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Pink Public Transport: A Necessary Evil?

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Pink Public Transport:
A Necessary Evil?

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
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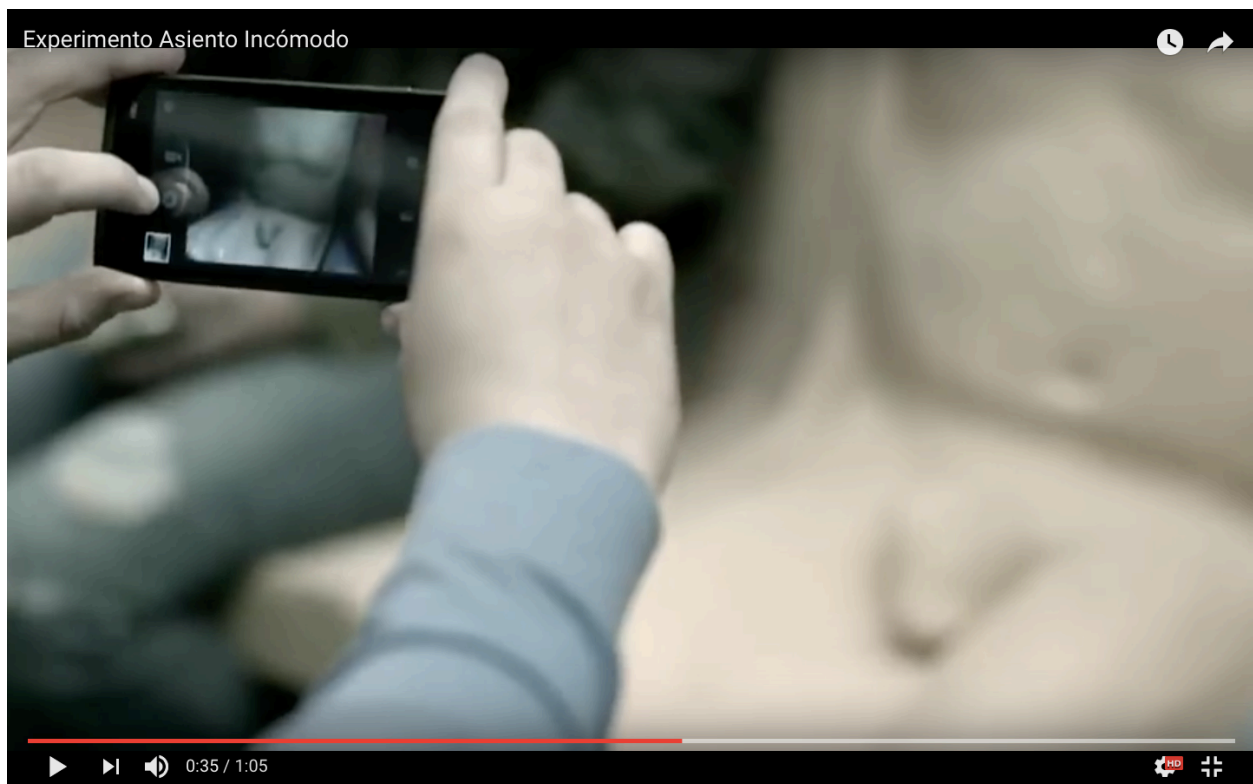
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Introduction

It was more a man than a metro seat—with a slightly defined dad chest and a rather small penis. The sign above it read “exclusively for men” (*exclusivo para hombres*). Yet, men and women alike appeared to be appalled by it in the video assembled by United Nations Women (UN Women), depicting an experiment they had carried out in the Mexico City metro system last winter as part of their “Safe Cities and Safe Spaces for Women and Girls” campaign. Reactions ranged from grimaces to petrified smiles, but all of the commuters had one thing in common: they did *not* want to sit on the penis seat. Placing a folded leather jacket over the figure’s member, one man braved the test, only to make unsavory expressions before standing, retrieving his jacket, and removing himself from the scene. In the next clip, two men laugh as they push their friend into the untouchable penis seat, but he manages to resist. Then comes the picture-taking, both of the seat itself, and of the sign that rests on the ground in front of it: “it is annoying to travel like this, but it does not compare with the sexual violence that women suffer during their daily commute” (*es molesto viajar aquí pero no se compara con la violencia sexual que sufren las mujeres en sus traslados cotidianos*). The camera cuts to a man clearly reading the sign, looking straight forward then to the side, with conceivable guilt in his eyes. A middle-aged man sits in the seat. His face spells horror. He stands, stares, shakes his head, then rolls his eyes, as if the seat has been a major inconvenience for him. The video concludes with the statement: “Nine out of ten women in Mexico City have been victims of some type of sexual violence during their daily commutes” (*9 de cada 10 mujeres en la Ciudad de México, han sido víctimas de algún tipo de violencia sexual en sus traslados cotidianos*).

The experiment, as detailed in *The New York Times* article “‘Penis Seat’ Causes Double Takes on Mexico City Subway,” was part of a campaign developed by UN Women and Mexico City’s Women’s Institute (Inmujeres), a government organization, as part of the campaign #ThisIsn’tManly (*#NoEsDeHombres*) (Deb and Franco 2017)¹. It was an attempt to shift the focus onto men, rather than women, who so often bear the blame when it comes to sexual violence. Though innovative, the campaign was not the first measure taken up by the Mexican government or other institutions to combat sexual violence against women on public transportation.



Still from YouTube video created by UN Women “Uncomfortable Seat Experiment” (*Experimento Asiento Incómodo*).

¹ The YouTube video that *The New York Times* draws from, deserves a in-text separate citation: (Kiido 2017).

In the article “Finding mobility: women negotiating fear and violence in Mexico City’s public transit system” Amy Dunckel Graglia outlines the history of gender-segregated public transport, the start of which she located in the 1970s, when “the predominately masculine transit authority quoted women as, ‘excessively complaining and protesting against the discomfort of having to ride in very cramped conditions’” (Dunckel Graglia 2015: 625). In 2000, the government finally heard these complaints, founding a small portion of women-only public transport, around five percent of the total system. This miniscule measure did very little for women, Dunckel Graglia explains. In 2006, Inmujeres took charge with a campaign that included “putting pressure on both the legal institutions and the transit agency to begin treating public transportation as a place that fosters gender inequality and limits women’s equal right to participate in urban life”, emphasizing that the vulnerable position women inhabit on public transport should be considered “a form of discrimination” (Dunckel Graglia 2015: 626). The campaign also involved an expansion of segregated public transportation in 2008, to two cars exclusively for women at the front of 42 percent of the metro and significantly more women-only buses. Around the same time, Inmujeres attempted to transform women-only transport “into a symbolic place for a women’s movement”, the details of which I will indulge in my first chapter (Dunckel Graglia 2015: 627). Inmujeres’ efforts also resulted in policy reforms, prominently the signing of the “Pledge for Gender Equality” (*Decálogo por la Equidad de Género*) with the intent of “promoting actions and policies that would begin building a city free of gender discrimination” and the passing of the “Women’s Access to a Life Free of Violence” act which “modified 18 articles in the existing legal structure, protecting women’s security and emotional well-being during the entire legal process of reporting violence crimes” (Dunckel Graglia 2015: 627).

Additionally, Inmujeres developed the program “We Women Travel Safe” (*Viajemos Seguras*) alongside the Secretary of Transportation which today comprises of five attention modules within the stations with the highest number of reports of sexual violence, equipped with lawyers and psychologists that offer support and guidance to victims, a 24-hour hotline through which victims can file reports, and publicity campaigns that aim to promote gender equality (Dunckel Graglia 2015: 627). Recently, Inmujeres came out with a smartphone app called “Vive Segura CDMX”, through which users can “evaluate their perception of security during their daily journeys in the city; report cases of harassment and risk; make emergency 911 calls and receive attention if need be” (*evaluar su percepción de seguridad en sus trayectos por la ciudad; reportar casos de acoso y riesgo; realizar llamadas de emergencia al 911 y recibir atención en caso necesario*) (“Vive Segura CDMX”). Despite the efforts put forth by Inmujeres and UN Women, sexual violence continues to be prevalent on public transport in Mexico City, and the publicity campaigns and gender-segregation serve as constant reminders of this reality.

.....

I arrived in Mexico City for the first time in January of 2017 for a semester abroad at Universidad Iberoamericana, a “fresa” (preppy) Jesuit school in the far-out, and fittingly elevated, business district of Santa Fe. Not knowing that “Ibero”, as they call my university, has its own fleet of school buses, sporting carpeted seats and curtained windows, I began my time there commuting via public transportation. This shocked my fellow students, who rarely to never used public transportation themselves. They warned that I should not remove anything from my bag that was of value, advice that exposed their inexperience: nearly everyone on public transportation whipped their smartphone out at one point or another, usually to converse using

the popular messaging application WhatsApp. It was not the high rate of robberies on public transportation that struck me. Rather, it was the segregation, the “Exclusive area for women and children” (*Area exclusiva para mujeres y niños*) signs, the pink seats, and the barricades, which differentiated public transport in Mexico City from that of any other place I had visited. It was because sexual harassment and assault were so prevalent in these crowded, enclosed spaces, several people explained to me, that women-only sections were put into place. Considering the circumstances, I opted most often to inhabit the women-only section, sometimes using the mixed section, or what most people call the “men’s section” (*la parte de hombres*), when I was not traveling alone. I became accustomed to sitting next to women who unashamedly carried out their entire makeup routines.



Inside an uncrowded women-only bus.

At the same time, I attempted to better understand how people I met conceptualized these sections through conversations which, when in groups, routinely morphed into debates. People even seemed to debate themselves sometimes. On the one hand, they said, women-only sections were necessary since they created spaces in which women did not have to worry about sexual harassment or assault. On the other hand, they said these sections were only a means of avoiding the problem, a way of getting around actually having to solve it. On a third hand, these women-only sections did not provide refuge, really, since women were the most aggressive of them all—instigators of verbal abuse, pushing, and hair pulling—a story I heard from both women and men.

Conducting surface-level research, I came across equally contradictory comments. One in particular, within a TripAdvisor thread from 2008 by the title “Women Only Buses in Mexico City”, stood out to me. JulianM, a certified “Destination Expert for Mexico City”, wrote in reference to previous comments about groping: “this is common and one of the reasons why don’t let my wife use public transportation [sic] unless there’s no choice about it. It’s shameful” (JulianM 2008). Clearly, JulianM needs to self-reflect. His nonsensical comment, though, highlights a commonly held view which comes forth frequently in my interviews, which may or may not be exacerbated by women-only sections—that women are in need of protection. How might women-only sections affect gender equality in the long run when they arguably promote this notion, I thought. Are women-only sections worth the possible consequences of their implementation? While I and the internet have our opinions about this measure, what do people who use transportation in Mexico City regularly think of it?

By the time my Dad emailed me *The New York Times* article detailing the Penis Seat campaign, I was sold on the now-trendy topic. I began my IRB-approved research officially in May of 2017. Along with using public transportation most days of the week, and taking notes while doing so, I interviewed 25 people. The majority of my interlocutors were friends I had made at the house and museum of the architect Luis Barragán (Casa Barragán), famous for his use of pink, orange, yellow, and superbly framed natural light. I gave tours there over the course of my stay as part of a social engagement course I signed up for through Ibero. The tour guides and actual employees with whom I spoke were either in the process of completing or had completed a degree in architecture at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and were daily users of public transportation. One friend, Javier, was especially helpful, as he led me to several of his friends who relied on public transportation, who had stories aplenty to share. Other interviewees included my housekeeper and my good friend's housekeeper, a chef at a shipping company, and several foreigner friends. I was lucky to be able to interview a program coordinator at the UN Women offices of Mexico City, and a coordinator of the mobility of women and girls at Inmujeres. Some of my interviews were immersed in tours. One was led by two friends from the house and museum of Luis Barragán, Ara and Arturo, who, over the course of 4 hours, introduced me 13 stations, one of which enclosed a museum of the metro. Another tour was directed by Mari and Lucia (mother and daughter) and the housekeepers of my friend, who took me through their commute from my friend's house in Roma Sur all the way to Iztapalapa. The tour quickly morphed into a series of interviews, as Mari and Lucia approached vendors, custodians, commuters, and policemen, some of whom were willing to answer their blunt questions. This portion of my project took place over the course of four months: June, July, August, and January. Back at Bard, I spent my time researching the topic, both the

literature on this measure in Mexico City, and the literature on the measure as it pertains to other countries where this also exists, including in China, India, and Egypt. Since a considerable amount of my ethnographic work was based in interviews, a great deal of the project consisted of close listening, transcribing, translating, and interpreting.

The coming three chapters are composed of topics that struck me throughout my interviews and research, though they certainly are not comprehensive of all that I gathered with the help of many generous interlocutors. In the first chapter, “‘Viboras Locas’: Aggressive Women of the Metro”, I investigate a phenomenon that I found paradoxical to the entire premise of women-only sections: that they too appear to cultivate their own version of violence that is described by my interlocutors as “aggression” (*agresión*). I argue that this aggression, combined with the custom of my interlocutors to disassociate themselves with the group of women who commit this aggression, exhibits the existence of only negative solidarity within women-only sections. Interpreting idealized conceptions of what women-only sections should look and feel like, I seek to answer the question: What would it require for women-only sections to be free of aggression? The second chapter, “Time: Short-Term, Long-Term, Indeterminate”, grapples with the possibility that the short-term solution (gender-segregated public transport) might stand in the way of the long-term goals presented by my interlocutors, who in this chapter include a lawyer and psychologist who work within a Viajemos Segura attention module. Chapter 3, “Where Difference Should Live? Hegemonies, Ideologies, Right to the City” considers the role that ideologies and hegemonies that are developing or have already punctured the psyches of my interlocutors play in their understanding of their right to space within public transportation. My analysis is driven by the question: Is there a place for women-only sections, or any form of segregation, as supported by Right to the City literature? I conclude by taking a step back—to

recognize that what ties my chapters together appears to be an overwhelming call to bridge the many gaps that arose during discussions, most immediately the gender divide on public transport, then two steps forward to remember that in the women-only section, I felt safe, and that there is validity in comfort, however fleeting.

“Viboras Locas”: Aggressive Women of the Metro

On a brisk afternoon in Tivoli, NY, I sat on the sleeveless futon chair in my living room and Whatsapp called my sister. Our conversation, recounting the few hours in which we had not been talking, was interrupted when she said, “Oh, god, one second”. Not knowing where in Mexico City she was at that moment, I was slightly concerned. “There was a fight” she said. “Wait what?” I said, “between who?”. “This young...cholo girl got on and this older woman was getting off with a cane, maybe the young one didn’t let her off and the old one hit her with a cane, just reached in and bonked her on top of her head. Then they yelled at each other.” “What did they yell?” I asked. “Like, ‘whore!’ (*puta*) Then the doors closed, and the metrobus drove away, and that was it”.

This incident, while distinctly more dramatic than anything I ever witnessed using public transportation in Mexico City, was a direct manifestation of the puzzling assertion by many of my interlocutors that in the women-only sections, women can be very aggressive. In this chapter, I intend to explore this “*agresión*” discussed by my interlocutors, through their descriptions and media depictions of the phenomena. Next, I hone in on the disconnect between, on the one hand, the mostly negative portrayals of the women-only section that I heard from my interlocutors who use the metro regularly and, on the other hand, the positive portrayals

enunciated by my wealthier interlocutors who rarely (or never) set foot on public transport. This disconnect demonstrates the distance between the ideal and the reality of segregated public transport, thus revealing a lack of communication and understanding between users and influencers. I continue with a close analysis of the detached language that my interlocutors use to describe this aggressive behavior, finally arguing that the hesitancy to identify as part of the collective reveals that women in the women-only section are bound only by a sort of negative solidarity, a shared distaste. Despite attempts to make women-only sections and buses empowering, women-only sections are constant reminders of what they attempt to exclude but manage to induce albeit in alternative forms: violence.



One of many versions of the barricades that divide women-only waiting areas from mixed waiting areas. Photo by Arturo Hernández Machorro.

Sitting in a quiet café on a grey day over coffee and hot cocoa in Polanco, an upscale neighborhood in the northern part of Mexico City, Sam, a 26-year old graphic designer, described this phenomenon without my prompting her when I asked which section she occupies when she uses public transportation:

<p>In the metro there exists like a women's zone and a men's zone. For me the truth is that I occupy both zones, when for example the men's zone is very full, I go in the women's zone. Because I know that there are like fewer people. But, um, in the mornings, it was like this which is why I went to the women's space, but they are very aggressive.</p>	<p>En el metro existe como la zona de mujeres, y la zona de hombres. Yo la verdad es que ocupo las dos zonas, cuando por ejemplo la de hombres está muy llena, me voy a la de mujeres. Porque sé que hay como menos. Pero, este, en las mañanas, era eso así yo me iba en el lugar de las mujeres, pero son muy agresivas.</p>
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Sam's primary concern when choosing which section to board is the amount of space that is available, which steers her towards the women-only section in the mornings. She has reservations, though, about this clear-cut consideration as there are other factors which affect her experience, i.e. the aggression that she witnesses specifically in the women's section. The women's section may be preferable, but it is not perfect.

Zuleyma, the head chef at a shipping company, went even further as I interviewed her at her place of work when she said:

<p>There's the women's area, but, well, not even men respect it and sometimes it's better to ride in the men's area which is [...] in the door because women, while equal, we are very aggressive.</p>	<p>Está el área de mujeres, pero, pues, ni lo respetan los hombres y a veces es mejor viajar en el de los hombres que es [...] en la puerta porque las mujeres, sí igual, somos bien agresivas.</p>
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Women's aggression is more than a downside; it is a repellant for Zuleyma, a reason to sometimes stand or sit in what she and most others call the men's section, though it is supposed to be called the mixed section.

Ana, a friend and tour guide at Casa Barragán, responded to my question, "Have you had any notable experiences on public transport?" with a tangential account of women's aggressive behavior. Perhaps our closer connection allowed for her lengthier response, or maybe she is simply quite passionate about the topic:

<p>Well from the start, in the...for example, if I go in the women's section, and also in the men's sometimes, I realize that in the women's section, I don't know if it's a question of society in Mexico, but women become like very individualistic, or rather, they don't give up their seats, they don't...they don't move to make space, they're like...very aggressive, sometimes, and we're only women, aside from that sometimes they become very defensive like in groups if any man tries to get on the wagon. That is, even if he wasn't going to do anything, not even etc. if some man boards that women's wagon, sometimes it's like "why did you get in", sometimes, not <i>always</i>, but yes, I have seen this. So sometimes, if it were up to me I wouldn't go in the women's, but things have happened to me in the men's section, so, I prefer the women's carriage for this reason hahaha. But yes, that is, like to be together with purely women in the women's carriage is sometimes uncomfortable and, at times I think it is unjust that they never give up their seat or never...I don't know. From time to time a senior citizen will get on, an old man, a man that is already old, and they don't give up their seat, because he is a <i>man</i>. So, this, this is strange.</p>	<p>Pues, de entrada, en el...por ejemplo yo que sí voy en el de mujeres, y también en el de hombres a veces, me da cuenta que en el de mujeres, no sé si es una cuestión de sociedad en México, pero las mujeres llegan a ser como muy individualistas, o sea, no ceden el asiento, no...no se quitan para dar el paso, son como...muy agresivas, a veces, y eso que solo somos mujeres, y aparte a veces se ponen muy a la defensiva como en conjuntos si algún hombre se llega a meter al vagón. O sea, aunque no fuera hacer nada, ni etc., si algún hombre llega a tal vagón como de mujeres, a veces es como "porque te metes", a veces, no <i>siempre</i>, pero sí, me ha tocado ver eso. Entonces a veces, si por mi fuera no me iría en el de mujeres, pero me ha pasado cosas en el de los hombres, entonces, prefiero el de mujeres por eso jajaja, pero sí o sea cómo convivir con puras mujeres en el vagón de mujeres a veces es incómodo y, a veces me hace injusto que ellas nunca ceden el lugar, o nunca...no se luego llega entrar un adulto mayor, un viejo, un señor ya grande, y no les ceden el lugar, porque es <i>hombre</i>. Entonces, eso, eso es curioso.</p>
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Ana's answer suggests that women are not merely aggressive, but also exhibit other unpleasant attributes in the women's section. They are individualistic, defensive, and unjust. They do the wrong thing. Ana proposes that this phenomenon might be part of a bigger picture, that women are not only aggressive, individualistic, and defensive on public transportation, but in general in "Mexican society".

It is striking that the first notable experience that Ana chose to share with me was that she thinks women are aggressive on public transportation and maybe beyond, despite her acknowledgement that she still prefers the women's section over the mixed section because, she says, "things have happened to me in the men's". It seemed to me the ultimate paradox—in investigating a women-only section implemented to curb the high rate of sexual harassment and assault on public transportation, commuters wanted to tell me about how aggressive *women* can be. Though for many women it is the section of choice, it is not a section free of all forms of violence.

Sitting on a swivel chair in the office that used to belong to Luis Barragán, a white room with terra cotta walls and a large, square, elevated window with a silver sphere resting on its ledge, Gabi, Ara, Adriana, and Arturo pinpointed the root of this aggression. Amidst a discussion about dressing for the metro, Gabi giggled, "they are more aggressive, yes, women with women are more aggressive, because they're envious. Or rather, they're very envious here" (*mujeres entre mujeres son más agresivas, este de por envidiosas. O sea, son muy envidiosas*). "They judge more" (*juzgan más*) Arturo added. "They judge their own gender more" (*juzgan más a su propio género*). Still not finished, Arturo repeated "instead of defending, they judge. Or rather, they brand, they mark" (*en vez de defenderse, la juzgan, o sea, la tachan, la señalan*). This all erupted following a story that Gabi shared, which she had not witnessed

herself but heard from other people. There were several stories shared like this throughout my interviews. In this case, a woman boarded the mixed section wearing a really short skirt (*falda muy cortita*). A man said something to her and tried to grab her. She became very angry and swore at him, but instead of all of the women around helping her, saying “why are you harassing her” they said, “it’s your fault for provoking him because you wore a short skirt like that” (*tu tienes la culpa por provocarlo por ponerte una falda asi de corta*). The woman had to exit since all of the women began to yell at her, Gabi explained. “This happens a lot in Mexico” (*eso se da mucho aquí en México*).

As exhibited by Gabi’s story, and the commentary Sam, Zuleyma, Ana, Ara, and Arturo provide, my interlocutors were eager to tell me about the faults of gender-segregated public transport. It was particularly pertinent that I understood that in women-only sections, women are aggressive, individualistic, jealous, unjust even.

Aggression in the Media

Atop what almost sounds like the Curb your Enthusiasm trot-like transition music, appear the words, increasing in size “TOP THE WORST FIGHTS BETWEEN WOMEN ON THE METRO” (*TOP LAS PEORES PELEAS DE MUJERES EN EL METRO*), then a dancing 5 in front of a background of hearts, cherries, and clovers, before we see an almost completely one-sided argument between two women, one of whom is standing and applying powder to her face, as the other sits with her back to the camera. Both women and men are in the frame, which suggests that this scene was filmed in the mixed section. The video cuts to a dancing four, before opening on a moment in a more crowded carriage, the dialogue of which I can only relay since it was transcribed in an article. If it were not, the Spanish would be far too fast to

comprehend. The woman states: “Go over there, listen watch out, what happened. He already saw that she hit me again, she touched my boob, it’s not that she’s not being careful she did it three times, go over there” (*Hágase para allá, oiga tenga cuidado, qué le pasa. Ya vio que me pegó otra vez, me tocó una boobie, no es que no tiene cuidado van tres veces, hágase para allá*). The cameraman then turns the camera toward the calm men who surround them, one of whom says “shhh”. The accuser moves herself then asks the cameraman, “Who gave you permission to film? Give me it! Turn it off, why, why are you filming me? What are you doing, idiot, give it to me, give it to me, idiot, why are you filming me?” (*Quien te dio permiso de grabar, dame eso! apágalo, por qué, por qué me grabas, que te pasa imbécil, dámelo, dámelo imbécil, porqué me grabas*). Number 3 must be filmed during the “peak hours” (*horas picos*) The backs and fronts of women’s heads tumble through the open door, for a split second a set of arms are in the air, as if this woman has surrendered, and can do no more than go with the flow. The roller-coaster quality is not limited to the visuals—screams and shouts amidst the caution “be careful with the children!” (*cuidado con los niños!*) are the soundtrack, which does not subside once the doors have closed. Inside, of course, another fight is carried out between two women (PUYI 2017).

Ana and Ulisees, who also worked at Casa Barragán, introduced this YouTube compilation video to me at the end of a joint interview conducted in my apartment during the excessively rainy summer season. Joining me and my laptop on my therapist couch, Ana and Ulisees recommended we search “worst fights between women on the metro” (*peores peleas en el metro mujeres*) or “aggressive women metro” (*mujeres agresivas metro*). They knew that this media was out there and wanted to share it with me. While acknowledgement of this phenomenon surprised me repeatedly, and it continues to shock and confuse those who I have

told since I returned to the United States, my interlocutors seemed to agree that women are aggressive in the women-only section. The video described above demonstrates the ways in which this phenomenon has been recorded, compiled, distributed, and transformed into a spectacle of entertainment. The user, TOPS PUYI, who posted the video, wrote as her description “HELLO VERY GOOD DAY. IN CONTINUATION I LEAVE YOU THIS VIDEO WITH ONLY THE PURPOSE OF ENTERTAINING. I SEND YOU A KISS FROM MY BEAUTIFUL AND DEAR MEXICO” (*HOLA MUY BUEN DÍA. A CONTINUACIÓN LES DEJO CON ESTE VÍDEO CON EL ÚNICO PROPÓSITO DE ENTRETENER LES MANDO UN BESO DESDE MI MEXICO LINDO Y QUERIDO*) (ibid).

Comments below this video and others like it indicate that viewers also consider this aggression a form of entertainment. Some compare these women to reptiles: “Women are like crazy snakes, you gotta be kidding me... hahahha careful with these crazy women (*Las mujeres son como viboras locas, no manches...jajajja cuidado con estas locas mujeres*) and analogize the lack of space on the metro: “You gotta be kidding, they’re packed like cigarettes” (*A no manchen, van como cigarros*). Others sweep aside the action and focus on physical appearance: “In spite of everything, I think the woman who fights with the almost old lady is pretty, hahahh” (*A pesar de todo, a mi me pareció linda la chica que se pelea con la casi anciana, jejejj*) (ibid). For these users, these fights contribute to a comedic conversation. Note that many laugh virtually at the end of their statements.

One slightly more serious and intriguing comment written by a man read: “and for this they give them their exclusive carriage on the metro? Between them they do themselves more damage!!” (*y para eso les dan su exclusive vagón del metro? Entre ellas se hacen más daño!!*). This prompted the two responses which echoed the points made by my interlocutors:

“Yes! How horrible! When I can avoid them women’s sections, I do!” (*si! Qué horror! cuando puedo evitarlas, lo hago! Son agresivas!!!!*) and “Who said that a carriage for women was safer??. hahaha people who say it’s better make me laugh, and we know well that between them it’s worse, there are many common and vulgar women” (*Quien dijo que un vagón para mujeres era más seguro??. jajaja me dan risa esas que dicen que es mejor, y bien sabemos que entre nosotras es peor, hay cada mujer vulgar y corriente*) (ibid). Acknowledgement of aggression serves as a way to discount the validity of women-only sections by painting them as even more dangerous than mixed sections. The reason that women-only sections exist seems to be removed from the equation—the women-only section has become a problem in itself.

In an article titled “Controversy about fight between women in DF metro” (*Controversia por pelea de mujeres en el metro DF*) published in 2014 by the newspaper *El Siglo de Torreón*, the second fight of the compilation video is cited for having sparked a slew of social media hashtags, like #LadyMetro and #LadyBoobie. According to the brief article, the accuser, who is described as the “the aggressive women” (*agresiva mujer*), was shunned by social media users who expressed “their indignation for the treatment that this woman inflicts on the other user, criticizing like an arrogant person” (*su indignación por el trato que esta persona propinó a la otra usuaria, criticando como una prepotente*) (“Controversia por pelea” 2014).

This phenomenon has infiltrated YouTube media, social media, and news media, as a form of comedic entertainment with an air of disdain. Is this phenomenon as prevalent as the media makes it seem? Were my interlocutors telling me about this phenomenon because they see it themselves consistently, or because it is a popular discourse? When Sam told me that women were aggressive on public transportation, she laughed. Was she embarrassed or was she adding to the larger conversation swirling around in the media, which arguably exaggerates and

hystericizes an only somewhat present phenomenon. If women truly are this aggressive on public transportation, what does this say about the effectiveness of this system?

The Inexperienced, the Approving

While interlocutors who use public transportation regularly relayed this phenomenon to me, those who rarely to never step foot on the metro were far less cynical. As she fondled the Dalmatian-patterned beans that decorated my dining-room table, Maggie, a 24-year-old Venezuelan who attained her impeccable English while living in Texas and has spent the past 10 years living in Mexico City, recounted the few times she has used public transportation instead of her own car which she drives short distances herself, and is driven long distances by her chauffeur. One time, she resorted to the metro when a plane crashed into a major freeway. Another time, she took the metro to conduct research for an urban planning course. In these instances, Maggie was with other people (men) and occupied the mixed section. It was not until recently that Maggie boarded the women-only section, braving rush hour. “It was *packed*, it was *extremely* packed” she said of the conditions. The man that she and her mother were with instructed them in great haste to enter the women-only section as he hopped on the mixed section, after which they “barely made it past the door”, and were “packed like sardines in a can”. Once inside, Maggie was pleasantly surprised by her experience. She even had what could be considered a revelation. She explained:

I never thought about the benefits of the women’s-only wagon, like a lot of people say ‘oh, but the girls get crazy trying to get in there’. Well I imagine like at rush hour they do because like getting in and out you can easily miss your stop because you’re not able to get out, so the girls have to really push, but I did feel like, if we’re going to talk about in the metro you can feel sexually assaulted sometimes, so like we were all packed together, but you didn’t really feel that uncomfortableness, if you would have been packed together with like a bunch of men that you don’t know. In fact, I was packed right next to this girl and we started talking, and it ended up that she wanted to live in Venezuela and things like that.

Though Maggie acknowledges the mainstream discourse that women are “crazy” when they attempt to board the metro during rush hour, she justifies this phenomenon as simply a need to push to be able to get from one place to the next. It is out of necessity, rather than out of entitlement or general craziness, that women push. What is more important to Maggie is this lack of “uncomfortableness”, this not feeling sexually assaulted that can only exist in a women-only section. Notice that Maggie never specifies that this space is “comfortable”. Her description of the women-only section is given in the negative form. Yet, Maggie does provide a positive example, when she recounts forming a connection with another woman on the carriage. Maggie’s lack of experience with public transportation was not unusual for middle to upper-class people that I knew. Of course, in search of interlocutors, many of the middle to upper-class people who were interested in being interviewed were anomalies, at times the communist-leaning. Maggie and her family did not fall into this category. Maggie studied at the school where I spent my semester, the private Jesuit Universidad Iberoamericana, where wealthy white students studied. “Ibero” is located in Santa Fe, a district in the western part of the city, known for having slums side by side with upscale apartment complexes and high-tech business headquarters. Most other students that I met used the IBEROBus, drove, took Uber, or were chauffeured to and from school.

Miguel, a well-off 49-year-old event producer and musician who uses public transportation less today than he used to, found it very amusing that his wealthy friends use public transportation when they visit Paris or New York, but never in their home city. He elaborated: “people with money in Mexico, never in a *million years* will they get on the metro in Mexico”. (*la gente con dinero en México, ni de puta se sube el metro en México*).

Maggie’s mom, who came to my apartment to redecorate bohemian-style before Maggie filmed a portion of a short film that she planned to submit to American universities, described the women-only section as “superb” (*buenísimo*). She explained, “When I entered the women’s zone I felt safer, calmer” (*Yo cuando entré a la zona de mujeres me sentía como más segura, más tranquila*). Her only complaint was that there should be more carriages, as there are more women than men going out into the streets to work. Like Maggie, Ana Paula almost never uses public transportation. The opinions that I gathered from those who rarely to never use public transportation barely resembled what I gathered from commuters. For the most part, middle and upper-class people described women-only sections as positive places. Not only are they “buenísimo”, I was told, they bring people together.

Paola, a 30-year-old neighbor whose main job is to translate Spanish subtitles into English for Netflix, who has an affection for Uber that I have seen met by no other, was especially sunny about what goes on within the women-only sections, despite her recognition that overall, they are a “necessary evil” (*mal necesario*):

<p>In my experience, including in moments where there isn’t a pin in the car, the women come to your aid, they communicate to accommodate within the carriage and wait to allow passengers to exit who in another way wouldn’t be able to do so. In the general wagons, the situation is much more chaotic, more violent, and the empathy that I have noted in the reserved carriages is much less frequent.</p>	<p>En mi experiencia, incluso en momentos donde no cabe un alfiler en el vagón, las mujeres se ayudan, se comunican para acomodarse dentro del vagón y dejar salir a las pasajeras que de otro modo no podrían hacerlo. En los vagones generales, la situación es mucho más caótica, más violenta, y la empatía que he notado en los vagones reservados es mucho menos frecuente.</p>
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Paola’s description is the polar opposite of Ana’s, who described women as individualistic, unjust, and aggressive within the women-only section. For Paola, the women-only section has promoted a sense of solidarity among women. They help each other out, they are respectful and

patient with each other. She seems to suggest that their understanding of a common experience influences their behavior toward each other. Most of my interlocutors who commute regularly relayed to me the aggressive behavior that happens in the women-only section; many of my interlocutors who do not commute regularly described the opposite behavior. Ana Paola described the women-only section as “calm” (*tranquilo*), while Sam described the mixed section as “calmer”.

Yet I would not have described women on the metro as either of the two types of women that were presented to me. Perhaps my questions were begging for extreme answers, but it seems strange that my interlocutors jumped to such dramatic conclusions about the way women behave on the metro, leaving little room for contesting narratives.

Considering this dichotomy, it is necessary to think about what these two narratives represent. Is it the success or lack of success of the women-only section? If so, what can be learned from the reality that most commuters see women-only sections as places of violence, while those who do not ride it, those whose wealth and influence might have the power to improve these sections, see women-only sections as idyllic? Also, why are these two groups choosing to tell me these two stories? What motivates their words? My interlocutors’ interest in sharing stories of aggression with me demonstrates both a fascination with the spectacle of this kind of behavior and, further, a recognition that women-only sections are violent, and flawed, even if these flaws are transformed into humor. That wealthier commuters held a less critical perspective on gender-segregated public transport establishes a divide between those who use and those with the influence to improve public transport. On top of this, the idyllic perspective sets a standard that is shattered by the stories shared by my interlocutors who actually use public transit.

Another Take

In an article titled “‘Pink transportation’ in Mexico City: reclaiming urban space through collective action against gender-based violence” published in 2013, Amy Dunckel-Graglia argues that “pink transportation” has effectively mobilized women and “transform[ed] the urban environment” in Mexico City (Dunckel Graglia 2013: 267). Dunckel-Graglia looks closely at the various laws and programs that made women-only sections possible and eased the process of reporting violent crimes that occur on public transportation. She elaborates on the women-only buses, officially called “Athena” buses, which have historical women painted on their sides. The inside of buses are filled with “visual images expressing women’s courage, strength, and ability to go fight for their country at any time” (Dunckel Graglia 2013: 271). These paintings, “taken from an established feminist discourse that women are revolutionaries, founders of Mexico, and important figures”, “do play a very heavy hand in changing the image of women” (Dunckel Graglia 2013: 270). Yet, none of my interlocutors brought this decoration to my attention. In light of this fact, it seems that while this goddess, revolutionary campaign was established with the good intention of promoting women’s empowerment, it had little effect on the mindsets of my interlocutors.

Sam “won’t let up”

Attempting to avoid a man who persistently placed himself directly behind her, Sam spun. At times when space is so limited, this is the only option for people who need to escape uncomfortable situations. As the man adapted to her movements, always finding a way back to his preferred position, Sam realized that the only solution was to exit the carriage at the next

stop. “What a pain, no?” (*Que fastidio, no?*) she recalled during our interview. The doors opened and Sam made her way through them, only to feel that same man grab her backside. Angry, and unwilling to let it pass, Sam turned around and hit him with a closed fist. When the other passengers realized what had happened, they threw him out of the carriage. To her luck, Sam said, there was a police officer in the station. Sam told him that this man grabbed her, and that this was “harassment” (*acoso*). The officer brought them both to the station where the man denied Sam’s accusation. “I didn’t touch her, I didn’t do anything to her” (*no es que yo no la toque, yo no la hice nada*). Sam replied, “You’ve been bothering me since stations back, I mean the truth is that I won’t let up” (*Me vienes molestando desde estaciones atrás, o sea la verdad es que yo no voy a dejar*). Sam said that the man continued to profess his innocence and her guilt: “The thing is you hit me, that is aggression” (*No, es que tu me pegaste, eso es agresión*). Eventually Sam left without filing a report because she would have had to go to the delegation to do so, and she was in a hurry.

They are

In order to better understand this phenomenon, its causes and its consequences, it is helpful to hone in on the language that my interlocutors actually use when addressing it. For example, in Sam’s first statement, she does not include herself in the group of women that are aggressive. She does not say “we are very aggressive”, instead she says, “they are very aggressive”. When she recounted the story in which she was groped and she punched her attacker, it is only through the words she says were her attacker’s that she is deemed aggressive. Sam emphasizes, though, that she would not let up, in other words, that she would not allow this

harassment to go unpunished. She is willing to describe herself as courageous, but not as aggressive. Why is this difference so important to Sam?

Ana also distances herself from the aggressive women she describes: “women become like very individualistic, or rather, they don’t give up their seats, they don’t [...] and we’re only women, aside from that sometimes they become very defensive like in groups if any man tries to get on the wagon”. Ana repeatedly uses the third person when talking about women, excluding herself entirely from the group of women who are individualistic and defensive, and in other parts of the quote, unjust and aggressive. Yet Ana does include herself when she says “we’re only women” a somewhat perplexing statement. Is Ana trying to say that women are not performing their gender the way that they are supposed to or said to? Is Ana trying to say that women can only be so aggressive because of their gender? Regardless, it is only when Ana addresses women as limited and acting within the gender norms that she associates herself with this group.

Maggie only acknowledges women’s aggression through what she has heard from other people: “like a lot of people say ‘oh, but the girls get crazy trying to get in there’”. She does not see it herself, in fact her story paints the opposite picture of women inside a women-only carriage at rush hour, but it is significant that she puts herself at double distance, because in reality she is definitively distanced from this aggression.

The language that Sam and Ana use to place themselves outside of the group of women who participate in this phenomenon highlights a lack of solidarity among women in the women-only sections. If Sam and Ana say that women are aggressive and individualistic in the metro, why do they not include themselves in this group if they use public transportation regularly? If this is the identity of the woman who uses public transportation, why do they hesitate to embody

it, even straightforwardly place themselves outside of it? The women-only section, through its initiation to its decoration, was intended to mobilize and empower the woman—what could be so wrong that women deny their membership in the collective? What does it say about the success, both day-to-day, and in the long-term, of the women-only section that its very commuters will not even describe themselves as part of the greater group?

Unlike Sam, Ana, and Maggie, Zuleyma does not distance herself when she says “we are very aggressive”. Zuleyma does not see this aggression as positive since she goes on to say that she sometimes uses the “men’s area” to avoid it. Is she simply being honest about her participation in this aggression? Perhaps it’s even more significant that Zuleyma, while not separating herself from the collective, is still repelled by this aggression into the mixed section. She can only handle being a part of the collective *sometimes*.

The only form of solidarity that appears to truly exist within women-only sections is a negative solidarity. Sam and Ana are brought together through the negation of their participation in this aggressive, individualistic behavior. Women who are aggressive, Ana says, come together to defend against men who attempt to seep into their space. All women are brought together through the creation of a section that exists only for women in order to curb harassment and assault at the hands of men. Rather than being defined by what they include, women-only sections seem to be defined by what they exclude: men. Men, and the violence they incite, therefore violence too defines this category.

Men continue to dominate the women-only section. Not only by the looming reminders that they are being excluded, but also by their reaffirmed ownership of the mixed section. What is supposed to be called the “mixed section” (*la parte mixta*) is instead most frequently referred to as the “men’s section” (*la parte de hombres*). My interlocutors relayed to me that women who

choose to use the mixed section are putting themselves at risk. Some only said that other people say that women are putting themselves at risk when they do this. This behavior was associated sometimes with wearing short skirts. My interlocutors said, or said that most people say, that women who use the mixed section are asking for it. The distance that my interlocutors often placed between themselves and the perpetrators of this rhetoric reflects the kind of distance that women place between themselves and the collective in the context of women-only sections, which further demonstrates a detesting relationship that my interlocutors have with the collective. Thus, the women-only section makes the mixed section, which consists of many more carriages than the few at the front marked “women-only”, unfriendly, perhaps more dangerous to women than it was prior to the implementation of women-only sections. Women are left with two unattractive options: to become targets, or to segregate themselves.

The replenished understanding that the mixed section belongs to men has nearly transformed what was supposed to be a choice into a requirement. Unless women are traveling with men (which somehow translates into their being protected) or unless women are hoping to be groped, they *best* occupy the women-only sections. I will go so far as to say that women do not choose to occupy the women-only section; the choice presented is an illusion. Whether women had more choice before or after the implementation of women-only sections, or if they never had a choice at all, is debatable; what is evident is that women-only sections exist, and women hardly have a choice but to occupy them. Hence, the women-only section is defined not only by the absence of men, but also by the avoidance of the “men’s section”.

All this, in spite of publicity campaigns—pictures of revolutionary women, the arguable re-appropriation of the color pink—signals a failure to, or the impossibility of, making what was at the outset a response to violence anything more than a symbol of violence. Within women-

only sections, women are defined in relation to what is excluded, what is avoided. Women in women-only sections are marked as potential victims of sexual violence, not as empowered, agentive, humans.

When women in the women-only section do hold an alternative title, it contrasts sharply with that of the victim: the aggressor. Female aggressors are different from male aggressors, however, because their actions are comedic, essentially harmless, merely a spectacle. YouTube videos depicting women fighting on the metro, and the comments that ensue, demonstrate the urge to bring to the fore the violence which has managed to manifest itself in the women-only section, the very place that is meant to be tranquil, conducive to a more secure and pleasant experience. These videos prompt a return to a repressed phenomenon, one that cannot help but appear where it is the most vocally unwelcome. Yet, these videos are humorous, a sort of cloak to cover-up the deeply disturbing reality that pink-plated women-only sections are not purely safe spaces. They are viewed as violent, though hosting a separate semblance of violence than their grey counterparts.

Despite attempts to make “pink transportation” more than a safe space, commuters and infrequent users alike still see the women-only section as a necessary evil (*mal necesario*). Maru, a classmate at Ibero wrote, “How absurd it is that we have to come to this” (*que tan absurdo es que tengamos que llegar a ese grado*).

What would it take for the women-only section to be desirable, instead of dissatisfying? For the choice to be real, no longer an illusion? The choice cannot be real, though, until the mixed section is regarded as a place in which women and men can coexist.

Time: Short-term, Long-term, Indeterminate

“There is no time here” (*No hay tiempo aquí*) said the older man wearing an orange uniform, as he leaned against the rail which divides those who enter from those who exit the metro station Chabacano. Propped up beside Rómulo was the mop that he used to maintain the marble floors, as he described his workplace through his missing teeth like a character imagined by a surrealist Latin American author: “day to day, people lose their civility, here civility doesn’t exist, here it is another world. Mmmnn there is no education, people are ignorant, here they lose everything” (*Cotidianamente, la gente aquí pierde civismo, aquí no hay civismo, aquí es otro mundo. Mmmm no hay educación, se hace el más culto, o más ignorante, aquí se pierde todo*). When I prompted Rómulo to continue his discussion of time, his observations moved from crude behavior to repetition, a repetition that played out against the static backdrop of the station: “Do you know what time it is right now? You know because you bring your biological clock. You see time here...Here at seven in the morning, it’s like this, and at 10 at night, it’s still the same” (*Te das cuenta, aquí que hora son ahorita. Sabes porque traes tú reloj biológico. Se ves el tiempo aquí...aquí a las 7 de las mañanas, sea así, y a las 10 de la noche, sigue siendo a lo mismo*). As a metro custodian, Rómulo has a unique perspective on the characteristics of the metro station and those who pass through it. He has been inside the station around the clock, the clock which he claims ceases to exist within the space he most often occupies.

Rómulo’s unprompted comments about time, sparked only by the questions asked by my interlocutors Mari and Lucia “what can you say sir?” (*que le puede dar usted?*) and “what happens day to day?” (*lo que pasa cotidianamente?*) suggest that time, or a lack of it, is a significant element both in the experience of the commuter and custodian. Romulo’s comments

also point towards a connection between the repetitive, cyclical, timeless nature of the metro and a loss of civility, manners, and what will become a very important concept in this chapter, “educación”. My brief interview with Rómulo serves as a microcosm for a greater discussion which I established at the start of my research, about the differences between long-term and short-term solutions, and whether or not they can coexist constructively. I organize this chapter in three parts. In the first section, I will discuss women-only sections as a short-term solution, through the lens of various news articles which examine this method of problem-solving both in Mexico City and other cities around the world that have similar systems, and through the words of my interlocutors. Next, I will detail an interview that I conducted with a lawyer and psychologist employed by the Women’s Institute, within an Attention Module (*Módulo de Atención*) at the metro station Balderas during my second trip to Mexico City. This interview focused heavily on the procedures that follow sexual violence if a victim chooses to take action, and whether or not these procedures, when on the off-chance successful, should be considered productive. The third section of the chapter shifts to “educación”, the universally lauded, ambiguous solution to sexual violence on public transportation. This chapter thus deals with different modes of time: short-term, long-term, and indeterminate, personal and historical, repetitive and transformative.

Media Debates: Do Band-Aids Help Heal?

In 2014, *Reuters* published an article analyzing the results of a survey, produced by the Thomas Reuters foundation, which determined that “women feel safer on single sex transportation”. The methods and results of the survey are as follows: “A poll of nearly 6,300 women in 15 of the world’s largest capitals and in New York, the most populous city in the United States, found about 70 percent of women said they would feel safer in single-sex areas on

buses and trains.” Despite the one-sided findings of the survey, the author of the article, “EXCLUSIVE-POLL: Does single-sex public transport help or hinder women?” Karrie Kehoe, uses the results as a conversation-opener, welcoming several opinions which challenge Reuters’ findings. At the end of her first paragraph she introduces a term that is often used in literature about women-only sections of public transportation, “band-aid solution”. In this context, “band-aid” is meant to serve as a metaphor for women-only sections, so as to highlight that women-only sections do not heal but merely cover-up the wound of what my interlocutors described as a Machista culture. Not only do women-only sections fail to tackle to root of the problem, Kehoe suggests, they have the potential to “backfire for women” (Kehoe 2014).

Kehoe quotes Julia Babinard, a senior transport specialist from the World Bank, who equates short-term solutions with temporary security, and long-term solutions with the end of gender-based violence: “The emerging interest in several countries in women-only initiatives should be seen as an opportunity for improving security in cities but not as a silver bullet for dealing with gender-based violence in transportation and urban settings”. She continues, “Women-only initiatives are not likely to provide long-term solutions as they only segregate by gender and provide a short-term remedy instead of addressing more fundamental issues.” Note that Babinard does not even call women-only sections “solutions”; instead she refers to them as a “remedy”, in turn emphasizing that they are temporary and ill-equipped to address the core of the problem (Kehoe 2014).

While acknowledging the upsides of women-only sections of public transportation, Emily May, co-founder of anti-harassment group Hollaback! in New York, ultimately is not in support of their implementation. She is quoted in the same article as saying, “there was no ‘one size fits all’ solution to stop harassment on transport but it was critical to address as women gave up jobs

and even moved home due to transport fears”, adding: “there certainly are people in some countries in which women-only carriages have been implemented that love them and feel so much safer because of them”. That being said, May complicated her previous assertions, stating “I think they are band-aid solutions and I don't think they are the kind of change we want. We don't want to be telling women that they have to ride in a different car or that they have to walk down a different street or wear different clothes.” May’s remark, about women-only sections placing the responsibility on women to avoid mixed sections and the men that inhabit them, rather than on men who need to modify their behavior, resonates throughout women-only section literature (Kehoe 2014).

In October of last year, the BBC published an article titled “100 Women: Are journeys safer with women-only carriages?” which, like many other articles, entertains both sides of the dilemma, but finally stands in opposition to the possible implementation of women-only sections, specifically in Kenya. The unnamed author cites “academics and policy experts” who say that the policy “places an expectation on women to avoid harassment, rather than on the perpetrators to change their behavior or for more effective law enforcement”. The article also cites the *Reuters* poll as the most useful evidence in favor of women-only sections, as women feeling safer is the most quantifiable understanding of the benefit of women-only sections, since there are insufficient conclusive studies which have looked at the before and after of women-only sections (“100 Women: Are journeys safer” 2017).

The author includes a section titled “a quick fix” in which Lynn Baraza, who was surveyed by the Nairobi advocacy group Women’s Empowerment Link, argues that “while women might be safer on their journey, the harassment when they get off the bus would be the same, or even worse”. In place of implementing women-only sections, she proposes that “the

whole community [apply a] zero tolerance to harassment” (“100 Women: Are journeys safer” 2017).

Though the article clearly stands in opposition to segregated public transport, there is one sentence which discounts women-only policies more than the entirety of the article: “They have been trialled in many countries, from Mexico to Japan to India, in various forms on buses, trains and taxis.” Are women-only sections in Mexico only trials?

These articles agree that women-only sections should be considered short-term solutions, while other more extreme measures should be engaged in order to initiate long-term change, like “zero-tolerance” policies. Can short-term and long-term solutions be carried out simultaneously, though? Do women-only sections stand in the way of long-term solutions?

The Short-Term

“There’s always a risk” (*siempre hay riesgo*) –Ara said, responding to the question “Do you feel safe when you use public transportation” (*te sientes segura cuando utilizas el transporte público?*). Like most of my interlocutors, Ara has habits that coincide with her use of public transportation. Perhaps this is because public transportation consists of spaces in which time is, for the most part, repetitive. Most people who use public transportation use it daily, taking the same route to and from work or school, on which they perform the same actions perpetually. These actions become so inherent that their repetitiveness becomes monotonous and only partially perceivable. Riding the metro with my interlocutors, I found that they could hardly describe what they were experiencing and observing as more than “normal” (*normal*). During interviews, though, these repeated actions resurfaced through the word that Ara spoke when thinking about risk: “siempre”. According to wordreference.com, a trusted online language dictionary, “siempre” means “every time”, “whenever”, “always”, and

“habitually”. The various translations of “siempre” leave room for debate about whether “siempre” represents the short-term or the long-term. On the one hand, “siempre” seems to indicate singular actions that are repeated, which suggests the short-term. On the other hand, “siempre” can be seen as specifying the long-term, since at which point “always” ends can be considered indefinite, arguably even nonexistent. Thus, “siempre” encompasses both—it represents short-term, repeated actions, which then morph into a long-term, continuous action. My interlocutors utilized “siempre” frequently to describe their routines, outlooks, and the conditions of the metro.

Beneath the blaring fluorescent lights of the Chabacano metro passageway, Rómulo used his gravelly, almost indistinguishable voice to illustrate one of the many recurrences that takes place in the station: “Running, running, towards day, towards morning, towards the afternoon, [commuters] always run” (*corriendo, corriendo, hacia día, hacia mañana, hacia tarde, siempre andan corriendo*). Rómulo views the metro as a place beyond basic repetition, a space in which commuters transform to perform improper human behavior.

Marta also noted this repetition and reinforcement of chaotic action on public transportation. Additionally, Marta indicated the repetitive actions she carries out in order to manage this chaos. Standing with surface cleaner in one hand and a washcloth in the other, having denied my offer to take a seat, Marta replied to the question, “Which part of the bus do you normally occupy?” (*que parte del micro ocupas normalmente*) with, “the back, because the micro buses are always full, there’s always pushing, asking for permission and in the back this doesn’t happen” (*atrás, porque el mirco siempre va lleno, empujando, pidiendo permiso y hasta atrás ya no*). She educates her children, as well, to position themselves in consideration of the number of passengers: “in fact, I always have them pass until the middle. If we aren’t going to

get off soon, we pass to the middle so as not to get in the way” (*de hecho, siempre les hago que pasen hasta el medio. Si no vamos a bajar pronto, hasta el medio para no estorbar*).

Sam, the graphic designer I introduced in the first chapter, moved to the Distrito Federal to avoid the long commutes she dreaded while she lived in Estado de México, but while she was using public transportation daily, she had a protocol. With her she would always bring a book that she would read and finish by the end of each month, totaling twelve books completed on public transportation alone per year. To avoid trouble in case of a robbery, “I would always carry 100 or 200 pesos (6-11 USD), to give [robbers], because if you don’t give them anything, they can kill you” (*Y de hecho, yo cargaba siempre con cien pesos 200 pesos, para dárselos porque si no les das, te pueden matar*). While some interlocutors used “siempre” to describe repeated actions that were practical, even innocent, like Sam’s practice of always bringing a book to read, others were more like the latter practices that Sam shared, and evocative of the dangers that commuters perceive exist within public transportation.

Javier laughed when I accidentally asked if he felt safe on public transport using the feminine term “segura”, but proceeded to answer the question seriously: “No, no and setting aside the sexual factor. I am never relaxed in the city...I always, and maybe it’s just me, I am always looking out for myself, when (incomp.) I watch, who it is, be prejudice, right? To see who gives me confidence, who doesn’t, where I should put this...I am always, I’m constantly checking to see if I still have my cell phone, my wallet” (*no, no y dejando la parte sexual al lado. Nunca estoy relajado en la ciudad, eh yo creo, no en este sentido. siempre, y yo por los menos yo Siempre me voy fijándome, cuando (incomp.) me fijo, quien va, para prejuicio, no? Para ver quien me inspira confianza, y quien no, donde me pongo, este, siempre estoy constantemente estoy revisando que todavía traiga mi celular, mi cartera*). Javier provides the

negative opposite of “siempre”, “nunca”, or “never”. Never is Javier relaxed, not checking to see who boards, whether or not he still has his cell phone and wallet. “Never” is the ideal, which exhibits his dissatisfaction with reality. Javier’s practice, his routine, his day-to-day, when using public transportation, is of constant vigilance.

The act of commuting—of reading books to pass the time, of checking one’s pockets to confirm that nothing has been stolen, of moving to the middle of the bus to manage the masses—are the foundation of the mundane. These are the iterations that make up the short-term, the never ending, the “siempre”. It is the conception of my interlocutors that what happens on public transportation will always happen on public transportation. These habits do not have an end date.

Inside the Módulo de Atención

The Attention Module, often mistaken for the information module which stands to its left, is a small, grey, cubicle-like box, with a frosted window donning vertical metal bars facing passerby. The green and pink sign which spans the top of the module reads “Modulo de Atención: Viajemos Seguras”, but this is the sole indicator of the module’s function. The Dutch door is on its side, with the bottom half locked, and the top swung open. I return for the second time in the afternoon, after having been turned away two weeks before, as I did not yet have permission from Inmujeres to study the module, nor interview those who work within it. The inside of the module is white, and many posters for “Viajemos Seguras” line the walls, including a sign which reads “Sexual abuse is a crime” (*El abuso sexual es un delito*).



The attention module (right), at Metro Balderas.

Julieta, a lawyer who has worked inside this module for two years, and Isara, a psychologist who has worked in the module for a year and a half, read my consent form carefully, and contact their employers before they eventually, but willingly, sign it. Our conversation, which lasts for over an hour, concentrates on the support that Julieta and Isara provide through the process of filing a report. It also ventures into a realm during which I write in my notebook, in all seriousness, “what’s the point?” as I feel at times disillusioned by their reflections on the seemingly endless flaws of the process. After having read on the Women’s Institute’s website that it is the job of the workers within the attention module to warn victims against accepting bribes from perpetrators, and convince them to instead file reports, I begin by

asking Julieta and Isara how they manage this challenge. Julieta, the lawyer, explains how she persuades victims to make what she wholeheartedly sees as the best choice:

<p>We explain to them all that can happen. But the first option and the one that we recommend first is to file a report. In this situation, it is the only option that will lead to an investigation, the only that will be able to determine if there really was a crime. It will give them um...that sensation that effectively, they carried out something to be able to blame him. This doesn't always happen. But, nevertheless, very personally, and something that I always comment to the commuters, is that the fact of just initiating the report that we initiate in the district attorney's office, we are already on the other side.</p>	<p>Les explicamos todas las que podrían haber. Pero la primera opción y las que primera les recomendamos es la denuncia. Por esta misma situación, es la única que va a llevar a cabo un investigación, que va a poder determinar si efectivamente existió un delito. Les va a dar este...esta sensación, que efectivamente, se realizó algo para poder pues encontrar al culpable. No siempre sucede. Pero, sin embargo, muy personalmente y algo que siempre les comento las usuarias, es que el hecho de iniciar la denuncia que nos la inicia en la fiscalía, ya estamos en el otro lado.</p>
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Instead of placing the emphasis on the effectiveness of filing a report, Julieta realistically describes the best option as being simply a step. While it does open up the possibility of an investigation, Julieta's expectations do not surpass a "sensation", a feeling that something has been done. This action moves a victim to the "other side", at the very least for the sake of their psychological treatment. On the one hand, this is quite grim. A lawyer who has spent two years serving as an aide to victims does not assume legal action will take place following the reports her clients file. On the other hand, this is hopeful. Despite the clear lack of action on the part of the authorities, Julieta has not quit. Why not? Any step is a step, any improvement is an improvement.

When I ask if the punishments that are sometimes (and by sometimes, I really mean rarely) doled out actually improve the situation, Julieta is not enthusiastic:

<p>Umm, it's a, it's like a debate that exists, each person has a different opinion in respect to, I personally feel that it doesn't. Unfortunately, here in Mexico we suffer from an incredible overpopulation in prisons...it doesn't ensure that they will be punished outside, or that they will have a greater change outside, that is to say, when they leave prison, when they're reintegrating. Then, usually within they would need to have psychological support, rehabilitation, but this doesn't always happen either.</p>	<p>Ehh, es una, es como un debate que existe, cada persona opina diferente al respecto, yo personalmente siento que no. Lamentablemente, aquí en México ya sufrimos de una sobrepoblación en las prisiones impresionante... pero eso no asegura, que puedan tener un castigo afuera, eh o que puedan tener un cambio más bien afuera... Entonces, usualmente adentro, interior tendría que llevar un apoyo psicológico, de rehabilitación, pero tampoco siempre pasa</p>
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As Julieta describes so clearly, even though the topic is debated, the prison and reintegration system lack the resources necessary to effectively reform perpetrators during and following incarceration. Seldom are court cases won, Julieta later explains, since they are often stymied by a lack of witnesses, broken cameras, or a corrupt psychological expert evaluation. So then, why even file a report, if it will likely lead to a lost court case, or if halfway successful, unproductive prison time for the perpetrator? As Julieta expressed earlier, to file a report brings the victim to “the other side”. Arguably, Julieta is including herself and perhaps even a larger collective when she states: “we are already on the other side” (*ya estamos en el otro lado*). Julieta uses this phrase in conjunction with another “to be a step forward” (*ya estar un paso adelante*), in the middle of a sentence about the importance of having a report in hand, and knowing that your story has been shared with the authorities. Julieta situates “the other side” as one that is the result of forwardness, of progress. Even if filing a report does not guarantee immediate justice, the action of filing a report suggests a step towards a future in which reports need not be filed by women frequently following their daily commutes.

Despite their symbolic weight, reports (*denuncias*) are still repetitive, and representative of short-term solutions. The overwhelmingly lauded long-term solution, suggested not only by

Julieta and Isara during our interview in the attention module, but also by the majority of my interlocutors, is squeezed into one deceptively elementary word: “educación”.

“Educación”

For my interlocutors, the term “education” (*educación*) holds a more complex meaning than the “education” that we understand in the United States. Here, “education” refers to school. Language arts, social studies, math, science, physical education, recess, repeat. When my interlocutors employ the term “educación” they are referring to a concept which encompasses far more. According to wordreference.com, “educación” can mean “upbringing”, “raising”, “education” “manners” and “good behavior”.

For example, Marta used “educación” to indicate the absence of respect on public transportation during our interview. She stated fervently, “There isn’t any of this civil education. Because they don’t, they don’t respect, they don’t know how to respect” (*no hay eso, educación civil. Porque no, no respetan, no saben respetar*). Note that Marta razors in on respect’s capacity to be acquired when she repeats for the last time “they don’t know how to respect”.

During our first interview, Ulisees and Ana presented two possible definitions of “educación”. First, Ulisees described what he called “involuntary education”:

<p>It’s not part of school. In school they don’t tell you “ahh, a woman is such and a man is such, right? I believe that now, really in involuntary education...The problem comes from way before. The fact that, that Mexican culture, that Mexican society has a very Machista mentality.</p>	<p>No es parte de escuela. Escuela no te dice “ahh, la mujer es tal el hombre es tal”, no. Creo que ahora, actualmente en educación involuntaria...El problema viene de mucho más atrás. El hecho de, que la cultura mexicana, que la sociedad mexicana tiene una mentalidad muy machista.</p>
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In this moment, Ulisees is describing “educación” as an impermeable force, dating back to an undefined but far off time, which has resulted in the present day “Machista mentality” in “Mexican culture”. Ulisees went on to describe the specific roles his grandparents taught him that women and men should embody, thus situating education in the home.

Ana, agreeing with Ulisees’ definition of education, then imagined how it might manifest in a school setting:

<p>It's true that from school you can set like this series of ideas, of understandings of respect, and allow the throwing away of this idea that the man is the one that has the power, right? The one who has the capacity to get work, the one that has to provide resources, and the woman only has to serve, to respond to a man, right?</p>	<p>Es cierto que desde la escuela puedes poner como esta serie de ideas, de pensamientos de respeto, y dejar de sacar esta idea que, el hombre es el tiene el poder, no? El que es capaz de conseguir tal trabajo, el que tiene que dar los recursos, y la mujer solo se tiene que quedar a servir, o a responder a un hombre, no?</p>
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Ana is hopeful that school is an environment capable of nurturing values like respect and gender equality. This broadened definition of education suggested by Ana and other interlocutors, both as happening in the home and at school, points towards something intriguing: it is the expectation of my interlocutors that the solution to the problem of sexual harassment and assault on public transportation must be located in both the home and the state. Through “educación” family, kinship, and the power of the state must come together to abolish sexual violence on public transportation, if this is even a prospect to propose. This is especially significant considering that my interlocutors tend to express disappointment in a state they describe as plagued by corruption. Through their hope that “educación” in the home and by way of the state will solve this issue, they are calling for the reunification of a broken connection. Not only do most of my interlocutors contest the separation of gender that takes place within public

transportation, they also oppose the discontinuity between the state and the home in their ability to educate, and communicate, properly. It will be further elaborated later in this chapter that this disconnect described in the discourse of my interlocutors is not limited to the relationship between the home and the state, as a similarly troubling schism also stands out to my interlocutors: the dichotomy between women and men. Fed up with divisions, my interlocutors look to the all-encompassing, inclusive, harmonious “educación” to do the saving.

Still enjoying hot cocoa with Sam, I asked what her opinion of women-only sections was. She launched into a discussion of “educación”, criticizing the government’s decision to separate rather than educate, then providing specific examples of the “educación” that must take place both at home and in school, consecutively:

<p>No, I don't think [women-only sections are] a solution. Becau...I feel that, it's that, I feel that the government believes that separating eh we are going to solve something that is coming from culture and education. I feel that this has to be resolved through educating children, in their families. If you to your son, you say to him, you see this woman, she is very pretty, she is very good. Ok, look, that light-skinned woman, right?... You are educating your son badly. In schools, it shouldn't be that there are girls, and boys, apart from each other. I think it's always been this way, right? Let's see, all of the girls line up here, and all of the boys there, right? Why not say, well, everyone line up here, by height, right? Or rather, I feel like it's always divide, divide.</p>	<p>No, siento que no es una solución. Por..siento que, es de la, siento que el gobierno cree que separando eh vamos a solucionar algo que ya está desde la cultura y educación. Se siento que este tiene que resolver desde educar a un niño, en las familias. Si tu a tu hijo, le dices, ya ya viste este chava está muy guapa, está muy buena (says “buena” as if she is disgusted), ok ay mira, ese guerita, no?... Tú estás educando mal a tu hijo. En las escuelas, no debe de haber que hay niñas, y niños, por aparte. Siento como siempre ha sido eso, no? A ver, todas las niñas se forman aquí, y todos los niños acá, no? Porque no decir, bueno, formense todos, por estaturas, no? O sea, siento que siempre es como dividir, dividir.</p>
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Sam argues that the government is not seeing the situation clearly. They need to understand, she says, that the solution is not separation, but an approach which transforms culture by means of education. This must be resolved through educating your children, she explains, definitively distinguishing the root of the problem in the home. Soon after, she adds traditional schooling

into the mix with the straightforward transition “in schools”. The government’s habit of promoting segregation resurfaces, as Sam criticizes the separation of boys and girls in line at school. Though Sam includes a transition, she presents education in the home and education in school as two important pieces of the solution. The term allows her to move seamlessly, as if there were no conceptual divide between school and home.

Back in the attention module, Julieta and Isara emphasize firstly that women-only sections are only temporary, and secondly, that education is the ultimate solution. When I asked what they thought of the separation between women and men, Julieta stated: “I agree with the measure, as long as it’s ok, temporary. One characteristic of affirmative measures is that they are of a temporary nature” (*estoy de acuerdo en la medida mientras que es temporal. Una de las características de medidas afirmativas es que son de carácter temporal*). Julieta goes through the upsides of the measure, the main one being a sensation of safety from sexual violence, before returning to her initial point: “I insist, it is not the final measure, it is not the solution, because really with this nothing will be solved, it’s precisely nothing more than separation, but I believe that it’s good, a very good beginning” (*Insisto, no es la medida final, no es la solución, porque realmente con esto no se va a solucionar nada es, justamente nada más la separación, pero creo que es buen--un muy buen inicio*).

The ultimate solution, though, for both Julieta and Isara, is “educación”. “For me the solution is, I am a firm believer that it is education” (*Dentro de, para mí la solución es, soy firme creyente de que es la educación*) Julieta said, afterwards illustrating the kind of respect and belief in gender equality that should be taught from childhood. Isara agreed, “For me the truth is that I totally support that it is education, from the perspective of gender, and that in the same way, maybe, getting rid of these social stigmas that we have, right?” (*Yo la verdad es que apoyo*

totalmente que sea una educación, con perspectiva de género, y que de igual manera, que al mayor, y quitando esos estigmas sociales y también que se tiene, no?).

Isara gave an example of a moment in which she *educated* a young boy who she caught calling another boy “gay” as a form of teasing. She asked the first boy about what it means to be gay:

<p>He’s six, and he says to another boy, “You’re gay”, right? And then I asked him, “Ok, what does it mean to be gay?” right? He says, “That a man likes another man, and they kiss”. “Oh, wow, then, um, your mom, does she kiss your dad?”. And he says “yes”. “Why does she kiss him?” “Because she loves him”. “Does your father kiss you?” And he says “yes”. “Ah, ok. Your father and you are gay?” and he says “No”. I say, “Ok, if a man kisses another man, then, why do you think he does this?” And then, through the questioning he says, “Well, because he loves him”. “Ok, right?”, and this is part of educating.</p>	<p>Tiene 6 años, y dice al otro “eres gay” no? Y entonces yo me acerqué a preguntarle, “bueno, que es ser gay?” No, dice “que le guste un hombre a otro hombre, y se besan”. “Eh wow, que, eh, tu mamá, besa a tu papá?” Y dices, “sí” “Por que lo besa?” “Porque lo quiere”. “Tu papá te besa a tí, como niño?” Y dice el, “sí”. “Ah, ok”. “Tu papá y tu son gay?” y dice “No” Digo, “ok, si un hombre besa a otra hombre, entonces, porque crees que sea?” Y ya, entonces a través de lo que se va cuestionando dice, “pues, porque lo quiere” “Ok, no?”, y forma parte de ir, ir educando.</p>
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Isara’s methods—of humanizing the unfamiliar, of relating the experience of gay people to the experience of this young boy—sound effective. Interestingly, this is the same method that UN Women sometimes employs in their penis seat campaign. Instead of stating simply that women experience sexual harassment and assault on public transportation, certain ads sought to appeal to men by targeting the relationships that they have with women: your daughter, your mother, your sister, all experience this.

Isara describes her method as convincing up to a point. There is only so much that can be done in school, and it is likely that when a child returns home, there will be a “breach”, which might reverse the work that has been put in at school by educators:

<p>...but at the moment that he arrives at home, and they're with their parents what I have told him, they...it's not right, it's not right, "Those are people that should not be", this can happen, this breach, but we can generate the seeds in which some people stop questioning these things that happen, these stereotypes, this objectification of not just women but also men, right?</p>	<p>pero en el momento en que llega en su casa, y comparte con sus papas a la mejor lo que ya le he dicho, vuelve a... no es cierto es no es cierto, esas son personas que no deben de ser, sea puede seguir, no, esta brecha, pero podemos generar semillas en las que algunas personas impiden a cuestionarse estas cosas que pasan, estos estereotipos, esta cosificación que se da no solamente ya mujeres sino también a hombres, no?</p>
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This "breach" does not stand in the way of the possibility of progress. It does present the tangible challenge of a chasm, though, to be filled in by "educación". Isara's use of the term "brecha" comes soon after Julieta uses the same word to describe a breach between the assigned roles of women and men, stating:

<p>It's astonishing um the number of people, for example, of adolescent boys and girls that are entering adulthood, that don't even know, say, basic concepts of respect between one another. And this cultural breach that we have, of your assigned place as a woman is this, and your assigned and permitted place as a man is this, um, they are still very rooted. So for me it would be, from the beginning, education from childhood um to be already able to undergo a change in future generations.</p>	<p>Es impresionante eh la cantidad por ejemplo de chicos adolescentes que están entrando a la etapa adulta, que no saben ni siquiera a lo mejor conceptos básicos de respeto entre unos y otros. Y esta brecha cultural que tenemos, de tu lugar asignado como mujer es este, y tu lugar asignado y permitido como hombre es este, eh, están todavía muy arraigados. Entonces para mi sería desde el principio eh la educación desde muy pequeños, eh para poder ya en futuras generaciones poderlo dar un cambio.</p>
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While it is common for people to pick up terms that other people are using in conversation, the order is important here. Note that Julieta uses the term first, regarding the breach that exists between women and men, and Isara uses the term second, referring to the breach between home and state. The breach that was once used in the context of the culturally developed differences between men and women is mapped onto a breach in the context of the disconnect between the home and the state. One breach becomes a metaphor for another, highlighting the multipurpose

or perhaps ambiguous or perhaps ever-present breaches that seem to hinder headway when it comes to improving women's commutes.

Julieta and Isara's comments underscore the distinctions that are split by capitalist modernity. What is capitalism without hierarchies, classes, and divisions? Why would the home and state not be distinguished, if the man and the woman are designated opposites? That Julieta and Isara recognize such breaches as an issue indicates a call for the sealing of these progress-preventing schisms. The discourse itself, linking gender to citizenship, seems to call for greater reforms to capitalist society.

Either way, in both cases, education is cited as the process with the potential to bridge these breaches. Exactly how is not quite clear. By "generating the seeds" and "educating from childhood", somehow what is today exceptionally fixed might become less oppositional. The various definitions of "educación", encompassing traditional education, child-rearing, respectfulness, and good behavior, make this goal expansive, even utopian. It requires not only a reunification of the home and the state, the breakdown of gender distinctions, but also arguably the end of capitalism.

If the objective my interlocutors present is "educación" and the breach-bridging required to achieve this, women-only sections certainly run in contrast to this goal. Segregated public transport is profoundly dissatisfying for this reason. As a physical representation of separation and a constant reminder of constructed difference, women-only sections seem only to deepen the disconnects that my interlocutors seek to reunify. Ironically, as explored in the previous chapter, women-only sections make what once was a shared space, the mixed section, into one in which

women are unwelcome. The divisions initiated by women-only sections are not simply creating one safe space, but two exclusive spaces within which stereotypes fester and hatred accumulates.

Thus, short-term solutions should not be viewed as separate from long-term solutions. If we have learned anything from my interlocutors, it is that nothing should be viewed as unrelated. Instead, it is imperative that we regard women and men, the home and the state, the mixed and the women-only section, and short-term and long-term solutions, as interconnected, and seek solutions that employ inclusive methodology.

Where Difference Should Live? Hegemonies, Ideologies, Right to the City

“Perhaps you don’t know because you come from the outside, you are accustomed because there this doesn’t happen, but I wouldn’t get on the metro if I were dressed like you. I wouldn’t do it” (*tu porque vienes de afuera y a la mejor no conoces, estás acostumbrada porque allá no pasa, pero como vienes tu yo no me subo el metro. Yo no lo haría*) Gabi said. “But I have a jacket, and a scarf”, I said, looking down at my tasteful black wrap-around dress, an outfit one might wear to a high-class cocktail party, even a job interview if accessorized. “Yes, but in the women’s section...” (*sí, pero en el vagón de mujeres*) Ara said, “or accompanied by a man” (*o acompañado de un hombre*) Gabi, Ara, and Arturo all said over each other.

Does creating a space only for women consequently though implicitly categorize the rest of the space as only for men? Do women-only sections help women claim their right to the city, or do they demonstrate that men have ownership over the majority of the city?

“For this reason you’ve never seen me wear a skirt” (*por eso jamás tu no me has visto hacer una falda*) Gabi stated. As Adriana opened the yellow door into the office, Gabi laughed:

“She’s more risqué, she’ll get on with a skirt”. (*Ella es más atrevida, ella sí se sube con una falda*). “From time to time” Adriana replied, “but later I ask myself, why did I do that?” (*de vez en cuando, pero luego como dijo, por que lo hice?*) which prompted Ara to laugh.

“The clothes that I wear, without a doubt, I wear because I use the metro. That’s why I don’t wear high heels either” (*la ropa que uso, definitivamente, es porque uso el transporte. Por eso yo no uso tampoco tacones*) Gabi continued. “Ah yes, no. Impossible” Adriana agreed.

Placing the blame on women for inhabiting public space is not only justified by their choice of clothes or shoes. “You’re leaving the church, and someone does something to you because you’re out, you’re out at eight at night” (*ibas saliendo de la iglesia, y ya alguien te hizo algo porque si tu ibas, estas en 8 en un lugar*) Adriana joked, darkly.

Though women-only sections, it is sometimes argued, help women to reclaim public space, it is imperative to consider the ways in which women-only sections confirm the ownership of the rest of the space by men. To explore the debate over women’s rights to public space I will draw first from the Comaroffs’ discussion of ideologies and hegemonies to think about the role of power in the development and design of the city. I will employ examples gathered during my fieldwork so as to demonstrate the role of ideologies and hegemonies in the context of public transportation in Mexico City. Then I will look at the Right to the City movement, concluding with an essay titled “What Would a Non-Sexist City Look Like?” which exhibits the comprehensive approach that must be taken in order to make change happen. Though urbanization has been greatly afflicted by capitalism’s white male approach to design, beginning to consider subordinated populations when developing cities, from the bottom up, can with time reconstruct exclusive and outdated hegemonies, including in Mexico City.



The view from the pedestrian bridge near Chapultepec Park. Buses are stuck in Mexico City's notorious traffic.

Photo by William Mercer McLeod.

Ideologies and Hegemonies According to the Comaroffs

In the introduction within *Of Revelation and Revolution* Jean and John Comaroff endeavor to define, comprehensively, ideology and hegemony. Their definition does not pin the two as complete opposites, rather, as two ends of a complicated continuum. They are connected because “they are the two dominant forms in which power enters—or, more accurately, is entailed in—culture” (Comaroff 1991: 22). They are divergent, the Comaroffs argue, because the former “appears as the (relative) capacity of human beings to shape the actions and perceptions of others by exercising control over the production, circulation, and consumption of signs and objects, over the making of both subjectivities and realities...power in its *agentive*

mode”, while the latter “presents, or rather hides itself in the forms of everyday life... seem to be beyond human agency, notwithstanding the fact that the interests they serve may be all too human” (Comaroff 1991: 22). Though the two are clearly different, they cannot be understood separately since ideologies can become hegemonies, and vice versa, or, as the Comaroffs’ astutely assert, former ideologies or hegemonies might reach a liminal space of “partial recognition” (Comaroff 1991: 29) in which they play a vague and even more complex role. In order to better understand ideologies, hegemonies, and the continuum that they lie on either end of, I will first analyze ideologies as defined by the Comaroffs, then hegemonies, and finally, the greater implications of this spectrum.

Ideologies are apparent. They are recognized, discussed, and fought over. They are, according to Raymond Williams, ““an articulated system of meanings, values, and beliefs of a kind that can be abstracted as [the] ‘worldview’ of any social grouping”” (Comaroff 1991: 24). They are not limited to the popular, the powerful, the dominant—they include the ideologies of the subordinated, though these are informed, the Comaroffs suggest, by those of the privileged. The ideological struggle arises at times to “reverse existing relations of inequality” and thus “involves an effort to control the cultural terms in which the world is ordered and, within it, power legitimized” (Comaroff 1991: 24). Ideologies exist in the form of explicit manifestos and everyday practices, self-conscious texts and spontaneous images, popular styles and political platforms” (Comaroff 1991: 24).

Women’s aggression is an example of an ideology. I certainly did not enter the interviewing process expecting to hear that women were more aggressive than men. This topic arose in many of my interviews, simply as an answer to the question, “have you had any notable experiences on the metro?”. Aggressive women on the metro is a YouTube fad, a hashtag even.

It is at the forefront of my interlocutors' minds because even if it happens sometimes, or even a lot in Mexico City, it is abnormal, unexpected.

Hegemonies, on the other hand, are hidden. They are assumed to be natural, essential, systematic, and unchangeable. They are “constructs and conventions that have come to be shared and naturalized throughout a political community” (Comaroff 1991: 24). Since hegemonies are seen as essential, they are not contested. It is in their very *nature* to be unopposed. Once they are questioned, they transition from their position on the farthest end of the ideology-hegemony spectrum, closer and closer to the other end depending on how particularly visible they become.

Sexual violence was consistently attributed to “a very Machista culture”. “Machista”, another word for sexist, strongly tied to power, competition, ownership, excessive manliness, and the concept that women should be faithful servants to men. Though my interlocutors recognized Machismo, it was spoken about as if it was an unbreakable foundation, developed so long ago the process of its evolution could hardly be picked apart, as Ulisees described it in his discussion of “educación” in Chapter 2. My interlocutors' tendency to agree that women were biologically weaker than men supports the assertion that this “Machismo” is deeply entrenched in the minds of my interlocutors who believe this.

The Comaroffs go on to examine the role of power in ideologies and hegemonies, explaining that hegemony is “that part of a dominant worldview which has been naturalized and, having hidden itself in orthodoxy, no more appears as ideology at all. Inversely, the ideologies of the subordinate may give expression to discordant but hitherto voiceless experience of contradictions that a prevailing hegemony can no longer conceal” (Comaroff 1991: 25). While ideologies may be a medium of the subordinate and the dominating, hegemonies are a medium

controlled only by the dominating, and even though it may seem positive that ideologies may lie, at times, in the hands of the subordinated, it seems ideologies most often exist in dissent to hegemonic realities. Ideology and hegemony are very much tied to power dynamics which, unfortunately, appear to control the world which we inhabit, whether or not we are aware of the consequences.

It is the space in between ideologies and hegemonies that appears to interest the Comaroffs most, which they describe as:

Between the conscious and the unconscious...the realm of partial recognition, of inchoate awareness, of ambiguous perception, and, sometimes, of creative tension: that liminal space of human experience in which people discern acts and facts but cannot or do not order them into narrative descriptions or even into articulate conceptions of the world; in which signs and events are observed, but in a hazy translucent light; in which individuals or groups know that something is happening to them but find it difficult to put their fingers on quite what it is (Comaroff 1991: 29).

It is at this point, in the middle of the spectrum, where ideologies are only on the cusp of their inception, and hegemonies at the eve of their recognition, that “human beings often seek new ways to test out and give voice to their evolving perceptions of, and dispositions toward, the world” (Comaroff 1991: 30).

In Mexico City, this spectrum, particularly this liminal space, can be applied to my interlocutors’ understanding of the how long women-only sections have existed. For instance, as Marta wrapped up telling me about the time she hit a man after he grabbed her backside as she exited the metro, I asked if she filed a report, and she said “No, years ago there wasn’t this, like the report, and there were few policemen in the metro” (*No, hace años no había así como la denuncia, y había muy pocos policías dentro del metro*). I proceeded to ask what year she was referring to, and if this was before women-only sections were implemented. She replied “no, it’s um, it has always existed, carriages for women, they have almost always existed. But, it could

already be some ten years, I believe (*no este, siempre ha habido, vagones para mujeres, casi siempre ha habido. Pero, ya puede ser como unos 10 años yo creo*). Marta's comment demonstrates the development of a hegemonic view of women-only sections. Though she understands that they are about 10 years old, she articulates these ten years as "always". Not everyone I spoke with held this exact view, though. As I interviewed a young female stranger on the metro about why women-only sections existed, she told me that women-only sections were a new thing. They were maybe one year old, she said, and called them a quick fix. Unlike Marta, to this woman, women-only sections were new. When I asked when women-only sections would no longer be necessary, though, she said that she believed that they would exist forever, since the government did not solve problems and only enabled quick solutions that do not do the job. Her initial comment could be used to support the argument that women-only sections are still in the ideological realm, but her second comment suggests a sort of permanence. Women-only sections might seem fresh to her at the moment, but she anticipates they will become hegemonic since they will never be eradicated. Women-only sections are on their way to becoming hegemonic, the segregation a non-event, a divided space pre-determined, as evidenced by Marta's sense that they've lasted forever, and the other speaker's belief that they will last forever.

A Necessary Struggle

The Comaroffs' discussion of ideologies and hegemonies is useful in breaking into the Right to the City literature in that just *who* has the right to the city is very much tied to power

and, therefore, ideologies and hegemonies. In *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*, Don Mitchell returns to the creator of the movement, Henri Lefebvre, before applying his concepts to contemporary issues. He lays out Lefebvre's argument in three parts. The first concerns the difference between rural areas and cities. It should be noted that, according to Mitchell, Lefebvre loved the countryside, viewing it as homogenous and acceptably private. Cities, on the other hand, are supposed to be public and heterogeneous, "one in which encounters with difference were guaranteed" (Mitchell 2003: 18). In order for this to work "the right to inhabit the city—by different people and different groups—had always to be struggled for" (Mitchell 2003: 18). Part two of Lefebvre's argument was that "the city is the place where difference lives" (Mitchell 2003: 18). His final point was that "in the city, different people with different projects must necessarily struggle with one another over the shape of the city, the terms of access to the public realm, and even the rights of citizenship" (Mitchell 2003: 18). Lefebvre's insistence that while the countryside can be homogenous, the city must be heterogeneous, reflected the Comaroffs' simple explanation of the difference between hegemony and ideology: "hegemony, at its most effective, is mute; by contrast, says de Certeau (1984:46), 'all the while, ideology babbles on'" (Comaroff 1991: 24). Lefebvre's notion that within the city, "different people with different projects must necessarily struggle with one another over the shape of the city" very much mirrored the Comaroffs' description of ideology as a struggle at its core.

Mitchell uses the example of the post-9/11 discussion about security in New York City to consider the right to the city in his introductory chapter. He cites a *New York Times* article published shortly after the attack in which nine security experts were asked to "envision a New York City of maximum security where money was no object in the pursuit of safety" (Mitchell 2003: 1). They imagined "long lines and intrusive and random searches, new identification

systems and a strange new vocabulary of terms like biometrics, bollards, bomb mitigation containers and smart doors.’ One of the experts said, plainly, that ‘You would have to develop a fortress mind-set’” (Mitchell 2003: 1). While immediately after 9/11 these measures might have seemed like the best option, in order to secure a damaged city from future attacks, Anthony Vidler, the author of the article, takes on a Right to the City-like approach to the situation: “Vidler argues, other cities’ experiences with terrorism suggest that, in fact, ‘terrorism alone will not decrease the importance of city centers for the public life of societies,’ because ‘real community, as evident over the last week [of spontaneous public gatherings and memorials], is bred in cities more strongly than suburbs’” (Mitchell 2003: 3). Mitchell, Vidler, and Lefebvre all value cities for their diversity, their freedom, and their struggle. To secure New York City would require a Trump-like procedure that would suck the fun out of one of America’s most vibrant cities, and consequently “‘secure’ it out of existence” (Mitchell 2003: 3). Mitchell exhibits the city’s vulnerable position in that while it is diverse, and somewhat free of the constraints that would categorize it like the homogenous countryside—it is at risk of losing its character to security measures, or other powers that attempt to prevent the city from thriving off of difference.

In the opening section of an article published in 2008, titled “The Right to the City”, David Harvey asserts that:

The question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from the question of what kind of people we want to be, what kinds of technologies we deem appropriate, what aesthetic values we hold. The right to the city is, therefore, far more than a right of individual access to the resources that the city embodies: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city more after our heart’s desire (Harvey 2008: 1).

To Harvey, the individual, the collective, and the city are inseparable. If the city changes, the person and the collective change. If the people change, the city changes. While it is obvious that

humans have agency in that they can transform the city, it is less apparent that the city also has agency, and can affect the people who live within it. Throughout the essay, Harvey posits the right to the city as one of the most fundamental human rights, and thereby advocates for a repossession of this right by the majority of the people instead of leaving it in the hands of the one percent. He explains that over the past 100 years, urbanization has occurred under the noses of the people: “we have been re-made several times over without knowing why, how or wherefore” and questions its consequences: “has this contributed to human well-being? Has it made us into better people or left us dangling in a world of anomie and alienation, anger and frustration?” (Harvey 2008: 2). Harvey then goes on to spill the details of this rapid urbanization, the majority of which I will not indulge, though this citation of Engels stood out as a vivid example of the danger of capitalist urbanization:

’No matter how different the reasons may be, the result is always the same; the scandalous alleys disappear to the accompaniment of lavish self-praise by the bourgeoisie on account of this tremendous success, but they appear again immediately somewhere else. . . . The breeding places of disease, the infamous holes and cellars in which the capitalist mode of production confines our workers night after night, are not abolished; they are merely *shifted elsewhere!* The same economic necessity that produced them in the first place, produces them in the next place’ (Harvey 2008: 10)

In response to Engels’ statement, Harvey wrote: “it is depressing to think that all of this was written in 1872, for Engels’ description applies directly to contemporary urban processes in much of Asia (Delhi, Seoul, Mumbai) as well as to the contemporary gentrification of Harlem in New York” (Harvey 2008: 10). This manner of solving urban problems—to simply *move* the poor—is one of the dangers of a top-down system of urbanization. Like women-only sections of public transportation, instead of solving the problem, which those at the top understand is far greater than the specific population they are attempting to ‘solve’, they move them. The goal

might not be to make the city better for everyone, but rather better for those at the top. Harvey concludes his article with a proposal:

The democratization of the right to the city and the construction of a broad social movement to enforce its will is imperative, if the dispossessed are to take back control of the city from which they have for so long been excluded and if new modes of controlling capital surpluses as they work through urbanization processes are to be instituted. Lefebvre was right to insist that the revolution has to be urban, in the broadest sense of that term, or nothing at all (Harvey 2008: 15)

While Harvey's suggestion is practical—we tend to assume that democracy is the solution to our greatest ills—it seems naïve to expect democracy to manifest itself within a system that appears to have rejected the input of the masses for a century. Yes, it is imperative that cities remain hubs of difference—melting pots, we call them. In order for cities to be of the type that Lefebvre praises, and Harvey calls for the resurgence of, perhaps diversifying those who hold powerful position is in order, or a more socialist approach.

In 1980, Dolores Hayden published an article titled “What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like?”, which first demonstrates why cities are sexist, then details how to eliminate this sexism. In her first footnote, Hayden situates her argument within existing Right to the City literature, none of which, she says, “deals adequately with the situation of women as workers and homemakers, nor with the unique spatial inequalities they experience” (Hayden 1980: 170). Grouping city and suburb into “urban region” (Hayden 1980: 171), Hayden describes the transition from crowded city living to suburban lifestyles from the 1890's to the 1920's, which concretized the role that women played in the home, and that men played outside of the home, and thus developed the sexual division of labor. As is often depicted on television shows like *Mad Men*, set in the United States during the 1950's and 1960's, “while the family occupied its private physical space, the mass media and social science experts invaded its psychological space

more effectively than ever before” leading to an increase in consumption, and the emergence of women in the workforce in an effort to satisfy these new needs. With 39 percent of households having two workers by 1975, Hayden questions just how well this works considering the suburb-city nuclear family set-up, citing the organization of homes into spaces which demand private attention, the physical separation from communal space, nearly useless appliances, and décor in need of cleaning, as cause for concern. In addition to contributing to a nearly impossible lifestyle if a woman marries and has kids, “household isolation” is ideal for battering, the extent of which “can only be guessed at the time, but there is no doubt that America’s houses and households are literally shaking with domestic violence” (Hayden 1980: 175). While women with money are able to hire nannies and purchase handy appliances to ease the difficulties of being a working mother, Hayden argues that private solutions are only accessible to the affluent and oftentimes perpetuate the suppression of lower-class women who carry out those jobs, therefore the solution must be public, and support all women. Hayden then aptly asks:

If architects and urban designers were to recognize all employed women and their families as a constituency for new approaches to planning and design and were to reject all previous assumptions and ‘woman’s place’ in the home, what could we do? Is it possible to build non-sexist neighborhoods and design non-sexist cities? What would they be like? (Hayden 1980: 176)

Looking to the Cuban Family Code of 1974, which “requires men to share housework and child care within the private home” (Hayden 1980: 176), Scandinavian communal housing designs, and failed attempts by American feminists to “develop community services for private homes” (Hayden 1980: 179), Hayden proposes the creation of a program called HOMES (Homemakers Organization for a More Egalitarian Society) which must:

(1) involve both men and women in the unpaid labor associated with housekeeping and child care on an equal basis; (2) involve both men and women in the paid labor force on an equal basis; (3) eliminate residential segregation by class, race, and age; (4) eliminate all federal, state, and local programs and laws which offer implicit or explicit

reinforcement of the unpaid role of the female homemaker; (5) minimize unpaid domestic labor and wasteful energy consumption; (6) maximize real choices for households concerning recreation and sociability” (Hayden 1980: 181)

While Hayden’s HOMES program is almost unrealistically utopian, her insistence on equality at every level reminds one of the failures of past programs as a result of their relaxed approach to egalitarianism. Hayden does not simply consider the role of women in the redesign of housing, and in the long-run, neighborhoods and cities, she considers the role of men, of class, of race, and of age, also. She understands that these categories cannot be seen as separate, that they must be understood as intersectional. Number four could be interpreted as the demand to pay careful attention to language, what is “implicit” but effective in the subordination of women. Hayden is not looking only to develop an ideology; she commands us to reconstruct the hegemonic beliefs that permeate the city. Though communal housing developments that include but are not limited to day care services, laundry services, and communal kitchens, seem as if they would not greatly impact woman’s subordinated position, it is the detailed intersectional mission of HOMES which makes the program nit-picky enough to enact change.

Although I previously called the plan “utopian”, it is important to note that it is also at times very realistic. Hayden does not only advocate that HOMES takes up housing development, but housing redevelopment. She outlines the ways in which previously existing homes and neighborhoods can be transformed to better suit the needs of working women. What Hayden’s argument lacks, though, is a plan to convince people other than feminists that this design will benefit them, too. At the end of her essay Hayden states: “When all homemakers recognize that they are struggling against both gender stereotypes and wage discrimination, when they see that social, economic, and environmental changes are necessary to overcome these conditions, they will no longer tolerate housing and cities, designed around the principles of

another era, that proclaim that ‘a woman’s place is in the home’” (Hayden 1980: 187). There are plenty of people, of all genders, all classes, of all races, who believe today, thirty-seven years later, that the ‘woman’s place is in the home’. Hayden’s essay lacks a guide for convincing the powerful—those responsible for turning ideologies into hegemonies—to participate in this movement.

When considering the right to the city in the framework of capitalism, it is difficult to not be cynical. How can the city be constructed for the people when the people have little to no control over its construction? Who will advocate for a city which acknowledges women and the homeless in its design, besides feminists and other activists who are not very likely to be taken seriously? This is where the Comaroffs’ discussion of ideologies and hegemonies comes in handy. As Lefebvre makes very clear, the city should be a site of struggle. Difference should be palpable. Ideological struggles should be taking place constantly, challenging one another. The fight for the right to the city should be persistent, with oppressed people at the forefront demanding egalitarian design. Hegemonies will always be present, hegemonies which at the moment favor light-skinned males and result in cities built exclusively for them. It is not necessary that we overhaul capitalism in order to begin to construct cities that consider more inclusive hegemonies. Beginning from the bottom up, as Harvey suggests, is the right place to start. Hegemonies, as they are hidden, cannot simply be tossed out. They are so implicit that they require slow, deep, severe shifts in mindset which cannot possibly occur within a short period of time. Since the city controls, as Harvey declares, the “kind of people we want to be, what kinds of technologies we deem appropriate, what aesthetic values we hold”, it is necessary that we begin with democratizing the city, at the same time as we attempt to democratize the collective. We must use equality-promoting, inclusive, innovative, ideologies, then popularize

these ideologies to the extent that they become the new hegemonies. By the time that inclusivity and equality are hegemonic, there will be new ideological struggles, and ever-present differences, that will keep the city heterogeneous.

In “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective”, Donna Haraway denies the existence of objectivity, which she claims is a white, male, and purely subjective construction. She suggests a new “feminist objectivity” (Haraway 1988: 583) which draws from as many perspectives as is possible to patch together the closest thing that exists to the truth, because pure, one-sided truth, she says, does not exist. She calls this feminist objectivity “the sciences of politics of interpretation, translation, stuttering, and the partly understood” (Haraway 1988: 589). Through ideological struggles, Haraway demonstrates, new hegemonies can be defined, however slowly. Haraway’s fundamental essay exhibits the reality that nothing is fixed or unchangeable, that while power might be in the hands of light-skinned males at present, there is a growing movement towards redefining hegemonies to be all-inclusive and more truthful, though never wholly truthful because that is an unachievable goal. Like Harvey and like Hayden, Haraway sees the struggle as beginning from the bottom up.

Haraway’s argument can be applied to “educación”. Beginning from the bottom up, “educación” has the potential to redefine hegemonies. It is a solution that does not demand immediate perfect, but ever-continuous progress. In a sense, Haraway’s “feminist objectivity” gives “educación” the credentials that hide behind its utopian guise. Through Haraway’s lens, “educación” can cease to be viewed as an ultimate solution and can begin to be interpreted as a malleable process that redefines itself as often as it redefines the cultural practices my interlocutors hope it has the capacity to change. “Educación” embodies ideology exceptionally.

It is a site of constant struggle, of change, of improvement. My interlocutors are hyper-aware of its aptitude. It is in line with Right to the City literature since both are diverse, inclusive, and always abuzz.

The identified solution thus puts the already-implemented on a pedestal. It is evident that segregation, rather than integration, defies Right to the City ideologies about integration and intersectionality. Temporary, Band-Aid solutions like gender-segregated public transportation promote the hegemonic beliefs that men have a more expansive right to the city, that women are meant to be separated, protected, defended against the world which they are not supposed to inhabit. It could be argued that women are given a greater right to the city with women-only sections, as sexual harassment prevented them from using public transportation, getting to work, and running errands. But if the move is to segregate, at least provide women with half of the space, rather than a miniscule portion of it. Supporting the ideology that women are weaker and need to be protected, which is an ideology because it is a popular discourse that is both implicit and explicit, strengthens hegemonic structures which assume that public space is meant for men, and therefore allows for the persistence of this unjust inequality. Even if the majority of the carriages on the train are meant to be mixed-gender, the section is called the men's section by most people.

This past January, the women-only sections were being moved to the last three carriages of certain lines. Standing in Pino Suárez, the metro station closest to the Women's institute, I noticed a sign that blew my mind. It read "Men: Advance and distribute the in first wagons. Thanks".



Photo by Arturo Hernández Machorro

While shocking, the sign was merely a frank physical representation of the understanding conveyed by my interlocutors, that there existed a women's section and a men's. Had this sign been handwritten it would not have been so telling. If it did not include three stereotypical male shapes, obediently marching in the direction of the bright red arrows, it would have been less calculated. This sign, though, was color-coded and obviously orchestrated. Even if officially there is a women's section and a mixed, this distinction has developed differently, as a dichotomy between women and men. So hegemonic, this understanding has seeped back into the government, who seem to have forgotten the rules they themselves set. It is imperative that we choose our method of making public space more inclusive carefully, and consider integration as

potent a measure as segregation, following Lefebvre's assertion that the city should be "the place where difference *lives*".

Conclusion

"The last time, the last time they robbed me, um, um, it was very awful" (La ultima vez que me asaltaron, eh, eh, fue muy feo).

Well dressed and wearing high heels, Sam stood early morning on a bus crammed with construction workers. Then three men with three guns boarded. "You already know" (*ya sabes*) she said, of what would come next. They asked for wallets, money, cell phones, and jewelry. "And for me, bad luck, I was the only woman" (*Y para mí, mala suerte, yo era la única mujer*). As they pick-pocketed the construction workers (*albañiles*), they made Sam stand in the middle. Claiming her work clothes warranted their search, they said she must have something of value. All the while Sam stayed silent. "The only thing I did was put my head down, and that's it. I mean, search me, do what you want, but don't hurt me, right?" (*yo lo único que hacía era bajar la cabeza, y ya no. O sea, regístrame, haz lo que quieras, pero no me hagas daño, no?*) The man searching her, though, began to touch her. "I was thinking, they're going to violate me" (*yo estaba pensando, me van a violar*). The passenger next to her tried to help, demanding that they leave her alone. "Don't do anything to her, don't touch her" (*no le hagas nada, no lo toques*), Sam recounted him saying. But the men, on drugs, responded only with more violence, hitting the passenger in the head repeatedly with their pistol. Not knowing what to do, Sam first didn't do anything. Then she gathered the contents of her purse—her lunch, her jacket, her book—that they had dumped onto the floor. "I felt...well humiliated, right?" (*yo me sentí...pues humillada, no?*). Once the men exited the bus, the construction workers asked if she

was ok, if they could bring her to work, and later offered emotional support. “But in that moment I didn’t feel anything, I mean in that moment I was blank, I wasn’t thinking anything” (*Pero pues en ese momento pues yo no sentía nada, o sea en ese momento yo estaba en blanco*). Sam said she was ok, and walked to the metro, where two or three people continued to ask if they could bring her to work, and suggested they call her family. Again, Sam said she was good, and told them not to worry. She arrived at work, and when she sat down in her chair, in front of her computer, she began to cry.

Sam’s story incites mixed emotions. It is moving since in this terrifying scenario, someone stuck up for Sam, and many others came to her aid in the aftermath. Yet, Sam was not receptive to this assistance. Feeling blank and humiliated, Sam merely reassembled her purse, reassured the worried that she was ok, and waited until she was alone to break down. Similar to the distance that Sam and other interlocutors placed between themselves and the collective of aggressive women on the metro, Sam provides another example in which she is detached from those around her on public transportation. Here there is a clear, well-meaning collective with at least one man willing to put himself at risk to rescue Sam from her vulnerable circumstance. Like the negative solidarity that manifests in the women-only sections as a result of its sole identity being that it is supposed to exclude violence (counterintuitively, it cultivates its own version of violence), Sam and the albañiles are bound only by this traumatic experience. Though Sam presents a detached stance from the collective in the context of public transportation, remember that Sam strongly opposed education established on divisions (both in the home and in school) which indicates that even though she cannot consider herself a part of the collective in the context of public transportation, she does hope for a more inclusive, unified future in this realm.

Detachments, disconnects, and breaches pervade this paper. Girls and boys should not be separated in line at school, Sam told me. A lesson taught at school is contested in the home, Isara said. The wealthy view segregated public transport as superb, while those who use it regularly recognize its flaws. The government manages to print a sign that reads “Men: Advance and Distribute in the First Six Carriages”, despite their insistence that there is a women’s section, and a mixed. Women deny their participation in the collective as they describe women on public transport as aggressive. Women and men are socialized, assigned opposing roles from childhood, Julieta said, leading to a rarity of respect.

One can easily trace the overlaps of the preceding examples, even some instances of cause and effect. Each of these breaches can also be interpreted as implicitly dismissing women-only sections of public transport as yet another divide that contributes to an already broken modern capitalist society, one which needs not more separation but its opposite: integration. Each breach, each disconnect, every degree of distance described by my interlocutors, is a metaphor for the sign that reads “entry exclusively for women and children” (*ingreso exclusivo para mujeres y niños*), every pink and grey icon that indicates the woman’s place as separate from that of the rest.

Educación—the unanimous, ambiguous, utopian solution proposed—is by definition integrative, enveloping, expansive. It is long-term, indefinite, ever-progressing. In every way, educación is gender-segregated public transport’s exact opposite. If only it were so simple that my interlocutors’ call for educación translated into their definitive cry for the eradication of women-only sections. That would make coming to conclusions breezy. Supported by the position that gender-segregated public transport strengthens outdated hegemonies, one could make a strong case.

Yet, as I admitted in my introduction, I myself almost always inhabited the women-only section. Not just for the purpose of conducting research, either. I genuinely felt more comfortable in the women-only section. Perhaps this was because I had heard so many stories about sexual violence, read too many statistics, to not fear that I also might become a victim if I did not stick to the women-only sections. My discomfort within the mixed sections was likely exacerbated by the reality that I felt exposed as one of the few women. It may also have been the lack of colorful clothing in the mixed section, the sea of dark blues and deep grays, set against a slew of pink, purple, and red in the women-only section, that drew me to the foremost carriages. At times, when they weren't too crowded, I enjoyed boarding the pink buses that brought me to Ibero. I liked sitting amongst all women, and hearing the driver fend off men who attempted to join our club. It wasn't even as if I didn't understand just how much of a façade women-only sections were as I rode them. On several occasions, I was reminded that gender-segregated public transport can only provide so thick a buffer, when our bus stopped next to another with men, men who's stares effectively removed the windows between us.

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