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Abstract

This paper explores street harassment as a contentious practice in the rhetorical spaces of the street and social media posting through a case study of the performance group Las Hijas de Violencia. Through anarchistic direct action resistance tactics, the group confronted harassers in the streets of Mexico City and their recordings launched global media interest which led to viral online sharing. Widespread sharing of their performance led to the creation of public discursive space, through comments sections, which was utilized to measure attitudes toward street harassment and feminist direct action protest. Contextualized in a growing call for an end to street harassment, this is the first critical inquiry into Las Hijas de Violencia. Their tactics and subsequent interpretations by viewers are approached critically and through an interpretive thematic analysis in order to gain insight into hegemonic power that dictates gendered behaviors in public space, both on and offline.

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LAS HIJAS DE VIOLENCIA: PERFORMANCE, THE STREET, AND ONLINE

DISCOURSE

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of Arts and Humanities

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Madison M. Snider

June 2018

Advisor: Erika Polson, Ph.D.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I did not believe that a Cause which stood for a beautiful ideal, for anarchism, for release and freedom from conventions and prejudice, should demand the denial of life and joy. I insisted that our Cause could not expect me to become a nun and that the movement should not be turned into a cloister. If it meant that, I did not want it. I want freedom, the right to self-expression, everybody's right to beautiful, radiant things.

~ Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*

A woman steps outside her door and starts to walk down the street she has walked so many times before. She is on her way (to work, or school, or a social gathering). She has set out with a purpose. Her outfit has been selected with her destination in mind. She crosses the street and hears someone yell out at her: “Nice ass!” “Hey pretty lady!” “Smile, baby.” These small, objectifying interruptions are often met with silence. This can lead to a more aggressive, violent, or threatening retort. Or maybe it ends there. Either way, her space and time has been taken from her. She may feel angry, anxious, scared, or insecure. But today she doesn’t quicken her pace. She doesn’t cover her head so as not to draw additional attention. This time she pulls out a gun. It’s pink, plastic, and in place of real ammunition, there’s confetti. She aims right at the perpetrators’ face, and fires. To their amazement she breaks into song, yelling and laughing all the way.

This is the response of Las Hijas de Violencia or “the Daughters of Violence”. This performance art group, created by artists and Mexico City residents, Ana Karen, 25, and Ana Beatriz, 28, and Beztabeth, 24, employs song, dance, sculpture, drawing, and acting.¹ The group was active between 2013 and 2016, during which time they took on many issues surrounding women’s rights, but their public performances against street harassment have gained the most media attention. The videos feature the group responding to street harassment in real-time by pulling out confetti guns, shooting the perpetrator, and then launching into song. The performance has drawn attention for its fusion of seriousness, playfulness, and confrontation in public space. The group self-published several recordings of their performances on their YouTube and Facebook pages, but coverage of the performances by global media outlets vastly expanded their audience.² This shift signaled a transition from their performance as one of the street, to one which was *about* the street, but had been digitized and shared online to reach a wider audience. This transgressive feminist performance, not surprisingly was met with mixed reviews in the online formats. It outraged some and delighted others. This group did not perform in a vacuum and their actions must be read within a larger context of not only street harassment, but the many approaches employed globally to resist masculine hegemony at large.

¹ Natalie Delgadillo, "Fighting Street Harassment in Mexico City With Punk Rock, Performance Art, and Confetti," *CityLab*, February 11, 2016, <http://www.citylab.com/navigator/2016/02/mexico-city-street-harrassment-catcalling-hijas-de-violencia/462048/>

² Las Hijas de Violencia has been featured by *City Lab*, *El Pais*, public radio stations in the United States, and *Slate*.

In approaching Las Hijas de Violencia as a case study, I will approach their performance and its subsequent life online in three steps. First, I will approach the performance as it was in the street as a rhetorical fragment and a contentious performance emanating from vernacular discourse. Second, I will approach the making of an image event through their performance being shared virally over social media. Third, I will utilize this image events afterlife online to analyze the ways in which this created a new discursive space for debate over the merits of the performance specifically, and the issue of street harassment more generally.

In an effort to ground my positionality as the author in this work, I will comment briefly on how I came to focus my Master's Thesis on the subject. My first exposure to Las Hijas de Violencia (hereafter Las Hijas) was via a shared Facebook video that appeared on my news feed. I was initially shocked by the video of the young artists staging a multimedia public performance in resistance to street harassment in Mexico City. The video was a montage of short clips from various performances they had staged through the city's streets. Set to their punk anthem, "*Sexista Punk (Sexist Punk)*," the group's one original song, various group members were shown shooting men with the pink toy confetti guns. These men were walking by them on the street, posted up with their friends on a corner, and in cars. The women chased them down to initiate the performance with a shot in the face from their confetti guns, then grabbed their microphones to sing at them. I say sing *at* them, in place of sing *to* them, as this preposition is more fitting to the attitude of the song and their body language. The lyrics include several direct questions for the perpetrators as to why they believe their actions are appropriate and women deserving of such interruption and objectification.

I have been intrigued by Las Hijas since before I began investigating social movements, and before I began graduate school. It became a fascination because of personal experiences of street harassment that provoked many questions about the communicative challenges it invokes. I first became concerned with the damages caused by street harassment through contemptible, but common, personal experience. While teaching in Costa Rica, the interruption it caused me on my daily commute to work gave me pause, which evolved into acute frustration. As I walked from the neighborhood elementary school, back to my host family's home, I started to recognize a familiar face waiting for me on the corner every day. He would say hello harmlessly at first, but as the days passed, his comments became more aggressive, vulgar and led to more physical acts. My discomfort traversed our linguistic differences, and my efforts to remain stoic in the face of his harassments were met with anger, threats, and expletives. I tried wearing headphones, pretending to be on the phone, even taking different routes home, but the anxiety that welled up as I set off on my journey home never ceased. Upon return to the United States, I found that this practice, while different in its scale and tone, was also prevalent in the United States, and the emotions it had created and the evasion tactics I had employed were shared widely among my female family members, friends, and colleagues.

When, years later, I first heard about Las Hijas I was initially filled with energy and a rebellious pride. Take that! However, upon further investigation, meditation, and analysis I have begun to more critically approach the performance, especially its dissemination online. Questions of the negotiation of power, space, and place along gendered lines has long been a research interest, but what was particularly intriguing

about Las Hijas was the means by which they approached their own experiences of harassment as a moment for invention and argument. Though interwoven and interdependent, their performances have distinct implications in the street and online spaces. First approaching the performance in the street I argue that through play and transgression, Las Hijas brings about new possibilities for what resistance to street harassment can be by introducing a direct to aggressor tactic. Additionally, this signifies an opening for what is possible for women in public space more generally as it constitutes an expansion of this vernacular discourse. In approaching the entirety of this performance protest through a media ecology framework, I argue that mediation has been integral to their ability to reach a wide, international audience, but perhaps more importantly, this has created opportunity for meaning-making that is ongoing as this performance finds its place in the archive of social media. This ongoing process is evidenced by the rich discursive space created in the public comments section of Facebook.

In order to come to a better understanding of the tactics being employed to contest street harassment, I utilize rhetorical and discursive fragments to approach Las Hijas as a performance—one which provides an opportunity for greater criticism within the larger study of transgressive resistance to patriarchy. The group came into the public eye outside of Mexico City when Al Jazeera's global news media outlet *AJ+* created a video that went viral on Facebook, amassing over 10 million views.³ The group members, some of whom are actresses, came up with this theatrical response as a direct action protest in

³ Delgadillo. "Fighting Street Harassment in Mexico City With Punk Rock, Performance Art, and Confetti." *CityLab*.

resistance to street harassment. Although the performance can be understood as a serious criticism of street harassment and the patriarchy that sustains it, their modes of transgression are often read as playful and laughter is commonly seen in footage of their performances.

Before jumping into critical analysis of Las Hijas, I provide a summary of the state of street harassment both globally and specifically in Mexico. I then conceptualize the street as a contentious public space that is laden with historical and cultural contexts which inform how power is at work in this locale. Moving from this conceptualization of space and place, I briefly comment on performances of gender in Mexico and how they inform behaviors like street harassment. From there, I summarize some of the efforts (both past and present) that resist street harassment. Finally, I ground my approach to studying the movement of Las Hijas as a performance from the street that moved—and now lives—online.

This project draws on literature of gender based violence and performative protest which are rich, however, the two do not often intersect and there is specifically a gap in approaching Las Hijas de Violencia critically. In the critical analysis that follows, I make a comprehensive argument for ways in which public space (on- and offline) is negotiated and contested by anarchistic direct action tactics--tactics which are taken up by global media outlets and opened for discourse online, creating a new public stage for the performance which is both immediate and archival.

Literature Review

On Street Harassment

In 2013, the 57th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women declared sexual harassment in public spaces, commonly referred to as street harassment, as a form of gender-based violence (GBV) against women. The commission also instituted a definition of street harassment as “any act or comment perpetrated in a public space that is unwanted and threatening, and motivated by gender; it may include sexually suggestive comments, unwanted touching, invasion of space, and rape.”⁴ Despite the institutionalization of this definition, street harassment continues to persist in cities globally.

The issue is not only understood differently in various cultural contexts, but is also interpreted in vastly different ways across the literature. While some refer to less aggressive forms of street harassment as ‘harmless,’ utilizing such muted language as a ‘street remark’⁵, others have likened the practice to ‘sexual terrorism’⁶, thus complicating understanding of the gravity of these experiences and further calling to mind the variability in cultural significance adhered to street harassment.

⁴ Paola A. Campos, Kathryn L Falb, Sara Hernández, Claudia Díaz-Olavarrieta, and Jhumka Gupta. "Experiences of Street Harassment and Associations with Perceptions of Social Cohesion among Women in Mexico City." *Salud Pública De México* 59, no. 1 (2017): 103.

⁵ Carol Brooks Gardner. 1980. Passing By: Street Remarks, Address Rights, and the Urban Female, *Sociological Inquiry* 50, no. 3-4, (1980): 329.

⁶ Elizabeth Arveda Kissing. 1991. Street harassment: the language of sexual terrorism. *Discourse & Society* 2, no. 4, (1991): 456.

Perhaps the most complicated aspect of street harassment is the backhanded nature of its content in many situations. Street harassment often presents itself as a complimentary observation, often based on a woman's physical attributes. The 'complimentary' nature of these comments can serve to reinforce the continuation of street harassment as a practice giving harassers the ability to defend their actions as such. What can easily be seen as an objectification of a woman's body or an unwelcome critique, is defended as flattery and the woman who renounces it as ungrateful or overly dramatic. However, harassment remarks do not adhere to the same rules as a compliment paid to an acquaintance in the private sphere. On the street, women are expected to either remain silent and non-reactive, or smile and act quietly flattered. This is in opposition to the common "thank you" response expected in a private compliment-giving interaction.

This deceptive 'compliment'-giving exposes a patriarchal naturalization of the practice of silencing women in public space. Not only does street harassment serve to take space from women, interrupting their movement and distracting their focus as they move from place to place, but it mandates that they meet direct and often harmful gestures, language, or physical contact with nonreactive stoicism.⁷

Negotiating Public Space

In examining street harassment, the naturalized control of women's bodies in public space can be seen to reinforce patriarchal structure of gender hierarchy. In the neoliberal conception of a disintegration of the boundaries of public and private space, public spaces (which include the street, public transportation platforms and vehicles,

⁷ Gardner, "Passing By: Street Remarks", 329.; Kissling, "Street Harassment", 453.

parks, and other publicly accessible areas) are ostensibly accessible and welcome to every member of the community. However, as research has shown,⁸ the use of and movement through these spaces by women is limited and controlled by experiences of street harassment as a form of gender-based violence. As proposed by Katherine Rankin in her study of gender and space in Nepal, women, upon entering public space are in fact entering a gendered space. In patriarchal societies such as the Nepali context and, I argue, the Mexico City context, this gendering of space often manifests as a male-dominated space. To enter this space as a woman means to be under the surveillance of men.⁹ Patriarchal social structures deem that this public space belongs to men and that, in order to avoid danger or harm, women should remain in private spaces (i.e. the home) or else conform to “correct behavior” (i.e. silence). The ongoing management of women’s movement through public space is enacted in many ways, including gender-based violence¹⁰, femicide¹¹, and street harassment. In her research in Mexico City, Amy Dunckel-Graglia found that despite efforts to mitigate street harassment and violence, women:

Still need to learn to survive what might be termed a ‘hyper-masculinized’ space, where large numbers of men behave in ways which are oppressive to women...

⁸ “Improving women’s safety in Mexico City,” UN Women. Accessed August 4, 2017. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/11/improving-womens-safety-in-mexico-city>.

⁹ Katharine N. Rankin, “Cultures of Economies: Gender and Socio-spatial Change in Nepal,” *Gender, Place and Culture* 10, no. 2, (2003): 118.

¹⁰ Campos, et al., “Experiences of Street Harassment”, 103.

¹¹ Lourdes Leal, “Combating Impunity and Femicide in Ciudad Juárez,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 41, no. 3, (2008): 31.

women cannot claim that these public spaces are open and available for them to use freely without fear, as is their right as citizens of the city.¹²

In these public spaces, which are “socially constructed, filled with power, [and] struggled over,”¹³ we can see a site of contention and negotiation, which is being met with responses from the state as well as through unsanctioned direct action protest.

Performances of Gender in Mexico City

It is impossible to understand the street harassment and gender-based violence pandemic in Mexico City without first understanding the cultural and historical implications of Mexican machismo. It must be noted that while an introduction of machismo is necessary to a cultural contextualization of street harassment in the Mexico City context of Las Hijas, it is not the intent of this project to utilize machismo as a leading framework, nor will it reify this terminology in the analysis of its findings. It is explored merely as a point of contact with historical gender hierarchies which are well studied in the literature of the region.

Mexican machismo is a persistent, though changing, set of attitudes that dictate the role of men in public space.¹⁴ It can be seen as a performance of masculinity, often done onto women, though notably done for other men. A staple of this behavior is street harassment. Street harassment, as a construct of machista culture, is a practice passed

¹² Amy Dunckel-Graglia, "‘Pink Transportation’ in Mexico City: Reclaiming Urban Space through Collective Action against Gender-based Violence." *Gender & Development* 21, no. 2 (2013): 271.

¹³ Rankin, “Cultures of Economies”, 115.

¹⁴ Josue Ramirez. *Against Machismo Young Adult Voices in Mexico City*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2008: 2.

between men which is imperative to their assertion of masculinity. Often the remarks made to women in the street have very little to do with, or seek subsequent action by, the woman addressed. Men expect silence. Widespread street harassment in Mexico City is rooted in machista culture and works to define masculinity more so than femininity, though it has real and damaging effects on the experience of (and arguably, access to) the street for women.

In his ethnographic work with university students in Mexico City, Josué Ramirez illuminates the complexities of machismo as an ongoing experience of the patriarchal gender hierarchy structure for women, and as a site for a changing assertions of masculinity for men. Ramirez finds that generational changes are underway that are serving to phase out many forms of machismo, including street harassment; however, there is still prevalent use of these forms among certain groups of students. In his research he found a persistent practice of *chifladas* done by male engineering students onto female students. As Ramirez observed of *chifladas*, “this behavior has a vague resemblance to the *piropo*, the old small-town custom of complimenting a lady in the plaza.”¹⁵ We can see this practice as a remnant of particular ideals of Mexican masculinity. The performance of this masculinity can be understood as particular to not only Mexico City, but to a generation.

Raewyn Connell maps out an understanding of masculinity as a complex set of gender norms that are constantly being negotiated and points to the Mexican masculinity

¹⁵Ramirez, *Against Machismo*, 46.

project of machismo as a clear example of this idea.¹⁶ Ramirez echoes this understanding of masculinity as a performance and takes it a step further in analyzing the particular choice of the word *chiflada* as it is used to describe the street harassment done by engineering students onto women passing by through campus. He analyzes the practice, and subsequent discussion of it:

The *chifladas* of engineering are a more peculiarly Mexican topic. To fully understand the *chifladas* we must acknowledge that the verb *chiflar* connotes comic performance in Mexico. The classic Hollywood buffoons known as “The Three Stooges” were called *Los Tres Chiflados* in Mexico. We should keep in mind that the core imagery of *machismo* — the symbolic absurdity of *cojones* — was part of an old vernacular of hilarity and humor. To assign a man’s capacity for action to his testicles was a way to defeat serious ethical questioning of his behavior...Future research on *machismo* should make popular humor a focus. If much progressive discourse in Mexico is stern and moralizing, the defense of sexism and male privilege in everyday contexts is often based on simple clowning and buffoonery.¹⁷

This particular practice of masculinity, as it utilizes street harassment as a means for action, can be seen as particular to Mexico City, as well as individuals’ own beliefs on gender. Analyzing street harassment as a practice of performing gender is rooted in a patriarchal power structure of gender hierarchy that is in the process of constant renegotiation.¹⁸ In viewing these practices as performances, with humor and history attached to them, a deeper understanding of street harassment as a means of acting out masculinity comes into view. As Connell proposes, “there is no single masculinity, but rather multiple masculinities, both locally and on a world scale... masculinities can and

¹⁶ Raewyn Connell, "The Study of Masculinities." *Qualitative Research Journal* 14, no. 1 (2014): 10.

¹⁷ Ramirez, *Against Machismo*, 63.

¹⁸ Ramirez, *Against Machismo*, 63.

do change.”¹⁹ Connell’s work highlights a need for more consideration of masculinity studies in approaching the naturalized practice of gendered street harassment as a product of patriarchal structures.²⁰

Within the aims of this project, understanding street harassment as an expression of masculinity is of secondary importance. While a basic consideration of this history and cultural practice, as they relate to the perpetrators, is important for a deeper understanding of the practice, what is of critical importance is its effect on the daily movements of women and girls, and even more so, the production of reactionary performance and rhetoric being taken up in resistance to this practice.

However machismo may be changing in Mexico, and Mexico City more specifically, it has not quelled the pandemic of street harassment experienced by women in the city. In a 2017 study Paola Campos, Kathryn Falb, Sarah Hernández, Claudia Díaz-Olavarrieta, and Jhumka Gupta analyzed the frequency and forms of street harassment as well as the ways in which it leads to decreased feelings of social cohesion among women living in Mexico City. Their findings were indicative of not only the endemic nature of street harassment in this massive metropolis, but also approach an understanding of the far-reaching impacts that street harassment can have on social cohesion and health among women. For the purposes of this paper, it is important to understand not only the ubiquity of street harassment, but the means by which women mitigate these experiences.

According to Campos, et al., 62.8% (nearly two-thirds) of the 952 women they surveyed had experienced some form of street harassment in the past month, of whom

¹⁹ Connell, “The Study of Masculinities”, 7.

²⁰ Connell, “The Study of Masculinities”, 7.

over one-quarter (26.8%) reported experiencing a physical form of street harassment. In response to these experiences, 75% of those said they took measures to avoid street harassment such as avoiding going out alone or at night, modifying daily routes, missing or being late to work or school, taking a gun out in public, pretending to be on the phone, pretending to have a boyfriend or husband, among others.²¹ A more spatially-specific study carried out by UN Women found that nine out of ten women experience violence while using public transportation in Mexico City, making it the second most dangerous transportation system for women on earth.²²

Combating Street Harassment: Mexico City and Beyond

In addition to the great lengths taken by individual women to avoid street harassment, the state has also stepped in to mitigate this pandemic. As early as 2000, UN Women in partnership with INMUJERES and the government of Mexico City recognized the issue of violence against women and girls in public spaces as a widespread issue of public safety and introduced several responses. Reports pointed to public transportation as a hotbed for gender based violence and harassment in Mexico City, so the city's *Sistema de Transporte Colectivo* (Collective Transportation System) began a program to offer safe spaces to women by introducing *Atenea* (women-only public transportation also referred to as Pink Transportation), as well as providing more accessible places for reporting acts of violence and harassment in transit stations. By instituting Pink Transportation, women's organizations working with the state were able to create a

²¹ Campos, et al., "Experiences of Street Harassment", 103.

²² UN Women, "Improving women's safety in Mexico City."

response to the rising concerns over harassment of women riding public transportation in Mexico City. In an ethnographic study into the impact of Pink Transportation and subsequent measures to eliminate street harassment in Mexico City, Amy Dunckel-Graglia, notes that:

Segregation of this kind offers a solution to the everyday violence and harassment faced by women and girls, insofar as it prevents male perpetrators and protects women. However, it fails to address the real issue, which is men's sense of entitlement to harass women, and their objectification and appropriation of female bodies. Visualizing a gender-equal urban environment involves solving these problems, allowing women and men, girls and boys to make full use of public spaces.²³

While this program, along with the reporting measures put in place inside public transportation terminals, are effective at mitigating the gender-based violence to women and girls in public space (with notably limited scope), they largely overlook the causes. The implications of this oversight are the perpetuation of victim-blaming. Rather than instituting greater control over men who commit violent acts of harassment, the state opts to institute additional control over the movement of women's bodies in public. This puts the responsibility of safety onto women who are then expected to make the "right" or "smart" choice in their occupation of public space, including their commute to work or school. And the assumption of this approach is no different than common claims that women who are harassed were in the "wrong place at the wrong time," or were targeted due to their choice in dress. Because Pink Transportation is not universally or easily accessible to all—they only comprise about 10 percent of total buses in the metro area

²³ Dunckel-Graglia, "Pink Transportation", 274.

and only run along only 23 of the 91 routes²⁴—it becomes part of a system of necessary sacrifices for women. Thus, those who do not alter their route or delay their transit in order to accommodate this deficiency are to blame when they are harassed on traditional public transit, much like those who choose to dress in ways deemed provocative, or simply occupy public space at all, carry the blame of harassment done onto them.

However flawed, the growing pressure for the state to act on this pandemic is not unique to Mexico City, and their flagship Pink Transportation model is now being implemented globally with iterations being developed in London, Bangkok, Tokyo, Dubai, Moscow, and Rio de Janeiro.²⁵ While this model is innovative and has provided a state sanctioned safe space for women, its shortfalls have been met with conceptual and artistic expressions that call for changing the behaviors of men rather than placing the entire burden of this issue on women. These expressions, which aim to change societal attitudes toward street harassment, have sprouted up through state sponsored initiatives as well as unsanctioned direct action throughout the city.

One such communicative approach has garnered global media coverage and has come to be known as the *Experimento Asiento Incomódo* (or commonly in English media, the Penis Seat). *Sistema de Transporte Colectivo* (Mexico City's Transportation Authority), in partnership with UN Women, undertook to challenge the machista values that have perpetuated and escalated the gender-based violence and street harassment situation with a new campaign called #NoEsDeHombres. The campaign featured PSA-

²⁴ Dunckel-Graglia, "Pink Transportation", 274.

²⁵ Dunckel-Graglia, "Pink Transportation", 267.

type messaging throughout the city, with billboards, videos, and most famously, installations on public trains in the city.

The Penis Seat - a public train seat molded to the male form and featuring a semi-erect penis was installed in place of a normal transit seat (see Figure 1). The seat was identified as “For Males Only.” It was also accompanied by a placard at the foot of the seat, positioned for the male occupant to read. The placard read: “*Es molesto viajar aquí, pero no se compara con la violencia sexual que sufren las mujeres en sus traslados cotidianos* (It’s uncomfortable to sit here but it doesn’t compare with the sexual violence that women suffer in their daily lives).” The Penis Seat was widely shared by various media outlets and sparked a lively debate. By imitating the physical forms of harassment experienced by women on a daily basis, specifically the common practice of men intentionally pressing themselves up against women on crowded trains, the campaign tried to illustrate this disturbance to men, who, in a hyper-masculine cultural context found the sensation of sitting on the semi-erect penis form in front of others, to be humiliating. Social media took to debating this tactic, with many praising the campaign for placing responsibility on men for changing the experience of public spaces for women, and others asserting that the installation was not enough to make change.²⁶ Though the method can and should be critiqued, the installation was picked up by global media, thus bringing to the forefront of the international stage the dire gender-based violence and street harassment situation in Mexico City. The sharing of this story via

²⁶ Vicky Baker, "Mexico City metro's 'penis seat' sparks debate," *BBC News*, March 31, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-39449506>

global media channels²⁷ as well as user to user sharing via social media were able to propel gender relations in Mexico City to the international stage.



Figure 1. *Experimento Asiento Incomódo* (Penis Seat) on Mexico City subway train. *The New York Times*, 'Penis Seat' Causes Double Takes on Mexico City Subway, March 31, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/31/world/americas/penis-seat-mexico-city-harassment.html>

These state sanctioned tactics for counteracting the perpetuation of street harassment through both preventative structural measures (introducing women-only transportation) and symbolic measures to change attitudes (installation of the Penis Seat) fall short in mitigating and remedying the situation on two accounts. First, they are limited to public transportation. The state's focus on these locales may be due to the ability to measure the impacts of their initiatives in a public, yet semi-controlled, space. Public transportation vehicles, platforms, and stops are more regulated than the street and are often patrolled by state-sponsored entities, including representatives of the *Sistema de*

²⁷ News coverage includes: *BBC*, *Paper Magazine*, *The New York Times*, among others.

Transporte Colectivo. The harassment that takes place under their authority thus magnifies their shortfalls in addressing this issue and controlling the space. Secondly, neither initiatives work to take back public space for women. They instead focus on corralling women into a safe space out of the general public, thus recognizing and accepting that public space is in fact a male space and rescinding women's rights to public space. This creates a vacuum in which transgressive modes of resistance emerge.

In the fight to expose and delegitimize street harassment done onto women by men, there have been various creative methods taken up by activists and performers. Readers may remember the video, "10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman,"²⁸ that went viral in 2014. The video featured a white, cisgender woman walking around the city and receiving an astonishing number of catcalls, wolf-whistles, as well as a man following her. This video set off a series of parodies, some with a more serious commentary on the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, and gender that are inherent to experiences of the street for marginalized bodies including "10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman in Hijab" and "10 Hours of Walking in Paris as a Jew." Others took on a more comedic tone including: "10 Hours of Walking in NYC as Kim Jung Un," "10 Hours of Walking in NYC as Batman," and a series of parodies in which the woman subject talks back to the harassers in unexpected ways.

Street art has also been employed to speak out against street harassment. Stop Telling Women to Smile²⁹ is an international art series started by Brooklyn, NY based painter and illustrator, Tatyana Fazlalizadeh. The medium of wheat paste posters, adhered

²⁸ Rob Bliss Creative, "10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman," YouTube, October 28, 2104, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1XGPvbWn0A>

²⁹ "About," *Stop Telling Women to Smile*, <http://stoptellingwomentosmile.com/About>

legally and illegally throughout major U.S. cities and a growing number of international cities, have gained acclaim for their empowering messages centered on inequity in experiences of public space. Fazlalizadeh has adopted a hyper local approach to her process, which includes facilitating focus groups with residents of the city in which she is working. During these focus groups, Fazlalizadeh, sometimes with the aid of a translator, creates an open dialogue about women's experiences of street harassment. Women are prompted to share a message they would like to see in their streets and Fazlalizadeh uses these phrases, paired with illustrations of the women involved, to create her works. The project has reached several major U.S. cities and made its first international debut in Mexico City.

In 2010, the anti-harassment organization Hollaback! launched an app that has since developed into a reporting tool for victims and witnesses of harassment in New York City.³⁰ The app also serves as a database and resource by collecting reports and identifying hotbeds of street harassment. Users can also access "Know Your Rights" materials and other resources. Notably, the data is not currently shared directly with the New York Police Department.

The various approaches to fight street harassment mentioned here are notably aesthetic, immediate, and performative. While other approaches exist and are important to creating structural changes (i.e. Title IX trainings), these performative approaches are especially important in looking at the street. Through affect and aesthetics, the attitudinal and social structures that allow for the continual confrontation and negotiation with these

³⁰ Judith Ohikuare, "An App to Help Women Avoid Street Harassment," *The Atlantic*, September 13, 2013, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2013/09/an-app-to-help-women-avoid-street-harassment/279642/>

behaviors in met head on. While innovation is underway in the fight to end street harassment, a solution has yet to be reached. Many of the efforts highlighted in this section fall short of the change women are demanding. For the state sanctioned efforts this could be due to the limitations in working within institutions which are inherently patriarchal. For others, it could be that there is not an active reclaiming and occupation of that space by women. It is in terms of these shortfalls that I believe Las Hijas is an especially innovative and interesting effort in this cause.

Transition from the Street to Online

Experiences of street harassment cannot be understood as limited to an interaction between two bodies occupying space in the street. In moving away from understandings of public rhetoric as rhetorical situations, defined by particular and separate elements, Jenny Edbaur offers a more useful understanding of public rhetoric as a rhetorical ecology that is imperative to a better understanding of street harassment and the experience of public space for women. She argues that:

Place becomes a space of contacts, which are always changing and never discrete. The contact between two people on a busy street is never simply a matter of those two bodies; rather, the two bodies carry with them the traces of effects from whole fields of culture and social histories. This is what it means to say that the social field is networked, connected, rather than a matter of place, sites, and home.³¹

Utilizing this understanding of public rhetoric in exploring practices of street harassment, it is evident that gender hierarchy and histories of violence and oppression are interwoven into each of these interactions. These interactions, however, are not limited to the

³¹ Jenny Edbauer, "Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2005): 10.

physical space of the street. They extend into our digital lives through their capture and sharing online. The online rhetorical fragments of social movement actions are another way of approaching an understanding of public space. In the context of Las Hijas, who's largest audience is that which they reach online, the transition from the street to the thoroughfares of social media is crucial to approaching a critical understanding of their performance.

While the first section of my analysis rests firmly in the immediate performance of Las Hijas as it occurred in the street, the second and third sections antagonize the role that online mediation played in the creation of a secondary, and supplemental, iteration of the performance online, and the tertiary life in the ongoing online discourse thus created. In order to successfully move from the rhetoric and performance of the street to the online context, I ground my analysis in the framework of Social Movement 2.0 ("the convergence of Web 2.0 platforms and protest, movements, or other resistance activities")³² as part of a media ecology as conceptualized by Emiliano Treré and Alice Mattoni, who conceive of this framework as an effective means for studying the "social movement/media nexus"³³ without "neglecting the complex historical, social, political, and economic factors in which these social movements originate and thrive."³⁴ From the group's inception, various modes of mediation have been integral to the performance of Las Hijas. This is evidenced in their self-published videos that feature footage captured

³² Christina R. Foust and Kate Drazner Hoyt, "Social Movement 2.0: Integrating and Assessing Scholarship on Social Media and Movement," *Review of Communication* 18, no.1 (2018):37.

³³ Emiliano Treré and Alice Mattoni, "Media Ecologies and Protest Movements: Main Perspectives and Key Lessons," *Information, Communication & Society* (2015): 291.

³⁴ Treré and Mattoni, "Media Ecologies and Protest Movements," 291.

by group members during planned performances in the street. Comparing these early iterations to the height of their mediation via *AJ+*, it is evident that a holistic approach through media ecology is necessary to conceptualize of this resistive performance. Within the variety of media ecology approaches, that of the communicative approach is best suited. Developed by Altheide³⁵, and continued by Tacchi, Slater, & Hearn³⁶, Treré and Mattoni define this approach as:

A milieu of agents who are connected in various ways by various exchanges of mediated and unmediated forms of communication, along three different layers: technological, which includes the devices and connecting media that enable communication and interaction; social, which includes people and their social modes of organization, and discursive, which refers to the very content of communication.³⁷

This specific media ecology perspective is important as I approach the performances of Las Hijas as a complex entity made up of moments of action in the street, capture and sharing of this action through online dissemination, and the discourse that lives on online after the performance in the street has ended. Especially in consideration of the incredible growth in viewership that came out of their being featured in western media outlets. It is in the exposure of the group to these media that the ‘media ecology’ metaphor is particularly useful.

Christina Foust and Kate Drazner Hoyt caution against isolationism in media studies that tends toward a “one-medium bias, or the tendency to analyze the communicative features of social movements by looking to only one media platform,

³⁵ David L. Altheide, *An Ecology of Communication : Cultural Formats of Control*. Communication and Social Order, (New York: Aldine De Gruyter): 1995.

³⁶ Jo Tacchi, Don Slater and Greg Hearn, *Ethnographic action research: A user’s handbook*, (New Delhi: UNESCO), Retrieved from <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/archive/00004399/>

³⁷ Treré and Mattoni, “Media Ecologies and Protest Movements,” 294.

such as Facebook or Twitter.”³⁸ While the analysis of this paper will focus the scope of its inquiry on the *AJ+* video on Facebook (which was selectively chosen as the most popular coverage of Las Hijas), I will endeavor to remain grounded in an understanding that even this singular video does not live in a Facebook or AJplus.net vacuum. The affordances of other news media pages (i.e. the *CityLab* article) not only feature the *AJ+* video within their own platforms, but also include social media plugins which allow readers to easily share the video or article on a vast assortment of social media platforms. The *CityLab* article for instance allows readers to share via Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and email.³⁹ This is in addition to the sharing affordances that are principal to the social media platforms themselves. This is to say that the ways in which the online audience is built around the performance of Las Hijas is often the outcome of a convolution of cross-medium sharing. To study reactions and discourse created in relation to a video that seemingly lives on one Facebook link, is in fact, to study a sample of the entirety of the media ecology of which it is part.

While there is very important work being done to understand the power dynamics present in media, especially in regards to social movements, I avoid a binary conceptualization of the contexts in which these media exist. As similarly put forth by Foust and Drazner Hoyt:

Debates about independent versus corporate media, old versus new media, Eastern versus Western media, online versus offline protest, etc., continue to

³⁸ Foust and Drazner Hoyt, “Social Movement 2.0,” 45.

³⁹ Delgadillo. "Fighting Street Harassment in Mexico City With Punk Rock, Performance Art, and Confetti." *CityLab*.

ignore the degree of connectivity that exists between all media, especially within the context of today's convergence culture.⁴⁰

In identifying various media types and the ways in which they represent a larger media ecology, I do not intend to compare them thus. Rather, I choose this selective sample due to its popularity and thus the larger data set it offers the study. The limitations of this study are evident in the limited selection of representations which are utilized. However, as argued by Frangonikolopoulos and Chapsos, social movement theory has historically tended toward a heteronormative and western-centric privileging by overlooking movements led by non-normative bodies in collectivist fashions.⁴¹ Within these limitations, the study of social movements was largely limited to the conception that “movements need to be hierarchically organized, with recognized leaders and resources, promoting a sustained claim on the authorities.”⁴² This reliance on resource mobility as a framework for the study of social movement is one that does not serve the aims of this project. Rather, “media ecology permits our ability to view both the promotions and limitations of human freedom, aesthetics, and social change simultaneously.”⁴³

Foust and Drazner Hoyt skillfully lay out the reductionist tendencies evident in the study of Social Movement 2.0. Two tendencies that are particularly relevant to the study of Las Hijos, as their performance lives online, are noted in the dichotomy of

⁴⁰ Foust and Drazner Hoyt, “Social Movement 2.0,” 45.

⁴¹ Christos Frangonikolopoulos and Ioannis Chapsos, “Explaining the Role and the Impact of the Social Media in the Arab Spring,” *Global Media Journal – Mediterranean Edition* 7, no. 2 (2012): 13.

⁴² Frangonikolopoulos and Chapsos, “Explaining the Role and the Impact of the Social Media in the Arab Spring,” 11.

⁴³ Foust and Drazner Hoyt, “Social Movement 2.0,” 49.

techno-utopianism and techno-dystopianism.⁴⁴ Techno-utopian approaches tend toward assumptions that mediation of a social movement is enough to determine its success. This success is often measured in shares, views, and retweets, but with very little grounding in the real connections that are being made online. This perspective also over-emphasizes the ability for Social Movement 2.0 to undermine existing hegemonic structures. Conversely, techno-dystopian perspectives underplay the importance and effects of Social Movement 2.0. These include critiques of “clicktivism” as unable to create change and favor in-person or face-to-face modes of resistance and action. This reductionist outlook is short sighted in its ability to understand the ways in which our digital lives are in many ways synonymous with our material lives. As put forth in his qualitative research guide for online ethnography, Robert V. Kozinets posits:

Online social experiences have real consequences for social image, social identity. In fact, they can ‘amplify’ causation in social connection: they are interconnection. Even before you can have communication in this same point-to-point manner, you have to have that interconnection to make it all possible.⁴⁵

I place my analyses of Las Hijas comfortably between techno-utopian and techno-dystopian perspectives with a grounding in the framework of media ecology and an understanding that our digital lives are interdependent with our material lives. An understanding of how interactions function in the street alongside some familiarity with urban public space is necessary for meaning-making by viewers of Las Hijas online. Thus, a connection between the street and online space is critical to their efforts.

⁴⁴ Foust and Drazner Hoyt, “Social Movement 2.0,” 47-48.

⁴⁵ Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: redefined*, 2nd ed., London; Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2015.

The purpose of this inquiry is to understand the role of unsanctioned public performance art works as a resistance to pandemic street harassment in Mexico City, specifically analyzing the role of Las Hijas, a Mexico City based performance group, and how the utilization of digital media became key to their impact. In examining Las Hijas as a case study, this inquiry seeks to accomplish the following: First, to antagonize the gendering of public space, I critically examine the rhetoric of the performances as they occurred in the street. This inquiry remains rooted in the spatio-temporal and cultural context of Mexico City as this was where the groups live performances were done. Secondly, this inquiry will examine the movement of this performance from its iteration on the street to online, namely through social media sharing. It is here that I will be able to articulate my positionality as a scholar looking critically at a performance that took place in another time and space. This section interrogates the transformation that the original embodied rhetoric undergoes in order to emerge anew online. This section then makes way for the third section which analyzes the comments gathered under the most popular video coverage of the group. Through an interpretive thematic analysis of the comments gathered publicly online in response to this video and the performance tactics more generally, I am able to argue that opposition to Las Hijas online utilizes misogynistic rhetoric as a means for invalidating women's voices in public space and reinforcing the hegemonic system of gender norms that make street harassment widespread. Additionally, opponents utilize abstract and overt threats of violence in retaliation to the performance of Las Hijas as a means for instituting fear as a means for controlling women's agency and creative potential in public space.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODS

The main considerations of this critical inquiry are to determine the implications of unsanctioned public performance in resistance to street harassment as it functions on the street in the immediate time and space of the performance, how it lives online after the performance has ended, and what the discourse it creates regarding street harassment online reveals about identity formation. This study analyzes the means by which public performances of resistance can be used locally and globally through digital media sharing to increase awareness of the street harassment pandemic in Mexico City and throughout the world. This study is primarily concerned with a critical discussion of these performances as they exist in real-time, online, and in the imaginations and discourses of supporters and critics.

While the street and public performance remain key constructs to this study, much of the discourse surrounding them has largely moved online as it has been propelled by the group's sharing of their own content via social media sites (including Facebook and YouTube), as well as the recording and sharing of their performances by news media

(including AJ+, U.S. public radio station websites, and Splinter). I have approached the case study of Las Hijas in three parts. First, I provide a critical discussion of the performance as it were in the spatio-temporal context of the street. Second, I provide a supplemental critique of the performance as it exists online. The final chapter explores the online discourse created by the sharing of the performance online through an interpretive thematic analysis.

As Hijas de Violencia represents an unsanctioned, transgressive, and innovative response to street harassment in Mexico City, it is studied as part of a system of responses and policies that are working toward a similar goal. This study provides insight into the attitudinal variables that accompany the group's performances and claims about street harassment online, as this is the site in which they have continued viewership. This study also provides greater understanding of how public performance, met with online sharing, can provide both local and global support and opposition to social movements, even after their inception. The next three sections correspond to the methods used in the following three chapters, respectively.

Critical Discussion of the Immediate Performance

The first chapter of analysis involves a critical discussion of the performance of Las Hijas in the immediate setting of the street by analyzing video footage compiled and published by the group directly. It is noted that in-person observation of the performances would be preferable to this method, however, since the group is no longer actively performing, I have utilized various performance clips. I recognize that the clips available to me as an international viewer are favorable and limited selections that exclude much of

the contextual information. I make my best attempts to remain reflexive about my subjectivity in regards to this limitation.

Though Las Hijas has been featured in media outlets internationally, and discourse online hotly debates its merit, the contentious nature of this performance has yet to be rhetorically critiqued. In approaching the performance and its archive I expand an understanding of feminist performance and its place in the study of social movement.

I approach the video as a rhetorical fragment to which I attend through critical discussion the power of the performance among the performers, harassers, and general witnesses. Drawing on McGee, who cautioned against “putting the cart before the horse” in approaching a movement as the subject of inquiry, instead suggesting it be an *outcome* of research,⁴⁶ I maintain a posturing toward this understanding of Las Hijas as not a “movement” in and of itself, but as a meaning-making, active resistance that draws on symbol, the body, and memory.

I conceive of Las Hijas as a performance group made up of individuals with agency who are antagonizing assumptions of public space, violence, play, and gendered norms of behavior in the street. This is not to suggest that the performance of Las Hijas (and the confetti guns they use, and the street space they take up with their bodies) is solely material. While the material phenomena of their performances are unique and integral to this study, I am guided by Pason, McKerrow, and Foust’s argument that “movement” (or in the case of Las Hijas, transgressive performance) cannot and should not be limited to phenomenon or meaning. As Pason posits, “to understand social change or what has *moved* from rhetorical efforts, scholars might address the interplay of

⁴⁶ Michael Calvin McGee, “‘Social Movement’: Phenomenon or Meaning?” *Central States Speech Journal* 31, no. 4 (1980): 233–44.

phenomenon and meaning as they are mutually constitutive.”⁴⁷ This leads to my approach to studying the performance of Las Hijas as a rhetoric of othered bodies engaged in transgressive resistance. First, I conceptualize of the ways memory informs the performances of Las Hijas and lends itself to an identity formation for the group as well as their supporters. After grounding Las Hijas in a history of feminist resistance, performance, and transgression, I begin an analysis of their performance as it were. Drawing on Calafell, McIntosh, and Foust I approach Las Hijas as an embodied rhetoric and part of a vernacular discourse, or a “discourse emanating from historically marginalized bodies.”⁴⁸ Finally, approaching their performance as a phenomenon in the street, I employ Bakhtin's carnivalesque as a means to critique the transgressive nature of the events as they were. In utilizing these three frameworks as a means for critiquing the performance of Las Hijas, I argue that their performance was a continuation of lived performances of marginalized bodies occupying public spaces that were thus brought into a history of transgressive performances of femininity through employing (and then expanding out of) aspects of the carnivalesque and quotidian lived performances.

⁴⁷ Amy Pason, “Phenomenon or Meaning? A Tale of Two Occupies,” in *What Democracy Looks Like*, ed. Christina R. Foust, Amy Pason, and Kate Zittlow Rogness (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press), 109.

⁴⁸ Bernadette Marie Calafell and Dawn Marie D. McIntosh, “Latina/o Vernacular Discourse: Theorizing Performative Dimensions of an Other Counterpublic,” in *What Democracy Looks Like*, ed. Christina R. Foust, Amy Pason & Kate Zittlow Rogness (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press), 2017, 202.

Critical Discussion of the Mediated Performance

Drawing on DeLuca⁴⁹, I provide a critical discussion of the performance as an “image event” and its subsequent dissemination online. Image event, as a terminology, is particularly helpful in conceptualizing the performances of Las Hijas as a mediated fragment. As defined by DeLuca, image events are “staged protests designed for media dissemination.”⁵⁰ These moments, or visual rhetorical fragments, provide incomplete claims and in their openness to interpretation and reaction, create new possibilities for argument and inventiveness.⁵¹ In approaching the mediation of performance, utilizing Las Hijas as a case study, I firmly place my critical discussion in the framework of a media ecology. By employing this framework, scholars may complicate the online life of performances such as this as they are considered part of “social movement 2.0.”⁵² By refusing to limit this study to a single platform or affordance (i.e. Facebook and “likes”, respectively), and by neglecting to fall into the techno-utopian or techno-dystopian camps, a more complex and integrated conception of how transgressive performances as modes of resistance can and do live online can be realized.

The transition of this performance in its initial iteration to its simultaneously immediate and archival life online provides the opportunity for a comparative criticism.

⁴⁹ Kevin Michael DeLuca, *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism*, (New York: Guilford Press), 1999.

⁵⁰ John W. Delicath and Kevin M. DeLuca, “Image Events, the Public Sphere, and Argumentative Practice,” *Argumentation* 17, no. 3, (2003): 317.

⁵¹ Delicath and DeLuca, “Image Events,” 317.

⁵² Foust and Drazner Hoyt, “Social Movement 2.0.”

In this section I analyze the most popular (based on view count) of the videos of Las Hijas shared online. While many videos have been produced of Las Hijas, both by the group and other media outlets, I have chosen to analyze the most popular video⁵³ as it provides the height of mediation for this group. Interestingly, the video is a production by *AJ+*, a subsidiary of *Al Jazeera Media Network*, based in San Francisco, California. The video is created for an international audience of English-language speakers which, in part, attests to its view count.

Interpretive Thematic Analysis of Facebook Video Comments

Drawing on the work of Baptiste⁵⁴, chapter four will involve an interpretive thematic analysis of the discourse created in the comments under the video analyzed in the second section. The goal of this method is to understand how an international audience has come to make sense of this transgressive performance of feminist direct action protest. The video⁵⁵, as of April 12, 2018, has received over 10 million views on Facebook, 97,000 shares, 78,000 reactions, and 6,700 comments. While there are thousands of comments on the *AJ+* video, I have limited my analysis to one thousand comments. This selective sampling was done in order that the scale of the analysis would be manageable. In choosing this sample, I utilized the comments sorting mechanisms available to all users when reading comments on Facebook. I collected the first one

⁵³ Popularity based on overall view count

⁵⁴ Ian Baptiste, "Qualitative Data Analysis: Common Phases, Strategic Differences," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 2, no. 3, (2001).

⁵⁵ *AJ+* English, "'Mexico's Harassment Issue'" Facebook, January 27, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/ajplusenglish/videos/676054245869419/>.

thousand “Top Comments” as defined by Facebook. These comments are deemed “most relevant” which means that comments do not appear chronologically, rather appear based on most engagement. Essentially, if a comment garners more reactions or sub-comments, it would be pushed to the top regardless of when it was posted. This choice was made in hopes to access the most provoking and contentious discourse in reaction to this video as a means for filtering for comments with clear arguments. Additionally, only free-standing comments were included in this sample set. That is to say, some of the 6,700 comments are in fact sub-comments below an original. Because I endeavored to explore the discourse provoked principally by the video itself, not other users, I remained focused on an analysis of free standing comments.

This analysis explicates what these reactions can tell us about the public’s conception of the performance and street harassment culture at large. Inspired by Polson and Whiteside⁵⁶, who utilize Baptiste to create an interpretive thematic analysis, I approach the commenters on the *AJ+* Facebook account through key themes. I created thematic data sets by first “first coding or ‘tagging’ content in such a way that it stays close to the text’s manifest meaning” and to further the rich description of your findings by approaching themes “from the researcher’s interpretive lens to provide explanatory statements.”⁵⁷ I approach these comments as a feminist scholar and a researcher interested in the intersection between performances of resistance and the mediation of social movement. From this positionality, I recognize that three major themes emerge in the comments on the *AJ+* video featuring *Las Hijas*. These effectively constitutes their

⁵⁶ Erika Polson and Erin Whiteside, “Passing to India: a Critique of American Football’s Expansion,” *Media, Culture & Society* 36, no. 5, (2014).

⁵⁷ Polson and Whiteside, 667.

being exposed to the global media stage: first, opposition to the definition of street harassment, second, claim that men are the real victims, and third, threats of violence. Though scarcer in the sample, I choose to add a fourth thematic group that represents those in support of Las Hijas. This is an interpretive choice made to ensure that supportive voices were amplified in the spirit of Las Hija's mission.

Marrying this interpretive thematic analysis of online reactionary discourse to Las Hijas, I employ Cloud's *framing by foil* framework⁵⁸ in order to extrapolate the intentions of such themes in the maintenance of hegemonic powers. By joining a thematic analysis with rhetorical criticism I go beyond a descriptive analysis of the discursive space of the comments section and critique the intentionality and effects that the discourse therein signifies.

⁵⁸ Dana L. Cloud "Foiling the Intellectuals: Gender, Identity Framing, and the Rhetoric of the Kill in Conservative Hate Mail." *Communication, Culture & Critique* 2, no. 4 (2009): 458.

CHAPTER THREE: LAS HIJAS DE VIOLENCIA IN THE STREET

Las Hijas, a performance art group, was developed by four women in Mexico City with the goal of interrupting the street harassment they suffered in their daily personal movements through public spaces. The impetus of the collective and their performances was to take back control of their mobility through public space and resist the interruptions of street harassment in the personal lives of the performers. This desire for personal catharsis and empowerment is expanded in its sharing online as well as its “public” status. Thus the audience they have created, both on the street and online, has recognized their transgressive mode of resistance and it has garnered attention from local and global media.

Proyecto Las hijas de Violencia: A Rhetorical Fragment

Due to the temporal and spatial limitations of the performances by Las Hijas (they were active between 2013 and 2016 in Mexico City), I critically discuss their performances as they were in their immediacy in the spatio-temporal context of the street in Mexico City utilizing a video compilation published by the group and uploaded

directly to YouTube. The video is titled *Proyecto Las hijas de Violencia*.⁵⁹ It was uploaded March 31, 2015 and as of writing (January 19, 2018) it has 13,196 views, 179 “likes,” and 110 “dislikes.” It was presented at *el Festival Internacional de Artes Feministas de la Ciudad de México* (The International Festival of Feminist Arts in Mexico City).

The video opens to a black screen with white text reading “*Nunca más una agresión sin respuesta* (No more aggression without response).” The scene opens to a street in Mexico City, presumably captured on a hand-held video camera. Two young women in floral dresses flank an older man. You hear one of the women say “*Hagamos esto* (Let’s do this).” The scene cuts to a close up on a man in a ribbed, white tank top standing on the curb. A woman, off camera, asks “*¿Por qué me chiflaste?*”⁶⁰ (Why did you harass me).” The man embarrassingly apologizes to women who step into the frame wearing floral sundresses (a uniform that becomes evident as the video goes on).

Next the video cuts to a scene with the same two women running after a moving pickup truck on a busy city street, and is captioned “*Otro chiflado* (Another harassment).” They catch up to the truck at a traffic stop and approach the driver’s window which is open (which gives him easy access to call out at the women from his car as he drives past them walking on the street). One woman pulls out a plastic confetti gun and shoots the driver from less than a foot away three times. The women turn toward the camera and walk away from the truck smiling. The camera pans to the driver and a

⁵⁹ Hijas de Violencia, “Proyecto Las hijas de Violencia,” YouTube, March 31, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bp4k3MGGa5E>

⁶⁰ Linguistic note: the verb *chiflar* means “to whistle” but is used in this context to denote common forms of street harassment including whistles, kissing sounds, and other forms of cat-calling.

woman behind the camera says “*Se llama acoso, pandejo* (It’s called harassment, asshole).” and another asks “¿*Cuál es tu nombre?* (What is your name?)” but the harasser drives off without responding.

The video cuts to three men leaned against a wall at a street corner. Three women, off screen, question the men as to whether they know that their actions are considered street harassment. The men do not seem to understand. One woman steps forward and shoots the man in the middle with a confetti gun (see Figure 2). The men are confused by this. Another woman steps forward with a microphone and amp and they all start singing “*Sexista Punk*”⁶¹. The men begin walking away while the women follow them, singing at them. Scene cuts to another man being followed by two of the women as they sing the rest of “*Sexista Punk*.”

⁶¹ Opening verse:

*“I’m always confronted with this everyday
The same looks and words of aggression
“How pretty, how tasty, Mamacita, what an ass!”
And I just ignore the denigration.”*

Translation sourced from Splinter.com article; Gabriela Resto-Montero, “Meet the female punk group fighting street harassment with songs and confetti,” Splinter.com, February 9, 2016, <https://splinternews.com/meet-the-female-punk-group-fighting-street-harassment-w-1793854600>



Figure 2: Still from Las Hijas de Violencia, “Proyecto Las hijas de Violencia,” YouTube, March 31, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bp4k3MGGA5E>

The video transitions to a black screen and a more produced version of the song continues. The screen reads: “¿Tienes ubicado algún acosador callejero? (Have you located a street harasser?) ¿Conoces un negocio o lugar en donde se diviertan acosándote? (Do you know a business or location where they enjoy harassing you?). This is followed by: “Escribenos a lshijaddeviolencia@gmail.com (Write us at [email]) and “Estamos ansiosas por exponerlo (Tu identidad no será revelada) (We are anxious to expose this. [Your identity will not be revealed]).

This was the first video uploaded by Las Hijas to their YouTube account. It is only two minutes and three seconds of footage but effectively shows their approach to fighting street harassment with a transgressive public performance. In bringing together play and pseudo-violence in the face of sexual violence they encounter routinely in public space, the women are effectively interrupting the preconceived notion of ‘correct’

behavior by women in these spaces. They are initiating discourse with many of the harassers, but notably meet their violence with confrontation, action, and laughter. This is visibly shocking to the men featured in the video. There is no backlash or retaliation in the confrontations captured on video. More often than not, the men are put in retreat by the women's actions. This inverts the traditional power relations in the street which privilege men's bodies and voices over women's and the action can be seen as a reflection of gendered power dynamics in public space through a "fight fire with fire" retaliation tactic of resistance that opens opportunity for critique. In addition to challenging the gendering of public space, the performance interrupts space 'owned' by men through physicality as well as through amplification of women's voices especially when "*Sexista Punk*" is played.

Memories of Resistance: From Pussy Riot to *Ni Una Más*

No rhetoric or performance lives in a vacuum. While Las Hijas may challenge preconceived notions of what "protest", "social movement", or "feminist activism" mean due to their creative and unabashed approach, they are part of a long history of resistance and even longer history of occupying public space while women. The brevity of their action, and the little explanation offered by the group as to their goals or future plans, is limiting if approaching them through a purely functionalist lens. However, as performers and actors, I believe their intentions were much more grounded in meaning-making and a desire to break the status quo in regards to gender power relations in Mexico and in response to the growing consciousness about gender based violence globally. In both their topical and aesthetic grounding, they were not alone.

Drawing on Foucault's notion that "space itself has a history,"⁶² I position my discussion of Las Hijas first in an understanding of the ways in which their performances, as they occurred in the streets of Mexico City, carried with them inherent histories of power and oppression along gendered lines. These histories are thus worn on, and implicit to, the marginalized bodies of women in public spaces. The embodied rhetoric this creates is discussed in greater detail in a later section of this chapter, however, it should be mentioned early in discussion of the context of this performance.

The performances of Las Hijas rely on a collective memory of Mexican women, and women globally, of shared experiences of street harassment and gender based violence. These memories of street harassment, shared among women in public spaces widely "identif[y] a discursive terrain upon and through which antagonistic struggles occur in the present."⁶³ The attention Las Hijas has gathered in response to their efforts to fight street harassment is due in part to a public memory shared among women who have experienced some form of street harassment while moving through public space. This memory, presses upon their daily movements in the street. It enforces control over their behavior, through memories of seemingly minor transgressions (i.e. the women who walked alone at night, the woman who went out in a short skirt, the woman who dared contest a man's advances in public) who have been punished through systemic harassment, rape, and murder. This foundational memory is a lived one that each of the performers, as individuals, carry with them in each sojourn through public space. Las

⁶² Michel Foucault & Jay Miskowiec, "Of other spaces." *diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 22.

⁶³ Christina R. Foust & Jenni Simon, "Memories of Movement in a Postfeminist Context: Conservative Fusion in the Rhetoric of Tammy Bruce and "Dr. Laura" Schlessinger." *Western Journal of Communication* 79, no. 1 (2015): 4.

Hijas member, Ana Karen, stated in an interview with *City Lab* that they were drawn to the issue of street harassment “because it really mirrored our own situations and what we were each going through. We felt like street harassment was the legitimization of a larger societal violence, because we all live just accepting that it happens.”⁶⁴ A duality of memories is being played out in their performances, both that of their personal experience, as well as a collective memory rooted in a larger system of gender based violence.

Memory also works within Las Hijas as a collective as they draw upon the rhizomes of transgressive feminist resistance in Mexico and beyond. A rising call for response and change in respect to gender based violence has been met with distinct approaches in Mexico: state-sanctioned and transgressive performance.

As discussed earlier in this paper, the Mexican state has responded to the issue of harassment with a “boys will be boys” approach in which changing violently gendered spaces through change in male behavior is out of the question. In examining SlutWalks as a public negotiation, Kate Zittlow Rogness offers a conceptualization of choice and oppression that can be tactfully applied to the situation of street harassment in Mexico City:

Choice does not indicate the absence of oppression. By centering choice, victims are held responsible for any negative consequences while systems of oppression remain overlooked. Thus, the rhetoric of choice invokes victim blaming; individuals are responsible for the consequences of their choices.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Delgadillo, “Fighting Street Harassment,” *City Lab*

⁶⁵ Kate Zittlow Rogness, “(Re)turning to the Private Sphere: SlutWalks’ Public Negotiation of Privacy,” in *What Democracy Looks Like*, ed. Christina Foust, Amy Pason & Kate Zittlow Rogness (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2017), 165.

Reading Rogness in the context of Pink Transportation, instead of fighting oppression which makes gender based violence in public space endemic, further control of female bodies is privileged. Further limiting the movement of women to “safe spaces” is not an opening of public space, but, rather, an amplification of the masculine hegemonic order through state sanctioned corralling of women’s bodies.

As Foust and Simon assert, “memory also permits social movement members or vernacular communities to write their own history, often against institutionalized histories that may reinforce oppression.”⁶⁶ This history is contextualized in the context of Las Hijas through the legacy of Mexican machismo and the variety of local and global resistances that have confronted misogyny and violence against women. Thus, out of this hypocritical and constricting approach, more radical responses have emerged. Histories of transgressive modes of resistance, especially those implementing an anarcho-punk aesthetic can be seen as more influential to Las Hijas. Regionally, such hashtag movements as #NiUnaMas and #NiUnaMenos have employed multi-tactical approaches calling for an end to femicide. These range from thematically similar efforts from traditional marches⁶⁷ to music videos⁶⁸. On the other hand, Las Hijas is aesthetically inspired by various anarcho-punk initiatives. The group directly cites Pussy Riot as an inspiration. In the *City Lab* interview, group member, Ana Beatriz said:

⁶⁶ Zittlow Rogness, “(Re)turning to the Private Sphere,” 165.

⁶⁷ #NiUnaMenos, accessed: February 19, 2018, <http://niunamenos.com.ar/?p=1>

⁶⁸ Barbara Sosaita, “VIDEO OF THE DAY: NEW VIDEO CALLS FOR ¡NI UNA MAS! (NOT ONE MORE) FEMICIDE IN MEXICO,” *Feministing*, accessed: February 19, 2018, <http://feministing.com/2017/12/21/video-of-the-day-new-video-calls-for-ni-una-mas-not-one-more-femicide-in-mexico/>

When we started our project, Pussy Riot was in the news a lot. They were still in jail at that time. And we were really inspired by something they said while they were in jail, which was something like, “The only thing you need to be punk is to have something to say.” We’re actresses—we’ve never done music or punk in our lives. But that gave us a lot of inspiration, because we do have something to say.⁶⁹

In her analysis of the iconography of Pussy Riot’s affect generation in their transnational dissemination Caitlin Bruce reiterated Ana Beatriz’s point. Bruce posits, “one does Pussy Riot actions to be a Pussy Riot member, and one feels in solidarity with them.”⁷⁰ Thus, Las Hijas has placed their performance in the anarcho-punk realm alongside groups like Pussy Riot as well as more regionally specific counterparts. However, unlike #NiUnoMas or #NiUnoMenos, such radical performances of resistance are decidedly committed to anarchist direct action. In her investigation of radical cheerleading, Christina Foust, finds that this type of resistive performance “does not rely on representational politics, for instance, by encouraging women to lobby politicians or join local advocacy groups.”⁷¹ This can be read in the context of Las Hijas in their resistance to street harassment. In contrast to state-sanctioned approaches which effectively enforce greater control over women’s bodies, and more traditional “movement” tactics which work within the hegemonic order to create change, Las Hijas can be seen as a riff off anarcho-punk direct action to change their immediate reality. This transgressive approach can be understood as both radical and embodied.

⁶⁹ Delgadillo, “Fighting Street Harassment,” *City Lab*; this interview was originally done in Spanish, but was translated by the author and published in English.

⁷⁰ Caitlin Bruce, “The Balaclava as Affect Generator: Free Pussy Riot Protests and Transnational Iconicity.” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1, (2014): 46.

⁷¹ Christina Foust, *Transgression as a Mode of Resistance* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010), 193.

Drawing on the work of Calafell, McIntosh, and Foust, I set out to critically discuss the performance of Las Hijas as a transgressive mode of resistance. First, I ground this critique in a reading of Calafell and McIntosh's work on vernacular discourse.⁷² While the subjects of this research are not Latina, in that they are not part of a racialized identity group in America, they are marginalized on account of their gender in Mexico City. This critique then must begin with a recognition that Las Hijas comes out of the reality of a lived, and living, performance that the members, as women, along with all women and other non-normative bodies, are constantly involved. This quotidian embodiment is contextualized through the rhetorical space of resistive acts. As theorized by Roxanne Mountford, "rhetorical space is the geography of a communicative event, and, like all landscapes, may include both the cultural and material arrangement, whether intended or fortuitous, of space."⁷³ This "cultural and material arrangement" is critical to an understanding of the ways in which Las Hijas' performance is a continuation of performances that women enact in the street as a rhetorical space laden with violence (and threat thereof) emanating from hegemonic masculinity (or machismo).

Before ever conceiving of their performance art or coming together as a group, Las Hijas members were engaged, knowingly or unknowingly, in public performance in their daily movements through public space. As asserted by Squires, "even if access to public arenas is theoretically guaranteed to all, all will not necessarily be equal within

⁷² Calafell and McIntosh, *What Democracy Looks Like*, 202.

⁷³ Roxanne Mountford. "On Gender and Rhetorical Space." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2001): 42.

those spaces”⁷⁴ as evidenced by aforementioned state-sanctioned movement efforts. In the context of the street in Mexico City, while neoliberalism “signifies a cartography of power that breaks down the imagined modernist boundaries between the private and the public”⁷⁵ this idealistic freedom from gendered space has not been realized. Recent research has linked neoliberal developments, especially in the northern states of Mexico, with rising rates of femicide, especially among women working in the *maquiladoras* (factories in the borderlands).⁷⁶ The increasing levels of violence against women are not isolated to the borderlands, as they are endemic to the entire country. This is evidence that, despite the promises of neoliberalism, public space is largely still under the surveillance and control of hegemonic masculinity which acts on women’s bodies through the male gaze, violence, and femicide (or threat thereof). Thus, as discussed by Calafell and McIntosh, the “mundane” daily actions for the marginalized body is in effect an act of performance.⁷⁷ The mere act of walking in public as a woman, doubled and tripled down upon by the choice to wear ‘inappropriate’ attire and not be accompanied by a man, is an act of transgression which threatens the masculine hegemony and its logics - and as such is punishable.⁷⁸ Hence, the performance of the women of Las Hijas does not

⁷⁴ Catherine R. Squires, “Rethinking the Black Public Sphere: An Alternative Vocabulary for Multiple Public Spheres,” *Communication Theory* 12, no. 4 (2002): 450.

⁷⁵ Catherine Chaput & Joshua S. Hanan, “WikiLeaks and Its Production of the Common: An Exploration of Rhetorical Agency in the Neoliberal Era,” in *What Democracy Looks Like*, ed. Christina Foust, Amy Pason & Kate Zittlow Rogness (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press), 2017, 248.

⁷⁶ Kathleen A. Staudt. *Violence and Activism at the Border Gender, Fear, and Everyday Life in Ciudad Juárez*. 1st ed. Inter-America Series. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 4.

⁷⁷ Calafell & McIntosh, *What Democracy Looks Like*, 202.

⁷⁸ Calafell & McIntosh, 202.

begin with their planned and recorded actions in the street, but began, and continues, upon their entering the public street. This conceptualization of performance as it regards historically marginalized bodies that do not have the “privilege of invisibility”⁷⁹ is a key foundation upon which this analysis rests.

Play and Transgression

In an effort to regain control of their lived experience of public space, Las Hijas members found agency in anarchistic direct action. Reading Foust through the lens of Las Hijas, their “rhetoric foregrounds the human body as a charged site, historically vulnerable to gendered violence and patriarchal disciplining, yet rich with inventional possibilities for resistance.”⁸⁰ Such possibilities for invention can be seen in Las Hijas mixing of play and confrontation, which might be seen as rooted (though notably expanding out from) in the carnivalesque. Their performance under the name of Las Hijas de Violencia, can be understood as the premeditated, theatrically planned, performance. The performers have no need to “set-up” a space for resistance, the conflict zone of street harassment is habitual, predictable, and ever-present in their movements through public space as marginalized bodies. Thus they create a space for confrontation with machismo through direct action.

The performers, in recognition of the absurdity of street harassment as a practice of hegemonic masculinity, mirror this absurdity, extending their daily performance beyond the regulated behavior of women occupying public space. They transform the

⁷⁹ Calafell & McIntosh, 204.

⁸⁰ Foust, *Transgression as a Mode of Resistance*, 192.

mere occupation of this space to an active interruption of it, and in so doing, violate the natural order that machismo institutes upon it. This transgression involves, as put forth by Foust, “true risk” through “violations of propriety.”⁸¹ As noted above in discussion with vernacular discourse, this true risk does not begin with the named performance, but the antagonistic approach that the performance employs inherently crosses this line of propriety and thus opens the performers to more risk and retaliation. This risk then intersects with the existing risk of their bodies as woman-identified and daring to occupy public space. Through play, excess, and violence, Las Hijas violate “official culture” which “separates and ranks ideas and the individual and collective identities they form.”⁸² The performances of Las Hijas take on punk aesthetics and anarchistic tactics through their play with the line of illegality. By shooting harassers with a toy gun, their performance can be claimed as playful and even humorous, but simultaneously the pulling out of a gun-like object and pointing it in the face of a man can be alarming and induce fear. As Ana Beatriz recalled to City Lab in answering what kinds of reactions their performance has garnered,

In general, they jump a little and look really surprised. Just the fact that we look them straight in the eyes before we even do anything scares them a little. And then while we’re looking straight at them, we reach for the confetti gun in our waistband, and you can tell they’re starting to get really scared. And then when the gun goes off and makes that loud pop, some men jump, some men yell. We had one fall down once.⁸³

This transgression can be understood in terms of Bakhtin’s carnivalesque in the flaunting of the body and excess. The body is inherently flaunted in its audacious occupation of

⁸¹ Foust, *Transgression as a Mode of Resistance*, 5.

⁸² Foust, *Transgression as a Mode of Resistance*, 10.

⁸³ Delgadillo, “Fighting Street Harassment in Mexico City,” *City Lab*.

public space and such excess is furthered by choices of dress (floral sundresses), being unaccompanied by a male or older family member, and the seemingly playful attitude the women maintain. The excess of such performances doesn't stop there as the women bring with them recording devices, amps, microphones, animal masks, and most importantly, toy guns. The performance of Las Hijas is visceral, humorous, and frightening. It can be understood thus as a carnival ritual and a rupture from the vernacular discourse performance of the members' daily movements. As put forth by Foust, "in the temporary and clearly demarcated bounds of the carnival ritual, mind and body may be reunited to varying degrees, as a literal, revolutionary return to what has been separated in order for a regime to have power."⁸⁴ We can see this reunification of mind and body in the performances of Las Hijas as they break the mandated silence of women who are harassed. Hegemonic machismo normally forces women to remain stoic and nonreactive in the face of violence and imminent threat to their body. This signals the "suppressed terms of nature"⁸⁵ inherent to street harassment scenarios in their daily occurrence, in which fight or flight are the more natural human response to a physical threat, be it speech or action. However, in the separation of the mind and body in the service of the maintenance of the hegemonic masculinity regime, these are deemed inappropriate. Thus through breaking the separated order, by taking action that is playfully violent, Las Hijas was able to create space for a new sensibility of public space and what it means to occupy that space as both a woman being harassed and a man who harasses.

⁸⁴ Foust, *Transgression as a Mode of Resistance*, 10.

⁸⁵ Foust, *Transgression as a Mode of Resistance*, 10.

The creation of this new order of public space draws upon the carnivalesque and expands, tactfully, into transgressive modes of resistance. It serves a dual purpose of creating a new world of possibilities for both those involved in the performance, and those that witness it. Caitlin Bruce introduces this idea in her analysis of Pussy Riot's "Punk Prayer": "It revealed an alternative world of possibility, and in so doing, called on spectators to become spect-actors, to contribute to the ongoing transformation and circulation of the performance."⁸⁶ The public exposure of the performance and the risk intrinsic to it, in that women were acting on the bodies of men, a clear rupture from the norms of hegemonic masculinity, evidences the "alternative world of possibility" being created. This rupture signals a break from Bakhtin's carnivalesque into a transgression of hegemonic masculinity. This recalls Watts' conception of the "break" as a staple of post-modernity in an understanding of the interruption of gendered public space reread in the case of Las Hijas. This can be conceptualized at the moment in which the performance "resonates with ideations of freedom, disorder, and closure— something 'ends' and something else 'breaks' out. This "break" is intensely experienced as 'affect' and gets represented as emotion."⁸⁷ What ends in this moment of the "break" is the momentary loss of control by hegemonic masculinity of the street and what comes out of it is a new conception of public space in which women's voices are amplified and their bodies are privileged, however temporarily. The resulting affective emotion ranges from amusement to fear. Watts' conception of noise as integral to the "break" is also constructive for

⁸⁶ Bruce, "The Balaclava as Affect Generator," 52.

⁸⁷ Catherine Squires, Eric Watts, Mary Vavrus, Kent Ono, Kathleen Feyh, Bernadette Calafell, and Daniel Brouwer. "What Is This "Post-" in Postracial, Postfeminist... (Fill in the Blank)?" *The Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34, no. 3 (2010): 216.

considering Las Hijas, as the very moment of this change can be narrowed down to the pop of the confetti gun. He posits, “this ‘break’ also makes a noise; in terms of human communicative action, voice [or ‘pop’] is the sound of affect.”⁸⁸

Carnival ritual constructs a space within public rhetoric for play and subversion of the hegemonic regime that is understood as limited to an inherently contingent time and place permitted by the regime in order to attend to the oppressed without a substantial power shift. In the case of Las Hijas, this aspect of the carnivalesque is abandoned, in line with anarchist direct action tactics, in order to break with this hegemonic regime. This inherently subverts the control of the hegemonic masculine order of the street and creates risk on the part of both the performers who are agents of the transgression and their targets. There was very little control on the part of the performers as to the reactions that they would receive which is an inherent cost of such a break out of a regime. I believe that the shock value of the performances’ transgressive nature served as a means for protecting the women. The confusion, stylistically reminiscent of carnival ritual, introduced play between men and women and unveiled harassment in all its absurdity. This interruption of the violence of public space called for a novel response, one the harassers were not prepared for, thus serving to protect the women.

Foust, in exploring the implications of radical cheerleaders in anti-globalization protests, explicates the means by which transgressive anarchist direct actions are a “ratcheting” up of the state in order to create confrontations which expose the state in its

⁸⁸ Squires, Watts, Vavrus, Ono, Feyh, Calafell, and Brouwer. "What Is This "Post-" in Postracial, Postfeminist... (Fill in the Blank)?", 216.

injustice and absurdity.⁸⁹ This can be reworked into the context of Las Hijas in that their wearing of hyper-feminine floral sundresses (see Figure 3) and walking unaccompanied through public space seen as “asking for it,” and in so doing they reveal the absurdity of both street harassment as a practice *and* this argument as a justification for victim-blaming. Thus, the group is able to use the very structures of hegemonic masculinity (machismo) to bring about the behaviors that they seek to unveil and confront.



Figure 3. Still from Las Hijas de Violencia, “Proyecto Las hijas de Violencia,” YouTube, March 31, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bp4k3MGGA5E>

From a hegemonic perspective, transgression as a mode of resistance has been critiqued as “immature” or “ineffective” and is seen as unable to combat the oppression the performance is creating visibility for. As articulated by Foust: “Simply because a performance excessively marks the body does not render it immune to economies of

⁸⁹ Foust, *Transgression as a Mode of Resistance*, 193.

representation, let alone historical relations of oppression.”⁹⁰ In the case study of Las Hijas this can be seen in dissenting discourse created in response to the sharing of their performances online (which will be further discussed in Chapter 4). In relation to the performance as it was in the street, however, it is crucial to understand that while this performance, as previously claimed, crosses the line of propriety, it does not cross the line of legality (at least explicitly). This is in contrast with another performance of resistances to gender based violence, that exceeded even the carnivalesque, in terms of stepping outside of playful violence and into real violence. In 2013, police in Ciudad Juárez, a hotbed for femicide beginning in the 1990s, began searching for a “female vigilante killer.”⁹¹ In response to reports of women being disappeared, killed, and sexually assaulted by bus drivers on their way to work at the *maquiladoras*. Feminists and anti-femicide activists began demanding justice through petitions to the police and local governing bodies (all within the state sanctioned modes of resistance), however, another response started making headlines: after two bus drivers were killed, media outlets started receiving emails owning up to the crime from ‘Diana: the hunter of bus drivers’ who allegedly wore a blond wig, boarded buses, and shot two drivers in the head as vengeance for women who faced violence and death on the public transportation system in the city. This extreme performance of resistance, while explicating the body and violence, steps outside our understandings of the carnivalesque and transgressive modes of resistance. I note it here in order to understand where the lines of propriety can

⁹⁰ Foust, *Transgression as a Mode of Resistance*, 156.

⁹¹ “Mexico police seek killer vigilante 'Diana: the hunter of bus drivers',” Associated Press in Ciudad Juárez and *The Guardian*, September 3, 2013.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/03/mexico-killer-vigilante-diana-bus-drivers>

be crossed by transgressive modes of resistance, but lines of legality are much more tenuous. Shooting men with a real gun is different from shooting men with a toy confetti gun. Though both comment on the violence that has been systemically and socially permitted against women, one crosses into violent crime.

This dramatizes a continuing debate within social movement scholarship, which I believe is extraneous, and misleading, when looking at Las Hijas. Marcyrose Chvasta synthesizes two contradicting perspectives on transgressive modes of resistance and their ‘efficacy.’ She argues that while carnivalesque protest serves a purpose in an emotional capacity both with participants and the media, it is unable to change policy. Further, she posits that humor is to the detriment of this policy efficacy on the part of carnivalesque protest which requires anger on the part of the protesters. This dichotomy is firstly flawed in that it is built on the assumption that there must be a choice between anger and humor in the mode of resistance chosen by a group. Las Hijas is indicative of this flaw in that they simultaneously invoke anger and joy, play and seriousness, throughout their performance, much like Radical Cheerleaders and Pussy Riot. Further in the essay, Chvasta recognizes another dichotomy in modes of resistance in that they must be ‘celebratory performative’ or ‘interventionist’. She defines the ‘celebratory performative’ protest as having “an internal focus that works as self-legitimation for the activists themselves. Gathering publicly in carnivalesque fashion energizes the activists while increasing public awareness of their existence and purpose.”⁹² The ‘interventionist’ protest is conceptualized as one which “is designed to target and persuade the

⁹² Marcyrose Chvasta. "Anger, Irony, and Protest: Confronting the Issue of Efficacy, Again." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2006): 11.

institutional powers to make changes.”⁹³ Within the case study of Las Hijas, in making this distinction I argue that the ‘efficacy’ of Las Hijas’ performance of resistance is oversimplified. This, in effect, created a rupture from the aforementioned histories and rhizomes of struggle that have come before it and continue after it.

While transgressive modes of resistance have been, and continue to be critiqued as ineffective, these arguments are often centered within the hegemonic order and rely on indicators that are institutionalized. Las Hijas, in naming and conceptualizing of themselves and their goals, never desired to function within the state or non-profit industrial complex as other street harassment and gender-based violence movements have. In interviews, performers continuously come back to the idea of personal empowerment through catharsis as a main driver of their performance. This can be understood, then, as their primary goal. The secondary goal being influence and inspiration for other women in the face of similar violence. Group member, Ana Beatriz, shares with City Lab:

When we started this project—and I think it will be this way in the future, too—it fundamentally had to do with us as individuals. We felt the need to do something about this, to reach a sort of emotional catharsis regarding the violence that we live with every day. So that’s a huge part of it. But after that, we also have an aspiration that other women, young women and old women, will see what we’re doing and be inspired to do something similar, to stop staying quiet when they’re subjected to violence.⁹⁴

Catharsis is important to an understanding of the position from which Las Hijas members see themselves in their performance. Merriam-Webster offers a secondary definition of ‘Catharsis’ that is especially critical to conceptualizing of their performance: the

⁹³ Chvasta. "Anger, Irony, and Protest," 11.

⁹⁴ Delgadillo, "Fighting Street Harassment in Mexico City," *City Lab*.

“elimination of a complex by bringing it to consciousness and affording it expression.”⁹⁵

This specific definition points to the anarchistic method by which Las Hijas seeks to confront harassment on a personal level. This is accomplished by refusing to conform to societal norms of behavior for women in these interactions and takes it a step further by “bringing consciousness” to an alternative reality, one in which women are not made silent and passive in public space. This is made possible by “affording it expression” through the interruption of the hegemonic order of the street. While critics can approach this one-off style performance as ineffective, in reality it is aligned with a tradition of anarchist direct action, an unwillingness to behave within neoliberal state sensibilities. As such, its ‘efficacy’ cannot be analyzed through instrumentalist or resource mobilization frameworks.

Conclusion

Grounding this critical approach to Las Hijas is an understanding of vernacular discourse as a quotidian performance of marginalized bodies in their daily movements in public space, and a greater understanding of the ways in which this performance crosses lines of propriety and thus contests the hegemonic order. Las Hijas thus positions themselves as both within this daily performance, and in excess of it. In so doing, Las Hijas is able to interrupt public space and hegemonic masculinity through anarchistic direct action. Through assertion of the body and excess they are able to create new possibilities for not only what it means to be a women occupying public space, but additionally, in taking away the “privilege of invisibility” that heteronormative male

⁹⁵ Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. Accessed: February 19, 2018. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/catharsis>

bodies have in public space, they are able to create new possibilities for what it means to be a traditionally privileged body in the rhetorical space of the street. This is accomplished through the ‘break’ out of the control of public space and women’s movements therein dictated by enduring machista hegemony, which is also a ‘break’ into a new street order in which the possibility of retort and retaliation from women onto men is possible and can be added to the previously limited repertoire of this contentious space.

The performance of Las Hijas follows in the tradition of feminist anarchist direct action groups that have come before in response to various issues. Similar to these groups, Las Hijas draws on the carnivalesque in the use of theatricality, excess, and the body to open new possibilities for inventional ways of ‘being’ in the street as a gendered body. Through play and laughter, which is simultaneously playful and frightening, Las Hijas is able to bring into question what the limits of acceptable behavior are in the street. Their actions are not explicitly illegal or dangerous, but they make both witnesses and their targets think about what could be possible in response to harassment. Women’s bodies, only moments before thought of as objects of the male gaze upon which men were free to comment, objectify, touch, and violate, become transformed into active agents of fear and laughter. This is disarming and alarming, thus breaking out of the sanctioned control of carnival ritual and into a transgressive mode of resistance that violates these norms of behavior and is outside the control of hegemonic masculinity.

The performances of Las Hijas in the street, as they were, provide a rich rhetorical space to which this analysis attends. However, this is far from the only rhetorical space in which this performance can and should be studied. The next chapter approaches the mediation of their performance, which is intrinsic to their conceptualization in that they

were picked up by *AJ+*. The global news media outlet produced a video featuring Las Hijas that quickly went viral. This marked the pivotal moment in which their street performance transitioned to a global media event. This transition has many implications, some of which are explored in the following critical discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR: LAS HIJAS DE VIOLENCIA ONLINE

In the following section I explore the ways in which the performance of Las Hijas involved, from its inception, different levels of mediation. The tactics which the performance group employed to mediate their work build on the meaning-making they were able to accomplish through their public street performances as examined in the previous section

In an effort to remain faithful to the aims of a media ecology approach, and not to essentialize one medium or fragment thereof, I preface my argument by defining its limitations. I do not offer a holistic or complete analysis of the mediation of Las Hijas in this chapter. I instead approach the most popular (highest view count) video that has been circulated of the performances of Las Hijas. The video, produced by *AJ+*, the online and U.S. based subsidiary of *Al Jazeera*, was published across their web and social platforms (thus necessitating a media ecology framework). It has been featured in other news outlets (including *City Lab* and *Slate*). In the next chapter, I utilize this video particularly in order to critically analyze the discourse therein created. However, in order to establish the theoretical framework for the implications of the performance of Las Hijas as they

were mediated, I turn to McGee, DeLuca, and Delicath in attending to this argumentative fragment as an “image event.”

The *AJ+* video is distinct from the video used to analyze the performance of Las Hijas in the street in the previous chapter. The first notable distinction is the production quality and overall aesthetic. The self-published YouTube video that Las Hijas submitted to *el Festival Internacional de Artes Feministas de la Ciudad de México* (The International Festival of Feminist Arts in Mexico City), has a D.I.Y. (do it yourself) aesthetic that is critical to the group’s claim to punk. This stylistic choice is a symbol of independence or the ability “produce and distribute ideas and art without the interference of major corporations”⁹⁶ which is integral to the subculture’s identity. In contrast, the *AJ+* video is highly produced, involves translation of the original language (Spanish to English), and flashy graphics and visual effects. The content is also distinct in that it features more stylized shots of Las Hijas members while the original video was more straightforward in its attempts to capture the action as it was in the moment of interaction between Las Hijas and harassers. Figure 4 is a good example of both the text overlay graphics, language translation, and the stylized shots of the members.

⁹⁶ Ian P. Moran, "Punk: The Do-It-Yourself Subculture," *Social Sciences Journal* 10, no. 1, (2010): 13.



Figure 4: Still from *AJ+* video, “Mexico’s Harassment Issue,” Facebook, January 27, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/ajplusenglish/videos/676054245869419/>.

While this chapter does not focus on a critique of the form or style of the video as produced by *AJ+*, I believe it is important to note the distinctions between the two videos analyzed in this project as the ability for this particular Facebook video to go viral is inherently tied to the visual and linguistic choices made by its producers.

This video thus provides a rhetorical space for critical discussion. McGee, in approaching rhetorical criticism, brings forth a new conceptualization which has proved valuable for the study of the mediation of social movement and resistance efforts, that is, the fragment. Arguing that we not approach a “text”, in the case of *Las Hijas*, the *AJ+* video, as a singular entity which can be removed from context in order to be studied, as if on a Petri dish, McGee puts forth the notion that such rhetorical (or argumentative) fragments be considered “part of an arrangement that includes all facts, events, texts, and stylized expressions deemed useful in explaining its influence and exposing its

meaning.”⁹⁷ This is particularly important in understanding the mediation of performances of resistance as a mere fragment of the performance, but also the public communication situation of which it is part. It is from this conceptualization of the *AJ+* video as a fragment that I determine the impacts of such performances, and the discourses therein, which is “produced in consequence of the fragmentation of culture.”⁹⁸

“Image event” thus becomes a particularly helpful term in approaching the performances of Las Hijas as a mediated fragment. As defined by Kevin Michael DeLuca, image events are “staged protests designed for media dissemination.”⁹⁹ These moments, or visual rhetorical fragments, provide incomplete claims and in their openness to interpretation and reaction, create new possibilities for argument and inventiveness.¹⁰⁰ This is certainly true in the context of Las Hijas, who from their inception made use of recording technologies and access to platforms such as Facebook and YouTube to share their performance with an audience beyond those in the street. Using and complicating the three argumentative functions of image events as put forth by Delicath and DeLuca, I will approach the ways in which (1) “Image events broaden the scope of participation in the public sphere to include subaltern counterpublics,”¹⁰¹ (2) “Image events deliver argument in powerful ways capable of creating opportunities for debate and producing

⁹⁷ Michael Calvin McGee, “Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture,” *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 54, no. 3, (1991): 279.

⁹⁸ McGee, “Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture,” 288.

⁹⁹ DeLuca, *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism*.

¹⁰⁰ DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 318.

¹⁰¹ DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 324.

moments of generative argument,”¹⁰² and (3) “Image events and other critiques performed through spectacle animate the possibility for public discourse and expand the range of relevant rhetorics in social controversies by generating new lines of argument”¹⁰³ in looking at the viral Facebook video of Las Hijas and produced by *AJ+*.

The Spectacle of the Confetti Gun

Considering the fragment of Las Hijas’ performance that can be considered an image event, the shooting of a confetti gun in the face of street harassers, an understanding of spectacle is crucial. The group actually employed a multitude of approaches, many of which did not merit the making of an image event. As group member Ana Beatriz explained in an interview with *City Lab*:

Really, we do two things: the first is we take direct action against street harassers. They harass us, and we shoot them with our confetti guns and sing our song and chase them. And we also do public performances, which are a little more theatrical—we have a little bit of dance, some sculpture and drawing, some acting.¹⁰⁴

Unlike the secondary performative tactics (dance, sculpture, drawing, and acting), it is the first direct action tactic that merits media dissemination and was picked up by large media outlets. This tactic is noteworthy in its making of a spectacle, in a carnivalesque tradition, that brings in a sense of spontaneity. As Delicath and DeLuca argue:

Dramatic acts of protest like image events challenge norms as to what constitute acceptable means of communication. As such, image events make the implicit

¹⁰² DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 325.

¹⁰³ DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 327.

¹⁰⁴ Delgadillo, “Fighting Street Harassment,” *City Lab*.

claim that direct action protest, non-violent civil disobedience, and critique performed through spectacle are acceptable forms of political participation.¹⁰⁵

In terms of this rhetorical fragment as an image event, the parsing out of the confetti gun shooting from the rest of the contextual information leading up to this point is interesting beyond its spectacle as an object of transgressive feminism. This conflict is discussed by Steinholt and Bruce in their independent analyses of Pussy Riot. The “carefully orchestrated illusion of spontaneity” that Steinholt deems as critical to an understanding of Pussy Riot’s “Punk Prayer,” is as Bruce argues, too judgmental and not curious enough of an approach. Bruce calls for a conceptualization of the performance (and the balaclava more specifically) as an “aesthetic and social *process* than as static product.” Though I do not intend to approach the confetti gun as the specific object of study, as Bruce does with the Pussy Riot balaclava, her argument for a conception of resistance as process over product I believe to be an important framing of our approach to performances of resistance more generally.

The image event making of the confetti gun shooting by Las Hijas through its dissemination by various media outlets is a process not a product. Therefore, being created for mediation does not limit its ability to provoke action in the street or after it has been initially shared online. This is possible through the duality of social media as a conveyor of the immediate and a vast archival reserve. The “discovery” of Hijas can happen again and again with each new viewer even after the group has stopped performing. Thus, the afterlife of the image event is continuously reborn and reimagined in light of changing historical and cultural contexts. In line with Bruce’s conception of

¹⁰⁵ Delicath and DeLuca, “Image Events,” 321.

the afterlife of the image, there is thus a possibility for a second moment of spontaneity that further complicates the narrower conception put forth by Steinholt, that of the rediscovery of the image event after it has not only passed on the street, but has also passed in its initial moment of sharing online.

The transgressive nature of the performances of Las Hijas sets them up for effective image event making in that the transgressive and theatrical style is able to “challenge taken-for-granted assumptions and disrupt the existing grid of intelligibility”¹⁰⁶ that act on the gendered street. However, in so undergoing the process of image event making, the modes of resistance and the contextual factors that have informed the performances of Las Hijas have been simplified into an easily sharable and digestible fragment for global media dissemination and in this process, the group loses control over the interpretation of their performance. Because subaltern publics, or counterpublics, face so many limitations in access to wide media dissemination, image events become a critical tactic.¹⁰⁷ This is evidenced by Hijas’ early video publications as compared to the *AJ+* feature that propelled them to “viral” status. Interestingly, the image event of their confetti gun use in the street becomes the icon of their efforts. In being taken up by a large media conglomerate, the complexity of Las Hijas, with its rich historical and cultural contexts and multimedia tactics, are simplified to “the girls with confetti guns.” In the *AJ+* video this is evidenced by the subtitle: “Fighting Street Harassers With Confetti Guns And Punk Rock.” Subsequent articles from *Splinter*¹⁰⁸ and

¹⁰⁶ Delicath and DeLuca, “Image Events,” 324.

¹⁰⁷ Delicath and DeLuca, 318.

¹⁰⁸ Resto-Montero, “Meet the female punk group fighting street harassment” *Splinter*.

*City Lab*¹⁰⁹ were titled, “Meet the female punk group fighting street harassment with songs and confetti” and “Fighting Street Harassment in Mexico City With Punk Rock, Performance Art, and Confetti,” respectively. This signals a dislocation of the image event from the group. Thus, the image event of the confetti gun being used to fight street harassment becomes the argument in and of itself. The image event need not be tethered to the group, or the movement at large, in order to make an argument. As Delicath and DeLuca argue, image events such as this “constitute the site and substance of the argument.”¹¹⁰

Breaking from the ‘Old Rhetoric’

So, then, what are these boundaries and how do the image event of Las Hijas merit a break from preexisting rhetoric? The performance of Las Hijas lives within a contextualization of space and place which has been previously defined—one in which women in public space are relegated to silence. Even those instances of resistance that are allowed are within the state-sanctioned controls of ‘correct protest’ must fall within the order of the street as dictated by hegemonic masculinity. Such allowed means and mediums include marches, picketing, sanctioned gatherings in public space, and hashtag accumulation online. Staged events, such as these, have a fourth wall in the same sense that a theatrical performance would. Breaking of the fourth wall exceeds our common understanding of that interaction as one group confronting another (i.e. protesters versus police) but in its personalization of the interaction (i.e. harassee versus harasser, woman

¹⁰⁹ Delgadillo, “Fighting Street Harassment,” *City Lab*.

¹¹⁰ Delicath and DeLuca, 325.

versus man) viewers are pushed to re-conceptualize what resistance can mean in terms of the friend-enemy dialectic. The more accepted relationship between protesters and their targets is effectively kept vague by the sheer number disparity. Envision a crowd of thousands of protesters who have gathered to call for an end to street harassment. They acquire the necessary permits, create the expected signs, and develop the compulsory chants. However, as they march through a thoroughfare of their city, they are passed by individuals on their way to work or school. Several of those individuals might be harassers themselves. The number of protesters, the riotous calamity of the scene, which may have been seen as a way to raise the voices of this cause, actually permits those in question to sneak by unnoticed. While this tactic can result in acknowledgement by state entities by forcing those in the halls of government buildings to address the crowds, it does very little to change the quotidian performances of masculinity and femininity that are in question.

In contrast, what Las Hijas are able to do by shooting the harasser in the face (albeit with a toy gun) at the very moment of harassment is reflect the fear that the harasser is accustomed to bringing to this encounter. They cannot hide in the same way a passerby might be able to at a protest against actions he has partaken in. This is due to the imbalance in the encounter (thousands of protesters versus one citizen) but also due to the direction of the claims being made (marchers are usually gazing ahead with the crowd or up into the halls of government or business – rarely are they focusing their gaze on the street or the individuals who occupy it).

Las Hijas, as a transgressive mode of resistance, are able to break out of preconceived boundaries of ‘correct protest’, although not without limitations. While the

fourth wall separating the women from men serves to protect the men from changing their behavior, it also can serve to protect the women from further violence (though this protection relies on women's compliance with "correct behavior"). Thus, Las Hijas played with a line that had not yet been crossed and repercussions that were yet to be defined. By placing their performance somewhere between a permitted protest and 'Diana: the hunter of bus drivers' (see previous chapter), Las Hijas were able to create an immediate reconceptualization of what is possible in the street without crossing the boundary into 'real' violence that has legal ramifications. The performances of Las Hijas were cleverly situated in a space that is just risky enough to entice viewership through an image event, but not so risky as to be effectively demonized by the masses.

This clever packaging is due in part to its inherent mediation. A mediated transgressive performance, when packaged in a shareable way (i.e. *AJ+*'s use of English language and flashy graphics) is able to be understood similarly as a visual object that through the spectacle and theatricality of the performance can mobilize public emotion. Transgression through the embodied carnivalesque informed their performance as a rhetorical, mediated, fragment being picked up by *AJ+* but this continues through a "mechanical feedback of investment, energy, and meaning making"¹¹¹ that spans the entire media ecology.

Incomplete Claims and New Discursive Spaces

Image events as conceptualized by DeLuca and Delicath fail to fully articulate the interconnectivity between an image event (in their conception) and the lived performance it advances (as argued in Chapter Three). Physical and mediated lives, especially in

¹¹¹ Bruce, "Pussy Riot", 48.

relation to activism and resistance efforts, are intimately intertwined. Both the performance in the street and the audience physically present and the online audience that witnesses the performance through the tactic of an image event are integral *and* integrated in/to the meaning-making of Las Hijas.

The interpretive space that the image event of shooting harassers with confetti guns was able to create is under ongoing negotiation, even after the immediate moment of discharge and subsequent moment of online sharing. The performance in the street and the mediation of that performance are argumentative fragments of “unstated propositions, indirect and incomplete claims, visual refutation, and implied alternatives.”¹¹² In the case of Las Hijas this uncertainty is created in the moment of the confetti ‘pop’. This is the genesis of the opening that began in the street, moved online, and is currently still under negotiation in the contentious discursive space of public comments sections. In the next chapter, I utilize an interpretive thematic analysis to explore the discursive space of the *AJ+* video

¹¹² Delicath & DeLuca, “Image Events,” 322.

CHAPTER FIVE: THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF REACTIONARY ONLINE DISCOURSE

Previous sections have created a foundation upon which the present chapter is built. Chapter Three offered a critique of the performance of Las Hijas in the street as captured by the group during the height of their activity in Mexico City. The transgressive, playful, and spontaneous nature of their performances effectively drew on and expanded from their quotidian performances of being a woman in public space. Meeting their oppressors in real time in the site of contention, Las Hijas is able to creatively assert the body and excess to contest the hegemonic masculine order of the street. In Chapter Four, the mediation of their creative and transgressive tactics via social media sharing lead to their adoption as an image event, per DeLuca's definition, within the movement against street harassment and gender based violence globally. Utilizing this framework an understanding of mediation as a supplementary, complementary, and as I argue, necessary, tactic is explored.

Founded in critical discussion of the performance in the street and the performance online, the present chapter offers an analysis of the reactionary discourse sparked by the viral sharing of the *AJ+* video featuring Las Hijas. In this chapter I bring

together an interpretive thematic analysis¹¹³ of the comments gathered in response to this video and identify the most salient themes among them. It is evident that the available data - the public comments section under the video - is inherently skewed which must preface any analysis thereof. The *AJ+* Facebook video featuring Las Hijas as of writing (April 12, 2018) has amassed over 10 million views, 97,000 shares, 78,000 reactions, and 6,700 comments. Curiously, the Facebook specific ‘reactions’¹¹⁴ are overwhelmingly positive with 77,000 “likes”, 410 “loves”, 166 “haha”, 24 “mad”, 16 “wow”, four “sad”, and one “flower.”¹¹⁵ In contrast, the sample of comments analyzed for this analysis were overwhelmingly negative. This trend is common in public forums beyond Facebook, including Yelp Reviews, YouTube videos, Twitter responses, etc. Generally, those who are disturbed by content, do not feel like they are represented by the content, or feel that someone in their identity group is being singled out by the content, take to the comments sections as a space for their voices to be heard.

This type of negative and provocative behavior falls under the umbrella of *trolling*. Exploring the role of *trolls* in Peruvian politics, Diego Cerna Aragón¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Baptiste, "Qualitative Data Analysis: Common Phases, Strategic Differences."

¹¹⁴ Facebook reactions are an affordance that previously was limited to the “like” button to show appreciation or approval of content on the platform. Currently there are six options, in the author’s version of Facebook, that are available to users.

¹¹⁵ The “flower” reaction was a limited time option offered to a limited audience in honor of Mother’s Day in the U.S.

¹¹⁶ Diego Cerna Aragón, "¿Quién es el troll?: La construcción de identidades políticas en social media en el contexto peruano" *Contratexto* 028 (2017): 77-78.

complicates the work of Bishop¹¹⁷ and Bergstrom¹¹⁸ to flesh out the role of *trolls* that he defines as users who, with very little indication to their level of seriousness, provoke, joke, and criticize others online activities and content. While this can be harmless play between users, some aspects of trolling are threatening and employ hate speech as a means for utilizing fear to control other users' experiences. Thus, content shared by feminist activists such as Las Hijas, which was presumably shared to foster attitudinal change in response to street harassment in Mexico City instead constitutes a new discursive space for men's rights activism, misogynistic rhetoric, and threats of violence to women. In exploring the use of Twitter hashtag campaigns to fight street harassment, Nina Marie Flores, more specifically defines the intent of *trolls* in a feminist movement:

Many trolls use the anonymity of on-line accounts to follow the activity around an issue or a specific user over time, leaving offensive comments on articles and social media postings. Being the recipient of on-line harassment, including threats of violence, rape, or death, is not uncommon among internet activists¹¹⁹

This calls into question the ways that, like the silencing of women in public space through harassment and violence; *trolling*, as a mechanism of hegemonic masculinity, silences women in online public spaces.

In order to frame my analysis of the reactions to popularized video footage of public feminist performance group, Las Hijas de Violencia, in their performance of

¹¹⁷ Jonathan Bishop. "The Effect of De-Individuation of the Internet Troller on Criminal Procedure Implementation: An Interview with a Hater." *International Journal of Cyber Criminology* 7, no. 1 (2013).

¹¹⁸ Kelly Bergstrom, "'Don't feed the troll': Shutting down debate about community expectations on Reddit. com." *First Monday* 16, no. 8 (2011).

¹¹⁹ Nina Marie Flores, Leobardo F. Estrada, Kathleen Komar, Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, and Paavo Monkkonen, *Taking Back the Streets: Resisting #StreetHarassment in a New Era of (Virtual) Public Space*, 2016, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 151.

resistance to street harassment, I bring together an interpretive thematic analysis with the framework of *framing by foil* put forth by Dana Cloud.¹²⁰ Through her autoethnography, rhetorical criticism, and social movement frame analysis, she tactfully unpacks the reactionary rhetoric in hateful conservative emails she received following her own politically charged public statements. By identifying key claims made about her through conservative hate mail, she is able to read beyond these claim's attempts to name her (as an elitist intellectual, national traitor, and gender/sex traitor), and rather approach them as claims to the writer's own identity. In utilizing Burke's theory of "the kill": the naming and defining of the self through the naming of the opposition and negation of that opposition,¹²¹ Cloud is able to use these emails as a text to analyze the foiling process that these correspondence serve for the sender, their collective identity, and the "movement" they see themselves as part of.

According to Cloud, "foiling one's adversary relies on the power of naming; applies tremendous pressure to the target through the identification and invocation of psychological, economic, and physical vulnerabilities; is amplified in its impact by an intimate mode of address."¹²² In naming her as elitist intellectual, national traitor, and gender/sex traitor, the sender is rather naming his/herself in opposition to those identities. Thus, foils such as these become the frame through which senders sharing these opinions

¹²⁰ Cloud "Foiling the Intellectuals," 458.

¹²¹ Kenneth Burke, *A rhetoric of motives*, (New York: Prentice-Hall), (1950): 265.

¹²² Cloud "Foiling the Intellectuals," 458.

can create a collective identity of their oppositional “movement.” As Cloud synthesizes, *framing by foil* is “the exclusive definition of self in terms of an adversary Other.”¹²³

The marrying of rhetorical criticism and social movement frame analysis set forth by Cloud is useful in approaching the reactionary discourse created in the comments section of the popularized *AJ+* video featuring Las Hijas.¹²⁴ This video constitutes the most saturated space for reactions to their performance and a locus for studying the ways in which the conflicting ideologies of commenters create their identities through framing mechanisms. The performance is transgressive, playfully violent, and confusing to those who witness it both as the targets of the performance as well as the audience (be they online or on the street).

Within the limitations of this project, a purposive sampling of 1,000 of the total 6,700 comments were chosen for analysis. Utilizing a tagging and grouping system,¹²⁵ three major, albeit complex, themes emerged: opposition to the “street harassment” definition, claim that men are the real victims, and threats of violence. Many comments occupied more than one, and sometimes all, of the tags. Many were confounding in their use of tone, sarcasm, form, and language. Because the most viewed video of Las Hijas was in English, English and some Spanish were the only languages present in the sample regardless of the country or language of the commenter. First, I approach the following negative comment theme groups as they are critical to identity framing and maintenance of hegemonic rule over public space. The following sections excavate the most common

¹²³ Cloud, “Foiling the Intellectuals,” 461.

¹²⁴ *AJ+ English*, “Mexico’s Harassment Issue” Facebook.

¹²⁵ Baptiste, “Qualitative Data Analysis.”

theme groups and approach an understanding of how these themes represent, and bolster, masculine hegemony in their responses to women's transgressive performance activism. By joining a thematic analysis with rhetorical criticism I go beyond a descriptive analysis of the discursive space of the comments section and critique the intentionality and effects that the discourse therein approach. The final section will discuss some of the sparse affirmative arguments made in reaction to the video. While these opinions represent a minority opposition, creating space for such opinions is philosophically in line with the goals of *Las Hijas* and the author and constitutes an interpretive choice.

“That’s harassment too now?”: Definitional Conflict and Misogyny

The majority of reactions are fundamentally opposed to the characterization of the men's behaviors in the videos as harassment. There are several cases in which the commenters name the behavior as a compliment and the performers (and ostensibly, their supporters) as ungrateful, overly-dramatic, or sensitive. This marks a naming on two levels. In the naming of these behaviors as compliments the commenter is thus placing the actions in opposition to harassment, which productively infuses the goal of fighting street harassment as futile and dissipative. Second, they are placing themselves in opposition to the performers as well as their supporters by aligning with the harassers. By asserting the innocence of street harassment, the commenters are defending the actions of the men in the video as well as their own behaviors.¹²⁶

Comment 1: The first person that they shot with the gun was only saying they were pretty. That's a compliment not harassment.

¹²⁶ While the comments are publically viewable to anyone with a Facebook account, I have chosen to omit the usernames for all examples.

Comment 2: Okay I get that street harassment is a big deal, but the guy who said he was just admiring the pretty girls??? What was wrong with that???

Comment 3: Maybe i missed it but which one of those men actually harassed them?All i saw was the one guy say he was admiring them,that means he was looking at them.That's harassment too now?

The above comments seem fairly benign, the last two even open a space for conversation on the definition of street harassment which constitutes, as defined by the UN, “any act or comment perpetrated in a public space that is unwanted and threatening, and motivated by gender; it may include sexually suggestive comments, unwanted touching, invasion of space, and rape.”¹²⁷ The man in the video, to whom each of the above commenters referred, was stopped by Las Hijas after making an initial, unwanted and possibly threatening, comment, that was not captured. The first thing the viewers see is Las Hijas turning back around to him and saying ¿*Que dijiste?* (What did you say?). Thus, while “admiring the pretty girls” still falls within the definition of street harassment in that it is unwanted and can be threatening in public spaces in which women’s safety is far less protected, it is evident that this is a secondary milder statement than that which was originally uttered.

Within this theme group, many oppositional commenters, by rejecting the idea that this could be harassment and marrying this with misogynistic rhetoric both name themselves and the masculine hegemony that they want to preserve as valid and the women opposing it as invalid. This occurs by naming the women as one or a combination

¹²⁷ Campos, et al., “Experiences of Street Harassment”, 103.

of the following: ugly, crazy/stupid, deserving of harassment (even when that claim contradicts their claim that no harassment took place), and bad women/bad feminists. In line with Cloud's framework for *framing by foil*, these commenters are able to name Las Hijas, and sometimes women and/or feminists more generally, as unable to make a valid argument on the topic of harassment because of the aforementioned shortcomings. For example, one user shared the following:

Comment 4: They were just calling you pretty psychos lol, I'd understand if he touched you or something but dam, some crazy bitches, that aren't even that pretty to begin with lol

This commenter chose to go beyond the more straightforward questioning claims of the first three comments in an effort to delegitimize Las Hijas on the grounds that they were 'psycho', 'crazy', 'bitches', and finally ugly. Utilizing a *framing by foil* approach provides a deeper understanding of the function of what could be considered name calling. By questioning the intellectual and emotional capacity of the woman, a tactic that has historically been used to delegitimize and silence women, the commenters furthermore seek to define and name themselves as intellectually and emotionally capable and superior. In naming the performers as 'bitches,' the commenters name them as 'bad women' and thus themselves as 'good people'. This is much like the hate mail senders of Cloud, who in characterizing her as a 'bad citizen' effectively foiling her against their 'good citizenship'; those commenting on the Hijas de Violencia video are able to do effectively the same type of foiling.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Cloud "Foiling the Intellectuals," 458.

Other commenters brought into their comments claims that Las Hijas, and again women more generally, are deserving of harassment they receive.

Comment 5: Some women wanna be left alone, but act & dress like whores. You wanna look & act the part, prepare w what comes w it

This type of victim blaming was common among the comments. It serves to both negate the reality of harassment as it claims that this behavior must be wanted by the women, and then when this belief is challenged, paints the women as ‘asking for it’ by naming them as ‘whores’ and ‘sluts’. Following Cloud’s framework, comments such as these can be read in the context of the *AJ+* video comments: “The letter-writer’s [commenter’s] masculinity is defined in extreme opposition to the transgressive feminine, again demonstrating the workings of the foil. He is the icon of agentive personhood and arbiter of gender norms and relations.”¹²⁹ The use of misogynist rhetoric within arguments that reject the realities of harassment serve as mechanisms of maintenance to the system of gender norms and relations which are responsible for the proliferation of street harassment in the first place. In her work on SlutWalks, Kate Zittlow Rogness posits that slut shaming, “encourages women to become hypervigilant about their bodies— who they associate with, how they use space, and how they appear outside the confines of their private spaces”¹³⁰ and that this shaming leads to victim blaming:

As a form of cultural policing, slut shaming perpetuates the idea that a woman can protect herself against sexual assault if she dresses, acts, and speaks in a certain way. As a result, when a woman is assaulted, she is perceived as somehow complicit, or in some cases completely responsible, for the assault or rape because

¹²⁹ Cloud "Foiling the Intellectuals," 468.

¹³⁰ Zittlow Rogness, "(Re)turning to the Private Sphere," 156-157.

she did not take appropriate precautions. Victim blaming captures the idea that victims should be held responsible for their oppression, rather than the perpetrator and/or the cultural and political institutions that facilitate that oppression.¹³¹

Thus, those who utilize these tactics are actively reinforcing, creating, and promoting hegemonic masculinity rule over public spaces, including those public spaces which are found online. The perpetuation and intensification of misogynistic rhetoric as a means for invalidating those who stand up to harassment is a constant theme in this set of comments.

“Fighting fire with fire”: Men as the Real Victims

The second major theme found within the comments was the combination of an opposition to the tactics of Las Hijas performance as futile and reprehensible. Comments in this group claimed that the performers were using equally or more severe harassment tactics against the men. Secondly, a large portion of the theme group rooted this opposition to Las Hijas’ tactics with a claim that the true victims were the men, both in this particular video and public space at large. Thus, oppositional commenters are able to deflect the issue of street harassment by both opposing the ‘fight fire with fire’ approach as not ‘righteous’ and naming men who partake in these behaviors as innocent. Notably, many of these claims are contradictory in that they claim harassment done onto women is secondary to that done onto men and hold women to a higher standard of behavior in public space.

Comment 6: What those girls are doing technically constitutes assault. Genius let's fight street harassment with street harassment. Two wrongs don't make a right. Stupid video.

¹³¹ Zittlow Rogness, “(Re)turning to the Private Sphere,” 157.

Comment 7: This is technically assault. I would think these men would sue these obnoxious women. "Hey-- let's fight street "harassment" with even MORE street harassment!" Yeah. Bullying tactics must really feel "empowering"

Comment 8: And them running up to people and shooting confetti at people blocking traffic from flowing isn't harassment?? Don't get me wrong, I don't support any type of harassment but this is a double standard which girls often do lol

In each of the above examples “harassment” done onto the men by Las Hijas is the main point of concern. To varying degrees the commenters, concede to harassment on both sides, especially in Comment 6: “two wrongs don’t make a right” and Comment 8: “this is a double standard which girls often do.” In both cases the commenter, albeit indirectly assesses the situation to which Las Hijas is responding as harassment, yet does not condone the creative approach to counteract this by the women performers. This resembles a ‘boys will be boys’ argument in which men are held to a very low standard of behavior in public space, and anything beyond a demure response, or silence, by women is deemed unacceptable and punishable. By framing the women as the harassers, the commenters defend the actions of the men - with a complete blindness to the endemic street harassment and gender-based violence situation globally - thus foiling the male harassers as the victims. One commenter even goes as far as to claim that Las Hijas are an example of what he perceives to be “female privilege”:

Comment 9: Congratulations. More examples of female privilege when they can physically assault men with guns, just for saying "hi" and not be charged. Won't be long before someone pulls their own gun and shoots first.

In addition to claiming the real victims are the men, with no recognition of the huge disparities in public safety between men and women, and thus foiling them against the 'privileged' females who are getting away with crimes in the face of 'harmless compliments,' this comment leads into the third theme: threats of violence.

“I just hope they don’t come across the wrong guy”: Threats of Violence

The third major theme group involves a series of overt and abstract threats of violence. These threats range from simple cautions to the women of Las Hijas to definite warnings that, if other women were take on these tactics, the commenters would respond violently. While this theme group is diverse and the tones varying, they mark a distinct shift from the *framing by foil* process employed by the first themes. The active threats they offer go beyond this naming construct and work to affect behavioral change in both the women of Las Hijas and women in public spaces more widely. Abstract and cautionary comments do so in a subtle tone.

Comment 10: Idk man I like the idea, specially the punk rock theme song, but it might be dangerous to pull any kind of gun to a person, they might pull a real one.

Comment 11: One of these women are going to get bashed right in the mouth or worse. Bet they won't shoot confetti at someone they don't know again.

Comment 12: No. A woman in Philly was murdered last weekend for turning down the advances of one man while trying to make it home to see her children. The last thing I want to do is die over some fucking confetti. I'm good.

While these commenters do not personally write of enacting violent acts on the performers or other women, their comments put forth violence as a legitimate response. Commenter 11 specifically cites a case in which behavior even milder than that of Las Hijas was punishable by death. Rather than condemn the murder of a woman in public space, the commenter seeks to advise caution to women, further entrenching the systemic control of women's movements through public space which are punctuated by acts of violence, rape, and murder.

Another subset of this theme group constitutes more overt and personal threats of violence:

Comment 13: What ? The guy just said he was admiring the pretty girls and they shoot him in the face with confetti ? I don't care if they are women, would slap those cunts.

Comment 14: That's a great way to get pepper sprayed. That's the problem with people now. They do what they think is best for them and they don't think about what would happen if they did it to the wrong person. Even if it's a confetti gun. I'll tell you if you held that up to my head you'd be on your ass no matter the sex of the person.

Comment 15: So someone glances at you while their driving and you automatically assume that person wants to rape you and you chase them?!?! If someone points a confetti gun in my face they'll have a Gun in their face to, but I fill mine with lead not confetti.

The third major theme group in the comments under the *AJ+* video contains mentions of violence, either as an abstract caution against possible danger in retaliation to the performance and, more notably, overt threats of violence from the commenters. Much like the hate messages received by Dana Cloud, these comments draw on hegemonic masculinity and violence to name the women they oppose as “bad women” who should be punished for stepping outside of the walls that patriarchy has created for “good womanhood.” As Cloud states, violence is fundamental to hegemonic masculinity:

The logical culmination of the adversarial framing strategies in these letters is to mark women like me as violations of the natural order, and such violations may be punished. If outspoken, critical women are the targets of this mail [comments], then its authors become its very masculine weapons, wielding sexual violation as the ultimate correction to female insurrection.¹³²

The media in use here is important to note. In Cloud’s work, her personal email is used by her opponents to deliver directly to her their assertions of who *she* is and to what “movement” she belongs, and thus, who *they* are and to which “movement” they belong. The medium of Facebook, specifically the comments section, is a much more public space. I argue that in making these assertions through this media format, the commenters do not seek to define themselves only in opposition to the performers, but to all of their supporters who have access to this public forum or may access it in the future. Whereas retaliation emails to Cloud were part of an effort to modify her behavior and speech on a personal level, the comments section of the *AJ+* Las Hijos video can be understood as a warning to supporters of this performance that even the possibility of this behavior and speech in the future will not be tolerated. This space, which presumably *AJ+* created to

¹³² Cloud "Foiling the Intellectuals," 470.

spur conversation about the performance, instead becomes a space for men's rights activists and misogynists to assert their identity as a foil to the performers, and simultaneously, to reinstate an allegiance to hegemonic masculinity as their collective identity through threat of violence.

“I remember when...”: Affirmative Space as a Minority Opinion

Finally, I mention the affirmative comments in response to *AJ+*, even though they represent a small subset of the sample, for two reasons. First, that there is such a disparity in affirmative and negative comments seems to indicate something important about online public space. Second, as the direct action performance protest of Las Hijos represented a minority opposition to machismo in the streets of Mexico City, affirmative commenters represent a minority opposition in terms of the online discourse in response to their mediated performance. The core goal of Las Hijos was to make their voices heard, and in that spirit, it is important to consider the voices of minority opposition in the context of the comments section.

Before jumping into the specific affirmative comments in question, it is important to note again that the comments section is inherently flawed in terms of whose voices are privileged in the space. While there are certainly material realities that privilege some voices on social media at large, in this context I speak of privileging in a more nuanced way. While every Facebook user is welcome to share a comment or reaction to this photo, to do so requires careful consideration of the repercussions of that choice. It is evident that many viewers who support the video in fact chose against commenting and opted to leave a reaction (as seen by the 77,000 “likes”). This Facebook affordance

requires less time, but more notably is semi-anonymous and does not demand additional feedback. Thus, I argue that the choice to react instead of comment is, for some viewers, a strategic one that serves to protect them from retaliation from a vocal majority who have commented negatively to the performance.

Of the sparse affirmative comments, many utilize narratives of personal experience to legitimize their claims:

Comment 16: I remember clearly as I was walking down the street at the tender age of thirteen and this middle aged man called me from his truck to come over and made obscene sexual gestures at me. It was only when I yelled back that I was only thirteen and that I could be his daughter that he realized what he was doing and I will always remember the look of shock in his face. We need to speak up. We need to stop tolerating this type of harassment.

Comment 17: Being a young pretty Latina girl often comes with harassment, and cat calling. I've even had guys try to grab me as I would walk through a public place like school, or fair. These girls probably go through it every single day in Mexico. It's not a compliment! They just want to be left alone and go about their business.

These type of affirmative comments are particularly interesting because they seek to create an empathetic response from those who do not experience street harassment as commonly as women. In order to do this, they employ a reliving of experiences that could be traumatic for the women who write them as well as those who read them. This reliving of trauma as a means for legitimizing and *proving* that hegemonic masculinity thrives at the expense of women's safety and lives is problematic. As discussed in

previous chapters, both personal and collective histories of violence are embodied by women on a quotidian basis and across the globe. To relive these traumas in order to prove the need for change to a well-documented issue places a disproportionate burden on the victims/survivors, and a task that may commonly seem too risky.

In looking through her personal emails Cloud notes that the messages felt like “invasions of [the] private space and self.”¹³³ This invasion can be understood in the case of the *AJ+* video in that it creates a mirroring effect between the experience of public space (i.e. the street) and public online space (i.e. the comments section). Fear of retaliation, harassment, and violence relegate women to silence in *both* public spaces. Those that dare speak out against this practice of hegemonic masculinity, be they armed with a confetti gun or a personal experience of past trauma, are not immune to the fear induced by such a choice but have reckoned with this calculated risk.

Conclusion

Approaching this interpretive analysis through a *framing by foil* schema, the overwhelmingly negative reactionary discourse to the *AJ+* video of Las Hijos reveals collective identity creation among opponents of the performance group and street harassment activism more generally. While the first two major theme groups predominantly work to name and thus invalidate the performers and their supporters, the third theme group extends beyond a framing and foiling effort to threaten Las Hijos and anyone who might be inspired to confront harassers through abstract and overt threats of violence. While this activity can be scoffed off by some as *trolling*, it is ill advised to

¹³³ Cloud "Foiling the Intellectuals," 466.

dislocate these threats from the lived experience of the performers who have been the recipients of many violent threats, including death threats. Thus, online public space (i.e. public comments sections) bleeds into lived public space that the women of Las Hijas were occupying, and actively putting their bodies on the line, to protect for women. This case study should inform further studies to investigate the ways in which online public spaces for women are threatened by hateful and threatening rhetoric and the ways in which this online public discourse informs threats and violence in physical public spaces. Thus, the simplification of such commentary as *trolling* can dangerously underestimate the means by which such rhetoric emboldens acts of violence on women who already disproportionately are affected by violence and harassment in public spaces.

The framing of all three theme groups works to maintain and strengthen hegemonic order in public space which dictates women's behavior through punishment via violent acts including harassment, rape, and murder. In making this argument I do not propose to equate street harassments such as catcalls with rape or murder, but rather caution that to disarticulate street harassment from a system of gender based violence, which includes more violent acts such as these, is a dangerous practice; one which the discursive space of the comment section in question is evidence for.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY

As street harassment continues to come into the consciousness of global media outlets and urban dwellers globally, innovation and critique is abundant in terms of activism and action in the struggle to mitigate this specific offshoot of gender-based harassment. Mexico City has emerged as a leader in such innovation, and as is the case with innovators, it has received much critique. Various efforts to respond to structural and attitudinal instigators of sexual harassment in public space, which include Pink Transportation and the Penis Seat have brought the public into discourse about the hegemonic masculinity (or machismo) that inform the need for these costly and seemingly drastic programs. In looking at the myriad anti-street harassment approaches employed, I argue that state-sponsored and traditional protest methods leave a void to which direct action protest attends.

Las Hijas de Violencia is an exemplar of anarchist direct action protest. Approaching this performance through a media ecology framework I have critically discussed three key processes that define this performance movement as ecosystem. First, through Las Hijas' public street performances that constituted a "break" from traditional

protest tactics, their transgressive use of play, violence, and humor, created new inventive space in the street for women. Their performance utilized spontaneity as a means for leaning into the quotidian performances of women (or otherwise marginalized bodies) to instigate confrontation and thus invent new possibilities for retort. In exposing the absurdity of hegemonic masculinity's hold on public space through the control of women's movement and safety, Las Hijas matched that absurdity with a transgressive assertion of the body and excess. Thus, their performance was not only a means for opening the possibilities of form in feminist resistance, but additionally signaled an opening of possibilities for what is possible as a woman occupying public space. This initial process of mediation through direct confrontation with the aggressor and audience building in the street constitutes the base of the media ecology of Las Hijas. It is here that even after the extinction of this performance movement as it was in the street, an afterlife is created through the process of image event making.

The secondary process of Las Hijas' performance involves its mediation through digital sharing and social media interaction. The first and second processes can be seen as interdependent: the performance in the street, through play and transgression, merits its sharing online, and its sharing online expands the audience of the street performance beyond its initial temporal and spatial confines. The translation of public performative activism to online space created the possibility for "discovery" and "re-discovery" of Las Hijas outside of the context of the street. This both serves to create an archival life for the performance which was, previous to online sharing, limited to the moments of confrontation in the immediate context. This is evidence for the interconnectivity of our physical and mediated lives in that the physicality of Las Hijas, and the ways it plays off

of shared experiences of public space, traverse social media sharing and reach a much larger audience that also shares in this experience. However, this is not to say that consensus about street harassment is reached via its mediation as an image event.

The third process of mediation is simultaneously a living and archival one. As the performance expanded from the street and onto online platforms, it opened the possibilities for contentious online space. This discursive space, like the performance itself, traverses our digital and “lived” lives. This discursive space is expansive. Taking a subset of the archive created in these discursive spaces of online comments sections, it is evident that the contentious space of the street translates to a contentious space online. In fact, harassment and misogynistic rhetoric, which the original mediation of the performance worked to confront, is bolstered by online sharing. The comments section of the most popular video of Las Hijas’ performance thus becomes a new “street” in which hegemonic masculinity and misogynistic rhetoric work to silence women. A mirroring effect, through online mediation, ensues. And much like the street, transgressions are made by supporters of Las Hijas who dare step outside the lines of propriety to share their personal stories of violence as a means for defending other marginalized bodies. While online discursive space may constitute an amplification of marginalized voices with mitigated threat of violence, it can also become a space in which hegemonic power could realize its metastatic potential.

Future Research

This research both benefited from and was hampered by, the time lag between when Las Hijas first performed their protest on the streets of Mexico City and the

beginning of the research project. Las Hijas, while no longer actively performing in Mexico City, have left a record of their performances across the web through various interviews and features. While this archive provided ample material to accomplish the goals of this project, the inclusion of ethnographic methods including interviews and participant observation would have enriched the data set. Most of their media coverage happened around the time in which the *AJ+* video went viral (2016). It could add an interesting layer to the analysis to be able to ask Las Hijas members to revisit their performances after they had finished actively performing.

Rooting the analysis of a Facebook video in a media ecology approach sought to use the video as a sample for the larger life of the performance in public space and the processes of expansion across digital media. However, limiting the sample to Facebook limits the analysis to this specific audience group. A comparative analysis across platform audiences would have enriched the findings. The sample if taken from another platform could yield different themes. Additionally, posts were not differentiated across gender, country of origin, or other demographic indicators. This was due to limitations in the affordances of Facebook which include privacy settings which limit the amount of demographic information a user discloses publically. Rather than make assumptions about the identities of Facebook users, I chose to let their comments speak independently. At times comments disclosed identity indicators which were then used to critique the meaning therein, however, if these disclosures were not made within the text I made my best effort to not make assumptions about the user, hence the omission of usernames.

Future research could expand to employ a more intersectional approach in the study of street harassment and the ways in which it differently effects racial minorities,

LGBTQIA identified persons, and other non-normative bodies. This also opens an opportunity for transnational comparative study into the ways in which cultural and historical contexts around minority identity groups and gender norms inform attitudes toward street harassment.

Additionally, as noted in the literature review, in regards to street harassment and the efforts being made to eradicate it, masculinity studies are imperative to a holistic approach. In particular to this project, humor and masculinity as they relate to practices of street harassment are particularly interesting.

This research enriches the media ecology approach to the study of social movements and performative protest as they move between on and offline media. As I continue my academic pursuits, I intend to continue utilizing this approach as a means for understanding the ways in which resistance movements are mediated through art works and online discursive spaces. With a feminist and critical cultural approach, I endeavor to further critique the ways in which practices born out of hegemonic masculinity are continued and contested in performative ways both in public space on and offline.

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