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Homosocial trust in urban policing
Masculinities and traffic law enforcement in the gendered city

Romit Chowdhury

The exercise of social control in cities has been linked in a fundamental way to a wide variety of policing mechanisms in urban contexts. This article builds on the literature on urban policing by foregrounding 'masculinities' as a unit of analysis for understanding everyday practices of law enforcement on city streets. It describes quotidian interactions between male public transport vehicle operators and traffic police in contemporary Kolkata, India, to make a set of analytical observations about three interrelated concerns (a) the gendered character of urban policing, (b) the emotional and moral ethos of urban law enforcement, and (c) the production of the city as a male space. Through these analyses the article develops the concept of 'homosocial trust' as an explanatory framework for understanding gendered dimensions of the everyday state, place-making, and mobility in the ordinary city. Such a heuristic draws thought to the vocabulary of masculinity used by men, who are otherwise framed in a conflictual relationship, to transact situational trust and make city streets inhabitable for themselves. The article shifts the emphasis in studies of urban policing away from conflict to mundane collaboration between law enforcement officers and

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urban publics to highlight the masculinities of everyday state practice through which the city is reproduced as a space of patriarchal power. The article draws on ethnographic interviews with autorickshaw drivers, taxi drivers, traffic police personnel, and participant observation at workshops conducted by the police with transport workers to sensitize them to safe road practices in Kolkata.

Introduction

The labor geographies of public transport vehicle operators in the city of Kolkata in India are routinely marked by encounters with traffic police. In the course of their daily travels, transport workers cannot take for granted a right to labor in the city; instead, they have to seize that right through repeated confrontations with traffic law enforcement officers. The overlaps and differences between the social profiles of different groups of public transport workers, the geographical limits of their trades, and the discrete legal status of different modes of public transport in Kolkata complicate their encounter with urban traffic policing. For instance, while all transport workers are working-class and men, autorickshaw drivers are primarily 'locals' who ply only on specific neighborhood routes, whereas most taxi drivers are migrants from nearby states in eastern India and roam the entire landscape of the city. Furthermore, while the taxi has a presence in the Motor Vehicles Act 1988 as a contract carriage, the autorickshaw has no mention in this act of the Parliament of India which governs road transport vehicles in the country. Instead, the operation of autorickshaws as a form of shared para-transit has been regularized by a set of state government rules and decisions made by the high court. These social and legal bases of public transportation in Kolkata provide the ground for negotiations between forms of labor and state monitoring practices that are understood in urban theory as informality. In the popular press, where traffic problems are habitually traced to unruly driving practices of transport workers alone, the relationship between them and the police is usually represented through two prominent tropes: the public transport vehicle driver is either a clever 'rogue'[1] who eludes the reach of law, or the 'city police are more their accomplices than responsible public servants.'[2]

The exercise of social control in cities has, historically, been linked to a wide variety of policing mechanisms in urban contexts. The critical tradition in urban studies has, for the most part, understood the relationship between urban policing and disenfranchized social groups in the city as an antithetical one. However, the everyday contexts in which the metropolitan police and men situated on the urban margins interact reveal a social relationship that braids cooperation with conflict. This article builds on the literature on urban policing by foregrounding 'masculinities' as a unit of analysis for understanding everyday practices of law enforcement on city streets. It describes quotidian interactions between autorickshaw- and taxi drivers and traffic police in contemporary Kolkata to make a set of analytical observations about three interrelated concerns (a)

the gendered character of urban policing, (b) the emotional and moral ethos of urban law enforcement, and (c) the production of the city as a male space. Through these analyses the article develops the concept of 'homosocial trust' as an explanatory framework for understanding the gendered logic of cooperation between traffic police and transport workers through which urban mobility is governed and inhabited. The article begins with a review of the literature on urban policing to identify the reasons why masculinities have been neglected in this sub-field of urban studies. It then lays out the social context of public transport and police work in Kolkata. After a note on methodology, the article delves into the interactional particulars of traffic law enforcement through a focus on neighborhood relations and patterns of heteronormative masculinity in city spaces. It then elaborates 'homosocial trust' as a heuristic for capturing ideologies of masculinity in everyday state practices and the gendered structure of public morality by which the city is socially produced as a male space.

Policing cities

Controlling crime and maintaining order, key responsibilities of the urban police, proceed by identifying disruptive elements in the city. Practices of policing ascribe disrepute to particular people and places, and hence, are embedded in deeply ideological assumptions about who can legitimately exercise claim on state- and community resources and who cannot (Fyfe 1995). Of considerable interest, therefore, to studies that have emphasized the mutuality of policing and the production of urban space has been the street as a site of contestation between marginalized people and the police force. Urban researchers have demonstrated that working-class, racialized male youth are forced into situations of conflict with law enforcers over incongruent understandings of how the street ought to be inhabited (Anderson 1990; Cohen 1979; Fassin 2013). The literature on US and British cities records the great discomfort that the sight of young (especially poor and racial minority) men hanging out on street corners causes the bourgeois citizen, who sees them habitually as a law and order problem (Alexander 2000; McDowell 2003). These studies have been important in underlining the role of policing practices in upholding urban inequalities.

Urban policing has followed a somewhat similar trajectory in India in the sense that law enforcement sustains the marginality of particular social groups in the city. Unemployed young men passing time in Meerut,[3] for instance, are perceived as a threat to both morality and order maintenance, and subjected to police action under the guise of tackling sexual harassment in public spaces (Jeffrey 2010). Descriptions of the policing of sexual commerce in Mumbai note the use of physical force by the police on sex workers, who consider them to be sullying the respectability of middle-class people, even as they demand bribes (Shah 2014). In the same city, following the communal riots of 1992–93, policing in Muslim localities was intensified through more police stations than in non- Muslim neighborhoods (Blom Hansen 2001). In New Delhi, residents of squatter settlements go to great lengths to acquaint themselves with the written law to avoid extortion from junior staff of the metropolitan police force (Datta 2012).

However, given the blurred boundary between the Indian state and society at the local level (Gupta 1995), and the specificity of democratic processes in the region, the relationship between state functionaries and the urban poor plays out in ways that do not conform entirely to narratives of urban policing in northern cities. Discussions of the 'tapori', an urban male character peculiar to the subculture of twentieth century Bombay, who 'stands at the intersection of morality and evil, between the legal and the illegal, between the world of work and those without work', (Mazumdar 2001, 4872) captures an aspect of the myriad ways in which the urban poor of India grapple with everyday policing. The tapori, by embodying the morality of the neighborhood, manages to hoodwink law through recourse to street cunning. These popular representations of everyday law in Hindi cinema highlight both the oppositional relations between the police and the marginalized and the common ground between them which opens avenues for the latter to negotiate with power in ways that enhance their right to the city.

As this review shows, critical police studies—in India and internationally—have strived to reveal how law enforcement regulates the lives of marginalized publics. It is perhaps for this reason that issues of masculinity—inasmuch as masculinity is assumed to be a site of privilege rather than marginality—have largely been neglected in thinking about policing and city spaces. Thus, studies that underscore conflict between police and male youth in cities, emphasize race, religion, and class relations, and do not read it also as a reflex of gendered power. Feminist criminological research has sought to rectify this gender blindness by highlighting the influence of gender on crime and criminal justice systems. Some of the focus of these studies has been on the ways in which the police, as a state institution, reflects and sustains dominant ideas of gender, including masculinity (Corsianos 2009; Elski 2018; Silvestri 2017). This cluster of writings—located in North America, Europe, and Australia—has demonstrated how gendered assumptions govern cop culture, from the functioning of police academies, through self-representations of police personnel, to the regulation of criminal and social behavior. However, even as these studies read police culture through a gender lens, they do not consider in a sustained way the urban context in which much of policing takes place. Indeed, it may be said that studies of policing which emphasize urbanity are neglectful of gender as an organizing principle, while those which are mindful of gender in police work seldom take into account how urbanism affects policing.

This article intervenes in this gap in thinking about urban policing. It does so by bringing police studies in dialogue with anthropological writings on the everyday state and masculinity in a way that emphasizes the everyday state's gender regime as a 'structure of cathexis' (Connell 1990). For Connell, the Freudian idea of 'cathexis' encapsulates the attachments of intimate relationships through which the gender order is maintained in societies. Following this use of the term, this article unravels a set of emotional and moral evocations through which everyday state practices manufacture the gender order of the city. Such an approach draws thought to the vocabulary of masculinity used by men, who are otherwise framed in a conflictual relationship, to transact situational trust and make city streets inhabitable for themselves. It also foregrounds mundane collaboration between state functionaries and marginal urban publics

to highlight the masculinities of everyday state practice through which the city is reproduced as a space of patriarchal power.

Traffic police and public transport in Kolkata

As of 2006, Kolkata's traffic police force comprised about 4000 men. At present there are 25 traffic guards in the metropolitan area. Each guard is headed by two inspectors who are assisted by sergeants, head constables, constables, and home guards. The city has a road length of 1416.4 kms, which is the lowest among all major metro cities in the country, and 9,41,722 registered vehicles. The Kolkata Traffic Police force thus has a considerably difficult task in ensuring safe and smooth mobility in the city.[4]

A Traffic Training School was set up in Kolkata in March 1953 with a view to impart required training to traffic personnel and also valuable civic education to the urban citizenry. Workshops on safe driving practices targeted at bus/taxi/autorickshaw drivers have been a crucial component of the School's activities in more recent years. In 2014, some 70 taxi drivers participated in the workshops, and the number grew to nearly 3000 in 2015. For autorickshaw drivers, the figures were 2000 and 3000 in 2014 and 2015 respectively. This aspect of the Kolkata Traffic Police's endeavors received a huge impetus in July 2016 when the chief minister of West Bengal announced the launch of the 'Safe Drive Save Life' campaign to reduce street accidents and improve road culture in the city. Between 1995 and 2000, accidents in Kolkata had increased from 8895 to 11,036. According to police records, autorickshaws received 4124 and 4023 official cases for rash driving in 2014 and 2015, respectively. The figures for taxis were 11,112 and 13,697 for 2014 and 2015, respectively. In 2015 some 200 cases of serious injury involving a taxi were registered, and 73 involving an autorickshaw. The program was designed to mitigate this welter of disorder on Kolkata's streets.[5]

The main aim of the 'Safe Drive Save Life' campaign is sensitizing transport workers to the pitfalls of reckless driving. The Kolkata Traffic Police has made concerted efforts to reach out to the unions of autorickshaws, taxis, and buses to respond to the campaign. Sergeants and constables personally urge transport workers they come into contact with to attend workshops which are held daily in the various traffic guards of the city. In cognizance of a general suspicion of the urban poor towards the police, law enforcers are being encouraged to forge easier communication links with transport workers in the city. The Kolkata Traffic Police has been organizing what is called 'friendship club football tournament.' This annual event enlists the participation of some 400 neighborhood youths—men—with the objective of establishing friendly equations between policemen and local boys.

Taxi drivers and autorickshaw operators are both major groups of public transport workers with whom traffic police come into regular contact with. In 1977, the number of registered taxis in Kolkata was 6956, which grew to 15,630 by 1987. In 1990, taxi permits were relaxed which led to an exponential growth in the number of taxis in the city (Sen 2016). In the year 2014–15, there were 60,682 registered taxis in Kolkata. Since the beginning of taxi operations in the city, the trade has been associated with the Sikh community. In the present

day, however, the vast majority of taxi operators in Kolkata are from the states of Bihar and Jharkhand in eastern India. Studies on contemporary Bihar show that the very low wages in the state impel vast numbers of men to migrate, some to the relatively affluent region of central Bihar but mostly to states like West Bengal, Haryana, Punjab, and Maharasthra (Roy 2011). It is important to note that while Sikh men are seen as hardworking honest folk, Bihari men are mostly considered uncivilized by the urban middle-classes.[6] Newspaper reports repeatedly invoke the figure of the 'rogue driver' and decry the 'taxi menace' that plagues life in Kolkata now that Bihari men have infiltrated the trade.[7] Taxi drivers' faults range from rampant and arbitrary refusal, through quarrelsome behavior, over-charging and robbery, to different orders of assault. In recent years, there have been a number of allegations of sexual violence from women.

The autorickshaw was incorporated in the public transport landscape of Kolkata in the year 1983. The autorickshaw was brought in as part of the self-employed scheme, as a way of addressing pervasive youth unemployment in the city. Thus, while taxi and hand-pulled rickshaw operators in the city have, historically, mostly been from outside West Bengal, the bus, minibus, and cycle-rickshaw segments of the transport industry have a vast majority of Bengali workers. The autorickshaw was specifically introduced to provide employment to young local Bengali men. In the present day, though, nearly half the number of autorickshaw drivers also own the vehicles they drive; the rest pay a daily rent to the owner. In 1987, the number of registered autorickshaws was 1865. The number of registered autos plying in the Kolkata Metropolitan Area in 2001 was 22,000 (Dutta 2015). In present-day Kolkata, unlike other Tier 1 cities, autos ply within designated routes and on a shared basis, an arrangement that started in the late 1990s. It is estimated that today 50% of autorickshaw routes traverse a distance of 3–8 kms, while 40% cover 3–5 kms. Although only 125 routes are officially registered, in practice well over 180 routes operate (Dutta 2015).

The ensuing discussion of urban policing and its relation to the making of the gendered city need to be read in light of this broader description of the social landscape of law enforcement and public transportation in Kolkata.

Note on methodology

The article draws on ethnographic interviews (Spradley 1979)[8] with 20 autorickshaw drivers, 25 taxi drivers, 15 traffic police personnel, and participant observation at workshops conducted by the police with transport workers to sensitize them to safe road practices in Kolkata. This fieldwork was done over a period of 18 months between 2016 and 2017. My ethnographic target population were three occupation groups that are entirely male and require these men to spend extended lengths of time in the outdoors. Alongside the commonality between their professions, these two groups of transport workers were also chosen keeping in mind some crucial demographic differences between them, as described above. Conversations with drivers lasted between 1 and 3 h. I began by simply approaching traffic personnel manning the city's streets, explaining my research project, and then requesting them to speak to me about their experience. As a middle-class male researcher, I was able to make use of patterns of sociability

in the city—such as impromptu conversations at roadside tea-stall—to establish a friendly familiarity with traffic policemen. None of them, however, agreed to speak to me on record. Despite the practical difficulties of taking elaborate notes in the midst of busy and noisy streets, I chose not to push them to allow me to record, thinking that this would enable them to narrate their experiences with less hesitation. Indeed, my willingness to do interviews off the record helped me to build rapport with traffic police because it was read as an acknowledgement of their professional hazards. In addition to biographical information, my questions to them ranged from strategies they use to nab traffic law offenders, the conditions in which they indulge offences, the crime profiles of different neighborhoods, to their thoughts on the problem of street harassment, public perceptions of policing, what drew them to this profession, among other queries.

Neighborhood relations

Notwithstanding the considerable disaffection which public transport vehicle operators express towards traffic police, there exists a measure of mutual understanding between these groups of men. As noted above, autorickshaws in Kolkata traverse the same route within neighborhoods in which they usually live. This spatial familiarity produces a form of masculinity that expresses a sense of entitlement to absolute freedom within the neighborhood. By dint of having grown up in the locality, autorickshaw drivers seem to expect unfettered sanction—both social and legal—for their usage of neighborhood space. A 37-year-old traffic sergeant said:

> The thing with auto drivers is that they are mostly local boys. They have lived in this locality all their lives. So they take liberties thinking this is their area and no one will tell them anything here. There are drivers who will tell us, ‘Sir you are fining us here; we have grown up here, we used to swim in ponds here as kids, play football in the fields. Don’t fine us here.’

Working-class masculinity in Indian cities has a specific relation to the neighborhood. The high density within slums in which they reside forces poor male youth onto public space, especially interior lanes of neighborhoods, as a zone of male sociability. In Kolkata, boys’ clubs—a room where young working-class men congregate to play indoor games, watch television, and even sleep at night if there is no space for them in their homes—are ubiquitous in neighborhoods and have a distinct social history. They occupy a morally ambiguous place, associated with idleness and vice on the one hand, but also seen as part of the associational life of the neighborhood through the support these clubs sometimes render in community affairs (Gooptu 2007). Autorickshaw operators—and law enforcement officers on the lower rung—are a part of this habitus that is both male and embedded in neighborhood space. A 28-year-old police officer said this about autorickshaw drivers:

> They take liberties in their own localities. This is the nature of this city. Everyone is a hero in his own locality.

For working-class men, the feeling of entitlement to neighborhood they consider their own is also a desire for legitimacy in rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods which are pushing them to their fringes. Law enforcers are aware of this, and in some degree, are sympathetic to these male claims on urban space. Such homosociality demonstrates the extent to which legal regulation of urban traffic is inflected by shared assumptions of class, neighborhood life, and masculinity between law enforces and disenfranchized urban publics. Indeed, autorickshaw drivers' circular mobility produces a sociability with law enforcers that has far-reaching implications for how transport labor is policed in the city. As a 45-year-old police officer explains:

> We certainly get to know auto drivers over time. I not only remember their faces and names but also some details about their lives. Some faces become familiar because they are regular offenders. We will tell them, 'Arindam, again you are making the same mistake? How many times will you get fined for the same offence?' His father was very ill and hospitalized. On his way to seeing him, he would tell me the status of his father's health. Then one day I saw him in a *kacha* (mourning clothes), so I asked him if everyone else in the family is alright.

Interactions of this nature through which law enforcers get familiar with the biographies of autorickshaw operators are largely absent in taxi drivers' accounts of their encounters with the police. Interpersonal knowledge flows between police and auto operators allow some degree of mutual appreciation to evolve between them and create an opening for indulgences to be sought and granted. Indeed, personal familiarity between the police and transport workers is used as a resource by both groups of men. Many traffic policemen spoke of using personal contact with transport workers to improve civic knowledge among them. Similarly, drivers also use passing familiarity with policemen to escape punishment (see Figure 1).

As I was waiting inside an autorickshaw one afternoon, for the vehicle to get its full complement of four passengers, a traffic sergeant walked up to the autorickshaw operator. The sergeant addressed the driver by his first name and began chastising him for waiting at a major crossroad, an offence for which he should be fined. The operator stepped out of the vehicle and began mock-pleading with the police officer, telling him that he has promised his wife tickets to a film. If he is made to pay a hefty fine, he would be unable to keep his promise: 'You are married yourself, sir, you know the damages of failing to keep a promise to your wife, please don't fine me.' The sergeant guffawed and asked the operator to drive off that instant and ensure that he does not commit such offences in the future.

Such interpersonal familiarity ameliorate the threat which policemen otherwise pose to drivers. They open an avenue for police officers to use male camaraderie to conditionally befriend transport workers and impart civic knowledge, signaling the malleability of the everyday state to practice different styles of gender as it regulates urban spaces. Male camaraderie with law enforcers is also utilized by men on the city's margins to evade the grip of law. Fleeting conviviality allows transport workers to gauge the personality of particular law enforcement officers and anticipate the logic of police intervention, which has been called 'cop wisdom' (Stuart 2016) in another urban context.

Figure 1: An autorickshaw waits for more passengers as a traffic policeman scrolls his phone. Photo by author.

Police officers are entrusted with the responsibility of implementing state rules, but they are simultaneously embedded in local worlds and their habits (Das 2004). Cooperation and understanding also proceed from the shared social backgrounds of some police officers and transport vehicle operators. A 40-year-old traffic official, who spent his formative years in a small village in West Bengal, recounted:

> I am not used to speaking to women too much. So I hesitate to offer help to women. I remember this one time when I went out of my way to help a middle-aged woman who I thought was struggling on the road. She reacted very rudely to me, as though I had misbehaved with her simply by speaking to her. I felt terribly judged. I see some taxi drivers from Bihar having the same problem. We don't know how to speak to city women and they don't like us very much. We are not up to their standard.

Officers occupying the lowest ranks in the police force and the urban poor sometimes inhabit similar social worlds (Anjaria 2011). As Fuller and Harriss (2001, 15) write, 'its [the states's] lower echelons at least are always staffed by people with whom some kind of social relationship can or could exist … the boundary between state and society … is … negotiable according to social context and position.' While the existing literature emphasizes commonalities on the basis of class, the interview excerpt above underlines the continuities of male experience—in addition to those of class—that help forge a sliver of understanding between lower-rung state functionaries and the urban poor about what it means to live in cities as men. We see how a male traffic official recognizes that his cultural training in gender inhibits easy cross-gender interactions and impels identification with other men who also inhabit such a form of masculinity, one that is hesitant to communicate with unfamiliar women in the city. This idea of a non-urban masculinity that is 'out of place' and devalued by the cultural ideals of city life is also produced by the barb of some urban middle-class women's contempt for rural masculinity in city spaces, the experience of which low-ranking male law enforcers and poor men share.

Male solidarity between state actors and transport vehicle operators stems also from police officers' acknowledgment that even as transport workers are a menace to order maintenance in city streets, they are simultaneously a vital infrastructure of support for the police, particularly for discharging public welfare in the city. A 39-year-old traffic sergeant says:

> There is no question that many auto- and taxi drivers are very helpful. If there are accidents on the road the man in the suit will pass by in his car without stopping. But the drivers will take the injured to the hospital. In my 13 years as a traffic police, I have seen this many times.

In the absence of reliable emergency services, the network of transport workers—specifically taxi and autorickshaw operators—are called upon to render situational support in times of urgent mishap. If, as Jane Jacobs famously argued, 'eyes on the street' play a significant role in creating public safety through informal surveillance, transport workers in the city often function as hands-of-the-road, providing assistance in difficult situations on city streets, well beyond the call of their profession. A traffic constable shared with me an anecdote about how after a fierce storm, a fallen tree had blocked a major connecting road; a group of auto drivers got together and had it cleared without waiting for municipal services to handle the problem.

The gesture of offering a gift to state functionaries is often a strategy for marginal social groups to exercise claims of citizenship (Das 2004). By functioning as an informal infrastructure of support on city streets, transport workers position themselves as a resource for managing urban mishaps and find a legitimizing ground for laboring in the city. The state's inability to fulfill its welfare role is seized by public transport workers as an opportunity to lend credence to their right to the city.

This subsection has sought to highlight the cultural associations between masculinity and neighborhood life through which practices of urban law enforcement and the gendered city are relationally produced. In the next section,

I unmoor the discussion from the spatial scale of the neighborhood to unravel how heteronormative ideals of masculinity inflect traffic law enforcement in the city at large.

Patterns of heteronormativity

A key instrument of the 'Safe Drive, Save Life' programme—detailed above—is regular sensitization workshops with public transport workers in the city. The workshops, conducted in the afternoons to make use of lean traffic times, take the form of a classroom setting. Transport vehicle operators gather in a room fitted with white board and audio-visual aids, as sergeants take them through the key learning points of the day. A range of promotional material from the campaign adorns the classroom walls: A prominent poster announces grandly, 'In my enlightenment are the seeds of a new city', hinting at the codes of conduct that get characterized as informed civic actions on city streets. Pamphlets or other written documents are not circulated in these workshops because most transport workers are either non-literate or have low levels of literacy. Drivers are informally urged to attend these workshops. Traffic constables cajole transport workers they meet on the road; an official invitation is sent to transport unions to send drivers to these events regularly. Drivers who successfully complete these workshops are issued cards bearing the title 'Enlightened Driver'; this is a way of incentivizing participation and gradually making attendance compulsory. Workshop facilitators stress that following laws means less fines which means more earnings for transport workers.

As we wait for class to begin one summer afternoon—which usually has the strength of about fifteen participants—many drivers attend to calls on their mobile phones. Some complain of being trapped, while others report with a distinct ring of pride in their voice, 'I am attending class.' Today's facilitator is a 29-year-old traffic sergeant who has been on the road for about two years. He begins the day's proceedings by sharing a statistic:

> Road accident deaths in India are among the highest in the world and 90% of the times the cause is negligent driving. We have to reduce accidents. The problem is that the level of knowledge among drivers is very low. We all know how driving licenses are released in this country. Let's both keep it a secret for now.

To address this problem of inadequate civic knowledge, a large component of these workshops is devoted to sharing information about traffic laws, especially those pertaining to public transport vehicles. Considerable time is spent on discussing CCTV footage of road accidents, to identify the cause of mishaps and how these can be avoided. There are discussions of speeding, with workshop facilitators gently chiding drivers for their bravado. The facilitator's strategy also includes showing images of drivers helping the public, with the objective of reinforcing positive models of behavior in public spaces. This all-male environment of teaching and learning how to navigate mobility lawfully in the city is powerfully conditioned by a shared culture of heterosexual urban masculinity. Law enforcers and transport workers' insertion into the gender regime of

heteronormative masculinity shapes the diagnosis of and proposed solutions to problems of risk/safety and good/bad conduct in the city. As the 29-year old sergeant explained in class that afternoon,

> It's alright that you [autorickshaw driver] are asking women to sit in front, next to you. The smell of her perfume, her shampooed hair blowing in your face, we all enjoy these things. But also ask her to wear the seat belt, ask her to hold on to the auto's railing properly.

Research on male homosocial bonding (Bird 1996; Flood 2008) underscores sexual storytelling and competitive sex talk as the primary performative tropes of heterosexual masculinity in same-sex settings. The structural imbalance of power between male police officers and male transport workers and the formal context of the classroom, in particular, usually disallows overtly salacious conversations which are common in men's friendships. Nevertheless, their interactions and the urban narratives these exchanges shore up are structured by ideologies of heteronormative masculinity and desire. Law enforcement officers' efforts to popularize safe driving practices often rest on the naturalization of male heterosexual lust in public space. In the fieldwork note above, the young male police officer presents a particularly sensual image—invoking olfactory and tactile sensations—to weld heterosexual urban erotics with steering habits that can minimize the risk of road accidents. The particular workshop proceeding I have been reporting on concluded with the sergeant reminding transport workers:

> Drive properly not out of fear of the police but for your own self; if your license is confiscated for three months, how will your family eat?

Transport workers are persuaded to follow traffic norms and safe driving techniques so that they are able to fulfill their provider roles as men. Order maintenance in public spaces is, therefore, tied to the performance of an exalted version of patriarchal masculinity in the home. State actors and transport vehicle operators co-produce the masculinization of public spaces in the sense that hetero-patriarchal conceptions of men's social roles provide the vocabulary and interpretive framework for understanding public safety and order on city streets. In Kolkata, these conceptions of gender roles are embedded in a particular contextualized form of middle-class, upper-caste Bengali patriarchy, one that ideologically ties respectable femininity to domesticity and, parallelly, the capacity to provide such 'protection' to women to a valued index of masculinity (Ray 2000). Conversely, the inability to keep women in the home, especially on account of men's inability to provide adequately, is seen as a failure of masculinity. For Bihari taxi drivers in Kolkata, sending adequate remittances back to their villages is a key achievement of masculinity in a social context where widespread male out-migration from rural Bihar has led to married women assuming a greater role in decision-making, household financial management, and increased participation in the public sphere (Datta and Mishra 2011).

The imbrication of traffic law enforcement with the ideals of heteronormative masculinity ought not to be seen as a strategic expression of state rationality. Patriarchal ideas of masculinity are not deployed by policemen in an

instrumental way to manage traffic problems. Rather, everyday practices of mobility and law regulation on city streets proceed through a mutual obeisance to cultural norms and ideals of masculinity which link lawful conduct in public to the performance of idealized gender roles in private (see Figure 2). A traffic sergeant, 42 years of age, who often leads such workshops, recounted:

> In the first phase we ask about drivers' lifestyle, family members, what his burdens are. Their attitudes on the street are dependent on this, so it is important for us to know. We try to address these. If his father is ill, we try to get a doctor to see him. If his children can't buy books for school, any father will be troubled. We put them in touch with NGOs that give out free books. Problems in the home are expressed outside.

Law enforcers' diagnosis of the problem of unruly driving practices presumes a close connection between the intimate sphere of family life and the wider interaction order of public spaces. They suggest, in fact, a curious reversal of the more common understanding of men resolving troubles in the public domain by taking it out on the family. Law enforcers' view that the stability of the public order is reliant on the stability of family life authorizes gender roles that reinforce sexual division of labor. In other words, law enforcers psychologize men's unruly behavior on city streets by connecting it to the instability of the patriarchal family. In the terms of this discourse of traffic law enforcement,

Figure 2: Traffic officials manning a major crossroad in Kolkata. Photo by author.

securing the city from reckless driving entails safeguarding male power in the family. The governance of urban traffic simultaneously constitutes the home and the city as spaces of male authority.

Moral tropes of good fathering routinely emerge as policing tactics that shame drivers for particular kinds of behavior on roads. I encountered, for instance, a police officer chastising an auto driver for using abusive language towards a passenger, saying that his daughter would be ashamed of him if she heard him speak like this. The social life of the autorickshaw, as we have seen, allows such biographical information to circulate; the manner in which they seep into traffic policing captures the structuring influence of heteronormative masculinity on the everyday work of law in the city. In the traffic training workshops, transport workers are routinely shown video clippings of accidents not merely to identify the causes of mishaps—for instance, a taxi violates a traffic signal and is mowed down by a truck—but also to show the consequences of recklessness on drivers' families. Participants hear stories of families engulfed by poverty after the death/disability of a transport worker due to truant driving. The failure to approximate men's provider role, to be good sons/husbands/fathers, is held out to transport vehicle operators as a major consequence of lawlessness and as a deterrent to risky driving. Transport workers also read traffic law enforcers through the lens of men's provider role. While traveling in a taxi in the course of my fieldwork, I heard the driver tell an adjacent taxi operator as both vehicles waited at a traffic signal, that a new sergeant who is in charge of that area seems better than the others, because he understands how difficult it is for migrant taxi drivers to financially support their families. The other driver responded that the police ought to empathize with them for the burdens they shoulder for the sake of their families back in their villages. The general cynicism towards law enforcers notwithstanding, several transport operators also noted the long chain of command in which traffic police officers are placed. A 36-year-old taxi driver reasons:

> They also have pressure on them. We have heard and seen. On the wireless phone, as they are giving us a case, some DC (deputy commissioner) is telling them, 'File 20 cases every day otherwise your job is on the line.' So they also have pressure. We have noticed we are fined more towards the end of every month. They also have families to feed. Everyone is under pressure in this city.

Men's mutual recognition of the pressures of working life draws attention to the homosociality of public spaces, which is one of the principal ideological tropes by which the everyday state produces the city as masculine and inimical to the presence of women. Several traffic policemen confess that if they followed the rule book to the letter, the sheer volume of fines would make it impossible for transport workers to provide for their families. Thus, they mostly enforce the more serious offences (such as drunken driving, speeding, missed signals) and indulge the minor ones (changing lanes, overtaking). In this way, the policing of urban traffic and the functioning of the everyday state in the city are mediated by the heteronormative construction of paid work as the primary site of masculine identity.

Homosocial trust

Urban scholars have argued that the modern city is inherently uncertain in the sense that the unknown and the unmanageable are constitutive of cities (Zeiderman et al. 2015). One aspect of this urban unpredictability is the work of law enforcement in cities. Asad (2004) has observed that suspicion is the fulcrum of policing systems: the uncertainty intrinsic to any suspicious response to a person or situation is what occupies the gap between codified law and its application in practice. Those laboring on the urban margins in particular, have to find ways of surviving both the general uncertainty of urban life and the particular visage that this arbitrariness assumes with respect to law enforcement in cities. Consequently, 'improvised lives' in cities of the global south depend variously on an economy of reciprocity, manipulation, and trust (Simone 2019). Such relations of trust between strangers in the city are not a product of being together in the same place, but the outcome of everyday urban practice (Amin 2012).

The interactions described in the previous two subsections suggest that law enforcement in the city is fundamentally inflected by the value-laden associations between masculinity and the sociability of urban life. Men's sense of ownership over neighborhood space as a site of leisure and work inflects everyday practices of law on city streets. These interactions also suggest that heteronormative formations of masculinity, especially idealized gender roles within the family, impinge on the ordering of urban mobility by the everyday state. Patriarchal tropes of the good father, the responsible family man, and the naturalization of male heterosexual desire suture cooperative relations between urban actors which law enforcement participates in. These empirically derived analyses prepare the ground for developing a feminist framework to understand how the city sustains male privilege through encounters with the uncertainty of urban life and the suspicious gaze of law enforcement. To elaborate this process, I will lay out the concept of 'homosocial trust' as a heuristic for tracking the cooperative gestures and moral inflections of the everyday state through which the patriarchal city is reproduced. The idea of 'homosociality', while an important one in masculinity studies, has seldom been invoked in scholarship on urban life. In masculinity studies the term is deployed to demonstrate how sociabilities between men sustain patriarchal social orders, particularly through the defense of hegemonic ideals of masculinity (Hammarén and Johansson 2014).

Despite conflictual relations between transport workers and traffic police, there is a measure of reliance between these groups of men as they move through city spaces. This mutual reliance between hierarchically positioned men situated in the state apparatus and on the urban margins is what I am calling 'homosocial trust.' Urban living—and encounters with law enforcement—is replete with the onslaught of the unexpected (Amin 2012). Consequently, managing the inherent unpredictability of the city—and the everyday effects of law—demands practizing trust in social situations (Blokland 2017). The exercise of such trust itself depends on the moral orientation of the other, that they will do what is morally right in a given situation. Trust in the other's moral goodness develops through repeated encounters in which the other acts as is morally

expected. Homosocial trust identifies the moral vocabulary of masculinity by which men transact situational forms of support that enable them to manage the caprice of law and the unknowability of cities. Such trust is homosocial in that it has a particular gendered characteristic: It is predicated on a mutual recognition of the morally exalted status of male breadwinning, the city as the primary site for this achievement of masculinity, and patriarchal definitions of men's role within the heteronormative family. Homosocial trust between men is a major structuring principle of the everyday work of urban law enforcement: It guides tacit notions of what comprises 'good' police work and what falls under 'bad' policing practices and opens avenues for marginalized men to negotiate sanctioned modes of laboring and being in city spaces. Sztompka (1999) isolates 'procedural trust' as the faith that people invest in institutions and institutional procedures. Public transport workers, in inhabiting the urban informal economy, are unable to repose procedural trust in traffic law enforcement; rather, their relationship with police officers is framed by mutual suspicion and entails a continuous negotiation with unpredictability. The fundamental uncertainty of urban life, it ought to be noted, inevitably encapsulates law enforcement officers as well. A 41-year-old university-educated traffic sergeant recounts:

> I remember in the peak of summer, some 6 years ago, I was on duty. Suddenly I blacked out. The road pitch was so hot my skin was burnt. Some taxi drivers nearby took me to the hospital. They guarded my motorbike so that no one could touch it. They bore the entire money for this initial phase. They reported the incident to the police station. When I tried to return the money they would not accept it. They said they don't want the money because they have noticed that I understand the pressures these drivers are under. I am concerned about their families, their children's well-being. They did this so that I could also return to my wife and child. For me, this is what makes Kolkata a living city.

Urban geographers have demonstrated how heterosexual morality governs city life (Hubbard 2000). Homosocial trust between men, which is premised on a shared moral investment in patriarchal ideals of masculinity, is a way of tiding over unexpected dangers of city life and the suspicious gaze of law enforcement. Thus, when the group of taxi drivers refuses to accept money for the help they extended to the policeman suddenly taken ill, they do so by morally exalting the patriarchal association between waged work and adult familial masculinity. Such gestures of kindness between men in the city carry with them a moral expectation of reciprocity: that their burdens of breadwinner masculinity will be acknowledged just as they recognize this struggle in other men's urban lives.

Homosocial trust between men in encounters with law enforcement reproduces the city as a patriarchal space in the sense that the moral terrain of heteronormative masculinity shapes the ordering function of the everyday state. In several interactions with law enforcement, this collective male assumption about the inherent moral value of hegemonic forms of masculinity emerges as the main provenance of judgement. The folk criminology of traffic officials to adjudicate between which offence requires intervention, to what degree, and which can be overlooked, derives from this homosocial culture of trust between men on city streets. The figure of the responsible family man mediates transport

vehicle operators' requests for leniency from law enforcers and also makes the fickleness of policing practices partially intelligible. Such metaphors and practices of masculinity through which homosocial trust between men is transacted are intrinsic to the gender regime of the everyday state and the normative production of the city as a community of men.

Conclusion

The relationship between urban policing and the disenfranchized has been understood primarily through the lens of social conflict. The narratives recorded in this article suggest that encounters with urban law enforcement are also about cooperation and trust. The grammar of such situational forms of trust draws on heteronormative valuations of masculinity—such as the exalted figure of the good father, the responsible family man, the naturalization of heterosexual desire—and its associations with neighborhood space. Such modes of cooperation between unequal men serve to make the city inhabitable for the marginalized but also sustain it as a space of male privilege. If studies of urban policing have shown how *conflict* between law enforcers and the marginalized sustains urban inequalities, this article shows the part played by *trust* in reproducing urban marginality and the vocabulary of masculinity by which such trust is negotiated.

The heuristic of 'homosocial trust' shows that (a) state-society interactions in the city partially rest on situational trust that is evolved in everyday urban encounters with law enforcement, (b) hegemonic metaphors of masculinity supply the terms by which such trust is enacted, and (c) the persuasive power of such metaphors which characterize police work in the city is to be explained by the moral force of gendered ideas about urban uncertainty, fickleness of law, masculinity, family, and the associational life of neighbourhoods. While urbanists have highlighted the 'morality of mobility' that frames conflicts between transport workers and city administrators (Mains and Kinfu 2017), the objective of this article has been to show that moral discourses also operate as the ground for state functionaries and the urban majority to cooperate and forge situational trust in the everyday city. Relations of trust between strangers that are based on moral reasonings which legitimize the city as a site of hegemonic masculine performances, simultaneously heighten women's sense of being out of place in the outdoors and embolden urban structures that hinder women's access to public spaces. The emphasis on trust and collaboration in practices of law enforcement, therefore, far from eschewing a focus on urban inequalities, draws thought to the gendered moral logics through which urban policing produces and maintains the city as a space of patriarchal power.

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Notes

1 'Rogue taxi drivers elude cops', *The Telegraph*, 11 July 2013.
2 Letters, *The Telegraph*, 3 July 2012.
3 A city in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, covering an area of 183 km square.
4 These data are from the Annual Review Bulletin of Kolkata Traffic Police 2016: http://www.kolkatatrafficpolice.gov.in/KolkataPoliceReview.pdf.
5 Ibid.
6 An editorial published in *The Telegraph* sees its upper-class, Anglo-Indian writer ruing the diminution in the number of Sikh taxi drivers in the city, who are perceived to be sincere and well-meaning. O' Brien, B. 'Salute to our super Sikhs', *The Telegraph*, 5 June 2004.
7 The following comment from the transport minister, Madan Mitra, reported in an English daily, captures the cultural logic that is often levied to explain the Bihari migrant taxi drivers' incivility: 'Most of the taxi drivers are not aware of Bengal's language and culture and the sentiment of local people and thus fail to provide them with the service they require.' See: Press Trust of India, 'Strong measures against rogue taxi drivers in Kolkata: Minister', *Business Standard*, 14 July 2014.
8 I have used 'ethnographic interviews' in the sense described by James Spradley in his book *The Ethnographic Interview* (1979) to refer to those interviews which rest on on-going respectful relationships with respondents that allow open and frank discussion, often in a naturalistic setting. I placed particular emphasis on asking descriptive questions which urge interviewees to delineate in detail their routine activities and experiences in their usual setting.

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