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<RRH>Metro Manila, Philippines</RRH>

<BOOK-PART-META><LBL>Chapter 7</LBL>

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<ABSTRACT><TITLE>Abstract</TITLE>

This chapter reports the results of a survey on sexual transit crime with college students in Manila, Philippines. The chapter introduces some basic information about the sample (316 students) and some empirical findings. Forty-three percent of respondents were sexually harassed, but 85% of those students who reported having been victimized did not report the incident. Fifty-one percent of female, 32% of male, and 15% of LGBTQI students reported having been a victim of sexual assault or harassment crime while on the bus, train, at the bus stop or station platform, or on their way to/from the transit stop. The most common precaution by women was “dressing in a certain way”, waiting for buses only at well-lit places, or avoiding bus stops and train stations where crime was prevalent. The chapter briefly summarizes the main findings from the case study and makes suggestions for research and practice.</ABSTRACT>

<KW><TITLE>Keywords</TITLE>: <KWD>sexual violence</KWD>, <KWD>groping</KWD>, <KWD>precaution</KWD>, <KWD>safety perceptions</KWD>, <KWD>transit environments</KWD></KW></OPENER>

<BODY>Metro Manila is the Philippine’s National Capital Region. It is home to almost 13 million residents living within a land area of 620 sq.km. (PSA, 2014). It is composed of 16 cities and one municipality. Moreover, Metro Manila is recognized as one of the emerging international hubs for higher education in the Asian region (Ortiga, 2018), as it has a total of 335 colleges and universities. About 88% of these higher education institutions are privately owned, while 12% are operated by corporations and family-owned businesses (CHED, 2017). Filipino students seek academic degrees not only to build their skill-set and improve their employability; for some, it is their stepping stone to overseas migration.

Metro Manila’s land transport is comprised of both road-based and rail-based transport (Figure 7.1). Formal transport is generally supplemented by informal transport

services. Some examples of the latter include: *jeepneys*, developed from retrofitted military vehicles left over from the war; AUVs or Asian utility vehicles; tricycles; and non-motorized rickshaws, locally known as *pedicabs* ([Mateo-Babiano, 2016](#)). These modes serve as important feeder modes to formal transport. Second to walking, *pedicabs* are often used by students in Metro Manila to go to school from the nearest train station ([Fillone and Mateo-Babiano, 2018](#)).

<FIG><LBL>Figure 7.1</LBL>: <CAPTION>Mass ~~t~~Transit ~~System~~—system in Metro Manila</CAPTION>. <ATTRIB>Source:

<URI><http://riles.upd.edu.ph/></URI></ATTRIB></FIG>

While public buses and trains represent the more formal type of land-based public transport in Metro Manila, plying specific inter-city routes, the majority of the population use jeepneys for their local travel. There are approximately 805 bus routes and 785 jeepney routes which serve Metro Manila’s inter- and intra-city travel. Another form of formal public transport is mass rapid transit (MRT). For a population of 13 million, there are only three rail transit lines (LRT-1, MRT-2, MRT-3). The first line commenced operations in 1984, the second in 1999, and the third in 2003. Each line carries approximately 400,000 to 580,000 passengers daily.

<HEAD1><TITLE>Transit Crime</TITLE></HEAD1>

Crime and violence have been a major concern in cities in the Philippines. A 2014 report by the Philippine Statistics Authority ([2014](#)) conveyed that ~~one~~ in ~~5~~ five women between the ages of 15 and 49 have experienced physical violence. Indeed, gendered violence in public transport commuting environments is prevalent in Metro Manila. Out of the 16 largest capital cities worldwide, Metro Manila ranks ~~7th~~—seventh worst in terms of “women’s perceived safety when traveling alone at night” or “on having been groped or experienced any other form of physical harassment whenever they use public transport” ([Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2014](#)).

In 2006, a gender-segregation scheme was implemented to limit sexual harassment inside the trains. The scheme designated the first three coaches for the use of women, children, the elderly, and the disabled ([Araneta, 2006](#)). While transit crime persists, there has been limited success from the part of the authorities in understanding which forms of public transit environments are less safe than others ([Newton and Ceccato, 2015](#)), or the extent to which place-based characteristics contribute to fear and crime ([Loukaitou-Sideris, 2011](#)). To get a better understanding of these issues, we turn to our empirical study.

<HEAD1><TITLE>Sexual Harassment on Transit as Experienced by University Students in Manila: Survey Findings</TITLE></HEAD1>

An online survey was initially administered to students who were enrolled at the University of the Philippines (UP), one of the premiere universities in the country. UP has 15 campuses spread across the country. In 2018, there were 26,453 students studying in UP Diliman, one of the campuses in Metro Manila, where this survey was first distributed. The university has a sprawling campus, with a relatively flat topography. Campus wayfinding is a constant challenge for many students, given that accessing buildings could mean accessing the next classroom in a building located ~~2~~two kilometres away. A 2017 survey conducted by the authors shows that most students either walk, take jeepney, or drive to navigate the UP Diliman campus ([Mateo-Babiano et al., 2017](#)). Because we were unable to reach the survey quota of at least 300 participants after ~~eight~~8 weeks of conducting the survey (from May through July 2018), we made the decision to extend the online survey for another six weeks and to target students enrolled at other universities within Metro Manila.

A total of 316 survey respondents completed the survey. The gender split was 46% female, 40% male, while 13% of the students indicated LGBTQI status. Approximately 98% of survey respondents reported that their ethnic background ~~is~~was Asian/Pacific Islander, and 96% indicated that they were Filipino in ethnicity. As expected, since the target participants were college students, about 96% of the respondents indicated that they belong to the 18–29 age group. About 45% of the students who responded to the survey reported that they did not use formal public transport. Indeed, the most common transport choices amongst these students were either ~~using~~ jeepneys or pedicabs.

Being stuck in peak hour congestion has been part of the everyday commuting experience of Metro Manila's 13 million strong populace ([Chin et al., 2017](#)). The survey revealed that ~~five~~5 out of ~~10~~ten students (51%) travel for an hour or more daily, over a quarter (26%) travel for ~~1~~one to two hours, and another quarter (25%) travel for more than ~~2~~two hours. While one out of four students responded that they use public buses three times or more weekly (26%), only seven percent use the trains with the same frequency. Almost half of the students who reported taking the train (45%), rode the train two days or less weekly.

<HEAD2><TITLE>Victimization</TITLE></HEAD2>

A total of 137 out of 316 students reported having experienced sexual harassment in transit environments. Of those, 51% were female, 32% male, **and** 15% LGBTQI reported having

been a victim of sexual assault or harassment crime while on the bus, train, at the bus stop or station platform, or on their way to/from the transit stop.

As shown in [Table 7.1](#), for female bus riders the two most commonly experienced types of harassment were non-verbal – “unwanted sexual looks or gestures” - and physical - “groping, touching inappropriately.” At bus stops and walking to/from bus stops or train platforms, respondents specified that the two most common unwanted behaviors they experienced were “unwanted sexual looks or gestures,” and “whistling.”

[Table 7.1](#): [Types of Harassment](#) ~~harassment~~ [Experienced](#) ~~experienced~~ by [Public](#) ~~public~~ [Transit](#) ~~transit~~ [Commuters](#) ~~commuters~~ in Manila in the past ~~3~~ [three](#) years.

	PUBLIC BUS			TRAIN MRT-3, LRT-2, LRT-1		
	FEMALE N=144	MALE N=127	LGBTQI N=42	FEMALE N=144	MALE N=127	LGBTQI N=42
Walking to the bus/train (en-route)	Whistling (22.92%) Unwanted sexual teasing/remarks 20.83%	Stalking (13.39%) Unwanted sexual looks or gestures 9.45%	Whistling (9.52%) Unwanted sexual looks or gestures 9.52%	Whistling (21.53%) Unwanted sexual looks or gestures (27.08%)	Stalking (14.17%) Unwanted sexual looks or gestures (10.24%)	Stalking (19.05%) Unwanted sexual looks or gestures (23.81%)
Waiting at bus stop/train platform (at station)	Whistling (20.83%) Unwanted sexual looks/gestures (17.36%)	Unwanted sexual looks/gestures (13.39%) Stalking (10.24%)	Calling you babe, honey, sweetheart (11.90%) Stalking (11.09%)	Whistling, (6.94%) Unwanted sexual looks/gestures (13.89%)	Stalking (12.60%) Unwanted sexual looks/gestures (13.39%)	Stalking (11.09%) Calling you babe, honey, sweetheart (11.90%)

	PUBLIC BUS			TRAIN MRT-3, LRT-2, LRT-1		
	FEMALE N=144	MALE N=127	LGBTQI N=42	FEMALE N=144	MALE N=127	LGBTQI N=42
Riding bus/train (on-board)	Unwanted sexual looks/gestures (29.86%) Groping/touching inappropriately (16.67%)	Unwanted sexual looks/gestures (16.54%) Groping/touching inappropriately (10.24%)	Unwanted sexual looks/gestures (21.43%) Groping/touching inappropriately (7.14%)	Unwanted sexual looks/gestures (22.92%) Groping/touching inappropriately (12.50%)	Unwanted sexual looks/gestures (16.54%) Groping/touching inappropriately (11.02%)	Unwanted sexual looks/gestures (19.05%) Groping/touching inappropriately (16.67%)

Source: Authors.

Similarly, train commuters experienced personal victimization in the train wagon, on the train platform and while heading to/from the train station. The two most commonly experienced forms of victimization on the train were: “unwanted sexual looks or gestures,” and “groping, touching inappropriately.” On the station platform, unwanted sexual looks or gestures and stalking by a stranger were the most common unwanted behaviors. When respondents were on their way to or from the train stations, the two most common harassment behaviors experienced by them were “unwanted sexual looks or gestures” and “calling you babe, honey, sweetheart, or something similar.”

Reporting

Incidents of transit crime and harassment continue to be underreported. The survey revealed that a staggering 85% of those students who reported having been victimized did not report or make a formal complaint. A slightly higher proportion of underreporting was found among women (89%), and slightly lower among LGBTQI (81%) individuals compared to men.

Safety Perceptions

Perceptions of safety on the train were slightly more positive than on the bus. While 39% of commuters reported that they feel “often safe” while riding the bus, and 33% felt safe waiting

at the bus stop, 45% of train commuters felt “often safe” when using the train, and 43% felt “often safe” while waiting on the train platform.

Unsurprisingly, the study revealed that commuters felt safer on buses and trains during the day, when 39% of commuters reported feeling “often safe” riding the bus, while 33% felt safe waiting at the bus stop. Even after dark, a slightly higher proportion of commuters perceived trains to be safer than buses. For instance, 29% of commuters reported that they ~~feel~~felt “often safe” when using the train as compared to 22% who indicated feeling safe using the bus after dark. A mere 18% of respondents reported feeling “often safe” after dark. One out of four “rarely felt safe,” while 13% never felt safe when using the bus in the evening. Most significantly, about 4% reported that they do not use the bus ~~nor~~or wait at the bus stop (5%) after dark.

Perception of safety differs between genders. Male bus passengers reported feeling safer as compared to their female and LGBTQI counterparts. During the day, 29% of male bus riders reported that they “always feel safe,” while only 7% of the female and 17% of the LGBTQI respondents felt the same. At the other side of the spectrum, about 9% of females never feel safe, compared to only 1% of male respondents who never feel safe.

During the night, 15% of male, 3% of female and 6% of LGBTQI commuters felt “always safe” across their whole journey. One third (33%) of female commuters reported “rarely feeling safe” traveling at night, or walking to/waiting at bus stop after dark (38%). A lower proportion of male bus commuters felt “rarely safe” taking the bus (22%) or walking to/waiting at the bus stop (23%) after dark. One out of four females reported never feeling safe at bus stops in the evenings.

<HEAD2><TITLE>**Precautions**</TITLE></HEAD2>

Student commuters were asked if they take precautionary safety measures while traveling~~ing~~ on a transit vehicle or waiting for the bus or train. An overwhelming 78% of bus commuters (i.e. 91% female, 66% male, 89% LGBTQI) and 82% of train commuters responded positively (i.e. 92% female, 71% male, 90% LGBTQI and 30% for other gender).

Fear of victimization while traveling~~ing~~ ~~makes~~leads 11% of bus commuters and 12% of train commuters to only travel during the day. While *on board* the bus or train, 14% and 23% of bus and train commuters respectively avoid wearing ~~jewellery~~jewelry, and 11% and 19% respectively also refrain from bringing purses and wallets and seek to dress “appropriately.” About ~~thirteen~~13% percent of these riders also prefer to wait for the bus only when the bus stop is well-lit and has other people present. They avoid bus stops and train stations where crime is prevalent.

<HEAD2><TITLE>**Student Perceived Problems and Suggestions**</TITLE></HEAD2>

Most commonly perceived challenges encountered by students using transit while *en-route* and *on-board* buses are pickpockets (35%), robbery (29%), and sexual harassment (23%). At bus stops, pickpockets (34%), poor illumination (30%), and robbery (29%) were ranked as the top key challenges. Although not articulated among the top three concerns at bus stops, a significant number of respondents (18%) flagged sexual harassment as a problem.

The overall top concerns on board buses are similar between female and LGBTQI respondents; both groups identified pickpockets (24%; 16%), robbery (16%; 13%), and sexual harassment (13%; 12%) as key problems. However, male respondents did not consider sexual harassment as a problem. On the other hand, only female bus commuters identified sexual harassment (13%) as a problem at bus stops. The male and LGBTQI transit users considered the lack of security personnel instead as another key issue contributing to lack of safety (Table 7.2).

For train commuters, key problems encountered while using the system included overcrowding, long lines and waiting times (57%), poor ventilation (49%), and frequent breakdowns (47%). Only 16% of the respondents indicated sexual harassment as a problem on board the train. The top three challenges at train platforms were overcrowding, long lines and waiting times (54%), pickpockets (33%), and poor ventilation (33%), with the additional problem of poor illumination identified as one of the top concerns of LGBTQI respondents only.

<TABLE-WRAP><LBL>Table 7.2</LBL>: <CAPTION>Top Three Challenges-challenges in Transit-transit Environments-environments in ManilaManila, by gender.</CAPTION>

	PUBLIC BUS			TRAIN MRT-3, LRT-2, LRT-1		
	FEMALE N=144	MALE N=127	LGBTQI N=42	FEMALE N=144	MALE N=127	LGBTQI N=42
Waiting at bus stop/train	Pickpocketing (13.42%) Robbery (12.63%) Sexual	Pickpocketing/poor illumination (11.87%) Robbery	Poor illumination (14.29%) Pickpocketing (13.10%)	Overcrowding, long lines and waiting times (22.64%)	Overcrowding, long lines and waiting times	Overcrowding, long lines and waiting times

	PUBLIC BUS			TRAIN MRT-3, LRT-2, LRT-1		
	FEMALE N=144	MALE N=127	LGBTQI N=42	FEMALE N=144	MALE N=127	LGBTQI N=42
platform (at station)	harassment (10%)	(10.29%) Poorly guarded/empty most of the time (10.29%)	Poorly guarded/empty most of the time (10.71%)	Poor ventilation (12.67%) Pickpocketing (11.29%)	(19.10%) Pickpocketing (14.93%) Poor ventilation (13.43%)	(21.77%) Pickpocketing (10.48%) Poor illumination (10.48%)
Riding bus/train (on-board)	Pickpocketing (35.44%) Robbery (29.11%) Sexual harassment (23.10%)	Pickpocketing (23.59%) Robbery (15.55%) Sexual harassment (12.87%)	Pickpocketing (16.39%) Robbery (13.77%) Poor illumination (8.85%)	Overcrowding, long lines and waiting times (14.70%) Frequent breakdowns (13.25%) Poor ventilation (12.52%)	Overcrowding, long lines and waiting times (14.11%) Poor ventilation (13.10%) Frequent breakdowns (11.09%)	Overcrowding, long lines and waiting times (15.88%) Frequent breakdowns (11.76%) Poor ventilation (11.18%)

Source: Authors.

Across all gender groups, the top two key recommended strategies that emerged were the installation of closed-circuit TVs (CCTVs) inside buses and train cars (21%) and at platforms (15%) and the deployment of police personnel to patrol platforms (18%) and on-board buses and train cars (12%).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study found that safety and security issues continue to be a major concern in public settings. Sexual harassment emerged as a key concern reported by women but not by men.

Victimization of female university students remains a persistent challenge, yet this has not been considered as a serious enough problem deserving government intervention. Student responses show preference towards paternalistic solutions (i.e. CCTV, policing, women-only transport) to address public transport victimization, although research shows the limitations of such strategies ([Gekoski et al., 2015](#)).

Encouraging more students to take up public transport, both for their commute and leisure trips, would require changes: Transitioning from paternalistic to empowering strategies in the design and planning for inclusive transport; testing the applicability of best-practice gender-sensitive and transit-oriented design interventions, which are tailored to the context of the Global South; and integrating public transport safety and security into current regulations such as the Philippines' Anti-Sexual Harassment Law, towards achieving sustainable, resilient and inclusive transport for all.

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