative federal projects. Pink transportation and *Viajemos Seguras* offer an urban planning approach, the City Program for Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces offers an institutional approach, and lastly, #NoEsDeHombres offers a social media approach. The urban planning methods, implemented in the early 2000s, offer spatial transformations of public transportation. Furthermore, they allow the people of Mexico City to reimagine the gendered nature of public spaces, creating the potential for women's safety through physical restructuring. The institutional approach is the most widespread method of transformation, and was established in 2008 due to the ineffectiveness of previous approaches. It provides an organized way of addressing the issue through law and policy. Finally, the social media approach was a campaign launched in 2018, and confronts sexual violence in the most contemporary sense: through online communities. As social media inherently consumes much of the world without the necessity of physical contact, #NoEsDeHombres was able to reach a larger amount of the Mexican population. I discuss each conceptual framework in more detail in the following section.

A. Urban Planning Approaches: Pink Transportation and *Viajemos Seguras*

Although conversations on how to combat sexual violence within public transportation in Mexico City have been ongoing since the 1970s, few structural measures have been implemented and none have significantly corrected the problem. In the 1970s, the call for women-only spaces became popular. With experiences of riding in cramped conditions, many women reported being physically attacked by men on moving buses, metros, and taxis. In the year 2000, transit authorities decided to act upon these complaints, establishing the first women-only public transportation system in Mexico City:

¹¹ "CIUDADES Y ESPACIOS PÚBLICOS SEGUROS PARA MUJERES Y NIÑAS: Programa Insignia" (ONU Mujeres., February 2016).

Pink transportation.¹² The system applies to all forms of public transit, including the metro, taxis, and buses (Figure 1.1 provides a visualization of the Pink buses). The city implemented a ‘Pink car’ in 2000 within the metro (a separate car exclusively reserved for women, the disabled, the elderly, and children). However, just 5% of all public transportation was initially designated as women-only spaces. Of the subway lines specifically, only 58% designated the first two cars in each train for women during the hours of 6:00am-10:00am and 4:00pm-9:30pm.¹³



Figure 1.1: ONU Mujeres, 2016, Ciudades Seguras y Espacios Públicos Seguros: Informe de Resultados Globales. The photo above includes Pink buses in the Zocalo Plaza of Mexico City preparing for daily travels. Notice the sign located at the top and front of each bus, titled “SERVICIO PARA MUJERES,” translating to “Service for Women.”

While the Pink car has been somewhat helpful in reducing assault on the metro, it has not substantially resolved the issue: sexual assault cases had continued to soar. *Viajemos Seguras* is an initiative produced by the Chief of the Federal District Government in Mexico City in October 2008. Sponsored by INMUJERES, it was produced as a response to the high rates of sexual violence against women in the Collective Transport System (STC).¹⁴ The main objective of *Viajemos Seguras* is to “realize coordinated institutional actions, from a gendered perspective, of the organisms of public transportation, respon-

12 Amy Dunckel Graglia, pp. 624-640.

13 Ibid.

14 Ana Gúezmes García et al., DIAGNÓSTICO SOBRE LA VIOLENCIA CONTRA LAS MUJERES Y LAS NIÑAS EN EL TRANSPORTE PÚBLICO De LA CIUDAD DE MÉXICO Programa Global Ciudades y Espacios Públicos Seguros Para Mujeres y Ni (Ciudad de México: ONU Mujeres, 2017).

sible institutions of public security and of the justice system to guarantee that the women of Mexico City travel safely and free of violence.”¹⁵ It has several guidelines and points of actions to prevent sexual violence against women on public transportation, one of them being the installation of offices to report an abuse. Under the Athena Program, another point of action calls for the separation of men and women in the metrobus, metro, trolley bus, and train.. As part of *Viajemos Seguras*, the Athena program establishes exclusive transportation for women and is protected by security during specialized hours. Lastly, the initiative means to establish a series of campaigns to sensitize and prevent gender violence.¹⁶ As these objectives involve adjusting urban routes, schedules and environments, *Viajemos Seguras* represents an attempt to combat gender violence from an urban planning perspective.

In 2008, the National Counsel on Preventing Discrimination (CONAPRED) conducted a survey to assess the effectiveness of Pink transportation and the other approaches, only to find that violence was not decreasing: 8 out of every 10 women had been victims of sexual crime that year.¹⁷ In fact, after nine years of the City Program for Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces’ existence, in 2017, INMUJERES published a study stating that more than half of women in CDMX report cases of violence daily.¹⁸ With consistently disturbing findings, INMUJERES led multiple regional conferences within Latin America in an attempt to establish gender-based violence as a legitimate and grave form of discrimination. Their main recommendations in 2006 were to: (1) increase the number of women-only forms of transportation on the road, including 100 more Pink taxis in 2013 and more women-only buses; and (2) include visual feminine imagery on Pink transportation to evoke symbolic womanhood. The second approach became a visual campaign, named after the Greek goddess, Athena, to legitimize women’s right to mobility within Mexico City.

15 Amy Dunckel-Graglia, “‘Pink Transportation’ in Mexico City: Reclaiming Urban Space through Collective Action against Gender-Based Violence,” *Gender & Development* 21, no. 2 (2013): pp. 265-276.

Quote was translated from Spanish to English. Original quote is as follows, “realizar acciones institucionales coordinadas, desde un enfoque de género, entre los organismos de transporte público, instituciones responsables de la seguridad pública y de procuración de justicia, para garantizar que las mujeres de la Ciudad de México viajen más seguras y libres de violencia”

16 Paula Soto Villagrán et al., “Evaluación De Impacto Del Programa ‘Viajemos Seguras En El Transporte Público En La Ciudad De México’: Aportes Al Diseño e Implementación De Políticas De Prevención De La Violencia De Género En Espacios Públicos,” Banco Interamericano De Desarrollo, July 2017.

17 Amy Dunckel Graglia, pp. 624-640.

18 “Consolidar La Institucionalización De La Política Pública De Igualdad En La Ciudad De México” (INMUJERES, 2017), pp. 5-114.



Figure 1.2: Source: México Nueva Era: Periodismo Digital de Vanguardia, 2018. The image above depicts an exclusive wagon for women as part of the Atenea Program with *Viajemos Seguras*. Notice the orange barricades designating the exclusive space. They are labeled, “SOLO MUJERES Y MENORES DE 12 AÑOS,” translating to “Only women and children under the age of 12.”

With regard to the exclusive units for women within public transportation, the Athena Program has likely been the most impactful in reducing gender violence. As of 2010, it consisted of one-hundred buses with fifty-one routes, and had plans to reach more of the zones through which women travel most frequently. The buses circle twenty-two different streets and operate from 6:00 am through 9:00 pm from Monday through Sunday. Currently, this service has been extended to include elderly seniors, people with disabilities, adults carrying babies, and children under the age of twelve or accompanied by mothers.¹⁹ Similarly, the trolley buses have five different routes: Corredor Cero Emisiones “Eje Central,” Corredor Cero Emisiones “Eje 2-2 A Sur,” Corredor Cero Emisiones Bus-Bici “Eje 7-7A Sur,” and Metro Boulevard Puerto Aéreo-Metro El Rosario.²⁰ While there is a police force designated to women’s safety only during rush hour on the train, the metro bus has twenty-four hour police protection. Rush hour can generate threatening situations for women in public transportation given the high volume of men and compacted spaces. The extra law enforcement can therefore provide a sense of comfort for female travellers, especially during crowded hours (See Figure 1.2). In these ways, *Viajemos Seguras* (and

19 Paula Soto Villagrán et al., July 2017.

20 Ana Güzmes García et al., (Ciudad de México: ONU Mujeres, 2017).

the Athena Program specifically) has offered a way of confronting sexual predators in public transportation and challenging the masculine domination of public spaces.

B. Institutional Approach: El Programa Ciudades y Espacios Públicos Seguros para Mujeres y Niñas

As a result of the ongoing gender violence, in 2008, the UN Women in Mexico first launched the City Program for Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces to prevent and respond to sexual violence against women and young girls in public spaces. As a pilot program, it was implemented in five major global cities suffering from gender violence: Cairo, Kigali, Port-Moseby, New Delhi and Quito. Because of its widespread recognition, 35 more cities would join the program—including Mexico City in 2015— making gender violence an acknowledged international public health issue.²¹ The main points of the program initiated in Mexico City include:

1. implementing laws and integral policies to prevent and respond to gender violence in public spaces;
2. changing attitudes and behaviors to promote the right of women and young girls to travel free of sexual violence;
3. A prevention campaign designed to achieve social change, including men and young boys in transforming the behaviors and attitudes surrounding sexual assault and violence;
4. A mobile application utilized to generate support, information and allow reports of incidents or risks;
5. And a new system of integral monitoring within public transportation.²²

The City Program for Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces offers both an institutional approach as in steps (1), (2), (3) and (5), but also a social media approach via step (4). UN Women in Mexico developed a thorough report underscoring the systemic reasons for gender violence on public transport and the institutional methods for addressing the problem on a global scale. One of the most important points is outlining the underlying structural foundations of sexual violence in public transit. They argue the problem has four sources: transportation infrastructure, mode of travel, a culture of masculine domination, and latent violence shaped by a culture of fear and masculine domination.²³ This program has been instrumental in bringing awareness globally to gender violence within public transportation. In fact, the City Program for Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces was one of the first international implementations of institutional change in a decentralized

21 “CIUDADES Y ESPACIOS PÚBLICOS SEGUROS PARA MUJERES Y NIÑAS: Programa Insignia” (ONU Mujeres., February 2016).

22 Ibid.

23 Ana Gúezmes García et al., (Ciudad de México: ONU Mujeres, 2017).

manner, contributing to widespread public education.

C. Social Media Approach: #NoEsDeHombres

Another effort on behalf of UN Women in Mexico and the Mexico City government was to establish the campaign #NoEsDeHombres, or “This is Not Manly Behavior,” which consisted of several social and media experiments intended to influence a sense of accountability among men. With the help of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and the advertising agency, J. Walter Thompson, #NoEsDeHombres targeted men ages twenty to fifty years old who use public transport on a daily basis.²⁴ The main purpose was “to end the normalization of sexual violence against women in public spaces and to promote a more respectful form of masculinity.”²⁵

One of the social experiments titled “The Penis Seat Experiment” included a seat on the metro molded into the form of a male body (See Figure 1.3). Above the seat is a sign that reads “*Exclusivos Para Hombres*” translating to “Exclusively for Men.” The purpose of this experiment was for men to “put themselves in women’s shoes.”²⁶ As men would sit on the seat, they would either laugh or express repulsion and walk away. Some men began to use it to harass their friends, forcing them to sit on the Penis seat as a joke. In the following section, I include examples of posts and online discussions about the campaign.

Figure 1.3: Source: UN Women in Mexico (2019). The image above depicts a scene from a social experiment titled “The Penis Seat Experiment” conducted by ONU Mujeres.



24 “UN Women Launches the Campaign #NoEsDeHombres to Tackle Sexual Harassment in Public Transport,” UN Women | Americas and the Caribbean, 2017.

25 Ana Güzmes García et al., (Ciudad de México: ONU Mujeres, 2017).

26 Ibid.

The UN Women in Mexico reports that this campaign provoked some men to think deeper about sexual remarks and assault. It resulted in a 11% reduction in thinking that sexual remarks flatter women, and a 6% reduction in thinking that women's outfits invite sexual attention.²⁷ #NoEsDeHombres has evidently sparked a great deal of conversation regarding the issue, especially on social media platforms. I will address my own critique of the above programs in the following section.

3. Critique of Federally Implemented Policies

While these programs have generated some small gains in creating awareness, they have several inherent flaws and misconceptions. In particular, they make many problematic assumptions regarding assaulted women's responsibilities as victims, and about the misogynistic behavior of men. They also lack a deeper understanding of how sexual violence manifests in public spaces.

Beginning with the urban planning approach, in order to understand the nuances of the issue, it is necessary to explore the nature of gendered spaces in the urban setting. More specifically, it is necessary to delve into why men feel entitled to use public transit as a means of sexual domination and violence. Spatially, studies find that there is a strong correlation between modes of transportation and traditional gender roles, as women are seen as household figures and not public ones. In fact, some argue that Pink trains have negative effects. It produces a multitude of coping strategies "that women employ as a tactic to negotiate fear and violence within [urban spaces]."²⁸ Examples include: women denoting 'dangerous places' and 'dangerous times' to organize their scheduling, women experiencing fear and avoidance of urban spaces, and women changing their appearances to desexualize their bodies.²⁹ UN Women reports that 28% of women surveyed say they take company and avoid travelling alone at all costs on public transportation; 25% of these women do not leave at night time or leave home early in the morning, and 13% are constantly adjusting their transportation routes for safety purposes.³⁰

Additionally, *Viajemos Seguras* has attempted a series of structural solutions to gender violence in urban transport. However, there are a number of concerns regarding the effectiveness of such initiatives. For example, the reporting dispersed offices throughout the metro stations have been unhelpful for many Mexican women. In a recent study done by Mexican urban planning scholar Paula Villagrán, 2,802 women were interviewed on their experiences with *Viajemos Seguras*. The study concluded that there were four

27 "CIUDADES Y ESPACIOS PÚBLICOS SEGUROS PARA MUJERES Y NIÑAS: Programa Insignia" (ONU Mujeres., February 2016).

28 Amy Dunckel Graglia, pp. 624-640.

29 Ibid.

30 "PROGRAMA CIUDADES Y ESPACIOS PÚBLICOS SEGUROS PARA MUJERES Y NIÑAS EN MÉXICO," December 2019.

main issues with the system of reporting: Lack of knowledge, distrust in the authorities and judicial institutions, shame and other associated emotions, and naturalization or normalization of illegal conduct.³¹ See Figure 2.1 for testimonies from assaulted women who participated in Villagrán's interviews.

Issue	Quote
Lack of Knowledge	<p>"I didn't tell anyone. I didn't report it because I was in a rush to get to work." <i>No le conté a nadie, no denuncié porque llevaba mucha prisa para llegar a la oficina.</i></p> <p>"I didn't tell anyone. I didn't think about reporting it because there is no way to prove it and I don't know where to report it." <i>No le conté a nadie. No pensé en denunciar porque no hay forma de demostrarlo, y no sabía dónde denunciar.</i></p>
Distrust in the Authorities and Judicial Institutions	<p>"I didn't report it and I didn't think about reporting it because in general they do not carry out the reports and it just becomes a waste of your time." <i>No denuncié y no pensé en denunciar porque en general no proceden las denuncias y solo hacen que pierdas tu tiempo.</i></p> <p>"Yes, I have asked for help from the police and they didn't help me, they told me that they couldn't do anything about it and then they ignored me." <i>Si he pedido ayuda a un policía y no me ayudó, me dijo que ellos no podían hacer nada, y las personas me ignoraron.</i></p>
Shame and other Associated Emotions	<p>"Because I didn't think about it, I was a bit traumatized and the last thing I was thinking about was reporting it." <i>Por qué no lo pensé, estaba un poco traumada y en lo menos que pensaba era en denunciar.</i></p>
<i>Naturalization or Normalization of Illegal Conduct</i>	<p>"Well the truth is I didn't tell anyone about it, sometimes I feel like it's so common that I just don't say anything." <i>Pues la verdad no le conté a nadie a veces ya lo siento tan común que no lo digo.</i></p>

Figure 2.1: Source: Villagrán, Paula, Cuadro 1. Extracto de Causas de la no Denuncia, Evaluación de impacto del programa "Viajemos Seguras en el Transporte Público en la Ciudad de México," 2019. The above are quotes from assaulted women who participated in the study done by Paula Villagrán, on the reasons for not reporting their assaults.

These four motives for failing to report assaults were the most common. When a large number of women do not report their assaults simply from lack of knowledge where

31 Paula Soto Villagrán et al., July 2017.

the offices are, it becomes an urban planning issue. The large crowds in public transportation in Mexico City make it harder for reporting offices to stand out and become visible. To make matters worse, 18% of women did not even know they could report their assault and only 17% knew what *Viajemos Seguras* was.³² An added factor is that most women using the metro are working-class and do not have time to go through the details of executing a report or waiting for instruction on how to do it. That being said, it is the duty of *Viajemos Seguras* to create an easily accessible and efficient method of reporting assaults. I would argue that the responsibility should not be placed on assaulted women to achieve justice by proving their case to a system of predominantly male police, who were not taught to prioritize nor how to properly respond to sexual assault. In Figure 3.1, a woman states “I didn’t think about reporting it because in general [the police] do not carry out the reports and it just becomes a waste of your time.” If women cannot trust the police to protect them, who can they trust? Sadly, this lack of concern on behalf of the police system directly influences women to internalize their trauma, leading to mental health illnesses such as depression and anxiety disorders. In this way, the police act as a muscle in maintaining and enforcing public spaces as sites of male domination.

In regard to the Athena program within *Viajemos Seguras*, UN Women in Mexico created a video to promote awareness surrounding the new policy. Within the video, many women are cheering in unison, “No te calles, denuncia!” translating to “Don’t be silent, report [it]!” This video strikes the wrong tone, unaware of the fact that victims are not seeking a happy-go-lucky solution. Further, it reveals a deeper ignorance on behalf of UN Women in Mexico, as it depicts the act of reporting one’s situation of abuse as a means of reducing their trauma. However, once again, *Viajemos Seguras* places the responsibility on women to achieve justice for being assaulted, whereas men and the systems that allow predatory male behavior should be held accountable for perpetuating the violence. In this way, women are tasked with desexualizing their own bodies, and urged to engage in coping mechanisms such as avoidance of routes and the adjustment of their schedules.³³ For these reasons, it is evident that *Viajemos Seguras* along with other federally-sponsored policies have invested in programs that assess and address gender violence in public transportation, but do not resolve it.

The institutional approach of the City Program for Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces may include programs that provide a sense of awareness of the severity of gender violence. However, it is quite unrealistic and unjust to believe that these initiatives— which place the onus on assaulted women— will drastically change the level of violence. For example, in point (2), “changing attitudes and behaviors” is a broad and generalized goal to target a systemically rooted issue. Such language prompts me to ask how they plan

³² Ibid.

³³ Amy Dunckel Graglia, pp. 624-640.

to begin changing these behaviors; what is included in “[promoting] the right of women and young girls to travel free of sexual violence?” The same point can be made about this ‘prevention campaign’ listed in point (3). How effective might a prevention campaign be in “transforming” these behaviors permanently? Because gender violence is so embedded in the spatial and systemic entitlements for men, it is unlikely that points (2) and (3) will yield substantial improvements in security for women in public spaces.

Point four’s suggestion that women should be in charge of reporting their assaults is also questionable in its effectiveness. For women, it is traumatizing to experience assault to begin with. Even more emotionally draining is reporting your assault to a fully technological system, as women are asked to report their incidents via a screen (a mobile application with no human interaction, which is neither just nor ethical). Even after using the app, they are still reporting emotional distress. 53.8% of women indicated having emotional and psychological problems, 28.2% indicated physical after-effects, 12.8% did not know how to respond, and 5.1% reported economic losses.³⁴ Such evidence questions the effectiveness of a mobile app, the competence of the Mexico City Police, as well as other federal organizations in addressing women’s security thoroughly.

Lastly, regarding the social media approach employed by #NoEsDeHombres, there has been a great deal of controversy. While #NoEsDeHombres had hopeful intentions, the campaign has produced many online conversations and critiques about its strategy. The “penis seat,” specifically, has garnered praise by those who believe that shock tactics are necessary to capture the attention of a city that has ignored its sexual harassment problems for too long.³⁵ However, “critics argue that it doesn’t engage sufficiently with the core problem— male attitudes towards women.”³⁶ Some women argue that the Penis seat experiment, although intended to teach empathy, actually serves the purpose of making men uncomfortable. Moreover, the video includes a scene of two men forcing another man to sit on the seat as a joke. As men used the experiment to harass other men, this type of behavior further demonstrates the program’s lack of success in addressing the issue at hand. As shown in Figures 2.2 and 2.3, many people expressed disgust at the methods used in this campaign, noting the irony of “sexually harassing men to teach them about sexual harassment.” The campaign has largely been mocked, thus leading to further desensitization of the severity of sexual harassment in public transportation.

34 Ana Gúezmes García et al., (Ciudad de México: ONU Mujeres, 2017).

35 “Ciudades Seguras y Espacios Públicos Seguros: Informe De Resultados Globales” (Nueva York, Nueva York: UN Women Global Flagship Programme, 2017), pp. 1-22.

36 Ibid.



Figure 2.2: Source: Twitter, Ryan Smith or @ryanjoshuasmith, 2017.



Figure 2.3: Source Twitter, Weronika or @verberr.

3. Conclusion

While these three programs initiated by governmental organizations have been instrumental in creating conversations about women's access to safety in public transportation, women continuously remain assaulted at disturbingly high rates in Mexico City public transit. These strategies have a common theme of being well-intentioned (despite their different conceptual frameworks), yet fail to target the problem in systemic or gender-sensitive ways. While these programs have certainly created awareness around gender violence in public transit in CDMX, they have not targeted the problem at its root. A more effective approach would require structural *and* infrastructural change. Indian feminist scholar Kanika Batra studies how this same issue is manifested in New Delhi, where rates of gender violence are even higher. She argues that infrastructure is a key building block and mechanism of global metropolitan spaces, enabling sexual predators to prowl a city as it struggles to keep up with the rapid pace of urbanization and globalization.³⁷ Thus, in order to deconstruct the embeddedness of male entitlement in urban spaces, it must first be understood how the make-up of a city produces such inequalities. An example of this would be how most major global cities, including CDMX, employ "rampantly profit-oriented city planning that emphasizes private modes of transport over public ones which continue to neglect the safety of women and children."³⁸ It can be deduced that the very design of the city and its public transportation defines the gendered relations of its inhabitants.

Batra proposes several approaches to hold police accountable and push heavier regulation regarding these systems: Demanding more women to be hired as bus drivers and bus conductors, increasing police presence during nights and mornings, the issuing of compulsory identity cards by the police to drivers of all public vehicles, at least two certifications of good character for drivers from their place of residence, and an installa-

37 Kanika Batra, "Transporting Metropolitanism: Road-Mapping Feminist Solutions to Sexual Violence in Delhi," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 54, no. 3 (April 2018): pp. 387-397.

38 Ibid.

tion of GPS trackers in all vehicles.³⁹ These provisions would allow women to establish a deeper sense of trust with bus and taxi drivers, as well as with the police force. Additionally, a class-specific analysis must be considered when addressing the sexual violence in public transit. Many female riders are working-class and have few other options for mobility, aside from public transportation. Safe modes of transportation are thus essential for women to navigate public spaces successfully.

While some authors see sexual violence as a consequence of class disparities in metropolitan locations, others locate it more directly within the nexus of patriarchy and power structures. The core of the issue, thus, could lie in the ingrained *machista* culture that is inherently violent towards women in Latin America. It is a culture that valorizes women who embody the Virgin Guadalupe, who is the idealized Mexican woman representing purity. A woman from Mexico City interviewed in a study by scholar Amy Dunckel Graglia states that “if you look like the good woman, men will protect you. If you don't embrace that image, you are very likely to get harassed and no man will stick up for you if that happens.”⁴⁰ In this way, women's roles as wives and mothers, as well as their physical appearance, appear to be primary factors in dictating their right to mobility.

Mexico City's federal policies tendency to overlook the deeper patriarchal implications of public spaces have resulted in persisting incidents of sexual violence within public transportation. Short term solutions such as increased policing and separate gendered spaces only provide a band-aid to cover up the core of the problem.⁴¹ Moreover, many scholars reporting and exploring this issue have failed to include a class-based analysis to their research. This would include the roles and privileges of elite Mexicans in this process, as they are often complicit in denying working-class Mexican women access to secure mobility routines. In order to thoroughly address gender violence within public transportation in Mexico City, I plan to explore the problem from a grassroots level approach, interviewing working-class women from Mexico City and engaging with their ideas in order to create a safer city for all.

39 Ibid.

40 Amy Dunckel Graglia, pp. 624-640.

41 Kanika Batra, pp. 387-397.

Works Cited

- Batra, Kanika. "Transporting Metropolitanism: Road-Mapping Feminist Solutions to Sexual Violence in Delhi." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 54, no. 3 (2018): 387–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2018.1461979>.
- Dunckel Graglia, Amy. "Finding Mobility: Women Negotiating Fear and Violence in Mexico City's Public Transit System." *Gender, Place & Culture* 23, no. 5 (2015): 624–40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369x.2015.1034240>.
- Dunckel-Graglia, Amy. "'Pink Transportation' in Mexico City: Reclaiming Urban Space through Collective Action against Gender-Based Violence." *Gender & Development* 21, no. 2 (2013): 265–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2013.802131>.
- García, Ana Gúezmes, Laura Capobianco, Yeliz Osman, Miguel Espinosa, Patricia Castro, Teresa Incháustegui Romero, Silvia Saucedo, and Arturo Alvarado Mendoza. DIAGNÓSTICO SOBRE LA VIOLENCIA CONTRA LAS MUJERES Y LAS NIÑAS EN EL TRANSPORTE PÚBLICO De LA CIUDAD DE MÉXICO *Programa Global Ciudades y Espacios Públicos Seguros Para Mujeres y Ni.* Ciudad de México: ONU Mujeres, 2017.
- Metrobús - Ciudad de México - Programa viajemos seguras. Accessed May 27, 2021. <http://data.metrobus.cdmx.gob.mx/mujeres.html>.
- "A 'Penis Seat' in Mexico Shocks Men Into Confronting Sexual Harassment." Global Citizen. Accessed May 27, 2021. <https://www.globalcitizen.org/fr/content/penis-seat-mexico-public-transport-sexual-harassme/>.
- Rep. *Ciudades Seguras y Espacios Públicos Seguros: Informe De Resultados Globales.* Nueva York, Nueva York: UN Women Global Flagship Programme, 2017.
- Rep. *CIUDADES Y ESPACIOS PÚBLICOS SEGUROS PARA MUJERES Y NIÑAS: Programa Insignia.* ONU Mujeres., February 2016. <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20americas/documentos/publicaciones/2017/ciudades%20seguras%202016.pdf?la=es&vs=2718>.
- Rep. *Consolidar La Institucionalización De La Política Pública De Igualdad En La Ciudad De México.* INMUJERES, 2017.
- Rep. *PROGRAMA CIUDADES Y ESPACIOS PÚBLICOS SEGUROS PARA MUJERES Y NIÑAS EN MÉXICO,* December 2019. <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20mexico/documentos/publicaciones/2019/informe%20resultados%20ciudades%20seguras.pdf?la=es&vs=3701>.
- Soto Villagrán, Paula, Arturo Aguilar Esteva, Emilio Gutiérrez Fernández, and Carlos Castro Reséndiz. "Evaluación De Impacto Del Programa 'Viajemos Seguras En El Transporte Público En La Ciudad De México': Aportes Al Diseño e Implementación De Políticas De Prevención De La Violencia De Género En Espacios Públicos." *Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo*, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.18235/0000804>.

“UN Women Launches the Campaign #NoEsDeHombres to Tackle Sexual Harassment in Public Transport.” UN Women | Americas and the Caribbean, 2017. <https://lac.unwomen.org/en/noticias-y-eventos/articulos/2017/03/no-es-de-hombres-onu-mujeres>.