Karachi And The Making Of A Woman:
Gender analysis of city's public buses

A Thesis submitted in the Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement of the Degree of Master of Science in Integrated Urbanism and Sustainable Design

by

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Examiners Committee
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Disclaimer

This dissertation is submitted to Ain Shams University (ASU) and University of Stuttgart - Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning (USTUTT) for the degree of Integrated Urbanism and Sustainable Design (IUSD), in accordance to IUSD-ASU regulations.

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07/29/2019

Ferya Ilyas

Signature

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Ferya Ilyas

Karachi and the making of a woman:
Gender analysis of city's public buses

Abstract

Public buses are to Karachi, what Karachi is to Pakistan - a microcosm of the wider society it exists in. Taking a bus as a woman, in this city of 15 million, is more than just getting from one place to another; it defines your place in the society and shapes your experience of the city. To explore what it truly means to travel in Karachi's kaleidoscopic public buses, I spoke to 22 young women to get a peek into their urban life in the megacity. These in-depth interviews were preceded by an online survey to get initial impressions about how women experience the city and were complemented with hours of observation of public buses and its related infrastructure. From the amount of space given to women to how the seats are arranged in a vehicle, the ethnographic fieldwork revealed the gendered nature of Karachi's public buses which in turn shapes the performance of gender in the everyday experiences of women such as their 'modest' clothing choices, controlled bodily comportment and 'angry' attitude. Taking the discussion from the micro level of a bus to the macro level of a society, I argue how the social, political and economic complexities of Karachi shape women's experience of the city as something radically different than that of men's. The stories of my participants make valuable contribution to academic literature on how gender intersects with city, space and built environment in Karachi; and also how planning in Pakistan can be made more gender-sensitive as a matter of rights and for ensuring equality between all citizens.

Keywords: gender, women, public buses, built environment, city, Karachi, Pakistan

Contents

List of figures

Taking a bus in Karachi

The collar is dripping with sweat,

The belt is now around the neck.

The vehicle is bouncing up and down,

The passengers in the bus are tossed around.

گریباں پسینے میں تر ہو رہا ہے

کمر بند گردن کے سر ہو رہا ہے

سفینہ جو زیر و زبر ہو رہا ہے

اُدھر کا مسافر اِدھر ہو رہا ہے

The walls of the bus will soon be dust,

For we are travelling in a Karachi bus.

جو دیوار تھی اس میں در ہو رہا ہے

کراچی کی بس میں سفر ہو رہا ہے

The one who had their hair perfectly combed,

The one who had their face powder-bombed,

The one who had adorn an expensive suit,

They have everything off just few seconds on the route.

جو خوش پوش گیسو سنوارے ہوئے تھا

بہت بال چہرے پہ مارے ہوئے تھا

بڑا قیمتی سوٹ دھارے ہوئے تھا

گھڑی بھر میں سب کچھ اتارے ہوئے تھا

The poor person is now in a shabby fuss,

For we are travelling in a Karachi bus.

بے چارے کا حلیہ دگر ہو رہا ہے

کراچی کی بس میں سفر ہو رہا ہے

The collar of my office shirt is torn,

Most tomatoes from the grocery bag are gone.

God knows where my chicken is,

For I am left only with his feathers and fizz.

جو کالر تھا گردن میں، 'لر' رہ گیا ہے

ٹماٹر کے تھیلے میں 'ٹر' رہ گیا ہے

خدا جانے مرغا کدھر رہ گیا ہے

بغل میں تو بس ایک پر رہ گیا ہے

If anything is happening among all this buzz,

It is that we are travelling in a Karachi bus.

کوئی کام ہم سے اگر ہو رہا ہے

کراچی کی بس میں سفر ہو رہا ہے

This Urdu poem[1] by Syed Zameer Jafri, which most children grow up humming to, comically encapsulates what it means to take a bus in Karachi. The bumpy ride, the chaos, the sweat; the poem paints a pretty accurate picture of the experience of travelling in Karachi's kaleidoscopic public buses.

But, of course, there's so much more to the them than losing your collar or your chicken on the way home; especially if you happen to be a woman. Like a reflection of the society they exist in, Karachi's buses offer a different experience to their women passengers than men. Rampant sexual harassment and inadequate space to sit and stand are just the tip of the iceberg; how women experience this space as a whole has deeper meanings and repercussions which can go as far as to the clothing style they adopt and the places they visit in the city.

In this ethnographic study, I explore what it means to take a bus in Karachi as a woman. The overarching goal is to reveal how gender comes into play in the city and how people - gendered, raced, classed - are shaped and produced within spatial regimes as they dictate who can do what, who has more rights over resources and whose needs are more important.

Understanding gender as a social construction, my research question is: How Karachi's public buses shape the performance of gender in the everyday experiences of women in the city? The objectives of the thesis are:

> 1) To conceptualise the public bus system in terms of women's understanding and meaning.
> 2) To reveal what gendered spatial codes govern the public bus system.
> 3) To understand women's behaviours and spatial patterns in relation to the public bus system in order to make sense of how they experience and navigate it.
> 4) To uncover how the limitations of the public bus system affect women.

For this purpose, I met 22 young women from Karachi who shared with me their stories of not just travelling in the bus but what happens before and after the commute. From walking long distances to save fare, avoiding the best seats

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1   I translated this poem, focussing on the feelings and message the poet intends to transmit. It is funnier in Urdu.

in the bus to be away from men, to getting off in an unknown neighbourhood because there is no accurate information available, the words of my participants shed light on the everyday experiences of women in Karachi who transverse the city in a bus.

As a woman who has always lived in Karachi and travelled in its buses since childhood, the stories of my participants resonate with my own experience - which was also the main motivation and the starting point of my thesis. Questions of gender have shaped my relationship with the city and the society from very early on. While I grew up watching my father prepare breakfast for the family as my mother struggled to get out of the bed, I also noticed that some acquaintances sent their sons to elite private schools and daughters to poor-quality government institutions; on one hand, I have been amazed by how my friend's mother drives a van to provide pick-and-drop service to students - a predominantly man's job, on the other hand, I have also been annoyed by my mother's occasional insistence that marriage is necessary for women.

These dichotomies have always been a part of my life.

In 2015, when I wrote a feature about a social movement geared at claiming public spaces for women in Pakistan for the newspaper I worked at as a journalist, the conversations I had with the activists and academics made me think about women's place in our society more deeply. With this master's programme and the thesis requirement, I decided to take this as an opportunity to inform myself further about the subject.

Pakistan's record of women's rights - we are often ranked somewhere at the bottom in various gender indexes - further motivated me to choose this topic.

Women's rights have always been a topic of debate in the country; from women leaders of the independence movement, activists pushing against anti-women legislation in the 80s and 90s to the recent resurgence of activism at the hands of millennials, the 'woman question' has always been a burning one in Pakistan. So much so, that it is often seen as the defining factor for Pakistan's identity either as a secular state or one which is theocratic. That's why, on one hand, we have Islamic world's first head of state Benazir Bhutto, mountaineer Samina Baig who has scaled the Seven Summit and Oscar and Emmy-award winner

Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy; and on the other hand, we have the youngest Nobel laureate Malala Yousufzai who was attacked by terrorists for advocating for girls' education, social media sensation Qandeel Baloch who was murdered by his own brother in the name of honour and Mukhtar Mai who was gang-raped as a revenge for dispute between two clans.

Of course, listing these names as polar opposites don't do justice to the role ethnicity and class plays in a woman's life in Pakistan. The fact that Benazir managed to rule the country because she came from a powerful feudal family and that Mukhtar was gang-raped because her clan and her family were poor, reveals that there is no one category of women and one category of men and that gender intersects with other social structures in the cruelest of ways creating hierarchies that simple statistics cannot truly capture.

A nuanced understanding of women's lives, while makes a powerful reading, can also contribute in meaningful ways to both academic and development sectors. By speaking to women and sharing their experiences with a wider audience, I hope to generate and disseminate knowledge regarding how gender intersects with built environment in Karachi, with a focus on public buses which are crucial for healthy and sustainable cities.

In this regard, my study sits at a crossroad where the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 - which seeks to "make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" by focusing on public transport and improving women's access to it, meets the SDG 5 - which aims to "achieve gender equality and empower women and girls" by ending discrimination, ending violence in public and private spheres and ensuring full participation in public life. Also, my research can complement New Urban Agenda which gives guidance for achieving SDGs through urban planning.

At the local level, the ruling party in the country - Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf - has specific sections in its manifesto for transforming Karachi through provision of public services such as mass transit and promoting gender parity by increasing women's access to basic facilities and opportunities. My study sheds light on both these crucial issues and the government can benefit from the wisdom shared by my participants, especially at a time when work is underway for two of the six proposed Bus Rapid Transit lines in the city and the revival of

Karachi Circular Railway which moved thousands of people across the city from 1964 to 1999 when it was stopped due to lack of funds.

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 provides readers with a brief background of Karachi and its mobility situation. It is followed by Chapter 3 which gives a detailed explanation for how the research - literature review, data collection, data analysis and writing - was carried out. Then, the readers are introduced to the theoretical world of this study in Chapter 4 as I write about the theories and concepts of gender and city which helped me make sense of what I learnt in the field. I then move on to Chapter 5 to explore the research question through the experiences of my participants. This is followed by Chapter 6 where I use my theoretical framework to discuss what the findings mean and also look at the bigger picture, moving from the micro scale of the public bus to the macro scale of the society. Next, in Chapter 7, I put forward possible short, medium and long term measures which can help improve the system in a way that it works for women, not against them. I wrap up the study in Chapter 8 by summarising the key points, stating the implications of the study and suggesting ways to further explore the findings in future research.

Karachi - a mini subcontinent

Karachi, with its 15 million people, is the biggest city in Pakistan and one of the world's mega cities. It is the economic backbone of the country and accounts for 54% of federal government's tax revenues and 70% of national income tax revenue, contributes around 25% to Pakistan's gross domestic product, handles 95% of the country's international trade, contributes 30% to its manufacturing sector, and holds 50% of its bank deposits (Gayer 2014).

Hence, in a country, where the majority of the population lives in rural areas (World Bank 2018), this city provides facilities and opportunities otherwise inaccessible in most parts of Pakistan. That's why, Karachi has been a magnet for people from all over the country and also the region.

The city got this status as a home for migrants way back in 1947, when the British Raj in the subcontinent ended and Muslims from the length and breadth of India moved to the newly-created Pakistan in the hope of a better life. This migration had such a profound effect on the city, which started as a small fishing village and was a quiet port town at the time of independence, that 'migration' became its identity and 'migrants' - *Muhajir*[2] - an officially-recognised ethnicity. So strong is this notion that I, who has never set foot in India but have ancestors from there, am a *Muhajir*.

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2   Urdu word for migrant.

In the 70s, after Pakistan split and Bangladesh was created as a new country, many Bengalis moved to Karachi to be in their 'original' homeland. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 80s again forced thousands of people from the neighbouring country to settle in the bustling mega city; so big was this influx, that Pakistan, until the recent Syrian migrant crisis, was the biggest host of refugees in the world (UNHCR 2019).

In addition to this, a large number of illegal immigrants such as Burmese, Sri Lankans, Filipinos, Thais, Iranians, Iraqis and Ethiopians are also present in the city (Gayer 2014).

And of course, the city is home to Pakistanis moving from within the country. Most of these relocations are by people from the low-income bracket seeking employment opportunities in the city - hence Karachi's national image as the 'mother of the poor'; but many people have also moved to the city escaping terrorism in their hometowns up north as a result of US invasion of Afghanistan in the wake of 9/11 attacks.

This dynamic and sustained movement of people into the city has made Karachi a subcontinent in itself, where you can listen to *Bengali*[3], *Dari*[4] and many other regional languages within your earshot and enjoy *Kabuli pulao*[5], *Rusgulla*[6] and other South Asian treats to your heart's content.

At the same time, this diversity also complicates life in Karachi. Until 2013[7], Karachi was an exceptionally violent city as different ethnic groups fought for power over the city. These violent clashes often pit *Muhajirs*, who see themselves as the rightful 'owners' of the city against *Pashtuns* - who originally belong to the north-western part of Pakistan but had been settled in Karachi for decades and *Sindhis* - who are a majority in the province Karachi is located in but a minority in the city.

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3   The native language of the region of Bengal which includes Bangladesh and parts of India.
4   A version of Persian language spoken in Afghanistan.
5   A traditional Afghani rice dish.
6   A Bengali milk dessert.
7   The then newly-elected government, in collaboration with the army, started a security operation in the city to clean Karachi of terror and criminal elements. While the operation is criticised for its human rights violations, over the years, it has resulted in visible changes in the city's security situation.

These ethnic divisions manifest in a variety of ways in everyday urban life. In spatial sense, neighbourhoods are split along ethnic and religious lines, and one community and a political party representing it dominate the area. Politically-speaking, provincial government made up mostly of *Sindhis* and city government mainly comprising *Muhajir*s always remain at odds over how to run Karachi and in the process, neglect the city. In social terms, while people mingle with each other and enjoy the diversity of Karachi, people also tend to stay in their ethnic socio-cultural bubbles, hanging out among themselves and marrying within their own communities. In that sense, Karachi is big but also small at the same time.

The society is also fragmented in terms of class, with an imaginary bridge splitting the city into two parts and clustering people into either 'burgers' - members of the socio-economic-power elite of the country who speak English with a foreign accent, would die if ever caught eating with their bare hands and usually live in the two affluent neighbourhoods near the Arabian Sea; or '*bun kebabs*'[8] - the factory workers, the teachers and the shopkeepers living on the other side of the bridge where there's no escape from power outages and getting mugged in the street is seen as a rite of passage to becoming a true Karachi resident.
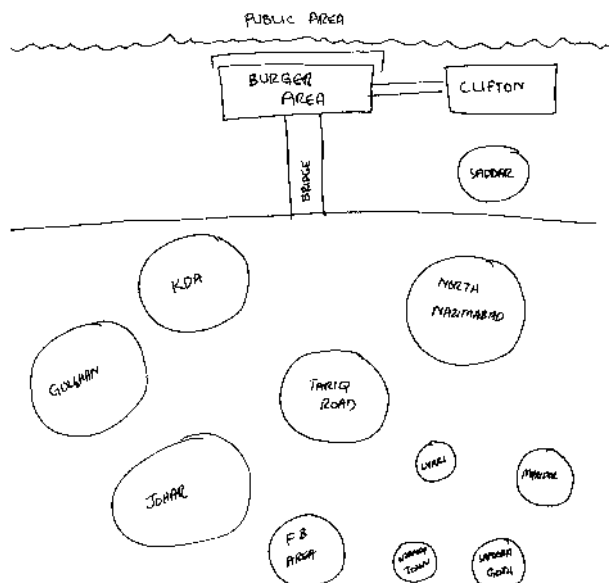
Figure 2.1 - My participant Erum's map of Karachi, showing the bridge which splits the city in two parts. The bubbles signify the tendency of people living in silos; the sizes reflect the socio-economic class of the neighbourhoods.

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8   A traditional sandwich mainly served at roadside stalls.

Given the fact that Karachi is an overpopulated city of a poor, developing country, the city struggles to provide for each of its residents. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the land in the city is owned by several different entities such as the federal and provincial governments as well as the armed forces, and the mayor has administrative control over less than 12% of the city (Siddiqui 2019).

As a result, the civic services are overstretched, market forces are taking over the supply of basic amenities and informality is a way of life, which the city in its neoliberal moments often try to eradicate than integrate. One indicator is the city's housing situation; 38% of the city's total population occupies 74% of the land (which happens to be formally developed) while the remaining 62% of the population resides on 22% of the land which happens to be informally developed (Hasan 2015b). The mushrooming of gated communities for the rich - often in the name of safety - further strangles the grip of the elite on the land in Karachi, while the poor are pushed to the edge of the city as the government razes houses and shops in response to court orders or for 'development' purposes. A recent example is of government destroying hundreds of shops - and many more livelihoods attached to them - around the historic Empress Market in the city centre to pave way for World Bank-loaned pedestrianisation project. While the government's stance is that these shops were illegal, the official documents held by the owners tell a different story. Similarly, the government, in order to revive Karachi Circular Railway, is bulldozing houses built along the train tracks over the years.
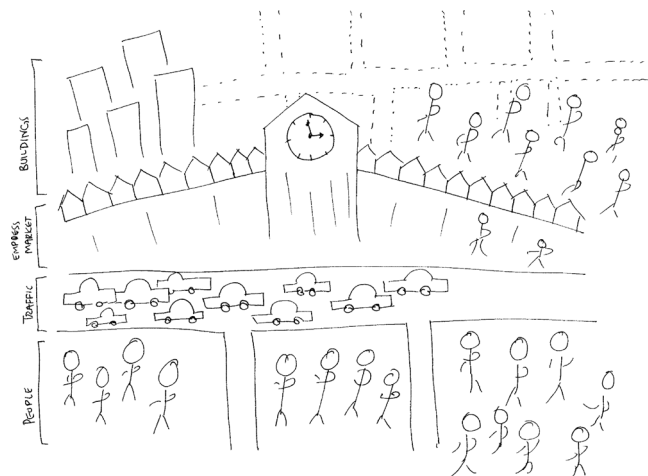
Figure 2.2 - For my participant Sana, Karachi starts and ends at the Empress Market; she drew its colonial clock tower as the centre of her map.

In terms of mobility, the way the city has developed, it is a nightmare to travel through. On one hand, neighbourhoods in Karachi are often not well-equipped with services and facilities which force people to commute to far off areas, but on the other hand, travelling from one place to another is a challenge. The city administrators have mostly planned for cars, building signal-free corridors and flyovers rather than bus lanes and pedestrian pathways and as a result, the public transport system has been neglected in the face of rapid city growth, lack of funding and urban violence.

In Karachi, travelling in buses is also a matter of one's socio-economic class. As unbelievable as it may sound, a part of Karachi's population has never step foot in a public bus. These people include children of politicians and celebrities but also many people from middle and upper-middle classes who have always had a car at their disposal and were chauffeured around either by their parents or hired drivers or could afford to hire private vans, rickshaws and taxis on a regular basis. The rest of the people, who maybe have one motorbike per family and can pay for rickshaws and taxis only on special occasions, public buses are the necessary evil they have to live with. Though, the poor service and stigmatisation of the public buses mean everyone dreams of not having to travel in them at some point in the future.

Despite this situation, public buses are still a widely-used mode of transport in the city; though they make up only around 4% of the total vehicles in Karachi - cars are roughly 36% and motorbikes 47% - they are used by 42% of the total number of passengers in the city (Hasan 2015a).

Women mainly use buses to get to educational institutions and places of work. However, women who work in white-collar jobs switch to private vans, rickshaws and taxis as soon as they can afford a more expensive means of transport. Similarly, men switch to motorbikes - either their own or the one that belongs to the family - to avoid using buses; women often don't have the financial means and social luxury to make this transition. Based on these social indicators, one can deduce that the main users of public buses are working class people - both women and men - and women students.

Ethnicity comes into play here as well. While *Muhajir*s are the majority in the city, a big part of the public bus system is owned and managed by the *Pashtuns*.

Before 2013, when the city's security situation was unstable, *Muhajir*-led political party MQM would suspend the public transport system as a show of power; and when riots broke out in the city, demonstrators would torch the public buses down to ashes in protest - this is also one of the reasons why the number of buses decreased in Karachi over the years. But public buses and ethnic violence has a very old relationship in Karachi. In the spring of 1985, a speeding bus believed to be driven by a *Pashtun* driver killed a *Muhajir* student - Bushra Zaidi - and sparked one of the worst ethnic riots in the history of the city. Many believe the incident forever changed Karachi as 50 people were killed and 300 injured in a week and the ethnic faultlines became deeper and stronger.

If we talk about gender, in Pakistan, there has been a steady increase in the number of women in the public domain due to population growth, rise in literacy, delays in marriages and changing economy. Similar shifts are witnessed in Karachi; for example, in most universities, women are either in majority (Karachi University, medical colleges) or in equal numbers (engineering schools). Though many women join the workforce after they graduate, the large presence of women students does not exactly translate into bigger number of women professionals. However, women are present in overwhelming numbers in manual and industrial work such as garment factory workers and domestic helpers.

Despite the trend, being in public remains a challenge for women. If we look at women's mobility, stepping out of their house and getting to a place require women to juggle with many issues: options available to them, time of the day, distance to the destination, their budget, their clothes, their attitude. Because of this plethora of concerns, women end up travelling longer and paying more for their commute; and mobility becomes an added burden to all the other challenges the city presents to a woman.

In the pages that follow, I have tried to give a snapshot of what it is like to travel as a woman in Karachi to help my readers better understand and appreciate the stories of my participants.

Time

Women avoid travelling at night out of fear for their safety and the risk of being seen as a 'bad woman'. Because of these circumstances, being out late can make women anxious.

Distance

Given the uncertainty and poor coverage of different modes of transport, travelling long distances becomes a worrisome experience for women and they avoid going to places considered far from home.

Independence

Due to safety concerns, women's movement in the city is known, managed and sometimes even approved by their families. Any unexpected change - whether intentional or not - can worry the families and could get women into trouble with them. That is why many women hide harassment episodes from their families because that could result in more surveillance and restrictions for them, in the name of their safety e.g. not being allowed to go out alone.

Also, travelling alone - particularly at night and by foot - can be an unpleasant and scary experience for women and so some avoid travelling unaccompanied, relying on the availability and willingness of their family members and friends.

All of these measures reduce women's independence by a huge margin.

Missing opportunities

With fewer alternatives, bad mobility options lead to women missing out on many opportunities as they limit their use of transport to necessities only. Women are demotivated to go out and that affects their performance at work and school. Economically speaking, women are reluctant to work night shifts and companies also hesitate to hire women for such positions. For leisure too, women avoid meeting friends and restrict their social activities.

Women in public

Women are usually present in urban spaces as travellers; waiting at a bus stop, walking, commuting in a vehicle. So any deviation from this, for example resting on a footpath, draws attention and leads to uncomfortable experiences for women such as strangers in cars offering them lift, assuming they are call girls.

Interaction with the city

Shuttling from one enclosed space to another, women's exposure to the outdoors is often from inside a vehicle. This results in a very limited interaction with the city as women move only between places and spaces they know, find accessible and necessary to visit.

'Benefits'

Many companies provide pick and drop services to attract and retain women employees. They are also allowed to go home early in case the security situation in the city worsens.

Figure 2.3 - How women move in Karachi. Source: Author

	University bus	Qingqi*	Motorbike	Rickshaw*	Car	App-based taxi*	Van	Walking
GENERAL	Bus service provided by university for students Bigger vehicles Covers long distance Crowded	A 6-seater hybrid vehicle made by adding extra seats to a motorbike or rickshaw Main competitor of buses Unsafe vehicles Untrained drivers Crowding not possible; everyone gets a seat Covers short distance; need to change	Faster; can wiggle through traffic Decent alternative to buses but only for men	Three-wheel motorised cart with seats for 3 passengers Vehicle open from both sides, conducive for street crimes No metre; need to bargain fare Bumpy ride	Traffic jams Rash driving No proper parking spaces	Requires mobile data High accountability (driver's info, route tracking available) Finding ride, explaining address could take time Not available in certain neighbourhoods Fewer cars available at night	Eight-seater vehicle shared by other passengers with similar route and destination Convenient; pick and drop from the doorstep Longer routes, more time consuming than personal vehicle Restrictive timing Fee paid on monthly basis Decent vehicles; you always have a seat	No proper infrastructure Existing infrastructure encroached by shops, vehicles, trash Makes one vulnerable to street crimes
WOMEN-SPECIFIC	Most seats taken by women	Women and men sit too close to each other which causes discomfort Harassment	Taboo to ride personal bikes Usually travel as a second passenger with a man they know Have to sidesaddle, which is risky and uncomfortable Hiring taxi bikes is even more restricted Style of clothing a barrier to ride comfortably	Harassment - drivers stare through mirrors	No harassment inside the vehicle Travelling alone at night is a concern Car breaking down is a concern Extra responsibility for driving around family for grocery shopping and socialisation Bullied by men drivers.	Touted as answer to women's safety concerns New car, new man every time; could raise questions about women's character Mostly men drivers; women fear for their safety Women's contact details are sometimes misused Incidents of harassment are low but still happen	Usually women-only service Considered safe	Improper infrastructure means women and men have to walk too close to each other and this leads to harassment Harassment - staring, touching, stalking Can't sit and rest as that is unusual and can be misread

*Services for general public

Figure 2.4 - Pros and cons of using different modes of transport in Karachi. Source: Author

Figure 2.5 - A screenshot of a mobile ad by app-based taxi service Careem, specifically addressing women and their mobility-related security concerns. Source: Author

Figure 2.6 - Time it takes to travel by different modes of transport. Source: Author

Sample route: My home in Gulshan-e-Iqbal neighbourhood to my last office in Defence View area

Distance: 12.9km (road route), 8.33km (B-line)

Note: *These minimum time durations are just for one-way journey and are calculated with the help of Google Maps and personal observation. They only account for the vehicular journey and don't include traffic delays and waiting time (at bus stop, for booking ride etc.).*
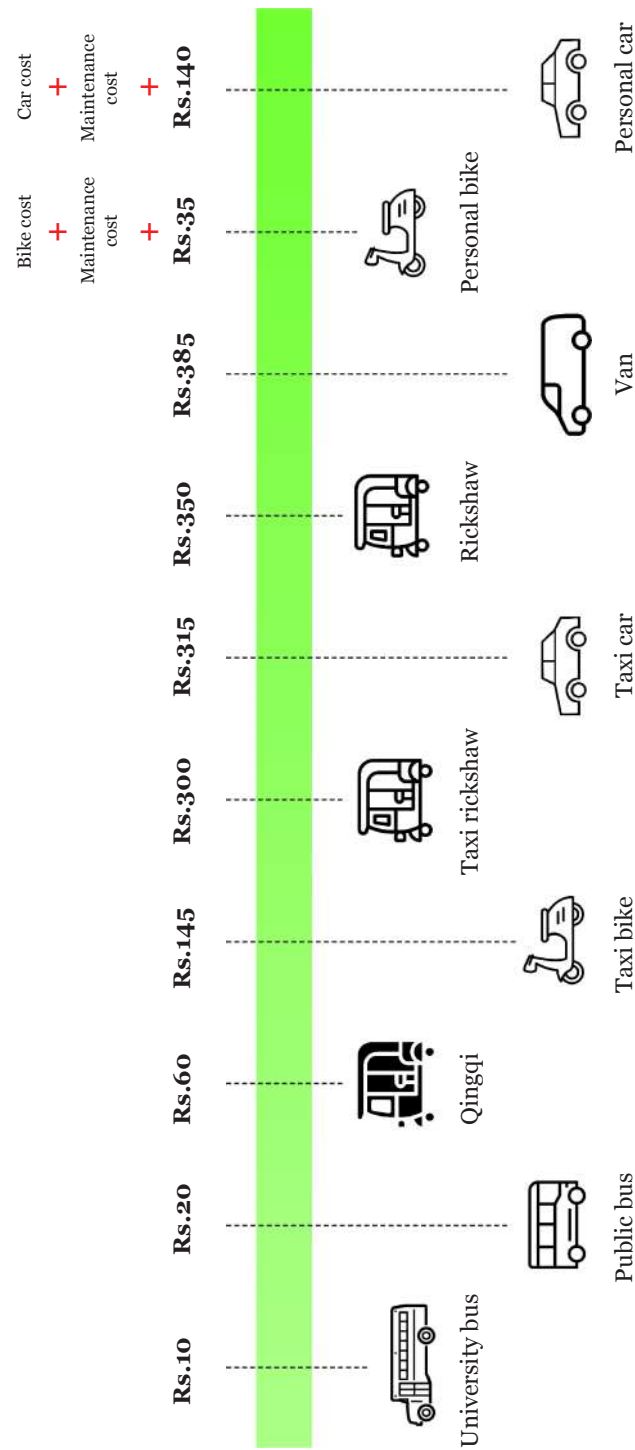
Figure 2.7 - Monetary cost of travelling by different modes of transport. Source: Author

Sample route: My home in Gulshan-e-Iqbal neighbourhood to my last office in Defence View area

Distance: 12.9km (road route), 8.33km (B-line)

- Qingqi rates (Rs20) are multiplied 3 times for 3 changes required

- Taxi rates don't include peak factor charge which are applied during rush hour

- Van rates are calculated by dividing monthly fee by number of working days

- Rates for personal vehicles show daily fuel cost

Note: *These costs are for one-way journey only. Prices are shown in Pakistani Rupee and the current exchange rates for Euro and Egyptian Pound are: €1 = Rs165,66 and E£1 = Rs8.69. For comparison, a McDonald's Happy Meal costs between Rs310-Rs355 in Karachi. This data was retrieved on May 20, 2019.*

Bike cost + Maintenance cost   Car cost + Maintenance cost

Rs.10   Rs.20   Rs.60   Rs.145   Rs.300   Rs.315   Rs.350   Rs.385   Rs.35   Rs.140

University bus   Public bus   Qingqi   Taxi bike   Taxi rickshaw   Taxi car   Rickshaw   Van   Personal bike   Personal car

Cheapest option to travel

No student discount available

Passengers and conductor often fight over fare

No dedicated bus lanes = get stuck in traffic

Unpunctual; no particular time for arrival and departure

Rush hour delays

Slow driving to get more passengers

Rash driving for racing

Overcrowded

Fewer buses

Small, old, damaged vehicles

Uncomfortable seats

Noisy engine, heats up, smells of burnt petrol

No air-conditioning + hot days = sweaty passengers standing too close to each other

No proper windows = dust, heat, rain easily entering the vehicle

High doorstep

Poor city-wide coverage

Many unoperational routes

Arbitrary change of route during journey

Harassment

Untrained drivers

Rash driving causes accidents

Details of routes, bus stops, timing not easily available

No proper bus stops

Passengers wait on road

Waiting on road = easy spot for harassment

Tuck shops near bus stops cater to men exclusively, make women uncomfortable

No street-level, safe crossings

Pedestrian bridges not present everywhere

Completely or partially covered bridges considered unsafe

Mugging at gunpoint

Pickpocket

No special provision for elderly, people with disabilities or pregnant women

Stigmatised; people feel judged for using them

Figure 2.8 - The state of Karach's public bus system. Source: Author

Behind the scenes

I intend to use this space to lift the curtain on all that preceded this very moment in which you are holding my thesis and reading my words. From my worldview, knowledge base, fieldwork to interpretation, I here disclose how the research process progressed in the six months allocated to finish this thesis.

Research approach and method
This is a qualitative research of an iterative nature, where literature review, data collection, data analysis and writing happened in cyclic - not linear - way. I went back and forth throughout the process and each stage was shaped and influenced by the others.

	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Literature review						
Data collection						
Data analysis						
Writing						
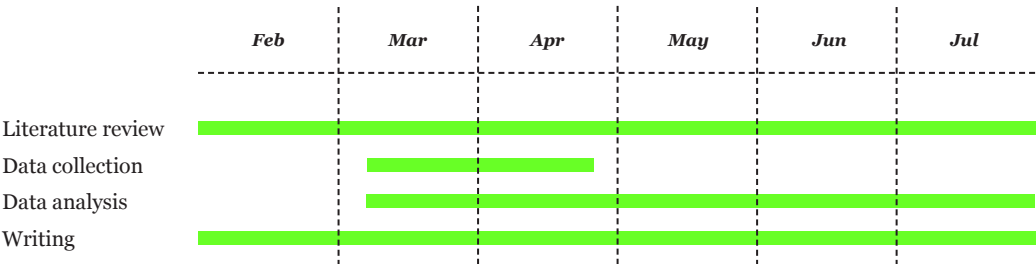
Figure 3.1 - Timeline of how the research process progressed. Source: Author

Working with a feminist methodology, I focused on three goals: to excavate and reveal the perspectives of women; minimise harm and control in the research work; and do research which can eventually benefit women (DeVault 1996).

I looked at women's experiences and accepted knowledge claims on the basis of the subjective view of the knower (Assiter, 2000). According to this worldview, knowledge is seen as 'not fixed, static or stable but as a spiral from which new knowledge, principles and structures emerge in a never-ending process' (Griffiths 1995, as cited in Hughes 2002, p.155). It is understood that women's experiences of their daily lives give them privileged access to understanding the relations of ruling - a vantage point that can ground a powerful critique of the institutions and ideology of domination (Hartsock 1997).

Hence, social meanings are derived from 'how women talk about their experiences' (Smith 1997, as cited in Hughes 2002, p. 153), as 'experience is the site of subject formation' (Goodman and Martin 2002, as cited in Hughes 2002, p.154). As such, 'values and power are the organising concepts for the analysis of experience' and therefore, not separated from facts (Griffiths 1995, as cited in Hughes 2002, p.155).

Having an ethnographic approach, I didn't start with a concrete hypothesis and predetermined variables and instead research questions and their answers were discovered in the social setting I was studying through the stories of my participants. As a result, the research questions evolved throughout the process:

Jan 31, 2019: How women use their clothes to navigate the city and what are their reasons to do that?
Why this question? I knew women's clothing choices are not just based on fashion and style and I wanted to investigate their reasoning.

March 7, 2019: How do women think the city - its social structures and built environment - disadvantages them and how do they overcome these limitations, with clothing as an indicator of this negotiation?
Why this question? Following the feedback from the first two colloquiums, I tried to reformulate my question in a way that the findings can have some kind of impact on planning.

April 4, 2019: How Karachi's built environment reflects and shapes gender? A gender audit of the public transport system.
Why this question? The data gathered so far increasingly linked women's clothing choices to their mobility patterns, which also appeared to have

effects beyond how they dressed; hence, the use of the term gender.

April 22, 2019: How Karachi's public buses reflect and shape gender?
Why this question? Initial data analysis revealed that there is more detailed evidence for public buses than the entire public transport system which includes bus stops, pedestrian bridges, streets etc.

July 15, 2019: How Karachi's public buses shape the performance of gender in the everyday experiences of women in the city?
Why this question? After reflecting further on the stories of my participants and considering the feedback I had received during and after Colloquium 3 in the end of June, I reworded the question to focus on the act of doing gender.
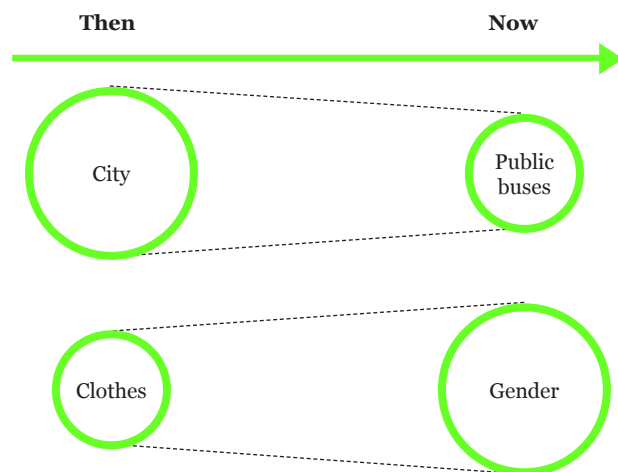
Figure 3.2 - How the topic evolved from the start to the end of research process. Source: Author

Similarly, the research goals also evolved as they became more and more specific during the research process. Just before starting the fieldwork, the broad research goals were:

1) To conceptualise the city in terms of women's understanding and meaning.
2) To uncover what gendered spatial codes govern the public realm and understand how that affects women's experiences.
3) To understand women's behaviours and spatial patterns in urban daily

life.

4) To understand how women overcome the limitations of the city using their clothing choices as a paradigm example of this negotiation.

During the fieldwork and analysis phase, these goals were eventually condensed to focus on public bus system and gender, as mentioned in Chapter 1.

Being a Karachi woman and public bus user, I share a conceptual universe - language of common understanding, culture and ideas - with my participants. This position allowed me to have a better understanding of what was expressed and what was left untold.

At the same time, I am also conscious of how my standpoint influenced my decisions, and as a result, the research process. From the choice of topic, study population to methodology, my interests and priorities shaped the whole thesis since I have always been interested in public transport as a city-dweller, I personally relate to my study sample, and I chose to do in-depth interviews because of journalism experience.

My journalism background came into play more than once. During data collection and analysis, I had to intentionally switch off my journalism mind and try to see the social from the eyes of an ethnographer because notetaking is completely different in these two fields and interpreting what people say is reserved for very few formats in the media. At the same time, my journalism experience informed the entire analysis process as I used my knowledge of how planning is done in Karachi and the mindset of the city administrators to make sense of why things are the way they are.

There were also many external factors that shaped the research process. For example, choosing a bigger sample and struggling between 'distant' and 'involved' writing styles because I knew I was doing a social science research for a faculty of architecture and planning - two different academic disciplines. While IUSD has always been open in this regard and encourages integrated approaches, I always had this difference in the back of my mind.

Given these influencing aspects, I wanted to make sure I remain true to the job of doing a good research; most importantly, to my participants. For

this purpose, I initially intended to do a focus group, either with the same participants or new members, to check my findings with the study population. Due to time constraints, however, I wasn't able to do that. Instead, I did the member check and shared my interpretation and analysis with all my participants and asked for their feedback. Despite their busy schedules - many are graduating soon - most participants got back to me with suggestions, clarifications or simple approvals.

Literature review

As someone new to the academic fields of gender and urbanism, I intended to review literature on gender, space, how gender and space intersect and then Pakistan-specific literature on these topics. However, due to time restrictions, I was not able to this job as thoroughly as I would have liked to.

As a start, I reviewed a large amount of literature with initial focus on gender and space from the perspective of feminist geography and on clothes from the perspective of sociology. The aim was to get familiar with these fields of knowledge as much as possible.

In this regard, two key readings were the *Feminist Glossary of Human Geography* by Joanne P Sharp and Linda McDowell, a guidebook which introduced me to the key concepts and theories regarding gender and the debate around them; and *Why Loiter?: Women and Risk on Mumbai Streets* by Shilpa Phadke, Sameera Khan, Shilpa Ranade which helped localise the issues of gender and space for me and inspired me to try see Karachi through the lens of existing theories.

Later, I narrowed down my research to a list of key concepts which I felt were close to my topic and research goals. This was still a very long list, covering broad topics such as the difference between space and place, how citizenship works and what influences feminine bodily comportment.

During fieldwork and analysis, deviant cases and contradictory or unexpected information kept taking me back to the literature as I looked for explanations. This further expanded my area of research. However, once I entered the writing phase, I finally reduced my theoretical concepts to the ones I discuss in Chapter 4.

Aside from reading books and articles on the thesis topic, a great deal of literature was also reviewed on research methodology which eventually shaped my entire approach towards this study.

Hence, the thesis has been a truly learning enterprise, gaining new knowledge about not just gender but also how to do qualitative research. From academic articles, textbooks to online crash courses, I have tried my best to inform myself about the topic I am researching. But given the vastness of the universes that these topics are, I would like to acknowledge my shortcomings; that I am still new to these fields and I have approached my thesis as a student and not as an expert.

Data collection

The data was collected through an online survey, many hours of observation and 22 in-depth face-to-face interviews.

Online survey

The online survey was conducted using Google Forms, to get initial impressions about women's experiences in the city. The link was shared on my social media accounts as well as in some focused Facebook groups such as those for university students and women only.
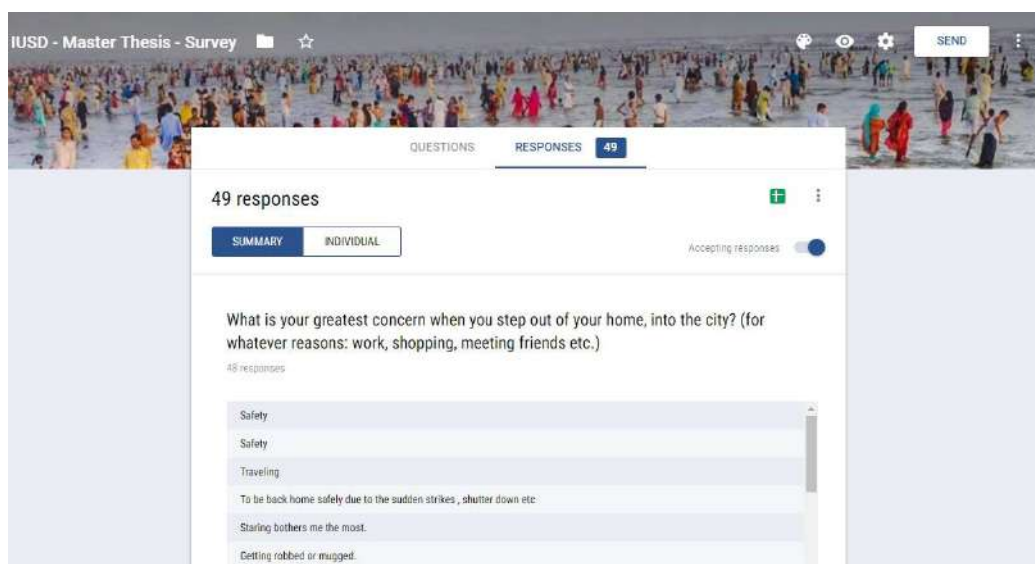
Figure 3.3 - A screenshot of the Google survey. Source: Author

The questions for the online survey were general and open-ended, asking

women to share their experiences about daily urban life; their major concerns when stepping out of the house; aspects of the city which make them feel comfortable or are threatening to them; and what would they like to change.

A total of 49 participants between the ages of 18 and 35 years took the survey from March 11 to April 2. The findings from this survey were instrumental in directing the focus of the research towards public transport as many participants expressed concerns regarding mobility options available to them. The survey also validated my intuition about investigating women's clothing choices because many participants mentioned clothes even when none of the questions used the term.

Aside from getting a feeling for how women interact with the city, I also intended to use the survey to find participants for my in-depth interviews. However, this didn't pan out very well and I relied on snowball sampling for face-to-face conversations.

Observation
Before I started the fieldwork and had not decided to focus on public buses, I made a list of places I would visit and observe such as malls, bazaars and beaches. I followed this list during the first few days of my data collection period. However, as the research process progressed, I focused more and more on the public bus itself and other elements of the public transport system. I took notes either on my phone immediately or in documents once I came back home. During these exercises, I kept in mind the nine dimensions of observations (Spradley 1980, p. 78):

Space Physical layout of the place	**Object** The physical things that are present	**Time** The sequencing of events that occur
Actor Range of people involved	**Act** Single actions people undertake	**Goal** Things that people are trying to accomplish
Activity A set of related activities that occur	**Event** Activities that people carry out	**Feeling** Emotions felt and expressed

In-depth interviews

These were semi-structured interviews to learn about women's experiences in the city in detail. Using snowball sampling method, I approached my friends (9) and acquaintances (2) for a frank conversation about my research topic. They were clearly informed about the purpose of the meeting and agreed to it. My friends and acquaintances, then, recommended me other people (10) to interview. I also approached a participant (1) via Facebook, after she posted about her recent experience of travelling in buses.

Participants I approached directly

.... Participants recommended to me by others

● My friends

◉ My acquaintances

● Complete strangers
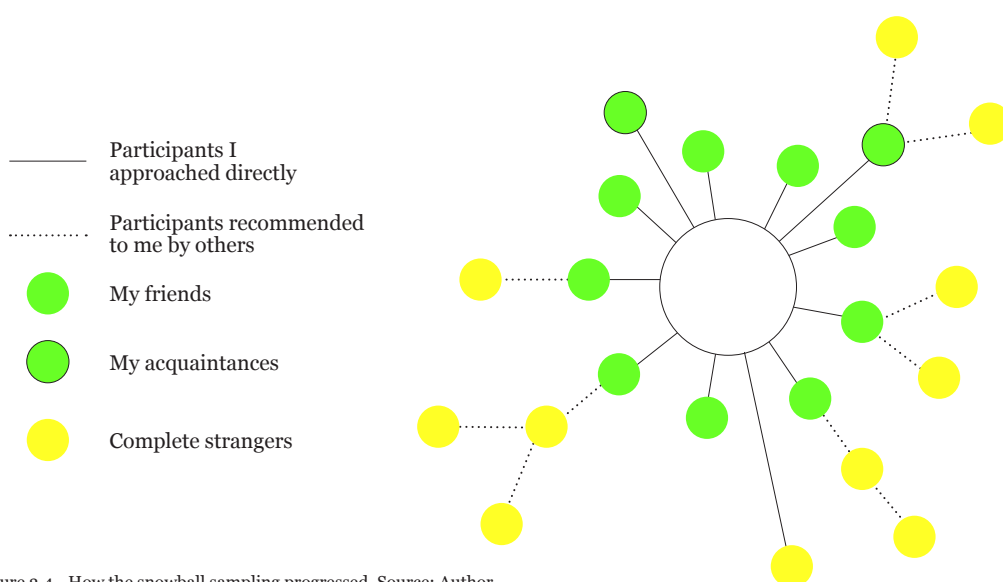
Figure 3.4 - How the snowball sampling progressed. Source: Author

The decision to interview my friends was inspired by Lisa M Tillmann's (2015) 'friendship as method' concept, which has roots in feminist methodology, is based on the principles of interpretivism and is a critique of positivism. As such, the method doesn't believe research has to be separate from politics and values, and reduces - if not completely eliminates - the hierarchical separation between the researcher and the participants.

The 22 women I interviewed are between the ages of 19 and 31 years; are students or recent graduates; use or have used public buses on a regular basis; and belong to middle to low-income classes of Karachi.

I decided to focus on public transport users because I believed women experience strong social control in public buses and access to private cars mean

less need for strategising through clothes which was the initial focus of my inquiry. Also, in Karachi, public buses are mainly used by middle to low-income classes and I was personally interested in this segment of the society. Further, given the importance of public transport with regard to mobility and gender equality, I felt the findings could help with future planning.

My decision to interview young women was based on convenience as I knew it would be easier for me to approach them and that they would be more open to speak about their personal lives and experiences.

Initially, I wanted to interview only the students of the University of Karachi (KU) because as a former student, I have easy access to the population and the majority of the students fit the category of public transport users and middle to low-income classes. Though most of my participants still belong to KU, I interviewed students and graduates of other universities as well as a result of the snowball sampling.

The interviews were conducted in Urdu, English and sometimes both depending on what the participant appeared to be comfortable with; and lasted somewhere between 30 minutes to 2 hours. Most interviews were recorded except for a few on the request of my participants. Being familiar with the process of research as students, many participants asked themselves if I will record the interviews which made my job easier. Those who didn't, I explained to them that the recording is optional and only for memory purposes and not for accountability, to put them at ease.

I conducted two interviews as a pilot, to test my questions and refine them if needed. As a result, I reorganised the order of the questions and changed the wording of some questions for the following interviews. But these were minute changes and that is why the pilot interviews are part of my entire data set. Also, because this is an ethnographic study, questions and their orders were evolving anyway with each interview.

To get the conversation started, I initially planned to use a mix of techniques such as looking at pictures of women in urban spaces - personal or public, local or international; to read news stories about women's use of urban spaces; and to visit spaces that are considered taboo for women such as local tea shops

called *dhabas*. However, I only managed to use the mapping and daily routine techniques as they appeared to be the best approach for my participants.

At the start of the interview, I asked my participants to draw a 'map of Karachi' and encouraged them to understand the term 'map' in whichever way they want. While many of the participants appeared intimidated by the term 'map' - and that's why I often reworded this request - the final product was informative as it revealed my participants' everyday experiences on a piece of paper for us to explore and discuss further.
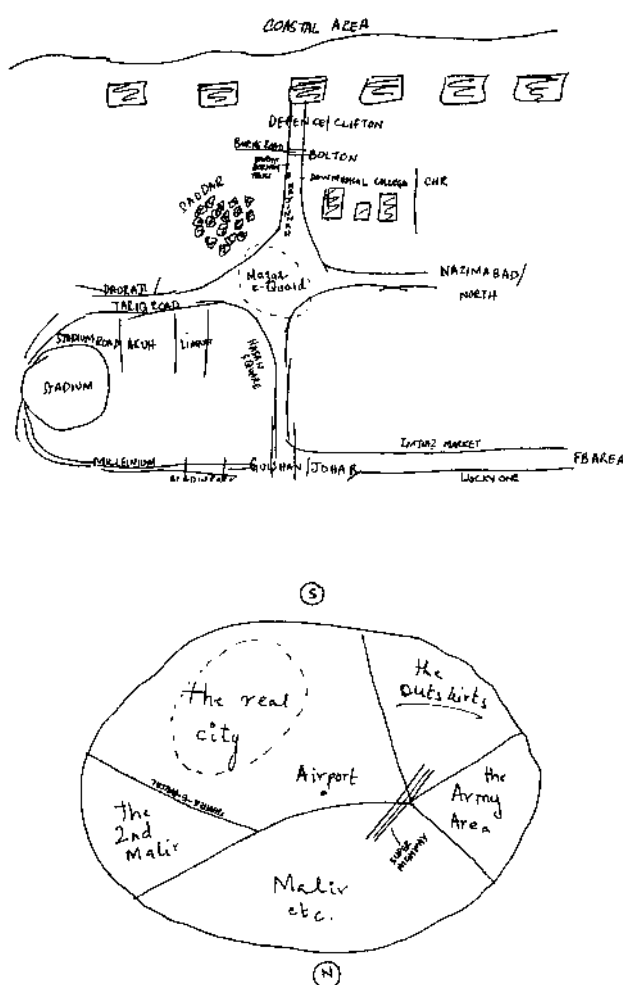
Figure 3.5 - Maps of Karachi: The city through the eyes of my participants - Amal (top) and Farah (bottom).

The second exercise for these interviews was to ask participants to share their

daily routine. Together with the mapping exercise, the goal of these two tasks was to get an understanding of the unique context of each participant. These two exercises, often naturally, led to my interview questions which were a mix of descriptive questions - to allow participants to describe their experiences, their daily activities, and objects and people in their lives in general; and structural questions - to explore in detail some specific responses they had offered. Since I asked the most 'obvious' questions about women's experiences in public buses to get a deeper understanding of each individual's experience, many people assumed I have not travelled in public buses and hence, am unaware of the reality.

The questions at the early phase of the data collection process were general, talking about the city, how women participate in urban life and what restrictions they face. They became more specific as I met more and more participants and learned from their distinct perspectives, such as how is their experience of travelling in public buses and what is different about women and men's compartment in the bus.

All the interviews had a conversation-like style which meant drifting away but it gave me a richer understanding of the situation as my participants freely talked about their experiences at home, work and university which informed me about their unique worldview and their understanding of the society they live in. Interviewing friends was helpful as they opened up easily and went into greater detail with little effort. With acquaintances and strangers, I built the rapport during the initial contact which included the whole process of setting up the interview, meeting place and time; and during the actual conversation where I followed the advice of sociologist Howard Becker to focus on 'how' questions and not the 'why'; to not put people in defensive mode, to be respectful and show that I value their time and opinion and want to know more.

When setting up a meeting with my participants, I was insistent on meeting at time and place of their choosing to make sure they are not bothered by my interview in any way. As a result, I met some people on the weekends only or spoke to some at night because that's what they were comfortable with. Often, after the interview, I would hang out with my participants either to grab something to eat or drink together or share a ride back home. Also, I wanted to keep the possibility of a follow-up interview open and hence

asked each participant if they would be available for a second interview. In Karachi's lifestyle, it is difficult to arrange a quick follow-up interview as people are often very busy but all participants were kind enough to agree to it. In the end, however, I didn't conduct any follow-up interviews. But, I maintained communication with many participants via text, asking them more questions or clarifications.

Given the sensitivity of the topic, many conversations were emotional for both me and my participants as they shared intimate details of their lives, their personalities and their environment. Some women were upbeat about the struggles, some heartbroken; this affected us during the interview and me additionally when I was transcribing the audios. I tried my best to be sensitive and considerate to each one of my participants.

Participants

Since the in-depth interviews constitute the main data for this study, I believe the participants deserve a proper introduction.

Majority of the women I interviewed were born in Karachi and grew up in the city; with a few exceptions in which case my participants were born and raised in a Gulf country and moved to Karachi as teenagers. The roughness of this shift - giving up order and relative luxury and getting entangled in the chaos of Karachi - is reflected in the stories of these women and how they see and experience the city.

In terms of ethnic and class background, most of my participants belong to the *Muhajir* ethnicity and come from families which earn enough to cover basic necessities. As discussed in the previous chapters, these conditions facilitate a certain kind of experience in a city where one's ethnicity and economic status are always relevant.

As mentioned earlier, a big number of my participants are students and graduates of KU but I also interviewed some from elite, private universities where my participants are studying on scholarship. From the socio-economic class of fellow students, the kind of intellectual readings and coursework assigned to the availability of extracurricular activities such as swimming and sitar lessons, the dichotomy of an ill-equipped public university and a world-

class private institution provide an interesting contrast between the experiences of my participants.

Regarding travelling independently, most participants started using buses when they graduated from secondary school and went to college, which was often away from home. Some started travelling when they joined a university. Before that, they usually commuted with their parents (in family car or motorbike, rickshaws and buses) or in a hired van for going to school. In any case, most participants only move between home and university/office during the weekdays. Hanging out with friends and other leisure activities are usually carried out in conjunction with education and work in the surrounding areas, and weekends are reserved for family outings for many.

For almost all the participants, public buses are not their only mode of transport. While the majority use them on a daily basis for going to university or work, many mix and match depending on the occasion; for example, taking a rickshaw for a job interview to not be late or hiring an air-conditioned Careem taxi to not arrive at a special gathering all sweaty.

13 Students
7 Professionals
2 Both

Occupation

18 Single
2 Engaged
2 Married

Marital status

16 Muhajir
3 Punjabi
2 Pashtun
1 Sindhi Pashtun

Ethnicity

Age: 19   20   21   22   23   24   25   26   27   28   29   30   31
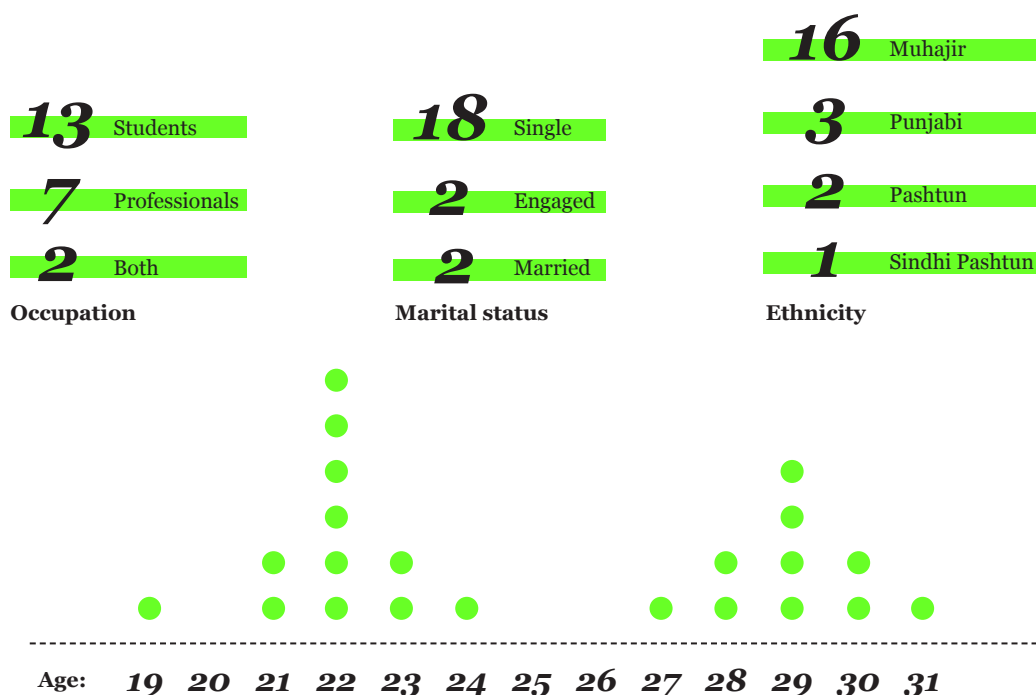
Figure 3.6 - Sample in numbers. Source: Author

Setting

I had initially planned to do my fieldwork in April and May because I felt I need more time to do literature review but I moved data collection one month back to March, to avoid fieldwork in *Ramazan* which this year fell in May. In Pakistan, the lifestyle changes completely during *Ramazan* as people avoid extra work during the day because they are fasting and prefer to stay indoors and rest after the sunset. I knew I wouldn't be able to do good fieldwork during *Ramazan* and decided to start early.

Starting in March was interesting as this is the month of International Women's Day and like the rest of the world, many events and rallies were organised across Pakistan on March 8. These gatherings of pro-equal rights marchers didn't sit well with many people as they complained about women dancing in the streets and holding posters with 'offensive' slogans. The following days witnessed meme wars on social media, heated discussions in family drawing rooms and even a resolution against the rally in one of the provincial assemblies. For many organisers and participants of the rally, the situation got out of hands when they started receiving death and rape threats.

Some of the posters from Women's March in Pakistan which created a storm both online and offline. Source: @HERPakistan, @Ghausia_R and @AuratMarch2019

I started my fieldwork in this contentious climate as I met my first participant on March 11. The society, it seemed, was split into two camps and emotions were running high on both sides. On one hand, people defended the marchers for expressing their anger and fears unapologetically; on the other hand, many complained this went too far. Naturally, the March often came up in the

discussions I had with my participants and facilitated focused conversation about women's place in the society and their rights.

Data analysis
As is common in qualitative research, I gathered a large amount of data - more than 23 hours of audio recording, around 87,000 transcribed words and dozens of photos. This demanded great care and plenty of time for proper analysis which was done manually rather than through a software. I took this decision because since I have never used a software before for qualitative analysis, I knew I would need to allocate time to learn the software and that would mean less time for other, crucial tasks. Also, since I would not be able to master the software in such a short time period, I felt I would always doubt the results and keep going back to the original data to make sure everything is correct and lose time again.

The analysis process, taking inspiration from the Grounded Theory method, followed these steps: transcribing interviews and organising observations; reading all transcripts to get familiar with the data; doing open coding to give codes to different ideas and concepts present in the data; clustering these codes into themes; and finally organising these themes in a way that they explain the research question.

As stated at the start of this chapter, the analysis was not a one-time activity and I looked at the data after every interview. Initially, I made mind maps to make connections between different concepts which were emerging in the data. Later, I organised these different maps into a matrix to see how one thing was affecting the other and what results were it producing. This helped me make sense of what was happening in the bus, what meaning it holds for the people and how it influences behaviours.

Once all interviews were conducted and transcribed, I started open coding. For this step, my unit of analysis was every 'idea', rather than every line or paragraph; which means I gave codes to every idea that was talked about. These ideas were expressed in many different ways - one small phrase, one long sentence or a whole chunk of paragraph.
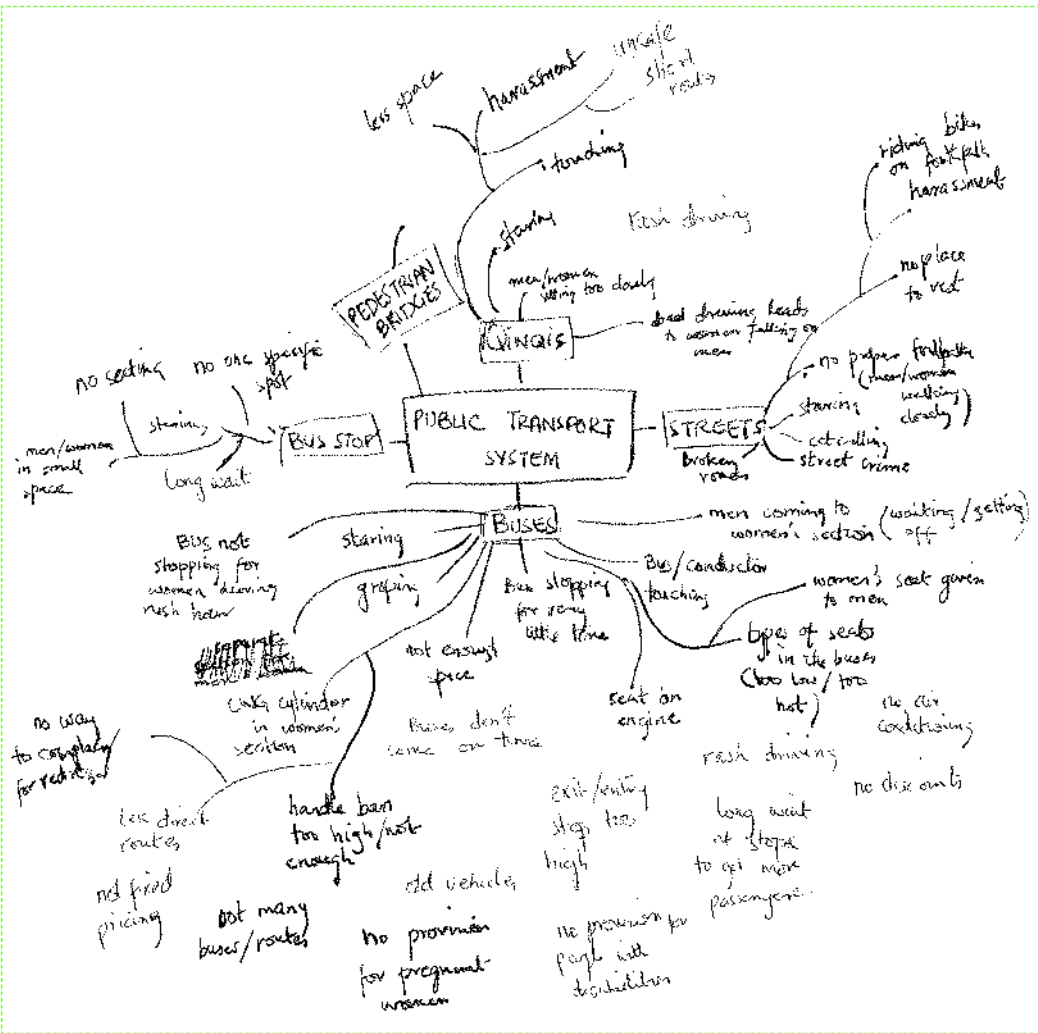
Karachi's public transport system and how it reflects and shapes gender

What happens?	What makes this possible?	What social/gender norms govern this?	How does that make women feel/how women are affected?	How women react/respond?	What women learn/message is sent to women?
Staring	Men sitting in the back, women in the front, like on display	men can do whatever they want; they have no/less restrictions	women feel they don't have equal rights	women conceal themselves (clothes)	men have more power
		there's no/less accountability for men	women question their worth	women try to avoid attention	men won't face consequences
		men are sexually repressed, have few outlets for expression, have less control on their sexuality		women try to blend	men are harassers and saviours as well
		women are weak, can't do anything about this		women try to live up to the social image of women	being in the city is fraught with risk
		women are not supposed to be in public		women limit their use of public transport to basic need only	women have more to lose (reputation, character, virginity)
		women are weak, can't do anything about this	women feel out of place like an alien	women become angry	outdoors belong to men
		Unaccompanied women/women in public are 'loose' women	women are scared for their safety (harassment)		men come first
				women get anxious	
		women are sexualised beings	women feel helpless/powerless	women travel with someone (other women, men)	women's work is unimportant
groping	space between women-men section/men allowed to come to women's side	men can do whatever they want; they have no/less restrictions	women feel they don't have equal rights	women avoid stranger men	women's presence in the city is an exception
		there's no/less accountability for men	women question their worth	women bear harassment	men make the rules
		women are not supposed to be in		women accept and live with extra-poor conditions of their	women accept inequalities as fate

Figure 3.7 - Some of the methods I used to organise and make sense of the stories of my participants and my observations. Source: Author

When writing codes, I tried to use a uniform language so when I need to cluster them, I can use a keyword search to find them easily. That's why it was important to be familiar with the transcripts and the new codes, and do the open coding and clustering within a short span of time so that the memory is still fresh.
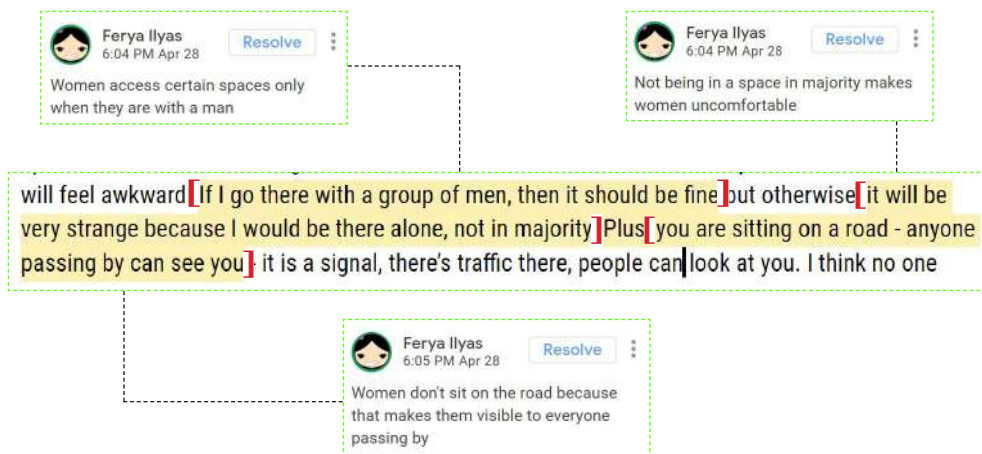
Figure 3.8 - An example of the open coding process. Source: Author

During this process, I frequently went back and forth between the original text and the new codes, to stay in touch with the wider context of why something was said. This was especially useful when two codes contradicted each other and the context helped make sense of the difference, for example, a participant sharing that her dressing choices are completely her personal decision and are not influenced by anyone or anything; or learning about harassment of men by men in buses. While in the first case, I have accepted it as an exception, in the second instance, it encouraged me to look at the literature again and find an explanation.

Writing

I have been taking notes from the start of the research process. I maintained separate documents for different sections of the thesis and would jot down my thoughts, observations and ideas in these documents regularly. I would also use these documents to save relevant pieces of literature I have been reviewing.

During the analysis phase, writing codes and organising them into themes also generated a great deal of usable text.

For the chapters where I share my findings and discuss them, I condensed, edited and rewrote the codes and themes into coherent arguments and complemented them with theories and concepts from my literature review. As such, writing also played an analytical role in this thesis.

The writing style I have chosen for this research is a mix between confessional tale and advocacy tale (Guillon 2016) where I have tried to be as transparent as possible to allow readers to audit my work and at the same time, not just discuss a social issue but also propose changes.

To ensure my text reflects every important aspect of the research process, I made use of my daily research calendar - which I maintained to keep track of how my work progressed; and my feedback document - where I organised all the comments I have received from teachers, friends and advisors since the start of the research process. These two items worked as a checklist for me throughout the writing stage.

While I think I have done a decent job in terms of adequately communicating to my readers, as a journalist, I am not satisfied that I didn't have enough time to be away from the text for a little while and get back to it for proper editing. However, this encourages me to continue to engage with my work even after the master's programme is over.

Women, men and everything in between

Gender as a social construction

'One is not born but rather becomes a woman' (Beauvoir 1956, p. 273). French feminist Simone de Beauvoir beautifully summarises the idea that gender is a social construct with this quote, arguing that being a woman or a man is not a biological attribute but a cultural creation through which the society we live in assigns different traits to different people and sorts them into feminine and masculine categories.

In that sense, 'gender is constantly created and re-created out of human interaction, out of social life; and is the texture and order of that social life' (Lorber 1994, p. 13); it is both 'an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society' (West and Zimmerman 1987, p. 126).

In contrast, the term sex has been understood to represent biological differences between people such as external genitalia, chromosomes, hormones and the reproductive system (Nicholson 1995); 'a determination made through the application of socially agreed upon biological criteria for classifying persons as females or males' (West and Zimmerman 1987, p. 127).

According to Lorber (1994, p. 14), the construction of gender begins very early

on as babies are assigned 'to a sex category on the basis of what the genitalia look like at birth' and are then named, dressed and treated in a way that the assigned sex category is easily distinguishable. This process, she says (ibid), continues throughout their lives, from early childhood, puberty years to adulthood; and influences all aspects, from the toys they prefer, who they like as a partner to what jobs they take.

Hence, gender is learnt and naturalised through everyday practices which are part of the specific social system an individual is embedded in. Bourdieu (in Power 1999) calls this the habitus - 'a set of dispositions, internal to the individual, that both reflects external social structures and shapes how the individual perceives the world and acts in it' (p. 48). These acts become second nature as people learn them in childhood and take them for granted.

The gender is, of course, influenced by other intersecting social structures such as race, religion and class. As a result, 'men and women members of the favoured groups command more power, more prestige, and more property than the members of the disfavoured groups' (Lorber 1994, p. 34).

Gender norms are also affected by laws as they promote and sustain certain behaviours and relations, and penalise those outside their agreed definitions; for example laws regarding women owning property and homosexual relationships. In the long run, laws normalise the assumed naturalness of these behaviours and relations.

Conaghan (2013, p. 3) says 'for large parts of its history, law served as a bastion of male privilege and female subjection'.

> *There is ample evidence, historical but to some extent still current, of the collusion of law in the support of a patriarchal social order in which women were positioned as (at best) different from men and therefore occupying a separate social sphere, or (at worst) inferior and therefore cast in the role of serving or amusing men or constituting objects of their property (ibid).*

It is important to mention that gender norms vary from one place to another and from one time period to another (Nicholson 1995). Also in any given place and time, they are usually fluid and often defied and rearranged by people

(Diamond and Butterworth 2008).

Gender binary

The mainstream idea of gender and sex rests on binarism which splits biological and social characteristics into two, opposite categories only - female and male, woman and man; setting strict expectations for the two groups for how to dress, who to like and how to behave both in private and in public.

This goes against the cultural and biological scholarship which has illustrated with plenty of evidence that there are more than two sexes and many expressions of gender; and that these two concepts are not bipolar but rather exist on a spectrum.

Feminist scholars such as bell hooks, Patricia Hill Collins and Judith Butler - to name a few - have all challenged 'the concept of gender categories as dual and oppositional' (Lorber 1994, p. 4). Similarly, the writings of psychologist Suzanne Kessler, biologist Marianne van den Wijngaard and historian Alice Dreger 'indict all of us who uphold the intransigent cultural ideology of two, and only two, sexes' (Kitzinger 1999, p. 494).

For Butler (in Schippers 2007, p.90), 'heterosexual desire is what binds the masculine and feminine in a binary, hierarchical relationship'.

> *Heterosexual desire is defined as an erotic attachment to difference, and as such, it does the hegemonic work of fusing masculinity and femininity together as complementary opposites. Thus, it is assumed that men have a natural attraction to women because of their differences and women have a natural attraction to men. While there is far more to the content of masculinity and femininity than erotic desire, the construction of hetero-desire as the ontological essence of gender difference establishes the meaning of the relationship between masculinity and femininity. Regardless of one's sex category, the possession of erotic desire for the feminine object is constructed as masculine and being the object of masculine desire is feminine (Ibid).*

Compulsory heterosexuality

According to Wittig (in Butler 2006), the 'binary restriction on sex serves

the reproductive aims' of a system which sees heterosexuality as the only natural form of pairing since it is procreative and hence, purposeful. Known as compulsory heterosexuality, the system sets standards for acceptable forms of desires; influences everything from personal behaviour to social practises; and as a result, assures 'male right of physical, economical, and emotional access' (Rich 1980) to women.

The supremacy of heterosexuality is maintained, on one hand, by normalising heterosexual behaviour and, on the other hand, by chastising anything that doesn't fit the women-men coupling because these acts 'both resist and threaten the oppressive system of male dominance which requires women to be heterosexual for its very existence' (Chouinard and Grant 1995, p. 142).

Gender order

As mentioned above, the gender binary system not only categorises women and men as two opposites with fundamental differences, it also locates them in a hierarchy (Jabbra 2008). Hence, women and men are never grouped as equals and one is always ranked above the other.

This hierarchical distribution of genders means certain characteristics are associated with one particular category and are then presumed to be better than the other. As has been the case most of the time, masculine attributes are accepted as superior than the feminine ones.

Women and their associated characteristics of femininity are defined as irrational, emotional, dependent and private, closer to nature than to culture, in comparison with men and masculine attributes that are portrayed as rational, scientific, independent, public and cultured. Women, it is commonly argued, are at the mercy of their bodies and their emotions, whereas men represent the transcendence of these baser features, mind to women's body (McDowell 1999, p. 11).

An exception is, however, made when it comes to morals. In a contradictory manner, women have been understood as someone with weaker superego and hence, weaker powers of moral reasoning such as by Sigmund Freud and at the same time, as morally superior to men because of their ethics of care and responsibility for others for example by Victorian-era's poet Coventry Patmore

(Gilligan 1982).

These gender stereotypes are at the core of patriarchy, a system in which men are ranked higher than women and hence have dominance over them. Walby (1990) outlines six structures through which unequal relations are established and sustained in patriarchal societies so that men can oppress and exploit women: 1) segregation of women's labour to certain less-paid professions; 2) women's unpaid domestic labour; 3) men's dominance of cultural institutions such as media; 4) men's control of women's bodies; 5) use of violence against women; and 6) less to no political power for women.

These structures, Walby concludes (Ibid), form two main gender systems - the private patriarchy and public patriarchy, which together exploit women's labour and sexuality for men's benefit.

Power imbalance
Underlying these structures and gender systems is the power imbalance which gives the dominating class - men - of the prevailing system the 'ability to impose [their] definition of the situation, to set the terms in which events are understood and issues discussed, and to formulate ideals and define morality' (Connell 1987, p. 107).

Such an authority ensures that people - both women and men - accept the prevailing system as correct, reducing or even eliminating the sense of injustice in the oppressed class. Lukes (2005, p. 28) calls this 'the most insidious exercise of power [as] it prevents people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial'.

Given how women are oppressed mostly through taken-for-granted social relations and systems, it is important to look at power through Michel Foucault's lens who argues that power doesn't rest in one supreme body but is spread throughout the society in its complex 'net-like' (Foucault 1980, p.98) system of relations and structures. According to him, power 'is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one

point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere' (Foucault 1978, p. 93).

What happens is that subjects, individuals, people are produced having 'certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires' (Foucault 1980, p.98) which are not just the target of power but also its promoters.

> *The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle (Ibid).*

Applying this understanding of power to patriarchy, one can see how unequal ideals about femininity and masculinity are created and then used to perpetuate that very inequality, for example the notions about female and male bodies, their strengths and weaknesses and the use of violence against women.

Iris Marion Young (1980), in her essay *Throwing Like a Girl*, talks about how women have an imaginative confined space around their bodies which they never cross, that they see their bodies as fragile and hence in need of protection from harm, and they don't use their entire body to perform a task but just the parts that are closest to the task for example using only their hands when lifting something but not the grip of their feet.

> *We have more of a tendency than men to greatly underestimate our bodily capacity. We decide beforehand--usually mistakenly--that the task is beyond us, and thus give it less than our full effort. At such a half-hearted level, of course, we cannot perform the tasks, become frustrated, and fulfill our own prophecy. In entering a task we frequently are self-conscious about appearing awkward, and at the same time do not wish to appear too strong. Both worries contribute to our awkwardness and frustration (Young 1980, p. 144).*

In a scathing assessment, Young says this controlled feminine bodily comportment is a result of living in patriarchal societies where women are 'physically inhibited, confined, positioned, and objectified' (1980, p. 152). She argues that women don't get the chance to freely use their bodies, are constantly taught about the womanly ways of doing things and learn they are merely flesh

to be looked at and objectified.

The ideals of femininity also influence the notion of modesty, 'a form of sex-consciousness, especially peculiar to woman' (Gilman 2002, p. 10) and often measured through a woman's dress.

> *So "modesty" in dress, as applied to that of women, consists in giving the most conspicuous prominence of femininity. The mere insistence on a totally different costume for men and women is based on this idea—that we should never forget sex (Ibid).*

Surrogate man

On the flip side, with superior attributes associated mainly with masculinities, women with their feminine model find no place for themselves in the men-dominated social setups.

Big organisations promote gender-neutral workers but this model is often based on masculine traits (Pateman 1988, pp. 38); the universal citizen who is at the core of democracy was constructed in the image of male body at a time when women were not allowed to participate (pp. 223-224); and leadership skills are often a mirror image of qualities linked with hegemonic masculinity (Calas and Smircich 1989). To be all of this requires that women render irrelevant everything that makes them women and become like a man (Acker 1990, p. 150).

> *To limit women's struggle to the demand for inclusion in what is essentially men's social contract, or for engagement in work on identical terms with those of men, ignoring the reality of women's lives, is to seek to make women surrogate men in a world that is still a man's world. That is not only to deform the women who achieve such a goal - it is necessarily to exclude the majority of women from the project. (Cockburn 1991, p. 25).*

Hegemonic masculinity

This inequality between genders is also the focus of Connell's theoretical concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininities.

First formulated in the early 80s and then reworked in 2005 in the wake of

some criticism, hegemonic masculinity is described as 'attitudes and practices among men that perpetuate gender inequality, involving both men's domination over women and the power of some men over other (often minority groups of) men' (Jewkes et al 2015, p. 113).

The term hegemony in hegemonic masculinity is borrowed from Italian marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci, who describes it as the ability of those in power to ensure their dominance not through the use of dramatic force but by developing acceptance among their subordinates through propagation of certain ideas and norms regarding day-to-day life (Jewkes et al 2015). In this sense, hegemonic masculinity is often established through consensual negotiation; though raw coercion is not out of the question.

There are multiple masculinities varying across different historical and geographical settings; they are hierarchised through cultural consent and institutionalisation; and hegemonic masculinity need not be the commonest pattern in the everyday lives of boys and men and rather works through models who have authority (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

The last point, of hegemonic masculinity working through models, highlights the fact that not all men have the attributes of hegemonic masculinity. Hence, 'the number of men rigorously practising the hegemonic pattern in its entirety may be quite small; yet the majority of men gain from its hegemony, since they benefit from the patriarchal dividend, the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women' (Connell 2005, p. 79).

Connell calls this men's 'relationship of complicity with the hegemonic project - masculinities constructed in ways that realize the patriarchal dividend, without the tensions or risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy' (Ibid).

These men 'respect their wives and mothers, are never violent towards women, do their accustomed share of the housework, bring home the family wage' (Ibid) and at the same time, enjoy the benefits of men dominating women as a whole in the form of honour, prestige and the right to command as well as material dividend such as earning more or holding political power.

Femininities

The other side of the hegemonic masculinity is the concept of emphasised femininity which Connell (1987) describes as a form of femininity 'defined around compliance with this subordination [of women] and is oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men' (p. 183).

It is the type of femininity that is culturally extolled and is highly commercialized and legitimated. Heterosexuality is central within it, and thus it accommodates the interests and desires of men through emphasis on vulnerability, fragility, acceptance of marriage, sexual receptivity, and motherhood (Connell in Finley 2010).

Like masculinities, femininity is also theorised as existing in multiple forms with emphasised femininity being just one of them. Connell (1987) mentioned other types of femininities such as those resistant or non-compliant and the ones that combine cooperation with resistance. Mimi Schippers (2007) later refined and elaborated these forms, labelling them as pariah femininity and hegemonic femininity.

Regardless of the form and type, femininity is socially shaped as different and complementary to masculinity.

As identified in the vast empirical literature on masculinities, hegemonic masculinity can include physical strength, the ability to use interpersonal violence in the face of conflict, and authority. These characteristics guarantee men's legitimate dominance over women only when they are symbolically paired with a complementary and inferior quality attached to femininity. To complement these characteristics in a way that subordinates femininity to masculinity, femininity includes physical vulnerability, an inability to use violence effectively, and compliance (Schippers 2007, p. 91).

Hence, the social construction of femininity as a polar opposite of masculine features in patriarchy. According to Schippers:

Even if few women and men actually embody these characteristics in relation to each other, the symbolic relationship established through these hierarchical complementarities provides a rationale for social practice more

generally. Thus, the significance of masculinity and femininity in gender hegemony is that they establish symbolic meanings for the relationship between women and men that provide the legitimating rationale for social relations ensuring the ascendancy and dominance of men (Ibid).

Public-private distinction

The insistence on absolute difference between femininity and masculinity also has spatial ramifications which deepens distinction between private and public spheres and produces regulations about who should occupy which spaces and who should be excluded (McDowell 1999, p. 11).

The private sphere has been historically theorised as spatially and socially separate from the public realm and associated with women, who exist in that space under the control of men and perform the tasks of housework, childcare, shopping and much more for men's benefit (Walby p. 87).

This spatial division is a result of the belief that women are responsible for taking care of the house and the family, and men are responsible for putting food on the table (McDowell 1999, p. 73).

The public sphere, on the other hand, is seen as the domain of men. Women are not always kept out of it but often have restricted access to the space in economic, political and cultural terms; for example women's concentration in jobs which come with low pay, prestige and protection (Gregson and Lowe 2005), and their absence from the power corridors of politics (Chesser 2019).

Women are also kept out of the public sphere as a result of fear and actual use of violence. According to Valentine (1990, p. 301) 'men subtly insinuate, or directly use the threat of male sexual violence consciously or subconsciously to exert power and hence control over women's use of space'.

As a result, women avoid men-dominated spaces, especially at night 'not only because night reduces visibility and therefore increases the opportunity for attackers to be concealed and strike unobserved, but because the nature of public space changes, being appropriated in the evening by the group women fear: strange men' (Valentine 1990, p. 300). Blaming the victim for 'being in a dangerous or inappropriate place' (Valentine 1989, p. 385) further reinforces

the idea of safe and unsafe spaces for women.

While many women fear and experience danger in the city, many others find the urban as a 'place of liberation…[which] offers women freedom' (Wilson 1991, p. 7) where anonymity and diversity provide experiences not possible in the private realm where you interact with limited number of people and already know them.

City and the built environment
The gender relations and their spatial implications subsequently influence the built environment (McDowell 1999), which has historically been developed to cater to men's needs.

Men have been used as a standard to understand and make things, take for example Le Corbusier's Modulor which uses a man's body for measurements. Further in planning, men's experiences, values and concerns are privileged over women's, who are often ignored in the development process or are assumed to have a similar experience. While in some cases, this may be done explicitly, the real danger of this approach is in how it is widely and unquestionably accepted.

The result is the creation of spaces which reinforce the dominant gender norms and deepen the inequalities part of the regime (Ibid) such as less to no space for women at local tea shops and inadequate lighting on the streets.

Surveillance and discipline
Gaze, the act of looking, is the process through which objects are formed by those with the power to view; the act is never neutral as it is part and parcel of social structures and relations (Foucault 2003) in which it takes place, as well as of sexual desires and pleasure (Rose 2007) of the viewer.

The one who is doing the looking is in power because while they can look whoever they want and however they want (Rose 2007), the object often can't look back (Haraway 1991). This leads to the object internalising the gaze and seeing themselves from the eyes of the viewer (Berger 2008). In terms of gender relations in patriarchy, the male gaze directed at the female object produces forms of femininity as per the wishes of the viewer (Ibid).

In Foucault's (1995) conceptualisation, the looking can be best described as surveillance and the construction of femininity as discipline. He uses the example Bentham's Panopticon prison to illustrate how disciplinary power works.

In this prison, individual cells are directly observable by one guard in a central tower. Here, power operates through continuous, anonymous and automatic surveillance instead of relying on displays of physical force or violence. The prisoner, assuming to be constantly under observation, is obliged to train, correct and induce states of obedience.
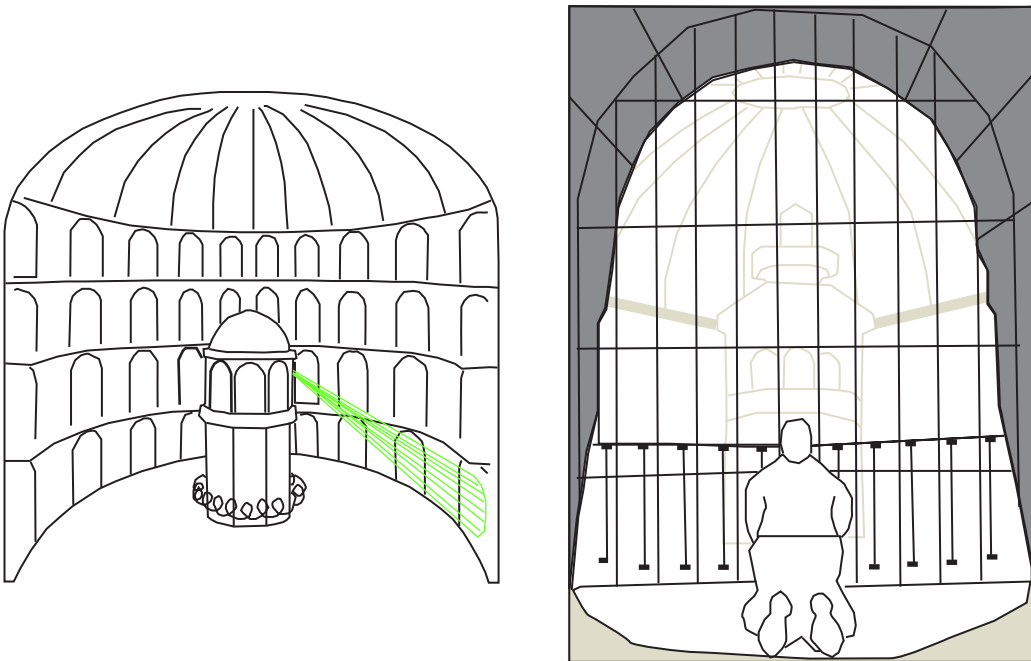
Figure 4.1 - (Left) Panopticon prison with a central tower monitoring cells around it.
(Right) A prisoner inside one of the cells, being watched. Source: Author

Foucault (1995) stresses that the Panopticon approach can be applied to all kinds of interactions with the goal of discipline, using its three critical elements: surveillance, normalisation and examination.

Normalisation is the production of homogenous forms of selfhood and subjectivity through socialisation into appropriate roles and identities and with institutions promoting a set of practices, values and beliefs. In this way,

dominance is ensured not through force but by telling people what they can and must be and regulating and surveilling the most intimate and minute elements of daily life.

Examination is judgement; a continuous assessment of individuals by comparing them with others. People are rewarded as well as punished and so they seek to discipline and correct themselves to be normal.

Utilising Foucault's understanding of disciplinary power and how it produces certain bodies, Butler (2006) argues that people perform what it means to be a woman or a man in their context and repeating that performance creates gender.

> *Discrete genders are part of what "humanizes" individuals within contemporary culture...Because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions; the construction "compels" our belief in its necessity and naturalness. (p. 190).*

> *As in other ritual social dramas, the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated. This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation (p. 191).*

She (2006) explains that people perform gender as a survival strategy because failure to do so draws social sanctions.

> *As a strategy of survival within compulsory systems, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences...indeed, we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right. The historical possibilities materialized through various corporeal styles are nothing other than those punitively regulated cultural fictions alternately embodied and deflected under duress (p. 190).*

Calling performance of gender a public action, Butler (1988) says the act is an ongoing, collective matter in which an individual takes part in a ritualised manner.

> *The act that gender is, the act that embodied agents are inasmuch as they dramatically and actively embody and, indeed, wear certain cultural significations, is clearly not one's act alone. Surely, there are nuanced and individual ways of doing one's gender, but that one does it, and that one does it in accord with certain sanctions and proscriptions, is clearly not a fully individual matter. The act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again (pp. 525-526).*

The place where gender is performed is important to the act because the social relations and structures of that place has an impact on how gender is performed (Keith and Pile 1993) which as a result, influences how the individual sees themselves (Goffman 1956).

Women on a bumpy ride in Karachi

While this may not be apparent to the naked eye, but gender and built environment exist together in a complex relationship. The human-made surroundings under which people come to live and operate express a society's gender structures and also shape them by allowing or prohibiting certain behaviours.

In this chapter, through the stories of my participants, I explore how Karachi's buses reflect gender and shape its performance in the everyday.

What is a woman?
In patriarchal Pakistan, women are often not thought of as people who have careers, someone having an outdoor life and who have the need to step out of their house. Hence the society doesn't feel it is necessary to provide facilities for women to do all of this and more. These ideas about what is a woman are then reflected in the urban environment, which further strengthens the society's notions about gender.

If we talk about the public transport system, the experience of taking a bus in Karachi exemplifies how women feel about being in public; that it is not their space, that if they are there, they will face consequences which include men violating them with free will and no accountability, and that men's needs are somehow more important than theirs.

In this subsection, I will share my findings about how the physical and social environments of the public bus are inscribed with the standard gender script followed by the society as a whole.

Women-men compartments
The public bus is divided into separate sections for women and men, a reflection of the strongly-held idea that the two genders should not mix freely. Though my participants admit that such a segregation is an inefficient use of space, they also stress that it is inevitable given Karachi's social atmosphere in which women see men in public as a potential danger to their physical self.

Fareeda, who works for a multi-national company and only recently stopped using buses on a regular basis as she can now afford a van, argues that a non-segregated bus under present circumstances, where passengers are stacked against one another like "sardines in a can", will only lead to conflicts and fights as most men don't know how to be physically close to a woman without harassing her in some form or shape.

"We should have buses like those abroad where everyone travels together but then men in Karachi should also have the manners to sit next to a woman; they are not eligible for that yet," 19-year-old Maria concurs with Fareeda. A business freshman, Maria has travelled in buses all her life and knows the nature of the system like the back of her hand.

Since Karachi buses are always packed, my participants say this crowdedness facilitates harassment in the current segregated buses and it could get worse if the segregation is removed.

"Personally, I don't see a point in having separate compartments. But I know why we have them. Men, young and old, are always looking for a chance to either fall on the women or touch them somehow. If there's no separate compartments, then, every passenger should have a place to sit and no one should stand," 22-year-old medical student Anum suggests, but in the same breath also admits it is not possible given the number of daily commuters and total buses in the city.

A *Punjabi* herself, Anum also thinks that the drivers, who are mostly *Pashtuns*, would not agree to a mixed bus because of their strong religious beliefs.

Women's compartment - a free-for-all
While the women-men division is strongly defined by the design of the bus, women witness their space being violated very often and with impunity; a reflection of the society's power dynamics where men can do whatever they please and women are often helpless.

By the virtue of the design, the driver is always present in the women's section as they sit in the front part of the bus, defeating the original purpose of a strict gender division. The conductor - on the pretext of collecting fare - enters women's section freely and usually stays to hang out with his driver friend. And the men passengers - despite having their own entry-exit point - feel the urge to use women's door every now and then.

In a section designated for women-only, there's no privacy for its passengers.

On women's part, the interaction with the driver-conductor duo is limited to paying the fare and asking to stop the bus. But an awful lot transpires in between these rather straightforward acts during the entire journey.

Sitting close to the women, the driver often indulge in sexually commenting on how they talk, sit and dress, making passengers uncomfortable in what is supposed to be their safe space. "I have heard it myself; most of the time, they are *Pashtuns* and I can understand *Pashto*[9]. They don't know that because maybe I don't look like a *Pashtun* girl. They talk about women in vulgar terms and I can understand all of it. It feels bad but I have to listen to it; I can't do anything about it," medical student Henna shares with utter sadness.

Given the terrible seating arrangement in the women's section, which I will talk about in detail in the following pages, one seat is located right next to the driver's seat, very close to the gear stick, which allows the driver to touch women inconspicuously in the name of changing gears. Ranam, who is currently juggling with family life and her master's education, recalls an incident from her

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9   Native language of Pashtuns.

college days. "I was returning home with my friend who sat next to the driver. I always avoided that space because I know that makes you an easy target; it gives the driver an easy chance to touch you. When our stop arrived, I told my friend to get off and the moment she stood up, she started hitting the driver with her bag. The bus was crowded; I was standing and I had no idea what was happening, I was clueless and also a little embarrassed because the bus stopped for us to get off," she narrates.
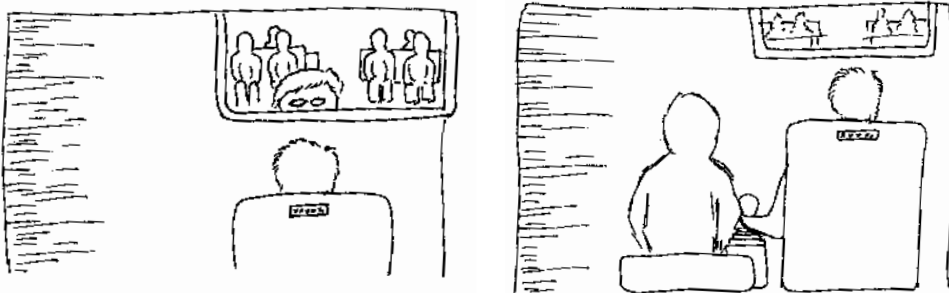
Figure 5.1 - (Left) Driver staring at women through the rear-view mirror. (Right) Driver touching women sitting next to him while changing gears. Source: Author

The conductor, on the other hand, has freer access to the women's section as he moves across the bus collecting fare from the passengers. "I have to be careful how I am taking the fare back from the conductor because he would like to touch me in the process, to feel me up. I may sound paranoid to you or to anyone else but that's how it is," content-writer Farah says with a raw timidness.

Figure 5.2 - Conductors touch women as they take bus fare from them. Source: Author

Half angry, half dejected, Farah goes on to describe how conductors do their job, rubbing off their thighs against women sitting on the aisle seat and lingering at the door to discreetly touch passengers getting on and off the bus. Many other participants also mentioned how they are usually rude and have

a rough tone which discourages them from having any extra interaction with them even if it is about harassment.

When it comes to men passengers, they also feel free to enter the women's section mostly to use their door but sometimes to sit as well. Women already have a small space in the bus and this space further shrinks for them as they squeeze to avoid making any physical contact with the 'intruder'. Men, on the other hand, move around without inhibition even when the section is crowded, often touching women in the process.

"I don't know what's their [men's] problem; they have their own compartment, their own door, but they get on and off from women's section. They come all the way to our section and get off from where women are sitting. It makes me so angry especially because they usually have to get off somewhere far away but they come and stand at our gate long before their stop," Maria shares.

While my participants think using their door is acceptable if the men's section is too crowded and there's space in women's section, they note this is often not the case and that men enter their section just for the sake of it, not for practical reasons.

This is in sharp contrast to how women interact with men's section; they would never freely enter it even if there's plenty of empty seats and using their exit is out of question. "Men can get out of the bus from women's section but women would never do that; to walk all the way back to men's section. Of course, for women, men's section is a danger zone," 21-year-old Razia states. A social scientist on a loose, Razia covers her face with a veil when travelling in buses and this, she says, allows her to observe passengers - even men - discreetly during her journeys.

In special circumstances, when conductors tell women to sit in the men's section, women still find it a risky move. They check the space and the passengers sitting nearby to gauge the level of threat before they decide to enter the other side.

My participants have mixed experiences about using the men's section; sometimes it is acceptable for men and they are even welcoming but sometimes,

they claim their right to the space and expel the women out as Farah says happened to her friends and her mother. "Once, my friends were sitting in the men's section because our compartment was full. There were plenty of empty seats in the back and men passengers could sit wherever the want but they insisted to sit where my friends were sitting. Also, another time, my mother was sitting in the men's section; one, old woman is sitting in your section, what is your problem but no, that man said my mom should move out," Farah narrates, shaking her head in disbelief.

In a tit for tat, men also sometimes face resistance from women for entering and using their section but it is negligible given how often and how freely they enter women's section.

Smaller compartment for women
Women have a smaller compartment as compared to men, in line with the gender stereotype that not many women go out and hence need less space in the bus. As a result, women hustle to find a place for themselves in the bus, commute while standing the entire time and often hang by a thread - both literally and figuratively - at the door just to not have to wait for the next bus.

Razia, who usually goes to her university in a van and finds buses liberating because they allow her to travel whenever she wants, explains that since almost all of Karachi buses are ancient, they were designed at a time when fewer women travelled. "We have this idea that only men travel and women don't; but I think this has changed a lot, women also travel in big numbers now," she says.

If we look at the physical space allocated to women and men in the bus, roughly one-third of the vehicle is reserved for women. Technically speaking, in a minibus, men's section has 19 seats and women's section has '11 seats'. I write this in quotes to highlight the fact that these seats are of poorer form and shape and only add to the misery of the passengers.

Further, the little standing space in women's section is usually occupied by a human-size CNG cylinder[10], which not only reduces physical space to stand

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10   In 2005, the country's highest court ordered all vehicles to convert from diesel to CNG. For Karachi's old public buses, this meant placing the cylinder wherever possible; in majority of the cases, this happens to be in women's section.

and sit comfortably but poses grave danger to the passengers. "Everything is so terrible in the bus and on top of that, we have a CNG cylinder in our section. If something happens, we are the first ones to die; this is dangerous. Also, it is so hot, you can actually burn body fat by touching it and get slim," home-based event manager Henna quips, making use of dark humour which is very common among Karachi residents.

There's a general consensus among my participants that the size of their section is not in proportion to the number of passengers who travel in buses, especially on routes where there are universities since many women students rely on public buses to commute unlike men - student or not - who often use motorbikes to travel. Also, children usually travel with women, further increasing the space requirement for their section.

Women's compartment - an afterthought
While men's section is organised, has better seats, plenty of windows and more space to walk and stand, women's section is an afterthought; a space created from unwanted leftovers as a manifestation of social ideas about women's rights and needs, and the questions of 'if' and 'how' to fulfil them.

Of the '11' seats located in the women's section, there's not even one seat which the passengers consider comfortable to use. As illustrated in detail in Figure 5.3, each seat in women's section comes with its many downsides.

"My experiences of travelling in Karachi buses have made me realise that there's something very wrong with the system. If men need to get to work, women have the same needs. Again, I don't care what the statistics say about how many women go to office or university and how many of them use buses. If a woman needs to use a bus, she should have a proper space to travel in," Farah stresses.

Not having a decent space to commute - a seat which doesn't burn their behind, a spot where they are not groped, a place with no high-pressure gas cylinder sticking into their face - speaks volumes about the secondary status women hold in society. Further, it also infantalises women when they are expected to almost squat while men sit comfortably in their proper seats. And the fact that women are not safe even in their own section tells us something about the power imbalance inherent in the society.

Figure 5.3 - A bird's eye view of a Karachi bus. Source: Author

Windshield, doors, windows

Passenger seat

Driver seat

Gear stick

Space to stand in women's section

Space for CNG cylinder

Grille partition which separates women's section from men's
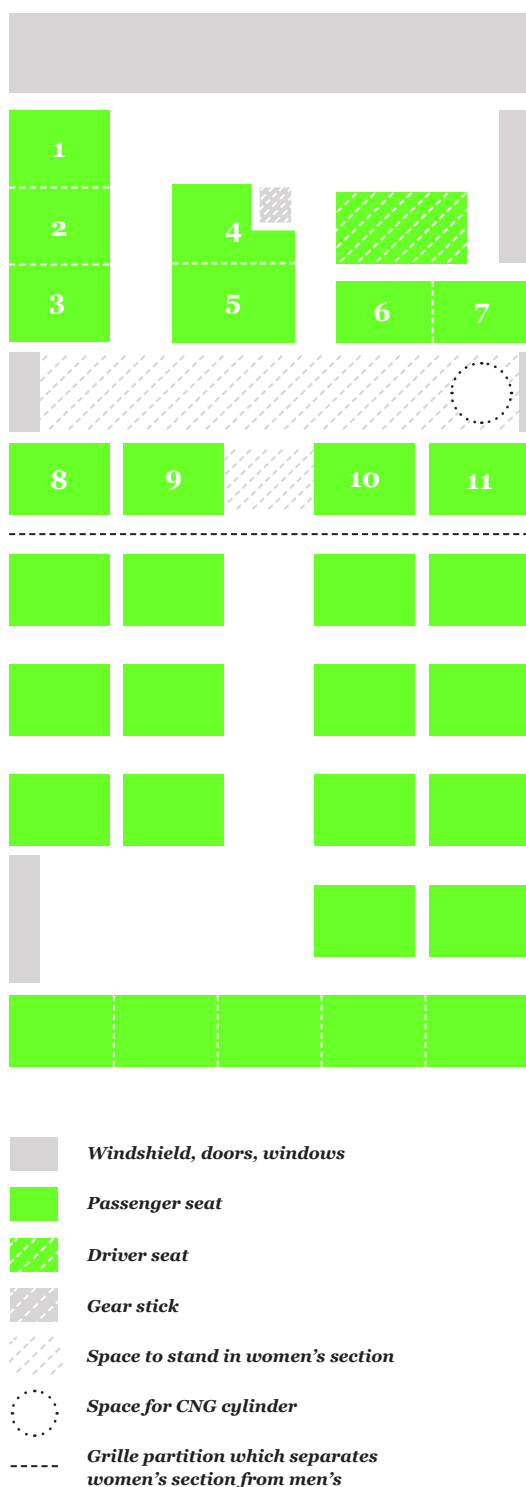
Seats 1, 2 & 3

Women consider these seats the safest as they are furthest from the men's section. But even here, they have to bear the stares of the driver.

Also, the conductor often touches women sitting next to the door (seat 3) as he clings to the gate.

These seats are of low height and women have to almost squat to sit here. There's little legroom which adds to the discomfort and also makes it difficult for passengers to access these seats.

Seats 4 & 5

These seats are made by putting a big cushion on the metal cover of the engine. Two passengers sit here, facing the opposite directions - one looking to the front (seat 4) and the other looking to the men's section (seat 5). Aside from being hot, this seat also has little legroom.

The passenger sitting on seat 4 has to squat to sit here. With the driver's seat right next to it, the woman sitting here is touched by the driver matter-of-factly as he changes gear while driving.

The passenger sitting on seat 5 finds herself in the clear view of men passengers, feeling scanned and scrutinised the entire time.

Seats 6 & 7

These seats are essentially a cushion placed on a movable toolbox; it has no back, has little legroom, faces the men's section and shakes as the bus moves. When there's no toolbox, the cushion is placed on the raised bottom, which being close to the engine is often burning hot.

Seats 8, 9, 10 & 11

These are the best seats with proper height, back and a window/door next to them. But they are a hotspot for harassment as men passengers touch women from behind, through the gap in the seats.

Young women usually avoid these four seats and prefer to stand if there's no other option available; instead, older women sit here based on the belief that men harass younger women more.

If young women do sit there, they a) check who is sitting behind, b) sit on the very edge of the seat c) put their bags behind to create a physical barrier

Some men still find a way and touch women through the space on the side or from under the seat.

Women sitting on the aisle seats (9 and 10) face additional threat from conductors & passengers entering their section and touching women.

Women sitting on seats 8 and 9 additionally worry about men and conductor lingering at the door.

Often, a CNG cylinder is placed in front of seat 11, which is dangerous and takes space.

Seats 1, 2 & 3

Seats 4 & 5

Seats 6 & 7

Seats 8 & 9

Seats 10 & 11

A view of the bus from the inside. Source: Author
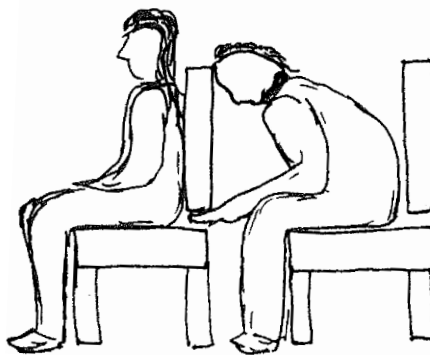
Figure 5.4 - How men passengers touch women through the gap between the seats 8, 9, 10 & 11. Source: Author

A seat for men, with the view of women

The way the bus is segregated, women sit in the front and men in the back. This seemingly harmless arrangement of passengers has a lasting effect on how women experience the public bus.

With all the seats in the men's section facing to the front, the women's section is in full view of men passengers giving women the sense of being surveilled by strangers the entire time they are in the bus. The constant staring tells women that this is not their space, that they are doing something wrong by being here and that whatever they do, they will be seen - an expression of the gender regime under which women operate in Karachi.
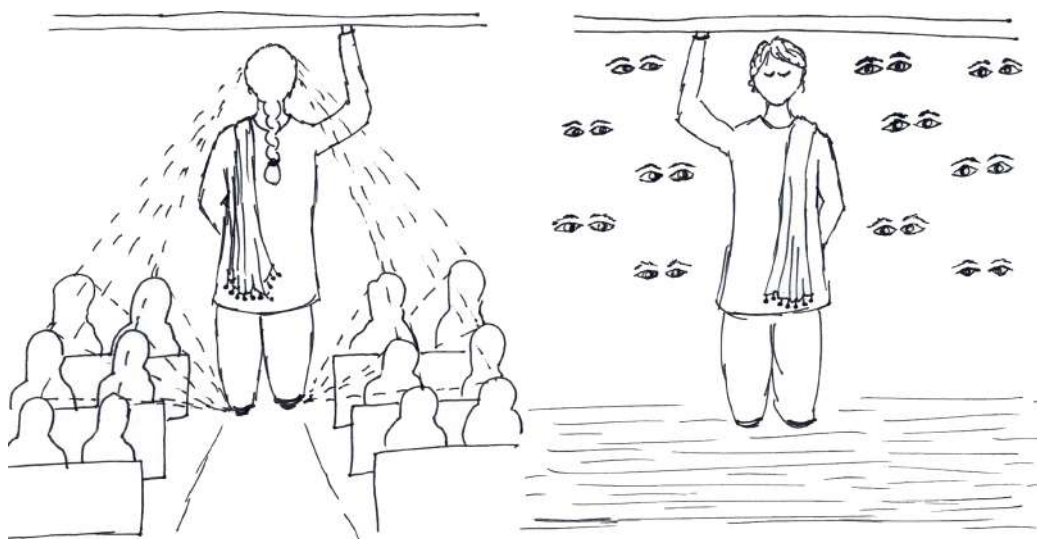
Figure 5.5 - How women experience male gaze in the bus. Source: Author

"It is so awkward to have men seeing you all the time. You feel like you are the centre of attention for everyone. The seat on the engine especially reminds me of Pakistani weddings when the bride is sitting on a sofa in the centre of the stage; it feels exactly like that because that's the most visible seat in the bus and everyone can see you," Henna gives her honest opinion.

In a violation of their personal space, women feel their bodies are under constant watch and it is not a pleasant experience. It takes away their peace of mind, makes them uncomfortable and puts them on alert.

Women internalise male gaze to such an extent that it becomes their default

experience, even in cases when men are actually not looking at them. This awareness of being looked at so easily and with no escape influences how women eventually behave in the bus.

"One time, I was sitting on the seats in front of men's section and a man was sitting behind me. He didn't touch me but he was staring at me so hard I could feel it. I asked myself how long will this man look at me and why doesn't he get tired. But I couldn't say anything to him because he would ask how do I know that he was staring at me when I can't even see his face. To avoid this, I sometimes cover my head to distract attention; I did the same that day too and he finally stopped," 23-year-old psychology student Aliza shares.

The arrangement of women and men's section not only allows surveillance of women but it also facilitates harassment. Sitting in the back gives men control of the situation as women can't really see who is behind them and what are they doing. This puts women in a vulnerable position and give men the upper hand to do as they please; it is like attacking someone from behind when they are unaware.

The bus stops for women
While most of the gender structures that are apparent in the built and social environments of the public bus fall in the category of hostile sexism, there's one aspect which falls in the opposite category of benevolent sexism: the bus comes to a complete halt, however shortly, to let women passengers get on and off the bus, unlike for men who have to jump on and off the vehicle while it is still moving.

"I feel drivers and conductors respect women passengers more in the sense that they stop the bus when we are getting on and off. They don't do this for men. In that sense, conductors at least take care of women," Anum says as she digs her hands in her lab coat pockets and lifts her shoulders.

'It is a lady!' is the usual call conductors make when women approach to get on or off the bus, to alert the driver to stop the vehicle completely. For men, on the other hand, the driver only slows down the bus for a few short seconds during which they have to jump on or off the vehicle. This care for women passengers is most striking in situations when the bus is racing with another vehicle; while

men have zero chance of getting off at their intended location when the driver is racing, the bus will stop for women.

The idea is that women are weak and need to be taken care of, that they should be given proper time to get on and off the bus because they are delicate; whereas men are tough and can easily jump on and off the moving vehicle.

Making of a woman

As the bus reflects and reinforces the gender ideas held by the society, the experience of being in that space leads to many behavioural changes in women which more often than not stay with them even when they are not commuting.

Women learn what's appropriate behaviour for them as their presence is noticed, their differences are chastised and their 'transgressions' are penalised. Even if they disagree with the messages they get, women feel compelled to adjust because the society burdens them with the responsibility to change and because they fear for their reputation which determines how others behave with them. With new people in the bus every time, women repeat their performance of a socially-sanctioned 'good woman' until it becomes a habit.

In this subsection, I will share my findings about what women learn about themselves and how they internalise those ideas as they travel in a bus.

Personality changes

Travelling in buses requires women to grow a thick skin to ignore male gaze and comments so they can focus on the important things; they have to shout to be heard by the driver and the conductor as they get on and off the bus and pay their fare; and they need to speak up against harassment to not let it continue. This is often very different from how they and the society see women; someone who is timid, quiet and submissive.

Further, travelling in buses allows many women to commute alone instead of relying on a family member to chaperon them; to go out at the time of their choosing and not be restricted by the availability of others; and to explore areas of the city - even if it is from inside a vehicle - other than their own neighbourhood. This is in stark contrast to how women are seen as dependent and immobile.

What travelling in buses also does is put women outside their small social bubble of family and friends into a space full of strangers of different genders and from different social and economic backgrounds[11] such as domestic helpers, labourers and medical students; they learn about different kinds of people, about a variety of behaviours and how to deal with them. This is very different from their usual experience where interaction with people other than their family and friends is limited and controlled.

"When I started my university, my sister told me that I am not a very confident person and to address this, I have to go to the university on my own in public buses and that I won't get any van service. This changed everything. Initially, I was totally blank, I had no idea about the routes, I would ask people at the bus stop for directions," 22-year-old Fizza, who moved to Karachi from Doha for higher studies, says in the quietest voice I have ever heard in a city with so much noise pollution, that people tend to talk very loudly to be heard.

From her personal experience, Fizza says it is all about confidence. "If you are willing to face whatever comes your way, then you can easily travel through the city but if you are scared; scared of what people will say, how they look at you, what they think about your dressing, then it will be very difficult for you. Because that is what I experienced; everything here is so different and chaotic. In the beginning, I wouldn't even ask the driver to stop the bus because I expected him to stop on his own. The bus kept going on and I had no idea what to do," she recalls with amusement.

All of these experiences, happening on a daily basis, in some ways transform women into a person who is confident, independent and cosmopolitan.

But it would be naive to believe these experiences only have positive impact on women; these same experiences and many others have the opposite effect on women. Many participants shared travelling in buses make them anxious and fearful, always fearing for their personal safety as well as their belongings.

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11   Urban life in Karachi is usually restricted to people's own little bubbles, their families, ethnic community or neighbourhood; and people have limited contact with all that's out there in the city. Women have even more limited interaction as they mainly socialise with their families and friends from work or educational institutions. Travelling in buses exposes women to a more diverse - though still not the complete - demographic of the city; people from different ethnic, socio-economic and religious groups with completely different ideas and perspective on life travelling together in the small, confined space of a minibus.

"When travelling by public transport, anything can happen. You can get groped, your laptop can be stolen, you can miss your stop and be late. All of this shapes me into a very paranoid person. In short, I am very paranoid," Farah, who lives on the further edge of Karachi and commutes to her office in the heart of the city, shares.

The fact that buses are confined spaces and are usually moving, and that there's so much uncertainty about the system - when will the bus arrive at the stop, if there will be enough space to stand or whether there will be other women passengers in the bus or not - add to women's fears.

This framework of fear which develops as women navigate the public bus system makes them afraid of most men; they stop travelling at night because there are fewer or no women in the bus after sunset, they avoid asking men for help because that would reveal their vulnerability, and they would rather prefer to give up their seats and move away from the harasser than complain because there are no real consequences for men.

Women disciplining their bodies
Clothes
Women witness their bodies being read by strangers at a very young age, in everyday places and occasions. But what happens in a bus is that there is no ambiguity about the gaze nor distance from the gazer; women - usually alone - are trapped by the time and space constraints of the commute in this situation and their previous knowledge, based on facts or myths, induces the fear that a gaze could lead to something even worse.

As the male gaze scans their bodies from head to toe with laser-like precision and no fear for repercussions, women learn about their own bodies and the social conventions wrapping them. The looks tell them that their hair is showing, that their shirt is too short and that their jeans is simply unacceptable. Journey by journey, men after men, women learn the social norms - often sanctioned by religious ideas but not necessarily - about their bodies in public.

To avoid the unpleasant experience of being a constant spectacle available for men's viewing, women start strategising with their clothes to not draw attention in any way; because the 'logical' conclusion is that if you are stared at, there is

something wrong with you.

Komal, who observes guinea pigs in a science lab for a living, shares there are certain clothes in her wardrobe which she will never wear to work because she commutes by public buses every day. "When I am buying clothes which I know I will wear to work, I make sure they have a specific thickness, certain length and particular colour. Like, I mistakenly got a silk shirt stitched with loose sleeves and now every time I am standing in a bus holding the railing, the sleeves come down to my shoulder and expose my arms. I feel awkward and also angry because I made this stupid mistake," she tells me.
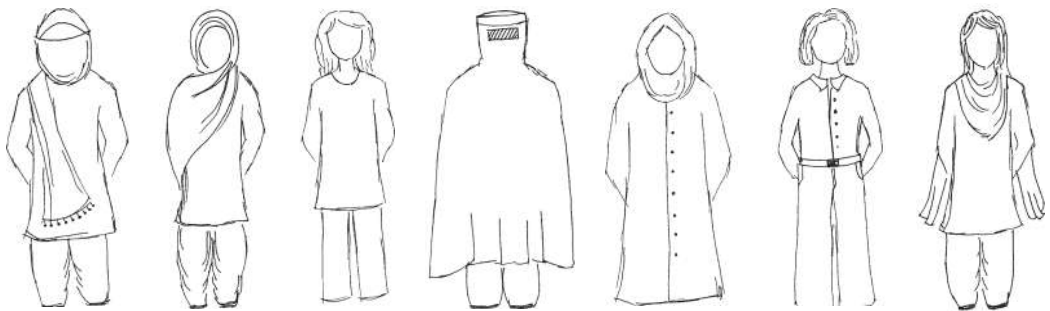
Figure 5.6 - Just a few of the many ways women dress up in Karachi. Source: Author

Like Komal, the thought process behind women's decision has many goals: to cover every inch of their body with no skin or private garments showing; to reduce the pleasure of men seeing them; to escape the blame of 'tempting men' in case they are harassed; to create an image of a 'good woman' as this influences how people see them and hence interact with them; and to have a peace of mind that they did their part.

Hence, the argument that male gaze disciplines women's bodies when they are travelling in buses; that women give up their personal preferences to fit the mould of what is a woman in their society. But I want to take this argument one step further and argue that this disciplining is not just time and space-bound to the bus and the journey, and that women don't go back to their own style once the journey ends, because that's not how clothing works. Women cover more when travelling in buses and can shed extra layers when they feel they are in a safe space but it is often not possible for practical reasons - the way the dress is made, and for social reasons - taking off layers of clothing is looked down upon and is subjected to subtle, negative social sanctions. This puts pressure on

women to continue with the charade and since travelling in buses is a regular experience, the repetition ensures the permanence of the change as women begin to identify with it.

'Female' gaze

As women struggle with the male gaze, adjusting their bodies to deflect attention, they also control their own gaze in order to avoid eye contact with men.

Women always look to the front to completely eliminate the chance of locking eyes with the men sitting in the back. When that's not possible because they are sitting on seats facing the men's section, they look down to the ground, outside the window or the door, or at a harmless object like a child and create their own little world to block the male gaze.

"Men think the route of the bus is written on my face and they have to read it so that they don't get lost. To avoid their eyes, I look outside the bus," Maria shares.

Women go through this constant struggle because of the idea that men stare more if they see the woman is also looking at them and that the staring could lead to something worse like winking or a flying kiss. But in some cases, women also avoid eye contact with men to pretend that they are not aware of their intrusive gazes and that's why not reacting to them.

Controlled comportment

Given the many real and assumed threats to women's bodies when travelling in buses, it is not a surprise they maintain a very controlled comportment when present in that space - stiff body, always on edge and with all senses working in overdrive. They use as little space as possible, containing their bodies to the physically possible extent because 'public' is not their place after all; they don't want to appear casual because women are only supposed to step out of their house for an urgent reason; and they are always in a state of hurry because they must get back to their 'private' space as soon as possible.

Women feel the need to adjust their body language - how they move, the postures they make - to avoid being the target of men's attention who would

stare at anyone and anything that's 'out of the ordinary'. And they always stay alert so that they can detect danger and save themselves from harassment.

"I personally don't understand how me sitting crossed legged is arousing? I am sitting like this for my comfort; we are already travelling with so much unease. But I never do this, unconsciously, whether I am in a car, a bus or a rickshaw. I never sit crossed leg," Ranam tells me, adding how travelling in Karachi's minibuses as a tall person is a whole different challenge.

'Angry' woman
In addition to their bodily behaviour, women also try to have a certain kind of attitude when travelling in buses; an assertive tone when interacting with the driver and the conductor, an angry look to express you mean business and a tough demeanour to show you will react in case of any misadventures.

"My experience in Karachi is very nice except for public buses. But I am not one of those people who stays quiet; I am very dangerous. I think when women have a dangerous attitude, men get scared. You have to give a tough impression the very first time you interact, to show what's the balance of power in this situation; who is more powerful. If you show that you will make the other person's life miserable if he hurts you, then nothing bad will happen," Heera, who always looks at the silver lining, argues.

The goal of appearing 'angry' is to repel danger; that men should think twice before messing with them, to get the support of fellow passengers in case they call out a harasser, and to hide their fears and emotions and hence their vulnerabilities.

"If you show men that you are scared of them or you feel threatened by them, then they might try to hurt you. But if you stay strong in front of them and don't show your weaknesses, they can't do anything to you," 24-year-old international relations student Nilofer stresses.

This often leads to an internal contradiction where women, who can sense and fear danger, pretend to be brave and put the threats aside.

"I actually hate acting like this. Sometimes, I am literally crying inside but I hide

my tears behind my anger. These experiences make me feel disgusted but you cannot do anything about it," Aliza reveals.

Two is better than one
While women travel alone to go to their universities and work, there are also times when they are accompanied by a family member or a friend. Mothers taking their daughters for shopping, fathers accompanying them to the bus stop and friends travelling along on the way to college or university.

Women feel there's a difference in how they experience the bus when travelling alone and when travelling with someone else. Men passengers, who usually appear to be unafraid of everything, actually fear serious consequences when a woman is accompanied by someone especially a men; this, women think, reduces the chances of harassment.

Similarly, after sunset, when fewer women travel in buses and men take up women's seats, women feel having a companion is an absolute necessity to create physical and social barrier between themselves and the men passengers. Also, if women are still harassed, they feel it is easier to respond to it if you have someone around to support you in case the situation gets out of hand.

"I am relaxed when I am travelling with a family member because I know there's someone who would help me if I get into trouble. When you are alone, people see you as vulnerable," Aliza believes.

She says having another person around gives you the support you need to think quickly and be safe. "Once, I was waiting at a bus stop with a friend and we noticed a man was stalking us. We decided to not wait anymore and got on a bus with a longer route to home just to lose him. But he came along. Then we got off in the middle because we couldn't let him follow us to our homes. The bus moved on and he didn't get off. If he had, we would have hit him with our shoes. That's why I prefer that I have someone with me," Aliza tells me.

For women, these experiences reinforce the idea that being alone, outside their home, is a dangerous pursuit fraught with many risks and they are dependent on others.

Safety of private sphere

There's no doubt travelling in buses is not the preferred option for women; not just because the service is downright miserable but how burdensome is the experience of using it for women. As illustrated throughout this chapter, women suffer on unimaginable levels when they get on the ancient-yet-ornate vehicles of the public transport system.

Most of my participants have or will quit using the buses if there's a better option available to them. Many frequently use other modes of transport, especially online ride-hailing services, to commute with less fear and discomfort. But as the Figure 2.4 in the Chapter 2 demonstrates, other available options to travel are not always feasible for women; Uber and Careem taxis are expensive, bikes are a taboo and driving private cars means you are stuck in traffic and are also bullied by men drivers.

But this migration from public buses to private vehicles is still happening and will continue to happen until the system is fixed. And what this shift is doing is moving women out of the public realm into the private one, where women shuttle from one enclosed space to another in an enclosed vehicle; putting women back to where 'they belong' - the private space.

"I am glad we have Uber and Careem; I feel comfortable using them. I don't like buses and rickshaws because they are unsafe. Anyone can touch you or steal your bag. I will pay more for a taxi and avoid rickshaws and buses for my peace of mind," Manam, a 29-year-old entrepreneur, says. Acknowledging her privileged position where she can afford to use different modes of transport, Manam sadly mentions how some women have no escape from the misery of travelling in Karachi's public buses.

Karachi on wheels

In this chapter, I will use my findings to discuss the gendered nature of Karachi's public buses and reflect on what they tell us about the society they exist in. I will use the same subheadings and key terms as from the literature review chapter to organise my discussion in order to clearly locate my findings with specific theoretical concepts.

Gender binary

The social regime apparent through the division of Karachi's public buses is the one based on gender binary; the idea that there are only two genders - woman and man, hence only two compartments. This dual-gender system leaves a variety of difference unacknowledged such as transgender people.

In Pakistan, transgender is an officially-recognised third gender since 2009; though the official court order used the term 'third-sex'. In 2018, the government passed a legislation which further liberalised the laws, allowing transgender women and men, intersex people and eunuchs the option to self-identify their gender on official documents. As a result, people with different gender identities have been able to take part in community life as everyone else, like run for the parliament and read news on national television.

But, while transgender people enjoy the protection of current laws and of the South Asian traditions which consider them as 'godly', they are also one of the most stigmatised communities in Pakistan and are often subjected to

unspeakable violence. This mistreatment has roots in how transgender people, their bodies and their sexuality are seen as deviant by many in the society.

Compulsory heterosexuality
The division of the bus, separating women and men, also highlights the idea of compulsory heterosexuality; that the only natural attraction is between people of opposite sex and hence they should be kept physically separate to avoid any 'immoral' behaviours. The division pretends other forms of sexuality - men desiring men, women being attracted to women - are not natural, don't exist and not to be worried about.

Compulsory heterosexuality may also help explain two points raised by the participants. First, the majority of the women I interviewed, if not all, stressed that it is a man's nature to harass women; they are sexually attracted to women and desire their bodies that's why they go for any woman irrespective of how more or less covered they are.

Harassment is understood as a result of men's weaker control over their sexual desires in a society where extramarital relationships are not allowed and marriages are becoming increasingly difficult due to socio-economic reasons. On the other hand, men harassing man is rarely talked about and is seen as an unnatural aberration.

"Human nature compels men to break the mould and do what they want. It is a basic need which is not being fulfilled because the society doesn't let them; there are boundaries and pressures. Sexuality is the origin of everything we do, everything we are; and there's no outlet, no true medium of expressing it. So men go for other ways," Ranam explains, invoking Freud to make her point.

Razia also makes use of the readings from her psychology course and says,"when men are living in segregated societies such as ours, like bus drivers and conductors, who come from villages far away from Karachi, have very little interaction with women in general and none at all with their own women if they are not married, they try to make a connection with any woman whenever they get a chance; they try to avail that opportunity".

Second, my participants were often at a loss when we tried to make sense of why

men behave the way they do in buses. Many said they really don't understand what pleasure men get out of staring at a woman from a distance or touching them briefly.

Razia says many men are not conscious of what they are doing. "I have studied psychology a little and I can judge people by their looks. So many men are staring at you with blank looks; they have no idea what they are doing and that's apparent in their eyes. There's no intention behind their act and they don't believe in it," she insists.

By this logic, some of my participants think, just like women, men are also slave to the system of patriarchy and they harass women subconsciously as a mean to satisfy their sexual needs because that is what they learn from their environment through socialisation with other men around them; that men are attracted to the opposite sex and for them to satisfy their sexual desires, they need a woman.

"I don't think men have any conscious ideology or mindset behind their acts, they just do this because they are men; they might have seen other men doing this and they copy them. I remember seeing a conductor - a young boy who looked older than his age - staring and catcalling women passengers just like adult conductors do. He made me laugh. This child is programmed to do this; he has learnt this from other men around him," Henna theorises.

Using the same line of argument, Henna concludes that men learn to harass women and do it almost mechanically. "Maybe they don't even get any pleasure out of it; they must feel it is useless but they still do it," she says.

Gender order
The physical and social environments of the bus also lay bare the prevailing gender order of the society. From how much space women are given, the state of their section to how they are treated, it is not difficult to deduce that women occupy a low status in the pecking order. Transgender people, who - when on the bus - are tossed from one section to the other as both women and men refuse to accept them, occupy an even lower place. This puts men at the top of the gender order and as any sovereign would do to maintain the status quo, men use tactics such as harassment to ensure they always have the upper hand.

While the general consensus is that men harass women for purely sexual reasons, some women think men also do this to intimidate them. "In think, men harass to show women that they are inferior. Nowadays, *mashallah*, women are going out, getting an education, moving around in the city and travelling in public transport. Men want to suppress this; to make women feel uncomfortable, to make them stay in a specific domain; to make them feel unsafe so they avoid using the public transport and avoid going out," Fizza thinks.

Harassment makes up the most fundamental difference between how women and men experience the journey; that men are a threat to women and not vice versa. Stranger men making intimate advances at women without their consent and without inhibition; and women unable of making them face consequences.

This absence of accountability further tips the scales in favour of men. How they behave with women depends on if they will be held responsible for their actions and whether there will be sanctions or not. The chances for men vary from one space to another, from one class to another, and if they are identifiable or not. Universities and malls, for example, filter the kind of men that are present in these spaces and have a higher degree of accountability because the men are known and the interaction is relatively more long-lasting. Buses and bus stops, on the other hand, have all kinds of men present in the space and have very low chances of accountability because the men are anonymous and the interaction is temporary.

"I feel most protected in my neighbourhood because we all know each other to some extent. A man from my area would not whistle at me because he knows I live just two blocks away and someone can easily come from there and beat him up. But maybe this person, at some other bus stop, may whistle at me because there won't be consequences for him; he can harass and disappear. I have been catcalled mostly by passersby; even people who are staring at me, they are on the move, so they know I cannot do anything," Nida, a communication specialist who is dabbling with career change, explains.

The socio-economic class also plays a role; my participants feel men fear harassing women from the upper class because they know there will be repercussions; class provides protection to women because men fear

consequences. But the same men would harass women in a public bus because these women usually belong to lower and middle-income classes and don't have the power to hold men accountable.

"If a really chic lady gets out of an expensive car, men would be scared to say anything to her because they know they will get a reaction. So no matter how much the man wants to catcall or grope this woman, he won't do it. Take for example, Defence - an elite neighbourhood and Korangi - a labour class area; they are two different worlds but are located next to each other. Men from Korangi work in Defence as construction workers, security guards and domestic helpers. They might talk among themselves about the women in the neighbourhood but they won't have the courage to masturbate to them or catcall at them. But when these men are in buses, they will do all of this to the women because they know there won't be any consequences and that these women don't have any power. It is not possible that these are two different kinds of men; these are the same people," Nida breaks it down for me.

Women usually avoid confrontation in buses because they fear hurting the men's ego, triggering retaliation and turning the situation from bad to worse. They are particularly afraid of men who don't show any sign of remorse and appear confident like smiling back at the woman. Women also doubt that justice will be served; they feel the driver and the conductor will not support them because they are both men, that the passengers might not believe them if the harasser looks respectable and the police might call their own morality into question. This all could be embarrassing and humiliating for women to experience.

Amal, a doctor in the making, shares the story of her friend. "I was travelling with one of my seniors from college and we were sitting on the seat next to the door. In the middle of the commute, my senior stood up and left the seat vacant. I didn't say anything but when we got off, I asked her why she did that and she told me a man was touching her from behind. I was so shocked and sad; I asked her why didn't she say anything or why didn't she tell me. So many women don't react; imagine, my senior is around 28 years old - a grown woman but she decided to walk away," she narrates.

Either out of fear, hopelessness or disgust, women don't want to interact with

the harasser. They don't want to touch the man by hitting him or even letting him listen to their voice by calling him out. They feel it is pointless to tell a man who had just committed one of the worst violations that what he did is wrong.

Hence many women say they choose to avoid situations which could lead to harassment or ignore the harasser if something happens. But in the twisted world of Karachi's public buses, women are sometimes accused of 'approving and enjoying' the interaction if they don't react or react late. And those who do speak up, depending on the circumstances of that particular day, could also find harassers encouraged more by the fact that a woman is engaging with them.

"Once, something happened between the driver and the passenger sitting next to him; they exchanged heated dialogues in *Pashto* which I couldn't understand. Another *Pashtun* lady sitting next to me started laughing hysterically, so much that she had tears in her eyes; I was intrigued and I asked her what happened. She told me that the driver was touching the passenger and when she told him to stop, he replied: you enjoyed it all along and now you are complaining," Ranam says, rolling her eyes and shaking her head in disbelief.

For her, the most shocking aspect was the woman laughing at this interaction. "I wondered what was so funny about this; if it was me, I would have been embarrassed. This incident also made me think about cultural context and how it influences our thinking; that the driver understood this interaction in such a way and the other passenger found it funny," Ranam, who herself is a *Muhajir*, tells me.

In addition to these complex scenarios women find themselves in, they are also socially conditioned to believe that they have more responsibility to ensure the system works smoothly. Many believe prevention is better than cure and women should first make sure they are not giving any chances for harassment and respond only as a last resort. Even those who reject this premise concede that men won't change and give up their power, and women must adjust because it is their everyday reality and they need to move on with life. Also, they believe men doing something wrong doesn't give women the right to give up on the rules and that they should play by the book irrespective of how men behave because every individual will be judged for their own acts and not for the other's.

Women's inability and/or reluctance to hold men accountable and the absence of consequences for men's actions creates a culture where men feel free to do whatever they want and women are left helpless and vulnerable.

"In their own minds, men are the superpowers; they can do whatever they want. Women will, at most, shout at them but other than that, men will overpower women. It is difficult for women to do anything because they have to keep themselves safe and protect their identity. So they avoid these situations instead of confronting them and that gives men the confidence to do whatever they want," Fizza explains.

While this power imbalance is at full display in public interactions, it is also visible in subtle ways within familial relations. Fathers, brothers, husbands and sons have a say in a woman's life; daughters have more responsibilities than sons towards their family and the house; and a man's transgressions are more forgivable than a woman's.

"It comes down to your family even if you don't want to admit. I always thought my family was quite neutral; not too open-minded but also not too conservative. But I can see that's not the case as I am growing older; the male dominance, that is prevalent in our society, is also present in my family. It is subtle, but it is there. That sons have certain privileges. My brother has had multiple girlfriends; everyone in the family knows about it and nobody bats an eye but if I ever do this, everyone will be angry and tell me to not cross my limits," Aaliya, a journalism student by day and sketch artist by night, opens up about her experience.

Aaliya argues that people grow up in this social system, internalise these differences and behave accordingly. So much so that some believe gender roles are natural and useful; and equality would only create conflicts like harassment. Many women are at pains to emphasise that not all men are bad and that some conductors, drivers and passengers are respectful and supportive of women. Others mention how men suffer too and the 'privileges' women enjoy. For true equality, they argue, women should then give up these privileges. Some even understand equal opportunities for women as reducing opportunities for men as women will get something that is currently men's.

"Women card works in Karachi all the time. If you get into trouble in the street, 10 *bhais*[12] will come to check up on you. When I go to a bank, no matter how long the queue is, I am served first. At *Javed Nihari*[13], if you want to buy food and there's a long queue of men; you can go to the counter, make an innocent face and you will be served first even if there are 50 men waiting," Heera lists her experiences.

Hegemonic masculinity

Men are seen as harassers but also as the saviours of women. In case of harassment, women seek help from fellow passengers especially men based on the idea that only men can rein in other men and save women; and that men are scared of repercussions only when they are up against another man. Some of my participants mentioned the fear they have seen in the eyes of their harassers when called out; they stop, pretend to be asleep, change their seat immediately or even get off the bus prematurely just because the possibility of them getting beaten up rises exponentially as soon as a man gets involved in the situation.

Men are likely to support women when made a stakeholder in a conflict, and empowered to judge the crime and execute the punishment because of the dominant cultural and religious values which dictate that men are supposed to protect women.

This same norm applies to men related to women, who are expected to get in a fist fight if their family members are harassed in their presence. While this expectation makes many men anxious when they are with family members in spaces considered unsafe for women, it also deters harassers from targeting women because they know they won't escape unhurt in case they get caught.

The idea of honour, its existence in a woman's body and men's responsibility to defend it is so deeply-rooted that many unsafe spaces become accessible to women when visited with men they trust. On the flip side, men - burdened by the expectation - discourage women from being in such places or be there only for an important reason and limited time to avoid any unpleasant experience. "My university friends and I wanted to try a new restaurant serving *nalli*

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12   Urdu word for 'brothers'; here, Heera is implying the moral responsibility brothers in Pakistani culture have to protect their sisters. The term is often used to refer to stranger men who women find safe.

13   A famous Karachi restaurant serving traditional slow-cooked meat stew called nihari.

biryani but the men in our group said that women should not come along because the area is not women-friendly. When we insisted, they said we can ask for home delivery but going there with women was not a good idea. They said there's no proper place to sit for women and there are many bikes parked nearby[14]. They were very reluctant and in the end, we didn't go," Aaliya tells me, very disappointed for missing out on an innovative version of Karachi's beloved rice dish.

The honour card is also used by the harassers who when called out immediately deny the act, stating that the woman is like their own daughter or sister and they would never hurt them. Tabassum, a new mom, shares her recent experience of travelling in a bus after a long gap. "Somehow, I forgot what it is like to be in a bus and I noticed an old man staring at me constantly for a very long time from across the men's section. I snapped and said something. The man started saying how I am like his daughter and that I misunderstood him," Tabassum narrates the incident to me.

Despite the chances of men helping women in the name of culture, there are also instances when men don't support women in a harassment conflict. One explanation is that the harasser might be more 'masculine' than other men in the bus and the passengers don't speak up out of fear for their own safety. This overpowering of one masculinity by another can also explain why the harassment of men by men almost never results in a fight in the bus or become a topic of discussion in the media as it usually happens in the case of women's harassment. A masculinity which is vulnerable and can be subdued is not something desired by the society and hence should not be talked about.

The other argument for men not supporting women is that men enjoy the tacit support of other men be it the fellow passengers, the driver or the conductor. They might also not stand up against the harasser because they think women deserve it. Whatever reason they have, men often try to settle the matter by telling women to let go of the issue.

"I feel when men are called out, they feel insecure; they feel losing a little bit of the power they believe they have. My speculation is that other men don't

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14   Implying that the space is frequented by a large number of men.

support women for this reason; that their support will put men's undisputed power into question," Amal shares her honest take.

Femininities
The other side of hegemonic masculinity is women's responsibility to perfectly fit the mould of 'good' woman that society has created for them. One example from the bus is how their appearance is an issue in the public as they are seen as the main representative of culture. While a large number of urban men wear Westernised clothes such as pants and shirt and no one bats an eye, a woman wearing a pair of jeans garners outrageous amount of reactions from the people in the bus.

Another example would be how difficult it is for many women to react to harassment as it asks them to be different; they grow up with the idea that women should be quiet, shy and definitely not the one talking about taboo topics such as sexuality in public and drawing attention to herself. That is why responding to a harasser is often a thought-out action as women evaluate the situation and struggle to make the difficult choice of staying feminine or behaving like a 'surrogate man'.

"I am a person who doesn't have a spine; never had a spine. I hate confrontation. Not a good quality for a manager if you think about it but I cannot handle confrontation. So I have always avoided responding to harassment and I blame myself for it; that it is my fault. I was scared, I didn't want to shout but now, if god forbid something happens to me now, I will do something. I will definitely do something now," Farah says.

The need and usefulness of adopting certain 'manly' attributes to navigate urban spaces dawn upon women very early in their life. At home, daughters are often labelled as 'the son' in praise for doing something strong and brave. And in public, women who appear to be weak either physically or attitudinally are believed to be harassed more as men don't expect any or a strong response from them.

Hence women mix their femininity with a dash of masculine attributes be it for shouting at the driver to stop the bus or standing with a tough posture to dispel danger.

Public-private distinction

The whole premise of why women have less space in buses is based on the idea that not many women step out of their home. This contradicts the reality in which women from all social classes go out in huge numbers to study, work and shop. But since many women remain hidden as they move between specific indoor spaces and in private vehicles, they appear as a minority in the public realm and their pronounced absence discourages other women from being out there.

When in public, especially in places where they are not expected, women feel a sense of alienation and discomfort as men use their gaze to inquire who the person is and why she is here. Even if it is out of curiosity on men's part, the gaze reveals the power dynamics by telling women that this is not their space and they are being watched. Harassment further reinforces women's fear of the outdoors and puts them on alert in spaces considered unsafe.

"I went to an electronic market to buy a new laptop for myself a few months ago. I wasn't alone; a friend was accompanying me. The whole market was full of men; we were the only two women. I was fine but my friend got really scared and wanted to leave as soon as possible," 23-year-old sociology student Mahvish recalls.

Karachi's cultural and economic diversity is often blamed for how women are treated in the public. The city attracts migrants from across the country and is also home to the people of Pakistan's many divergent ethnicities. Men belonging to conservative cultural groups, from rural areas and of low-income background are believed to have a strong sense of male superiority and so it is understood that in Karachi, the presence of women in roles other than what they are used to seeing surprises these men and leads to conflicts.

"I think independent and skilled women make men uncomfortable. Usually, men who have this kind of behaviour come from rural areas where it is not common for women to get an education, where they see their own parents suppressing women and women being submissive to men. When they come to a place where they see women working, getting an education, standing side by side with men, they don't feel comfortable," Fizza says, as she reflects on her daily experiences.

The heterogeneous population of Karachi, it is argued, creates a chaotic public domain where people having different social ideas come together; what's appropriate and acceptable for one group of people may be completely deviant for another and this absence of 'harmony' creates problems as people, especially women, are measured up against a varying set of standards.

"In Karachi, we have different ethnic communities who have different ideas about everything. Like there are certain families where women and men hug each other and that's a norm, but there are also families where women and men don't even shake hands. If you do a certain thing in one situation, you won't be considered odd, but if you do that same thing in another situation, you will be stared at," Ranam explains, arguing how ethnic differences play out in public.
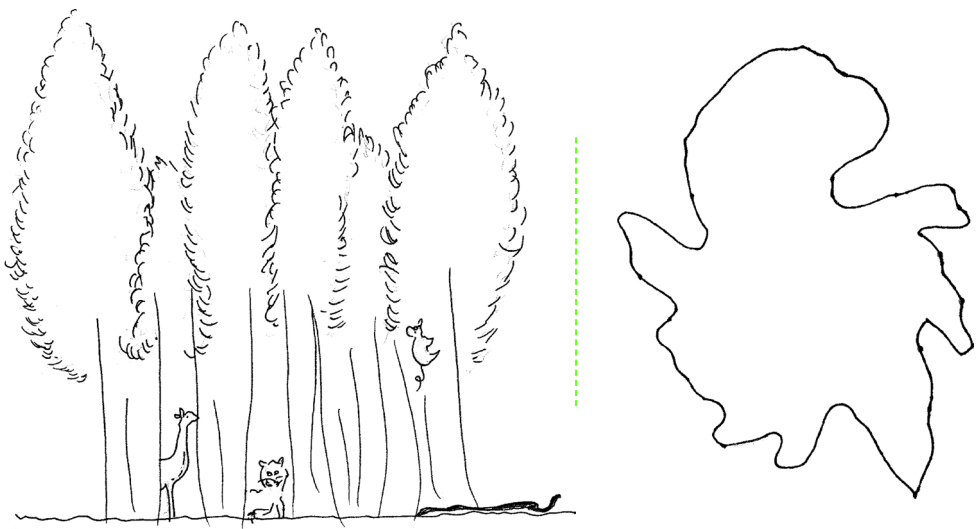
Figure 6.1 - Tabassum and Ranam's map of Karachi, reflecting the chaotic nature of the city. While Tabassum drew a jungle (left) to depict Karachi as a place where something crazy is happening all the time, Ranam drew a shapeless organism (right) which keeps growing in random directions.

This lack of homogeneity has implications in women's private sphere as well. For many of them, life is dichotomous and they receive conflicting messages from their surroundings - their families and the city. Some are free at home but face restrictions in the society; their parents encourage them to study and work, and they are appreciated for their talent but the system out there makes it absolutely difficult for them to do all of that. Others are restricted at home and find freedom in the city; for women who need a strong reason to be out of their home, university and work life give them the chance to explore the city and

broaden their horizon.

Women find a way to navigate the city depending on the kind of restrictions imposed on them and what they really want to do; not all women have the same limitations and not all of them want the same experience from the city. As women move between distinct universes on a daily basis, they appear and act differently in different spaces and in front of different people. They put extra time, money and effort in simple things like what to wear and how to travel which can be adventurous and liberating for some and exhausting and overwhelming for others.

"Being a woman in Karachi is an extra effort. For example, how I dress up is an active decision for me; do I wear a dupatta or not, or is my shirt two inches too short. You make these calculations to judge if your dress is appropriate or not and even if it is appropriate for your home, your mode of transport and your workplace, you wonder what if you have to step out for a site visit. This takes away several minutes from my day, every day. As a woman, I have to spend extra time and effort on making these decisions," 29-year-old international relations student Sana complains.

Women adjust their behaviour according to the men present around. In the public realm, especially the bus, it is difficult for women to classify men and behave accordingly so they tune their behaviours and appearances according to the 'lowest common denominator' and prepare for the 'worst case' scenarios. "You find all kinds of men in a public bus; educated, office worker and also an illiterate labourer. And you don't know who will behave how. That is why it is better to be careful and do what you can at your end," Komal insists, stating that since it is an everyday reality, one can't keep having bad experiences all the time.

In contrast, women have a different attitude and comportment when they are in spaces which filter in similar type of men, for example educational institutions, malls and offices. In such spaces, women know exactly what to expect and how to behave. Fareeda's trip to another city with her office colleagues for a team outing illustrates this point. "At one of the events, I was wearing a shirt which was not too long. Basically, my ass was not fully covered. But somehow I didn't feel uncomfortable because I knew the men I was hanging out with and the kind

of mindset they have. I have spoken to them and I know their way of thinking which is respectful to women," she tells me.

Depending on the kind of threat present and the level of effort it demands on their part, women develop notions about different situations and places; for instance, spaces frequented by stags raise red flags, while spaces visited by the elite or families are considered safe. Women build this knowledge over their lifetime and use it as they transverse the world outside their home.

It is pertinent to mention here that Karachi's history of violent crimes has also changed the idea of 'public spaces' from outdoors to indoors with an increasing number of people hanging out inside malls and restaurants rather than the usual parks and beaches. On one hand, this has turned socialisation into a consumption-oriented activity where people interact only with their friends and family in the presence of strangers from their own social and economic class. And on the other hand, many outdoor spaces have deteriorated and disappeared from the cityscape due to neglect.

Given the level of manoeuvring women are required to do when in public, their presence outside the home is always a matter of concern. For many people, no reason is strong enough for women to go through such discomfort and they wonder why would anyone want to be out there in the first place; for others, education and to some extent work have become valid reasons for women to be out in the city; but for very few, leisure is an acceptable motive.

Often, parents are worried as long as their daughters are out of their home; more than they are for their sons. This also influences women's decisions to go out as they feel pressured to not put their parents under stress when they are away. Twenty-two-year-old Qainat, who has ambitious career plans, tells me how her mother waits for all her daughters to return home before she eats her lunch. "Our parents are concerned because we are women. I tell my mother everything about my day; where I will go, who I will meet. It is not like we have trust issues; it is just being careful," Qainat stresses.

While the circumstances in the public realm push women out of this space, there are conditions which draw them into domestic life through familial expectations. Their education and work is often considered their 'leisure'

activities or 'me time' and they are expected to spend their free time to fulfil their responsibilities towards their family.

Many women are expected to take part in household chores no matter what their personal routine is like; they are either responsible for certain tasks or help their mothers with their domestic duties. If their education or office work doesn't allow them to do housework regularly, they make up for it in some ways on the weekends.

The family is also the main institution of social life for many women. They are expected to spend time with their families and feel responsible for this; mothers especially rely on daughters for this. That's why women often feel guilty if any activity beyond their education or work routine takes away time they could otherwise spend with their family. They also face disapproval if they don't do so.

"On Saturday and Sunday, I go grocery shopping with my mother or we visit our relatives. It is usually family-based interaction because my mother is waiting for me to be free on the weekends so we can do something together," Nida tells me as she describes her average weekend.

It is possible that women's domestic roles are seen as their primary responsibilities and what they do otherwise like studying or working is seen as an exception or a temporary situation. Women are told, explicitly or not, that they can study and work all they want but at the end of the day, their job is to take care of the house. Erum, a 29-year-old graphic artist, gives her two cents: "Women are not expected to have careers; even if there is a woman who works, people think she is just passing her time, earning some extra money for herself, or maybe she is forced by her circumstances. People say she is working now but once she will get married, her husband will support and then she won't need to work. Her work is seen as unimportant and something temporary".

This push from the public sphere and pull into the private domain strongly locate women into their homes in a self-fulfilling prophecy that they belong to the private space.

Surveillance and discipline

Women's experiences in public, especially in the bus, are defined by the sense of

being under constant surveillance, particularly by men. They are stared at in the streets, inside the vehicles or at shops; their bodies scanned from top to bottom and from front to back. They know exactly what's being looked at as the gaze moves across their body.
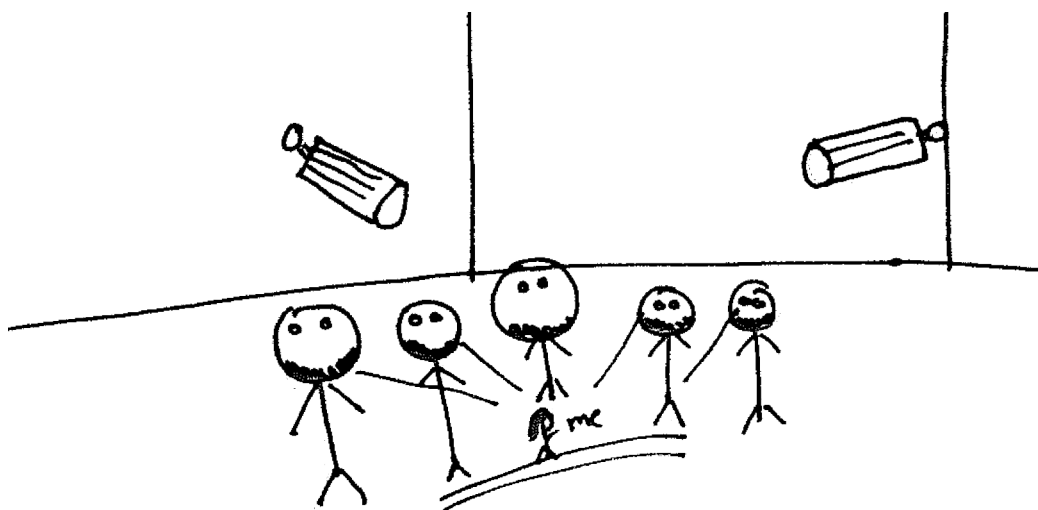

Figure 6.2 - Anthropology student Rana's map of Karachi, who describes her experience of being watched by men when in public. She drew the men big and herself as small to express how she feels when she is out in the city.

"When I am outside my home, I feel all eyes are on me and that thought is very uncomfortable. Many times, that is not even true; there's no one looking at me, but that's my default mode of thinking," Fareeda says matter-of-factly.

To eliminate any confusion, men supplement their stares with lewd comments on women's physical appearance, both good and bad aspects, making them conscious about their presence and informing them about the do's and don'ts of being in public as a woman.

Aliza shares an incident from last winter when the hot water supply at her home was disrupted and she had to take showers at one particular time only. "There was gas load shedding and I could only take a shower right before coming to the university. So usually my hair would be wet by the time I get on my bus. One day, this 'uncle'[15] in the bus started singing a song about rain and wet hair while giving me strange looks," she recalls disappointedly, sharing she immediately covered her head to hide her hair.

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15   Karachi colloquial for middle-aged men.

Being watched is an everyday reality for women so much so that they expect to be stared at and made uncomfortable in public, and are pleasantly surprised when this doesn't happen. Male gaze is such a regular part of a woman's life that many don't realise what it is like to be not looked at all the time until they find themselves in a completely different context, for example, going to a foreign country.

As the male gaze follows women wherever they go, they realise it is not as innocent as simple curiosity. Rana, an anthropology student, says the looking reflects the power dynamics of the situation. "There are some places where women are a unique sight like mobile markets. Also, I wear *rida*[16] which is a form of burqa but not a common one; so that attracts attention too. But in other instances, men stare because they know they have the power to do that without any consequences; because if you stare back at them or if you say something, they don't stop staring," she argues.

How women experience male gaze can be split into three stages. First, they are bothered when it starts happening and immediately assume something is wrong with them. Second, when the gaze continues irrespective of what women do or don't do, they start to ignore it and eventually get immune to it. But ignoring can take a great deal of mental energy and can be exhausting. So finally, women decide to react. "When men are staring at me, sometimes I mumble swear words at them. Many times, I have given them *lanuth*[17], other times, I have complained to my friends loudly so everyone can hear how the man is looking at us. Sometimes what I have done is stared back at them; the person gets really unsettled. When you stare back, stare with anger; you have to push them away with your eyes, so the look has to be powerful," Aliza lists for me all the different ways she has tried to fight the gaze.

"You ignore one time, two time, but then it keeps happening and it is too much. I feel like throwing something at their face; one of these days, they will get hit," she adds, seething with anger.

Some women make use of humour to dismiss the unsettling experience. "In my

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16   Worn over regular clothes by women belonging to the Bohra sect of Islam, a rida is
a two-piece garment with a poncho-like top with a hood to cover the head, and a loose-
fitting skirt underneath.
17   It is a way to curse others by showing your full, stretched palm to them.

head, I wish to walk up to the person and ask: hey, do you need something from me, is there something written on my face or is my face very unique. Tell me and I will fix it," Maria shares.

Anthropologist Rana also uses similar tactics. "If a man is staring at me continuously, I joke with my friend and tell her: yes, look at me, I do look exceptionally good today. Thanks for the attention!" she quips, but immediately adds that "deep down, I know I don't want this kind of attention".

The three-stage male gaze experience, however, is not a linear process and not everyone goes through all stages; some remain stuck at stage one while some may jump to stage three directly.

While men may look only for pleasure, they look from a position of power where they can see whoever they want, whenever they want and however they want. And this idea is not lost on women, who are aware of their weaker position in the social hierarchy. As men stare, women wonder what unintended messages men are getting by looking at them and what are they imagining as they gaze their bodies. This experience makes women feel unsafe as they fear a stare could turn into something more sinister; they feel uneasy as they become conscious of their bodies; and they feel disgusted and insulted as they become a spectacle for public viewing without their own consent. The gaze distracts women as they can't concentrate on their goal and feel like an outsider who doesn't belong to the place.

One quick conclusion women come to is that there must be something wrong with their bodies otherwise why would a complete stranger look at another person so intently in public. Women become so deeply aware of their physical self that they develop notions about their own bodies based on these interactions. "When I am walking, I notice men on bikes turn all the way back to look at me; men inside cars and rickshaws do the same. Perhaps, I look really good from the back and the men want to see how I look from the front. I think I have a physique of that kind; that when I walk, I think my hips move and my back looks alluring to men so they want to check me out," Nida concludes.

Since clothes are seen as a barrier between male gaze and women's bodies, women begin to adjust their appearance as a response to the stares. This

reaction is backed by the social understanding that men stare when women are not appropriately dressed. By this logic, women who don't cover enough are seen as someone giving men access to their body and those who do cover more take comfort in the fact that men are looking at a piece of cloth and not their skin.

The idea linking women's appearances with men's uncontrollable sexual urges is so deeply-rooted in the social psyche that women adjust their dressing style irrespective of the fact that they have been harassed wearing a variety of clothes and are themselves convinced that no amount of layers can prevent harassment. Erum, who recently moved out of her parents' house to live in a different city - a rare happening in Pakistan, gives a snapshot of her clothing experience. "Of course, I still think about my clothes when I step outside my house but a part of me has also started to rebel against this idea of making these decisions because I have been harassed no matter what I wore. In college years, I would wear a headscarf and loose clothes and I got harassed. In university days, I was wearing an overcoat kind of thing and I was still getting harassed. I stopped wearing it, I got harassed. You wear jeans, you get harassed. I have reached a point where I wear whatever I want," she tells me. And the very next second she adds: "but of course, within the context of what's acceptable to the society".

Religious beliefs further strengthen this connection as women are expected to cover their bodies out of divine obedience. This has many implications in everyday life. Firstly, women who cover more are seen as religious, even when they are not, and hence someone with a high character - a notion which comes with a certain level of social praise and protection. On the flip side, some may also see these women as conservative and narrow-minded. Secondly, since religion approves of women covering their body, some may see harassment as a divine punishment. Similarly, women who adjust their clothing style reluctantly find comfort in the fact that at the end of the day, it is what God wants. These thoughts reduce the severity - wearing against your will, hot weather, not fashionable - of the act for many.

The gaze not just tells women if they should cover more but also what to cover and how much. Women learn that certain types of clothes in certain situations attract more attention than others like a pair of jeans or a *rida* because the majority is not wearing them. They start to add layers of clothing - a headscarf,

a coat, a veil - as men continue to stare at them in public. Some use adjustable clothes like a *chaddar*[18] to wrap their bodies and hide their clothes temporarily and take it off later as they move between spaces with different social dress codes.

While what's appropriate for women to wear is a relative idea - means different things to different people, women learn there are certain do's and don'ts when going out in public, especially in a bus. This may include a *dupatta*[19] preferably covering the head but at least the upper part of the body to conceal the breasts; no deep necklines for the same reason; no fitted dresses to not reveal the shape of the body; no bright colours to draw attention; full or quarter-sleeves to hide the arms especially when holding the railings; *shalwar*[20] over fitted-pants so when one sits, the ankles don't show and the shape of the thighs is not revealed; and nothing really fancy like glitter or bling.

Some non-clothing related rules would include no makeup for how it enhances certain facial features and no jewellery for the noise they make.

With so many things to worry about, an increasing number of women are turning to the Saudi-style *abaya*[21] as an easy way out. It is loose and long; and contains and covers every inch of the body. "I have worn abaya for a very long time and I didn't do that for religious reasons. I had to travel in public transport and I had to be conscious about my undergarments; that they are not showing. That my body is properly covered. I didn't like *abaya* to be very honest. But when I started travelling in buses independently, I thought if I start wearing abaya, these problems will end. I won't have to check my clothes, I can stand and sit whichever way I want. My dressing changed because of this. I was not a religious person at all; in fact, I felt suffocated in my *abaya* but I had to wear it because I had no other choice," Farah, who only recently stopped wearing abaya, reveals.

Women compromise on their preferences and dress according to the social

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18   A long and wide unstitched piece of cloth used to loosely wrap around the head and the body over regular clothes.
19   A dupatta is a little smaller than chaddar and is one part of the three-piece clothes - long shirt, loose trousers and dupatta - women wear regularly.
20   A pair of loose trousers which is wide around the waist and narrow at the bottom.
21   A robe-like garment, usually of black colour, worn over regular clothes by Muslim women in many countries.

norms. They adjust their purchasing habits and develop clothing likes and dislikes according to what's acceptable in the society and make these decisions almost subconsciously. This becomes 'their' style and helps create an image of them in the eyes of the others.

"We think we wear whatever we want to; I am that confident, I am that brave. It is an act of bravery to wear whatever you want to, first thing. Travelling in public transport actually plays a role in defining your style. Like I used to wear a lot of *kurtas*[22]; I always defined it as my style. Now, in the hindsight, it was a strategic decision to tone down my sensuality. I didn't know I was making this decision but that is what it was. It is difficult to critically understand what decisions we make and why we make them because these ideas are such a strong part of our mindset, that they define things for us. When I started buying my own clothes, I made this decision for myself, to wear *kurtas*. And now, whenever I am abroad, in a place where I can wear whatever I want, it is a mental block for me to wear certain kinds of clothes like fitted shirts. I cannot wear clothes that are too close to my body; I feel it is not my style and I will be uncomfortable in it," Sana shares as she evaluates her clothing decisions.

Women don't deviate from this even if they want to or if they can because every change is noticed and could send a wrong message to others about them. So, women do self-surveillance and continue with the charade. Farah's experience of wearing *abaya* sheds light on this aspect. "I started wearing *abaya* to university because I was travelling in public buses and on days, when I had presentations, I wanted to wear nice clothes but I couldn't because if you wear *abaya* every day and then one day you don't, you wonder what would the neighbours say or what would your classmates think. I had these thoughts in my head," she shares.

Fashion and style become secondary concerns as women begin to dress for comfort which they hope would come in the shape of less surveillance of their bodies. This peace of mind is also linked to the belief that now their body is in an acceptable state and they won't be blamed in case something bad happens. This makes it easy for women to dismiss the gaze when it still happens and allows them to focus on important things. Hence, women pay attention to

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22   Long traditional shirt but looser.

the benefit they get out of this compromise rather than seeing this just as a restriction; they feel it is something they do it for themselves and not so much for others. And even if it is for the society, some say, it is not that bad a trade-off as it ensures social order.

"If you are living in a neighbourhood with a particular mindset; religious, conservative, then I think women should adjust their clothing according to the social norms of that area. You know as the saying goes, when in Rome, do as the Romans do. I am not saying you should not wear what you want to wear; just don't wear something that would create troubles for you," Henna shares her point of view.

Now would be a good time to mention again how one's socioeconomic class influences these experiences. Women from upper class can manage to wear what they want as they can afford to shield themselves from 'unsafe' people and spaces as they shuttle between elite indoor spaces in their personal cars, sheltered from the invasive stares of strangers.

Erum tells me how surprised she was when she interacted with the elite of Karachi for the first time at her workplace. "When I got introduced to this completely different demographic of our society - I didn't even know they existed - and I saw what they wore; skirts and dresses, I was appalled. I wondered where do they even wear these dresses; we live in the same city but where are they wearing them; where are these places," she recalls wondering like a child.

Erum then goes on to explain how this experience is possible for some women. "It is really strange; my new boss comes to work wearing dresses sometimes. She is in the same social circle as I am; she is surrounded by the same people as I am and no one raises an eyebrow because of her class. It is a question of power; she is in the position of power, she is the boss! Plus, her privilege shields her from walking in the streets and being outdoors," Erum elaborates.

Unfortunately, the freedom of women in one segment of the society doesn't really help the broader cause because not everyone has the same circumstances. The ever-present male gaze eventually disciplines women into socially-approved femininities. It is so pervasive that those who don't conform stand out and

become the centre of attention.

It would be an incomplete assessment if I don't highlight the powerful role of a woman's reputation in disciplining their bodies. Women's behaviours are effectively regulated through this idea of reputation, which is essentially the image of each individual woman in the eyes of the society. This image is created by evaluating a woman's actions and attributes - how she speaks to a man, how careful she is about her body or even who she is friends with - against the dominant social norms.

From a very young age, most women are explicitly taught about gender roles and expectations in their families; are compared to other women as a way of judging and disciplining; and are warned of consequences for not adhering to these ideas such as being labelled as too 'outspoken' or 'open-minded which could negatively impact their reputation.

As a result, women are always concerned about how society sees them and feel pressured to protect their reputation of a 'good' woman. Men, on the other hand, are free from any such expectations which put the burden of following the norms solely on women's shoulders.

"When a man and a woman are walking towards each other, chances are, they will both brush up against each other if no one changes their position. As a woman, I don't want that. But why am I the one who is feeling awkward about this interaction; why is the man not feeling that way. It is because my private space is very important; because I have a lot to lose in terms of my reputation, my respect, even my virginity if things go wrong. If people see men are brushing up against me, they will think I am an 'easy' woman, or I will earn a reputation for myself as a woman who is not bothered by stranger men touching her and then more men will cross their limits and try to do things beyond brushing up against me; they will grope me or invade my privacy in some other way," Nida tells me in graphic details, emphasising that women have these pressures and men don't.

Hence, women's choices are heavily influenced by how they might affect their reputation in the eyes of the society. Take their response to harassment for instance; women often don't speak up against the harasser because of the

notion of shame attached to it and the possibility of victim blaming which could ruin their image of a 'good' woman, make them the 'talk of the town' and lead to even worse treatment by men.

The same reasoning is applied to women's clothes. In a society where clothes represent modesty and culture, and women are seen as the flag-bearer of traditions, what women wear becomes a matter of public order.

Families also play a role in maintaining this system for these very reasons as they often advise and encourage women who make changes to their lifestyle either because they believe that women should dress or behave in a certain way or are concerned about their safety and reputation. They inculcate in women certain ideas about moral boundaries and what's right and wrong from a very young age, and then give them the complete freedom to do whatever they want to do. However, the awareness of those ideas become their shackles as women police themselves willingly without any external effort. The social control of women is so effective that parents often don't worry about their daughters getting into bad habits as much as they do for their sons.

"Every person has their own limits; every family has their own boundaries. Parents tell children what their limits are which they should not cross. My parents never told me to not be friends with men or not hang out with them but I know my limits and that I shouldn't cross those limits; that I should come back home before a certain time and be careful about certain things. If you take care of this, everything is easy; there's nothing difficult," Nilofer tells me about her philosophy.

Beyond buses and blues

In this chapter, I will again go back to my participants' stories and utilise their experiences to articulate how can the present public bus system be improved in a way that it benefits women. Each one of these recommendations are formulated in a way that it is assumed they will be implemented in isolation, keeping in mind the limited capacities and interests of stakeholders in Karachi. However, an ideal scenario would be where they are all implemented at the same time; in which case, some recommendations would become redundant if others are implemented.

To borrow Erum' words, the public bus system in Karachi is 'rotten to the core' and needs a complete overhaul.

If we go back to the Figure 2.8 from Chapter 2, we can remind ourselves about all that is wrong with the public buses and the related infrastructure. Each one of those issues need to be addressed to ensure the system works in favour of the people, not against them.

However, as mobility in Karachi is a highly gendered issue because women have fewer options to move around than men, everything that is wrong with the public buses hurts women more than others. Hence, in this chapter, I will try to put forward a list of recommendations which could directly improve how women travel in the city; of course, most of these measures will have positive effects beyond addressing issues faced by women.

But before I go into details, I want to emphasise that design and planning should always be complemented with measures which aim for social change such as awareness campaigns and changes in laws because otherwise we only address the symptoms - which is necessary - but fail to cure the actual disease; that we reinforce the idea that certain people are weak, need protection and hence require special treatment; and that the powerful can get away with just about anything.

Take for example the transgender people who can sit in either of the two compartments in the bus depending on their chosen identity; however, the problem rests with other passengers - both women and men - who often object to their presence. No amount of design and planning can truly address this issue and what is needed is a change in attitudes, which requires a completely different set of measures and approach. I will not go into details about how this can be achieved because that is not the focus of this study.

Speaking about social change, I want to acknowledge that I am aware the society will not transform anytime soon and that is why my recommendations are situated in the current context. As much as I may personally disagree with certain ideas, for example, separate buses for women or short waiting time at bus stop to decrease chances of harassment, I feel the recommendations have to be based around the current reality. I see it as a bitter pill one has to take to bring down the fever.

This doesn't mean I am giving up on the idea of trying to change the society; in fact, I hope these recommendations will do just that. The premise of all these recommendations is that public buses influence performance of gender and by tweaking the buses in subtle ways, we can hope to see changes in how gender is shaped in general.

Some measures are simple and can be implemented as early as tomorrow, with very little effort. They don't need top-down planning and could be executed in a participatory manner. For instance, convincing the bus owners to shift women's section to the back and give them equal space; and gathering information about bus schedule and freely sharing it to the public. While other changes may take several years before they see the light of day such as getting bigger buses and training drivers and conductors to be professional.

In the long run, the state must take responsibility of the public transport system, because it is one of those critical services which are crucial for smooth functioning of urban life, should not be seen as a profit-making venture and should be provided for greater public good just like hospitals, schools and roads.

Currently, public buses in Karachi are run as a private venture with government only regulating routes and fares. No subsidy is provided by the state and the bus owners are left alone with the difficult task of providing cheap and efficient transport to the general public and making a profit at the same time.

This needs to be changed and public transport should be dealt with as a matter of right of citizens rather than as a service to customers. One cannot expect women to be financially independent and contribute to society if they are not even free to move from one place to another with ease; women need to know and feel - in letter and in spirit - that the public is their space as much as it is men's and this starts with their everyday mobility.

However, the magnitude of the effort required to fix the entire system should not discourage us from taking small, seemingly insignificant, steps because while the society will take its sweet long time to evolve, women need to go out now, get on the bus and do their jobs. If their situation can be improved even a tiny bit, it will make a big difference in their daily lives. Also, incremental changes pave the way for progress in the future and make implementation of big adjustments easier. That's why I have tried to split my recommendations into short-term, medium-term and long-term measures, so that the system can be improved progressively.

Short-term measures

Equal space
Women should have equal amount of space in the bus to sit and stand.

Seating arrangement
Women's section should be shifted to the back and men should sit in the front; this will eliminate or at least reduce the male gaze and touching, and increase women's sense of safety as there are very low chances of men turning all the way back to look at women or to touch them.

This way, women will also be spared of harassment by the driver.

In the long run, seats should be arranged in multiple directions so that no one passenger feels they are being watched by the rest continuously.

Gap between the seats
The space between the seats should be properly sealed so that men cannot touch women discreetly. The fact that men can harass women without getting noticed allows them to continue with their act.

Seat quality
The quality - height, back, material - of every single seat in the bus should be good and uniform.

Fluid compartments
The division between the sections for women and men should be fluid so people can move between them easily depending on the need. There are times when there are more women passengers in the bus, for example in the afternoon on routes with big universities as most women students rely on public buses, and there are empty seats in the men's section but the strict division between the two compartments doesn't allow free movement between them.

However, given the threat of harassment, many of my participants recommended, passengers should only be allowed to move to the other section to sit and not to stand, that this should be supervised by the conductor and somehow approved by the passengers.

Fares
Bus fares should be fixed and known to the passengers so that there's no confusion and women don't have to argue with the conductor unnecessarily. Also, there should be a better way of collecting fare so that there's no need to have a conductor in the first place.

Given that women are often financially dependent, the fare could also be reduced for them. However, this will work only if the business model is radically changed and the state pumps funds into the system.

Information

Navigating the public bus system is an acquired skill as information about the routes, timing and stops is not easily available and passengers rely on family members - mostly fathers - or strangers to know which bus to take and from where.

Not knowing how the system works makes it a scary setup and making this vital information easily available will democratise the system, reduce women's fears and increase their independence.

Physical safety

CNG cylinders should be removed from women's compartment and placed somewhere else so no passenger is at the risk of being too close to it if it explodes. During my fieldwork, I noticed a few buses had the CNG cylinder on the top of the vehicle, which could be a decent quick solution.

Separate vehicles for women

Many participants stressed there should be a separate bus service - for women and by women. With women in the driving seat, passengers will be spared from the harassment by the driver and conductor; and no men passengers mean women won't be watched all the time.

While some participants believe it would be hard to find women drivers and conductors, many others were optimistic and pointed out women who drive Uber and Careem taxis and vans at KU.

Medium-term measures

Driver-conductor duo

There's is a great deal of ambiguity about the role and responsibility of the driver and the conductor. From a business perspective, women passengers are their customers and their safety should be the duo's responsibility. However, that's very far from the reality.

In case of harassment, women often wonder if they should complain to the driver or the conductor and ask them to get the harasser off the bus; they doubt if they even have any control over their passengers or whether they will do something about it. While very few conductors and drivers are respectful,

most don't care what one passenger does to another and in fact, themselves are involved in harassment.

This absence of some kind of authority makes buses a very anarchic space, where the rules are easily violated and there's not much accountability. This should be changed and drivers and conductors should be held responsible for the safety of their passengers.

Commuters, both women and men, need to know that if they are hurt in any way, there's a process for registering complaints and getting justice; many women endure harassment quietly precisely because they know there's no way out and they have to accept it as their everyday reality.

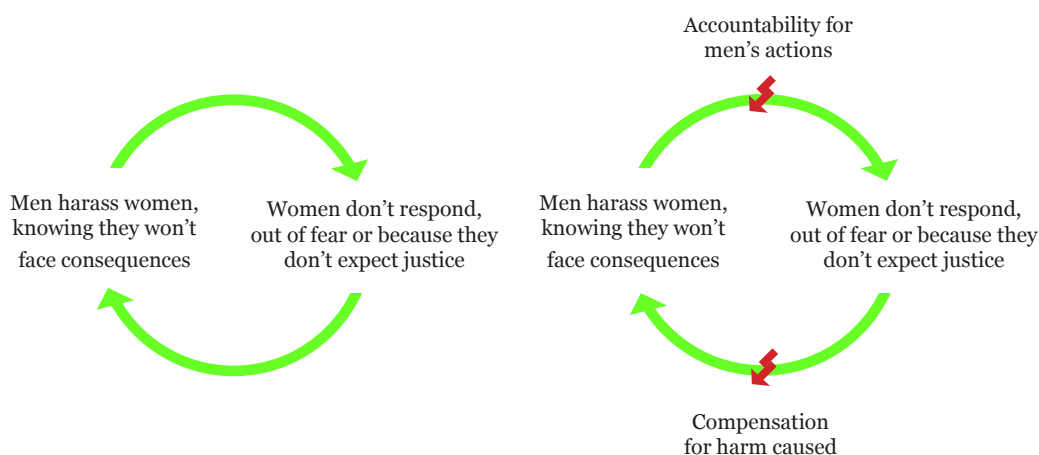And harassers should be held accountable and punished; they should fear consequences.

Figure 7.1 - The cycle of abuse and how it can be broken. Source: Author

While this mechanism has the potential to deter harassers, it can also reduce women's feeling of vulnerability and helplessness. Hopefully, it will also expose this open secret and people will probably stop pretending it doesn't exist or is not as big an issue as some women make it out to be.

Aside from this job, the driver and the conductor should also be trained to be professionals. From driving responsibly to being respectful to the passengers, the duo needs an upgrade by a big margin.

Further, at some point, women drivers and conductors should be inducted in the system. With only men drivers and conductors, women often feel alienated and without an ally when travelling in buses. Having women drivers and conductors will create a balance where customers (passengers) and service providers (drivers and conductors) are both women and men.

Long-term measures

Crowding
Karachi needs bigger and more buses to cater to its bulging population; the small, overcrowded buses that people use currently facilitate harassment as men passengers and conductors enter the already congested women's section and touch them while moving around.

Public buses should have decent space to sit, walk and move around, eliminating the possibility of people touching others unless and until they make a conscious effort.

Timing
The arrival and departure timings of buses should be regular, frequent and known to the passengers; this will reduce the uncertainty of the system which is one of the biggest reasons why women find public buses unreliable and hence scary.

Waiting for long and undetermined time period at the bus stop make women more vulnerable to harassment; punctual buses will reduce these fears to a great extent.

Better routes
Bus routes and stops should adequately cover the city so that women can move from one end to the other easily, independently and without any fear. Currently, areas at the further edge of the city are not well-connected and as a result, these places are considered far away and often avoided. A well-connected public bus system could ensure that different neighbourhoods of the city exist in a continuum and not in isolated bubbles as is the case right now.

Direct connections between far off places would also mean women won't have to change buses twice or even thrice and endure troubles they face at the bus stop,

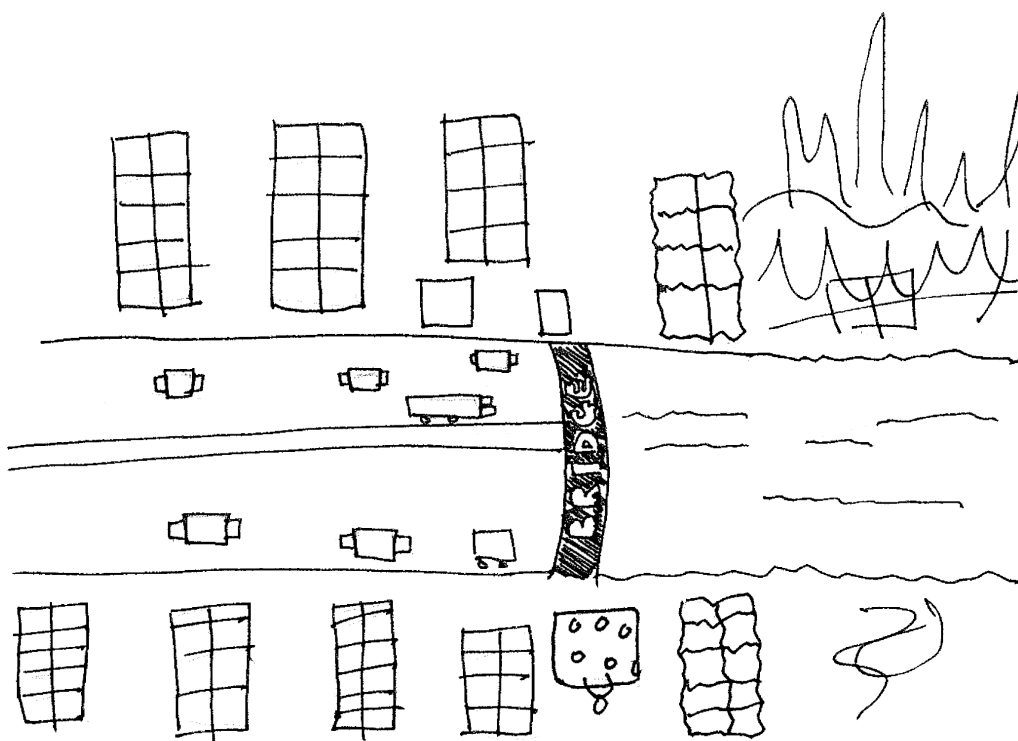on the streets and inside the bus again and again.

Figure 7.2 - Mahavish's map of Karachi, divided by a bridge with developed
neighbourhoods on one side (left) and areas in poor conditions on the side (right).

Night travel
Travelling in buses after sunset should be made safer. In a cyclic reaction,
women often avoid travelling at night because there are fewer women
passengers at that time and they feel unsafe. Introducing women drivers and
conductors, and making the duo responsible for their passengers' safety could
help achieve this goal.

CNG crisis
Public buses should have access to CNG[23] throughout the week because on days
when the fuel is not sold, very few buses ply the road and women have to wait
longer at the bus stop and travel in exceptionally crowded vehicles, which raise
the risk of harassment.

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23   Due to fuel shortage, CNG is supplied only few days of the week.

Bus stops

There should be designated bus stops with proper space for sitting and waiting and drivers should be obliged to stop there and there only. When in the bus, this will reduce the anxiety caused by the fear of missing the stop and going to an unknown place. And when waiting at the stop, passengers won't have to walk to the middle of the road and wave at the driver to stop the vehicle as this moving back and forth creates a great deal of commotion in the waiting area and gives harassers a chance to touch women.

Having a specific space to wait could also create a sense of community as same people would come to the same place at the same time on a regular basis. This could discourage harassment as the anonymity would be reduced to some extent.

However, there's also a flip side to this scenario; that women are also noticed by others, their arrival and departure time known to the harasser. But if women are encouraged to speak up and they know justice will be served, this issue could be addressed.

The space around the bus stop should also be revitalised. Currently, one can find tiny tuck shops selling paan[24] and cigarettes near most bus stops. These shops are frequented almost exclusively by men who hang around for a while, gawking at women waiting for the bus.

The surrounding should be designed in a way that it is not dominated by men only and is also active at night as 'eyes on the streets' will make it safer for women to use the space.

Pedestrian infrastructure

The city lacks adequate pedestrian infrastructure which in turn facilitates harassment of women.

For example, the absence of proper footpaths means women and men walk on the road alongside high-speed motor vehicles. This results in people walking too close to each other which provides an easy opportunity for men to harass

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24   A South Asian chewing treat made with areca nut wrapped in a betel leaf.

women. Having wide and continuous footpaths will allow pedestrians to walk freely, without bumping into each other.

Also pedestrian bridges[25], especially those which are completely or partially covered, induce fear of attack in women as they are often deserted, are far from the crowd because of the height and are completely dark at night. Ideally, pedestrian crossings should be at the street level so that people don't have to go up and down dozens of step every time they have to get to the other side of the road. And in case of pedestrian bridges, they should be completely visible from the street and well-lit at night.

Pedestrian bridges like this one, which is located near the city's central jail (which happens to be in the middle of the city) and is partially-covered for security reasons, are avoided by most women. Source: Author

Possible impact

Being a woman in Karachi affects how you travel and subsequently how you experience the city; ease of getting to a place influences women's interaction with that place and limited travel options mean women rely on their families and end up mostly socialising with them. That is why women try to do things that require no or least amount of commuting.

A good transport system would allow women to be free in their choices and explore the city more. Women could travel for leisure and not just for education and work; this would enhance their social life and have a positive impact on their emotional and mental well-being.

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25   Mustafa Kamal, who was the mayor of Karachi from 2005 till 2010, addressed the traffic issues of the city with the classic 'build more roads' philosophy. During his tenure, major roads were turned into high-speed, signal-free corridors and pedestrians were offered bridges with four flights of stairs (two on each side of the road) to cross the street. Many people avoid using these bridges because they are often too far, considered unsafe and require extra effort to climb.

Safe and reliable transport system would also reduce women and their family's fear of the city as it will no longer be too big, unapproachable and unknown. This will allow women to travel to places which are considered too far, alone and at night.

Given how services and facilities are scattered across the city and neighbourhoods are often not well-equipped to sustain healthy, urban life, a good public transport will increase women's access to these amenities and upgrade their living standards.

If less space in buses, no compensation for getting harassed and uninterrupted male gaze can reinforce social ideas about gender, an improved public transport system which makes women confident, unafraid and independent can also turn the same gender regime on its head as women use their bus experience in other aspects of their life.

Women in Karachi are already thriving despite living in a structure which restricts them in many ways; they are ingenious, going around the system and getting things done to the best of their abilities and according to the opportunities available to them. Imagine what they can achieve if the system actually works in their favour.

Last stop

I started this research with a curiosity about how women dress in Karachi, why they make certain clothing decisions and if these acts have any influence on their urban experience. In the months that followed, especially during the fieldwork, a link emerged between women's clothes and their mobility options, and I began to look closely at the public transport system. My goal was to understand what is the public transport system in itself and in the eyes of women, how they use it, how they experience it and how they are affected by it.

With the help of my 22 participants and their stories of commuting in Karachi, I got a peek into the urban life of young women and learnt how gender permeates something as mundane as a public bus. From the seating arrangement to the amount of space allocated for women, the experiences of my participants laid bare the oppression of the everyday, of the regular and of the taken-for-granted.

As my participants poured their hearts out telling me why they choose to stand rather than sit on the 'dangerous' seats or why they adjust to the image of the socially-sanctioned woman even if it is against what they believe in, I learnt what women do and what they don't do as they navigate the city, and their unique logic behind all these actions. What was most striking was the long-lasting effects of an act as simple as taking a bus, such as developing a unique sense of style or forever doubting the intentions of stranger men.

While the stories of my participants took me deep inside the bus as I observed every inch of the space and passengers' behaviours, the experiences also put

me at a vantage point from where I tried to see how what's happening inside the bus fits in the bigger cosmos we call society. From family structures to ideas about masculinity, the bus experiences revealed how Karachi's society functions and what it believes in.

In the end, making use of the wisdom shared with me, I put forward some recommendations which have the potential for making things better in small, simple ways.

Implications
Research

Most research which deal with gender and built environment focus mainly on Western examples of suburbanisation, housing and bathrooms which, on one hand, inspired me to look at everyday elements critically but, on the other hand, often felt quite far from the realities of a chaotic city in the Global South such as Karachi. In this regard, the experiences of my participants make a valuable contribution as they reveal how gender and built environment intersect in a city which is densely populated and has a radically different experience than the countries mentioned in the literature.

Particularly, these everyday experiences will work as a good background reading for similar research in the South Asian context, given the many socio-economic similarities between the countries of this region. One example that comes to my mind is a photo I saw during my online research on this topic in which a man passenger was touching women sitting in front of him in a bus in Sri Lanka through the gaps between the seats, just like men do in Karachi.

Regarding academic research on gender and mobility, I found that studies mainly focussed on the coverage and the use of public transport system, highlighting how women and men have different mobility patterns and how the infrastructure more often than not makes it harder for women to move. However, I found nothing on the gendered nature of the system itself. This is where the knowledge shared by my participants adds a new perspective on mobility to the existing literature as it looks at the public transport system with a fresh pair of eyes and from a unique angle.

Policy and practice

In terms of practical implications of the knowledge generated, my participants' experiences provide evidence that built environment is part of a city's social fabric and exists in a mutual relationship with the people who, on one hand, shape it but, on the other hand, are also shaped by it. The stories highlight how certain basic values such as equality and independence are intrinsically linked to the built environment and hence, the role planning can play in either inhibiting citizens or spurring social change, creating balance and ensuring justice.

In Karachi, where development is carried out through sporadic projects rather than long-term planning, this research can inspire decision-makers and planners to critically reflect on their plans and actions, and how they will influence urban life in years to come.

Through the experiences of my participants, this research also makes a plea to the state to take responsibility of the public transport system. The power holders in Karachi have not yet made the transition to a mindset which sees public transportation as a public good and not a service expected to make profits or at least breakeven. In this regard, this study hopes to galvanise support in favour of making public transportation a state priority.

Further, the recommendations derived from women's stories highlight the importance of listening to people and developing ideas that are rooted in the local reality as well as the value of low-key solutions. In Karachi, development projects are almost always top-down, rely heavily on foreign expertise and examples, and are expected to be showy in order to get votes come the next election season; that is why politicians prefer to spend their budget on building flyovers and underpasses which are hard to miss rather than replacing the decades-old water pipes hidden beneath the surface.

Speaking of governance, since the tradition and practice of local government system in Karachi are still weak[26], development projects for the city are

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26   Despite the stated national goal of devolution of power to the grassroots level, management of Karachi - in essence - is done at provincial, and in some cases, even federal level. There are laws and structures, which go as far back as 1972 to recent ones from 2013, which assign roles and responsibilities to local leaders and there have been periods when elected mayors ran the city; the struggle over the resources of the city means provincial and city governments are often at odds over municipal power.

envisioned in relation to the plans for the entire province - which is mostly agriculture-based and has a smaller population, rather than just the urbanised area - which has a specialised and advanced economy, and is densely populated. As a result, the nuances of complex urban life are often not considered when lofty plans are chalked out in the power corridors, focussing too much on the province as a whole and very little on the city as an independent ecosystem of its own. For example, inter-city bus and rail transport is always on the top of government agenda, while mass transit for the city of 15 million doesn't garner much enthusiasm. That is why, by revealing the intricacies of my participants' cosmopolitan lives, this study hopes to encourage sensitivity towards urbanity and its many facets in the decision-making process.

Last, but not the least, the study stresses the need for integrated planning both in terms of a) one physical intervention supporting and enhancing the other, and b) these physical interventions being carried out on the back of a bigger plan which seeks to change attitudes and mindsets. Take for instance the importance of upgrading bus stops and pedestrian infrastructure to improve the overall public bus system but also the necessity of raising awareness about equality and respect among all passengers.

Limitations and future research

Since research can be a never-ending process, I had to make certain hard decisions to honour my time restrictions and my capacities and interests, which meant not talking to more participants, not reading more books and submitting the thesis before a thorough edit. However, while this phase comes to an end with the final submission deadline, it also marks the start of the next phase where I or other researchers can expand this study and explore aspects not investigated currently.

For instance, this study can be made more intersectional. While I have considered ethnic background, religiosity and economic status of my participants when interpreting the data, I have been careful about making claims based solely on these background information because I felt I didn't have enough evidence from each of these categories. A future study can look at these categories as the foundation of human behaviour and urban life and can help answer the question of social change which should complement design and planning.

Also, I didn't interview women from an equally-important group of public bus users: the domestic helpers because of a) a lack of personal connection b) difficulty in getting access to them and c) time constraints as interviewing them would demand a completely different approach. Based on my observations, this segment uses the public transport in a different way, at different times and has a different outlook on the situation. If the findings of this study are to be used for planning purposes, the voice of this group of users must be considered.

It would also be interesting to replicate this research with transgender people as the study population. Given the power of public transport system in bringing people from different backgrounds together, inclusive public buses can give transgender people the visibility they need and strengthen their place in the society.

Further, while my participants include Islamic minorities such as *Shias* and *Bohras*, none of them belong to religious minorities such as Christians and Hindus. Since minorities in Pakistan are subjected to extreme discrimination and violence, interviewing them would add more richness to the findings. Also, this study talks in detail about men but doesn't consider their point of view; aside from informal chats with men from my family and friends, and some bus drivers and conductors, I didn't formally speak to any man. A future research could consider this aspect in order to look at the other side of the co

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فريا الياس

كراتشي وصناعة المرأة
تحليلات الحافلات العامة للمدينة طبقاً للنوع او الجنس

نبذة مختصرة

تتجول الحافلات العامة في كراتشي ، وما هي كراتشي إلا صورة مصغرة من المجتمع الاوسع في باكستان. إن ركوب الحافلة كامرأة ، في هذه المدينة ذات ال 15 مليون نسمة ، هو أكثر من مجرد انتقال من مكان إلى آخر ؛ بل إنها تحدد مكانتك في المجتمع وتشكل علاقتك بالمدينة. ومن اجل إستكشاف ما يعنيه حقًا السفر في حافلات كراتشي العامة المتقلبة ، فقد تحدثت إلى 22 شابة للحصول على نظرة خاطفة على حياتهم الحضرية في المدن العملاقة وقد سبق هذه المقابلات المتعمقة دراسة استقصائية عبر الإنترنت للحصول على انطباعات أولية حول تجربة المرأة داخل المدينة واستكملت بساعات من مراقبة الحافلات العامة والبنية التحتية المرتبطة بها مثل المساحة المخصصة للنساء في الحافلات و كيفية ترتيب المقاعد داخل الحافلات . كشف العمل الميداني الإثنوغرافي عن طبيعة تعامل الحفلات العامة في كراتشي بناء علي الجنس او النوع والتي بدورها تشكل أداء الجنس في التجارب اليومية للنساء مثل اختياراتهن المتواضعة لملابسهن ، والرقابة علي تصرفاتهن بناء علي اجسادهن والمواقف الصارمة تجاه اجسادهن. وإذا أخذنا المناقشة من المستوى الجزئي للحافلة إلى المستوى الكلي للمجتمع ، فإنني سوف اتسأل كيف أثر التعقيد الاجتماعي والسياسي والاقتصادي في كراتشي علي شكل تجربة المرأة في المدينة كشيء مختلف تمامًا عن تجربة الرجال. وقد ساهمت قصص المشاركين في البحث الأكاديمي مساهمة قيمة في كيفية تفاعل النوع الاجتماعي مع المدينة والفراغات العامة والبيئة العمرانية في كراتشي ؛ وأيضًا كيف يمكن جعل التخطيط في باكستان أكثر مراعاة لنوع الجنس كمسألة حقوق ولضمان المساواة بين جميع المواطنين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجنس ، المرأة ، الحافلات العامة ، البيئة المبنية ، المدينة ، كراتشي ، باكستان

إقرار

هذه الرسالة مقدمة في جامعة عين شمس وجامعة شتوتجارت للحصول على درجة العمران المتكامل والتصميم المستدام. إن العمل الذي تحويه هذه الرسالة قد تم إنجازه بمعرفة الباحث سنة ...

هذا ويقر الباحث أن العمل المقدم هو خلاصة بحثه الشخصي وأنه قد اتبع الإسلوب العلمي السليم في الإشارة إلى المواد المؤخوذه من المراجع العلمية كلٌ في مكانه في مختلف أجزاء الرسالة..

وهذا إقرار مني بذلك،،،

التوقيع:

الباحث: فريا الياس

التاريخ: يوليو ٢٠١٩

كراتشي وصناعة المرأة تحليلات الحافلات العامة للمدينة طبقاً للنوع او الجنس

مقدمة للحصول على درجة الماجستير في العمران المتكامل والتصميم المستدام

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الدراسات العليا

ختم الإجازة

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موافقة مجلس الجامعة .../.../...

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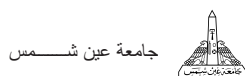
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كراتشي وصناعة المرأة
تحليلات الحافلات العامة للمدينة طبقاً للنوع او الجنس

رسالة مقدمة للحصول على درجة الماجستير في العمران المتكامل والتصميم المستدام

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يوليو ٢٠١٩