

SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND REPRODUCTION OF PATRIARCHY IN PUBLIC
SPACE IN NEPAL

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Prem Neupane and Bishnu Kala Neupane, who dreamed of me pursuing this level of academic achievement and always positively reinforced me for the hard work toward this journey.

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I am thankful to many people who supported me in different stages of producing this dissertation. Having frequently experienced different forms of sexual harassment in Kathmandu as a graduate student and a newly employed woman, I was not just shocked but had no idea what I could do at the moment of sexual harassment in public space. I suffered. Coming to Kathmandu from another part of the country, I had little clue for the number of such obstacles, which would harm an individual's life in a number of ways. Like other women, I learned to take harassment as men's nature and started looking for tricks and tips focusing on how I can be safe on my way to college or work. I learned to ignore, I learned to be scared, I learned to be skeptical of men, and I started wanting another family member to accompany me while going out. After I came to the US in 2008 and started my graduate studies in the fall of 2009, I had an opportunity to look back at the society I came from, and observed more closely some issues that touched women's lives in many ways. To utilize a summer trip in 2012 to Nepal, I had a chance to talk to many women in Kathmandu about their experience of using public transport. This conversation gave me a useful insight to understand the problem of sexual harassment not only as a personal matter, but a social issue. As I had just finished writing a paper on this, I learned that a young girl was murdered after a gang rape in a public bus in New Delhi, India. It was an alarm for me to explore more into this issue in the context of Nepal as I felt that the incident was not something that could be dismissed or ignored any more in Kathmandu. When I shared my deepening interest on this issue with my graduate advisor Dr. Patricia G. Steinhoff, she enthusiastically encouraged me to proceed. It is my great pleasure having her as the Chair in my dissertation committee. Her continuous support, encouragement, valuable advice and her understanding helped my research endeavor to turn in to this level of academic achievement. Without her consistent support, this

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines women's lived experience of sexual harassment in public transport and streets in Kathmandu, Nepal, paying attention to how women survive such harassment on a daily basis. It also documents how both men and women make sense of harassment, and their masculine and feminine how it impacts their identities. Then the study goes into the details of social and cultural constraints that set limitations for Nepali women in fighting sexual harassment. The study site for this research is Kathmandu – the largest metropolitan city of Nepal. It employs a mixed-method approach and uses data from both women and men in order to compare accounts and perceptions of sexual harassment. Questionnaire survey, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews are used to collect data. These data are complemented by field notes and observations from places in Kathmandu where sexual harassment was most likely to take place.

The central argument of this dissertation is that sexual harassment in public space in Nepal constitutes and reproduces dominant norms of patriarchy that are also observed in other social contexts such as in families and workplaces. I argue that men and women learn dominance and submission from homes, schools, peers, and society, and the norms of dominant patriarchy are maintained through sexual harassment. Power and privilege for Nepali men is invisibly reproduced through cultural socialization, and as a result, men are largely unaware of themselves as explicitly gendered. Sexual harassment in Kathmandu's public space creates a physical and ideological separation of sexes and diminishes the possibility of public space as being suitable for women. Despite the significant economic and political gains women have made in Nepali society, men continue to use violence to dominate and control women in public space.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In one chilly afternoon, as a regular data collection schedule, I decided to conduct an observation on a pedestrian overpass near Ratna Park, a public park at the center of the city of Kathmandu. During daytime, the overpass was always crowded with various types of people: pedestrians, streets vendors, and people who would hang out at the overpass for a prolonged period of time. In conversations with my female friends and with my research participants, I was told that these bridges were one prime location where women experience sexual harassment most. I was in a casual white jacket and jeans with a small backpack on my back. As a researcher, my plan was to observe harassment against women and take notes of that. As it was the winter time, there were some men standing on the side of the overpass enjoying the warmth of the sunshine. A few women were standing in the corner quietly and they seemed as if they were waiting for somebody. I walked back and forth across the overpass a couple of times, and finally stood in a place from where I could see most of the overpass area.

Men hanging out there were individuals, in pairs, and in groups. They were talking and laughing and some were eating roasted peanuts. I heard some commenting on women who were walking by. After about 5 minutes, a rally of the Maoist party walked on the street. As I was looking down at the rally, a man around 50 years old came close to me and joined me looking at the rally. Then I moved a little further. But he again came closer to me and touched my shoulder from behind. I looked at him but he did not pay attention to me. He seemed he was unaware of what he was doing. Then I again walked away from him. He stared back at me and he left the overpass. I again went to the place where I was standing first.

Then, to my surprise, I saw a young man very close to me. After a while, he started a conversation asking me my name, where I was from, and why I was there. I told him that I liked spending some time outside in winter days and this was one of my favorite places. He continued the conversation by mentioning a popular Indian movie *Taare Jameen Par (Like Stars on Earth)*. Then he asked my educational background. I said I was a university student. Then he asked if I was also a journalist. I said “no”. I asked him why he was in the overpass and if he came there regularly. He told me that he was a master’s student with a chemistry major at a university in Kathmandu. He was 26. Then he left the overpass after mentioning that he would be back in half an hour after attending an event. After a while, I also left the overpass in order to go to a place where I could write notes of the conversation with the man.

Then I went back to the overpass. After half an hour the young man suddenly appeared in front of me. I had not thought that he would come again. Then, he requested me to go to the park on the other side of the street so that we could chat more. After his persistent request, I decided to walk with him because I thought that was going to be good research “data” for me. As we were walking, he asked questions about my family. Then he asked me to go to a guesthouse to spend time together with him. He added, “it will be fun”. I was so shocked when I heard that. Then, I started feeling nervous. My heart pounded. I felt insecure. I questioned myself if I was going to trade off my safety for my research. Then I rejected the man’s proposal politely. He kept insisting me. Then I said I had to leave for my home as my parents were waiting for me. Then, he asked if I have a Facebook account. I said “no”. Then he asked my phone number. Since I was partly nervous, I could not utter “no” promptly. I gave him my husband’s number. Then I escaped from there and went home. I had a sense of relief. In the evening, my mind was so occupied with the incident and the conversation that happened during the day. Again

something not expected happened. I received a text from the man on my husband's cellphone asking me what I was doing and if I had dinner. Then he asked me if I could meet him the following day. After I told him my purpose of being on the overpass and talking to him, he discontinued the conversation.

I was in my fieldwork to look for answers to my research questions, but the experience left me with many questions unanswered. I kept asking: Was the overpass not made for women? How could the man of my father's age place his hand on my shoulder? How could a man younger than me approach like this and ask me to spend time with him in a guesthouse? Does my presence in that space mean I was waiting to be approached by men? What made these men so powerful? Why was I afraid of the man?

I would like to use the vignette above as a launching point for this dissertation as this provides some important insights on women's presence in public presence in Kathmandu. First, public spaces are masculinized and dominated by men. Women are there usually for a brief time if any, or they mostly use these spaces as transits. Second, women's stable presence in public space is marked, and it does stand out. Women using such spaces in the way men do are perceived as "available" for men who ask questions about women's private life. And, third, women cannot take prompt actions against the perpetrator due to various reasons. As a result, the effect of such experience can have a profound impact on women's psychological life, going beyond merely an experience of transient encounters of harassment. Men, on the other hand, seem to see nothing wrong with such acts.

The incident above is not my one-time experience. As a graduate student first and a young female employee later in the last decade, I had countless incidents when I was sexually

harassed in streets and public buses in Kathmandu. Passersby in streets would stare at my breasts without a reason. Men who seemed to be of my father's age would touch different parts of my body in a public bus. It was shocking and quite unusual to me at first. After I shared this with close friends of mine, I learned that it was a part of many young women's everyday life in most public spaces in Kathmandu. Those who could buy private scooters would escape, but those who used public vehicles would always suffer. I suffered. Public and media attention in Nepal is mostly drawn by extreme cases like gang rapes, torture, or death. While those are certainly more serious situations, there is a lot that the underlying "rape cultures" of various types contributes to the many levels of sexual violence leading to those extreme cases that we read about. Therefore, the experience of sexual harassment is not foreign to me in that particular cultural context.

My experience, both during my work, education, and fieldwork, provides important insights on how patriarchy operates in public spaces in Nepal. This dissertation is about a reproduction and enactment of a traditional patriarchy and the social constraints and social controls that shape the lives of both men and women. This is an investigation of how patriarchy works in contemporary Kathmandu (which has experienced some notable socio-political changes in recent decades). It is a time when women go into public spaces that previously have been privileged male enclaves. I do so by closely examining the social context within which harassment of women in public space occurs in Kathmandu.

Patriarchy and women's access to public space in Nepali society

Nepal remained the last Hindu Kingdom on the planet until the overthrow of the monarchy in 2007. The Hindu norms and ideals have historically conditioned the institution of patriarchy in Nepali society, shaping differences across gender, ethnicity, caste and religion. Such differences have had profound consequences on gender and other forms of inequalities, access to resources,

legal rights, and power. About 40% of the country's population is *janajatis* or indigenous ethnicities that traditionally do not follow the Hindu religion and the caste system (NEFIN 2016). However, as the religion and culture of the rulers and elites, Hindu practices influenced the lives of those non-Hindu ethnic communities as well. Brunson (2016) notes that several non-Hindu ethnic groups were placed roughly into a middle position on the caste hierarchy, below the high castes who abstained from consuming ritually polluting substances such as alcohol and certain kinds of meat, and above the low caste, who were engaged in such practices. Hindu practices and rituals were imposed by the rulers and high caste groups through Hinduization and Sanskritization by introducing practices and rules to non-Hindu groups as part of mainstreaming them to a unified Nepali society. Such practices reinforced patriarchy further, subjugating women's position. For example, Mitra and Kumar (2004) write:

In non-Hindu society and culture, particularly those of the indigenous peoples such as Gurung, Magar, Rai, Limbu and Tamang, traditionally there has been no discrimination between son and daughter. They generally do not take daughters as liability. However, in the last 230 years, the process of internal colonization or Hinduization or Sanskritization has forced some indigenous people to emulate Hindu social and cultural values. In such families like Hindu families, daughters are taken as liability (p. 235).

Although the ethnic or *janajati* groups were largely influenced by Hindu religious and cultural practices, the dominant way of seeing them as “alcohol drinking” people positioned them as subordinate to the high caste Hindus. This created discriminatory attitudes toward certain ethnic groups such as Tamang, Rai, Limbu, Gurung, and Magar by the high caste Hindus (World and DFID 2006).

Another layer of discrimination based on language and cultural difference in Nepal lies between the people in the south (Terai region) and in the hill regions. The dwellers in the southern plain, the so-called Madhesi communities, who are ethnically and socially close to Indians just across the border, have faced multitudes of discrimination by the Nepali state. Madheis are largely historically excluded from state participation in government administration and military. Because of their relatively darker complexion and their different Nepali language accent, many people from the hill and the mountain areas treat them negatively. Certain jobs that are considered as belonging to a “lower category” are taken up by the Madhesi people in Kathmandu. For example, they work as street vendors, plumbers, construction workers, barbers, and tailors. Their work is often belittled by the originally hill-dwelling high caste Hindu elites. Table 1.1 gives a broader picture of Nepali society paying attention to the differences in terms of various social categories. As I will show in Chapter 6, these macro-level ethnic, caste and geo-political discriminatory discourses appear in forming and representing different forms of masculine identities with regard to sexual harassment.

Table 1.1 Dimensions of inequality in Nepal

Social category status	Gender	Caste	Ethnicity/ Race	Language	Religion	Geo-political
Dominant	Men/boys	Brahmin, Chhetri	Caucasoid	Nepali	Hindu	Parbatiya (Hill dweller)
Subordinate	Women/girls	Dalit	Janajati/ Mongoloid	Other	Non-Hindu	Madhesi (Plain dweller)

Source: Adapted from “Unequal Citizens” (World Bank and DFID 2006)

Many researchers have noted that the status of women of indigenous ethnic groups in Nepal is relatively better than that of the Hindu women in that the indigenous groups are characterized by more egalitarian gender roles. For example, compared to high cast Brahmins

and Chhetris, low caste groups and people from indigenous ethnic groups have greater freedom to work outside their homes. However, as Brunson (2016) cautions, gender, caste and ethnicity do not exist as neat sociological categories across cultures and societies; they are to be defined with regard to the micro-politics of the local context. Similarly, the creation of the identity of “Nepali women” or “Nepali men” is not homogeneous. I pay close attention to women’s and men’s narratives as they position themselves in terms of their gender, caste and ethnic identities in their interviews.

Acknowledgement of the complexity in labeling and defining the nature of gender, caste and ethnicity, however, does not prevent us from making general observations with regard to how women have been treated in Nepali society. Men-privileging educational practices have largely influenced the way boys and girls are treated in family and society. Traditionally, education was an exclusive domain of men. Therefore, the institutions of family and school put girls at a disadvantage when it comes to providing educational and other opportunities for employment and social mobility (Rothchild 2006). Drawing on Ashby (1985) and Jamison and Lockheed (1987), Stash, Sharon and Emily Hannum (2001) identify three major factors that discourage Nepali parents from investing in education for girls: 1) daughters are expected to leave their parents’ house while sons are regarded as the legitimate heirs of their tradition and property, 2) daughter are treated as more suitable for farm and domestic work than men, and 3) the traditional gender role division requires women to be responsible for domestic chores. Such a division of domains creates a hierarchy between men and women where men often feel entitled to domination while women regard themselves as submissive individuals. As a result, Nepali women, especially those in the dominant Hindu tradition are “socialized to embody modesty,

shyness, shame and a strong sense of propriety especially in duty to husband and family” (Crawford, Kaufman and Gurung 2007:100).

Until quite recently, higher education, paid employment, and access to urban public space, all of which have been recognized as indicators of Nepal’s development and modernization, have largely remained within men’s domains (Grossman-Thompson 2013) and a majority of Nepali women have been left beyond the reach of development (Ahearn 2001). According to the Ministry of Education’s report in Nepal, there were 37.3% female students in higher educational institutions in the academic year 2009/2010. Furthermore, according to the Review of Research Literature on Girls’ Education in Nepal reviewed by UNESCO in 2004, women constitute only 7.5 % of the total bureaucratic workforce. The UNESCO study also shows that women have fewer chances of earning higher level academic degrees and of being selected for in-country and overseas courses and study tours, both of which are important for promotion opportunities. Nepalese educational policies are not gender sensitive, and it can be argued that gender neutrality in these policies has fostered the low participation of women in education. Lokshin and Glinskaya (2009) note that in many cases, Nepali social norms and the structure of the Nepali labor market provide limited employment opportunities for women. Still worse, as they note, traditional family norms in Nepal reinforce the husband and his family’s objections to wives working away from home, and this makes women work at home in order to maintain family prestige in the eyes of neighbors and relatives.

Amidst such cultural norms and institutions, there are some radical shifts in Nepali society that have transformed women’s lives in various ways, calling into question some of the assumptions of traditional patriarchy. I discuss three reasons behind such shifts. First is the change in schooling and education for girls. While education was exclusively the man’s domain

in the past, increasingly more women have started attending institutions of higher education. The 2011 census statistics shows that there still exists a large gender gap in terms of adult literacy rate (men 71% and women 47%). This, however, is a noticeable increase in women's literacy rate compared to 1991 when only 17.4% of adult women were literate. The future scenario of women's literacy is more optimistic since the youth literacy rate for women age 15 to 24 is 77.5%, according to the recent UNICEF statistics (UNICEF 2015). This suggests more women and girls will be attending schools and institutions of higher education in future, and many of them are likely to enter the "elite" domains of the workforce that requires educational credentials.

Second, concurrent with the globalized economy, there is a noticeable change in the economic market in Nepal, and this has profoundly affected the historically dominant gendered patterns of labor by creating opportunities for women to move to urban public spheres for paid employment (Grossman-Thompson 2013; Rankin 2004). Coupled with these economic changes, there are political movements and transformations within the country that have increasingly recognized the rights and space for women in politics, education, and bureaucracy. These changes have called into question long-held norms about female domesticity and prompted discourses on what the role of Nepali women can and should be in modern Nepal (Grossman-Thompson 2013).

Another noticeable change in Nepali society is labor migration to many foreign countries, which has again been largely gendered-- many men traveling abroad leaving their wives and children behind. This has impacted the dynamics of gender ratio and economically active population in the country (Lokshin and Glinskaya 2009). As a result, as Clewett (2015) observes, there is an increasing feminization of the workforce to fill the gap left by these absent men in the

country. This has resulted in women's navigation of unfamiliar gender roles that are traditionally not within women's domain. Many women now take up the role of family head with other new and uncharted responsibilities in their husband's absence. As a result, they are required to access public space for shopping, groceries, community meetings, and other involvements in community responsibilities that were previously handled by their husbands. This requires them to move from the "backward" and domestic sphere to the "forward" and more visible public life. As they move forward, they may receive conflicting messages about how their mobility will be received by others (Grossman-Thompson 2013).

Due to the reasons explained above, traditional gender roles are juxtaposed with new responsibilities and opportunities that Nepali urban women have taken on as they have moved to cities (ActionAid 2011). Clewett (2015) notes that Nepal has experienced the highest rates of urbanization in the South Asian region from 2010 to 2015. With such urbanization, there is women's increasing participation in education and service sectors that has expanded their reach in the public domain of life, requiring more mobility on their part. With political advances, many women in Kathmandu have increasing opportunities for study and work, which require them to be more mobile and to access public spaces alone. *HomeNet Nepal* (2015) reports that about 90% of the female population in Kathmandu is involved in the informal sectors of employment, where women greatly outnumber men.

As Nepali women continue to pursue the promises of advancement and modernization brought about by global economic changes and local politics, they are both "allowed" and required to step into the traditionally male-dominated public sphere. This access, however, creates tensions between traditional patriarchal norms and the notion of a free individual who pursues education and paid employment. New opportunities for women come with challenges

that result from breaking out of a traditional femininity identity that relegated women within dependent relations with dominant roles. In this regard, Liechty (2010) is right when he notes “the modern Nepali ‘public woman’ is free to go to school, ‘free’ to go to work, ‘free’ to consume modern goods and enter the public sphere, but unlike the ‘public man’, she must constantly bear the burden of *ijjat* (honor, my translation) and sexual harassment” (p. 341). As the quote indicates, as modern Nepali women use historically male-dominated public space as transits and paths to their work and education without an escort of a male member of the family, they experience sexual harassment and violence in such spaces. That is, as new possibilities for mobility emerge, new spaces are created where women continue to experience vulnerability and subordination by men, which profoundly affects women’s lives.

Tensions between traditional patriarchy and women’s presence in public space are more obvious in urban areas where more women now have access to public domains. Kathmandu-- the capital and the largest metropolitan city of the country -- is a notable example. According to the 2011 Census, Kathmandu holds more than one million inhabitants with an annual growth rate of 6.12% within the area of 50.67km². As most of the service sectors are centralized in this city, it has become the central hub for education, bureaucracy, employment, tourism, and business. Therefore, there is a continuous flow of people from other parts of the country since internal migration from various places to Kathmandu has been increasing at a daunting rate. Such internal migrants to Kathmandu are largely economically active population from the hills and mountains (Clewett 2015), with a small proportion of population from the southern part known as Terai or Madhes.

I selected Kathmandu as a research site for this study since the city represents the changing lives of women brought about by these forces. This city is witnessing rapid

urbanization in recent decades with people’s increasing access to commodities offered by globalization. People’s mobility and consumer culture has been changing more rapidly than ever before. This has impacted people’s life in various ways. Long-standing son preference culture is slowly changing (Brunson 2016). Girls are also provided with better opportunities for education and employment, which require them to access public space more frequently and for a longer time. Many middle-aged people who got an opportunity for education in the past moved from the agriculture-based subsistence economy to the service economy, and many of them have migrated to Kathmandu for better opportunities for their children—both boys and girls.

On the flipside, poor infrastructure due to insufficient electricity, transportation, drinking water and other factors has impacted the safety and livability of the city. Roads are narrow and poorly planned, streets and marketplaces are crowded, and traffic is congested almost all the time. The following picture is representative of the situation of public vehicles during rush hours in major public vehicle stops in Kathmandu.



Figure 1.1: Micro-bus during rush hours in Kathmandu

As most people cannot afford to buy private vehicles, public vehicles are the major means of transport. The main means of transport in Kathmandu are large public buses, micro-

buses, and tempos¹. The number of people riding motorbikes in recent years is soaring since they are convenient and a less expensive means to get to a destination. Although we can also see a rapid rise in the number of young women riding scooters (Brunson 2016), riding such two wheelers has largely been a gendered practice, mostly a domain of men. Only a few women who represent corporations, non-governmental organizations, and are from high socio-economic class are using private vehicles. As the city becomes more crowded but less secure, the chances of women and girls becoming vulnerable to violence and harassment are higher and more frequent (HomeNet Nepal 2015). The streets, waiting stations, and public transport in Kathmandu provide a convenient setting for perpetrators to abuse women with several forms of sexual harassment. Although there have been some policies and provisions, they have not been properly implemented and the safety and security of these girls and women has not been a major priority of the government of Nepal (ActionAid 2013; HomeNet Nepal 2015). While several reports prepared by non-government organizations (NGOs) outline its pervasiveness (e.g., ActionAid Nepal 2011; Thapa and Deuba 1994), the issue of sexual harassment in Nepal has gained little attention in scholarly literature.

Sexual harassment as a global problem

The challenges women experience in the form of sexual harassment and violence in public space are not unique to the context of Nepal. It is a global problem. The growing trend of women coming out of their homes for a more mobile life has presented problems of sexual harassment and assault in public places on a global scale (Chokalingam and Vijaya 2008; Schultz 1988; Welsh 1999). Scholarship on topics of gender and space also suggests that women are highly susceptible to unpleasant experiences both socially and psychologically when they become more

¹Tempos are three-wheeled auto-rickshaws that are smaller than buses and can accommodate about ten passengers at a time.

spatially mobile (Gardener 1990; Painter 1992). The World Health Organization estimates that up to 71% of women have experienced sexual violence at some point in their lives, and approximately one in five women experiences rape or attempted rape during her lifetime. Historically, violence against women has been framed as a “private” family matter, and police intervention was not supposed to be required (Schechter 1982). Even when the perpetrator was a stranger and the attack happened in public space, the victims of such assaults were largely negatively affected by underlying social values that do not give much respect to women, that define what is appropriate and civilized behavior, and that entitle people to judge how women should dress and otherwise present themselves in public space (Russell and Van De Ven 1976).

Working Women United (WWU) first used the term “sexual harassment” in 1975 as a social problem involving the treatment of women as sexual objects (Schultz 1998). It is also classified as a form of sex discrimination under Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964. Now, we can find a plethora of studies on the topic of sexual harassment. Harassment activities comprise such behaviors as physical, verbal and nonverbal acts that range from staring or comments on appearance and unwanted touching to rape. Following Fitzgerald, Collinsworth and Harned (2002), previous studies have paid attention to the entire spectrum of offensive sex related behaviors, mainly focusing on three categories: gender harassment, sexual coercion, and unwanted sexual attention. These authors argue that gender harassment is not about a sexual invitation oriented toward an individual woman but about crude and derogatory sex related behaviors that serve as offensive or insulting attitudes toward women at large. Sexual coercion is more about sexual cooperation by using rewards or punishment. The term “unwanted sexual attention” has been used in the literature to refer to uninvited, unwanted and nonreciprocal sexual attentions that are unwelcome to recipients. This kind of harassment is also defined as hostile

environment harassment, which involves behaviors like sexual jokes, comments and unwanted touching that create an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment (Welsh 1999). Many researchers agree that sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination, which is related to power rather than sexuality (Davies 2002; Welsh 1999; Schultz 1998; Skaine 1996; Kadar 1982; McDaniel and Roosmalen 1991; Collins and Blodgett 1981; Glass 1988; Schultz 1988).

The extensiveness of sexual harassment in public spaces around the world clearly documents the size of the problem. Bowman (1993) documents cases of street harassment and argues that it is a part of everyday life in urban spaces in the US. He notes that such harassment arouses fear, leads to psychological distress, and restricts women's mobility. In another study, drawing on data from the Canadian-based 1993 Violence Against Women Survey, Macmillan, Nierobisz and Welsh (2000) used a representative sample of 12,300 women aged 18 years or older. Their findings showed that "more than 80 per cent [of participants] experienced some form of stranger harassment, and almost 30 per cent experienced explicitly confrontational forms of harassment" (p. 319). In another study on 1990 Canadian women, Lenton et al. (1999) found that nine in ten women had experienced at least one incident of public harassment, and three in ten had been involved in the most severe type of harassment, where the perpetrator touched or tried to touch the victim in a sexual way.

Horii and Burgess's (2012) research on sexual risk in commuter trains in Japan reveals that 48.7% of women aged 20 years or more had at least one experience of being harassed. Chui and Ong (2008) reported on buses and mass transit railways in Hong Kong, where they found there were 125 reported cases of indecent assault of a sexual nature over a 10-month period in 2006. In China, Can (1994) reports that of 44 women interviewed, 88.6% were found to have experienced sexual harassment in public spaces such as streets and parks. Kirchhoff et al. (2007)

found that 39% of females surveyed in Jakarta, Indonesia, reported being sexually harassed in public transport, streets and waiting stations and also noted that such harassment happened to them frequently. Chokalingam and Vijaya's (2008) research on 100 women in India reports that nearly two thirds (63%) of the victims reported being subjected to multiple forms of a particular form of street harassment known as "eve teasing." Crouch (2009) summarizes the global nature of sexual harassment in public space quite well:

The effects of this unequal treatment vary among cultures, but again, there are striking similarities. In India, some women curtail their university experience in order to avoid harassment. They do not participate in evening activities, because they cannot be assured of safe transport home. The fact of public harassment literally prevents equal access to public goods. In the United States, women report altering their behavior dramatically to avoid public harassment—from not taking public transportation to changing jobs (p. 141)

All the studies reviewed here indicate the pervasiveness of sexual harassment in public space around the world, and by implication, the seriousness of the problem. These studies offer concrete examples of sexual harassment activities.

Although the problem of sexual harassment in public space is so global, societies and people continue to trivialize its seriousness. Fileborn (2013) notes that these problems are not often talked about and are not taken seriously as harm. Davies (2002) argues that since men do not suffer from harassment in public space, many people and society may not consider it as a form of harassment, but something else. She claims that giving a name to the harm is the first step to expose its wrongful nature and make it visible to society. Researchers have used various terms such as "street harassment" (Bowman 1993) or "stranger harassment" (e.g. Wessellmann and Kelly 2010) to refer to the unwanted sexual behaviors in public space that are wrongly

harmful to those who experience them. In these studies, women are always the victims and the perpetrators are men. The use of the term “victim” may seem to minimize the agency of women to combat the harassment and the perpetrators, as some researchers argue. I am aware of the limitations of using this term. The only reason I am retaining it is because the term “victim” has been used by many previous researchers studying gender and sexual violence. Similar to Coates and Wade (2007), I use the term “victim” and “perpetrator” to refer to individuals’ actions in specific social contexts, not as stable identity terms or as totalizing descriptions. The word “victim,” thus, is used to refer to “a person who has been wrongly harmed; perpetrators often try to conceal or avoid responsibility for their actions by obscuring the distinction between victim and perpetrator” (Coates and Wade 2007: 513).

Sexual harassment from a legal perspective

Harassment in public space is a global problem of sexual violence, and is clearly a case that involves unwanted sexual acts “deliberately perpetrated by the harasser resulting in sexual, physical, or psychological abuse of the victim” (Hassan, Komsan and Shoukry 2008:2). Since the perpetrators of harassment in public space can easily be a part of anonymous masses, it is difficult, and most of the time impossible, to produce confessions or proof showing sexual harassment actually occurred (Fairchild and Rudman 2008; Lenton et al. 1999). And because of this anonymous nature of such acts, perpetrators easily deny involvement even when remarks are traced to the likely source (Peoples 2008).

Fileborn (2013) notes that in the literature on sexual violence, there is significant underreporting of incidents of sexual violence, which makes it challenging to take legal action. In the case of Australia, she cites data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics that estimates that as many as 85% of victims do not report their experiences to police, or otherwise disclose to

friends, family or service workers. Pina and Gannon (2012) also acknowledge that incidents of street harassment and sexual harassment are under-reported. Lenton et al.'s (1999) study showed that only 9% of the participants had reported "their most upsetting experience of harassment to police" (p. 531).

Studies show that these cases are not reported because of a range of factors. The major reason seems to be that sexual harassment is often dismissed as trivial, and not worthy of legal actions (Lenton et al. 1999). As a result, victims may have a feeling that no one will take them seriously. Many women may not know that the behavior in question is illegal because they may be unaware that such laws exist. Only a limited number of more severe forms of acts may be considered as illegal. Or in many cases, the victims may not know the avenues for reporting. Acknowledging the challenges of making and implementing laws, Fairchild and Rudman (2008) further note that it is less likely that many people would support laws that limit the freedom of speech in public places.

Despite those challenges, many countries have passed and implemented laws that take actions against sexual harassment in public space. Both the United Nations and the European Union categorize sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination. This comes directly from the US legal argument that sexual harassment in the workplace is a form of sexual discrimination (Crouch 2009). Many countries including the US, Egypt, Turkey and India have recognized the seriousness of the problem, and have designed and implemented laws against sexual harassment of women in public space. To combat the problem, some countries have designated women-only buses and train cars. Governments in Japan and Brazil have taken some steps to protect women in public vehicles. The Japanese government has designated women-only train cars to be used during rush hours. Similarly, women in Brazil now have the option of riding female-only, pink-

striped subway cars during rush hours (Fairchild and Rutman 2008). Following a similar path, Nepal also introduced a women-only bus in the busiest route in Kathmandu, starting August 2014. Most of these measures, however, portray women as a weaker category that needs protection from the state. Crouch (2009), in this regard, notes:

Using such laws does not empower women. It reinforces traditional views of women and the laws will only be enforced on behalf of women who abide by traditional norms. Such laws say, in effect, “The state will protect you, but only if you obey the restrictions we put on your movement.” Such conditional protection does not empower women (p. 143).

Legal provisions for women who experience sexual violence have been included under several acts in Nepal’s legal system. The Defamation Libel and Slander Act 1959, for example, mentioned that if any person shows or does something that invades women’s privacy with an intent to defame any woman, he would be fined or sent to prison. Similarly, the General Code of Nepal 1963 specifically addressed the problem of sexual harassment providing more details of such acts, including: touches or attempts to touch a woman’s sensitive organ, taking off her underclothes, takes her to an unusually lonely place, makes her touch or catch (hold) his sexual organ or uses vulgar or other similar words or indications or shows her such drawing or picture or teases or harasses her for the purpose of sexual intercourse. This provision was continued and confirmed in the Crime and Punishment Act 1970 (Second amendment 1974). Given the pervasiveness of the problem in public transport and streets, the government of Nepal prepared the Public Transport Code of Conduct 2010. This act, among other details, mentioned that the “driver and conductors should speak in a respectful manner” to their passengers.

However, sexual harassment takes place in an environment where both the perpetrator and the victim are strangers to each other. This anonymity provides a favorable environment for

the perpetrator to take actions. Therefore, the existence of law to punish the perpetrator of sexual harassment in public space does not guarantee that the victim will get legal justice. Instead, as suggested by Crouch (2009), whatever is done must be accompanied by advocacy that keeps the focus on sex discrimination, not on the protection of the “weaker”.

Research preparation and preliminary work on the topic

This dissertation builds on my previous study of sexual harassment in public transport in Kathmandu. In the summer of 2012, I conducted a study in Kathmandu and examined the question of how public transport in Kathmandu creates a space of sexual harassment for women. Data from two sources – survey and interviews – showed that male perpetrators use public transport as a space to exercise their power and reproduce social inequalities in the form of sexual harassment. Because the buses are often overcrowded and there are not enough seats for the passengers, such buses provide a convenient setting for the anonymous perpetrators to abuse women. As a result, almost all (97%) of the survey respondents had experience of such harassment at least once in their lifetimes in public transport. Most of the research participants felt embarrassed and sad for a long time but despite their intense feelings, most of them indicated that they generally did not take action in response. Nor do they usually share the incident with others except with some close friends. A few women who protested against harassment were often challenged about their right to even be using public transportation. It led to the conclusion that public transport in Kathmandu is highly masculinized, and women entering this space find themselves vulnerable to sexual harassment. During my interaction with the participants, almost everybody had a story to tell, which was not surprising to me. What surprised me were the profound consequences of those harassment activities on their lives. Many of them said that they regretted that they were women and they had female body parts. One of them said “I wish I

could leave all my private parts at home while I travel in a bus.” “I don’t want to be born as a girl if there is another life after death” added another.

Building on these findings, I extended this work to the dissertation in a number of ways. I explore sexual harassment by extending my scope of data collection in two major social spaces, public transport and streets, where I can see more presence of women. In this process, not only the experiences of women but also the perception and understanding of men about sexual harassment are incorporated. Moreover, I also explore the psychological effect of such harassment.

Research questions and significance of the research

The present study investigates sexual harassment experienced by women in Kathmandu’s public spaces. To address this general question, specifically, I answer the following specific questions:

1. What is women’s lived experience of sexual harassment in public transport and streets in Kathmandu? How do these women survive such harassment on a daily basis and make sense of it?
2. What kind of social support and coping strategies do Nepali women utilize to combat sexual harassment? What are the social and cultural constraints in fighting and seeking social support to deal with sexual harassment? How does sexual harassment impact the psychological well-being of women?
3. How do men make sense of sexual harassment in public places? Does their understanding and interpretation of sexual harassment differ from that of women? Does men’s understanding of and involvement in sexual harassment differ in terms of their age, gender, social class and ethnicity?

The first question examines women's understanding, experience and effects of harassment on their life. This addresses issues such as frequency, types of harassment, location of harassment and time of harassment, and their relationship with women's mobility and identity. The second question pays attention to how women victims respond to such harassment. In Nepalese society where sharing experiences of sexual violence has largely been a matter of an individual's problem and is best kept secret from the public, it is worthwhile to see to what extent this cultural practice has changed over the time when there are more coping strategies and support mechanisms available, such as legal policies, government and non-government organizations working for the violence against women, local women's advocacy groups, and online forums. The third question examines men's understanding of sexual harassment and compares that with women's interpretation of sexual harassment. This reveals to what extent the harassment incident is attributed to the hegemony of the male perpetrator or to the victim (a blame the victim attitude). Overall, these questions address an important sociological concern of the interaction of structure --such as masculinity, and gendered public spaces--with agency--such as resistance and coping strategies by women. These questions also speak about the concerns of politics of power, gender violence, and embodied experience of women, among other issues, which are central to sociological and feminist scholarship today.

My documentation of sexual harassment in Nepal is an important contribution to a body of literature on gender, masculinity and violence, and medical sociology. It addresses a call by feminist scholars such as Mohanty (2003) and Narayan (2013) for contextualizing and historicizing feminist agendas, paying specific attention to the micro-politics of context, subjectivity, and struggle, as well as the macro-politics of global economic and political systems and processes. Coupled with a number of shifts in the global political and economic landscapes

in recent decades, Nepali women are now experiencing more social and spatial mobility. It is important to investigate to what extent sexual harassment experienced by these increasingly mobile women affects their multiple domains of life: personal, social and psychological.

There is no specific or widely used term in Nepali equivalent to the English word “sexual harassment,” but significantly, it is understood as a form of violence or *hinsa* (ActionAid 2011). Researching and engaging in discourses of sexual harassment gives a name and highlights the seriousness of the social problem. I believe such an approach would do much to challenge the current denial, minimization, and normalization of the abuse. It also provides a public forum for interaction and possible social change by offering insights for making appropriate state and public policies. Therefore, raising awareness and taking actions against such illegal and offensive activities is very necessary. After the tragic sexual assaults, such as one resulting in the death of a young student in India in December 2012, the importance and seriousness of this global problem is more clearly understood.

Structure of the dissertation

The next chapter will discuss the theoretical framework and the literature review on the topic. I discuss three relevant theoretical strands and their related bodies of literature with their major arguments and debates in the field.

The third chapter provides the methodology of the study in which I will discuss the utilization of the mixed methods approach. Then, I will provide a detailed description of the research subjects, research tools, and the data analysis approach.

After the methodology chapter, I will analyze women’s and men’s perceptions, experiences, and understandings of sexual harassment and organize them thematically as findings, which I will split into three different chapters. Chapter 4 presents an interactive analysis

of men's and women's understandings and accounts of sexual harassment. This chapter sheds light on the way different genders play roles in the existing power dynamics depending on the gendered social location of men and women in Nepal. It offers some interesting gaps in understanding harassment, which have important implications for the normalization of the problem. Then, Chapter 5 discusses the social and cultural constraints in responding to harassment and fighting the harasser. It will mainly explain the women's subjugated position in Nepali society and the way they sustain and perpetuate harassment experience in their life. It will show how the stress of sexual harassment is manifested in their lives and the way they utilize social support and coping strategies to combat effects of such harassment. Chapter 6 discusses various forms of Nepali masculinities and the way men's understanding and involvement in harassment varies in terms of their age, social class, ethnicity, and caste. Mainly drawing insights from masculine identity as a part of doing masculinity, I discuss how motives and violent repertoires for men are socially organized, structured within institutions, observed and inspected by peers, and used as expressions of friendship, authority, and masculine identity.

Finally, Chapter 7 summarizes the key findings and discusses the broader theoretical linkage with the existing framework discussed in Chapter 2. It will also examine the implications of the findings in understanding women's mobility in public space and the effectiveness of social support mechanisms. I will argue that such issues are deeply embedded in the cultural context of the societies where we investigate the problem. Finally, the chapter offers some viable areas of future research on the topic.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Three major bodies of existing theoretical strands and associated bodies of literature inform this study: 1) social construction of space, 2) psychological impacts and social support, and 3) masculinity and violence. These theoretical constructs build on the scholarship in sociology, women and gender studies, social geography, and medical sociology. I briefly discuss the relevance of each of these perspectives to my dissertation in the following sections.

Social construction of space and its relevance for sexual harassment

The public/private distinction of space

The social construction of space and its public/private distinction has been one of the central preoccupations of Western thought as a point of entry into many issues of social and political analysis in the ordering of everyday life (Weintraub 1997). Here, I particularly draw on the discussion about public versus private space by sociologist Weintraub (1997) and others (e.g. Roth 1999; Pateman 1983; Spain 1993). Historically, private space includes matters of family and sexuality that remain away from public scrutiny, whereas public space comprises political and commercial activities that are visible and accessible to the public. Public life largely arises from the ongoing intercourse of heterogeneous individuals and groups that can maintain a civilized coexistence. Public space usually is broad and largely unplanned, characterized by fluid sociability among strangers and near-strangers. In ancient times when family life was lived mostly in the open, in a social sphere, there was not a clear distinction between private and public since even the family affairs were not strictly secret. Later, liberalism made a clear distinction between private and public spaces. One dimension of liberalism was the separation of church from state, of government from civil society, and of work from home (Roth 1999). Due to

liberalism, there was a drastic transformation of the relationship between the “public” and “private” realms and of the characters of each. In modern societies, personal life and domesticity represents private realm. Private realm has the characteristics of modern family life, which is constituted by particularistic ties of attachment, affection and obligation (Weintraub 1997). The notion of public space has features of sociability and allows diversity and social distance although individuals may have physical proximity. The domains of public space lie in streets, parks, and plaza and equally in neighborhoods, bars and cafes while the domains of private life lie in homes and families. In sum, one major dimension of public/private distinction in modern culture, both in theory and practice, is the demarcation of the private realm of personal life from the public realm, reinforced by the market and bureaucratically administered by formal organizations. The supposedly “private” realm of civil society as well as the “public” realm of politics is populated largely by male heads of household and male wageworkers. In this sense, the privatized realm of the family is hidden and, thus, women "disappear" theoretically along with the domestic sphere (Weintraub 1997).

The distinction between private/public provides important insights for feminist scholarship, including the current study, for two major reasons. First, women were largely ignored and excluded from discourses in the dichotomous distinction of state versus civil society. Second, since family and home were largely categorized as matters of private space, women’s agendas and concerns were not represented since most women in the past did not take part in paid labor. However, these scenarios have changed in many parts of the world including Nepal, and it is important to investigate how public space may continue to reproduce features of private space where women have a subjugated status.

Sociologists and feminist scholars have emphasized that the public/private distinction is

not neutral and does not reflect just “separate but equal” spheres, but is gender-linked (Pateman 1983). They discuss the division in term of both social structure and ideology. Following Weintraub (1997), feminists put forth three main points. First, social and political theories have treated the domestic sphere as trivial and ignored it for the purpose of theorization and scholarly analysis. Second, the public/private distinction is gendered and uniformly discriminatory, confining women’s roles in domestic spheres and conferring an inferior position on them. Third, the public/private distinction often serves to hide abuse and violence against women from legal scrutiny. Feminist approach connects the historical subordination of women with the capitalist economy and its modes of production, which created an institutional separation between “work” and “home”. Only the production of exchange-value by men in the market economy is considered real work as opposed to the domestic work done by women at home, which is unpaid. In this overall process, the domestic sphere is both feminized and marginalized. Many feminists argued that overcoming the gendered and invidious separation between the “private” sphere of the family and the rest of social life is a key practical task for women’s emancipation (Pateman 1983).

Although many researchers studying women’s agendas have found the public/private distinction essential to understanding women's oppression, all feminists do not agree with the positions described in the previous paragraph. Some researchers cast doubts on the universalizing nature of categorizing men and women into direct oppositions in terms of private and public spaces. A number of reconsiderations beginning in the 1980s have brought a more troubled and ambivalent attitude toward this use of the public/private distinction as a conceptual tool (Weintraub 1997). Some have argued that is not true that women have indeed always been confined to the "private" realm. Women have always been a part of income generation both

inside and outside homes, and that trend became more and more visible when women started joining paid labor outside home during the industrial era. This evidence and argument not only blurs the boundary between public and private, but also makes the dichotomous distinction problematic in a complex way. Such a binary model proves inadequate to the complexity of modern societies (Weintraub 1997). Using this conceptual tool, I therefore treat the private/public distinction as a shifting cluster of oppositions in a continuum, rather than a mutually exclusive dichotomy in a binary opposition. Private and public spheres of life are interconnected rather than entirely separate and are the two sides of the single coin of liberalism and capitalism (Pateman 1983; Spain 1993). Pateman (1983) also urges that the slogan “the personal is political” has drawn women’s attention to the way in which we are encouraged to see social life in personal and ideological terms.

While the public/private distinction is problematic in a number of ways and sometimes misleading, I agree with Weintraub (1997) that this distinction is a powerful tool of social analysis if approached with due caution and conceptual self-awareness. It can neither be conveniently simplified nor avoided. As Pateman (1983) also hints, the public/private distinction helps me understand the differences between men and women as unequal products of a socio-historical process.

Analyzing space in sociology

The theorization that frames space as more than a physical entity, but rather as a site that reflects and reproduces social inequalities in its usage (Gardner 1990; Pain 1997; Spain 1993; Tara 2011) is a useful lens for this study to see how social and political contexts influence gender and other social variables. One of the most comprehensive theories of space to date has been proposed by the urban sociologist Henry Lefebvre (1991), who conceptualizes space as fundamentally social

in nature. Physical locations such as streets, public vehicles, market places, shopping malls and cultural centers, where women are prone to experience sexual harassment, are examples of social spaces since they constitute movements and interactions of people. Social space contains and assigns appropriate places to the social relations of production, and to relations between the sexes and between age groups. It is important to note Lefebvre's (1991) argument that a social space is "not a *socialized space*" (p 190) because it is not constructed through socialization. It is produced through social actions, forces and relationships between members of different sexes. Every society produces its own versions of social space and social production of space is fundamental to the reproduction of societies.

Lefebvre (1991) attempts to provide a unitary theory of space that combines the physical, the mental, and the social. The main goal of this unitary theory of space is to take account of the actual production of space by bringing various dimensions of space and its modalities within a single theoretical framework. His discussion of a spatial triad, which includes the *perceived*, *conceived* and the *lived*, also serves as a useful frame for understanding how women in Kathmandu interpret their relationship with space. Lefebvre's example of a park serves as a useful point of reference for me, showing that a space can be experienced in all three different ways. When a 'park' is conceived, we are saying that it is designed and produced through labor, technology and institutions. However, the meaning of the park and the space of the park itself are transformed as it is perceived and lived by social actors and groups. Lefebvre's theorization of space primarily as a social production helps me understand and give meaning to human actions (sexual harassment) and relationships (between men and women) as constitutive of and shaped by social forces (Nepali patriarchy).

Another sociologist, Erving Goffman (1971), has theorized space from a micro-sociological perspective. His ideas are particularly helpful in understanding and theorizing public space, which is constructed through social interactions and social relations in public life. For him, public life is characterized by some ground rules and associated ordering of behaviors of people and their co-mingling and of places and social occasions where face-to-face contact occurs. Goffman's (1971) analysis of relations in public sheds light on understanding public behaviors through codes of social order for the orderly conduct of the society. For him, social order consists of routinely associated functioning arrays of actual behaviors in terms of "patterned aspirations to the rules – including conformances, by-passing, secret deviations, excusable infractions, flagrant violation, and the like" (Goffman 1971: x). He discusses public order while presenting the idea of behavior in public places. In the everyday behavior of public life, such public order is supposed to be sustained, and as a result public civility is maintained. In such settings, individuals are supposed to treat one another in a particular way which Goffman (1971) terms as "civil inattention" in which "mutual interference is avoided without much sign that an effort to do so is involved, and when accident or incident brings strangers into entangling contact, brief remedial interchanges are extended" (p 331). Goffman's (1971) theorization is particularly helpful in understanding the connection between public life and social relations as an element of larger social structure. For Goffman, social relationships are mostly realized through face-to-face interactions among strangers, semi-strangers and people with different degrees of familiarity. Together, Goffman's notions of "civil inattention" and "social relationships" help me understand how heterosexual encounters between men and women follow public order in Kathmandu's space.

Gendered construction of space and sexual harassment

Theorization of space as socially constructed and the distinction of space into private and public has provided a theoretical framework for researchers to study different forms of sexual violence in diverse contexts. Scholars researching women's agendas and gender inequalities argue that public spaces are gendered. Conceptualization of public space as gendered and stratified helps to interpret women's experience of different forms of sexual violence. Many studies frame their research on different forms of sexual violence against women in public places as a gendered expression of male privilege. Spain (1993) theorizes and analyses space in terms of gender stratification and argues that physical separation between men and women gives rise to "gendered spaces" and reduces women's access to socially valued knowledge. Taking examples of three such spaces – homes, schools and workplaces – she argues that gendered spaces reinforce and reproduce prevailing status distinctions between men and women. Historically, women were largely excluded from socially valued knowledge by denying access to schools and workplaces. In contemporary societies as well, women's access to schools is largely segregated in terms of academic disciplines (engineering versus social sciences, for example). Similarly, in work places, women usually get subordinate positions compared to men (managers versus secretaries, for example). Homes, which are primary locations for women in most societies, contain very little socially valued knowledge. This naturally privileges men. Thus, all three spatial institutions operate to reproduce gender inequalities and power differences. As there exists reciprocity between status and space (Spain 1993), the patriarchal societal organization influences women's subordinated social status.

Gardner (1990) also provides detailed accounts of the characteristics of public space and popular beliefs about such space. She notes that communication in public space tends to be

largely transitory and appearance-dependent (physical looks, manners, non-verbal communication and dress). She argues that people have certain normative beliefs about what everyday life in public place is or should be like. Public places are transit ways to other destinations, and people from varying classes, racial groups and genders pass through them (Tara 2011).

Women's spatial mobility out of domestic spheres also tends to complicate the restriction of sexuality and sexual expression to the "private" sphere, since women experience sexual victimization in both private and public spheres (Roth 1999). However, when interpersonal privacy is violated, as is the case with public sexual harassment in the street, this can be regarded as the invasion of one's privacy and a violation of that autonomy (Bowman 1993). Therefore, sexual harassment not only involves a boundary challenge between private and public spaces, but it also reinforces existing power inequalities, forcing the victim to defend her privacy in a public space (Roth 1999).

The literature on the gendered construction of space has also adopted a social geographic approach in mapping fear of crime in various dimensions, including sexual harassment, that describes such activities as the reflection of gender inequality in the use of public space. Pain's (1997) study is particularly strong in explaining the spatial patterns of women's fear and examining how other social identities mediate its extent and impact in a British city. From the empirical evidence, Pain (1997) developed a social geography of women's fear into four areas: the imposition of constraints on the use of urban space, the distinction between public and private space in perception of danger, the social construction of space into "safe" and "dangerous" places, and the social control of women's spaces. Pain (1997) provides two levels in which spatial constraints are imposed by violent crimes. The first is the effects on women's

lifestyle in response to highly perceived fear of attack in public space. Such life style includes avoiding going out or not going out alone, watchfulness when walking, avoiding certain streets, and choosing certain types of transport. Second, such fear of spatial constraints is likely to arouse emotional and psychological effects. Pain (1997) argues that these kinds of constraints in the use of public space affect women's social life, leisure activities, and work life. Such perceived threat particularly in dark, lonely and unfamiliar places in public space helped the women in this study distinguish between public and private space as dangerous and safe places, respectively.

Although a large number of women also suffer from intimate partner violence, women in this study expressed fear of crime in public space due to the perception of strangers as unpredictable and threatening. Overall, all these studies show that space is appropriated by dominant groups in which social constraints imposed on women function as a means to reproduce women's social disadvantages.

The stress theory and social support

The psychological effects of sexual harassment on victims cannot be minimized. The effects of sexual harassment may result in different types and levels of stress on women who experience it. I draw on social stress theory in order to explain the relationship between women's experience of stressful incidents in their life and the consequences for their psychological and emotional wellbeing. I focus on how they perceive, interpret and give meaning to the psychological impacts of sexual harassment on their life. According to stress theory, stressful experiences are expected to be particularly deleterious to mental health when they are chronic, negative and unpredictable (Avison and Turner 1988; Thoits 1995). The notion of the stress process paradigm is crucial in understanding stress theory. Following Pearlin et al. (1981), this theory consists of three combined major conceptual domains and each of these domains includes varieties of other

subparts since various components of stress are interconnected to form a stress process. These three dimensions of stress are the sources of stress, the mediators of stress and the manifestations of stress.

The ultimate source of stress is traced to a larger social structure, but the individuals' experience of stress can be drawn from the occurrence of discrete events (life events), the presence of continuous problems (chronic role strains), and the diminishment of self (self-concept) separately, or two, or all three at a time (Pearlin et al. 1981). The underlying assumption of life events research shows that events lead to stress because of a change which the individual cannot tolerate (Pearlin et al. 1981; Pearlin 1989). Stressful activities may happen both repeatedly over time and as a single isolated event and can be both mild and severe; they affect victims either psychologically or physically or both (Uggen and Blackstone 2004). Following these criteria, I consider sexual harassment as a potential source of stress for many women. Turner and Avison (1992) report that successfully resolved life events, however, do not contribute to the individual's stress.

The second dimension of the stress process is the manifestations of stress. Stress is commonly defined as "a response of the organism to conditions, that either consciously or unconsciously, are experienced as noxious" (Pearlin et al. 1981: 341). Sociologists usually examine outcomes that can be assessed through direct observation, medical records, or self-evaluations and reports. Examples of stress indicators include health histories, symptoms of physical health, scales measuring mental health, use of alcohol and the disruption of social relationships.

Houle et al. (2011) treats sexual harassment as a chronic stressor because it puts the victims under physical and mental stress in their day-to-day lives. This stress may manifest in

several forms of anxiety, fear, frustration and issues of safety. Macmillan, Nierobisz and Welsh (2000), for example, note:

Sexual harassment can be seen as a social incivility, albeit one intimately connected to gender, that symbolizes the presence of potential offenders rather than potential guardians in particular social contexts. Furthermore, due to the uniquely sexual nature of such interactions, sexual harassment should invoke feelings of sexual vulnerability and ultimately symbolize particular environments as dangerous and threatening.

Ho et al. (2012) likewise showed that sexual harassment was linked to a range of negative outcomes for female college students, including, anxiety, fear, shame, guilt, headaches, disturbed sleep, decreased appetite, and decreased weight (p. 96). Feelings of sexual vulnerability and insecurity may often lead women to fears of further sexual assaults and rape (Crouch 2009; Kissling 1991; Laniya 2005; Macmillan, Nierobisz and Welsh 2000). If sexual harassment is frequently experienced by women in public space, the fear of rape is often present. In this regard, Gordon and Riger (1989) argue,

While rape is not often uppermost in the minds of most women, it is ever present. Most women experience fear of rape as a nagging, gnawing sense that something awful could happen, an angst that keeps them from doing things they want or need to do, or from doing them at the time or in the way they might otherwise do. Women's fear of rape is a sense that one must always be on guard, vigilant and alert (p. 2).

Schneider, Swan and Fitzgerald (1997) claim that sexual harassment can lead to decreased job satisfaction and diminished physical well-being. Moreover, sexual harassment has negative impacts on psychological wellbeing. For example, those who experienced sexual harassment showed more negative psychological outcomes than those who experienced no

sexual harassment. Macmillan, Nierobisz and Welsh (2000) documented remarkably high rates of stranger harassment, and suggested that stranger harassment may affect women more than non-stranger sexual harassment. Fairchild and Rudman (2008) argue “sexual harassment negatively impacts women’s psychological well-being whether the harassment is mild or severe, labeled or not labeled” (342). They further note that sexual harassment may cause women to objectify themselves as a result of objectification by perpetrators. This further can lead to mental health problems, characterized by an increased level of anxiety, distress and fear. Since many studies have shown the usefulness of studying self-reported data in studying the manifestation of stress due to some unpleasant experience in life, I rely on the participants’ reporting of their sexual harassment experience in interviews and surveys.

The third conceptual domain of the stress process paradigm that is utilized in this dissertation is the mediating resources. To alter the stressful conditions, people use a variety of behaviors, perceptions and cognitions. Such confrontations against stress-provoking conditions on behalf of individuals’ own defense are collectively known as mediators. Pearlin et al. (1981) explain two types of mediators: social support and coping. Coping usually functions through the modification of the stressful situations, modification of the meaning of the problems, and the management of stress symptoms (Pearlin et al. 1981). Specific characteristics of coping may differ on the basis of people’s problems with the social roles in which the problems emerge. Thoits (2011) offers two broad categories of supportive behaviors, emotional sustenance and active coping assistance, which influence individuals’ mental health both directly and indirectly. She discusses emotional sustenance as demonstrations of caring, valuing, and understanding of the distressed person’s situational demands. However, such demonstrations may not alter the distressful situations directly but may work primarily indirectly through several social

psychological mechanisms such as mattering, self-esteem and belonging. For Thoits (2011), active coping assistance involves helping the distressed person in terms of suggesting ways to solve problems by intervening in the situation directly, or helping to soothe their feelings to think differently, in order to provide distraction from the problems. Such assistance can be of two types: problem focused supportive strategies and emotion focused supportive strategies. These kinds of coping assistance strategies are defined as stress buffers because they help to lessen situational demands and person's emotional reactions to those demands, reducing the psychological consequences of the stressor directly. These tactics may also bolster the distressed person's sense of personal control, counteracting the stressor's physical and psychological impacts indirectly through this mechanism. This literature provides a useful insight in this dissertation to analyze the female respondents who tend to use various coping strategies on their own or by sharing stories with their friends and others.

Social support, which is the main focus of this research, is the utilization of social relations to mediate the effects of stressors. However, it is not synonymous with social network based on the number of family, friends or any other associates one possesses, but relies on the extensiveness of the relations or frequency of interaction and their engagement, involvement and concern with each other. On an everyday basis, we continuously get support in terms of love, affection, help, caring, interaction and advice from family members or friends. Supporting relationships are also found in many institutional and social contexts: religion, occupation, family, neighborhood, voluntary associations, the medical care system, and elsewhere (Mason et al. 2009). Social support provides not just material help but also gives advice to prevent the occurrence of stressors. Such support on an everyday basis is a matter of exchange since it not only involves receiving but also includes giving different forms of emotional, informational, and

instrumental assistance. Such forms of assistance are supportive in themselves and they also sustain self-esteem and a sense of mattering to others.

The review of the literature shows that most studies on social support with regard to women's psychological wellbeing come from contexts not primarily characterized as sexual harassment domains. They nevertheless are important because they help us understand the relationship between stress and its effects on individuals. Wethington and Kessler (1986), for example, examine actual support transactions and perceptions of support availability using cross-sectional data from a large-scale national survey. Their study focuses on the effects of perceived support and received support in relation to life events and psychological distress. In their study, the most effective support came from instrumental spousal support to enhance emotional adjustment for those who are seriously ill. It shows that practical support is very important during the situations that require instrumental assistance. However, the stress-buffering effect of social support is more strongly linked to perception than its actual reception. Analysis shows that perceived support is, in general, more important than received support in predicting adjustment to stressful life events. Thoits (2011) provides two reasons behind why perceived support tends to be stronger than the received support: perceived support has greater predictive power due to its generalized perception and this is derived from helpful exchanges with primary and secondary group members over time.

A study by Coker et al. (2002) provides evidence that social support reduces by almost one half the risk of adverse mental health outcomes among abused women. They also indicate that effective social support mechanisms are found both in highly structured institutionalized context as well as in informal networks of family, friends and relatives. Although social support is believed to mediate the impact of stressful circumstances, it is still unclear what conditions

determine whether or not social support will be effective (Carlson et al. 2002). It should, however, be noted that support mechanisms work variously under different conditions. Therefore, a few studies have shown that negative social interactions such as being criticized or being judged by significant others might cause detrimental health consequences. As a result, all types of social interaction may not be helpful for an individual's health. Newsome et al. (2005) state that negative social interaction may affect the individual's self-worth regarding how others see him or her. Such feeling is strongly influenced by the interaction with significant others and when interactions are negative, they are likely to bring detrimental health consequences (Ellison 1993; Rook 1990). As a result, social support mechanisms may further victimize the victim. For example, Zakar, Zakar and Kramer's (2012) report on experience of women victims of interpersonal violence in Pakistan shows that seeking help from formal institutions created more problems, such as more violence or divorce threats from their spousal partners. In another study, Mason et al. (2009) examine the role of social support and disclosure experience by women sexual assault survivors in the Chicago area. One key finding from their study is that those who received less informational and emotional support and more blaming were more likely to be re-victimized. This study shows that social reactions may affect survivors' levels of self-blame, coping abilities, and/ or self-esteem, resulting in an increase in their vulnerability to future assault.

Similarly, in the case of rape victims, Campbell (2008) and Campbell et al. (2001) show that the victims experienced problems in seeking help from formal organizations such as legal, medical, and mental health service providers. The process of receiving support instead made them feel blamed, doubted and re-victimized. For many of them, post-assault help seeking became a 'second rape' since it added more stress and hardship to the initial trauma. This

experience of secondary victimization from the social system had negative impacts on victims' mental health. Their self-reported psychological health indicated that they felt bad about themselves, violated, and distressed as a result of their contact with legal system personnel. As a consequence, these victims were reluctant to seek further help due to the risk of further harm and distress and many such victims did not even report to the police to guard their fragile emotional health. Thus, a lot depends on how support providers respond to the individual seeking support. Based on interviews with 102 rape survivors, Campbell et al. (2001) likewise show that social reactions can be both healing and hurtful depending on how such reactions are perceived by the rape survivors. The findings show that hurtful or negative social reactions resulted in higher levels of post-traumatic stress and depression among the rape survivors. Pearlin's (1989) suggestion is again helpful here: the effect of support is constrained or enhanced by the context in which the relationships exist.

Studies in general show that psychological mechanisms through social ties and social support are important pathways to good psychological health. It should, however, be noted that the existence and availability of social support does not guarantee a positive outcome in buffering stress. For women in Kathmandu, there are potential sources of social support such as bystanders, family, peers, police and courts. The study examines what extent these social support mechanisms are helpful in fighting sexual harassment and in buffering women's psychological effects resulting from sexual harassment. Sometimes, criticisms, negative judgments or gossiping regarding the harassment may function as stress amplifiers instead of stress buffers. My analysis pays attention to how negative interaction with these available resources intrusively impacts individuals' self-worth and other aspects of psychological wellbeing and prevent them from seeking help.

Masculinity and sexual violence

The notion of hegemonic masculinity provides a useful framework in understanding the relationship between masculine identity and sexual violence. Hegemonic masculinity is a term first used by R.W. Connell to refer to social and cultural practices that maintain and reproduce the dominant social position of men, and the subordinate positions of women in society. The term is used to explain differences in identities and power among men and women. This term has been proposed and re-conceptualized to take account of multitudes of masculinities that may manifest differently, sometimes in a hierarchical way, depending on local, regional or global levels and scopes (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Within this framework, masculinity and male power are interpreted in relation to the acts of violence perpetrated by men against women. Researchers argue that motives and violent repertoires for men are socially organized, structured within institutions, practices in schools, and sport, and used as expressions of friendships, authority, and masculine identity as part of doing masculinity (Messerschmidt 2000; West and Zimmerman 1987). The ideal of heroic masculinity in the context of sexual harassment is often associated with aggressive bodily display where the objective is not to employ the body in acts of violence but to use it as a means of intimidation (Kimmel 1994).

There have been very few reported studies on the relationship between masculinity and sexual harassment in public space. Although it was carried out more than forty years ago, Benard and Schlaffer's (1974) study is worth noting. They observed men's harassment behaviors in four cities (Berlin, Los Angeles, Rome, and Vienna) over the period of a year. They also interviewed 60 men of all age ranges. Only about 15% of these men intended to humiliate or anger the women; the majority wanted to do it for fun, to avoid boredom and many of them even did not give a thought about it. The authors note that men's presence in the streets serves to identify

them as members of the ruling group, to whom the street and the society belong. They also argue that sexual harassment against women is a form of male bonding, of demonstrating solidarity and joint power. To conclude, examining men's understanding of sexual harassment and comparing that with women's interpretation of sexual harassment will reveal to what extent the harassment incident is attributed to the hegemony of the male perpetrators or to the appearance and the behavior of the victim (e.g. blame the victim attitude). Wesselmann and Kelly (2010) also found that men were more likely to engage in the sexual harassment of women when they were in a group. They noted that there were two main reasons for this: the relative anonymity provided by a group context; and engaging in sexual harassment acted as a form of group bonding (p. 458). Analyzing 'girl watching' behaviors of men, Quinn (2002) regards comments and gestures that men make about women in public as 'a game of play' which men take part in for several reasons. Some of these reasons were for building masculine identities in relation to other men, for creating relationships with other men rather than with women, and to confess or display heterosexuality. Thus, the limited number of studies documenting men's perspectives point out that sexual harassment against women is a form of male bonding, of demonstrating solidarity and joint power. Laniya's (2005) findings nicely sum up perpetrators into three broad categories

1. predatory harassers: who "harass for sexual satisfaction";
2. dominance harassers: who "harass to reassert men's power over women", and,
3. strategic/territorial harassers: who "harass to protect 'male' environments" (p. 108).

It should, however, be noted that these categories are not mutually exclusive as individual perpetrators may not necessarily fall neatly into one of these categories. There could also be a range of other reasons men engage in sexual harassment. This research pays attention to this by explaining a range of reasons why men harass women.

Most studies on men's perspectives come from extreme cases of sexual violence and assault because it is relatively easier to recruit participants who have already been identified as the "perpetrators". For example, based on violent men who had been processed through the justice system and with women partners of violent men, a study by Dobash et al. (1998) compares men's and women's accounts of interpersonal violence against women in terms of prevalence and frequency of violence, injuries, and controlling behavior. The findings show that men not only underestimate the use of any particular type of violence, they also vastly underreport the frequent use of this violence. This suggests that violent men not only exhibit their male power by doing violence against their partners as a taken for granted activity, but also trivialize the effects of such violence on women.

Scully and Marolla (1985) show the connection between masculinity and violence more closely. In their study, men treat women as a category or class on whom they can enact their masculinity through violence and aggression. The convicted rapists in this study raped other available women if their significant others were not accessible to take revenge upon. In many cases, victims were treated as representing all women and rape was used as a means to punish, humiliate, and "put them in their place". For these men, rape was "a fantasy come true, a particularly exciting form of impersonal sex which enable them to dominate and control women, by exercising a singularly male form of power...rape made them feel good and, in some cases even elevated their self image" (p 261). This suggests an inherent relationship between doing masculinity and violence, in which case the rapists in this study considered the act of rape as a challenge and adventure, and an "ultimate" experience. However, little is known about the relationship between masculinity and sexual harassment in public spaces and men and women's accounts of such harassment.

While accumulating evidence does suggest the existence of “male” violence against women in all societies and across time, which might in turn suggest an inherent, universal male characteristic, research also shows variation in both the nature and level of violence between men and women across different societies and cultures (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). This variation suggests that it is necessary to pay attention to the cultural specificity and the importance of different contexts rather than an unvaried, universal behavior.

This discussion of the relationship between hegemonic masculine identity and violence against women points out the need to understand what men think about sexual harassment, and how they interpret their violent acts against women. Although sexual harassment is experienced by members of both genders, many previous studies show that sexual harassment is not a gender neutral phenomenon but a means of social control where the victims are mostly women and the perpetrators are mostly men. Since the victims of sexual harassment are women, it is quite natural to ask responses from them regarding what counts as sexual harassment to them and why that takes place. In fact, most studies on sexual harassment have elicited responses from women (Gardner 1990; Spain 1993; Tara 2011). Such responses provide important insights in understanding the nature and consequences of sexual harassment. However, they provide only a partial picture. Therefore, in addition to women’s perspectives, I argue that men’s perspectives should also be incorporated in studying sexual harassment against women. I present three major reasons for that: (1) men are the perpetrators in most contexts of sexual harassment globally, (2) incorporating men’s perspectives provides important insights in understanding the relationship between masculinity and violence, and (3) despite some researchers claim that collecting data from men on this topic is hardly possible, I show that it is possible to incorporate such perspectives.

The first reason is the global pervasiveness of the harassment problem and men's involvement in it. The extensiveness of sexual harassment in both public spaces and workplace contexts around the world clearly documents the size of the problem (Bowman 1993; Gardner 1990; Pain 1997; Tara 2011). All these empirical studies document evidence that men are the perpetrators of sexual harassment. In addition, the fact that many women experience sexual harassment suggests that there are not just 'a few' 'deviant' men who harass women; there are more such men than one perhaps expects. In my study on sexual harassment in public transport in Kathmandu (2013), 97% of 220 women who responded to the questionnaire survey reported that they had at least some experience of harassment on public transport. In that study, findings show that men harass women in various ways. Major harassment activities include behaviors from the perpetrators such as leering looks, winking, gesture making, unnecessary touching, unnecessary leaning, verbal comments, and unwanted communication. It is important to ask what these activities mean to men and why they are involved in harassment.

Second, incorporating men's perspectives on sexual harassment provides important theoretical insights in understanding the relationship between masculinity and violence. The body of work that deals with violence and sexuality informs us that masculinity and male power is related to the acts of violence perpetrated by men against women. A few previous studies (e.g. Dobash et al. 1998; Scully and Marolla 1985) have incorporated men's perspectives in understanding violence. This shows that it is both possible and important to address men's views on that. The notion of hegemonic masculinity provides a useful theoretical apparatus to discuss why men harass women in public space.

Conclusion

This study builds on and extends the theorization of public space, the sociological study of stress,

and masculinity. Its strength lies in combining all these theoretical perspectives to provide a holistic picture of sexual harassment in Nepal. As Nepali women perceive and live their lives utilizing public spaces, they confront experiences related to their sexuality that traditionally took place in their homes or private spheres of their life. As Roth (1999) argues, this presents a boundary challenge to many women. In addition, this invasion of privacy is a construction and representation of unequal statuses and power in Nepali patriarchal society. It is a reflection of Nepali men's hegemonic characteristics that renders women's status as subordinate and secondary. Before the analysis, I discuss the methodology adopted in this study in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

For feminists, mixing methods is desirable to analyze the multifaceted and complex layering of data (Rainharz 1992). I used survey (quantitative) and interview (qualitative) as major tools for collecting evidence, and that was complemented by my field notes. That also provided a basis of triangulation of evidence collected from different sources. Triangulation is used as a strategy to validate and cross-verify data and findings (Crewell et al. 2004 and Leckenby and Hesse-Biber 2007). Since many people are hesitant to talk about the issue of sexual harassment in Nepal, an anonymous survey was useful to gather information from the research participants so that they did not have to tell their experience in face-to-face conversations if they did not want to and still they could share their experience. At the same time, the participants who were willing to share their experience through interviews were very helpful to explore in-depth information about sexual harassment (Please see Appendix V on details of the development of research tools). For the analysis, the qualitative study is used primarily and the quantitative study was used secondarily (Leckenby and Hesse-Biber 2007). Qualitative method brings a great deal of exploratory insight into sexualities of girls and women (Leckenby and Hesse-Biber 2007). This concern is addressed by the qualitative approach by paying attention to the interpretation and nuances with its intensive focus on the detailed analysis of the process and meaning (Sprague 2005) with its “thick description” (Geertz 1973). Therefore, I considered it as the most preferred way to examine sexual harassment experience of women in their everyday life in public space.

Participant recruitment and data collection

I collected data from both women and men 18 years and older over different time spans: summer 2012, summer 2013 and May 2014 to July 2015. I administered the survey (Appendices III and IV) to a sample of 348 women and 348 men who used public transport and public streets at least three times a week in Kathmandu. I initially conducted a pilot study of ten individuals and updated the survey based on their feedback. For example, since a few questions regarding the impact of sexual harassment on women's psychological health did not seem to fit in the context of Nepal, I dropped them. For the in-depth qualitative data, I recruited 50 men and 50 women for semi-structured individual interviews and ten group interviews, each group including 3-5 participants. I provide the interview guides in Appendix II.

I adopted two major ways to access and recruit the participants: use of non-probability sampling, and volunteering in two non-government organizations that were working on women's safety programs in Kathmandu. Non-probability sampling is a form of sampling which does not base its method of finding research sample on the basis of random selection (Bryman 2006). Since the issue of my research is so prevalent among women in Kathmandu, adopting the non-probability sampling approach was pragmatically applicable and acceptable because I was not trying to infer population statistics from my sample. I used two types of non-probability sampling concurrently: convenience sampling, and snowball sampling.

Convenience sampling is basically conducted based on what is available to the researcher by virtue of the accessibility of research participants (62008). For example, when I was attending the social science conferences in Kathmandu in the summers of 2014 and 2015, I interviewed a few participants who were interested in my work and were eager to be interviewed. I interviewed my relatives, neighbors and friends. Likewise, I visited bus park areas, overpasses and waiting

stations, and approached people who were available there and were interested to talk to me. I also talked to street vendors, street cobblers, people who were hanging out in open space, people waiting for vehicles, and passersby. When I used public transport, I talked to people sitting next to me.

I extended the sample through the participants' networks, referrals and contacts. This method of finding people is known as snowball sampling, in which the researcher makes an initial contact with the people who meet the criteria to be the research participants and uses them to find connections with others (Bryman 2006). Becker (1963) argues that it is not possible to have a 'random' sample for such research, since the nature of universe from which the data have to be drawn is not knowable. Such a reference from initial participants is a strategy widely used by many researchers in social science for finding more research participants (Bailey 1994; Marshall 1996). Finding participants for my research was less challenging since women were constantly experiencing harassment in their everyday life. Moreover, there was no one particular group that could solely be identified, since most of the residents in urban area face such activities. Although the sample from the snowball method is not considered as representative of the population, the large number of survey responses and the in-depth interviews do represent the major concerns with regard to sexual harassment in Kathmandu and help us get a broader picture of the situation.

I also visited several workplace offices such as banks and college campuses, and developed rapport with the people there to obtain permission to administer the survey and recruit interview participants. I requested campus chiefs and teachers to allow me to administer the survey in their classes. After getting their permission, I briefly mentioned the purpose of my study and asked the participants if they had any questions about the study. I went over each

question from the survey and requested the participants to fill it out. I responded to their questions for clarification and comprehension. Each survey approximately took about half an hour to complete. A few who did not complete the survey that day brought it back the following day.

Interview participants were recruited during the survey, through my personal connections, and through snowball networks. I went to some participants' residences, college premises, offices, restaurant lounges, and public parks. Individual interviews and group interviews with both men and women were useful in getting the details of harassment. Group interviews were particularly relevant when the participants themselves asked and responded to each other's comments and responses. With a belief that interviews help us understand the world from the subject's point of view, I tried to make sure that my way of approaching the participants would not interfere with their perceptions and responses. In this process, I was careful not to lead the conversation during interviews.

All the interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent and were conducted in their preferred time and venue. Each interview lasted from half an hour to one and half hours. Although I had the interview guide with me, I encouraged the participants to disclose their experience in a detailed and spontaneous way, not limiting their responses to answer my questions. I made sure that nobody disturbed the process, and the participants felt comfortable to talk to each other and to me. In addition, I paid attention to the informed consent process, protection of human subjects, responding to the participants' questions and concerns, confidentiality of information and security of study documents based on the rules and regulations of the Committee on Human Subjects (CHS) of the University of Hawaii at Manoa. The confirmation of approval is given in Appendix I.

During the interview, I had an opportunity to hear and observe the participants' various emotions concerning harassment they faced. These emotions included worry, anxiety, outrage, frustration, distress, and sadness displayed in their verbal and body languages. Because of that, I sometimes had a hard time to continue the interview making them calm and normal. Their emotion-loaded feelings in narratives provoked my own emotional responses. I found it challenging to avoid my own emotional involvement in the interviews. The participants also had a sense of satisfaction and achievement when they reflected on the occasions when they successfully reacted to the perpetrator. I realized that for each individual respondent, interviews were the occasions when they could not just retrospectively recall their own experience and re-interpret that, but they also provided a sense of empowerment when they articulated their voice. Most of the interviewees noted that they were able to share the experience of sexual harassment for the first time during the interview. I firmly believed in what Oakley (1981) said about women's greater visibility "what is important was not taken-for-granted sociological assumptions about the role of the interviewer but a new awareness of the interviewer as an instrument for promoting a sociology for women – that is, as a tool for making possible the articulated and recorded commentary of women on the very personal business of being female in a patriarchal capitalist society" (p 48-49). What was fulfilling for me during the interview was that their increased sense of empowerment was going to be a resource to develop their confidence and courage to take actions against the perpetrator in the future.

Collecting data from men

Based on my preliminary research in summer 2012, the fact that most women in urban public spaces experienced sexual harassment on public transport suggested that there are not just a few "deviant" men who harass women; there are more such men that one perhaps expects. Moreover,

comparing accounts and perceptions of sexual harassment by two different gender groups is helpful in understanding the nature of sexual harassment itself (Dobash et al. 1998). Therefore, I took additional caution to collect data from men. Of particular concern was the potential reticence of men to report their involvement in harassment. I had established networks with some of my former male colleagues and classmates in Nepal who had assured me that they would help me find some participants through their network. Since many men seemed to take sexual harassments as “normal” and “acceptable” and had a false impression that there is nothing wrong with that, finding young male respondents was not as challenging as I initially thought. I recruited survey volunteers from university colleges and work places where I found many willing young respondents. Particularly in the case of middle-aged or older men, I had a hard time to find and talk to them about the issue. Therefore, such men recruited by *HomeNet Nepal* proved very helpful for my purpose, as the organization formally invited these people to take part in their data collection for the Safe City project, where I was one of the interviewers. Most of the group interviews were arranged by *HomeNet Nepal*. I provide details of my involvement in NGOs in appendix VI.

I hired a male research assistant from Tribhuvan University, Nepal with a background in social sciences in order to interview men, as I believe men may feel more comfortable in sharing their heterosexual harassment experiences with other men. I also trained my research assistant for conducting interviews in advance. After completing every 2 or 3 interviews, he and I went through the interviews and discussed how to approach and improve them next time. We also discussed with each other some perspectives through which we would look into the data. Although the research assistant interviewed most of the male respondents, I also interviewed some men who were comfortable talking about the issue with me. While selecting the sample, I

tried my best to consider the variation among the respondents in terms of their age and socio-economic background.

Analysis of the data

As suggested by Charmaz (2006), I tried my best to analyze the qualitative data through a constructivist approach. The constructivist approach sees both the data and the analysis as “created from the shared experience of the researcher and the participants” (p. 677). I have also tried my best to incorporate the contextual information and subjective understanding of the respondents as much as possible. I used their perspectives and terms to define and categorize sexual harassment and its effects on their psychological health.

The recorded interviews were listened to carefully with an awareness that a person’s self-reflection is not just a private act but also provides the building blocks for a bigger picture of the problem. These interviews were transcribed ‘incident to incident’ (Charmaz 2006). As I came up with patterns and contrasts in the transcripts, I prepared a list of them and started the analysis thinking about some logical arguments across the data. Data coding and interpretation were principally guided by the research questions asked in the beginning. However, I also paid attention to peculiar cases to incorporate any deviant or unique contexts. At the final stage of this procedure, I reexamined the adaptability of the central phenomenon to coded data in order to confirm the validity of analysis. In addition, ethnographic field notes and my reflections on my observations were used secondarily to complement the individual interview and group interview data. Statements from the participants that represent the phenomena are provided as evidence of the findings. These findings are analyzed systematically in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Quantitative data, on the other hand, were used marginally to provide a broader picture of the issue, and to back up and complement the themes that emerged from the qualitative data.

However, when the quantitative data provided new insights that the qualitative data did not, I paid special attention to them and incorporated them into the analysis. For the women's section, I mainly utilized two types of information from the survey: frequency of experience of sexual harassment and reaction strategies. The results are presented into different frequency tables, charts and cross-tabulation. Similarly, two main types of information were utilized from the men's part of the survey. They were their opinion of the frequency of harassment experienced by women and their involvement in harassment as perpetrators. Finally, thirty-seven statements related to sexual harassment in public space were analyzed for both men and women. Men's and women's data were first analyzed separately, and later they were merged in the write-up. Since harassment in public transport and harassment in the streets largely constitute a continuum in Kathmandu, I did not present them as spaces with clear boundaries in my data and in writing.

CHAPTER 4

HETEROSEXUAL ENCOUNTERS AND MASCULINIZATION OF PUBLIC SPACE

Introduction

This chapter analyzes what happens when men and women encounter each other in streets and public transport in Kathmandu. I will show that women's and men's understandings and interpretations of sexual harassment differ significantly. Amidst those differences, these opinions largely speak of the masculinization of Kathmandu's public space. I organize the chapter into three parts, which discuss three major processes of constructing and representing Kathmandu's public spaces as male-privileged enclaves. First, I argue that both men and women learn and accept the normalization of sexual harassment as an inevitable part of heterosexual encounters. Second, I take account of the details of sexual harassment incidents in men's and women's opinions and experiences, and argue that sexual harassment works as a tool to construct women and girls as sexual objects to serve men's desires. Third, I argue that sexual harassment represents an encroachment and invasion of women's personal space in public spheres, largely invalidating their presence and their claims to belonging outside their homes. This masculinization of public space reinforces the institution of patriarchy by marginalizing women's power and access to resources in Nepali society.

Normalization of sexual harassment

My interviews with men usually started with a conversation about women's safety in public streets and transport in Kathmandu. Except in a few cases, men largely regarded these spaces as safe places for women. They noted the fact that certain seats reserved for women in public vehicles meant that women are more privileged than men in using public transport. Women's

responses, however, showed a different picture of Kathmandu’s public space. As many women access public space more and more as transits to their schools, workplaces and other outdoor activities, they become the victims of multiple forms of harassment by men. An undergraduate student shared her daily routine when she had to return from her college in the evening, “Sometimes it gets dark while returning home from the meeting with my classmates. After I get off the bus, there is a 10 minute walk to my home; I walk so fast that I reach home breathless. I am so scared that somebody might follow me or grab me. So, you never know.” This response is representative of the salience of fear of physical harm or rape in the streets of Kathmandu. It is an everyday experience of many young women.

Women in Kathmandu were so accustomed to sexual harassment that when I asked them if they had been sexually harassed in public space, most of them first said “no” to my question. This was due to the fact that most of them had learned to take it for granted. But after telling them my own experience of being sexually harassed and giving them some time to recall, they started remembering and kept telling me many instances of harassment from their childhood to their current age. In such narratives, most of the stories were of a more physical or sexual nature that impacted these women in one way or the other. They mentioned that they had experienced such sexually unpleasant behaviors by male strangers in public space several times in their lifetime. They defined such behaviors based on the degree of impact they make on their perceived understanding of gendered social life in the eyes of self and others.

To provide an overall picture of the types and frequency of harassment women experience, I here provide the quantitative data from the survey.

Behaviors	Often	Sometimes	Rare	Never
Staring/ Leering	44.70%	34.50%	10.65%	10.20%

Following/Stalking	3.00%	23.10%	22.75%	51.05%
Repeated requests for tea, coffee,....., despite rejection	4.25%	18.15%	20.25%	57.30%
Whistling	28.55%	27.95%	19.30%	24.30%
Touching/ Groping	12.80%	33.15%	20.45%	33.55%
Passing lewd / Sexually explicit remarks about looks/body	11.40%	23.45%	23.35%	41.75%
Singing songs	30.00%	36.25%	15.15%	18.55%
Kissing sounds and actions	9.10%	17.65%	29.45%	43.75%
Winking	16.30%	29.40%	18.55%	35.75%
Pinching	6.35%	14.25%	18.05%	61.30%
Using rough and offensive language	17.65%	37.35%	19.00%	25.95%
Displaying sexually suggestive pictures	0.00%	9.80%	19.65%	70.55%
Playing with private parts publicly with an intention to make women uncomfortable	23.10%	32.65%	16.95%	27.15%
Pushing against women in public transport/ Rubbing body	12.50%	30.85%	23.75%	32.85%
Using indecent gestures	46.70%	33.95%	9.50%	9.90%
Watching girls in streets	3.90%	6.05%	13.25%	76.80%
Talking about sexual topics with women	4.05%	35.10%	10.80%	49.95%
Offering a ride	22.65%	38.15%	27.45%	11.50%
Asking personal questions about your marital status, phone number, address...	25.15%	41.75%	18.40%	14.70%
Commenting negatively about women in general	1.05%	11.05%	15.00%	72.85%
Threatening	0.90%	10.00%	11.75%	77.25%
Masturbation	9.5%	29.90%	17.65%	43.55%

Table 4.1: Types and frequency of sexual harassment in public space

The table above shows that women continue to experience sexual harassment in public transport and streets, and their experiences are varied. Sexual harassment in public space in Kathmandu is

so rampant that only 6 out of 385 women reported that they have never been sexually harassed in their life. Moreover, 91.4% of the female respondents reported that they have witnessed other women being harassed. All these behaviors that women experience indicate that public space in Kathmandu is utilized differently by men and women, with men monopolizing the space and women struggling to claim their right to belonging to that space. It implies that men continue to dominate women in public space, treating women as occupying a subordinate position in society.

The survey also gives a comparative picture of the frequency of women’s experience and men’s reported involvement in sexual harassment, as shown in Figure 4.2.

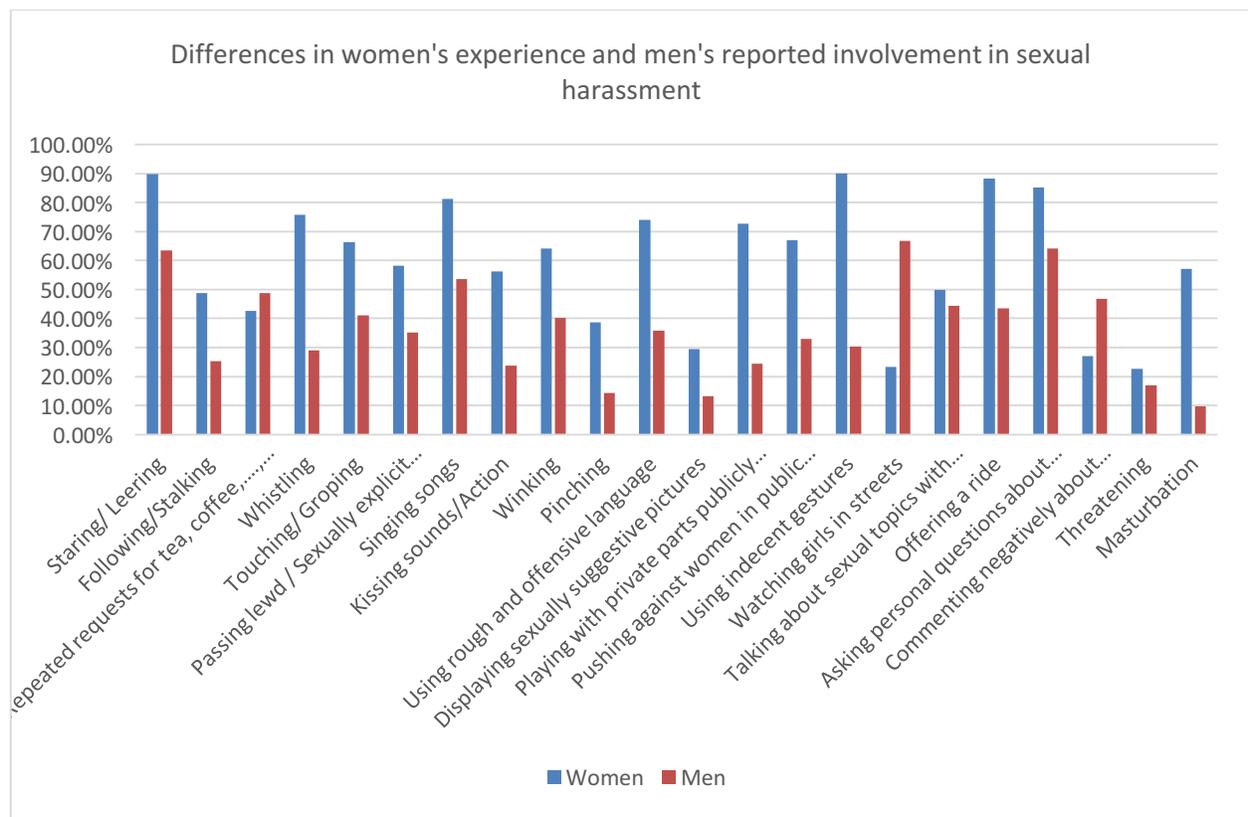


Figure 4.1: Differences in women's experience and men's reported involvement in sexual harassment

One noticeable pattern in figure 4.2 is that there are gaps between women’s experience and men’s involvement. For example, while 75.80% women experienced *whistling* within the last

twelve months, only 28.9% men report that they got involved in it within the same period. Similarly, 74% women were harassed with the use of *rough and offensive language* by men, but the percentage of men that reported their involvement in such activities was only 35.8%. In case of the use of *indecent gestures*, the difference is bigger. While 90.15% were harassed by the perpetrators who used *indecent gestures*, only 30.40% men acknowledged that they used such gestures in harassing women. In the case of *girl watching* and *negative comments toward women*, the data shows the reverse results. That is, while 66.90% men reported that they got involved in girl watching and 46.90% accepted that they made *negative comments about women in general*, only 23.20% women reported that they experienced men's *girl watching* and 27.10% mentioned that they heard *negative comments about women in general* within the last twelve months.

The difference between men and women can be explained by the fact that women may remain largely unaware of men's behaviors of *girl watching* and *gender harassment* in many occasions. Another point notable in this figure is that 49.95% women reported that they experienced *talk about sexual topics from men* and 44.30% men also mentioned that they were involved in those kinds of talk. It seems that men tend to acknowledge their involvement in verbal harassment compared to physical harassment. Similarly, 81.45 % women reported that men harassed them by *singing songs*, and 53.70% men also reported that they harassed women by *singing songs*. Because men were more open in accepting their involvement in harassment that included verbal comments, the gap between women's experience and men's involvement becomes smaller.

Although there were some fundamental differences between men and women reported in interviews regarding what counts as sexual harassment, their comments had one common meaning: sexual comments are a normal part of women's life which women must learn to accept.

This constitutes a *normalization* of sexual harassment in public space. Women normalize their experience of sexual harassment by accepting it as an unavoidable part of their life outside their homes while men normalize their acts by their *denials*, *trivialization*, and *legitimization*. Denials are the statements by men that do not acknowledge the rampant existence of sexual harassment in Kathmandu and do not recognize it as a social problem. Trivialization takes account of how the participants' definition of harassment reduces only to the extreme forms of harassment, such as the use of sexually offensive words or physical acts that provoke responses from women or that hurt them. Legitimization of harassment is the way perpetrators use the physical conditions of roads and the settings of the public space (such as crowds in public transport) as effective veils to legitimize intentional harassment behaviors. I start the discussion with the women's responses.

Comments coming from male strangers are strongly frowned upon and are treated as unpleasant and unwelcome. Only in situations when verbal comments come from acquaintances such as classmates, did women seem to take the comments positively. Most verbal comments such as whistling, singing, comments of compliments, smiling, and other banal behaviors were largely taken as very common by the participants as they are more prevalent and occur frequently. Emphasizing these behaviors happening to almost everybody and regularly, such kinds of everyday behaviors are taken as *jiskaune* or teasing but not as sexual harassment. One participant said, "I do not know if it is harassment; I do not know the right word for it. But I hate being commented on by strangers". Such a normalization of harassment is constructed as a customary trend of allowable masculine practices exhibited in "regular" and "normal" behaviors of public life within the parameters of acceptable deviance.

While women reported the rampant existence of the physical nature of sexual harassment, men denied that the problem was as widespread. In a few cases, men expressed a denial of the existence of sexual harassment in public space. For example, a 55 year old man working in a community organization said, “In my opinion, I do not think there is harassment against women in public space. There are seats reserved for women in public vehicles.” He blamed women activists for spreading false rumors about harassment and provoking other women against men. He added,

Most women attack men nowadays. The state is also in favor of women. Media has also lifted them up. Sapana Malla has also manipulated women and taught them to attack men. If it were biologically possible, women would ask men to give birth to babies. Whether you agree or not, they have forgotten their duties.

The man’s response above regarded Nepali women activists as responsible for bringing chaos and conflict in society and strongly denied the existence of harassment in public space. Giving the example of Sapana Malla, who is a lawyer and a women’s rights activist in Nepal, the man highlighted that women’s activism in Nepal primarily aims at “attacking” men. Raising the issue of sexual harassment here is largely interpreted as provoking women to go against men. The highly patriarchal notion of women in Nepali society as people who should not raise their voice against men is strongly visible in this piece of data.

Most men, however, admitted some existence of sexual harassment in public space, but their definitions and their perceptions regarding women’s feelings about sexual harassment largely trivialized, normalized and legitimized what it means for women to be sexually harassed in public space. For men, *jiskaune* comments that sounded positive as “compliments” regarding women’s physical structure, facial features and their clothing

are not harassment at all. They considered verbal comments as a normal practice they frequently observe and encounter in public space. When such incidents are recurrent, they become normalized and are considered a regular part of people's life. For example, a 51 year old male government officer said,

I use streets and public bus daily. It feels strange when you see such behaviors the first or second time but when you see it again and again, you don't even care about it. You start taking it normally.

The response here establishes sexual harassment as an unavoidable feature of public space, and notes that women should learn to accept this as a regular part of their life. This response fails to recognize this as a social problem of both men and women.

Men regard that women are not affected by verbal comments that are aimed at sexually harassing them. They consider such teasing comments as "light" and not impacting women's life. Men further believed that women rather enjoy comments on their bodies and clothing since such comments "appreciate" women's beauty and appearance. Some men claimed that women expect comments from stranger men. Most men referred to a popular assumption among themselves regarding women's feelings about such acts, "If a young woman does not receive any comments or compliments from men regarding her appearance or clothing, then she sees herself in the mirror many times after she gets home to see what went wrong with her." Therefore, for men, comments like 'beautiful', 'nice figure', 'nice make up' and other words that sound like compliments are not examples of harassment. A 21-year old male university student in an interview expressed his opinion that most women do not take it seriously but easily accept it as fun or pastime activity for men. Therefore, men believe that these acts are socially expected

and they in many situations feel obliged to offer compliments to women in public space, which, following West and Zimmerman (1987), is an example of “doing gender”.

Instead of considering it a carefully planned intention in advance, most men considered harassment as momentary fun. Fun is achieved when there is a two-way communication with a girl or a group of girls. Interview responses showed that men are often in a group in this context. More young men like 18-30 year olds normally engage in such activities with their friends. Boys younger than this age-range also tend to get involved in such activities to have fun. They often target younger girls when the girls are alone. One of the respondents explains the way they have fun teasing girls:

While both men and women are walking in the street, men tease women. Women react against such teasing. While reacting, women say ‘pervert’, ‘don’t you have sisters at home?’ When women make a reaction, we feel happy to have been able to draw their attention. Here, two-way communication is successful. Then, we just giggle at them to get fun out of the communication. Then they get mad at us and walk away. We just enjoy it. This is fun in a sense.

Some men considered sexual harassment as enjoyable for both men and women. For example, participants from a group interview in a university reported that heterosexual contacts with strangers can be mutual fun, not harassment. One student in the group shared his experience and opinion as:

Once when I was in a public bus standing with other friends, a woman requested me to sit next to her since there was one empty seat. I went there and sat. While sitting, we had a skin-to-skin touch on our arms throughout the half an hour ride. I just enjoyed the

skin touch and I believe she also enjoyed as much as I did. Men normally openly show what they want while women do not. But they also equally want it.

This response implies that sexual harassment is a natural outcome of the heterosexual desires of both men and women, and such a desire is outwardly visible in men, while it is dormant in woman. But, as the response shows, men think such contact between the two sexes is a source of pleasure.

Men normalize and trivialize sexual harassment by highlighting its transitory nature. A 25-year old man working in a non-government organization mentioned, “Sometimes, I just feel *fyatta* (all of sudden) that I want to tease. This is just fun for a moment. But if my friend spans on somebody’s butt then it is harassment. If I say ‘beautiful *sari*’ to somebody, it’s not harassment. While saying that, I’m not touching her.” It shows that these men define harassment on the basis of whether or not such acts visibly and physically hurt women. Most verbal comments in streets are brief and men think that women do not get bothered by them. For example, another respondent said, “It’s just a few seconds’ thing.” He further added, “When I see a beautiful woman, I just feel that ‘oh a beautiful woman is on the street today’. I just make some verbal comments. Once you say it, it’s done. That’s it. It’s very momentary. For me, it’s not harassment. It does not harm women.”

For some men, teasing comments intending to harass women are necessary in order to maintain a social and cultural order. Women wearing western outfits such as short skirts, gauzy tops, and jeans are locally interpreted by most of the male respondents as allowing or even asking for harassment. Such outfits allow women to partially expose their bodily parts that are interpreted as provocative for men. Most men respondents said, “Women are like that.” A woman recalled her conversation with her male friend:

When I complained about such conduct, a man said ‘suppose there is one uncovered candy and another covered one, which one do you think a fly attacks more?’ I said it is the uncovered one. Then he said that the same applies to men. He further added, ‘When girls are in grade 6 or 7, their skirts are longer, down to their knees, but when they are in grades 11-12, the length of their skirt is too short. Then how can you say there is harassment to women? Such kinds of things happen because of women.’

Making an analogy of women’s body with an uncovered candy, the man in the excerpt reverses the blame toward women. He treats uncovered candies as comparable to women’s body parts and refers to men as flies that naturally get attracted to the sugary stuff. Men’s behaviors, thus, are interpreted as natural responses that are provoked by the way women dress and maintain their physical appearance.

Thus, men blame women for providing some clues, signs or indications in a way that makes men feel invited to conduct such acts. An interviewee mentioned that violence against women occurs not mainly because of men but because of women’s behaviors in terms of their outfit, make up and style. He believed that if women could manage these things by following traditional norms, they could largely reduce the chances of sexual harassment in their life in public space. One person in a group interview mentioned, “Our friends say that boys need to tease girls who wear short and transparent clothes.” Another person added, “Nobody but women themselves is responsible for this. They are following western culture and the society does not accept that. They expose their naked thighs, and as a result men respond to that. If they follow Nepali culture, nobody harasses them.” Another member in a group interview said, “I have seen women activists asking people to teach their son not to rape but they should instead teach their daughters what to wear.” He further refers to the Nepali proverb, *aagoko chheuma ghiu*

paglinchha (If you place butter next to fire, it melts). The literal meaning of this proverb is when somebody adds more butter or ghee that works as a fuel on fire, and as a result the fire becomes bigger and stronger. He compares women's short attire with ghee next to a fire indicating that men are automatically provoked when they find women wearing such a short garb. Men legitimize and normalize their harassment by questioning women for their "inappropriate" self-presentation in public life.

However, women reported that men tend to make comments irrespective of any kind of clothing, although the intensity of comments may differ based on the types of attire women wear. One of the participants mentioned, "You do not know what they will say even in the casual wear that you wear at home. Whether you wear *kurta salwar*, or sari or even *burka*, comments will be there...if somebody wears knee-level boots, men will still look at her. If you wear an overcoat, they look at you and say something. What do they want to see?" Sexual harassment is not primarily driven by women's appearance because the responses show that women wearing any types of clothes receive harassment comments from strangers. Sometimes, men's conversations and comments aim not at a particular individual woman, but target the category of women at large. Such comments tend to be offensive, derogatory and insulting to the whole group of women. For instance, such comments seem to express men's "concerns" regarding what is an appropriate clothing and cultural norm for Nepali women. Women are blamed for flouting cultural values by wearing non-traditional clothing and getting harassed for breaking the rule.

Another way men normalized and trivialized sexual harassment was their belief that any heterosexual action with female strangers would qualify as harassment only if women take actions or seek external assistance in response. For men, good women speak back to men while bad women do not do so, but enjoy it. When a woman does not react, that is interpreted as an

acceptance and a signal of permission and license for men to go further. Here, women's silence is subtly interpreted by men both as a point of entry and as an indication to continue harassment. A middle-aged man blamed women, "I have a feeling that women also want that. Here in public space, so many people are around. If she shares with other people about harassment, the perpetrator steps back. Why do women keep silent over such conduct?" He thinks that women's silence allows perpetrators to keep conducting such acts freely. He said he is disappointed with women who just blame men but do not take any action to fight back.

Women's responses, on the other hand show a different reality. Most women, especially young ones in public transport, become nervous when they experience harassment that involves some physical touch from the perpetrator. In such contexts, perpetrators usually tend to be middle-aged men while victims are much younger. A high school graduate shares her experience, "Such incidents make me nervous at the moment and freeze me up. At that moment, my mind cannot think about what I should be doing. That's why I cannot make myself strong." This is also a stage when younger women are conscious enough about their developing and changing body and, as a result, feel less confident to speak up because they largely fail to name and describe what they are experiencing. A participant in her early 20s questioned, "How can I become strong at that time? That is a phase of numbness. I cannot think properly." She identifies harassment as a phase of defenselessness with a confusion and impasse and with a fear of public shame if revealed.

As men and women normalize sexual harassment as part of women's life in Kathmandu, they have some overlapping opinions regarding why men harass. Harassment is taken more as reflecting men's natural traits and characteristics, as one of the female participants said, "Teasing is boys' nature. They do it. They got that privilege naturally as boys. That's their job. They spend

time flirting, teasing, and passing time on the phone. This is their habit”. Many men likewise considered *keti jiskyaune* (teasing and harassing girls) as normal and expected male behaviors. A 19-year old male college student stresses the male nature, “I think that’s boys’ nature. It is god gifted. I have heard even educated people doing it. I heard master’s degree students do such activities. Even those who have a wife and children conduct such activities.” This opinion emphasizes the inherent male nature of flirting with and harassing stranger girls.

Another student in his early 20s mentioned an existing saying among men, “A girl is like a football and 22 men run after her.” Men consider that it is natural for a girl to have many more followers and be able to attract many men, and teasing or sexual harassment is a natural consequence of that. Another interviewee said, “Frankly speaking, I am a man and I can’t tell you that I haven’t teased girls.” This respondent does not take it as an individual responsibility when he was asked about his experience of teasing girls. For many men harassment is an inherent quality of being masculine and doing masculinity. Harassment is interpreted as a privilege of men in Nepali society as one of the interviewees mentioned, “We feel less threatened since it is normally expected. In Nepal, men with masculine characteristics are labeled as *marda* (macho). The popular proverb “*marda-ka das wati*” (*mardas* have ten women) implies that it is culturally okay for men to have relationships with multiple women, which is an indication of macho-ness, power, robust masculinity and polygamy.

However, in most cases, any activity that involved a physical contact was considered more serious and was treated as harassment by members from both gender groups. They viewed sexual harassment as something physical and more apparently sexual, having an intention to hurt or harm them. These activities are considered more unpleasant for women. As one of the women participants said, “Physical nature of harassment cannot be ignored” because they are inflicting

on an individual's most protected personal space and are overtly hostile and abusive. "Whether it is intentional or unintentional, touching anyone's body is harassment, which normally nobody notices in the crowd. This happens a lot in the context of Nepal", another added. For her, touching is a severe and inhuman act by strangers. She further added, "Someone's touch, especially strangers' touch, makes you feel very uncomfortable. Your bodily hormones take it very uneasily. That type of harassment is happening here." These behaviors are considered as harmful and aggravating to women's perception of self and their physical bodies. However, men considered that if women did not take such touching as offensive or if they did not react against such actions, then such touching was not considered harassment. Therefore, the definition of harassment is very limited and excludes many sexual harassment activities that are intentional and have negative consequences on women.

Some male respondents further highlighted that it is important to note whether the harassment activity is witnessed by a third party. They viewed that if such activities are seen by bystanders, women tend to take it seriously and consider it as harassment. For example, a 21-year old male student said, "They (women) are obliged to take it seriously when one makes physical contact such as kissing, touching her sensitive parts, pushing her, etc. and when these activities are seen by others in public." Such responses show that only if women experience some physical contact and if that is seen by others, then the activity qualifies as sexual harassment. This is another example of the trivialization of sexual harassment by men.

Next, I proceed to analyze the actual accounts of the experiences and encounters of sexual harassment by both men and women. Both men's and women's responses show that sexual harassment of different types give rise to the objectification of women and the encroachment of their private space in their public life.

Objectification of women in verbal comments and gazes

Objectification can roughly be understood as treating a woman as an object. My analysis in this section is primarily on sexual objectification where men treat women as sexual targets, largely claiming both women and public space as masculine domains. Objectification may include reducing women to their body or body parts, treating them in terms of how they look, or how they appear in the eyes of men, and treating them as if they are silent persons, lacking capacity to speak (Langton 2009). Men use an array of harassment repertoires to objectify women. I use the term harassment repertoires to mean a stock of words, images, and tactics that perpetrators use for objectifying and harassing women. Objectification also includes men's prolonged stares at women's specific body parts. The findings show similarities in women's and men's responses with regard to the use of such repertoires of sexual objectification.

Women experience such comments mostly in streets and occasionally in public transport. Comments are mostly mono-directional from the perpetrator to women. Sometimes, perpetrators also talk among themselves targeting a particular woman, or they present themselves as a ratified audience in women's conversations, back channeling and expanding on women's talk. Furthermore, harassers sometimes coerce women to take part in their talk. When men tend to comment directly, addressing women present in their perceptual range, they basically target the body image and clothing of women, by making different kinds of sounds to get their attention, singing songs, following them, persistent questioning (for example, where she is going, if she needs a ride, asking her to talk, etc.), staring, and so on. When men make these comments, women mostly try to ignore them and keep proceeding on their way as if they have not heard or seen anything.

Comments usually tend to focus on women's body image by mentioning women are beautiful, they have long or short hair, nice shoes, celebrity-looking body figure, and so on. One of the female participants reported, "When I go out with a little more grooming, they say 'beauty is coming!' or sometimes they just whistle or click their tongues." Another participant added, "They sing a song or clap their hands and when we turn toward them they say 'Wow! How sexy! Beautiful! Can I have your number?'" Such comments focus on what is more visible about women's bodily structure and clothing, and are expressed through the words of compliments, songs or analogy. For instance, a participant said, "sometimes they say like 'oh you have not put on any make up, but you look more beautiful without it'; sometimes they sing a song like '*simple simple kanchi ko dimple basne gala, malai man paryo* (o gal, you are so simple with your dimples in your cheeks, I liked that)' or a more recent song these days '*timro figure coca cola*' (your figure is like a CocaCola)." These examples show how popular culture is used as a tool in objectifying women. Another participant said that she loved wearing thick *kajol* (black eyeliner) while going out and she frequently received comments on that as she said, "When I wear *kajol*, they sing a song *gajalu ti thula thula akha* (big, big eyes with kajol)." The song directly refers to her eye makeup since it is noticeable when men see her in a public space. Similarly, some participants who wear spectacles mentioned that they often hear men calling them *chasmis*. *Chasmis* is a teasing word used to refer to women who wear *chasma* (glasses), and the word comes from the Indian soap opera *Kum Kum Bhagya*. "When wearing more fitting clothes", a participant recalls her experience, "everybody looks at my breasts by producing sounds 'oho', 'ehe', 'look at her things'. There are many people saying 'aha', 'uhu'... Sometimes I wear high heel shoes and they comment on that." She further added, "I think I have relatively bigger breasts, and while going to a tutoring class, some men stare at me from a distance, and when I

reach closer, they comment, ‘Wow! How big! And sometimes they directly say *dudh* (boobs).’ The word *dudh* is not normally used among people in their regular conversation unless somebody is talking about breastfeeding. It is a taboo word for speaking in public. By hearing their body parts objectified, women feel uncomfortable and embarrassed.

This kind of objectification of women was actually confirmed by men in the interviews. Many men mentioned that they use various references, objects and metaphors to verbally harass women in public space. The comments these men make mostly come from different objects to refer to the physical structure of women. Parts of women’s body or the overall body are compared with other entities. For example, if a woman is walking alone, as some men respondents mentioned, they occasionally make verbal comments directly, using offensive words to embarrass her. A university male student in his mid-20s narrated his experience, “When men are in a group and a woman is alone, men make comments such as ‘Hey *maiya* (lady), what nice hair! Why are you walking alone, don’t you see so many of us to accompany you? We are your friends too.’” This unsolicited invitation from men is annoying for women but fun for men. Such a comment may create an intimidating situation for women. As another example, *jumbo Coke*, which means a big coke bottle, is used to refer to a woman who seems to be overweight.

When men are using subtler ways of comparison and referencing, women are less likely to know that the men are comparing their body parts with objects. While women are in a group, men make use of an indirect route of teasing by comparing women’s body with different objects. It gives sufficient room for men to switch to the literal meaning of the term if they are questioned regarding their remarks. When a man in a group makes such comments, his gaze remains fixed on a particular woman and her body parts, which provides a clue to the other members in the group. Therefore, their judgmental comments can be interpreted as having a double meaning. For

example, male university students in a group interview revealed that they use a metaphor of a motorcycle to refer to the size of women's hips. In most cases, women do not understand what men are taking about, whom they are laughing at, and why they are laughing. These respondents said, "Sometimes when we are in a group, we make comments on a woman's body in an indirect way, such as- 'look at the high *sakab*'." Here *sakab* is the rear seat of a motorcycle. In some motorcycle brands, such as *Pulsar*, the rear part or *sakab* is raised higher compared to the front seat. Therefore, these men note that they also say higher *sakab* or *Pulsar* to refer to women's relatively bigger hips. If women have smaller hips, they call it *Platina*, a motorcycle brand with a low *sakab*. Similarly, the respondents also mentioned using "six pack body" to refer to women's higher hips. While commenting on conversations that they intend women to overhear, a few men make responses loudly enough for women to hear them as if they are ratified participants in the conversation. One respondent noted, "When I hear a woman's voice, I sometimes say 'oh this voice is as sweet as that of a cuckoo.'" Here, a woman's voice is compared with that of a singing bird. Such an allusion creates a certain version of femininity in terms of the tone and pitch of the voice, which is regarded as weaker, yet sweeter, than that of men. Such comments treat women as inferior and less powerful and men as powerful and strong.

Another male interviewee revealed his fantasy made by porn movies. Scenes and activities in porn partly shape his perspective on seeing and judging women. The scenes that feature women with bigger hips and men spanking such hips build his fascination for women's hips more than for other body parts. This fantasy comes into play when he sees women in a public space. He narrates, "For me, I go for ass. It's all because of the fantasy I developed from those movies. When I see a woman with a big ass, I feel 'wow' because I relate it to a particular incident from the movie." He connects the use of the word 'ass' with the English song, which he

thinks many women know about. He gives a reference to a song by Blink 182 – “I wanna fuck a dog in the ass, he wants to fuck a dog in the ass.” He adds, “Most girls listen to this song.” He reveals his fantasy about different types of women depending on the exposure he received at different ages. For instance, he said he was fascinated by young and beautiful girls in his late teenage and early 20s because of the influence from his peers. However, his fantasy has shifted after he was exposed to porn movies through Internet sites. Then he started to build up his fantasy of women through those movie actors like Olivia Love and Julia Ann. So, English words and fantasies are more easily accessible for many men because of the widespread availability of the internet in Nepal. Mass media and online culture, thus, encourage many Nepali men to develop a hypermasculine identity through an exaggeration of male stereotypical behaviors by supplying them with scripts for their social interactions with female strangers. Grazian (2007) argues that such behaviors reduce women to infantile objects of sexual desire, giving men a sense of confidence needed for competing in a harassment context.

Women’s interview responses also show that comments that objectify women’s appearance and clothing may take the form of conversations among the perpetrators in such a way that they want to make the conversation loud enough to let women hear it. Goffman’s (1981) notion of participation framework provides a helpful insight in understanding and interpreting men’s verbal and interactional comments about women. Participation framework, following Goffman, is the way participants in a conversation take up different roles in a particular occasion. Goffman makes a distinction between different types of roles and participants in conversation. There are speakers who make comments and there are hearers or audience who listen to that and take part in the conversation, and respond to the speaker in various ways. There can also be over-hearers who are within the conversational range, but are

not the primarily addressed audience. The women interviewees' responses show that men's conversations about women in contexts of sexual harassment treat women as the targeted audience but not as co-participants. For example, one interviewee noted "for younger girls with smaller breasts, they say 'oh they are LCD flat TVs', and for bigger breasts they say 'oh watermelons'. Breasts are their main focus." Here, women's private parts are compared with commodified objects. Similar analogy is found in another participant's experience when she was walking on a street with her female friend and a street vender was there selling fresh guava. She noted, "They just came closer to us and said *amba* (guava) and laughed out loud looking at us. They followed us for a while making different comments such as asking each other (among themselves) if they have eaten *amba*. When they talk with themselves, they tend to speak loudly so that we can hear their conversation. I later learned that men use *amba* to refer to women's breasts and nipple." Women's bodily structures are objectified in such a way that their body image and organs are sexualized and represented as objects of mockery and consumption for men. In such contexts, women are treated as the over-hearers of such conversation, but still an intended audience. This blurs the boundary between ratified and non-ratified audience (Goffman (1981) because despite treating the men co-participants as the ratified primary audience of their talk, their real, target audience is the women who are commented on.

Men's interview responses also confirm that they discuss among their friends about the appearance of a woman such as whether her hair is silky or curly or long or short, and so on. A man may compare her hair with *gundruk*, a Nepali term for dried curly and thin vegetable leaves, with an intention to make her hear the comment and annoy her because curly hair traditionally is considered lacking beauty and attraction in Nepal. To make the situation worse, all the members in the group laugh. Similarly, they also make comments about her height as *tower* for tall women

and *bamkhutte* for short women, and also offer judgmental comments to evaluate whether she is sufficiently beautiful. Here, *bamkhutte* is a Nepali word normally used to refer to animals with shorter legs.

In many situations, when men make verbal comments targeting women around them, overhearing such conversation by women is unavoidable because men tend to speak louder and clearer, making sure that women overhear their conversation. One of the female participants shared her experience, “They seem as if they are talking to themselves and they giggle. And they look at us. When we hear the punch line, we immediately know who they are referring to. We know the target from the punch word.” Here, women are targeted in what may be considered as men’s humorous social interactions that create a masculine bond and identity. Another participant shared her story, “When I am out alone in the street, I normally carry my cell phone. Once, there were two men walking close by me. They shared their phone number with each other, speaking loudly enough to make me hear them. In fact, they were giving me their number and trying to talk indirectly.” Here, men tried to reach women’s space by offering their own personal information with an assumption that women note their contact number and perhaps get in touch with them later. These conversations also seem to imply that men treat women as available sexual objects who may contact male strangers for relationships in future.

The women participants also noted that men sometimes intrude into women’s personal space by indirectly taking part in women’s conversations or displaying other behaviors that match with what women are doing at the moment. For that, men follow women’s conversations or observe the situation that women are engaged in for a while. Then they tend to present themselves as ratified participants of women’s conversation, often expressing their opinions on what women are doing or talking about. For example, a participant mentioned that when she was

eating *chatpate* (spicy crunchy food) on the street after buying it from a street vendor, a group of male strangers who witnessed her made a comment “It’s so hot and spicy”, referring to the food. Men here tend to voice not their normal voice but one supposed to be from the women who are targeted—an interactional feature which Goffman (1981) recognizes as “animating” another speaker’s words.

Sometimes, men tend to follow women and talk to them from behind. They talk on the same topic as women are talking about. If women are showing agreement or disagreement on some topic in their conversations, these men respond to women and add to their conversation, for example, by saying, “oh yeah, I think so too.” These men constantly backchannel women’s conversations. Two high school graduates in an interview mentioned, “A few days ago, we were in a micro-bus, talking among ourselves about our exam and the prospective test center. Some men there jumped in to our conversation saying ‘oh yeah, I am also wondering where the exam center will be’.” Encroaching on women’s territory by intruding in their conversation, men are likely to enter women’s space as voluntary and non-ratified participants. However, these women respondents do not appreciate such an unsolicited participation in their conversation. Such comments invade women’s personal space and information, largely questioning their right to use public space, yet sounding quite natural in the context.

There are some other types of verbal remarks in which both men and women participate in the conversation but men tend to employ coercive interactions. In such situations, men dominate the context and content by attempting to access women’s personal information. In this type of interaction, although both men and women are ratified participants, men usually initiate the conversation and try to flirt with women or access their information. Women who take part in

such conversations mostly respond reluctantly, as they find it hard to ignore the conversational solicitation. For instance, a university student narrated her experience,

On my way to college, there always was a young man by the bridge. I was recently married at that time and was in my full marital make up. One day, he stopped me and asked me if I was recently married. I said yes. Then he further asked what my husband did, how many days I had been married, and I answered his questions. Then he asked me to share my feelings after I got married. Then I angrily said ‘what feeling?’ ‘Are you not married? You can get married and experience the feeling by yourself.’ He said he has not got married yet but was thinking to get married soon. He said there must be a difference between men’s feelings and women’s feelings. He kept insisting that I share my feelings. In a teasing way, he asked me ‘do tell me since you are already married. Why are you shy? You may be experiencing a different feeling because you are just married’ I was so unsure how to respond to that guy. I felt very ashamed.”

Although it is not uncommon to initiate some kind of social conversation among strangers in the context of Nepal, it is not common to ask such specific personal questions that require women to reveal their marital status and sexual experiences with strangers. It is culturally unacceptable to ask and share such topics with members of the opposite gender. When strangers talk in public, women’s personal matters sometimes become a topic of concern for many men, as in the response above. The excerpt shows a man’s coercive attempt to drag a woman to join in his conversational agenda, interrogating her personal and sexual life. As the woman had a hard time responding to the harasser, the man’s effort to make her describe her sexual experience made her feel humiliated. She further reported that it was difficult for her not to respond since she could not decide promptly how not to take part in the conversation. As a result, she unwillingly

responded.

Men sometimes try to talk to women if they see them waiting for their friends or for buses in public spaces. First starting with greetings and some routine conversations, men move to a further step in personalizing the conversation by extending an invitation to the women for dates, and in some cases for sex. A female participant reported, “When I was waiting for my friend in front of a clinic, a guy in a motorcycle came closer to me and initiated the conversation. After a while he asked me if I can go to visit a nearby place with him.” The female participants also reported that men asked questions about women’s privacy. In such cases women would tactically tell a lie. For instance, a participant shared her experience, “While I was walking, a man followed me and asked ‘can I have your contact number? What is your name? You always walk here; I always see you.’ I was scared. I did not give him my information. He further asked ‘Why don’t you share your number with me? Do I look like one of those who flirt with women?’ I questioned him why he needed it and I just walked fast to escape.” These narratives show that men initiate conversations and take a lead role, and women remain their solicited respondents on whatever topics these men like to talk about. Men tend to attempt to access women’s personal information or approach them indirectly, trying to know if they can be available for sexual relationships.

Furthermore, men treat women as sexual objects through their persistent gaze at the female body parts. A woman respondent said, “I do not take it as a big issue if somebody verbally comments about me. I don’t give a damn. But when somebody stares at me continuously, I never get psychologically more disturbed than this. I feel like Oops! If something is wrong with me, if my trousers are unzipped, if my nipple shape is visible or if my chest cleavage is open.” She went on further questioning herself “Sometimes, I feel like it is my

mistake. I get so confused whether to walk fast or just wait there or I become so indecisive regarding what I should do next. If he thought that my hips were large, he might have said ‘Wow! What a butt she has! See that!’ But with his constant stare, I question myself if I am unknowingly signaling him in any way.” The arousal of such feelings of self-blaming requires self-checking if women’s presentation of self is appropriate in the context of public space. This kind of behavior provides an invisible pressure to women to be more conscious about their bodies, and this leads many to question their presence in public space and self-blame.

Overall, responses from both women and men about men’s verbal harassment to women indicate that men feel confident and powerful that they can comment on women without any potential risk to themselves. These responses reflect and construct men’s hegemonic and powerful position in Nepali society. Based on the types of exposure an individual man gets through peers, movies, TV serials, internet sites and other media, men develop different harassment repertoires. These repertoires are used as tools to objectify women by reducing them to certain body parts such as breasts and hips, by comparing with objects, and by largely silencing them in public space. As a result, men’s behaviors compel women to perceive themselves as sexual objects. They also develop an unfitting impression of the self, largely questioning the legitimacy of their presence in the masculinized spaces of Kathmandu’s streets and public transport.

Physical harassment and invasion of women’s space

Users of space develop a sense of belonging through their accumulated attachments and sentiments developed by means of their everyday practices (de Certeau 1984; Lefebvre 1991). Leach (2002) notes that belonging and attachment are consolidated through knowledge, memory, and intimate experiences of everyday walking. As women in Kathmandu claim their presence

and access to public space, the physical harassment they experience largely questions the legitimacy of their public presence. They feel an invasion and marginalization of their public life. While walking on the pavements, streets and overhead bridges, men bump into them intentionally in passing. Such type of bumping is more likely to occur when men and women walk in the opposite direction on the same pavement and street. Men deliberately bump into them by spreading and throwing their elbows and shoulders, pushing women out of their way. Sometimes they tend to hit women's breasts with their elbows. One of the female participants reported, "I always feel that when men walk in the street, they are intentionally coming to collide with me. I feel they are coming straight toward me to bump into me. If I don't move to the side, they will surely collide with me." Another participant added, "I have had several occasions when they crashed into me." For the respondents, such bumping is not accidental but a gender specific behavior of men and a way of presenting themselves in public space when women are there. The respondents disclosed that these men do not seem to care what has just happened but they keep going. After a while as they reach a reasonable distance of around 50 ft., they turn back to see the consequence of bumping. They do not bother to apologize or say anything about their inconsiderate behavior at the moment of collision. Most of the respondents said they manage such situations by moving aside or by taking a different side of the street to avoid any potential harassment.

Men invade public space in the streets of Kathmandu by grabbing women's breasts, hitting them on their breasts, and spanking their butts. It happens so fast that men grab and hit women and disappear in the crowd. Sometimes these men come close on their motorcycle, drive it slower and grab breasts or spank on women's butt, and run away from the scene. Women who are walking receive a sudden unpleasant surprise by such activities. An interviewee shared her

experience, “I had such experience while walking on a street in Tudikhel. It was really crowded. There were some open stalls of clothes; I was going there with my friends for shopping. All of a sudden, a person attacked me intentionally and hit me hard on my boobs. It hurt so much. I could not figure out who it was.” Another participant mentioned “once a guy held my breast tight and tried to squeeze it; I felt so bad; I could not go to my college for a week. I kept asking myself why I could not take any revenge.” Another participant added, “Sometimes I feel like I wish I can leave all my female private parts at home while travelling in a bus.” Thus, her biological identity markers become burdens for her in public spaces. This kind of hitting and touching of breasts happens so suddenly that these women remain unexpectedly appalled with shock and dismay. Another participant shares a similar experience when some motorcycle riders spanked her on her buttocks. In her words, “It was an exam time for my BA. As I was walking down the street from King’s way to Kamaladi, three men in a motorcycle came close and hit me on my butt so hard that my mind stopped working for a while. I was unnerved. It was like what happened suddenly. They hit me in such a way that I made a noise.” Women in such situations have little idea about the identity of the harassers. All these types of physical touch are infallible indicators of normal display of male dominance exhibiting their discourteous, inconsiderate and troublesome character toward women.

Invasion of women’s space by physical contacts have a stronger impact on women’s psychological and emotional wellbeing. One college woman mentioned, “I get scared when men come close to me. The touch type of harassment makes me feel very nervous. My body freezes and my mind cannot think properly about what I should do at the moment. So, I cannot be strong at that time.” Another respondent narrates her friend’s similar experience “I had a classmate at my school. She said that when she was going to school, one man showed her his private parts

and grabbed her hand hard. While she arrived at school, she was trembling and her eyes were full of tears. She was nervous...the poor lady became sick. She went through mental trauma for a about month. She did not come to school for several days. She was afraid of using that street again.” The use of the word “sick” in the excerpt shows that the victim is deeply affected by the harassment, as manifested in her tears, trembling and nervousness. The impact is visible into different parts of her everyday life for about a month. She defined mental trauma as as “a very terrified state of mind.” These responses show an important implication as to how women fight harassment in public space when they are harassed. Inability to think properly during such situations clearly brings various sociological questions regarding how structure and agency play out in women’s life in Nepalese society.

In addition to the streets, physical harassment that women experience from male strangers in public transport is equally paramount. Some major harassment activities include: men leaning toward women’s body; thrusting with a shoulder; shoving with an elbow; touching, grabbing and hitting breasts, thighs, hips or other parts of women’s body; spanking butt; spreading legs and hands; and poking with a private part from behind. Women also reported that they frequently experience physically abusing touch from fellow male passengers. Men lose control of their body so that it falls on the woman’s body. This occurs while they sit or stand next to men inside a vehicle. While sitting, women mentioned that men tend to pretend to be sleepy and intentionally incline their body toward the woman next to them. A female participant recalled her experience, “While going to the airport from Balkhu, a guy of my uncle’s age got on the bus from Dhobidhara and sat next to me. It was an hour’s ride. What he did was he completely leaned his body on me by pretending of being drowsy and sleepy. He frequently kept touching me with his hand.” As men try to lean on women, these men try to make it seem that it

was the result of the crowd and the movement of the vehicle. The participants mentioned that harassment occurred more when drivers repeatedly brought the vehicles to a sudden halt or there was a jerking of vehicles due to bumpy roads. One female participant reported,

Whenever vehicles move roughly or take a turn, they [harassers] pretend to lose control of their body and try to fall on us. Oh, let me share one incident. I was standing in the aisle. The bus was very crowded. As the bus took turns or jerked, the man would poke me with his private part from behind. When the bus was suddenly brought to a halt several times, he would take advantage of the occasion. It continued for some time before I moved toward the front in the crowd.

Many women participants reported similar kinds of harassment. For example, they could feel the harasser's private parts while he was brushing up against them from the back. The participants reported that it was the most unpleasant form of harassment for them.

Perpetrators frequently stretch their legs and hands to invade women's space in public transport. Intentional leg spreading is many men's sitting style when they sit next to women. These men tend to sit in a V-shaped slouch occupying more than one seat where knees stretch several feet apart. As a result, women have limited share of their space and are obliged to be squeezed into a reduced space. Most of the interview participants get offended by men's leg spreading behaviors and consider them as discourteous male postures. One female participant, for example, recalls,

Some days ago, in a micro-bus, a man was sitting next to me. That seat was meant for two people. This man occupied most of the space by stretching his legs wide apart. He was also pretending to put his hand on top of the seat behind me, but actually he was putting his hand on my shoulder. I tried to ignore it for a while but he continued that.

Then I squeezed myself more; he came even closer. Then I was really angry and I did not say anything but just pushed him toward his seat. Then he stopped doing that. Most of these men sit like this. You know what I mean? – making their legs very apart and sometimes they even put their hand on our thigh. That makes me very uncomfortable to sit next to them.

Men spread their hands straight to the top rail of the next seat when a woman is sitting on that side. In doing so, many women interview participants reported men touching their shoulder and upper back. Some men use this act as a starting gesture first and move slowly further, trying to touch women's breasts. Sometimes, they appear as if they are taking out their wallet or cell phone from their pocket and maneuver to touch different parts of women's body, trying to make it look natural. A woman, for example, narrates her experience,

They keep their hand around my seat from behind. The middle-aged guys, they seem to be taking their wallet from the pocket, and while doing so, they try to touch our different parts. They keep their legs wide apart; they don't care about others. We do not have enough space and have to squeeze ourselves into a limited space. We women put our legs together and fit ourselves into a limited space and guys always occupy more space, with their legs wide apart.

Men's accounts, however, differ with regard to many such activities. In the context of public transport, men have many seemingly "convincing" reasons to normalize and legitimize their conduct. The physical condition of the roads and rough driving help harassers blur the boundary between intentional harassment acts and the natural consequences of such roads and driving conditions. Therefore, crowded vehicles, bumpy roads and rough driving also contribute in legitimizing such harassment. Men mentioned that touching is unavoidable in overwhelming

crowds. Thus, for many men who do such activities intentionally, crowd serves as an opportunity. For example, a college student in a group interview said, “If there is a crowd, I touch women’s breasts but the same behavior is unacceptable if there is no crowd.” Here, a crowd provides an appropriate context in which men are more likely to grab the “opportunity”. Women, however, face a challenge to defend against such activities since such behaviors are easily legitimized in the crowd. The same respondent mentioned that women should not feel bad about such incidents and they should take it as a natural consequence of the crowd. In the contexts of crowds, men do not seem to make plans in advance. In this situation, as one respondent revealed, men enjoy such contexts in various ways such as touching women’s breasts, rubbing their body against women’s body, standing too close to feel women’s breath, etc. Another added, “The situation makes it normal even if you push her with your private part.” Thus, in public transport the crowd helps perpetrators invade women’s space, making it seem natural. Moreover, these behaviors are hardly noticeable to other fellow passengers in this context. In doing so, harassers occupy space and position themselves in such a way that the invasion of women’s space looks natural and unplanned.

Since there are no clear boundaries of private and public space in public vehicles, perpetrators have a chance to defend themselves if questioned about such activities. One participant reported, “When I try to argue in defense, they say- don’t you see the crowd here? It’s not your private vehicle. Why don’t you buy your own car?” Most of the participants reported getting similar responses from harassers while complaining about their sexual conduct. The defense for protecting one’s privacy is criticized in such a way that the woman is discursively excluded from the zone of public space while the harasser’s misconduct is validated and legitimized. But, private taxis are not safe places either. One interviewee mentioned “I do not use

a taxi if I am alone because I simply don't trust the driver." Because of these incidents, more young girls have now started riding scooters in Kathmandu since they are considered relatively safer means for mobility. A participant in a group interview mentioned that her father bought a scooter for her sister immediately after she shared her harassment incident with him. However, even in such contexts, one interviewee had an unpleasant experience while she was on her scooter: "One day, I was using my friend's scooter, there was a traffic jam and I was waiting. There came a motorbike, and one boy sitting on the back seat in the motorbike burned my hand with his cigarette."

These behaviors show that public space is utilized differently, with men monopolizing the space and women struggling to claim their right to belonging in such space. These practices create possibilities for harassment with male authority entering women's domain and intruding into their privacy. Here, it becomes relevant to refer back to Goffman (1971) with regard to the nature of public life. Goffman notes that public life involves those situations "where the unacquainted and the merely acquainted become physically accessible to one another" (p xiii). However, behind the normal appearance of public order in such spaces, fear and distrust may remain for the potential vulnerability of public life if the circumstances undermine the ease the individuals have. As a result, public places can be redefined as dangerous places where a high level of risk may become routine for women in Kathmandu. This risk and vulnerability questions their sense of belonging and membership in public space.

Conclusion

I have shown in this chapter that normalization of sexual harassment constructs and reproduces Kathmandu's public space as a masculine enclave. Both women and men learn to accept men's *jiskaune* behaviors as an inescapable part of women's life. Only very unpleasant physical sexual

conducts that were more offensive and that had stronger impacts on women were considered sexual harassment by both men and women. Although these acts are frustrating and discourage women's access to and mobility in public space, most women learn to live with them. This attitude considers men as fun loving people, in which case women are the objects of such fun. Women largely tend to take it for granted that men are powerful and hegemonic, and this is how Nepali society is structured. This is a major characteristic feature of the institutionalized patriarchy where power for men is socially and culturally constructed and accepted.

One fundamental question behind sexual harassment is: *What in women attracts men?* Men reported that they are mostly attracted by women's breasts and hip. Men form such desires by being exposed to behaviors and discourses of harassment through their company with others, via popular culture, and by watching media. Staring at women is constructed as a natural heterosexual desire of men that is culturally so ingrained that many men do not consciously realize that they are trying to see women's private parts or are invading women's space. Women, on the other hand, seem largely unaware of what attracts men to them. They constantly check if their blouses and trousers are unzipped, if they did not comb their hair properly, or if their lipstick is misplaced. They have a feeling that there is something wrong with them so that men are watching them or showing certain kind of behaviors.

Both the interview and the survey responses show that there is a dominant way of seeing women as open objects in public space. My analysis showed that men objectified women and their bodies in their various modes of verbal comments. Men compared women and their body parts with commodities such as coke bottles, TV screens, motorcycles and food. While these comparisons seem to construct fun and flirting for many men and women, the discourses often allow men to violate the bodies of women (Connell 1995; Hlavka 2014; Messerschmidt 2012).

Many men seem unaware of the privileges and power they enjoy in Nepali society. While acknowledging their supposedly submissive position, women learn to accept sexual harassment, and this legitimizes and validates men's dominance. Lack of response from women was considered by men as an indication of acceptance, mutual pleasure and consent from women. Men's responses show that many men take sexual harassment not as harassment but as a natural heterosexual behavior that is quite acceptable to women. Lack of response was treated by men as a sign of approval from women. As women do not respond to men's sexual harassment behaviors, men continue to regard this as a "go ahead" signal. Women, however, indicated various social constraints behind their lack of response. I discuss those social constraints in greater detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

RESPONDING TO HARASSMENT AND SOCIAL SUPPORT MACHANISMS

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed how men's and women's understanding and experience of sexual harassment both converge and diverge. The analysis showed that sexual harassment is normalized and legitimized by both men and women to a large extent, given the patriarchal structure of Nepali society and the male privilege in public space. Then one is tempted to ask a question: How do women respond to such harassment? If they do not respond, why don't they do so? At an interaction program conducted by the non-government organization *HomeNet Nepal* during the 16-day anti-harassment week in 2015, one police officer asked the women in the audience a similar question: If this is such a serious issue, why don't women react to the perpetrator? The officer went further, saying that it was women's fault because they did not fight back or report the case to the police. He also assured that women would get the necessary social support from the public and police when they want to fight the perpetrator. If that is the case, why do women in Kathmandu continue to suffer sexual harassment in public space? In this chapter, I analyze women's agency, or lack thereof, in fighting harassment, the social constraints that prevent them from responding, and the types of social support they get from the available networks.

The social constraints in responding

The dominant way of seeing women as safeguards of Nepali cultural norms and traditions provides social constraints for women's access to and use of public space in Kathmandu. These prescriptive norms define what women should wear, where they should go, with whom, and when to return home. Since sexual harassment is associated with the heterosexual nature of

socio-culturally prohibited activities among strangers in public, it carries a social taboo and stigma for Nepali women. The first major social constraint was women being judged by the society in terms of their rights and wrongs, and blaming them for breaking the tradition when things do not work according to cultural expectations. Because of that, women become nervous and lose confidence regarding how to respond to the situation. Moreover, while confronting the perpetrator, they have a constant fear of being witnessed and judged by others who might be their acquaintances. Both women's and men's interview accounts reflect this dominant societal attitude.

Often, sexual harassment is interpreted by many men as a consequence of women's provocative behaviors, appearance, and clothing. Responses like this make women accountable for such conduct while treating men's activities as natural outcomes of such situations. Men categorize women as *ramra* and *naramra* for "good" and "bad" respectively. *Ramra* women, for them, are the ones who follow traditional social, cultural, and familial rules and do not cross the limits of such norms. Bad girls contaminate Nepali culture by wearing non-traditional attire and as a result, invite men to comment on them— which makes sexual harassment by men inevitable.

Men said that women's appearance and behaviors shape men's attitude toward women in a particular way along the continuum of decent and bad women. A man in his early 20s said, "If she smiles, she gets trapped (*ladki hasi to fasi*).” Bad women often smile, try to talk and react, while good women mostly ignore. In the absence of such clues, many respondents think men cannot approach strangers in public. These quotes suggest that women are often on surveillance under a microscope of men regarding how they should present themselves in public spaces as such spaces are largely controlled by men. Women are constantly tested regarding to what extent they can accept, tolerate or ignore such behaviors by men. It gives an indirect pressure to women

to develop such a tolerance and self-control to face harassment in order to be socially acceptable and good.

Women are also aware of such cultural expectations and the consequential social constraints on their mobility in public space in Kathmandu. In interviews, many young women expressed worry and concern about whether any acquaintance witnesses them being harassed and if he or she might convey it to their family, relatives, and neighbors. This may defame women socially, since in many cases the victims may be blamed for their lack of good morals and for their illicit behaviors. Especially in the case of harassment that is physical in nature, many women believe that sexual harassment is likely to bring a stigmatized identity to her family as it damages the public image of the family. Therefore, these women are sometimes more worried about social defamation and negative stigma attached to their family and themselves than the actual harassment experience. An undergraduate student recounted her experience as:

I cannot sleep the whole night if anybody touches my body intentionally in public transport. I keep thinking about it. I wonder what I should do; I am tense. I feel ashamed and very scared of losing prestige. I am so much alert if somebody whom I know sees me facing and reacting to such incidents... I am worried if the people sitting next to me had a negative impression of me. I am so worried that people label me as lacking in good character. I do not feel like eating.

As another example, a middle-aged woman, who was a lawyer, shared her feelings as follows.

In the past, I used to get scared a lot. I used to think that incidents like this would defame and dishonor me and would have consequences for my future. I used to think that because of the harassers, my society may say this and that (emphasizing negative comments)

about my character and constantly feared that I might not find a marriage partner. I also feared that I may need to discontinue my study further.

The stories above speak about the social constraints due to the indirect impact of harassment that many young women endure with the fear of losing face and honor in society. It implies that young women in particular are the active agents of family values and moral order of social and cultural norms. A general cultural practice in many South Asian societies for arranged marriages is that if a would-be groom hears any negative comments about the girl, he would be disinterested in marrying her. In many cases, the power to make the choice and the decision of marriage largely lies in the groom's family. The bride and her family in most cases are in a subordinate position. In the above excerpts, the word *character* is the respondents' original word in English, and these comments suggest the way young women would be judged by others. *Character* is a very common word in Nepalese society to indicate an account of moral qualities, good virtues and integrity of a person—all of which are the defining characteristics of a “good” wife and a daughter-in-law.

The consequences and implications of any negative attributes of a person's character are not only limited to the individual but extend to the public image of the whole family. Its repercussions are not only for the present but also for their future. Therefore, unmarried women are more worried and concerned about this indirect impact of such harassment. The first participant further mentioned that she was mostly psychologically disturbed by some men who used to get off at the same bus stop. She said she was constantly occupied with the thought that somebody from her home would see her being followed by the men on the way home. Impacts would be more serious with the fear that these men could reach her home by following her. For example, she would panic if these men saw her house and started visiting. Such experiences

obviously make these women's mobility outside their home a challenge, and sometimes a torture. Another interview participant said that she was worried if other people noticed when a man poked her with his private part from behind in a bus. She was in constant fear about what other people would have said if they had seen the incident. Most of the younger women's narratives reported a perceived threat of sexualization and fear of social derogation by other people. Therefore, most of the participants considered such harassment as publicly reprehensible and expressed their outrage and disappointment as such behaviors diminish their self-esteem and question their right to be in public space.

Moreover, blame may be reversed even when women dare to take action against the perpetrator. The blame enforced by the patriarchal system in Nepali society points the finger at women rather than to the perpetrator. As a result, reactions do not always bring successful outcomes. Such blame-reversal is achieved in many ways. Harassers may legitimize their acts by blaming women for their clothing, make up, and the time of their presence in a particular social context at a specific time of the day. They may also legitimize and neutralize their conduct given the poor physical infrastructure of the roads and condition of the vehicles. One participant said, "They also have a reason to justify their behaviors that the situation in the vehicle made this happen. They tell you, 'I did not do it. It's the vehicle.' Then I would be perceived publicly as convicting somebody wrongfully." Women in such contexts are perceived as exaggerating and magnifying the case. Therefore, many of them do not have the courage to react against such acts; they may find their reaction dismissed or feel embarrassed for bringing up the issue of sexual harassment.

Hence many women do not take visible action against harassment because they constantly fear more humiliating reactions and dreadful actions from the perpetrator. Sometimes

such counter-consequences from men prove to be very costly for women. Many women participants reported that some men attack them directly, both verbally and physically, if women make any reactions. One participant noted, “it is intimidating when some men walk back hostilely to argue.” Another participant said, “When a man pushed my sister-in-law with his elbow, hurting her breasts, he did not care but kept walking. I raised my voice asking ‘what are you doing?’ Then he walked back with a loud masculine voice ‘what?’ It was scary. Then we immediately went to the nearest store to escape from him.” When a woman stares back and speaks, she speaks as a subject, subverting her status as a mere object. However, young women in particular are frightened to face such people and having to defend their position if the argument proceeds further. As noted earlier, many female respondents in the interviews reported that when they complained, harassers often responded back saying “why don’t you buy your own private car or get a taxi, if you cannot face the crowd.” Such counter comments from harassers make women feel not just excluded from public space but also lower their confidence and self-esteem, leading them to a state of nervousness (freeze) or forcing them to escape (flight) from the scene.

The freeze and flight of harassment

As I showed in Chapter 4, many women do not react to harassment but instead they learn to live with such activity by accepting and normalizing it. Then, what happens if women largely fail to take actions against the harassment they face? Quantitative data from the survey responses give an overall picture of the types of responses and coping strategies from women to particular types of harassment behaviors. In order to analyze the myriad ways women responded to men’s harassment, women’s open ended responses were coded to produce frequency counts of the following reaction strategies: *self-caution*, *silent reaction*, *visible reaction* and *seeking help*. A

self-caution strategy of reaction was mainly adopted by women who did not confront the perpetrator but instead focused on their own safety. The respondents' *silent reaction* was coded for the quiet nature of their actions, such as *frowning* or *giving an angry look*. Similarly, a *visible reaction* was coded for a more noticeable confrontation with harassers. Finally, a *help-seeking strategy* was mainly based on getting external help to confront the harasser. Such help was mostly received from persons who accompanied them while they were travelling in the vehicle or from bystanders, and occasionally from the police.

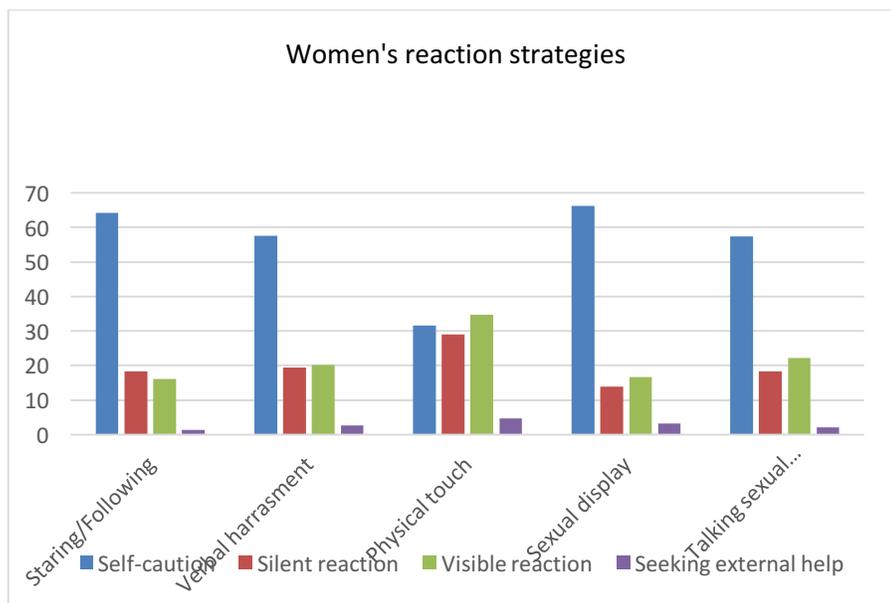


Figure 5.1: Women's reaction strategies

The most noticeable fact in the above figure is the use of *self-caution strategy* (about 60% in all types) by women. In combating all types of sexual harassment, women pay most attention to their safety, and for that matter they do not want to confront the harasser directly. In case of *sexual display* or *verbal harassment*, for example, women can easily ignore the harasser. In case of *physical touch*, however, women cannot completely ignore it. They use all types of reactions, each reaction comprising about 30% (except the external help). *Seeking external help*, however

was utilized minimally in all of these cases. Overall, the figure shows that *self-caution* is the most utilized reaction strategy to harassment while *seeking external help* is the least used.

Interview data give more details of how women react to harassment. The following response from a female participant summarizes how Nepali women deal with harassment in Kathmandu: “When such an incident occurs, women normally remain in three stages – freeze: women do not react to whatever happens; flight: they tend to escape from the situation; and fight: women fight back with the harasser.” She made a distinction between these three different types of reaction stages (3Fs) depending on a number of factors, such as who the harasser is, the place of harassment, the time, and whether the victim has any supporting mechanism.

Many women tend to remain in the freezing stage because they know the social constraints in responding to it or in getting external support. Although these women first try to ignore such acts or even try to pretend not noticing such incidents, they constantly go through an internal monologue and contemplation, analyzing what is happening to them at the moment. For example, one participant noted, “I also feel it and keep thinking about it. I realize it’s really happening but I cannot do anything.” Sometimes their nervousness grows to an extent that they become unable to think properly. This nervousness is particularly experienced by young girls when they first start to experience such harassment, but do not have much knowledge and understanding about it.

Most women respondents reported that their inability to react against such harassment on the spot was a source of stress and anxiety. They question themselves about their capability and regret not being able to react. This feeling mostly echoed the interview responses that reflected their powerlessness, and their perceived submissive, pathetic and subordinate status. Feelings like this are likely to result in a higher level of stress. Feelings of regret are overwhelmingly

expressed as their internal suffocation and grief as a result of their not being able to react to the perpetrator. This was noted in many interviews with such responses as: “I always regret why I could not fight back.” “I regret it a lot, especially immediately after I get off the bus.” “When I don’t speak up, I regret it a lot once I reach home.” Many of these women mentioned that they were unsure in the very beginning whether any physical touch from strangers in crowd was the natural consequence of the crowd and the movement of the vehicle on bumpy roads or it was the perpetrators’ intentional act. One participant put forth her feeling as, “I feel helpless, I feel nervous. Most of the time I am not sure whether he is doing this intentionally or it is only me thinking that way. I feel a dilemma. Even if I speak out I feel that other bystanders may not support me. I feel very embarrassed at that point.” This situation of confusion and uncertainty leading to the inability to react largely obliges these women to be the objects of passive victimization.

However, there are also situations when women know that the harassment is intentional, but still they cannot react to it. One woman, for example, narrates her feeling as, “What I feel bad about is I know everything like I need to speak up, I felt that (harassment) too and I was sure about it. But it always occurs to mind why I did not say anything. If I had spoken up, that feeling would not be recurrent in my mind. I am angry with myself. I hate myself”. This excerpt highlights her self-reflection and inability to fight back to the perpetrator. This largely resulted in emotional suffering with a sense of guilt, regret and anxiety.

Although these women do not fight immediately back, they are not in a completely passive, receptive state. They constantly go through active contemplation about the harasser’s wrongful deeds resulting in multiple negative emotional states such as embarrassment, helplessness, nervousness, confusion, dilemma, and fear of unsupportive audience. They have a

sense of agency that is largely unexpressed. In the interviews, there was an exhibition of willingness to act against such harassment but the effort to do so was not actualized actively in practice. Here, the interviewees experienced harassment and mostly knew that they required an action at the moment. However, this did not translate into practice and as a result brought negative self-perception and self-hatred on themselves. Such instances largely question their self-dignity and self-respect.

A lack of reaction especially to the perpetrator's physical harassment brought several psychological effects upon many women. For instance, a college student shared her experience and opinion as "If this takes place on the way to school, I do not want to go to school. I have once ruined my exam. When I was going to take an exam, somebody spanked my butt. I was very nervous. I trembled for a while. I forgot what I had studied. My mind was occupied by this incident." Another added, "I feel that I want to go to the office on foot instead. I want to go before the work day begins. If this happens on the way, I cannot work well in the office." Sexual harassment has both immediate and long-term impacts. The immediate impact is more visible in different bodily feelings and states of mind such as feeling frozen, getting nervous, trembling, getting angry, feeling helpless and so on during the occurrence of harassment. Regarding a long-lasting impact, one college student remarked on her new determination, "I was not aware that I was that much depressed. After the incident, I cried with my friends at my college. Even if I cried, the incident could not be undone. Ultimately, I once decided that I would remain single. I developed hatred toward men."

To overcome the contextual constraints, many women reported that they utilized another strategy of flight. This means, women tend to use an avoidance strategy by trying to escape from the harasser or from the context where such harassment takes place. The women participants

reported that rather than doing anything to the harasser, they prefer to ensure their safety by moving away from the harasser by, for example, getting off the bus, following a different side of the pavement, taking a different route to their home, and so on. Similar to Gardner's (1999) participants in a US context, some Nepali women also frequently faked, mostly on the phone, that there was another person accompanying them. In the flight stage, women do not approach the harasser, but rather divert their own behaviors to keep themselves away from him. A respondent mentioned, "I make every attempt to keep myself safe." However, moving away in a crowded vehicle is not always possible. She added, "I turn to the other side once the vehicle gets slightly less crowded". Another participant noted that women need to make a wise judgment and assess the situation, "We should be aware of the situation. If you see them coming toward you, it's better to move to a side and leave the way for them to go. Your first priority should be your safety." Maneuvering one's own behaviors, thus, is one of the most commonly applied tactics by most of the female participants, and these tactics do not involve any kind of confrontation and future risk. Another participant viewed, "I never react to harassers... It is better not to scold or fight with them, just proceed on your way. Since they are bad and you are less likely to get anybody's help at the moment, you should take care of yourself first. They can inflict revenge on you. So just think how you can be safe now and in future, rather than arguing and fighting them." Given the perceived unsupportive environment and a possible risk of revenge from the perpetrator, she believes more in self-protection with her own efforts rather than putting herself into a potentially dangerous situation.

When women encounter such harassment behaviors as staring, physical touch and genital displays, they mostly utilize an avoidance strategy. In such situations, they tend to look outside of the window from a vehicle, play with their phones, or try to get engaged with other kinds of

activities such as trying to find something in their bag, covering breasts with their bags, and talking with friends if they are available. Since most harassers who stare are likely to be older than women, these women find it challenging to make any direct response. Rather, they prefer to ignore it by engaging in other activities and pretending not to notice it. Despite being fully aware that somebody is staring at her, a participant viewed that it would awkward to ask them not to look at her. For her, “there is no other way except looking outside or down on the floor.” Some women mentioned that they got off the bus in the middle of their trip as a result of harassment. One of them mentioned that she had a hard time to tolerate it when a man poked her with his private part from behind in a crowded bus,

I eventually got off the bus even in the traffic and there was not a single pedestrian crossing on the bridge. I dared to ask the bus staff to open the door for me and told him that I would get off the bus right there. Then the conductor opened the door and I got off the bus and then walked for some time and got on another bus.

The excerpt indicates that some women are ready to take other types of risks rather than to continue to face sexual harassment. Therefore, an avoidance strategy sometimes involves trade offs with some risky situations as well. While the magnitude of the impact of such harassment is by far the greatest, women quietly attempt to exit from the harassment environment and dare to face other unpredictable challenges. In doing so, they may seem to be ignoring such behaviors in the eyes of the harasser but in reality they go through a constant struggle to ensure their personal safety and self-esteem. There are reasons for these women’s avoidance strategy, despite their intense realization that what is happening to them is not only immoral but illegal. There is a special cultural stigma associated with these types of sexual issues and as a result it is difficult for these women to fully articulate what they experience. Therefore, it goes without saying that

even being fully aware of the circumstances, given the deeply rooted assumption that regards women as the gatekeeper of cultural norms of gender and sexuality, many of these women prefer to take a silent reaction strategy by avoiding the harasser and the environment. They do so for self-protection after a sufficient evaluation of the costs and benefits of the situation. Rather than putting oneself into a violent backlash, minimizing such an environment by voluntary silence is exerted as a part of their coping strategy, albeit to the detriment of their agency.

Fight and reactions to harassment

Some women try to overcome the social constraints by fighting back at the perpetrator, taking several actions and reactions. In the fight stage, there are some women who tend to take actions against unwanted advances from men. In general, these women are normally married, middle-aged, and have experienced sexual harassment a number of times. They tend to exercise their agency in various ways depending on the types of harassment, the context in which the harassment takes place, and whether they are single or in group at the moment. I classify the reaction strategies adopted by women into three major categories: verbal response, embodied action, and use of external support.

Verbal responses range from requesting the perpetrator to move further to engaging in an aggressive verbal confrontation. Younger women usually do not argue or use a confrontational tone to speak back to the perpetrator. They often tend to react in a soft tone after facing harassment many times. However, repeated occurrence encourages them to speak up. One participant mentioned,

After facing such incidents many times and after seeing some other women reacting against such acts, we ask ourselves for the reason behind not being able to take any action. Then, we can speak up. If one starts speaking up little by little, she eventually can

speaking a lot later. Then it becomes a habit. Ultimately you realize that speaking up against such acts is not a big deal.

Another interviewee said, “We could not speak up when we were high school students. Now even though we still cannot speak up in a more commanding tone like ‘move here’ ‘move there’, we can at least say ‘*dai*, (brother), can you move a little further?’” In Nepali society, it is a common practice to talk to unacquainted people by addressing them using such terms as *dai/bhai* (elder/younger brother) and *didi/bahini* (elder/younger sister). Seniority in terms of age and social relationships create a social hierarchy, conferring more power to elders, and this functions negatively for younger women to take action against harassers.

However, middle-aged or older women usually tend to react more aggressively. Their speaking style in a rising tone and the use of certain words and language is straightforward and non-honorific. One of them said, “When a man came really close to her, my mum once scolded him so badly saying ‘move over, how dare you come so close? (in non-honorific language)’ (*uta sarera bas kasto tassina aaeko*). If I were there, I could not do that. Maybe I will be like her at her age.” Another woman mentioned that she stepped onto the harasser’s feet. Still another woman noted that she was becoming more confident gradually; she started scolding harassers and warning them not to do that again. However, there was a potential risk associated with that. One of them mentioned, “I slapped the harasser but later I was frightened if he was going to take revenge.” Therefore, it was always challenging for them to react. Unmarried women seemed to be more frightened to take this risk compared to married women; hence, they mostly preferred to ignore harassment and the harasser. It indicates that agency and power to react applies differently in different age groups, and so does the actual practice of reaction. Compared to young, unmarried women, middle-aged women are less worried from the perceived feelings of stigma if

witnessed by other people. These women are less affected by a feeling of shame and humiliation and more charged with anger and outrage as one of them mentioned,

I have beaten them. I have stopped the bus and dragged them out from the bus. Look!

Sometimes they just keep pushing and rubbing against us inside the vehicle. We have to go to a particular place but our mind gets distracted by such incidents. I use my hand to slap them. Then I ask him why he does that and if he has sisters at home. I just make him feel ashamed in front of other people. I have done this. He was ashamed of his deeds after I took the action. Then he got off the bus. If I react now, at that moment, he will be afraid of doing that next time.

For her, this kind of authoritative reaction brings a successful outcome unlike many young women's request-sounding reactions. Women's power determined by their age, maturity, and confidence enable them to fight back more confidently with the perpetrator.

Although younger women usually do not engage in verbal confrontations, they tend to utilize some secret non-verbal tactics and embodied actions. These embodied actions are bodily reactive displays, which may make use of other materials to punish the harasser. Such actions include pushing harassers back to their place, rolling eyes, pushing with elbows, stepping on feet, giving an angry look, pinching and slapping. Occasionally, these embodied actions are accompanied by verbal responses as well. When men respond back verbally and physically in such situations, women may occasionally have to defend and justify their actions, and this sometimes brings verbal arguments with men. Otherwise, these kinds of secret embodied actions go unnoticed by the public.

When women reflected on the toll of such experiences, they seemed to feel that they had achieved something meaningful. One of them said, "I was about to get off the bus. Without

thinking too much of the consequences, I pushed him hard, and as a result he fell down on the floor. I pretended as if I was sitting (laughter). This man also pretended as if that was a natural fall. Then I got off the bus at my stop.” This example shows that when women are not travelling further along with the perpetrator in the same vehicle, they feel more confident to take action against them. The reason behind taking such secret actions is their perceived inability to fight with the harassers in front of bystanders. The fact that these women are escaping from the scene immediately gives them power and confidence to respond to the situation. For this woman, such an action was possible because she had a chance to escape (flight stage) immediately following the fight stage. However, there always remains some perceived fear of future revenge from the perpetrator even if they escape immediately. In the context of more visible and aggressive reactions, women tend to have more fear and risk of further harm. One of the participants mentioned that as she was returning from her class at around 6 pm in a crowded micro bus, a man came very close to her and started cuddling her hips. At that moment, she could not think further but slapped him hard. But such a visible and assertive reaction brought anxiety and fear to her. She mentioned, “I was scared after that. My body started trembling.” Because being slapped by a woman is humiliating and embarrassing for men in the eyes of other bystanders, such actions may provoke men further to an extent that they are committed to take revenge. Therefore, most of the participants preferred to take secret actions so that other bystanders do not notice.

Some women have other reaction strategies. One participant said, “Sometimes we used to carry a needle or a safety pin. I think I pierced 3 or 4 men with that. If I had a strong feeling that he was doing it intentionally, I would pierce him. They never reacted because they knew that they were doing it and it was wrong. I felt so happy to prick them. While I was with my friend, I

did that, but I never did it when I was alone.” This excerpt shows a couple of interesting features of young women’s reactions and their utilization of a strategic option to fight back. Unlike the previous excerpt, a more covert reaction by pricking the perpetrator saves her from taking more direct, and sometimes risky, confrontational reactions. This nevertheless provides her a perceived sense of security and a meaningful achievement. Here, a sense of agency emerges with a feeling that she is punishing the harasser. A friend’s company in public space proves to be a resource that provides her a higher level of confidence and a lower level of fear and anxiety.

Some of the participants also mentioned that they utilize external help to fight against the perpetrator. Such help normally comes from the persons accompanying them or from the bystanders available there. Women reported that bystanders normally do not intervene in the situation. However, some participants mentioned that many middle-aged women supported them by reprimanding the harasser. One participant, for example, mentioned, “Somebody who takes verbal actions for us are those sisters standing close to us. They rebuke harassers to defend us.” Here, sisters refer to other women who are available at the time of harassment. Although these women are strangers to the victim, their intervention in the situation shows their shared identity and solidarity. Therefore, when some young women feel vulnerable to harassment, they largely have a sense of relief if they see any other women available. A participant shared her experience,

While going to my cousin’s place, a man followed me on the way. I asked him not to follow. There were not many people walking in the street and it was already getting dark. Then he asked me to go out for tea. I promptly ignored him and kept walking but I was scared. Then that man tried to come very close to me. I walked fast. Then there were a group of teenagers and I tried to walk near them but they did not care. Then a woman of my auntie’s age came

to me and asked if I needed any help. Then she scolded him and accompanied me to my cousin's place.

The example above shows that women who are senior in age can help younger women. Younger women have trust in older women as the latter are more experienced and have stronger agency. This kind of support has a visible impact on the perpetrator. However, a similar support if used by younger women may not bring the same result.

Likewise, some women reported that they sometimes benefitted from male bystanders' support to stop harassment. External support from men may be sought if the initial fight by the victim herself does not seem to work. One of the participants mentioned that when a man repeatedly touched her, she made him aware of his activities and asked him not to touch her. But she said he did not seem to listen to her. She added that when a young man who was in a nearby seat scolded the harasser aggressively in a loud voice, only then did the harasser stop doing that and moved to the other side of the vehicle. Men's voice seems to be more powerful and meaningful to make an impact. Here, men's voice and women's voice impact differently and men tend to react more aggressively, authoritatively and rudely, bringing positive results for the victims. Usually, these supportive men tend to be of young age.

Although reaction serves as a momentary sense of empowerment for some women, a large number of respondents considered reaction as a source of fear and anxiety since they foresee potential harmful consequences of revenge from the harasser in the future. This leads to an increased sense of insecurity, which may lead to stress that further victimizes them. Reaction as a source of fear is linked to two different aspects. One is linked directly to harassers in that they may possibly do harm as a response to a reaction by the victim. The other has to do with a

fear of re-victimization if any bystanders and acquaintances see women reacting to men in public space. I have discussed this issue in greater detail in the previous sub-section.

Many women consider reaction as a source to further provoke harassers and, therefore, regard it as leading to added stress. A young employee in an NGO said, “I am afraid of taking any action because I fear that there can be cases of revenge on their (harassers) part. If women speak back to them, their ego will be hurt.” Here, she indicates that reactions may challenge men’s dominant gender role, which may be questioned when women, a supposedly “subordinate” group, confront men’s offensive behaviors. As a result, men’s feelings of superiority get injured and their masculine identity may bring a more dangerous situation with a sense of revenge. This scenario is not limited to a hypothetical fear among these women but is representative of the realities that they face in their everyday life. For example, one respondent mentioned that when she slapped the man who rubbed his body against her in a crowded bus, he hit her back hard and broke her hand right there. Therefore, these women have a fear of being further victimized as a consequence of taking actions against perpetrators.

Moreover, women have a constant fear of being noticed by their acquaintances at the moment they react to perpetrators. If they are witnessed at that moment, they may be subject to further re-victimization since bystanders in many situations may hold the woman responsible for what has happened. For example, a college student mentioned her opinion regarding the invisible consequences of harassment as, “I fear of losing my *ijjat* (honor) because of the perpetrator more than a feeling that the harasser may do something bad to me in the future. I did not make any mistake on my part, but still I fear how society perceives me. He is a man so there is no harm for him. I think I am a woman so I will be considered as a cause for the incident in the eyes of the society.”

Thus, such invisible consequences are related to losing face due to the fact that other people may notice harassment incidents if the woman reacts. This seems counter-intuitive to many, but given the highly patriarchal social context in Nepal, most of the women respondents think that women are likely be blamed for their own victimization. Therefore, any reaction against such harassment from the part of women may create a situation that allows the people around to judge the woman's character and motives. In such situations, women are more concerned about the public image that may impact negatively on their psychological wellbeing.

When these women locate themselves in a larger social setting and community, their perceived self-image is negatively associated with their sense of mattering when there are encounters with perpetrators in public space. Women grapple with the social demands of their gender roles and restrictions, which are viewed differently for men and women as narrated in the examples above. Conventional norms about women's gender role imply that women hold societal values and family honor, and people are likely to perceive it negatively when women get involved in heterosexual issues with people other than their husbands. Therefore, the conflict between such social expectations and reactions to harassment tends to be associated with a greater threat and role conflict. This is a stressor that yields the prediction that women are likely to experience the traditional gender role as constraining for combating harassment. Such a conflict may undermine their perceived feeling of significance with others, and, as a result, women may experience erosion of their sense of mattering.

Use of social support mechanisms

Nepali society both provides mechanisms and imposes constraints on what type of social support is available and how they are utilized by women when they encounter sexual harassment in public space. The interview respondents in this study reported that they utilize two different

types of mediating resources to alleviate the effect of sexual harassment: coping strategies (actions that people take on their own); and social support (utilization of social relations). I discussed the types of coping strategies at a greater length in the previous section (Figure 5.1). For social support, women in Kathmandu made use of informal networks of family, friends and other sources. However, they function differently to mitigate or sometimes even intensify the effects of harassment.

Discussing the role of social support, Pearlin et al. (1981) focus particularly on emotional support in relationships that are primarily based on trust and intimacy. Peers (friends) and sisters of similar age are the core part of social relations for most of the respondents for sharing and getting emotional support when needed. The most effective support came from friends and it enhanced the emotional wellbeing for those who experienced harassment in public space. One of the respondents in a group interview said, “Nowadays I share with my friends, and I feel some relief after that.” Another added, “It flows out from the mind and once it flows out we get relief. I share it every time with my close friends.” Sharing with friends not only provides an immediate relief from the emotional burden of harassment, but sometimes it also serves as a coping strategy for their future reference. For example, a college student who was emotionally disturbed by street harassment when a man grabbed her breast and ran away was consoled and relieved by her friend’s advice. She said, “She suggested not taking it seriously since men are like that. She said they bring another wife even when they have a wife at home, and develop affairs with other women; once he did it to you, it’s gone; past is past; it’s finished now; look at your future now.” The response suggests women’s acceptance of men as natural predators who exhibit their engagement in such activities. This indicates women’s acceptance of men’s behavior as being masculine, which Connell (1987) and Messerschmidt (2012) characterize as “boys being boys”,

taking it for granted by accepting and enduring it within the patriarchal hierarchy in Nepali society. This acceptance, however, is also used as a coping resource by women. Drawing from her past experience and general understanding of the situation of the negative impact of harassment, her friend here offers assistance in a coping with the exigencies of the problematic situation by acknowledging men's privilege in Nepali society and suggesting the momentary nature of such incidents. For her, it worked in alleviating distress through guidance and encouragement, which enhanced the distressed person's sense of control. This observation connects well with Pearlin et al.'s (1981) argument that when victims cannot alter stressful situations, they can alleviate their stress through a modification of the meaning of the problem. For many female participants, sisters are like peers with whom they can disclose their internal experiences and emotions. Sisters are also most likely to go through similar kinds of experience and sisters are close to each other. Moreover, since their place of residence is usually the same (in the case of unmarried sisters), they have a better idea of the harassment-prone areas in their locality, which they can escape in future. This extends to a level of involvement and concern with each other's sexual harassment problems. Emotional support such as sharing similar stories, listening carefully, condemning the harassers or consoling the victims is usually exchanged in this type of relationship. Therefore, friends and sisters are normally utilized as an easy outlet for sharing because they also tend to have similar experiences. Their beliefs, attitudes and behaviors are largely compatible with each other.

As women face various social constraints in responding to harassment on the spot, they find alternative ways to buffer the effects. Some women revealed that their reaction strategies include condemning harassers in their absence. This type of reaction is usually made when women meet their peers and share their experience of harassment. In doing so, they express their

anger using swear words in condemning the harassers. For example, one woman responded mentioned, “We share it among friends and curse him. We curse him saying *rando* (asshole), *kamnapako* (useless) and *murdar* (corpse). We scold him saying his genitals should be chopped off and salt and chili powder should be poured on them.” Another female interviewee reported the way she would rebuke harassers when she met her friend,

My friend and I both reprimand the harassers saying - why couldn't he die? I want to stamp him with my feet like *gundruk*. We keep scolding him until we reach college, and eventually such feelings get weaker. It does not impact me for too long.

In the example above, *gundruk* refers to a mild acidic traditional Nepali food made with green leafy vegetables crushed and fermented for a few days. This metaphor is used to describe avenging the harassers the way people physically crush *gundruk* with their feet. The women wish they could do this to the harasser and may stamp their feet to get rid of their anger.

These responses show that women feel a sense of relief as a result of their verbal condemnation against the harasser even in his absence. It suggests that solidarity with another friend with a similar experience makes them feel more comfortable and the expression of verbal condemnation helps them to release the negative emotions that arose from harassment. Such expressions are usually loaded with anger, rebuke, swear words, and curse words. Although these kinds of reactions in absentia do not affect harassers in any way, these responses show that women recognize and verbalize harassment as a problem, and use these interactive moments as tools to alleviate their distress. Therefore, being able to express verbally with peers is connected to a lower level of harassment's negative impact on women even if the target of the condemnation is not present at the moment of reaction.

Insights from stress theory help us explain why peers and sisters serve as a useful social support mechanism. Following Thoits (2011), social support functions on the basis of the extensiveness of the relations and the frequency of interaction that people can draw from social relations. It is basically about the quality of relationships where engagement with each other is expected, which extends to a level of involvement and concern with each other's problems. According to Thoits (2011), friends and sisters are the primary groups of supporters who are more intimate to each other and whose relationship is of a more enduring type. For the participants, friends serve here as a forum for releasing their experience and sharing in itself brings a sense of empowerment and positive self-esteem. This sharing is a reflective occasion where women enact their agency, which may have protective consequences on their psychological wellbeing. As the members of the primary group are likely to have similar experiences, they benefit more in terms of battling the effects of harassment. Thoits (2011) argues that experientially similar individuals are a stronger source of social support compared to those who are experientially dissimilar. Experientially similar others understand the psychological consequences better and are usually better equipped with coping strategies in such situations. As a result, they are in a better position to listen to and support the practical concerns of their victimized friends. Thus, they are able to provide active coping assistance through advice, feedback, appraisal, and encouragement.

However, not all kinds of social relations and coping strategies available to women are equally helpful to mitigate the psychological effect of sexual harassment. There are social and situational constraints in employing social support mechanisms to fight against and buffer the potential effects of sexual harassment, to which I turn next.

Constraints in employing social support mechanisms

The topic of sexual harassment is largely kept secret from open discussion in Nepali society. Nepali women are implicitly socialized not to talk about their experiences related to sexuality within the sphere of their family and relatives. As a result, sharing sexual harassment experience with family members is largely regarded as a taboo and victims learn to keep such incidents to themselves. Moreover, one cannot imagine women sharing their harassment experiences with members of the opposite gender in the network of their family and relatives. If they do in a few cases, they tend to share only the verbal and teasing types of experiences. This may still be very limited because most women hesitate to reproduce the swear words that perpetrators use in harassing women. Sharing may involve mentioning the names of sexual genitals and swear words, and for most women they are considered as socially restricted topics to talk about with others.

Especially, these topics are not normally discussed with parents and other senior family members and relatives. A woman working in an NGO mentioned, “I have a supportive family but there is a limit to sharing things with them. I do not want to cross that limit. So, I do not want to tell them.” It is more of an implicit cultural understanding that sets power differences between adult children and parents and therefore, certain types of issues and conversation are simply expected to be avoided. This is an implicit socio-cultural control limiting each other’s behaviors in the network to make these women adopt a certain type of restraint in their sharing practices. This restricts their option of choosing parents as a more directly available resource for receiving help. Moreover, experiences that involve describing physical touches associated with women’s sensitive body parts (e.g. breasts, genitals) become largely non-sharable topics when women want to report to the police. One college girl mentioned “We do not have a name for it; we do

not have a word for it. How can I utter such words in front of my family? I don't dare to say the name of the part that pushes me from behind." Another woman mentioned, "Sharing this with police is unlikely. I do not have that courage. I do not know how to explain to them."

Because they do not have a name for it in the local language and because it is not openly talked about among family and friends, young girls in Kathmandu first do not know the encounters actually are sexual harassment. Most women mentioned that they were unaware of, and did not have enough knowledge to understand this issue as harassment. One of the participants mentioned, "These kinds of incidents kept occurring but I did not know at first that these were a form of harassment." She mentioned that she was disappointed when she experienced it first but did not know it was a gender-based form of abuse. Another female participant mentioned, "When it happened more and more, I later knew that they were abusing me. I felt so bad. I still feel bad." Still another mentioned that around puberty, she started acknowledging such acts as harassment though she had encountered such incidents earlier. She assumed that most girls before or at that age had no idea about sexual harassment.

Due to such constraints, participants disclosed that they tended to make up some fake stories to appear normal physically and emotionally if their parents noticed that they looked sad. For example, a respondent told me that a stranger grabbed her breast and disappeared in a crowd. That left her hurting so badly that she sat on the floor for a long time. She said, "My mother was also there and when I sat on the floor she asked what happened to me. I said I suddenly had a chest pain but I did not reveal the true story. I had a hard time returning home due to the pain." Another college student had a similar experience, "Seeing me crying, my mom asked me the reason. I just told her that I got something in my eye and as a result I was having a hard time. I did not tell my parents, thinking that they may worry about me." Here, making such fake excuses

shows that sexual harassment is not a topic of interaction and sharing between parents and adult children, and this constrains daughters from getting necessary support from their parents. Since the discussion of sexuality and harassment experiences rarely occurs in this social context, these women have additional challenges to cope and respond to their parents by hiding their suffering.

Social support and re-victimization of women

The existence and availability of social relationships and support mechanisms does not always guarantee their utilization in fighting sexual harassment. Women carry a constant fear and experience of being judged by others with the same patriarchal standards that produce and reinforce sexual harassment. In many cases, women face a potential risk of being re-victimized by their friends, family, and other external support mechanisms such as police and court. Women and girls reported that sharing with others trivialized the seriousness of the problem, and in some cases reversed the blame to the victim. This eventually re-victimized them and discouraged them from seeking further support. These constraints occur both during seeking support on the spot and after harassment.

When the victims of sexual harassment seek support from others in public space, especially in transport, some bystanders help them while others do not. For instance, an undergraduate student who was harassed in a public bus while going to college said, “I asked him [the perpetrator] a few times what he was doing to me but he did not listen to me. Then a man sitting in a nearby seat scolded him. Then I felt relieved. Sometimes people do help.” However, many respondents did not have this kind of supportive experience from bystanders. Rather they felt embarrassment, shame and humiliation to face such harassment in front of other people. For example, a college graduate shared, “When I react against such conduct but do not get any support from others, I feel very embarrassed.” Another added, “I always fear that the

people standing or sitting next to me would judge me based on my appearance and clothing. They may blame me for what happens. Therefore, I do not dare to share with others in public.” Therefore, whether the bystanders are going to support is unpredictable although many young women find other people’s presence providing a sense of safety and an invisible safeguard to protect from potential, perhaps more severe, abuse.

Seeking social support to fight the effects of sexual harassment after the incident takes place also presents challenges to Nepali women and girls. Due to the perceived risk of being trivialized and dismissed, many women mentioned that they were unwilling to share their harassment experience with their husbands and parents. In some cases, husbands as a category of men may take the situation less seriously and may trivialize the experience. For example, another respondent provided an example, “Once I really had a hard time when a man talked to me rudely using vulgar words and followed me. I reached home scared. Then I talked to my husband about this. Surprisingly, he took it very lightly and said 'you are educated and capable; you can easily react against such activities. Men tease and that is normal.’” Although he acknowledged the problem, he treated it as a common feature of men. Contrary to her expectation, the woman did not get any support from her husband, but felt more discouraged. Similarly, some women also mentioned that sharing with their parents was unhelpful since parents trivialized and dismissed those incidents as unworthy of serious consideration. This resulted in negative consequences to many women’s expectation of social support from their parents. These women reported that their parents deprecated them for not being able to take any action against such activities. Parents projecting these women as powerless and weak made them feel humiliated and helpless. For instance, a young woman in a group interview said, “My mum often says why could I not fight with the perpetrator? She gets angry with me.” Another added, “When I shared that I was

harassed in a tempo, my parents told me I could have gotten off the tempo and walked. The perpetrator of course follows me after that, doesn't he? What step can I take next?" These victimized women perceived these parental reactions as not just unhelpful and impractical but also further demeaning their psychological wellbeing. This response largely ignores the structural inequalities between men and women in Nepali society, pointing out a lack of women's ability to fight sexual harassment.

Even worse, there is a perceived threat of re-victimization by blame reversing to the victim. In such cases, sharing with others can have negative consequences to women, even if such consequences are at a perceived level only imagined. As discussed above, although friends and sisters mostly served as a mediating resource to dampen the harmful consequences of stress exposure, they sometimes can invite a detrimental effect by making the victimized feel more ashamed, left out and excluded from their peer groups. For instance, one participant noted,

When I was badly harassed in public transport by a man who rubbed my back with his hand, I could not think of anything but to slap him. When I shared this with my friends in school the next day, they reacted like I was inviting the harassment. They blamed me for that. They stopped talking to me after that. I suddenly broke down internally. I had never thought that my friends would respond like that. Around that time, there was a rumor in my school about a boy who sent me a love letter proposing to me. Everybody gossiped about me. Then, I was so traumatized. At that time, I felt why was I born as a girl?

Peer support that was first perceived and expected to be helpful turned into a rather hurtful and negative experience for this victim. Friends' negative reactions further intensified the victim's already fragile emotional state. The rumor of a boy's love letter to her, which was perceived negatively in her friends' circle, functioned as an additional stressor, which caused a sudden

emotional breakdown that impacted her for a long time. When I asked her the meaning of the word traumatized, since she herself used this word in the interview, she said she felt lonely, left out, isolated, and mentally disturbed. She further clarified that she cried for many days, could not sleep and eat properly, and could not dare to seek further help. She said she was scared to go to school. Finally, she questioned her female identity and did not see any meaning in it. Thus, sharing with friends may also unexpectedly invite rejection and exclusion, which puts the victim in a state of further victimization.

A woman who shared a taxi ride with a male stranger mentioned that he both verbally and physically harassed her during the ride and asked for her phone number. But later she was terrified and worried. She mentioned, “I was scared if that person would tell my husband this and that. I was scared if my husband will look at me suspecting whether am having an affair with another man. I was so overwhelmed with this feeling. I shared my worry with my sister and friends at my office but I did not tell this to my husband.” Here, the sharing of a contact number led to a potential fear of re-victimization from her husband later. A few women also reported that their parents blamed their daughters for being naughty and provocative through their clothing and behaviors held them responsible for inviting such harassment. A middle- aged community health worker mentioned, “There is a fear of being blamed if we share at home. If the people at home hate us, we are not going to share it with anybody. They blame us for being indecent.” For many women, seeking post-harassment help is sometimes perceived as a “second harassment” since it is likely to add more stress and hardship to the initial trauma.

Another reason that many young women are unwilling to share their harassment experience with their parents is due to the perceived fear of patrolling and further scrutiny that potentially restricts their future mobility. For instance, an undergraduate female student

mentioned, “When I reached home, I could not share the experience with my parents because if I tell them, I cannot go out anymore, daddy will start dropping me off at school. I will not be going out on my own. So I did not share with my parents.” Another young woman had a similar experience when her father heard of a neighbor’s story of being harassed in public space. The girl’s father escorted her to school for two years. Having heard such experiences, many young women reported that their parents started keeping an eye on them for the types of clothes they were wearing, and asking them to take their siblings with them while going out. These women did not like to be escorted nor did they want any restriction on their free mobility. They fear that sharing with parents can largely be counterproductive as it further regulates and restricts women’s freedom of mobility. Parents here tend to control their daughters’ behaviors and activities in public in order to “prevent” them from further experiencing sexual harassment. But for daughters, this restriction turns into a more serious anxiety and distress than the harassment they face every day in public space.

Unexpected and unhelpful responses from their husbands and parents show that these potential sources of social support are usually not perceived as useful sources to mitigate the emotional and psychological impacts of sexual harassment. Such negative reactions are not just unwanted but harmful to many women’s mobility. One major reason is that parents and husbands are deeply concerned about the safety and security of their daughters and wives, but they are less likely to be familiar with the specific consequences of the stressor. As a result, their information, advice, appraisals, and counseling are often perceived as be less effective in buffering the potential stress resulting from sexual harassment. This suggests that more effective coping assistance is likely to come from experientially similar others like friends or sisters.

Police, patriarchy and social support

For Nepali women and girls, the police constitute another patriarchal institution for two reasons. First, in some women's experience, the policemen are directly involved in harassing women when an "opportunity" arises for them. Second, even after the cases of sexual harassment are reported to them, women and girls are judged with the dominant patriarchal norms that prescribe the rules for women's public appearance. Most respondents had a negative perception of the possibility of seeking support from police stations that were mostly staffed with men. They prefer not to utilize them as they think police are also harassers.

For instance, a business woman narrated her encounter with the police as "While returning home after dropping my child at his school, a policeman looked at me and started singing a song "*malai pani mayale hera parbati, hamro pani manai ho ni parbati.*" (Hey Parbati, look at me with love; Hey Parbati, we also have a heart). I just murmured at him with anger. I was furious that those who were supposed to protect us behaved like this. How can we ensure our safety in public space?" The female participants said if they encounter more than one policeman, their chance of being targeted and harassed is multiplied. A foreign female tourist reflected on her experience, "I was returning home late at night from a gathering. A traffic policeman stopped my scooter in the middle of the road, which was actually fine. But once he started asking me some personal questions like what was I doing until that late, where was I coming from and who was I with...he pulled me over to the side and kept asking irrelevant questions. I could guess he was signaling that I could have engaged in some kind of sex work or something." For her, such an experience from a traffic policeman is not just demeaning but violates the individual's right to free mobility.

Many other scooter-riding women have had similar experiences. Once it gets dark, some traffic policemen ask irrelevant questions, stop irrationally and harass them in multiple ways. Others mentioned that police were no better than perpetrators. For instance, a university student mentioned, “Police whistle at you, stare at you for a long time, keep looking at you from top to bottom as if we did something wrong from our part. So how can we ask for their support?” Therefore, most of these women do not trust police, and some of them viewed police as the last source they want to get support from. Such experiences mostly exhibited a negative perception and evaluation of police. As a result, they were reluctant to go to them to seek any support. Therefore, the identity of policemen was constructed more as perpetrators than as protectors. Women’s lack of trust in these authorities speaks to a bigger picture of problematic masculine characteristics of the security system in Nepal.

Thoits (2011) has argued that perceived social support tends to be stronger than received social support in dealing with unpleasant life experiences. Nepali women, however, did not perceive the police as a potential source of support for them. I did not find any woman or girl that reported a case of sexual harassment to the police. However, some respondents mentioned that even if they do not report to the police, they warn the harassers that they would report it to the police if they did not stop their misconduct. For example, the respondent who shared the taxi ride with a stranger mentioned that when she was harassed in the vehicle, she warned him that she would call the police if he did not stop the misconduct. Similarly, a college student who was harassed for a while on a bus could not react on the spot, but warned the perpetrator that she would talk to the police once the vehicle reached the station. However, she did not report it to the police. Another high school student who was being followed by a man became courageous enough to react once she saw the police station on the way. Although most of these women did

not actually use police support, they used police power as a symbolic resource that empowered them to take various types of actions and react to the perpetrators. This use was especially notable when they realized that they could not deal with the perpetrator on their own. The fact that this support was available kept them confident, lowering their risk of anxiety and stress that could result from harassment.

Conclusion

Previous studies on street harassment that mainly come from the US and Canadian contexts (e.g. Bowman 1993; Gardner 1990; Lenton et al. (1999) largely agree that the major constraint women face in fighting sexual harassment is a fear of further harm such as rape from the perpetrator. While fear was one reason for Nepali women not fighting back against the harasser, there were larger social and cultural constraints that limited women's agency. In this chapter I discussed the various social and cultural constraints that Nepali women face in taking actions against the perpetrators of sexual harassment. There is an extension of patriarchy in the public life of men and women and in institutions which largely fail to recognize sexual harassment as a social problem or a social crime. Nepali women face multiple layers of social constraints in both family and community in labeling, explaining, sharing, and seeking support to address the sexual harassment they encounter in everyday life. Overall, the existence of so many social and cultural constraints for Nepali women in taking actions against sexual harassment suggests that women's claims to public space are largely invalid. Encountering and fighting these hurdles leads them to see public space as masculinized to such an extent that women's presence is questioned and treated as illegitimate. Thus, gender does not stand alone but functions in a socio-cultural and historical ground of patriarchy that perpetuates women's subjugated status in Kathmandu's public space.

Women also harbored fears that the male-dominated family, society, and institutions may blame them for their inattention to their safety in public places. Most women expressed a lack of active agency, nervousness, and confused state of mind. Fear of further harm from the perpetrator was reported by many women as one major reason behind not taking action. Many women reported that the perpetrator may follow the woman later, do further harm to her, or locate her residence in order to come back to see her later. They also had a constant fear of being seen by acquaintances on the spot or a risk of being reported to families and significant partners who might question the victim's behavior later. Women also considered that being seen by the public during episodes of harassment would further stigmatize their identity.

I also found that seeking external help such as from the police was considered largely unhelpful in combating sexual harassment. The interview responses showed that women did not report the cases of sexual harassment to police and legal authorities, and were not planning to do so in the future, mainly because they lacked trust in them. Rather, women thought that reporting to the police would make the harassment case public, which might further affect them. This largely contrasts with men's view that women did not report to police and legal authorities because these issues are non-significant and are not worth reporting. For most men, only extreme cases such as sexual assault and rape are considered as a crime, and only these behaviors are considered worthy of legal actions. Such a tradition reproduces male hegemony, power, and discrimination against women.

As the women articulated their stories of social and cultural constraints in fighting sexual harassment, they unanimously used "men" as a category of oppressors, who regard themselves as the judges and decision makers regarding whether and how women should appear in public. Although the women largely developed "all-men-are-the-same" and "men remain men" attitudes,

referring to the dominant forms of masculinity that most Nepali men exhibit in heterosexual encounters, they also seemed aware that there are various types of men. This leads me to ask another question: Is “Nepali men” a homogeneous identity? Are there various forms of Nepali masculinities based on age, social class, ethnicity and caste? How do men construct their and other men’s identities when talking about sexual harassment? These are the questions I attempt to answer in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER 6

MASCULINITIES AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Introduction

In the first analysis chapter, I discussed how both men's and women's accounts and experiences reproduced Kathmandu's public space as a largely masculinized arena that objectified and excluded women from its access and use. Following that, I discussed the social constraints that prevent women from responding to and seeking social support in order to fight against sexual harassment both at the scene and afterwards. In both chapters, I discussed "men" as a homogeneous category taking on the identity of the perpetrator. In this chapter, I turn my attention to how age, social class, and ethnicity may give rise to multiple forms of Nepali masculinities in relation to sexual harassment that are enacted differently in different times and spaces. Amidst these variations, however, I argue that all forms of masculinities within the context of Nepal largely promote the version that is associated with domination, aggression and violence. I show that discourses of men and masculinities show contrasting ideologies of doing gender in public space: while men's self-involvement is portrayed as a normal part of doing gender and acceptable heterosexual practice, other men's involvement is regarded as socially condemnable. When it comes to labeling sexual harassment as a socially questionable behavior, men also brought derogatory, stereotyped racialized discourses in talking about the Other who are from certain ethnic and caste groups.

Since all the women who were approached for this study had experience of sexual harassment of various forms, the number of harassers could not merely be limited to just a few. The number of perpetrators is higher in Kathmandu than one perhaps assumes, and all of them reproduce the hegemonic version of masculinity to enact their authoritative position in Nepali

patriarchy. Various social variables such as age, socio-economic class, ethnicity, and caste produce various versions of masculine identities as they relate to sexual harassment. It is also noteworthy that the perpetrator identity within any of the social categories is not a stable one; any man can potentially take up that identity depending on the context in which members of opposite genders meet. Many men make a distinction between good and bad men and such a distinction is blurred when they find an opportunity to tease girls. According to them, a few bad men wander in the street to intentionally harass women, but most good men do not go out intentionally to tease girls. However, if there is an occasion when men find any feasible chance to harass women, they said they do not step back from the “opportunity”, which they refer to as *chance marne* in Nepali, meaning roughly to ‘grab an opportunity’. For example, a man in his late 30s noted, “When there is a big crowd in a public bus and if you find a woman next to you, you can touch her in a subtle way (*najanido parale*).” It is a matter of grabbing an opportunity or hitting when the iron is hot (*maukako phaida uthaune*). Here, the perpetrator version of masculine identity is not fixed but performative.

Most men interviewed denied their involvement in harassment. In doing so, they used various distancing discursive strategies in their responses and often blamed “other people” for doing that. Most of them presented themselves as “decent” individuals who respect women. They depicted themselves as “good” people, categorizing and representing other individuals and groups as indecent, immoral and bad. These responses reproduce essentializing and pejorative representations of “other” people in terms of larger social categories such as social class, age, job category, ethnicity, caste, region and citizenship. Since some categories such as age and social class present a blurred boundary, I draw my findings based on how the participants used the

terms, for example, *buda* for ‘old’, *keta* for ‘young’, and *sano tino kam* for ‘working class’ in their responses.

Age and sexual harassment

The enactment of the hegemonic forms of masculinity may vary depending on men’s age. The findings show that men’s age matters with regard to the type of sexual harassment women experience. Younger men (usually late teens and early 20s) get involved more in the teasing types of verbal harassment while young adults (30s and 40s) and middle-aged (50s and 60s) men get involved in harassment that involves some kind of physical contact. The survey question *What ages of men are more likely to commit sexual harassment in public space?* gives an overall picture of women’s perception regarding the background of the perpetrators in terms of age:

Less than 25	29.7%
26-40	44.7%
41-60	24.2%
60 and above	1.4%

Table 6.1: Women’s perception on the age of perpetrators

This table shows that men of all ages get involved in sexual harassment in public space. Men aged between 26 and 40 were perceived as the largest group of perpetrators by 44.7% of the women survey respondents. However, there are more details in women’s accounts of their experience from the interviews.

Interviews with women show that young men of around the age of 15-30 years are involved in verbal harassment, particularly when they are in group. These men tend to stay in such places as coffee houses, in front of restaurants, at bus stops, parks, overhead bridges, temple premises, resting places, and other open areas. They are usually in a group consisting of more

than two people of similar age. When they see women, they tend to make various verbal comments. Sometimes these men continue to follow women in the street and make comments. These men are usually involved in more “minor” comments as if they are having some momentary fun with their friends. One of the female participants said, “I think college students do not do such acts with an intention of providing big harm to women. But I’m not sure about the young men who are just on the street.” Another woman added, “The reason behind young men conducting such acts may be that they do not know the impact of such acts.” She, however, discloses the negative impact such acts can bring in women’s everyday life. Such conduct, she noted, can create frustration in women that inhibits their use of public space. Assessing the impact and motive of the activities of these younger men, women regard younger men’s verbal comments largely as reflective of the characteristics of a certain age. Although these acts seem to be more casual and momentary, they prove to be frightening and threatening to women’s mobility since it is hard to know every harasser’s intentions and motives. There always remains a possibility that the anonymous harasser might do further harm.

Likewise, men also noted that there is a connection between their age and heterosexual desires. They considered youth as one triggering factor that provokes men to tease. Men’s age starting from early teens to mid 20s is portrayed as a phase in life in which men are actively involved in verbal harassment. “That’s a problem of the young age,” an interview respondent blamed men’s youth rather than personal characteristics and attitudes as causal factors leading to sexual harassment. Similarly, another man emphasized, “It naturally happens during teenage years, but some people behave as teenagers even in their old age.” Interestingly, here teenage is not defined based on age but is associated with the characteristics of behaviors that tend to be naughty, carefree, and immoral. By stating a popular saying in Nepali “Even a jackal is energetic

(*ghorle*) in its youth”, another respondent stresses that since even a relatively less powerful animal (compared to a tiger), jackal, feels powerful when it is young, it’s very natural for men to be active and feel powerful in their youth. It implies that it is natural that young men engage in teasing and harassment. Young men’s accounts show a lot of similarities with women’s narratives and contrasts with those of middle-aged or relatively older men. They admitted that they engage in verbal teasing but not in physical harassment. Physical harassment is something they condemn. They noted that middle-aged men engage in physical harassment, especially in public transport. They also mentioned that older people are less likely to face trouble even if they harass women, because people in general hardly believe that somebody in his forties or fifties would harass women.

Interview responses from young men also show that among young boys and men, harassment activities are usually encouraged by their peers to prove their masculinity. A number of other important specifics come into play while constructing their masculine group identities, such as displaying male bonding and solidarity, showing power, and exhibiting superiority among friends. A 19-year old college student narrates his opinion, “I am rather a shy boy and I do not like teasing girls. But when I was in grade 9, my friends encouraged me to tease a girl. I refused. Then they called me *chhakka*. This word hit me so hard that I cried at home. After that I started teasing girls whenever I was with a group of my friends.” *Chhakka* in Nepali mean a member of a third gender (*hijra*, a pejorative term again to refer to the third gender), which shows a lack of masculinity traits. This is categorized as a “third gender” which is neither male nor female in a “true” biological sense. While being in a group of young male friends, one is expected to perform as the group decides, to show male bonding and solidarity. For example, a 24 year old man mentioned his experience in a group interview, “I never tease when I am alone

but while I am with my friends I should follow them. If other friends make comments saying, for example, ‘What a melodious tone like that of a cuckoo’ then I just repeat their words. I have to do it.” It shows that peer influence is one of the reasons why many men start engaging in such activities.

Group membership to ensure one’s position among peer forces one to engage in such activities. This action as a group suggests that showing solidarity and conforming to group norms is something important to be in the group as well as to show male bonding among friends. Teasing and harassment mostly function to produce or conform to the attributes of masculinity, which are shaped and reshaped by the fact of their young age. Grazian (2007) argues that competitive sexual boasting like this seems to energize group participants momentarily, but in the long run it can lower the confidence of those who cannot meet the expectations, leading them to experience the shame of a spoiled masculine identity.

Group membership gives more confidence and encourages men to take an active role as perpetrators. In a group, one is likely to feel more secure. For instance, a university male student mentioned, “If I tease a girl while walking in a group and if there is any problem as a result, the problem is better handled in a group. I have a strong feeling that there won’t be any problem if we are in a group. There is a sense of security; there is no fear.” Moreover, young men sometimes compete with one another in the group to show power and superiority among themselves. In this case, a sense of accomplishment is felt when a man is successful in harassing girls. Sometimes, they bet among friends whether anybody in the group is capable of *keti patyauna*— a common word used in Nepali mostly among young men to mean a range of activities such as teasing, talking, making a girl fall in love, making her smile, or drawing her

attention. The girl, however, is unaware of such stakes or plans. A university student recalled his experience of being in a group of his friends:

Sometimes I bet my friends in a group to *patyauna* a particular girl around. Then, I have to talk to her anyhow because I have a bet with them. Then I just go near that girl and walk sometimes in front of her and sometimes besides her. After a while, I present myself as a very loyal person and start a conversation with her. You need to show your loyalty so that she will talk to you. I need to prove to my friends that I win the bet. I always try my best to win.

Here, *patyaunu* means to be able to communicate with a girl. This provides the man not just a sense of accomplishment but also proves his superiority among friends. He feels pride in his deeds and it is celebrated among friends as they often admit saying, “You’ve done! You’ve done great! We congratulate you.” On the contrary, if the girl the group targeted reacted negatively or scolded, he would feel inferior among his friends. This would diminish his image among his peers.

When it comes to public transport, many women believe that young men pose less risk to them compared to middle-aged men since the former are less involved in the physical nature of sexual harassment. For example, a college girl noted “If I have to sit next to a man, I feel more comfortable with somebody who is in his 20s. It feels less fearful. I feel comfortable with those younger men such as those who go to college. Their age is like 18, 19 or 20.” The woman also noted some positive alternative masculine acts of men, mentioning that these younger men help women by offering their seats to them and occasionally intervene in the situation by reprimanding the harasser. Despite a positive portrayal of men, this response also reproduces the feeble version of a woman subject and a powerful version of a man in that men hold the

patriarchal power to “help women by offering seats” and “reprimand the harasser”. By the same token, this response positions women as largely incapable of reprimanding the harasser on their own. Young men are represented as stronger individuals who can stand (do not need seats) and have strength to fight back with the perpetrator. Accounts like this also justify stranger men’s intrusion to women’s space that legitimizes masculine dominance.

The enactment of youth and their masculine identities also depends on contexts. For example, young men are less likely to make comments in the surroundings of their residential area and to female acquaintances. A female participant mentioned that, “If I am walking in a street and if there is a group of 3 or 4 young men that includes my brother, the group does not pass any comments to me. They do not say anything about me. They just keep quiet. They are aware that I am a sister of one of them. But if there is another girl behind me, they focus on that girl.” It indicates that anonymity plays a significant role among young men regarding whom they choose to harass. These men are likely to shift their role from neutral or indifferent individuals to harassers, depending on who the target is. In the case of acquaintances, they tend to follow the etiquette of civil inattention.

A few respondents mentioned that they approach women of their own age or younger intending to establish a romantic relation for the future. This kind of attempt, however, is more achievable when there is a repeated encounter by a man with the same woman. There was a general trend among young men to get more attracted by women who seem unmarried. But there is an interesting pattern in responses regarding married women whose husbands may not be residing in Nepal at the moment. In Nepal, the widespread trend of many men going to foreign countries for financial reasons, leaving their wives behind, provides a sense of opportunity for many men to approach these women. Many women reported that men who seemed to be in their

late 30s and 40s were interested in finding out if they can approach these women. This suggests that many young adult men also look for opportunities to extend their fleeting public encounters into further romantic relationships. One woman, who was asked if her husband was in a foreign country, told me that some men would regard her as “available” for a sexual relationship and pursue her further. She questioned, “What kinds of people are these?”

It is not common for women to be teased by men younger than themselves. However, a few women mentioned that they had been teased by younger men. These women largely blame the patriarchal society that privileges men who dare to do so irrespective of their age. One female respondent said, “They may feel better and smarter if they tease girls.” These young boys tend to wink or blink their eyes. However, such teasing does not have notable negative impacts on women, compared to the verbal comments made by men similar or senior to them in age. One of the participants narrated her experience,

I smiled back at him considering his eye blinking would not affect me. If he wants to have a heavenly experience with my smile, I can do that for him. If younger boys do that to me, I smile back at them but if men of my age or older do that to me, I become very angry.

Sometimes, I blink my eyes back at younger boys thinking that these poor boys are learning to be masculine. But I think the same reaction will provoke other men to sexual harassment and I am scared of doing that.

The response above shows that although men of all ages tease women, women feel more powerful if they have to react back to younger boys. Another female participant shared a similar experience,

I was the only girl on my way to Sundarijal last Saturday. One boy teased me so much. He kept asking ‘*didi*, where are you going? Why are you going? Can I go with you?’ I said ‘bus

park.’ He responded ‘why are you going to the bus park? I want to go with you. Please take me with you... but your friend may come and beat me’ (laughter). He continued teasing me. But I did not feel uncomfortable because he was so young that I could give a damn to him. It would make sense if he would be older: that would have made me very uncomfortable. This boy looked very young.

These excerpts indicate that age is not always a bar for men in getting involved in such activities. However, the perpetrator’s conduct makes different impacts on women depending on their relative ages. For example, if a man harassing women is younger than them, women normally do not take this as a serious act of harassment. Rather they regard such attempts as negligible. The responses above show that dominant gender identity, combined with age seniority, gives more power to men.

Middle-aged men (in their 40s, 50s, and 60s) were considered as the main perpetrators of sexual harassment by most of the female participants. Since these men are involved more in the physical harassment that women condemn most, the motive behind such acts is perceived more as a sexualization and objectification of women’s bodies. Many female respondents recalled a popular saying, “When a man crosses 40, he becomes naughty.” emphasizing the condemnable behaviors of middle-aged men, A woman added, “Even some old men of 60 or 70 years do such things.” Their age gives them power and confidence to behave in this way. Such kinds of behavior mostly occur in public transport rather than in other open areas, since perpetrators can easily disguise their acts in crowded vehicles. Perpetrators make sure that there are no other people seeing them in the crowd. Their behaviors are barely visible by other bystanders in the vehicle.

I asked the same questions to middle-aged men to solicit their opinions on who the harassers are and whether men of their age harass women. They mentioned “other men” as the perpetrators and noted, “I am not a harasser but I have seen many cases of harassment in public space. Young boys are like this.” They also acknowledged that they were involved in teasing girls when they were young. One man, who was in his early 40s, however, admitted, “Whatever the age is if we see a beautiful woman, we tend to get attracted. There is a popular saying *gharki murgi daal barabar*, which can be literally translated as ‘chicken at home is no better than lentil’ (chicken is more valued and regarded as more delicious than lentils and beans in Nepal). That means however beautiful a man’s wife at home is, he tends to get attracted when he sees a beautiful woman outside. This response normalizes men’s involvement in harassment irrespective of their age. But such activities have to be publicly invisible. Young men’s responses indicate that middle-aged and older men are less likely to get engaged in verbal teasing in a group with their peers since such activities are publicly more visible. A young man mentioned, “Some old folks are dangerous. If they find *taruni* (young chick), they do not let them go untouched.”

I also asked public vehicle staff regarding what kind of men harass women. One public vehicle staff confirmed that age is not a bar in harassment:

There is an old man. He always carries a bag. He always goes to sit with women or girls. He is about 70 years old. He is really old. He gets the ride from Chabahil and first asks me if seats are available. Then he finds a seat next to a woman.

Gita: Are old people also like this?

You won’t believe. Old people are more dangerous (laughs). One girl complained to me that the old man touched her here and there. She told me that he used his bag as a cover

to do that. I asked him why he did that. Then he got off the bus. Otherwise, I would smack him. If other people do such activities, I kick them. I did not hit the old man considering his old age.

Most middle-aged and elderly perpetrators tend to be already married and live a sexually active life. Married and older men are normally considered more stable, respectable and responsible in Nepali society. Therefore, their physical harassment if seen by others in public space seems to question their very respectability and reputation. Since such behaviors are easily legitimized amidst the overwhelmingly large number of people in a crowd, it is not difficult for them to save face unless the incident is seen by others. A participant states a popular saying - *latthi pani vachine sarpa pani namarne* (kill the snake and spare the rod); this proverb suggests that these men tend to fulfill their motive of harassing women (killing the snake) with no notable consequences to themselves (saving the rods). However, women have a much harder time to take any action against such people. One woman mentioned, “I do not argue with them. How can I have the courage to scold a person who is so much older than me? If I speak back, people believe him more than me. I feel I might get blamed instead. I feel inferior because I cannot do anything.” The participant in the above example is aware of the existing social norm in which older people are regarded as more respectable and younger women are blamed for flouting social norms by the way they wear their clothing and present themselves in public. In this context, age difference and (professional) identity between the perpetrator and the victim complicates the situation in many ways, so that these men take the opportunity without any potential repercussion for themselves.

Social class and harassment

Social class also plays an important role in the performance of masculine identity with regard to harassment. In Kathmandu, it is not easy to identify the social class of a stranger just by seeing them. However, although it is not always accurate, people can make a guess of the stranger's social and economic background based on their clothing and other forms of public appearance. The female participants mentioned that it is not easy to predict and know in advance who the harassers are based on how they look. That is, there are no predefined criteria to identify a perpetrator until he actually starts doing such things. Perpetrators tend to start doing such acts slowly and gradually as if these actions are inevitable as a result of crowds, uneven roads, abrupt movements of the vehicle, and so on. Then they are likely to increase the intensity and frequency of their activities depending on whether or not women react to them.

All men have a perceived feeling of being watched or witnessed by acquaintances and relatives, but people from a higher socio-economic background assume that getting involved in such activities would defame their public image and class identity. For example,

One of the male interviewees mentioned that:

This is a game of loss and gain. In this case, I always think if somebody who knows me and sees me doing this, there is a big loss. I need to think about my career. I want to go for a PhD and you know! White-collar job is all about recommendation... That is the reason I do not do such activities in public even if it's 9 o'clock at night.

Here, he seems conscious about his social status and future career while getting involved in harassment with strangers in public space. The response shows that one is likely to have serious negative consequences such as career risk or prestige loss. The sense of fear exists even in darkness.

Another participant, a banker in his early 40s, also disclosed his opinion, “The reason why I do not tease is not because I fear a response from women. There is no point I am afraid of women. But I have a feeling that society may be watching me or the people I know may see me teasing women. I am not like one of those wandering boys in the streets.” This response is also an indication of reproduction of a gendered hierarchy in which women are viewed as non-significant and powerless, and by the same response, men are powerful and hegemonic. At the same time, distancing himself from street wanderers, the respondent regards his perceived self-identity as something that has to be defended and kept clean. This implies that familiarity with a local context and society imposes constraints on men that keep them from getting involved in sexual harassment in public space, and such constraints mostly apply to adults and older people who have white collar jobs. These opinions show that middle class and middle-aged men perceive their identities and prestige as socially more important in public, compared to working class people and young boys. This categorization implies that working class men are represented as the ones who are the perpetrators, since they have little fear of social loss if they are caught and reported.

This, however, does not mean that people from reputable socio-economic classes do not harass women. One woman noted, “I have seen a professional working at an organization doing this. It does not mean that only people from *low family background* like construction workers are involved in it.” Many women participants mentioned that men cannot be trusted in terms of how they look. One of the participants narrated her experience,

At that time, I was going to Ratna park. A man sitting next to me seemed very professional. He was neatly dressed. He was around 45 years’ old. After a while on the bus ride, he started bringing his hand toward me. I pushed it toward him. He did it again from another side

almost trying to touch my breasts. . . . After a couple of weeks, I saw the same man with one of my professors. Then I was shocked to know that he too was a professor from Tahachal Campus.

Young men of any socio-economic background normalized that *jiskaune* is a normal heterosexual behavior of any man. Social class, however, does interestingly intersect with age with regard to what words and comments they use in verbal harassment. For example, a 28 year old man who worked in a computer company made an interesting point regarding the use of language. He thought that the use of the English language while making verbal comments is not only acceptable, but sounds good too. He said, “When I focus on somebody’s ass, I make comments in English because I feel it’s very common and comfortable. It’s a kind of praising them; they think it’s good. If it is in Nepali or if anybody says it in Nepali, it will be really annoying.” For him, this reference validates his use of English words and comments as not just appropriate but carrying some prestige with it. If the same expression is made in Nepali, he finds it ugly, inappropriate and vulgar. Such use of English is connected to the social class he belongs to, the type of school he went to, and his access and exposure to media and popular culture. When I asked about his background, he indicated that he was from a higher socioeconomic status, currently living in an elite colony in Kathmandu and went to an English medium boarding school. He also told me that he had access to global popular culture through TV, the Internet, and Hollywood movies. This shows that globally circulated mass-media images and texts influence daily social behavior pertaining to gender and sexual expression at a more localized level.

Most men, however, produced several, sometimes contradictory, discourses about the relationship of sexual harassment with the perpetrator’s social and economic class. Middle-aged middle class men in the sample claimed that working class men were more likely to be engaged

in such activities since the latter have little to lose in terms of their public image and prestige in case they are caught, because they do not possess such social honor. For example, a 36-year old government officer said:

If a man working in a restaurant does such activities and somebody catches him doing it, what happens? The maximum he receives is two slaps. That's all. It does not affect him much. In my case, if I do such activities, there is a massive loss.

The man here treats restaurant work as a low-prestige job, and notes that workers in such jobs do not lose anything even if they are caught performing sexual harassment. At the same time, he regards his government job as prestigious work, which holds public dignity. He added an instance in the case of young boys as “boys in grades 11 and 12 tease girls in the streets; it's the same thing. There is no loss of their prestige.” Here, social class and age are important evaluative tools for interpreting what is normal and what is not. Boys and young men are not considered as having a reputable and dignified identity in society. They are yet to climb higher steps of the social hierarchy ladder.

People from working class background, however, strongly resisted the claim that they are the perpetrators. For example, a 45-year old construction worker said he did not get involved in such activities in Kathmandu. Because he was from outside of Kathmandu and he was poor, he thought that there might be more serious consequences for him if he was caught doing such activities. For him, rich people from Kathmandu, instead, are in a better position to defend themselves, because they tend to be rich and have stronger social support. Here, an interesting dynamic of perceived fear seems to exist among both middle class people and working class people. The former are more afraid of the social image that may negatively affect their social status while the latter are cautious of the legal and financial consequences. Although anonymity

seems to prevent identity disclosure in conducting harassment activities, perceived fear always remains among men of any social class.

Both men and women considered public vehicles as working class men's workplace where sexual harassment is expected and normalized. They complained about the behaviors of drivers and their staff in public space. A bus conductor is a person who collects bus fares, and a *khalasi* signals the driver where and for how long the bus should be stopped in certain bus stations. These staff are also responsible for helping to load and unload passengers' baggage. Even when the drivers and staff of public vehicles are young, they are normally viewed as abusive and uncouth to women of any age and class. A participant stated her opinion, "For me, drivers and their staff are *cheap* kind of people. I do not look at them and do not like to talk to them. I never like to have a two-way communication with these people. There are some good drivers, their staff, and police, but it is set in my mind that they are *cheap* people." By using the English word *cheap*, she indicates such people as mischievous and untrustworthy.

Another participant also regarded public vehicle staff as the most abusive people, "If you talk about conductors and *khalasis*, they are the ones who harass most. They do it indirectly by the way they talk to us and the words they use. When you ask them to stop the vehicle to get off, they do not stop at the correct bus stop, but tell you that they will stop at the next station. That is all harassment. The words that drivers, conductors and *khalasis* use are very bad. It feels really embarrassing to hear them." Another added, "they click their tongue, keep staring, laughing; they make sudden stops and ask 'Sister, do you like to go? I stopped because I felt like you wanted to go. Hurry up if you want to go.' They do it even if they know that we are not going to that direction."

While walking by the side of the road, women receive such kinds of comments from the drivers and conductors of public vehicles. They tend to touch women's body parts especially on

their back, and they try to make it seem normal by showing that they are helping women to get on or get off the vehicle. Most of the female participants reported that *khalasis* and conductors do such kinds of behaviors only to women, mostly to young ones. Women also mentioned that the vehicle staff deliberately argue with women for bus fare to annoy them. Usually in the context of Nepal, the public transport sector is known as rough. It is considered so since those working in this sector such as drivers and their staffs are perceived as people who use impolite, rude and offensive language in their everyday practice. This domain of work is viewed by many as a disrespectful space for women.

However, in their interviews, all the drivers and *khalasis* claimed that their buses and vans were safe for women. For them, women's safety meant a few seats (3 or 4 depending on the capacity of the vehicle) reserved for them. However, they reported that there were some rare cases of sexual harassment by passengers in their vehicles, which they took care of. They promptly denied their involvement in sexual harassment of any kind, but they admitted that they had seen other drivers and assistants harassing women. They acknowledged that a lack of education, bad company, and poor socio-economic background of the people who work in public transport were some contributing factors in promoting sexual harassment. One of them said, "You know, transportation sector is like this." For them, it is not an individual problem or an issue; except a few cases, the whole domain of work is characterized as consisting of harassment perpetrators. Responses like this construct public transport workplace as a masculine space in which sexual harassment is normalized and institutionalized through the performance of masculine acts and identities.

Caste, ethnicity and harassment

Caste and ethnic diversity in Kathmandu raise questions about the monolithic masculinity identity and its implications for men's involvement in harassment. Pejorative representations of "other" caste and ethnic groups were clearly visible in many interview responses of men and women. In a group interview, one man of around early 50s conveyed two types of comments regarding harassers. In the following response, he talks about the behaviors of a man from a "lower" Hindu caste.

What I observed was – once I was standing in a queue. There were other men like me and a Damai (the so called "lowest" and "untouchable" caste in traditional Hindu classification) was there too. That Damai suddenly came from nowhere and stood next to the women. He positioned himself between the two women. He tried to talk to them many times. With some exceptions, I sometimes feel caste might work in that way.

Damai is a socially disadvantaged caste-- the so-called Dalit. People in that category are treated as "untouchable", and have socially and culturally been oppressed by the high caste Hindus. In the above response, the man creates a dichotomy of "them" versus "us", treating some social groups as likely perpetrators and classifying the members of the interview group (including the interviewer) as a "decent" group of high caste Hindus. He continued to blame another *janajati* (a general term for ethnic groups) Tamang as being highly involved in criminal activities. He treats Tamang cultural practices such as use of local alcohol (*jand and raksi*), not as indicative of their legitimate food items and eating habits, but as indexes of condemnable behaviors. The man viewed the "other" groups as "people who have neither social prestige, nor fear of losing their reputation". While talking about their involvement in sexual harassment, he brought the notions of social prestige and position based on such valuable assets as education, employment and

higher socioeconomic status. By doing so, it is also interesting to see how he self-represents and represents the members of his group, “We are afraid of conducting such activities since we have two types of responsibilities such as family responsibility and public responsibility. If one is involved in such activities, it can be shameful to the individual and may bring bad reputation to the family.” Here, he clearly represents “we” as a respectable social group having a good public image in Nepali society. By contrast, he implies that people from “lower” castes and certain marginalized ethnic groups do not lose social prestige because they do not have it.

Men from higher Hindu castes, particularly the hill Brahmins, portrayed their own identity as something good, default, and civilized while viewing other ethnic and regional categories as deviant and abnormal. In a group interview consisting of men from such a higher status group, one man in his mid 50s put forth his opinion, “Madhesi people do like this.”

Another member added,

Those who are originally from Terai conduct such activities. When I go to the Hanuman Dhoka area for some programs, I often find some groups of people of Terai origin; each group contains around three to four individuals. I have seen them slowly leaning toward women. Maybe, they rarely have a chance to come closer to other women in their life.

They mostly leave their wives behind in their homes and when they see other women here, they may have that desire to be closer with them ... Their kids do not live with them either.

That makes them free. Moreover, these people die for Nepali girls. They are not as conscious as us in respecting women. They do not need to maintain their status. They do not want to live here forever since they are here just to earn some money. So they worry less about what other people might say while being engaged in such activities.

This response brings a number of factors to our attention regarding how harassment is represented and problematized based on men's ethnic and regional identities. It shows that Hindu elites from the hills do not consider Madhesi people as Nepali citizens. The example also shows the racialized discourse in which Madhesis are treated as people who do not socialize with women in their everyday life. It also suggests that this situation makes them treat any strange woman as an object to fulfil their desires. The response also frames Madhesis as people who do not respect women. Moreover, the respondent thinks Madhesis have little concern about their social prestige given their supposedly short-term "money-oriented" stay in Kathmandu with their very limited social network.

Such pejorative representations of Madhesis say more about the ideologies and perspectives of those who represent than the objects being represented. When I met a Madhesi man around 45 years old in a bus park, where he had a small shoe repair shop under a tree, I asked him about his experience and understanding of sexual harassment. He was very disappointed by the way he has been treated by other people because of the fact that he was from Madhes and was poor. He recounted his stories of experiencing discrimination in his everyday life and said, "I have never teased any woman. You know people already treat us so badly that they never use a single respectful sentence to us. How can we dare harass women in Kathmandu?" Construction and representation of certain ethnic and caste groups in this way promotes racial stereotypes and is likely to reinforce public hostility toward such groups.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the multiple identities of men with regard to sexual harassment against women. There is no one masculine identity, but it is enacted and represented differently depending on the age, social class, caste and ethnicity of the perpetrator. Although most men

denied their intention of harassing women, most of the younger respondents admitted that they were involved in verbal harassment. Young men's harassment behaviors are subject to peer pressure since experiences are something to brag about and be proud of, being bold and showing heroic activity to be shared among friends. Such experiences serve as resources to construct a person's power, pride and identity among peers. Lack of those experiences and resources, on the other hand, may prevent one from getting such symbolic capital, hence creating a lack of masculine self-esteem among friends. Therefore, it was the peer influence and group membership that defined heterosexual harassment performance as an essential criterion for doing masculinity. Here, rather than understanding sexual harassment as a natural reflection of masculine traits, it is more a question of following the situated normative belief about masculinity that contributes to the reproduction of social structure.

Relatively older men, however, distanced themselves while talking about their involvement in harassment. Although these men mentioned that they witnessed such harassment every so often, most of them did not consider themselves as harassers. They acknowledged the existence of harassment activities in public space but mentioned youth and "other" men as the perpetrators. The contested perspectives brought by various categories of people regarding their involvement in harassment activities frame other people as harassers and disclose multiple layers of discrimination and hierarchy based on class, caste, occupation, age and ethnicity. Mostly middle-aged "higher caste" people presented stereotypically pejorative, racialized discourses, representing people from certain ethnic and caste groups as perpetrators. Most of the middle-aged and relatively older aged men strategically distanced themselves from the category of perpetrators as they regarded their identities and positions as prestigious, responsible and respectful toward women, compared to other groups and categories.

Thus, there is no one uncontested masculine identity. A single man can perform various versions of masculinity, such as a “decent” man and a perpetrator, largely depending on the context. Amidst that multiplicity, men portray themselves as opportunity seekers, and grabbing a particular harassment opportunity depends on a number of factors. For younger men, their company in a group provides them strength, and for middle-aged and older men, anonymity is the key context that allows them to intervene in women’s space and privacy. As a result, these places tend to be safe zones for the perpetrators to take advantage of women they do not know. Public space, thus, offers opportunities of both proximity and anonymity for men to enact the perpetrator version of their masculinity. Masculinity in public space ultimately emphasizes the performance of sexual harassment as a form of masculine resources (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2000). Men of all ages and backgrounds take the benefits of women’s presence in public space, continuing to reproduce harassment as a manifestation of hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal privilege in Nepali society.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The central argument of this dissertation is that sexual harassment in public space in Nepal constitutes and reproduces dominant norms of patriarchy also observed in other social contexts such as in families and workplaces. The dissertation findings show that patriarchy pervades the society and public space becomes an arena where violence and patriarchy can be performed, which further asserts male dominance and control of public space. I argue that men and women learn dominance and submission from homes, schools, peers and society, and the norms of dominant patriarchy are maintained through sexual harassment. Power and privilege for Nepali men is invisibly reproduced through cultural socialization, and as a result, men are largely unaware of themselves as explicitly gendered. As Kimmel and Messner (1992) note, men may not know of how the social meanings attached to gender shape their own experiences. As a result, similar to other characteristics of hegemony and dominance, men's behaviors and ideologies frequently remain unmarked and normal. Sexual harassment, therefore, is not a reflection of heterosexual drives of men because fleeting encounters are less likely to turn into sexual relationships. It, instead, is a performance of masculine identities and male privilege to enact power and domination on women.

Sexual harassment in Kathmandu's public space reproduces male privilege in a new domain of mobility and invades women's space, thereby questioning their sense of belonging. Nepali men's behaviors toward women in public space largely fail to follow the norms and expectations of civil inattention (Goffman 1981) where claims to privacy are acknowledged and respected. Instead, the fleeting encounters in Kathmandu's streets and public transport are largely

characterized with hostility, aggression, and men's dominance over women. This performance of power is not only heterosexual in nature, but *homosocial* (Grazian 2007), which further constructs public space as a venue for pride and bonding among men. Seeking social support and fight against harassment becomes a challenge for Nepali women because the institutionalized patriarchy prescribes rules and norms for women regarding how and when they should appear in public, and the blame largely goes to women if any instance of sexual harassment occurs. I expand this central argument below in a series of points developed and summarized from the findings.

Key findings

Patriarchy of harassment reproduces male privilege by masculinizing public spaces in Kathmandu. Nepali patriarchy has its explicit expressions in the shaping and reshaping of Kathmandu's public spaces. The social construction of public space leads to different understandings and interpretations by men and women. As the findings show, public space is a place for men to hang out with peers, engage in pastime activities among themselves, and spend hours chatting with friends. The overwhelming male presence in Kathmandu's public space gives one an impression that the space is made for them and the ownership belongs to them. Women's interpretations of public space, on the other hand, show a different reality. Public space for them is a brief transit, en route to their various destinations, such as workplaces, universities, grocery stores or homes. Any prolonged presence of women in public space is seen by both men and women as a disruption to an existing social order. This reality is variously accepted by both men and women.

Gendered shaping of Kathmandu's public space is evident when both women and men trivialized and normalized sexual harassment due to its routine occurrence in women's life. The

participants constructed boundaries between “sexual harassment” and “everyday teasing.” Verbal harassment was so trivialized that they said such activities are easily forgotten as they are mostly taken for granted, but they also expressed that such comments were unworthy of mentioning since they are such a frequent and regular part of their life. Taking actions against the perpetrator becomes challenging when men continue to trivialize women’s sexual harassment experiences. Women’s understanding of sexuality and harassment continue to perpetuate gendered hierarchies and hegemonies across heterosexual relations.

The notion of space as socially constructed was helpful in conceptualizing the hierarchical and ideological nature of Kathmandu’s public spaces. When we say spaces are socially constructed, it largely means that social practices are expressed and institutionalized through people’s daily activities and those activities generate structural properties and the social system, and in turn the social system shapes people’s behaviors. Therefore, people’s activities in Kathmandu’s public space both shape and are shaped by larger social structures. This again consolidates the argument that social spaces are ideological and they are likely to reproduce social inequalities and power differences between men and women, depending on who is primarily involved in producing these spaces. This connects back to Lefebvre’s (1991) argument that socially produced spaces serve as “a tool of thought and of action, and hence domination, of power” (1991: 26). The lack of women’s safety in public places shows social control of women by men in our societies, and such social control is largely normalized through social and cultural practices.

However, the reasons for acceptance and normalization of harassment in Kathmandu are different for men and women. Women saw sexual harassment as manifestation of institutionalized patriarchy that was largely unavoidable and inescapable. Men, on the other

hand, legitimized such activities as natural characteristics of heterosexual relationships between men and women. They were thus considered as naturally occurring cultural and biological attributes of men. Another naturalization and normalization tactic used by men was through referring to the physical conditions of the roads and the vehicles. They mentioned that sexual harassment in public transport was inevitable given the infrastructure of transportation. Women, however, were aware that men use such situations as opportunities to grab a chance to harass women, and yet appear normal and natural. Women were bothered and disturbed by such activity, while men largely failed to recognize it as a significant social problem. Normalization of harassment in this way largely conforms to the traditional gender arrangements, beliefs and behaviors, and reinforces women's sexual subordination to men in Nepali society. It is fruitful to refer to Hlavka's (2014) research from an urban Midwest community in the U.S. in which she found that discourses of normalization were observed in girls as young as 11 to 16 years of age. She reported that racially diverse young women (white girls, black girls, and Latina girls) accepted sexual abuse and harassment as inherent features of compulsory heterosexuality, through socialization in families and beyond. Both the current study and Hlavka's study point out that women and girls are expected to endure violence and aggression by men because they are unavoidable cultural and biological aspects of men. Discourses surrounding such beliefs and ideologies in fact legitimize men's aggression, harassment, and criminal sexual conduct with limited accountability.

Referring to men's power, the female participants pointed at male superiority and men's perceived social power to do anything they like. As a result, women are not free to use their rights to maintaining their body boundaries in public space. The existing social and cultural norms create conditions for the suppression and objectification of women, which results in

sexual harassment. One of the female participants commented on the present social structure in which women are harassed as “this is a male dominated society. Even if men commit crime like this, women are blamed, and so women are being harassed. It is our social condition to interpret women in a wrong way.” It shows that the respondents recognized that there is a lack of respect for women, and male as symbolic power plays a role in such harassment. This is so pervasive that it appears, deceptively, to be trivial. Going through the experience of sexual harassment almost every day, women developed an attitude of “all men are the same”. They develop distrust toward members of the opposite gender. In many cases, women developed hatred toward men. At some point, many women stopped trusting their male classmates, workmates and relatives.

Some participants said in order to escape such unpleasant situations, they stopped using certain types of clothes, quit their jobs, avoided using certain streets, bought a scooter, became more judgmental toward men, determined to stay single the rest of their life, and so on. These conflicting discourses send mixed messages about Nepali patriarchy in relation to sexual harassment. The acceptance and trivialization of sexual harassment as a natural outcome of heterosexual encounters, on the one hand, reflects Nepali society’s patriarchal norms as “normal.” The women’s negative experience of such encounters, on the other hand, is counter-productive to maintain patriarchy smoothly in families, workplaces, and communities.

When harassment is normalized and accepted as part of society that women should face in their lives, it continues to be institutionalized. Harassment experience at the very beginning of their puberty bothered girls and young women a lot, but once they accepted it as an everyday part of their lives, they learnt to modify the meaning and severity of sexual harassment. For instance, some women mentioned that rather than becoming sad, they needed to learn to accept this as inevitable, and meanwhile look for ways to protect themselves in public space. The findings

largely suggest that married women, perhaps with their maturity of age and their relative openness to face and talk about sexual matters, have less intense feelings of harassment but more reactions against the perpetrators. Unmarried women in general, on the other hand, are less likely to be sexually experienced and, thus, the sexual nature of harassment from strangers affects their feelings more intensely. Possible consequences of harassment and post-harassment actions – both on the spot and afterwards – are deeply embedded in the cultural context of the societies where we investigate such issues. The research findings have some similarities with that of Gardner (1990) with regard to women’s presentation of self in public. Gardner interviewed middle class women about their experience of sexual harassment in public space in a small city in New Mexico, U.S., and found that many informants purposefully mentioned a boyfriend or husband during service encounters or public conversations with a male stranger. These women, Gardner adds, also deployed some deception strategies, for example by wearing a wedding ring though they were unwed, in their self-presentation with plumbers and pizza delivery men, who often tend to be strangers. In the context of Nepal, some married women I interviewed reported that they frequently presented themselves as “married self” so that they would be targeted less by the perpetrators. That is, they make conscious efforts to manage the impressions that others have of them. In case of married women, they mostly display their married public identity. Lack of such impression management tools in women may mean that the unmarried women are more appealing sexual harassment targets for the perpetrator. As public space, thus, is masculinized, women and their body parts continue to be objectified.

Studies conducted in various socio-political contexts show that women face various challenges in taking actions against the perpetrator. The findings of Lenton et al.’s (1999) large scale study on Canadian women’s experience of sexual harassment showed that due to a

perceived risk of further crime, the women did not fight back with the perpetrator. Similarly, Gardner's (1990) study with women in the U.S. also showed similar results: women perceived a greater risk of rape or murder if they took stronger reactions against perpetrators. While the risk factor was still observed among Nepali women in the context of the present study, there were other reasons unique to Nepal's context. As I discussed in chapter 5, Nepali women and girls face layers of complexities in naming, fighting against, and seeking social support to take actions against the perpetrator. The lack of language to specifically explain the intrusion is one major impediment. Recall that in the Nepali language, there is no specific word for sexual harassment. In addition, because such experiences are not commonly discussed in families, young girls in particular may not know that these actions are sexual harassment. These constraints largely prevent young women from making sexual harassment a topic of discussion in social and discursive realms. Girls learn early that they should not talk about sex and their sexuality-related experiences, which makes external support impossible in most cases. This implicitly legitimizes sexual harassment and violence, reproducing male privilege in Nepali women's lives.

When it comes to sexual harassment, Nepali patriarchy restricts women's access to social support to a very narrow range. The findings showed that the only major form of social support that was effective was peer-sharing with similar others who often tend to be the victim's sisters and same-sex friends. The similar others with their past experiential knowledge are likely to take the role of the distressed person and imaginatively anticipate his or her emotional reactions and practical concerns. This is referred to as empathic understanding (Thoits 2011). By empathizing and validating feelings and concerns, a similar other is "there" emotionally for the distressed individual. In addition to providing emotional sustenance, similar others provided Nepali women active coping assistance through advice, feedback, appraisal, coping

encouragement and so on. Drawing from their past experience, similar others offered effective coping assistance to the exigencies of the problematic situation. They alleviated distress through guidance and encouragement that enhanced the distressed persons' sense of control. The findings showed that advice, feedback, guidance, and encouragement supplied by experienced others was efficacious in buffering the impacts of adversity. Influence received from similar others can shape the individual's coping efforts, which can reduce situational demands and emotional reactions directly and indirectly. This reduction can boost the individual's sense of control over her life. Moreover, the fact that there are peers who have coped effectively with the stressor generates hope. In general, similar others' social influence should guide individual's active coping behaviors and motivate continued striving, reducing stressful demands and emotional reactions both directly and indirectly through a bolstered sense of personal control.

Nonetheless, it must be noted that such peer support is very limited: the women don't get much help that encourages them to actually confront the harasser, and in fact a lot of the support from friends happens in the absence of the harasser as a kind of private exorcism. Thus, Nepali women's limiting of social support to the members of the same-sex category largely renders men and male-dominated institutions as potentially unhelpful in fighting sexual harassment.

Nepali society has a dominant way of seeing women as gatekeepers of social and cultural order in their families, and this also presents a significant social constraint, preventing women from taking action in the face of harassment. Women are largely blamed for what they wear because the society believes they provoke and ask for harassment. In chapter 5, I analyzed men's responses that women wearing western and revealing outfits deserve sexual harassment. For them, those who follow local cultural norms and wear traditional attire are not harassed. They

blamed women for flouting social rules, and sexual harassment for them was a useful tool to discipline Nepali women. Conversely, women's responses showed that women of most age ranges, wearing any type of clothes have been harassed, and they have been harassed frequently. Women with more traditional *kurta* and *sulwar*, and *sari* have been physically touched and grabbed, although verbal comments may depend significantly on what types of attire women wear. Men's responses largely showed that men are in a position to judge and decide what women should wear, what time of the day they should go out, and in which places they can be present. Such an ideological basis reinforces, as Grazian (2007) also mentions, vulnerability, weakness, and submissiveness as conventional markers of femininity, perpetuating Nepali patriarchal norms.

Sexual harassment in public space is likely to be noticed by other third parties who are neither the perpetrator nor the victim. In such contexts, both men and women prefer anonymity. Having acquaintances and witnesses around created problems for both men and women. Men thought that their self-image was defamed, and their respectability and identity was questioned. They reported that they are in a position to lose their face and position if seen by others. Women also think that sexual harassment in an anonymous environment protects them from being seen by others. Anonymity is a cloak that keeps them safe from further victimization.

The findings also question the essentialized version of masculine identity because, as I showed in chapter 6, both men and women resist, challenge and renegotiate multiple layers of masculinity that manifest in different forms depending on age, social class, caste and ethnicity. Rather than necessarily mirroring a "true" version of men's behaviors, the discursive representations of multiplicity of perpetrator identities show how the meanings surrounding masculinity and femininity are constructed in everyday lives of Nepali men and women. This is a

key reason why it was essential to include the male perspectives in the study in order to capture the radically different understandings of men and women. There is a connection between dominant expectations of normative masculinity in Nepali society and actual enactment of those identities by men in heterosexual encounters with women in public space. Thus, the “perpetrator” identity of men is not static, but context-dependent, and this point connects well with Connell and Messerschmidt’s (2005: 850) argument when they say that hegemonic masculinities “to a significant degree constitute in men’s interaction with women.” This is also similar to West and Zimmerman’s (1987) conceptualization of the performative nature of “doing gender” in everyday life. Similar to Grazian’s (2007) observation in the U.S., conforming to the hegemonic patterns of masculinity, thus, is particularly observed among young Nepali men of college age who exhibit many characteristics of early adulthood while still possessing the emotional immaturity, diminutive body image, and sexual insecurities of late adolescence.

Cockburn (1983:123) long ago noted that “patriarchy is as much about relations between man and man as it is about relations between men and women.” *Keti jiskaune* (girl teasing), in the case of Kathmandu, represents a common practice among men to establish intimacy and bond among themselves. Similar to Wessellmann and Kelly’s (2010) findings, my data from both men and women suggest that stranger harassment is more visible in group contexts. Many men reported that larger groups may increase pressure on individuals to follow group norms and harass women and girls. Due to a fear of being rejected by their peer group, many men and boys feel compelled to make comments on members of the opposite gender group. As Johnson (1988) also notes, the social significance of sexual harassment lies in its power to form identities and relationships based on practices that are largely taken-for-granted by individuals of both gender groups. Such socialization takes place in peer groups, in schools and in society at large. Learning

to be a perpetrator, thus, is also a part of both institutionalizing and reproducing the patriarchy of harassment.

Similar to Quinn's (2002) and Thompson's (1994) observation in other contexts, Nepali men's behaviors appear to function as a form of gendered, heterosexual play among men. I argue that men's harassment behaviors toward women send mixed messages regarding the access to and use of public space by women. While men's perpetuation of sexual harassment largely shows that men do not welcome women in public space, indirectly forcing them to leave the territory that belongs to men, their perception of women's presence in public space as fun and play suggests that they continue to want to see women in public so that women can be objects of heterosexual pleasure for them. This relational dynamic perpetuates hegemonic masculine identities, and largely shows a lack of empathy with the feminine other. Men regard a woman in public space as an object rather than an agentive subject with the voice and capabilities to fight against mistreatment. As a result, similar to many other harms women face, street harassment is largely dismissed as a trivial and natural fact of life that women must learn to accept.

Implications of the study

The findings have important implications for the role and space of women in the fast changing socio-political context of Nepal. Growing numbers of women coming out of their homes for a more mobile life have encountered the problems of sexual harassment and assault in public places in Kathmandu. While the traditional Nepali society mostly confined women to domestic chores and familial responsibilities, recent socio-political changes in the country have offered more opportunities for women's spatial mobility from the private sphere to the public sphere for various purposes. One such change in women's changing role in the society is that they now have more opportunities for study and work, which require them to come out of their private

spaces into public spaces. As new possibilities for mobility emerge, new spaces are created where women continue to experience vulnerability and subordination by men. Women's experience in public space, however, shows that women do not lay claim to a space in the public sphere. Liechty (2010:341) sees them as signs of gender policing. Violence against women in public space conflicts with the liberal rhetoric of women's empowerment, freedom, and opportunities in Nepal.

I have shown that Kathmandu's gendered public spaces are largely unsafe and unwelcome for women. The fact that men regard women as "available" and "open persons" implies that part of women's role is open to the public. Such an attitude emphasizes women's space as private, which is the sphere of domestic rather than public responsibility. Bowman's (1993) argument is relevant here: sexual harassment "forms a part of a whole spectrum of means by which men objectify women and assert coercive power over them, one which is even more invidious because it is so pervasive and appears, deceptively, to be trivial" (p 540). In public spaces, people normatively maintain certain physical distance, which Bowman (1993) refers to as "a zone of interpersonal distance", which can be crossed only by mutual consent. But, Kathmandu's public spaces showed a violation of such consent. When Nepali men intrude on women's privacy without such consent, many women reported that they may prefer not to show their presence in public space (e.g. not use transport, but instead walk on foot) in order to avoid such intrusion. Sexual harassment in Kathmandu, thus, is a reflection of the broader continuum of structural inequality between males and females in Nepali society.

Having said that, however, we cannot ignore the positive changes that have taken place in recent years regarding the agency of Nepali women to combat harassment. Several campaigns have named sexual harassment as a social problem. Several educational and awareness programs

in schools and communities have drawn the attention of both men and women in identifying the issue as a serious concern. Media programs have broadcast news and reports highlighting the cases of harassment in public transport and streets. Several state and non-government organizations have been working in Safe City and other programs to ensure the safety of women in urban areas in Nepal. As a result, women and girls have been able to find more confidence to speak up and take actions against the perpetrator on the spot. In 2015, a YouTube video -- capturing a man groping a woman and the woman spanking and reprimanding the perpetrator back -- became viral in many Nepali men and women's Facebook pages. These changing situations suggest that in many contexts men harbor a fear that their misconduct will be revealed right away if they get involved in harassment.

Most studies on sexual harassment recognize victim's agency to resist only when it is successful in stopping and preventing the perpetrator's violence. However, as Coates and Wade (2007) also maintain, this is not an appropriate criterion. My findings show that Nepali women resist in a myriad of ways that are less successful in stopping the harassment, but nevertheless are extremely important as indications of women's dignity and self-respect. Even if they are not successful, they recognize that what is happening to them is wrong, and when they experience it next time, they can build up confidence to combat it more aggressively. These changes in Nepali society are praiseworthy. However, women still are caught up in a dilemma over whether they should react, because they fear further harm when they passively ignore the advancement from the perpetrator, or are afraid to confront him due to a potentially more aggressive reaction in return.

The findings urge us to ask how we can fight sexual harassment in public space. For Nepali women, police stations, courts and public vehicles are spaces and institutions occupied by

men and shaped by patriarchal norms. Women did not report to the police and did not file cases against the perpetrator for several reasons. Women did not trust the police because many of them had experience of being sexually harassed by policemen. Moreover, they had a constant fear of being re-victimized at police stations when the case is brought to the public's attention. Previous researchers (Phillips 2000; Hlavka 2014) have also reported that victims of sexual violence experience a threat of sexualization and social derogation in case of rape reporting. Nepali women experience such fear in the less extreme case of sexual harassment, and as a result they are under pressure to manage their sexuality and sexual reputation by largely keeping the problem to themselves. Moreover, women harbor a fear of rape and violence from the perpetrator. They do not want to risk their safety and lives by making their experience known to others. In addition, since sexual harassment takes place in the context of anonymity, it is not practically possible to provide evidence of it in order to report it to the authorities.

Similar to the findings of Lenton et al (1999), I found that women who have experienced sexual harassment were more likely to use protective measures in order to save them from a potential vulnerability. These risk-avoidance tactics were used by women even when they did not have prior experience of sexual harassment since they learned those skills from experienced others. Their focus and attention is on their safety, and they are concerned more on how they can keep their life safe, rather than taking legal and other actions against the perpetrator. My findings showed that most women did not report to the police for fear of public disgrace and damage to family prestige, and this prevents them from seeking help from the police or other related authorities. While the dominant Nepali Hindu society considers women as responsible for safeguarding its cultural norms, their harassment experience questions their etiquette and public presence. Responses from many men suggest that men are more likely to blame, and less likely

to empathize with the victim. This automatically decreases the possible resources that women can utilize, leading to a low level of social support. When these situations exist, fighting sexual harassment becomes a real challenge for Nepali women.

Directions for future research

I suggest three major areas to which this research can be expanded. Sexual harassment is categorized as a criminal activity globally, and this is true in the context of Nepal as well. The focus, however, has been mostly on workplace harassment. In many countries, the victim may sue the perpetrator, or most commonly, report the employer in civil court for financial damages. But in case of street harassment, since the contact between the perpetrator and the victim is so transient, it becomes challenging to identify and report the perpetrator to the authorities concerned. A criminological lens would be helpful to address this concern.

Related to this, when I talked to a few lawyers and police personnel, I found that cases of sexual harassment in public space are not reported at all. As I discussed in the previous section, participants faced both practical challenges as well as lack of trust in the state authorities regarding their future safety and the execution of punishment to the perpetrators. However, in order to fight sexual harassment, it is important that the sexual harassment cases be reported and the perpetrators take action. It is important to educate both men and women about the legal actions against sexual harassment so that the gap between the number of harassment occurrences and the number of actual cases reported can be minimized. Future research should look into this issue.

I align with Crouch's (2009) argument that any attempt to fight sexual harassment in public space should be supported with social activism. After the Delhi rape case in 2012, the problem of sexual harassment has gained more prominence in Nepal. Some activist programs

include workshops and campaigns against sexual harassment in public space, and these activities are carried out in schools, public parks, community halls, and streets. Non-government organizations, both local and international, have been playing a significant role in raising public awareness aimed at naming the problem of sexual harassment in public space, and discussing ways to combat that. Some programs include workshops and campaigns against sexual harassment in public space, and these activities are carried out in schools, public parks, community halls, and streets. I had several opportunities to take part in those programs, including a street drama. It is important that activism and campaigns should teach about the problem not only to women; it is equally important to raise men's awareness in recognizing and addressing the social problem of sexual harassment. Quinn (2002) notes that it is important to teach empathy to men in order to enable them to understand other's feelings and emotions, and take the position of the other in order to do so. As future research on the topic, it is worthwhile to pay attention to the role of social activism that also focuses on teaching men empathy toward women in addressing the problem of sexual harassment in public space.

In addition to the dominant forms of masculinities characterized with violence and aggression, new forms of masculinities are emerging in Nepali society. There are men who display gender-equitable behaviors by helping their spouses in household chores and assist them in rearing children. I also met several men who were involved in social and political movements that aimed at actions in ending all forms of violence against women, including sexual harassment in public space. Several men and women reported that some men volunteer to help women fight sexual harassment at the scene. I also met college women and men working together to educate school children about safety in public space in Kathmandu. The organization Men Engage Alliance was established in 2007 in order to mobilize men to work for advocacy, education, and

intervention to end gender-based violence in Nepal. As a future research focus, it will be worthwhile to examine how these alternative forms of masculinities work in a society where the traditional form of patriarchy is so strong. Do alternative masculinities threaten the established forms of hegemonic masculinity? Are men who work for ending violence against women considered “real men” by Nepali society? Questions will arise whether men and women’s collaborations in social activism aiming to fight sexual harassment will further masculinize the very collaboration by reproducing patriarchy in new forms.

Appendix I: IRB Approval



UNIVERSITY
of HAWAII
MĀNOA

Office of Research Compliance
Human Studies Program

May 15, 2012

TO: Gita Neupane
Principal Investigator
Sociology

FROM: Ching Yuan Hu, Ph.D. 
Interim Director
Human Studies Program
Office of Research Compliance
University of Hawaii, Manoa

Re: CHS #20187- "Women Victimization in Public Sphere: Sexual Harassment in Short Distance travelling in Public Buses in Kathmandu"

This letter is your record of the Human Studies Program approval of this study as exempt.

On May 15, 2012, the University of Hawai'i (UH) Human Studies Program approved this study as exempt from federal regulations pertaining to the protection of human research participants. The authority for the exemption applicable to your study is documented in the Code of Federal Regulations at 45 CFR 46 (2).

Exempt studies are subject to the ethical principles articulated in The Belmont Report, found at <http://www.hawaii.edu/irb/html/manual/appendices/A/belmont.html>

Exempt studies do not require regular continuing review by the Human Studies Program. However, if you propose to modify your study, you must receive approval from the Human Studies Program prior to implementing any changes. You can submit your proposed changes via email at uhirb@hawaii.edu. (The subject line should read: Exempt Study Modification.) The Human Studies Program may review the exempt status at that time and request an application for approval as non-exempt research.

In order to protect the confidentiality of research participants, we encourage you to destroy private information which can be linked to the identities of individuals as soon as it is reasonable to do so. Signed consent forms, as applicable to your study, should be maintained for at least the duration of your project.

This approval does not expire. However, please notify the Human Studies Program when your study is complete. Upon notification, we will close our files pertaining to your study.

If you have any questions relating to the protection of human research participants, please contact the Human Studies Program at 956-5007 or uhirb@hawaii.edu. We wish you success in carrying out your research project.

1960 East-West Road
Biomedical Sciences Building 8104
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822
Telephone: (808) 956-5007
Fax: (808) 956-8683

An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution

ORIGINAL

CHS# 20187

Please type the information below. Thank you.

Researcher name: Gita Neupane

Researcher email: gita@hawaii.edu Researcher phone: 808-944-7016

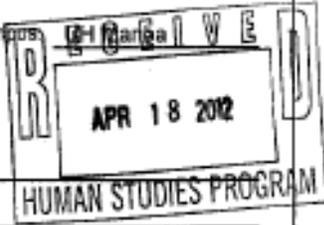
Department: Sociology Campus: Manoa

Status: Faculty
 Student
 Masters Ph.D. Other: _____

Name of student's Faculty Advisor: Patricia G. Steinhoff

Advisor email: steinhof@hawaii.edu Advisor phone: 67676

Title of Research Project: Women Victimization in Public Sphere: Sexual Harassment in Short Distance Travelling in Public Buses in Kathmandu



Signatures

I certify that the information in this application is accurate and complete.

Researcher: [Signature] Date: 4/17/2012

I have reviewed and approved this application:

Advisor: [Signature] Date: April 17/2012
(for student research)

This box for Human Studies Program Use Only: CHS#

Exempt Request: Approved Approved with Stipulations Not Approved Exempt Category 2

Reviewer comments / recommendations:

Approved by: [Signature] Date: 9/19/12

Appendix II: Interview guides

Interview questions

To both men and women

1. Demographic information: age, sex, marital status, educational background, profession, place of origin, duration of stay in Kathmandu if not from Kathmandu, caste, religion, and frequency of travelling, use of public transport
2. How do you travel when you go out of your house?
3. For what purposes do you use public transport, if you use any?
4. Have you ever witnessed any kind of indecent behaviors that women experience in public space? If yes, can you give me some examples?
5. How do you explain your role as a bystander?
6. What types of crime or violence is more frequent in public space in Kathmandu? How does the timing of the bus and the location women use inside and outside the bus affect the frequency and severity of such conducts?
7. Which public transport is more risky than others? What do you think can be done to prevent or minimize this harassment in public buses?
8. How is such conduct in the streets different from what occurs in the public transport?
9. Has anyone shared with you their experience of such conduct in public transport and streets?
10. Do you have any suggestions for males and females?

Only for women

1. Have you ever experienced such conduct in public transport? If yes, please explain.
2. How is your experience of harassment in the streets different from that of public transport?
3. What happened when somebody harassed you?
4. What did you do in such a situation?
5. Did you seek any help from the bystanders? If yes, please explain in detail.
6. How did you feel about your experience of such harassment? Please explain in detail.
7. How does such harassment experience affect your well-being?
8. Did you take any reaction at the moment?

9. Did you report or file complaint anywhere?
10. Did you share this experience with anybody? If yes, did sharing experience help you? Please Explain how?
11. How do you take precautions when you go out?
12. Do you think about how you look or act, with regard to how feminine you appear to others? If so, when do you think about this? Where are you and what's happening when you think about this?

Only for men

1. When you travel in public transport and walk in streets, do you talk with unacquainted women?
2. Has any of your male friends shared with you about their experience of conducting such acts to women? If yes, what did you tell him?
3. Have you ever done any other such acts such as asking private information, mobile number to stranger women in public space? Please explain in detail.
4. How do you feel about it?
5. How do you think women feel about it?
6. Do you see any difference among different categories of women by their age, marital status, garb, physical structure and so on and the type of harassment they experience? Please explain.
7. Which are the most appropriate types of public vehicles for conducting such acts and the time of the day and the routes where the occurrence of such incidence is higher? Please explain.
8. Would you please explain the type of men doing such conduct?
9. Has any of your female friends shared their experience of such conduct with you?
10. If yes, how did you feel about her? What did you tell her?

Focus group interview questions

1. How do you define some indecent conduct that women experience in public space such as in public transport and streets in Kathmandu?
2. How do you feel about the safety of women in public spaces in Kathmandu in general?
3. Do you find any difference in the types, frequency and severity of harassment among women in terms of their difference in age, marital status, garb, residence, routes, types of public vehicles...?
4. What do you think of the perpetrators?

Appendix III: Survey for women

Questions only for women

Survey: Questionnaire for the Conduct that Occurs in Public Transport and Streets

This survey is completely anonymous and therefore does not require your name or any other identifiable information. Your responses are very valuable and we are hoping your experience will help us better understand what happens in public transport and streets. We hope you will answer all of the questions to the best of your ability. However, if you do not wish to respond to any of the questions, you are free to skip them. Thank you very much for your cooperation and time.

1. Demographic Information

1a. Age

- 18 – 25
- 26 – 35
- 36 – 45
- 46 – 55
- 56 – 65
- 66 above

1b. Hometown/Birthplace: _____

1c. Sex:

- Male
- Female

1d. Caste:

1e. Religion (Check only one):

- Hindu
- Buddhist
- Muslim
- Christian
- Others:

1f. Education completed (Check only one):

- Less than Grade 12
- Plus Two
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's
- Other:.....

1g. Occupation (If you are only a student, check the first box. If you are a student and also have a job, please check the second box and write down your secondary occupation. If you are only working, check the third box and write down your occupation):

- Student
- Student + _____
- Work _____

1h. If you are relying on parental income, what is your parents' level of education (If this does not apply to you, skip this and go to the next question)

- Less than Grade 12
- Plus Two
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's
- Other:

1i. Number of years living in Kathmandu (KTM) if you are not from KTM:

- Less than two years
- Two to four years
- Four to six years
- More than six years

1j. I am currently staying with (relations and their age) (Check all that apply):

- alone
- My parent(s) age: _____
- My brother/s age: _____
- My sister/s age: _____
- My friend/s age: _____
- Other

1k. Marital status:

- Married
- Single

1.k.1. If you are a married woman, do you use marital symbols such as *sindoor, pote, tika*, etc? (Only for married women)

- Yes
- No

1.k.2. If you are married, how long have you been married? (Write in years)

2. The next sets of questions ask you the basic information of using public transport and streets in Kathmandu.

2.a. How many days a week do you usually travel within Kathmandu? (Check only one)

- Less than once a week
- Once a week
- Two - Four times a week
- Five - Seven times a week
- More than seven times a week

2.b. What type of transport do you use most often in Kathmandu (Check only one)

- Public bus
- Micro bus
- Tempo
- Taxi
- I have my own vehicle
- I do not use any means of transport
- Other: _____

2.c. Which route/s do you travel most in Kathmandu?

From To.....

2.d. What time of the day do you travel most? (Check all that apply)

- 5 am – 8 am
- 8am – 12pm
- 12pm – 4 pm
- 4pm – 8pm
- 8pm – 12am
- 12am – 5 am

2.e. How many hours a week do you usually walk in the streets in Kathmandu?

- Less than two hours a week
- Two to four hours a week
- Four to six hours a week
- Six to eight hours a week
- More than eight hours a week

2.f. Which route do you usually walk the most in Kathmandu?

From..... To.....

2.g. What time of the day do you usually walk the most in Kathmandu? (Check all that apply)

- 4am – 8am
- 8am – 12pm
- 12pm – 4pm
- 4pm – 8pm
- 8pm – 12am
- 12am – 4am

3. The next sets of questions ask your general experience and opinion on the incidents that occur in public space in Kathmandu.

3a. Have you ever witnessed any kind of conduct such as unwanted touching, teasing (जिस्काउने), whistling (सिट्टि बजाउने), verbal comments (बोल्ने) or any unpleasant gesture (नराम्रो हाउभाउ) in public spaces (such as in public transport and street) to women by men in Kathmandu?

- Yes
 No

3b. How frequent do you think such incidents occur in public space in Kathmandu? (Check only one)

- Very frequent
 Somewhat frequent
 Not very frequent
 Very rare or hardly happens
 Does not happen at all

3c. I can say that on an average, out of every ten visits I go to a public place, I have seen unwanted touching, verbal comments or any unpleasant gesture in public spaces. (Check only one)

- 10 or more times
 5 to 9 times
 1 to 4 times
 Less than once
 Never

3d. Where in Kathmandu are such acts more prevalent? (Check all that apply)

- In public transport.
 On a road or street.
 In busy markets.
 All of the above.
 I have not witnessed this conduct anywhere in Kathmandu.

3e. In what kind of public transport/vehicle is sexual harassment likely to happen?

Type of Public Transport	Frequency of Occurrence				
	Very Common	Common	Sometimes	Rare	No
Bus					
Micro Bus					
Tempo					
Taxi					

**3f. What time of the day is sexual harassment in public spaces most likely to happen?
(Check only one)**

- 5am – 8am
- 8am – 12pm
- 12pm – 4pm
- 4pm – 8pm
- 8pm – 12am
- 12am – 5am

**3g. What ages of men are more likely to commit sexual harassment in public spaces?
(Check all that apply)**

- below 18
- 18 - 25
- 26 - 40
- 41 - 60
- above 60

3h. What kinds of women are more likely to experience sexual harassment in public spaces? (Check all that apply)

- Women under age 18
- Unmarried women aged 18-35
- Married women aged 18-35
- Middle aged unmarried women aged 36-50
- Middle aged married women aged 36-50
- All unmarried women
- All married women
- All women, regardless of age or marital status

4. In the following section, the sets of questions ask your opinion about the frequency of different conducts that usually occur in public transport and streets in Kathmandu.

4a. Please rate how often you think the following types of behaviors are experienced by women from men in Kathmandu. Please only mark one box for each situation. For example, if you think “staring/Leering” is common in public transport, please put only X in the column, “Common”.

Situations	In Public Transport				In Streets			
	Very commo	Commo	Rare	No	Very	Commo	Rare	No

	n	n			common	n		
Staring/ Leering (एकोहोरो हेर्ने)								
Following/ Stalking (पिछा गर्ने)								
Repeated requests for tea or coffee..., despite rejection								
Whistling (सिट्टि बजाउने)								
Touching or Groping								
Saying Sexually explicit remarks about appearance/body								
Singing songs								
Kissing sound/ Action								
Winking (आँखा मार्ने)								
Pinching (चिमोट्ने)								
Poking (घोच्ने)								
Laughing disrespectfully								
Using crude and offensive language (नराम्रो भाषा)								
Displaying sexually suggestive pictures								
Harasser touching/playing with his private parts (गुप्ताङ्ग) publically with an intention to make others uncomfortable								
Pushing against women in public transport/ Rubbing body								

Using indecent gestures (नराम्रो हाउभाउ)								
Girls watching								
Discussing sexual activities with women								
Asking personal question such as about a woman's marital status, phone number, address...								
Commenting about women in general								
Offering a ride by a man in his motorcycle or in a car to a woman								
Threatening a woman								
Unwanted physical contact of sexual nature without permission								
Masturbating (हस्तमैथुन) in public								
Other (please specify).....								

4b. Why do you think men do such activities to women in public spaces such as in public transport and streets?

- To revenge other women in public when men's sexual relationship is not good with their wife or girlfriend.
- To boost their self-esteem (आत्मविश्वास).
- To have fun.
- To pass time.
- To humiliate or anger women.
- To avoid boredom.

- To grab the opportunity when a girl/woman is around and alone.
 - The victims and others who are around do not know the harassers.
 - To show men's power.
 - To show male bonding and demonstrating solidarity with other men (गुपमा अरुजस्तै बन्ने).
 - Women normally do not react to it.
 - Women enjoy it.
 - Women dress inappropriately and ask for it (मागछन्).
 - Other (Specify):
-

4c. Why do you think such behaviors such as listed above occur in our society? (Check all that apply)

- The police are inefficient in ensuring a safe environment.
 - No or inadequate punishment to deter offender.
 - No one who observes this behavior takes any action when they see it.
 - Male mindset about females in public spaces.
 - Women dress inappropriately in public.
 - Men are attracted to women, and these are the actions they take to show their attraction.
 - Less intermingling/mixing between men and women in Nepali society in everyday life.
 - Other (Please specify):
-

5. The next set of questions asks what you might do if you witnessed (देख्नुभयो) somebody being harassed in public. Please answer each question of your ability.

5a. What do you think you would do if you witnessed (देख्नुभयो) such an incident (घटना)? Check all that apply.

- Confront and react to the harasser. (Specify how)
-
- Talk to the victim about being careful while going out (for her clothes, place, time of the day, etc.).
 - Talk to the victim by offering her support and understanding.
 - I would feel bad but I do not intervene.
 - I would inform the police.
 - Stand there and watch.
 - Join the harasser who is doing such conduct.
 - I would not intervene.
 - Other, specify:
-

5b. If you have ever intervened (हस्तछेप) in the incident such as listed above where someone else was being sexually harassed, what was the reaction of the victim? (Check all that apply) (If you have not intervened in an incident, please skip to the next question)

- They thanked me.
- They asked me not to intervene (हस्तछेप) the situation
- They did not react at all to me (they did not acknowledge my actions)
- Other:

5c. If you have ever witnessed an incident where a woman was being sexually harassed by men, and you did not intervene the situation, what were your thoughts at that time? (Check all that apply) (If you have not witnessed an incident (घटना)?, please skip to the next question).

- The woman did not seem to be concerned.
- It was the woman's fault because of her choice of clothing / choice of place / choice of time of the day.
- I wanted to help but the victim didn't ask for help.
- I wanted to report to the police but no authorities were present.
- I wanted to help but was afraid that something bad might happen to me.
- I didn't have time - I had other priorities.
- It's best not to get involved in this type of situation.
- I never get involved in situations involving strangers.
- Other (please specify).....

5d. Would it be easier to take actions against the harasser if you know the people around you would also help and support you? (Check only one)

- Yes, definitely.
- Perhaps.
- Not sure.
- Unlikely.
- Never.
- Other (please specify):

6. The next set of questions ask your opinion in five different scales on statements related to sexual harassment in public space.

6a. Read the following statements. Using the scale below, circle the number that best fits your opinion about each statement.

<p>1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Not Sure 4=Disagree 5=Strongly Disagree</p>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6a. Women love to get attention from male strangers in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6b. Women feel happy when male strangers talk to them in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6c. If women are careful enough, they can largely eliminate (हटाउन सक्छन्) being harassed in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6d. Women should not walk alone especially after it gets dark.	1	2	3	4	5
6e. A woman will not be harassed in public spaces when she is accompanied by another woman.	1	2	3	4	5
6f. A woman will not be harassed in public spaces when she is with another man.	1	2	3	4	5
6g. Men sexually harass women because men cannot control their sex desire.	1	2	3	4	5
6h. Women in sexy clothes are to be blamed if they are sexually harassed.	1	2	3	4	5
6i. Women wearing traditional dress like <i>sari</i> or <i>kurta salwar</i> are less likely to be harassed in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6j. Young women attract harassers more than older women.	1	2	3	4	5
6k. It is okay to tease (जिस्काउनु) to unmarried women.	1	2	3	4	5
6l. Young women actually love verbal comments of sexual nature from men about their physical appearance and make up.	1	2	3	4	5
6m. Women expect men to watch (हेर्नु) them in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6n. Most women like to be pushed around (धकेल्ने) by men.	1	2	3	4	5
6o. Most women like to show off their bodies in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6p. Women invite and want such activities.	1	2	3	4	5
6q. Women enjoy the physical touch of a sexual nature by strangers in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6r. Women enjoy watching sexual gestures (हाउभाउ) played by men in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6s. Women are afraid to take any actions against the harassers due to fear of being harassed and attacked in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
6t. Women feel sad when they experience harassment in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6u. Women are often worried about their safety in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6v. Men verbally harass women mainly when they (men) are alone in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6w. Men verbally harass women mainly when they (men) are in a group of other men.	1	2	3	4	5
6x. Men physically touch women including in their sexual parts mainly	1	2	3	4	5

when men are alone in public spaces.					
6y. Men physically touch women including their sexual parts mainly when men are in a group of other men in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6z. Men harass other women in public when their sexual relationships with their own partner (girlfriend/husband) is not good.	1	2	3	4	5
6aa. Men think it is fun for men to harass women in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6ab. It is manly (man's nature) to harass women in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6ac. Men harass women in public spaces just to pass time.	1	2	3	4	5
6ad. Men harass women in public spaces to humiliate or anger them.	1	2	3	4	5
6ae. Men harass women in public spaces to avoid boredom.	1	2	3	4	5
6af. Men harass women to show their power.	1	2	3	4	5
6ag. Men harass women in public spaces to show male bonding and to demonstrate solidarity (एकरूपता) with other men.	1	2	3	4	5
6ah. Young men are the main harassers in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6ai. Men participate in sexual harassment in public spaces because the society expects them to behave that way.	1	2	3	4	5
6aj. Women enjoy if men sing romantic songs indirectly referring to them in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6ak. A woman has the right to dress sexually in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5

6al. When a girl goes out to a public space, I believe: (Check only one)

- She never feels safe regardless of her clothes and time of the day.
- She sometimes feels unsafe regardless of her clothes and time of the day.
- She feels unsafe as long as her clothes and time of the day are appropriate.
- She always feels safe regardless of her clothes and time of the day.
- I do not have any opinion about this.
- Other (please specify):.....

7. Did any women in your family such as mother, aunty, sister or, and any female friends share with you an experience of sexual harassment in public spaces?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please answer 7a and 7b below. If no, please skip to Question 8.

7a. How did you feel about it?

- I did not feel anything.
- I felt very sorry for her/them.

- I felt like doing something against the person who committed those acts.
- I did not feel bad because I felt it was her/their fault for being in a situation where this might happen.
- Other:.....

7b. How did you react?

- I did not react.
- I tried to be sympathetic and supportive.
- I expressed anger toward the harasser.
- I told her that she should not have been in that type of situation.
- I tried to give her some advice about what to do.
- Other:.....

8. In your opinion, what are the reasons that harassment situations in public spaces are not usually reported to the legal authorities? (Check all that apply).

- It is not a big problem; so there is no need to report.
- It is difficult to make a report.
- Most people do not know how to make a report.
- Most people do not know if these behaviors are unlawful (against the law).
- People do not believe it would make any difference to report.
- People have had bad experiences with the authorities.
- People do not want to report to the authorities who are not attentive to the issue.
- People have a general fear of police or courts.
- People think that there are challenges related to the legal procedures.
- There is a social stigma (बेइज्जत) attached to reporting.
- Other (please specify):.....

9. In your opinion, which of these actions will have the most positive impact to stop sexual harassment in public spaces? (Check all that apply)

- Stronger laws to punish harassers.
- Police who are trained to treat this issue with importance.
- People should help each other to fight against such incidents.
- Helping women understand how to dress suitably and how, when and where to go when travelling in public spaces.
- Changing perceptions of men towards women.
- Government officials who take this matter seriously.
- Providing support and empowerment (शसक्तिकरण) for women.
- Reporting of all such incidents to an appropriate authority.
- Other (please specify):.....

10. When you travel in public transport and walk in the streets, have you ever experienced any of these acts from men in the last 12 months. (Check all that apply)

Situations	In Public Transport					Streets				
	Often	Some times	Do not remember	Rarely	Never	Often	Some times	Do not remember	Rarely	Never
Staring/ Leering (एकोहोरो हेर्ने)										
Followin g/ Stalking (पिछा गर्ने)										
Repeated requests for tea, coffee,... , despite your rejection										
Whistlin g (सिट्टि बजाउने)										
Touching with sexual intention										
Passing sexually explicit remarks about looks/bo dy										

Singing songs										
Kissing sound/ Action										
Winking (आँखा मारने)										
Pinching (चिमोडने)										
Poking (घोचने)										
Laughing disrespectfully										
Using rough and offensive language (नराम्रो भाषा)										
Displaying sexually suggestive pictures										
Touching /Playing with your private parts (गुप्तांग) publically										

y with an intention to make you feel uncomfortable										
Pushing against you in public transport										
Using indecent gestures (नराम्रो हाउभाउ)										
Watching girls on streets										
Talking with you about sexual topics										
Asking you personal questions such as about your marital status, phone number, address, age...										
Commenting										

negatively about women in general										
Offering a ride in his motorcycle or in a car										
Threatening you										
Masturbating (हस्तमैथुन) in public										
Other (please specify)										

11. How did you react if you had faced one or more of the following situations in public transport or street? You can fill in with more than one option. (Such as- gave an angry look, verbally scolded, slapped, talked to fellow passengers, walked fast, got off the bus and changed another bus or walked to the destination, did not react in an obvious way, used a needle or pin to pierce him,Other). You can write in Nepali if you like.

Situations	Public transport	Streets
Staring/ Gazing/Leering, Following/ Stalking		
Verbal Comments such as -		

<p>Whistling, Passing lewd/ Sexually explicit remarks about looks/body, Singing songs, Kissing sound/ Action, Winking, Snicker/ Laughing disrespectfully, Using rough and offensive language, Using indecent gestures,</p>		
<p>Unwanted Touch - such as - Touching/ Groping, Pinching, Poking, Pushing against women in public transport/ Rubbing body, Touching/ Playing with their private parts publically with an intention to make women uncomfortable</p>		
<p>Sexual Display such as - Displaying sexually suggestive pictures, Masturbating in public</p>		
<p>Talking about sexual topics with women, Asking personal question such as about your marital status, phone number, address..., Repeated requests for tea, coffee despite rejection, Offering a ride in his motorcycle or a car, Commenting negatively about women in general,</p>		
<p>Other (please specify).....</p>		

**11a. If you experience such harassment, what do you do when you when you go home?
(Check all that apply)**

- Share with others.
- Keep thinking about the harassment.
- Feel sad and depressed.
- Do not talk to other people.
- Cry
- Other:.....
- Feel embarrassed to myself
- Regret for not doing anything from my part.
- Make plan what to do for the next time.
- Do not think about it.

12. The following sets of questions ask your experience about bystanders (दर्शक).

12a. Generally, do you try to draw the attention of the bystanders (दर्शक) to any sexually unwelcoming incident if you experience it?

- Yes
- No
- Depends. Then please explain:

12b. If yes, what is the usual reaction of the bystanders (दर्शक)?

- Generally they do not care
- Stand there and watch
- React to the harasser
- Tell me it's my fault (because of the clothes, place, time etc.)
- Other (please specify).....

12c. If no, please indicate why you don't draw attention of the bystanders (दर्शक) or try to seek help. (Check all that apply):

- I don't feel the need; it's a small issue.
- I don't need anybody's help; I can take care of myself.
- I have prior experience that nobody helps.
- I cannot share publicly what the harasser did to me.
- I don't want to describe the incident to entertain crowd.
- I am fearful that if I raise my voice, my life will be at risk in the future from the harasser.
- I generally don't have time to react.
- Other (please specify)

12d. Will it be easier to take actions against the harasser you know the people around you will also help and support you?

- Yes, certainly it gives confidence.
- Yes, may be.
- It is unlikely that it will affect my decision in any way.
- Certainly not; I'll never want anybody to get involved.
- Other (please specify):

13a. Have you ever shared your experience of such conduct to: (Choose all that apply)

- Romantic partners (husband/boyfriend)
- Family members: Brother/s Sister/s Mother Father
- Friend/s
- Relative/s
- Police
- Legal organization
- Did not disclose the experience with anybody
- Other (Specify):.....

13b. If you shared with _____, how did he/she react to you?

- They did not react in any obvious way.
- They also shared their stories.
- They showed their anger toward the perpetrator.
- They gave suggestions on how to travel safely.
- Other:.....

13g. How did you feel about their reactions? Was that helpful?

- I was helpful.
- It did not help.
- Other:.....

13h. If you have not shared your experience of such conduct with anybody, why is that?

- It is private and personal.
- I can handle it myself.
- It was minor and not a big deal.
- I do not know whom I can trust.
- It is difficult to share with the people I know because of the nature of the relationship.
- I am too embarrassed to tell anyone.
- I am afraid to tell anyone.
- I do not know who to go to for help.
- I do not want any legal problems.
- Other, specify:.....

14. Do you have any suggestions for men in general?

15. Do you have any suggestions for women in general?

Appendix IV: Survey for men

Questionnaire only for men

Survey: Questionnaire for the conduct that occurs in public transport and streets

This survey is completely anonymous and therefore does not require your name or any other identifiable information. Your responses are very valuable and we are hoping your experience will help us better understand what happens in public transport and streets. We hope you will answer all of the questions to the best of your ability. However, if you do not wish to respond to any of the questions, you are free to skip them. Thank you very much for your cooperation and time.

1. Demographic Information

1a. Age

- 18 – 25
- 26 – 35
- 36 – 45
- 46 – 55
- 56 – 65
- 66 above

1b. Hometown/Birthplace: _____

1c. Sex:

- Male
- Female

1d. Caste:

1e. Religion (Check only one):

- Hindu
- Buddhist
- Muslim
- Christian
- Others:

1f. Education completed (Check only one):

- Less than Grade 12
- Plus Two
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's
- Other:

1g. Occupation (If you are only a student, check the first box. If you are a student and also have a job, please check the second box and write down your secondary occupation. If you are only working, check the third box and write down your occupation):

- Student
- Student + _____
- Work _____

1h. If you are relying on parental income, what is your parents' level of education (If this does not apply to you, skip this and go to the next question)

- Less than Grade 12
- Plus Two
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's
- Other:

1i. Number of years living in Kathmandu (KTM) if you are not from KTM:

- Less than two years
- Two to four years
- Four to six years
- More than six years

1j. I am currently staying with (relations and their age) (Check all that apply):

- alone
- My parent(s) age: _____
- My brother/s age: _____
- My sister/s age: _____
- My friend/s age: _____
- Other

1k. Marital status:

- Married
- Single

1.k.1. If you are a married woman, do you use marital symbols such as *sindoor, pote, tika*, etc? (Only for married women)

- Yes
- No

1.k.2. If you are married, how long have you been married? (Write in years)

2. The next sets of questions ask you the basic information of using public transport and streets in Kathmandu.

2.a. How many days a week do you usually travel within Kathmandu? (Check only one)

- Less than once a week
- Once a week
- Two - Four times a week
- Five - Seven times a week
- More than seven times a week

2.b. What type of transport do you use most often in Kathmandu (Check only one)

- Public bus
- Micro bus
- Tempo
- Taxi
- I have my own vehicle
- I do not use any means of transport
- Other: _____

2.c. Which route/s do you travel most in Kathmandu?

From To.....

2.d. What time of the day do you travel most? (Check all that apply)

- 5 am – 8 am
- 8am – 12pm
- 12pm – 4 pm
- 4pm – 8pm
- 8pm – 12am
- 12am – 5 am

2.e. How many hours a week do you usually walk in the streets in Kathmandu?

- Less than two hours a week
- Two to four hours a week
- Four to six hours a week
- Six to eight hours a week
- More than eight hours a week

2.f. Which route do you usually walk the most in Kathmandu?

From..... To.....

2.g. What time of the day do you usually walk the most in Kathmandu? (Check all that apply)

- 4am – 8am
- 8am – 12pm
- 12pm – 4pm
- 4pm – 8pm
- 8pm – 12am
- 12am – 4am

3. The next sets of questions ask your general experience and opinion on the incidents that occur in public space in Kathmandu.

3a. Have you ever witnessed any kind of conduct such as unwanted touching, teasing (जिस्काउने), whistling (सिट्टि बजाउने), verbal comments (बोल्ने) or any unpleasant gesture (नराम्रो हाउभाउ) in public spaces (such as in public transport and street) to women by men in Kathmandu?

- Yes
- No

3b. How frequent do you think such incidents occur in public space in Kathmandu? (Check only one)

- Very frequent
- Somewhat frequent
- Not very frequent
- Very rare or hardly happens
- Does not happen at all

3c. I can say that on an average, out of every ten visits I go to a public place, I have seen unwanted touching, verbal comments or any unpleasant gesture in public spaces. (Check only one)

- 10 or more times
- 5 to 9 times
- 1 to 4 times
- Less than once
- Never

3d. Where in Kathmandu are such acts more prevalent? (Check all that apply)

- In public transport.
- On a road or street.
- In busy markets.
- All of the above.
- I have not witnessed this conduct anywhere in Kathmandu.

3e. In what kind of public transport/vehicle is sexual harassment likely to happen?

Type of Public Transport	Frequency of Occurrence				
	Very Common	Common	Sometimes	Rare	No
Bus					
Micro Bus					
Tempo					
Taxi					

3f. What time of the day is sexual harassment in public spaces most likely to happen?

(Check only one)

- 5am – 8am
- 8am – 12pm
- 12pm – 4pm
- 4pm – 8pm
- 8pm – 12am
- 12am – 5am

3g. What ages of men are more likely to commit sexual harassment in public spaces?

(Check all that apply)

- below 18
- 18 - 25
- 26 - 40
- 41 - 60
- above 60

3h. What kinds of women are more likely to experience sexual harassment in public spaces?

(Check all that apply)

- Women under age 18
- Unmarried women aged 18-35
- Married women aged 18-35
- Middle aged unmarried women aged 36-50
- Middle aged married women aged 36-50
- All unmarried women
- All married women
- All women, regardless of age or marital status

4. In the following section, the sets of questions ask your opinion about the frequency of different conducts that usually occur in public transport and streets in Kathmandu.

4a. Please rate how often you think the following types of behaviors are experienced by women from men in Kathmandu. Please only mark one box for each situation. For example, if you think “staring/Leering” is common in public transport, please put only X in the column, “Common”.

Situations	In Public Transport				In Streets			
	Very common	Common	Rare	No	Very common	Common	Rare	No
Staring/ Leering (एकोहोरो हेर्ने)								
Following/ Stalking (पिछा गर्ने)								
Repeated requests for tea or coffee..., despite rejection								
Whistling (सिट्टि बजाउने)								
Touching or Groping								
Saying Sexually explicit remarks about appearance/body								
Singing songs								
Kissing sound/ Action								
Winking (आँखा मार्ने)								
Pinching (चिमोत्ने)								
Poking (घोच्ने)								
Laughing disrespectfully								
Using crude and offensive language (नराम्रो भाषा)								
Displaying sexually suggestive pictures								

Harasser touching/playing with his private parts (गुप्तांग) publically with an intention to make others uncomfortable								
Pushing against women in public transport/ Rubbing body								
Using indecent gestures (नराम्रो हाउभाउ)								
Girls watching								
Discussing sexual activities with women								
Asking personal question such as about a woman's marital status, phone number, address...								
Commenting about women in general								
Offering a ride by a man in his motorcycle or in a car to a woman								
Threatening a woman								
Unwanted physical contact of sexual nature without permission								
Masturbating (हस्तमैथुन) in public								
Other (please specify).....								

4b. Why do you think men do such activities to women in public spaces such as in public transport and streets?

- To revenge other women in public when men's sexual relationship is not good with their wife or girlfriend.
- To boost their self-esteem (आत्मविश्वास).
- To have fun.
- To pass time.
- To humiliate or anger women.
- To avoid boredom.
- To grab the opportunity when a girl/woman is around and alone.
- The victims and others who are around do not know the harassers.
- To show men's power.
- To show male bonding and demonstrating solidarity with other men (ग्रुपमा अरुजस्तै बन्ने).
- Women normally do not react to it.
- Women enjoy it.
- Women dress inappropriately and ask for it (मागछन्).
- Other (Specify):
.....

4c. Why do you think such behaviors such as listed above occur in our society? (Check all that apply)

- The police are inefficient in ensuring a safe environment.
- No or inadequate punishment to deter offender.
- No one who observes this behavior takes any action when they see it.
- Male mindset about females in public spaces.
- Women dress inappropriately in public.
- Men are attracted to women, and these are the actions they take to show their attraction.
- Less intermingling/mixing between men and women in Nepali society in everyday life.
- Other (Please specify):
.....

5. The next set of questions asks what you might do if you witnessed (देख्नुभयो) somebody being harassed in public. Please answer each question of your ability.

5a. What do you think you would do if you witnessed (देख्नुभयो) such an incident (घटना)? Check all that apply.

- Confront and react to the harasser. (Specify how)
.....
- Talk to the victim about being careful while going out (for her clothes, place, time of the day, etc.).
- Talk to the victim by offering her support and understanding.

- I would feel bad but I do not intervene.
- I would inform the police.
- Stand there and watch.
- Join the harasser who is doing such conduct.
- I would not intervene.
- Other, specify:

5b. If you have ever intervened (हस्तछेप) in the incident such as listed above where someone else was being sexually harassed, what was the reaction of the victim? (Check all that apply) (If you have not intervened in an incident, please skip to the next question)

- They thanked me.
- They asked me not to intervene (हस्तछेप) the situation
- They did not react at all to me (they did not acknowledge my actions)
- Other:

5c. If you have ever witnessed an incident where a woman was being sexually harassed by men, and you did not intervene the situation, what were your thoughts at that time? (Check all that apply) (If you have not witnessed an incident (घटना)?, please skip to the next question).

- The woman did not seem to be concerned.
- It was the woman's fault because of her choice of clothing / choice of place / choice of time of the day.
- I wanted to help but the victim didn't ask for help.
- I wanted to report to the police but no authorities were present.
- I wanted to help but was afraid that something bad might happen to me.
- I didn't have time - I had other priorities.
- It's best not to get involved in this type of situation.
- I never get involved in situations involving strangers.
- Other (please specify).....

5d. Would it be easier to take actions against the harasser if you know the people around you would also help and support you? (Check only one)

- Yes, definitely.
- Perhaps.
- Not sure.
- Unlikely.
- Never.
- Other (please specify):

6. The next set of questions ask your opinion in five different scales on statements related to sexual harassment in public space.

6a. Read the following statements. Using the scale below, circle the number that best fits your opinion about each statement.

<p>1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Not Sure 4=Disagree 5=Strongly Disagree</p>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6a. Women love to get attention from male strangers in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6b. Women feel happy when male strangers talk to them in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6c. If women are careful enough, they can largely eliminate (हटाउन सक्छन्) being harassed in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6d. Women should not walk alone especially after it gets dark.	1	2	3	4	5
6e. A woman will not be harassed in public spaces when she is accompanied by another woman.	1	2	3	4	5
6f. A woman will not be harassed in public spaces when she is with another man.	1	2	3	4	5
6g. Men sexually harass women because men cannot control their sex desire.	1	2	3	4	5
6h. Women in sexy clothes are to be blamed if they are sexually harassed.	1	2	3	4	5
6i. Women wearing traditional dress like <i>sari</i> or <i>kurta salwar</i> are less likely to be harassed in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6j. Young women attract harassers more than older women.	1	2	3	4	5
6k. It is okay to tease (जिस्काउनु) to unmarried women.	1	2	3	4	5
6l. Young women actually love verbal comments of sexual nature from men about their physical appearance and make up.	1	2	3	4	5
6m. Women expect men to watch (हेर्नु) them in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6n. Most women like to be pushed around (धकेल्ने) by men.	1	2	3	4	5
6o. Most women like to show off their bodies in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6p. Women invite and want such activities.	1	2	3	4	5
6q. Women enjoy the physical touch of a sexual nature by strangers in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6r. Women enjoy watching sexual gestures (हाउभाउ) played by men in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6s. Women are afraid to take any actions against the harassers due to fear of being harassed and attacked in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
6t. Women feel sad when they experience harassment in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6u. Women are often worried about their safety in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6v. Men verbally harass women mainly when they (men) are alone in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5

6w. Men verbally harass women mainly when they (men) are in a group of other men.	1	2	3	4	5
6x. Men physically touch women including in their sexual parts mainly when men are alone in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6y. Men physically touch women including their sexual parts mainly when men are in a group of other men in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6z. Men harass other women in public when their sexual relationships with their own partner (girlfriend/husband) is not good.	1	2	3	4	5
6aa. Men think it is fun for men to harass women in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6ab. It is manly (man's nature) to harass women in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6ac. Men harass women in public spaces just to pass time.	1	2	3	4	5
6ad. Men harass women in public spaces to humiliate or anger them.	1	2	3	4	5
6ae. Men harass women in public spaces to avoid boredom.	1	2	3	4	5
6af. Men harass women to show their power.	1	2	3	4	5
6ag. Men harass women in public spaces to show male bonding and to demonstrate solidarity (एकरूपता) with other men.	1	2	3	4	5
6ah. Young men are the main harassers in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6ai. Men participate in sexual harassment in public spaces because the society expects them to behave that way.	1	2	3	4	5
6aj. Women enjoy if men sing romantic songs indirectly referring to them in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
6ak. A woman has the right to dress sexually in public spaces.	1	2	3	4	5

6al. When a girl goes out to a public space, I believe: (Check only one)

- She never feels safe regardless of her clothes and time of the day.
- She sometimes feels unsafe regardless of her clothes and time of the day.
- She feels unsafe as long as her clothes and time of the day are appropriate.
- She always feels safe regardless of her clothes and time of the day.
- I do not have any opinion about this.
- Other (please specify):.....

7. When you travel in public transport and walk in streets, have you ever done any of these acts to women – check all that apply.

Situations	In Public Transport					Streets				
	Often	Sometimes	Do not remember	Rarely	Never	Often	Sometimes	Do not remember	Rarely	Never

Staring/ Leering (एकोहोरो हेर्ने)										
Following/ Stalking (पिछा गर्ने)										
Repeated request for tea, coffee,..., despite rejection										
Whistling (सिट्टि बजाउने)										
Touching/ Groping										
Passing lewd / Sexually explicit remarks about looks/body										
Singing songs										
Kissing sound/ Action										
Winking (आँखा मार्ने)										
Pinching (चिमोट्ने)										
Poking (घोच्ने)										
Laughing disrespectfully										

Using rough and offensive language (नराम्रो भाषा)										
Displaying sexually suggestive pictures										
Touching/Playing with your private parts (गुप्तग) with an intention to make women uncomfortable										
Pushing, or rubbing your body against women in public transport										
Using indecent gestures (नराम्रो हाउभाउ)										
Intentionally watching girls on streets										
Talking about sexual topics with women										
Asking personal questions such as a woman's marital status,										

phone number, addresses, age...										
Commenting negatively about women in general										
Offering rides to a stranger woman in your motorcycle or in a car										
Threatening a woman										
Masturbating (हस्तमैथुन) in public to show to women										
Other (please specify).....										

8. If you have done any of those activities to women in public space mentioned in the previous question, why do you think you did that? Because: (choose all that apply).

- To revenge other women in public when my sexual relationship is not good with my partner.
- To boost my self-esteem (आत्मविश्वास)
- To have fun.
- To pass time.
- To anger women.
- To avoid my boredom.
- To grab the opportunity when a girl/woman is around and alone.
- The victims and others who are around do not know me who I am.
- To show my (man's) power.
- To show male bonding and demonstrating solidarity with other men.
- Women normally do not react to it.

- Women enjoy it.
- Women dress inappropriately and ask for it.
- Other (Specify)

9. If you have been involved in such activities, what was the reaction from the victims?

- Gave an angry look
- Scolded me
- Asked for help from bystanders (दर्शक)
- Slapped (थप्पड हान्ने)
- Pierced a needle
- Pushed
- Left for a different place (अर्के ठाउँमा गए)
- Did not react
- Other:

10. Did any women in your family such as sister or wife, or, and any female friends share with you an experience of sexual harassment in public spaces?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please answer 10a and 10b below. If no, please skip to Question 11.

10a. How did you feel about it?

- I did not feel anything.
- I felt very sorry for her/them.
- I felt like doing something against the person who committed those acts.
- I did not feel bad because I felt it was her/their fault for being in a situation where this might happen.
- Other:.....

10b. How did you react?

- I did not react.
- I tried to be sympathetic and supportive.
- I expressed anger toward the harasser.
- I told her that she should not have been in that type of situation.
- I tried to give her some advice about what to do.
- Other:.....

11. In your opinion, what are the reasons that harassment situations in public spaces are not usually reported to the legal authorities? (Check all that apply).

- It is not a big problem; so there is no need to report.
- It is difficult to make a report.
- Most people do not know how to make a report.
- Most people do not know if these behaviors are unlawful (against the law).
- People do not believe it would make any difference to report.
- People have had bad experiences with the authorities.
- People do not want to report to the authorities who are not attentive to the issue.
- People have a general fear of police or courts.
- People think that there are challenges related to the legal procedures.
- There is a social stigma (बेइज्जत) attached to reporting.
- Other (please specify):.....

12. In your opinion, which of these actions will have the most positive impact to stop sexual harassment in public spaces? (Check all that apply)

- Stronger laws to punish harassers.
- Police who are trained to treat this issue with importance.
- People should help each other to fight against such incidents.
- Helping women understand how to dress suitably and how, when and where to go when travelling in public spaces.
- Changing perceptions of men towards women.
- Government officials who take this matter seriously.
- Providing support and empowerment (शसक्तिकरण) for women.
- Reporting of all such incidents to an appropriate authority.
- Other (please specify)----

13. Do you have any suggestions for men in general?

14. Do you have any suggestions for women in general?

Thank You

Appendix V: Development of research tools

I used semi-structured open-ended questions for individual and group interviews. The interview guide was prepared keeping the research questions in mind. I also drew insights from published literature and newspaper articles on the topic. Charmaz (2006), for example, notes that intensive interviews explore the in-depth experience of information from the participants' worldview.

With this conviction, I used interview as an occasion to uncover participants' stories. I believed that "it is an inter-view, where knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee" (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:2). Thus, the interview guide was prepared only as a working template because a lot of additional and follow up questions were asked to explore the issue in depth. Similarly, group interview questions were prepared separately to allow discussion among the participants. More general questions were asked to stimulate discussion, while I moderated the discussion with limited intervention as needed.

I developed the survey primarily based on the model used by Fitzgerald, Gelfand and Drasgow (1995) to collect the quantitative data. Many previous studies have found this model useful (e.g. Wasti et al. 2000). This model divides questions into three categories: gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion. Since this model was first developed to study sexual harassment in Western contexts, I revised the questions in order to adapt the survey to my research context. Therefore, some of the questions from this model were removed because they were not appropriate in the context of Nepal. I also relied on two NGO surveys on sexual harassment in public places from India. One is *Jagori* (<http://safedelhi.jagori.org/interactive/questionnaire/>) and other is *India Open Your Eyes* (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/KNRZ58Q>). I have also used some questions from the *University of Hawaii at Manoa Student Survey on Violence*. I also drew insights from my

preliminary study in 2012. In addition, I also got ideas from other several sexual harassment surveys that were used in the context of workplaces, schools, military, and domestic partner violence. I prepared two separate sets of questionnaires for men and women, although many questions that asked the respondents' perceptions and understanding of sexual harassment were the same for both groups. The questionnaire for women focused on questions about their actual experience of sexual harassment, and for men, it included questions about their involvement in conducting such acts.

In addition, I complemented these data with my observation and field notes at least once every two weeks during the twelve-month period in some major public spaces in Kathmandu. These places included Hanuman Dhoka, Durbar Square, New Road, Putali Sadak, New Baneshwar, Bus Park, Koteshwor, Samakoshi, Kalanki, Kirtipur, Bhaktapur, Bauddha, and some places in Latitpur. These central places in Kathmandu were mostly crowded during day and evening times.

Appendix VI: Collaboration with women's organizations

I contacted two NGOs that were working in the Safe City programs in Kathmandu. The first was *HomeNet Nepal* (HNN) where I volunteered in its programs for six months. *HomeNet Nepal* is a non-profit social organization that supported workers in informal economy, especially those workers who could work from their home. The Safe City Program—which is *HomeNet Nepal*'s one major activity—mainly focused on the safety and empowerment of women and girls in public space in urban cities, and it was carried out in partnership with *ActionAid Nepal*. The safe city program had been working for various causes such as empowering the safe city team with necessary tools of knowledge building and disseminating public awareness materials about women's safety, creating pressure on and building capacity of the concerned authorities for the effective enactment of existing laws, increasing access of women to public services, developing information and documentation system, and conducting safety audit (*HomeNet Nepal Annual Report 2015*). During my fieldwork, I mainly participated in programs that targeted women and girls in urban cities. These activities helped me network with different stakeholders who were related to the security of women in public space such as community leaders, police and lawmakers.

Most of the activities I took part in with *HomeNet Nepal* included rallies, workshops, exhibitions, talk programs, street dramas, and meetings with the concerned partners and stakeholders. Working in a group and using their interview guide, I actively took part in interviewing people who were recruited by *HomeNet Nepal* with the help of local volunteers. I also had a chance to include questions from my interview guide. The informants included students, people working in different schools, colleges and other offices, various women groups and clubs, daily-wage workers, business people, police, lawyers, and local government officials.

Then, we as safety auditors in each group made safety walks to observe and assess the public safety situation in different times and places in Kathmandu. I shared the findings of our research in workshops, given in the figure below.



Figure: Sharing at a workshop at *Activista Nepal*

On the occasion of international anti-harassment week, I had an opportunity to share my preliminary research findings during a youth workshop on civic and youth action to end street harassment organized by *Activista Nepal*, one of the partner organizations working with *HomeNet Nepal* for the Safe City program.

Social Empowerment by Empowering Women (SEEW) was another organization in which I had an opportunity to volunteer in its two specific programs: the *Pink Bus* project and anti-street harassment demonstration. Focusing on women's and girls' safe travel, the organization ran a pink-colored bus for women and girls. I participated in the launch of this project. The Pink Bus was an exotic addition to Kathmandu's public transport. The bus ran two times a day during the busiest hours in a major commuting route in the city. Small cards with welcoming notes were distributed to the passengers riding the bus for a few days. I rode the bus three times from its

starting point to the final destination. I also interviewed the driver, the conductor and the passengers, asking questions about women's safety in public transport. I also took part in an anti-street harassment week sponsored by SEEW.



Figure: Researcher (Neupane) in the anti-harassment week campaign

The program included wall paintings, street demonstrations, pamphlets distribution, petition signing, and chats with the public about the issue of street harassment.

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