

Philosophy of the City

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Moving Bodies as Moving Targets: A Feminist Perspective on Sexual Violence in Transit

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Abstract: Acts of sexual violence in transit environments are everyday occurrences for women across the globe, and the fear of being on the receiving end of sexual violence severely impacts women's mobility patterns. Gill Valentine, in her examination of women's fear of male violence and women's perception and use of public space, has argued that the impact on women's mobility amounts to a spatial expression of patriarchy. The aim of this paper is to expand upon Valentine's notion of "the spatial expression of patriarchy" by engaging feminist philosophy within the context of sexual violence against women on public transportation. More specifically, I will argue for two particular interpretations of the spatial expression of patriarchy, one structural and one relational. It follows from my view that solutions to overcoming and ending sexual violence against women on public transportation hinge on both a structural and a relational understanding of the spatial expression of patriarchy.

Keywords: public transportation, sexual assault, sexual harassment, spatial injustice, misogyny, sexism, relational space, right to the city

1 Introduction

Back in the early 20th century, women would use hatpins, up to a foot long, to fight off aggressive men referred to as "mashers," who would try to force their attention on them in the city streets and on street cars.¹ The use of the hatpin sometimes resulted in injury to the masher. By 1910, several big cities, such as Chicago, passed ordinances that made it illegal for women to use and carry hatpins longer than nine inches. Women found to be in violation were fined \$50. Nevertheless, led by the suffragettes, women's outrage against the mashers was a sign of the reshaping of women's public lives in the 20th century.² Historian Karen Abbott refers to this historical example as "the hatpin peril that terrorized men who couldn't handle the 20th century woman."³ However, while we might not be in the midst of a hatpin peril, and despite the fact that women's public lives have been dramatically reshaped over the last century,⁴ the mobility of 21st century women still lingers under the threat of male sexual violence. For women (and girls) across the globe,

¹ Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, 191.

² Ibid., 192.

³ Abbott, "Hatpin Peril."

⁴ The literature on the categories of the private versus the public is rich and vast (and beyond the scope of this paper). For more on the significance of the public/private distinction in feminist theory, see Landes, *Feminism, the Public and the Private*, and Nancy Fraser's feminist critique of Habermas's idealization of the bourgeoisie public sphere in "Rethinking the Public Sphere." For more on the history of women's use of public transportation, see Wachs, *Women's Travel Issues*.

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acts of sexual violence in transit environments are everyday occurrences.⁵ Forms of sexual violence include rape or sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, stalking, catcalling, sexually aggressive comments, unwanted flirting, groping, flashing, indecent exposure, and public masturbation.⁶ The threat of sexual violence impacts women's mobility patterns, and Gill Valentine, in her examination of women's fear of male violence and women's perception and use of public space, has argued that the impact on women's mobility amounts to a spatial expression of patriarchy.⁷ The aim of this paper is to expand upon Valentine's notion of "the spatial expression of patriarchy" by engaging feminist philosophy within the context of sexual violence against women on public transportation. More specifically, I will argue for two particular interpretations of the spatial expression of patriarchy, one structural and one relational. It follows from my view that solutions to overcoming and ending sexual violence against women on public transportation hinge on both a structural and a relational understanding of the spatial expression of patriarchy.

My roadmap looks as follows: first, I contextualize the problem of sexual violence on public transportation by surveying the literature on gender, space, and public transportation. I also situate sexual violence on public transportation within the scope of spatial injustice (Section 2). Next, I argue for a structural interpretation of the spatial expression of patriarchy (Section 3) followed by a relational interpretation (Section 4). Lastly, I consider solutions to overcoming sexual violence against women on public transportation (Section 5).

2 Riding scared on public transportation

2.1 Background

Topics associated with gender, public space, and transportation in the urban planning and geography literature include women's fear of crime and concerns over safety in public spaces,⁸ the negative impact on women's mobility,⁹ and urban transport planning and policy solutions to these issues.¹⁰ It is well-documented that men and women experience traveling and using public transportation very differently and that women in developed urban societies use public transportation more than men.¹¹ The patterns of access and use of mass public transit are extremely gendered due to a variety of factors: women tend to be the heads of single-parent households; women typically take on a higher share of their household's travel burdens by being responsible for commuting trips associated with childcare, caretaking, and household tasks; and women are known to have inferior access to both private (such as privately owned vehicles) and public means of transportation.¹² In general, women in urban areas make more (but shorter) trips per day than men, which is costly to women, both in terms of time and money. Stated differently, women have a high mobility need but low accessibility.¹³

⁵ Ceccato et al., "Sexual Violence on the Move," 1.

⁶ National Sexual Violence Resource Center, "What is Sexual Violence?"

⁷ Valentine, "The Geography of Women's Fear," 385.

⁸ Valentine, "The Geography of Women's Fear;" Koskela, "Gendered Exclusions;" Ceccato, "Women's Victimization and Safety in Transit Environments;" Yavuz and Welch, "Addressing Fear of Crime in Public Space;" Loukaitou-Sideris et al., "How to Ease Women's Fear of Transportation Environments;" Loukaitos-Sideris and Fink, "Addressing Women's Fear of Victimization;" Ceccato and Newton, *Safety and Security in Transit Environments*.

⁹ Loukaitou-Sideris, "A Gendered View of Mobility and Transport;" Transportation Research Board of the National Academies, "Research on Women's Issues in Transportation;" Peters, "Gender and Sustainable Urban Mobility."

¹⁰ Bamberger, "Gender and Transport: A Rationale for Action;" Gauthier and Kunieda, "Gender and Urban Transport;" UN Women, "Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces."

¹¹ Korn, *Riding Scared*, 6–7; Ceccato, "Women's Victimization and Safety in Transit Environments," 163.

¹² Peters, "Gender and Sustainable Urban Mobility," 8–9.

¹³ Gauthier and Kunieda, "Gender and Urban Transport," 8.

Furthermore, discussions on the topics on gender, public space, and transportation are – and should be – highly intersectional.¹⁴ The concept of intersectionality offers ways of understanding and analyzing complex situations and phenomena in our social world. Instead of focusing on a single axis of social division, such as gender or race, it considers multiple axes – gender, race, class, age, and (dis)ability – and investigates how these parts of our individual social identities and experiences work together and influence one another.¹⁵ An intersectional lens aids the uncovering of intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination, which facilitates the creation of more just transportation systems.

Studies show that although gender is the most significant factor for fear of transit and anxiety about personal security in public places, other factors related to individual social identities matter too, such as being elderly, of a certain ethnic group, and of lower socio-economic status in a high-crime neighborhood.¹⁶ In addition to gender, race and class also play a significant role when it comes to access and use of public transportation. People of color and lower socio-economic status are often severely neglected in matters of the just distribution of transportation benefits.¹⁷ Considering that transportation is essential to quality of life factors such as health, education, employment, and economic development, discriminatory transit planning policies create severe barriers to the quality of life for residents of poor communities of color.¹⁸ Barriers are also evident when considering the intersectional dimensions of the lives of disabled commuters. Women with disabilities (both physical and psychological impairments) are often considered vulnerable because transit infrastructures are not built to accommodate their needs (for example, lack of curb cuts and elevators), and because they are at higher risk of falling victim to sexual assault or harassment.¹⁹ Additionally, not fitting into the normative cultural expectations of the traditional man–woman gender spectrum is an intersectional concern for some public transportation users. One study from Portland, Oregon, demonstrates that transgender and nonconforming individuals experience public transportation quite differently than members of more traditional social groups such as cisgendered individuals. Transgender and nonconforming individuals reported various encounters with harassment, discrimination, and violence on public transportation as well as high levels of stigma.²⁰ To sum up, adopting an intersectional lens is often necessary, as no single axis of someone's social identity will be sufficient to explain the benefits and obstacles a person faces with regard to access and use of public transportation. Instead, in matters of just transportation, the axes of gender, race, class, age, ethnicity, and disability all matter in significant interwoven ways, varying from person to person.

Several surveys and studies attest to the global widespread occurrence of sexual violence against women on public transportation. To start, self-reporting surveys reveal that a significant percentage of commuters in large cities across the United States have been sexually harassed: 63% in New York City (2007), 20% in Los Angeles (2014), and 21% in Washington, D.C. (2016).²¹ Furthermore, 51% of the respondents from the New York City survey said that they sometimes or frequently felt the threat of sexual assault and/or sexual harassment.²² A study commissioned by the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) Sri Lanka (2015) found that 90% of women using public buses and trains had been subjected to sexual harassment.²³ In Quito (Ecuador), 84% of women surveyed identified public transportation as unsafe, due to the threat and experience of sexual violence (2011).²⁴ In another survey of over 400 women

¹⁴ Ceccato, "Women's Victimization and Safety in Transit Environments," 164.

¹⁵ Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 2.

¹⁶ Loukaitou-Sideris et al., "How to Ease Women's Fear," 7.

¹⁷ Bullard and Johnson, *Just Transportation*.

¹⁸ Bullard, "Addressing Urban Transportation Equity," 1184.

¹⁹ Iudici et al., "The 'Invisible' Needs of Women with Disabilities in Transportation Systems," 266–7; Haniff-Cleofas and Khedr, *Women with Disabilities in the Urban Environment*, 4.

²⁰ Lubitow et al., "Transmobilities."

²¹ Yahnke, "Sexual Harassment Statistics."

²² Hsu, "How Does Fear of Sexual Harassment on Transit Affect Women's Use of Transit?" 88; Stringer, "Hidden in Plain Sight," 5.

²³ United Nations Population Fund Sri Lanka, "Sexual Harassment on Public Buses and Trains in Sri Lanka," 1.

²⁴ UN Women, "Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces," 8.

in Santiago (Chile), 72% reported having been the victim of sexual violence while using public transportation, and furthermore, 90.4% answered that they had been either victims of or witnesses to sexual violence.²⁵

However, underreporting makes it difficult to establish a quantified scope for sexual violence on public transportation. Sex crimes, in general, are underreported. A 2016 survey by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Statistics reveals that 77% of rapes and sexual assaults go unreported.²⁶ Estimates for England and Wales show that 75–95% of incidents go unreported and that these findings are replicated on public transportation.²⁷ Furthermore, the New York Police Department's Special Victims Division estimates that only 5–10% of transit sexual offences actually get reported.²⁸ This closely resembles the data from the New York City survey (2007), in which 96% of respondents, who indicated that they had been sexually harassed, did not contact the police or file a report.²⁹ The problem of underreporting is further amplified, when considering the following number of incidents reported to the New York City Police Department: 2014, 620 incidents; 2015, 738 incidents; 2016, 941 incidents; 2017, 1,024 incidents; and 2018 (January–July), 508 incidents. Of the 738 crimes reported in 2015, 340 were for forcible touching, 223 were for public lewdness, and 130 were for the misdemeanor or felony offense of sexual abuse. One report of rape was filed in 2015, compared to five in 2014.³⁰ Seeing as an average of 5.6 million riders use the New York City subway every day of the year, it seems perplexing that the number of incidents from the last five years range “only” from 600 to 1,000 per year when 63% of New York City commuters self-reported that they had experienced sexual harassment (2007). Based on both the sheer volume of commuters in New York City and the percentage of unreported sex crimes, the actual number of victims of sexual violence on public transportation is bound to be significantly higher.

2.2 Spatial injustice

Sexual violence against women on public transportation falls within the context of spatial injustice and the right to everyday life (in the city). The right to everyday life derives from the right to the city project pioneered by Henri Lefebvre.³¹ Concerns over the right to the city focus on a critique of neoliberal approaches to urban planning policies that increasingly divide and restrict urban spaces in ways that lead to socio-spatial segregation. Marxist geographer David Harvey explains that

The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.³²

As a derivative of the right to the city, the right to everyday life connects concerns over daily routines, experiences, and activities in the city to questions of rights. In this sense, the ordinary practices and experiences of moving through the city cannot merely be understood as mundane but rather as political acts.³³ Thus, in this light, sexual violence toward women on public transportation is an issue of justice: of

²⁵ Korn, *Riding Scared*, 14.

²⁶ Morgan and Kena, “Criminal Victimization.”

²⁷ Gekoski et al., “‘What Works’ in Reducing Sexual Harassment and Sexual Offences on Public Transport,” 14.

²⁸ Chokrane et al., “Subway Sex Crimes on the Rise.”

²⁹ Stringer, “Hidden in Plain Sight,” 6.

³⁰ Chokrane et al., “Subway Sex Crimes on the Rise.”

³¹ Lefebvre, “The Right to the City,” in Kofman and Helbas, eds. *Writings on Cities*. See also, Mitchell, *The Right to the City*; Harvey, “The Right to the City;” and Sandercock, “Cities of (In)Difference and the Challenge for Planning.”

³² Harvey, “The Right to the City,” 23.

³³ Beebejaun, “Gender, Urban Space, and the Right to Everyday Life,” 323; Fenster, “The Right to the Gendered City,” 219.

spatial injustice. Spatial injustice occurs when a member of a society is wronged and/or harmed, as a socio-spatial navigator, within the consequential geographies of that society. Let me briefly explain the two parts of that definition: what it means to be “wronged and/or harmed, as a socio-spatial navigator” and what is entailed by the term “consequential geographies.” First, to be a socio-spatial navigator means to be in a particular socio-spatial positionality, such as, for example, a woman from the Bronx, New York, who commutes by subway to Manhattan five days a week. The commuter has different axes to her social identity – Latina, middleclass, disabled, and wheelchair bound – accompanied by a spatial vantage point, unique to her. This is not limited to her confinement to the wheelchair but includes the spatiality of her neighborhood, her city, and her place of employment. Combined, these different factors make up her particular socio-spatial positionality. In a case of spatial injustice, a socio-spatial navigator is wronged when they are treated unjustly because of their group difference(s). For example, a wheelchair user who desires to commute to work on public transportation is at a clear disadvantage if only a few select stations have elevators. Next, in matters of spatial injustice, “to be harmed” can take on an array of meanings. It can mean to be physically hurt or to be psychologically injured. Physical injuries caused by wheelchair-related falls are more than twice as likely to happen outdoors than indoors, and hazard conditions for wheelchair users are often related to maneuvering curbs and stairs.³⁴ Verbal harassment can also potentially psychologically injure disabled wheelchair users who are at high risk of being on the receiving end of such behavior.³⁵ However, harm is not restricted to either physical or psychological injury. Joel Feinberg offers an account of harm as setbacks to interest. To have an interest in something is to have a stake in its well-being, such as owning stocks in a company. It is in my interest that the company does well, so I will get a return on my investment. Likewise, all the different interests I have in life represent something I have a stake in for the advancement of my overall well-being. When things go well, things are in my interest, but when they do not, they are detrimental to my interests. On Feinberg’s account, I am therefore harmed when my interest is set back.³⁶ Thus, when something interferes with women’s mobility (such as the threat of sexual violence) their interests are set back because having the ability to move freely is something women have a stake in for their overall well-being. This amounts to being harmed on Feinberg’s account.

As for the second part of the definition of spatial injustice (and to continue with the wheelchair user example), the city terrain that lacks curb cuts and elevators at subway stations is a “consequential geography.” Political geographer Edward Soja argues that “[...] Justice, however it may be defined, has a *consequential geography*, a spatial expression that is more than just a background reflection or set of physical attributes to be descriptively mapped.”³⁷ Thus, a consequential geography is a particular (un)just space that has been shaped by political and social formative processes. Political processes refer to decision-making at various stages, ranging from local to state to federal. Urban planning, allocation of funds for infrastructure needs, and affordable housing are a few examples of factors affected by such political decision-making. The social formative processes that create, cause, and uphold consequential geographies relate to our collective arrangements and social structures, such as practices and institutions. How we live and organize ourselves according to gender, (dis)ability, race, and age, to name a few factors, affect spatial arrangements, particularly in urban life. Therefore, a consequential geography, dynamically formed by both political and social formative processes, is one that has a significant negative impact on the marginalized people who exist within, or move across, its boundaries.

One might ask: is there such a thing as a *nonconsequential* geography? Not on Soja’s account. Implicit in his definition of a consequential geography is the implication that all geographies touched by political and social formative processes are consequential *in some sense*. Urban areas lend themselves well as examples of consequential geographies since they are formed by the people who live there and by the

³⁴ Gavin-Dreschnack et al., “Wheelchair-related Falls,” 121–2.

³⁵ Iudici et al., “The ‘Invisible’ Needs of Women with Disabilities in Transportation Systems,” 267.

³⁶ Feinberg, “Harm to Others,” 33–4.

³⁷ Soja, *Seeking Spatial Injustice*, 1.

people who govern them. Other cases are not as clear cut. Mount Everest or the middle of the Pacific Ocean for example. Are they consequential geographies? In some sense, yes, as both places have been negatively affected by human political and social decision-making. The commercialization of mountaineering on Mount Everest has led to a slew of problems, such as overcrowding and littering, which in turn cause environmental and sustainability problems for the region and its people. In the Pacific, off-shore drilling and overfishing threaten reef ecosystems. Therefore, consequential geographies are everywhere, although they might differ dramatically in content, seriousness, and scope.

Importantly, for my purposes, the infrastructure and spatiality of public transit constitute a consequential geography. Unlike a consequential geography that has been deliberately formed by political and social forces to wrong and/or harm particular groups of people (such as the harm done by the construction of the Dakota Access pipeline to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe along the North Dakota–South Dakota border), transit space has *unintentionally* been transformed into a consequential geography of injustice. While the political and urban planning purposes of modern transit environments are typically focused on efficiency and space maximization, an unforeseen consequence of the geography of such transit environments has been the unintentional construction of an unsafe space for women, owed more to the social formative factors (fear of male violence) than the political ones. That is not to say that transit never constitutes an *intentionally* unjust geography. For example, the quality of life of millions of transit-dependent urban poor across the United States is diminished because of the inaccessibility and unaffordability of public transit.³⁸ Therefore, although mass transit might constitute an unintentional consequential geography toward women, it is often an intentionally unjust geography toward other disadvantaged groups.

3 The spatial expression of patriarchy as structural

What I want to do next is to extrapolate two notions of Valentine’s “spatial expression of patriarchy” that engage feminist philosophy and go a long way toward explaining the persistence of sexual violence on public transportation. First, I will argue for a structural interpretation of the spatial expression of patriarchy (and in Section 4, for a relational one).

To start, Valentine argues that women’s fear is geographical. While the fear most women harbor is essentially fear of male violence, it transforms into fear of particular public spaces perceived to be dangerous. Women worry about public blame of victims who were attacked in public places (“she should not have walked home through the underpass alone!”), and to cope, they develop their own mental maps of environments they fear. Thus, because of the particular nature of their fear, women both perceive and experience public space differently than men.³⁹ Valentine argues that women’s fear of public space loops into a system of male dominance that is detrimental to women’s independence and freedom: the fear creates a dependence on a man for protection, but that dependence in turn limits a woman’s career opportunities and general prospects. The impediment to women’s independence and free movement through public space caused by fear of male violence perpetuates male dominance and patriarchy, hence the spatial expression of patriarchy.⁴⁰

With Valentine’s view in mind, gendered travel patterns may vary across the world throughout regions and cities, but one uniting factor remains firm: the mobility-related obstacles women and other marginalized groups face are characterized by persisting inequalities.⁴¹ Transportation-related inequalities do not exist in a vacuum: they are tied into larger structures – government, the economy, social

³⁸ Bullard and Johnson, *Just Transportation: Dismantling Race and Class Barriers to Mobility*.

³⁹ Valentine, “The Geography of Women’s Fear,” 385–7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 389.

⁴¹ Peters, “Gender and Sustainable Urban Mobility,” 1.

hierarchies, workplace policies, and laws – that all play a part in maintaining an uneven gendered playing field in a patriarchally dominated society.⁴² Psychologist Tracy Sidesinger argues that patriarchal norms and values have a ghost-like presence.⁴³ Both men and women (and nonbinaries as well) internalize these norms and values even if the costs to their own well-being outweigh the benefits. For example, sexual assault survivors often blame themselves for what happened to them.⁴⁴ The ghost-like presence of patriarchal norms and values makes them blame their own behavior or character: “I should not have walked home alone” or “I am stupid and worthless.” Gender inequalities persist in a patriarchally dominant society because the devaluation of women is built into the core values of that society (formally or informally) alongside the constant celebration of raw masculinity. In other words, the expression of patriarchy is structural.

It is characteristic of a patriarchy that it supports an array of social practices that negatively impact the lives of women, and for which there is no equivalent for men: a sexual division of labor that forces women into caretaking positions, underrepresentation in government positions, gender segregation into poverty, women’s exploitation through pornography and other sex businesses, domestic violence, date rape, street harassment, slut shaming, cyber flashing, and transit sexual violence. Of course, men are not exempt from experiencing exploitation, sexual harassment, or abuse. The difference is that men are not typically targeted by these practices as objectified members of a subordinated group. Men can be victims too, but an important distinction remains between *infrequent, unsystematic instances*, and *frequent, systematic practices* of harassment and abuse. I make this distinction with Kristie Dotson’s work on epistemic violence in testimony in mind. Dotson argues that there is a clear difference between single, nonrepetitive *instances* of silencing and repetitive, reliable *occurrences* of silencing.⁴⁵ Because the harmful practices are built into the fabric of the male-dominated society, it can be difficult for women (and other social groups) to make sense of their experiences within that society, precisely because their voices and perspectives are underappreciated and often unheard. Miranda Fricker refers to this kind of unintelligibility as hermeneutical injustice (a kind of epistemic injustice), which is an injustice that happens to an agent’s capacity as a knower when the knower finds herself unable to make sense of her experience and unable to make it intelligible to others.⁴⁶ Fricker’s much-discussed example is that of Carmita Wood and the coining of the term “sexual harassment” that helped women, via collective hermeneutical resources, to make sense of their previously unintelligible social experiences.⁴⁷ Sharing testimony and naming harmful practices that uphold the devaluation of women do not make such harmful practices go away, but they do help marginalized groups to grasp the content of what they intend to communicate and to localize themselves and their experiences within the larger social structure.

Kate Manne’s distinction between sexism and misogyny complements a fuller understanding of the structural workings of patriarchy. Manne argues that sexism is akin to an ideological rulebook referred to by the branch of patriarchy that justifies and rationalizes patriarchal social relations.⁴⁸ Misogyny differs from sexism. It is the branch of patriarchal order that polices and enforces hostile dominant norms and expectations in everyday life. This kind of misogyny, which Manne calls “misogyny in action,” is a structural, systematic social phenomenon (a product of social environments and social practices), and it seeks to subordinate women (and marginalized groups) and uphold male domination.⁴⁹ In regard to

⁴² A patriarchally dominated society is a society with a social hierarchy that typically benefits men. I say typically because intersectional considerations, such as race and class standing, sometimes influence standings in the hierarchy. For example, in the United States, wealthy white women would find themselves closer to the top of the social hierarchy than, say, a Hispanic homeless man or a Black transgendered man.

⁴³ Sidesinger, “Nasty Women.”

⁴⁴ Miller, *Sexual Assault*, 23.

⁴⁵ Dotson, “Tracking Epistemic Violence,” 241.

⁴⁶ Fricker, “Epistemic Injustice,” 6.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 149–50.

⁴⁸ Manne, *Down Girl*, 79.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 36, 78.

transit sexual violence, “misogyny in motion” might be a more apt term, as the hostile social practice, both perceived and actual, impedes women’s mobility. Mobility here has two meanings: physical and social. Physical mobility relates to people’s ability to move from place to place, for various purposes, by various modes of transportation. Social mobility, or upward mobility, refers to people’s ability to participate in fulfilling economic, social, and recreational activities.⁵⁰ Importantly, the two kinds of mobility are deeply intertwined. When physical mobility is restricted – for fear of sexual assault – then social mobility is restricted. For example, Alicia cannot climb up the corporate ladder if working the nightshift is required for a promotion, and Alicia is afraid of taking the bus at night. Consequently, misogyny in motion effectively cripples women and other marginalized groups by making them less practically functional than men. On this notion, Iris Marion Young writes, “Women in sexist society are physically handicapped. Insofar as we learn to live out our existence in accordance with the definition that patriarchal culture assigns to us, we are physically inhibited, confined, positioned, and objectified.”⁵¹ Such spatial constraints are evidently intertwined with gendered power relations.⁵² Thus, the social structures of patriarchy, sexism, and misogyny – with the ever-present threat of male violence – present cultural, economic, physical, and perceptual hurdles to women that make women’s mobility inferior to men’s.⁵³ To this effect, Tovi Fenster has criticized the Lefebvrian idea of the right to the city by pointing out that it lacks sufficient attention to patriarchal power relations.⁵⁴ In my view, one way to overcome this insufficiency is to pay closer attention to the normative grip of pernicious social structures.

One might point out that a tension exists between individual and structural explanations of patriarchy, misogyny, and sexism. Individual (or psychological) approaches explain these phenomena in terms of people’s preferences, beliefs, and values, whereas structural approaches explain them in terms of broader, systemic social structures. However, the two approaches need not be mutually exclusive. For a deeper explanation of the persistence of injustice, individualistic and structural approaches can be understood to work together, synergistically.⁵⁵

One way to approach this tension is to ask the question: why do some men commit acts of sexual violence? Do they do it because of individual intention or for structural reasons? For example, take Sam, a 25-year-old man residing in New York City. He is middle-class, able-bodied, and a frequent commuter on the subway. During rush hours, Sam likes to press himself up against women and grope them if he thinks he can get away with it. He knows that he probably should not do it, but it gives him a thrill that he desires. First, an individualist approach would attribute Sam’s actions to individual intention (his individual psychology). Sam is not thinking about his actions in terms of enforcing a power hierarchy, but rather, in terms of fulfilling a desire he has (although he might be aware that acting on that desire is inappropriate). Second, according to a structural account, Sam is a subway groper, not because of some deep psychological explanation but because misogynist actions have been normalized and legitimized under a patriarchal, sexist structure. A structural, systematic understanding of misogyny focuses on the hostile reactions that women face while navigating the social world, rather than the individual psychological bases for the reactions.⁵⁶

Which is it then? Is Sam an intentional misogynist who enjoys groping women, or is he an enforcer of a pernicious social structure? The answer is most likely both. In the same way that bias, implicit or explicit, can become internalized social structure,⁵⁷ so can patriarchal belief systems. Bias and beliefs about stereotypes, for example, do not just live inside our heads as psychological content, they can become internalized too. For example, prolonged exposure to images of the stereotypical, perfect nuclear

⁵⁰ Wachs, “Women’s Travel Issues,” 42.

⁵¹ Young, “Throwing Like A Girl,” 42.

⁵² Koskela, “Gendered Exclusions,” 111.

⁵³ Loukaitou-Sideris, “A Gendered View of Mobility,” 4.

⁵⁴ Fenster, “The Right to the Gendered City,” 217.

⁵⁵ Ayala-Lopez and Beeghly, “Explaining Injustice.”

⁵⁶ Manne, “Down Girl,” 21.

⁵⁷ Ayala-Lopez and Beeghly, “Explaining Injustice,” 8; Zheng, “Bias, Structures, and Injustice.”

family might make me believe that the nuclear family model is the only acceptable model for a family. In that case, my bias has become internalized social structure. Similarly, Sam might believe, based on his exposure to the sexist ideology of a patriarchal social structure, that young girls in miniskirts on the train are “asking for it.” Sam holds these beliefs, on a psychological level, *because* the broader, sexist social structure supports misogyny in action. While Sam gropes women because of his desires, he simultaneously engages the content of the ideological rulebook of the patriarchy that seeks to subordinate women (and marginalized groups) and uphold male domination. In other words, Sam’s psychology is colonized by sexism.

Such a synergistic understanding of individual and structural approaches also explains the misogyny of women. Women can hold sexist beliefs (toward other women) and act misogynistically without conscious awareness. That does not make them intentional misogynists, but it does show that even women internalize the ghost-like presence of norms and values within the patriarchal social structures. For example, a 2013 survey asked 2,367 people, out of which 61% were women, if they trusted male or female pilots more.⁵⁸ Fifty-one percent answered that they would be less likely to trust a female pilot. That women mistrust women pilots shows how ingrained the conditioning of sexism is, and that it affects the individual psychologies of men and women alike. To sum up, the spatial expression of patriarchy is deeply structural, and transportation-related inequalities do not exist in a vacuum, isolated from outside influences and structures.

4 The spatial expression of patriarchy as relational

The spatial expression of patriarchy is not only structural, it is also relational. To argue this, I start with the assertion that space and gender are relational. By relational, I mean that the social (gender) is partially constituted by the spatial and *vice versa*.⁵⁹ The two parts stand in a symmetric relation to one another: the modalities of feminine or masculine body existence are largely contingent upon the arrangement of space *and* the character ascribed to the space is largely contingent upon the characterization of the people in the space. Sociologist Martina Löw has theorized about the beach as a relational space to gender. She argues that space and gender, as social constructions, are produced via this relation, and that “the genderization of space is effected through the organization of perceptions, and in particular of gazes and the body techniques that go along with them.”⁶⁰ By “gaze” Löw refers to the “sense of seeing” advanced by both Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault. Sartre uses “gaze” (or “the look”) to capture the ontological reality one comprehends when one locks eyes with another person: the gaze becomes a gateway to dual awareness, of the self and of the Other.⁶¹ One not only becomes aware of one’s own subjectivity and consciousness through the gaze, but one is forced to accept that one is an object in the eyes of the Other, and that the Other is a subjective being as well. Relatedly, Foucault developed a meaning of “the gaze” intricately connected to the modern systems of power.⁶² In such systems, economic, political, and military organizations invented new subtle, strategic practices as well as novel methods of surveillance directed at individual bodies. These practices and methods were employed in institutions such as panoptic prisons, schools, the military, and hospitals. The aim was to produce docile bodies that would self-police because of the constant possibility of being

⁵⁸ Anderson, “Who Do You Trust More, Male or Female Pilots?”

⁵⁹ The idea that the social is partially constituted by the spatial and *vice versa* is compatible with the main thesis of Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space*. In that work, Lefebvre sets out to make philosophical, abstract notions about space compatible with the physical lived-in space of the social world. On his account, space is a product; a very complex social construction that is contingent on ideological, political, and social ideas.

⁶⁰ Löw, “Social Construction of Space and Gender,” 121.

⁶¹ Sartre, “Being and Nothingness.”

⁶² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

watched by the ever-present invisible “gaze” of those in positions of power. Subsequently, feminists have deepened the understanding of “the gaze” and argued that the way men look at women with a particular “male gaze” tends to objectify women. Film theorist Laura Mulvey first made this argument in 1975, with regard to the way many Hollywood movies force the audience to take on a masculine subject position that leads to the objectification of the women on the screen.⁶³ Additionally, on the topic of the modernization of power, feminist philosopher Sandra Lee Bartky has criticized Foucault for treating the bodily experiences of men and women as being the same. She argues that in contemporary patriarchal culture, most women have a “panoptical male connoisseur” constantly present inside their consciousness.⁶⁴ Before women see themselves through their own eyes, they are disciplined to consider what the “male gaze” would have them do in terms of behavior, look, dress, posture, and movement. Thus, with that background in place, when Löw argues that the genderization of space is enacted through gazes on the beach, she supposes that a Foucauldian Panoptic male gaze, as a spatial practice, seeks to not only objectify but establish power over women and their bodies.

On the beach, there are unwritten rules for how the gendered body should carry itself and behave. Feminine bodies can (in some specific places) sunbathe topless, but that option is accompanied by increased male gazing. Löw also points out that topless women usually do not run on the beach. This goes against the unwritten code of beach behaviors. Uncontrolled movements of the feminine body are unwanted and seen as unseemly and ugly.⁶⁵ Thus, the spatiality of the beach has been gendered in the sense that it sets normative expectations for the respective genders.⁶⁶ As Löw points out,

The genderization of perception (including the culture of the gaze) leads, in the sense of a somatization of social order, to a choice of place and a placing practice that reproduces structural principles of society (including gender). In other words, gender may be seen as inscribed, via body practices, in the production of spaces.⁶⁷

Thus, different spaces reinforce different patterns of gendered behavior, and different perceptual practices and body techniques reinforce the particular character of a given space.

Analogously, in the same manner that the beach is a relational space to gender, transit space is relational to the gendered bodies in it. Stated differently, like the beach, public transportation has a culture of gazing and body techniques all of its own. The “sense of seeing” and the unwritten code of behavior operative on public transportation are intricately connected to the modalities of gendered spatiality. These modalities refer to the ways that we, as gendered people, extend and carry our bodies in space; to the ways in which we spatially proportion ourselves. The modalities of gendered spatiality are normative, as they largely correspond to the prescriptive behaviors associated with how one should spatially proportion oneself according to one’s gender.⁶⁸ These modalities are learned behaviors that conform to the standards and expectations of society through the disciplining of one’s gendered body. Often this disciplining starts very early on, as early as preschool when children learn to “become” boys and girls.⁶⁹ Young aptly captures the notion of gendered spatial behavior in her essay “Throwing Like A Girl.” She focuses on what it means to live a “feminine existence” by examining the basic modalities of feminine body comportment, manner of moving, and relation to space. By “feminine existence,” Young means the existentialist idea of *situatedness* that gives women a sense of unity because of their shared

⁶³ Mulvey, *Visual and other pleasures*.

⁶⁴ Bartky, “Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power,” 72.

⁶⁵ Löw, “Social Construction of Space and Gender,” 122.

⁶⁶ I do not mean to infer and imply, based on Löw’s view, that men do not face gendered normative expectations. They do, and the demands of masculinity are burdensome. See, for example, Lefkowich et al., “Male Body Practices.”

⁶⁷ Löw, “Social Construction of Space and Gender,” 129.

⁶⁸ This claim is contingent on societal norms, culture, and other factors. I am not arguing that one universal spatiality exists for all men, nor that one universal way of interpreting feminine body comportment and spatiality exists for all women. My claim is that men and women *typically* carry themselves in accordance with the modalities of (their culturally contingent) gendered spatiality.

⁶⁹ Martin, “Becoming a Gendered Body,” 494.

socio-historical set of circumstances.⁷⁰ Subsequent analyses, such as Sally Haslanger's, explain this particular situatedness or unifying factor among women in terms of hierarchical relations – to be a woman, i.e., to be a feminine body, is to be positioned in a subordinate social relation to those who are men. Men, who have masculine bodies, are socially positioned as systematically privileged in relation to women on this understanding.⁷¹ Of course, this “unity” for women does not entail any biological claims. One does not have to be biologically female to be a subordinated woman: one only has to be *perceived* to be one.⁷² Feminine bodies are bodies that are perceived to be feminine by whatever social norms dominate a particular setting.⁷³ Some typical, but not necessarily universal, examples of social norms that determine the perception of a given gender are dress and hairstyles; choice of color scheme and accessories; body style and configuration; and embodied gestures, postures, and movements. Understanding the unity of the feminine existence is often found in the understanding of how the feminine body moves and conducts itself in relation to the space it is in.

There are clear differences between the way feminine and masculine bodies use their lateral and spatial potentialities. One particular study (referred to by Young) on the spatial dimensions of the human upright posture shows that the difference in manner of throwing a ball is significantly gendered.⁷⁴ In the study, boys were observed to bring their whole bodies in motion when throwing balls, which generated strong, fast, and accurate throws. Girls, on the other hand, were observed to throw from a static position with their arm lifted, resulting in a forceless toss. The difference in throwing technique amounts to a substantial difference in the use of lateral space by boys and girls.⁷⁵

The different use of lateral space is further observed in the modalities of the respective spatialities of the adult masculine and feminine body. German feminist photographer Marianne Wex documents this observation in her book “*Let's Take Back Our Space*” “*Female*” and *Male*” *Body Language as a Result of Patriarchal Structures* (1979). In what has been called a timeless exploration of gender and space,⁷⁶ Wex shows, by comparing over 2,000 photographs,⁷⁷ the difference between men and women's bodily comportments. She focuses on unstaged poses of men and women in everyday situations: walking, sitting, standing, and lying. The outcome shows the realms of gendered movement to be considerably different: men's use of their bodies is open and wide, while women's is cautious and careful. In Wex's pictures, men generally stand and sit with their legs far apart (feet turned out); they keep their arms a short distance from their body; and they are at ease with taking up space. Comparably, in Wex's photos, women mostly sit and stand with their legs close together (with their feet either pointing straight or slightly inward); they keep their arms close to the body; and they make themselves small and narrow in the space they occupy.⁷⁸

⁷⁰ Young, “Throwing Like a Girl,” 29–30.

⁷¹ Haslanger, “Gender and Race,” 42.

⁷² This helps explain the high risk of violence faced by transgender women (which affects transgender women of color disproportionately). See, for example, Stotzer, “Violence Against Transgender People.” It is the perception of the feminine body that makes one a target for sexual violence on public transportation, not the factual state of one's genitalia. Since statistics on the occurrence of sexual violence, in general, are poor, and in many cases, nonexistent, it is even harder to get an accurate take on the frequency of transit sexual violations against transgender women who often live under social norms that “permit” them to be “women.” This also explains the rage and anger cis males often feel when “finding out” and confronting transgender women.

⁷³ In the context of transit sexual violence, the particular settings that determine gender might vary from one urban area to another. Asta's conferralist theory regarding the social construction of human kinds explains this well. Asta suggests focusing on revealing which property (of a human kind) is operative in a context. This conferred property is a property that something has in virtue of some attitude, action, or state of subjects, or group of subjects. The status of “woman” might be conferred onto someone attending a party by the other partygoers in one particular context. The conferral is what is *perceived* to be the grounding property – even if the individual upon whom the property is bestowed does not endorse the conferral in the particular context. Consequently, that is how gendered (and racial) properties become entrenched and are (although often mistakenly) understood as the nature of the kinds. See Asta's “The Social Construction of Human Kinds.”

⁷⁴ Straus, “The Upright Posture.”

⁷⁵ Young, “Throwing Like a Girl,” 32.

⁷⁶ Zeisler, “Wide Stance.”

⁷⁷ For her project, Wex took between 5,000 and 6,000 photographs.

⁷⁸ Wex, “Taking Back Our Space,” 7.

Gendered body comportments, as spatial practices, reproduce structural principles and norms of society, and therefore, the way that people carry themselves and maneuver through particular spaces reveals something telling about the social order and prevalent power structures.⁷⁹ In her work on oppression, Marylin Frye argues that Wex's photographic documentation signifies the very systematic differences in men and women's postures and gestures.⁸⁰ To be oppressed, according to Frye, is akin to the experience of being caged in – to be blocked off, restricted, and limited from opportunity and advancement in numerous ways (economic, political, and social). Women's cramped physical postures and restricted embodied spatiality are thus often manifestations of living under such oppressive conditions. Psychologist Nancy Henley agrees and argues that body language and other forms of nonverbal communication are indicative of social hierarchies.⁸¹ Nonverbal cues inform understandings of status, power, dominance, and subordination and that includes spatial bodily comportments. In describing what Henley calls "the incredible shrinking woman," she argues that women's bodily demeanor is restrained and restricted spatially. The less space women take up, the more feminine they are perceived to be, whereas men's masculinity is judged by their expansiveness and wide gesturing into the space around them.⁸²

Men and women's differential use of their spatial and lateral potentialities also applies to public transportation: digital and anecdotal documentation thereof suggests as much. For example, the phenomenon of *manspreading* has received apt attention. It refers to the practice of men sitting with their legs in a wide v-shape, taking up multiple seats on public transportation. Manspreading is understood as an example of everyday sexism, of men's (oblivious or conscious) practice of taking up more space than needed and justified.⁸³ In recent years, grassroot activists have succeeded in bringing the phenomenon of manspreading to the attention of the general public. For example, a campaign against manspreading was initiated by Madrid public transportation officials in 2017 after a successful online petition initiated by the women's group Mujeres en Lucha.⁸⁴ Signs were put up in the Madrid transit system, telling men to keep their legs together. Back in 2012 in Sweden, journalist My Vingren created the website "Macho in Kollektivtrafiken"⁸⁵ (Macho on Public Transportation) after repeatedly feeling frustrated with men's tendency to take up more than their fair share of space on public transportation. Vingren's website features hundreds of photographs, snapped by other annoyed commuters, of men in manspreading poses. While public shaming of offenders remains a controversial strategy, it is a practice also found within the grassroot organization "Hollaback: We Have the Power to End Harassment."⁸⁶

Women and marginalized groups of commuters modify their spatial behaviors to avoid victimization, as studies on women's fear of violence and sexual assault on public transit show.⁸⁷ Women cognitively anticipate unwanted attention and modify their actions and routines accordingly, particularly to avoid male sexual violence. Valentine refers to these precautionary actions and routines against actual or perceived threats as "coping strategies."⁸⁸ Such strategies might include avoiding the subway in the middle of the night and opting for a taxi instead, or taking a nondirect route to one's destination because of perceived danger. It also might entail avoiding rush hour trains for the fear of being groped as well as

⁷⁹ Löw, "Social Construction of Space and Gender," 129.

⁸⁰ Frye, *The Politics of Reality*, 14–5.

⁸¹ Henley, *Body Politics*.

⁸² Ibid., 38.

⁸³ Jane, "Dude. stop the spread," 459.

⁸⁴ Wang, "Please Stop Manspreading on Public Transportation."

⁸⁵ <https://machokollektivtrafiken.se/>.

⁸⁶ <https://www.ihollaback.org/>. The organization Hollaback was founded in 2005 by seven New York City residents after a young woman, Thao Nguyen, snapped a picture of a man masturbating across from her on a subway train. When the police declined to pursue the culprit, Nguyen posted the picture online, from where it eventually made its way to the front page of the New York Daily Mail. The episode sparked a heated public debate about harassment in public spaces. Hollaback is now present in 79 cities across 26 countries.

⁸⁷ Koskela, "Gendered Exclusions," Ceccato et al., "Sexual Violence on the Move."

⁸⁸ Valentine, "The Geography of Women's Fear" and "Images of Danger."

modifying gazing and body techniques to thwart unwanted attention. Coping strategies tend to delay women and impede their mobility. For certain groups, such as low-income and/or minority women, who live in high-crime neighborhoods, the coping strategies might be particularly aggravating, as many women here work odd hours and have reduced access to alternative routes of transportation.⁸⁹ However, that is not to say that men have full mobility at all times, or that they do not experience violence or fear in public spaces. Seventy-eight percent of murder victims in the United States are men; and overall, men are at higher risk of victimization for all types of violent crimes *except* for rape and sexual assault.⁹⁰ In other words, men and women experience different types of crime at different rates (except for theft and pickpocketing): men are at a higher risk of physical violence in public spaces than women, but women are more likely to fall victim to sexual assault, sexual harassment, and indecent exposure in public than men.⁹¹ Furthermore, studies show that ideas about masculinity shape men's experiences of fear and safety in public places.⁹² Another study finds that the way men experience *being feared* is closely connected to not just gender identity but to racial identity.⁹³ Thus, while the experience of fear is gendered, one common denominator motivates the fear: masculinity. For women, it is fear of a masculine aggressor, and for men it is a fear of not being masculine in the *right* way, or fear of being perceived as being masculine in the *wrong* way. The respective fears are thus manifested in different gendered spatial practices.

To sum up, Valentine's assertion that women's fear is geographical rests on an understanding of gender and space as relational: gender is partially constituted by the spatial, and the spatial is partially constituted by gender. The norms that govern transit space allow men to be more comfortable and move with more ease than women (around women at least, not necessarily around other men), and this coupled with the nature of the space – dark, intimate, narrow, and confined – makes women think of the character of transit space as unsafe. Women's subsequent spatial coping techniques reveal that they are guided by what Bartky calls a subconscious "panoptic male connoisseur." In order to avoid spaces perceived to be dangerous, they imagine the ever-watchful "male gaze" on them and alter their behaviors accordingly. While the restricted nature of the spatial organization of public transport is physically limited for everyone, the abstract sense of who has a right to move through it is not. This creates a unique spatial positionality for women that does not apply to most men: in a space that is already physically restricted, women face a kind of double restriction when they adhere to the standard gender norms.

5 Moving on: how do we go from here?

To take stock, women's fear of public space creates an impediment to their independence and mobility, which, as Valentine argues, is manifested as a spatial expression of patriarchy. I have argued that such a notion of the spatial expression of patriarchy is constitutive of both the content of pernicious social structures and of the dominant gender norms that stand in relation to transit space. Now we might ask: if sexist social structures and oppressive gender norms have saturated transit environments, how do we move on from here? Next, I survey three different approaches to overcoming sexual violence on public transportation: design and defensive architecture strategies, punitive methods, and education and outreach programs. I will explain each in turn, and then support, what I call, a foundational strategy.

First, design and defensive architecture strategies are geared toward physical changes to the transit environment with the aim of reducing women's fear and the frequency of sexual violence. As a technological solution, the use of closed-circuit television (CCTV) is a common strategy. The intent behind

⁸⁹ Loukaitou-Sideris et al., "How to Ease Women's Fear," 3.

⁹⁰ Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Gender*.

⁹¹ Carter, "Gender Differences."

⁹² Day et al., "Confrontation and loss of control;" Dagirmanjian et al., "How Do Men Construct and Explain Men's Violence?"

⁹³ Day, "Being Feared," 570.

CCTV is twofold: to deter crime and to reduce fear of crime among transit passengers.⁹⁴ However, women have been reported to be skeptical of the effectiveness of CCTV. In order to feel safe, they prefer the presence of staff or security personnel and the driver's refusal to let intoxicated individuals on board.⁹⁵ Other design strategies include increased visibility through good lighting along platforms, stations, and bus stops as well as the removal of graffiti and trash⁹⁶ from transit settings to ease women's fear.⁹⁷

Defensive architecture in transit settings sex segregates people as a sexual violence prevention strategy. It does so through a variety of physical structures, most noticeably women-only train cars, buses, and waiting rooms. The implementation of women-only passenger cars has been realized in big cities throughout the world. For more than two decades, Egyptian women using the Cairo subway have had the option of riding in a car for women only.⁹⁸ Japan, notorious for *chikan* (public groping), started offering women-only passenger cars back in 2001.⁹⁹ To accommodate the millions of women, who have gradually been joining the Indian workforce over the last two decades, trains known as the "Ladies Special" have been running in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Calcutta.¹⁰⁰ In Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) women's-only train cars have also been in service, often marked by pink colors and signs.¹⁰¹ In 2019, Sri Lanka's Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation announced that it would introduce "female-only" buses in the capital of Colombo in response to complaints about sexual harassment.¹⁰²

Second, in some places, punitive methods have been considered as a deterrent for sexual violence on public transportation. After a 2011 survey in Quito (Ecuador), which found that 68% of women had been sexually harassed in public spaces, local ordinances underwent legislative changes. Similar measures have been taken in Quezon City (Philippines) in 2015.¹⁰³ In New York City, several preemptive measures against transit sexual violence have been initiated in recent years. First, as a law-enforcement solution, several special plain-clothed police units have been formed. They work in and around the transit system looking for perpetrators.¹⁰⁴ Second, in March 2019, Councilman Chaim Deutsch introduced a bill that, if passed, would bar recidivist sexual predators for life from using the subway.¹⁰⁵ Third, New York State Senator Diana J. Savino's 2017 report "Perverted Justice: How Subway Grinders Continue to Victimize New Yorkers" inspired the proposal of Bill S.3862 that sought to reduce recidivism by forcing harsher penalties on offenders. With a legislative measure like S.3861 in place, the offense of "forcible compulsion" (making sexual contact with a victim without the victim's consent) would change from a class A misdemeanor to a class D felony. The former is punishable of up to one year in prison and the latter up to seven years.¹⁰⁶

Third, education and outreach campaigns are run globally to create awareness of sexual violence in transit environments. In 2017 in Melbourne (Australia), Crime Stoppers and the Victoria Police supported the "Hands Off" campaign that released pictures of alleged perpetrators.¹⁰⁷ Since 2012, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority has worked with the organization Collective Action for Safe Spaces to

⁹⁴ Yavuz and Welch, "Addressing Fear of Crime in Public Space," 2496.

⁹⁵ Loukaitou-Sideris et al., "How to Ease Women's Fear," 13; Carter, "Gender Differences"; Yavuz and Welch, "Addressing Fear of Crime in Public Space," 2497.

⁹⁶ Although women report that removing graffiti and trash from the transit environment alleviates their fears, it is not immediately clear exactly why that is. At best, such attitudes provide a false sense of security, and at worst, such attitudes represent a classist and/or racist broken windows approach toward the aesthetic appearance of public space.

⁹⁷ Loukaitou-Sideris et al., "How to Ease Women's Fear," 14; Thornley, *The Crisis of London*, 78.

⁹⁸ Cowell, "Cairo Journal;" Peters, "Gender and Sustainable Urban Mobility," 33.

⁹⁹ Joyce, "Persistent Gropers Force Japan to Introduce Women-only Carriages."

¹⁰⁰ Yardley, "Indian Women Find New Peace in Rail Commute."

¹⁰¹ Peters, "Gender and Sustainable Urban Mobility," 33.

¹⁰² Yinglun, "Sri Lanka to Launch Public Buses to 'Females Only.'"

¹⁰³ UN Women, "Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces," 8–10.

¹⁰⁴ Rivoli and Tracy, "NYPD Tasks Special Victims Squad."

¹⁰⁵ Gold, "Serial Sex Offenders."

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Mills, "Hands Off Campaign Aims to Track Down Pervs."

promote the campaign “Stop Street Harassment” in Washington, D.C. (USA).¹⁰⁸ In Casablanca (Morocco), the Tahadi Association launched the “Do Not Harass Me, the Public Transportation Is for You and We” campaign in 2018 after a disabled woman bus rider was viciously sexually assaulted, and the footage of the assault was shared online.¹⁰⁹ Efforts to combat sexual violence have also been taken in London (United Kingdom) with both Project Guardian (2013), an initiative that includes an app for incident reporting, and the “Report It to Stop It” campaign (2014).¹¹⁰ Variations of outreach campaigns include innovative initiatives launched by community organizations, such as: the RightRiders, a nonprofit organization that offers safe, free late night rides on the weekend for women, transgender, and gender queer individuals in New York City; Hollaback, an online forum for victims of sexual harassment (mentioned in Section 4); and the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC), an organization in Toronto (Canada) that works on making safe public spaces for marginalized groups.¹¹¹

While there are pros and cons to the aforementioned strategies, in my view, these solutions cannot be successful unless they engage with measures for long-term structural change. For that, a foundational approach is needed. A foundational approach is one that improves conditions for women (and other marginalized groups) and ends sexual violence by uprooting the toxic base of the problem: sexist ideology that justifies misogynist behavior. Design strategies and defensive architecture clearly do nothing to this effect. Instead, sex segregation reinforces the misconception that women are frail victims in need of special protection, effectively changing the focus from the perpetrator to the victim. This is peculiar, considering no one ever suggests “men-only” passenger cars to sex segregate men and their so-called brutish, uncontrollable urges. While, in the short run, it seems helpful to segregate women in their own train cars and waiting rooms to reduce their fear of male violence – and to actually keep them safe – in the long-term, the solution fails to generate real change. It only reinforces the dominant, patriarchal belief system that grants primacy to the well-being and agency of men, while downplaying or ignoring the well-being and agency of women. Sex segregated defensive architecture also potentially harms transgender and nonbinary individuals. They might be shunned trying to use “women-only” cars, and they might face physical and/or sexual violence in the men’s section.

Foundational solutions engage pernicious social structures at their cores and envision the future in new terms. Punitive methods and education and outreach programs partially do this: harsher punishments might deter misogynist behavior, and campaigns might raise awareness. However, for the efforts to be worthwhile, they should be aimed at dismantling the old systemic structures that made the practice of sexual violence possible in the first place. Feminist activist Audre Lorde makes an argument to this effect in her essay “The Master’s Tool Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” (1984).¹¹² Lorde argues that it is through community building, interdependence between women and other marginalized groups as well as through the acknowledgment of difference as strength that racist, patriarchal thought is defeated. That means women must redefine their terms of existence. For example, in the case of defensive architecture, if women accept that they need special protection because gender roles force them to be “prey,” then women, unfortunately, end up affirming the role they have been assigned by the dominant structure. To accept what one has been allowed to become under oppressive conditions is, in the words of Catharine MacKinnon, to “affirm the qualities and characteristics of powerlessness.”¹¹³ By the same token, Haslanger has argued that social reality is not objective or independently neutral, it is male.¹¹⁴ In this “man’s world,” men and women alike have been conditioned to seeing social norms, expectations, and practices through a “male gaze” like the one described by Mulvey and Bartky. However, by trying to solve

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/our-work/dcactivation/>.

¹⁰⁹ Wills, “Which City is the Worst for Sexual Harassment on Public Transport?”

¹¹⁰ Bates, “Project Guardian.”

¹¹¹ Loukaitou-Sideris et al., “How to Ease Women’s Fear,” 35–43.

¹¹² Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 110.

¹¹³ MacKinnon, “Feminism Unmodified,” 39.

¹¹⁴ Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 100.

social problems, such as ending sexual violence, with tools straight out of a sexist toolbox, change will be elusive.

Consequently, a foundational approach is both multifaceted and proactive. It builds community and coalitions between different social groups, and it works toward eliminating the preexisting atmosphere of sexism (racism, homophobia) that facilitates sexual violence. A first step is to ensure that women are represented in government planning and design of transport investments.¹¹⁵ Having more women employed in transit systems – in construction, or as cleaners, train operators, signal operators, and management – is also likely to generate change. In Lima (Peru), for example, one fourth of the city's traffic officers are women who have been deemed more effective in enforcing the law and controlling traffic since they have proven to be virtually incorruptible.¹¹⁶ Having women change things from the inside is a way to transform broken systems.

Another foundational approach that has successfully shaken up pernicious social structures is the grassroot, bottom-up approach modeled by the #MeToo Movement. Although the movement has been around since 2006, it was not until it went viral in 2017 (after the allegations of sexual abuse against Harvey Weinstein went public) that it gained serious traction globally. The #MeToo Movement's success can partially be attributed to its power in numbers across time. As women came forward and told their stories of sexual abuse and sexual harassment at the hands of (often powerful) men, the magnitude of the problem became clearer, and a new standard was publicly set for what women were willing to put up with. To use Fricker's term, intelligibility was gained by sharing collective hermeneutical resources.

Importantly, some of the successful foundational strategies of the #MeToo Movement can be applied in transport settings. Speaking up is one such strategy. A study from India shows that “making a scene” or “engaging the crowd” works well on crowded buses as a defense against harassment.¹¹⁷ Obviously, speaking out is not always an option. Women might put themselves at further risk if they speak out, or they might be too scared or too ashamed to take action. That is why another foundational approach might sometimes be useful: bystander interventions. The 2015 UN survey from Sri Lanka on sexual harassment on public buses indicates that it is rare for bystanders to intervene and stop perpetrators in their tracks, and it recommends that public campaigns should reflect the need for bystanders to intervene.¹¹⁸ One such campaign has been run in New York City where signs posted in subway stations encouraged both victims and bystanders to speak up and report crime.¹¹⁹

Another foundational strategy entails planning campaigns that engage the core concepts of the pernicious structures in provocative ways that make potential perpetrators ashamed and/or uncomfortable. One such campaign was run in Mexico City in 2017 by UN Women and the Mexico City government. A subway seat had been changed with 3D features to look like the lower half of a male body, penis included. On the floor of the subway car it said, “It is annoying to travel this way, but not compared to the sexual violence women suffer in their daily commutes.”¹²⁰ The campaign changed the focus from women as victims to men as perpetrators. To combat sexual violence on public transportation, it seems promising to follow the courageous precedent set by the strategies of the #MeToo Movement. Foundational strategies are to a certain degree aspirational but that is a necessary component of trying to move past a traditional gender hierarchy that assigns roles of dominance and subordination.

In conclusion, examining issues of gender, space, and public transportation requires an intersectional lens if working toward social justice is the aim. Such a lens considers the multiplicity of factors that contributes to the oppressive living conditions of members of marginalized social groups. Overcoming oppressive living conditions means working toward spatially just societies, in which the built environment meets the needs of the people within it, with equal opportunity for mobility despite difference. Sexual

¹¹⁵ Bamberger, “Gender and Transport,” 2; Loukaitou-Sideris, “A Gendered View of Mobility and Transport,” 574.

¹¹⁶ Gauthier and Kunieda, “Gender and Urban Transport,” 33.

¹¹⁷ Lea et al., “Women’s Strategies Addressing Sexual Harassment and Assault on Public Buses.”

¹¹⁸ United Nations Population Fund Sri Lanka, “Sexual Harassment on Public Buses and Trains in Sri Lanka,” 4–6.

¹¹⁹ Loukaitou-Sideris et al., “How to Ease Women’s Fear,” 20.

¹²⁰ Deb and Franco, “Penis Seat’ Causes Double Takes on Mexico City Subway.”

violence against women on public transportation remains a widespread global problem, and it is but one example of a social practice that negatively impacts the lives of women, and for which there is no equivalent for men. Pernicious social structures with their ghost-like presence of patriarchal norms and values explain the persistence of such practices as well as their spatial expressions. Moving forward, solutions to overcoming sexual violence on public transportation should be aimed at dismantling such pernicious social structures through coalition building and innovative approaches.

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