

An Analysis of the Normative (Non)Compliance and the Interactions among Passengers in the Buenos Aires Subway*

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Abstract The subway is a public transportation where the control and freedom of passengers must be regulated to create a peaceful and harmonious environment. Social transgression imposes an environment of discomfort and tension between passengers. This study aims to describe the regulations that Buenos Aires subway passengers know, to investigate the perception of (non)compliance with them, to analyze how the interaction among the passengers in the subway is perceived and how it is related to (non)compliance with the norms of coexistence and safety. The results indicated that the participants perceived a high degree of normative noncompliance. Generalized noncompliance accounts for the existence of informal rules that organize the behavior of passengers in contradiction with the guidelines of formal rules. This double standard causes problems of coexistence and safety in the subway. Normative transgressions negatively affect the interactions among passengers, bringing about a social climate of discomfort and tension.

Keywords compliance, emotions, interactions, norms, subway

* Research article

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Análisis del (no-)cumplimiento de la norma

e interacciones entre los pasajeros del metro de Buenos Aires

Resumen El metro es un transporte público en el que es necesario regular el control y libertad de los pasajeros para crear un entorno pacífico y armonioso. La transgresión social impone un entorno de malestar y tensión entre los pasajeros. El objetivo de este estudio es describir la normativa que conocen los pasajeros del metro de Buenos Aires, para investigar la percepción de (no-)cumplimiento de la misma, analizar cómo se percibe la interacción entre los pasajeros del metro y cómo se relaciona con el (no-)cumplimiento de las normas de convivencia y seguridad. Los resultados mostraron que los participantes percibieron un alto grado de no-cumplimiento de la normativa. El no-cumplimiento generalizado explica la existencia de reglas informales que orientan la conducta de los pasajeros en contradicción con las directrices de las reglas formales. Este doble estándar ocasiona problemas de convivencia y seguridad en el metro. La transgresión de las normas afecta de manera negativa las interacciones entre los pasajeros, generando un clima social de malestar y tensión.

Keywords cumplimiento, emociones, interacciones, normas, metro

Análise de (não) observância do regulamento

e interações entre passageiros do metrô de Buenos Aires

Resumo O metrô é um transporte público no qual é preciso regular o controle e a liberdade dos passageiros para criar um ambiente pacífico e harmonioso. A transgressão social impõe um ambiente de desconforto e tensão entre os passageiros. O objetivo deste estudo é descrever os regulamentos conhecidos pelos passageiros do metrô de Buenos Aires, pesquisar a percepção da (não) observância deles, analisar como a interação entre os passageiros do metrô é percebida e como ela se relaciona com a (não-) observância das regras de convivência e segurança. Os resultados mostraram que os participantes perceberam um alto grau de não conformidade com as regulamentações. O incumprimento geral explica a existência de regras informais que orientam a conduta dos passageiros em contradição com as orientações das regras formais. Esse duplo padrão causa problemas de convivência e segurança no metrô. A violação das regras afeta negativamente as interações entre os passageiros, gerando um clima social de desconforto e tensão.

Palavras chave conformidade, emoções, interações, normas, metrô

Introduction

For years, the subway has been one of the most used means of transportation in large urban areas because it manages to tackle problems such as traffic congestion, pollution, noise, passenger commuting times, and mobility of passengers, all while handling a large flow of people at a low cost of energy (Jain et al., 2014).

However, there are other factors that also affect the quality of the commute and the wellbeing of the people, and those factors can influence the choice of the type of transportation. Several studies confirm that agglomeration (Evans & Wener, 2007; Mohd Mahudin et al., 2012), long waiting times (Friman, 2010), the high cost of transportation (Kenyon & Lyons, 2003), the unpredictability of waiting times (Maister, 1985; Morris & Guerra, 2015; Sposato et al., 2012), and the use of various means of transportation (Morris & Guerra, 2015; Sposato et al., 2012) all negatively affect the satisfaction with the service and the wellbeing of the people. However, almost no studies were found that analyzed how (non)compliance with the rules impacted the satisfaction and wellbeing of people that commute (e.g., Zaporozhets, 2014). In addition, few studies have focused on the subway; instead researches have been focused in other modes of public transportation such as buses and trains (Beramendi et al., 2019).

The subway, as all public transportation, is a highly organized system that establishes the synchronization of behaviors and the automation of habits from social standards (Zaporozhets, 2014). The similarity in the rules around the

world means that any tourist can feel confident about traveling underground in an unknown city. These skills have become “urban automatisms”, that is, active techniques that are used in particular situations. However, ignoring particular characteristics of some spaces, urban environments, and cultural contexts is not always justified, as there are cultural differences (Zaporozhets, 2014).

In this transportation system, as in any public space, it is expected that the rider adapts and acts within the established parameters. To do so, it provides a set of specified instructions, some concrete actions, which inform the most novice traveler what the expected behaviors are, and they are generally associated with user’s safety and the rules of coexistence. Additionally, the subway has certain implicit rules, or unwritten social norms, that passengers learn by imitation or oral transmission and that allow them to understand the logistics of transportation (Zaporozhets, 2014).

With these rules the subway seeks out a balance between the control of people’s behavior and the respect for the passenger’s freedom. Control and freedom are two independent variables that are in constant conflict in public spaces and are prevalent among many people. This requires a management of space that prevents one group from inhibiting the expression of another. On this point, personal space is discerned, where an individual has personal control over the interaction and communication with the others and their environment. On the other hand, public spaces are controlled by an authority that must

prevent a person from feeling any threat to their freedom or experiencing negative feelings. Optimal regulation will allow people to feel comfortable and avoid interpersonal and institutional conflicts (Zhao & Siu, 2014).

Appropriate behavior of people in the subway enables all the passengers to enjoy a more relaxed and organized life and a harmonious coexistence with others. On the other hand, normative infractions affect the operation and regulation of transportation. For example, when people enter the subway cars at the exact moment that the doors are closing, they endanger their lives as well as the physical integrity of the subway cars.

Norms prevent passengers from abusing the spaces and the freedom of others (Zhao & Siu, 2014). Zhao and Siu (2014) have found that people who are disorderly or act in defiance of the rules of implicit coexistence cause rejection in the rest of the passengers. For example, the railings in the cars are designed to be used — and shared— by all passengers. However, there are people who lean their entire body on them, preventing others from using it. These inconsiderate behaviors bring about discomfort, generate tensions among passengers, and increase the spread of social distrust (cf., Welch et al., 2005).

Without the spread of social trust, relationships are tinged with uncertainty, and people believe that, at any time, they could become victims of opportunism, a scam, or simply a respect offensive event. Therefore, social norms have the function to regulate interactions and create bonds of trust and reciprocity among people (cf., Burger et al., 2009; Cook, 2005).

Institutions not only should have rules that govern people's behavior, but also must implement a system that controls and sanctions transgressions. Control and sanctioning by the authorities are

necessary, but it is not the most efficient method to generate compliance because it is expensive due to the number of people who have to constantly monitor and punish (Nelissen & Mulder, 2013). Therefore, the best option to generate adherence to the rules is to raise awareness about a process of socialization fostered by institutions that makes people to develop attitudes and values that promote compliance. From this perspective, citizens obey the rules because they believe that it is their duty and obligation to do so and not because of processes of coercion or the imposition of force (Trinkner & Tyler, 2016).

Another way to get control is through social control. This is defined as any type of communication, verbal or nonverbal, whereby individuals demonstrate disapproval at disorderly conduct (Chekroun & Brauer, 2002). Chekroun and Brauer (2002) observed that people believe they would exercise social control to a greater extent than they would carry out in reality, because they underestimate the situational forces that prevent them from enforcing the rule. Moreover, there are other factors such as the personal interpretation of the rule that is broken (Brauer & Chaurand, 2010) and the social importance attributed to the rule. When a person breaks a rule considered as socially important by the community, there is a greater probability that people apply some kind of social control since it would be associated with hostile emotions. On the other hand, when the infraction is not considered highly deviant, the probability of exercising control is lower (Chaurand & Brauer, 2008). Furthermore, it was observed that the probability of punishing deviant behavior is diminished when the rule is frequently broken (Brauer & Chaurand, 2010).

In the Argentinian context, there is another variable that influences the low commitment by citizens to enforce the rules, the reporting, which is seen unfavorably and resembles that of a snitch

(Böhmer, 2010; Nésis, 2005). Due to historic issues, the low legitimacy of the authorities and institutions (cf., Böhmer, 2010) makes “supporting the rules and their control” seem like a betrayal by the interests of an illegitimate force. In this sense, words such as *snitch*, *informer*, *complainant* are words that have a negative emotional impact (Böhmer, 2010, p. 109). Accordingly, people perceive that noncompliance with the rules is a distant problem in which they should not act, where they should not be included, since it is not their role to apply control (Böhmer, 2010; Nésis, 2005).

Regulatory noncompliance becomes a problem when the infraction is not an isolated response, and some do not adapt to the context but rather respond to practices and legitimized institutional dynamics that function as adaptive social norms (Beramendi, 2014). As explained by the Focal Theory of Behavior (Cialdini et al., 1990), there are two types of social norms: the prescriptive norms that guide the conduct of people through a social evaluation and mark what should be done and the descriptive norms that lead people to act by understanding the real behavior of people. The latter allows us to understand a behavior that is adaptive and effective in the context (Cialdini,

2007). When there is a gap between what must be done and what is actually done, conflicts are observed in the regulated system.

Following this approach, but from a political science perspective (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004), it is not only necessary to study the formal rules, which are set by the institutions, but also to understand the informal rules, since these are the ones that establish the actual collective functioning.

Currently, there is no research in the local or nearly international context that has analyzed the recognition of rules and their perception of (non)compliance in the subway. In this sense, the company Subterráneos de Buenos Aires Sociedad de Estado (SBASE) stipulates the rules of safety and coexistence that organize the functioning of the institution (see table 1). The objectives of this study are to describe the rules that Buenos Aires subway passengers are aware of, to investigate the perception of (non)compliance with the rules, to analyze how the interaction among the passengers of the subway is perceived, and how these interactions are related to (non)compliance with the rules of coexistence and safety.

Table 1. Rules of coexistence and safety in the Buenos Aires subway

Keep right on platforms, corridors, and stairs.	For strict reasons of personal safety, take children by the hand.	Let passengers get off before getting on.	Caution is recommended in the use of the stairs and escalators. Lift your feet when leaving the escalators.
Remember that the sound of the buzzer indicates the imminent closing of the doors.	Be more cautious on rainy days.	Throw trash in the receptacles.	All cars have reserved priority seats for pregnant women and disabled people.
Take care of your belongings.	Improper use of the emergency break is prohibited.	No sitting on the escalators.	No running along the platforms, corridors, and stairs.
Wait for the subway behind the yellow line.	Do not get on and get off the cars once the doors have been closed.	Leaning out or putting your arms outside of the windows is forbidden.	Traveling with a bicycle is prohibited.
Walking along the tracks is not allowed.	Preventing the doors from closing, totally or partially, is forbidden.	Do not eat or drink in the cars.	Entering with objects or equipment that may bother other passengers is not allowed.

Smoking in the cars, corridors, or on the platforms is forbidden.	Do not lean on the doors.	Traveling with animals is not allowed, except for duly identified assistance dogs.	Entering with inflammable, explosive or bad-smelling materials is prohibited.
Mind the gap between the platform and the subway.	If service is interrupted, wait for instructions from the personnel.	Do not post advertisements, flyers, or stickers.	Use headphones when listening to music.
Hold on to the railing while on the escalators.	Keep shoelaces tied.	No running on the escalators.	Do not put any objects on the escalators.
Do not use the escalator when it is stopped.	<u>Remove your backpack and watch your belongings.</u>	<u>Fire extinguishers are located beneath the seats.</u>	
<u>Evacuation plan: 1. Wait for instructions from the personnel; 2. Stay on the train. The tracks are dangerous; 3. Exit the car only when advised by the personnel.</u>			

Note. All the rules of safety and coexistence are detailed according to the SBASE regulation and contract. The rules are displayed on the instructive posters for the user adjacent to the ticket offices, and the more specific rules are located in specific places and at certain times during the trip.
Source: own elaboration

Methods

Participants

The sample was intentional, and the snowball technique was used to reach a greater number of participants. It consisted of 21 Argentine users of the Buenos Aires subway. The average age was 44 years ($SD = 16.12$, $Min = 20$, $Max = 70$). All information regarding the sample and the focus group is detailed in table 2.

The focus group technique was used. This method of gathering information consists of group sessions in which participants discuss various topics in a relaxed and informal environment (Domínguez Sánchez-Pinilla & Davila Legerén, 2008).

This technique strategically focuses on those elements and questions relevant in the research that encourage participants to talk and interact with each other (Domínguez Sánchez-Pinilla & Davila Legerén, 2008). For this reason, a guide of discussion topics with semi-structured questions was considered; however, as suggested by the focus group technique, new questions were asked based on the emerging themes since one of the notions of the focus group assumes that information is constructed from interaction (Heritage, 2004).

To structure the group discussions, a guide was built that included a brief introduction and 7 guiding questions: (a) To begin, which are the advantages of using the subway?, (b) What are the disadvantages of using the subway?, (c) How do you think people relate to each other in the metro, in other words, what is the dynamics among passengers like?, (d) Which norms of safety and coexistence of the subway do you know?, (e). Which norms do you think passengers comply with?, (f). Which norms do you think passengers transgress?, and (g) To conclude this meeting, Do you have any comments to add that something that was not covered?

To collect more information about the participants, they were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire that included the following topics: gender, age, frequency using the subway, schooling, perception of one's economic class, and political ideology.

Procedure

Four focus groups were created using the criterion of maximum variability. The project director coordinated the focus groups, and there was always a team member who wrote down. The groups met at a university in the city of Buenos Aires. The

Table 2. Techniques and tools for gathering information

	Group 1 n = 5	Group 2 n = 6	Group 3 n = 4	Group 4 n = 6	Total n = 21
General % Female/Male	50/50	66.7/33.3	50/50	66.7/33.3	61.9/38.1
Median Age (SD)	55 (14.47)	40.50 (9.31)	50.50 (19.77)	34 (16.14)	44 (16.12)
<i>Frequency of subway use %</i>					
Several times per week	60	83.3	75	66.7	72.7
Once per week	20	16.7	25	16.7	18.2
Once every 15 days	20	0	0	16.7	9.1
<i>Schooling%</i>					
High school not completed	0	0	0	16.7	4.8
Associate degree not completed	0	16.7	25	0	9.5
Associate degree completed	0	0	25	0	4.8
Bachelor's degree not completed	20	66.7	50	66.7	42.9
Bachelor's completed	20	16.7	0	16.7	23.8
Graduate degree completed	60	0	0	0	14.3
<i>Perception of one's economic class %</i>					
Low-middle	0	0	25	0	4.8
Middle	0	50	0	33.3	23.8
Upper-middle	100	50	50	66.7	66.7
Upper	0	0	25	0	4.8
<i>Political ideology %</i>					
Left	20	0	25	0	9.5
Moderate/center	80	100	75	100	90.5
Right	0	0	0	0	0

Source: own elaboration

sessions were held in a relaxed atmosphere, without interruption, and were provided with snacks.

The activities lasted 60 to 90 minutes. The group discussions were audio-recorded and then transcribed for later analysis. Additionally, as mentioned above, the moderators wrote down during the activities to make easier the understanding of gestures and attitudes of the participants. At the end of each discussion group, the participants answered a self-administered questionnaire.

The Ethics Committee of the University approved the research project that frames this study. The participants were asked to sign an informed consent, which described the activity that was to be carried out, clarified that their participation

was anonymous and voluntary, and that the results would only be used for academic purposes.

Data analysis

The analysis of the information was based on the transcription (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2011) and was processed with the Atlas Ti, a software able to segment the data into units, codify the data, and build theory (Muñoz Justicia, 2005). The Grounded Theory was used to analyze the data. The theory derived from data collected in a systematic way was analyzed through a research process. This method does not arise from a preconceived theory but begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data. To do so, it is necessary to focus on the material

collected, and at the same time, have creativity to be able to capture the complexity of the subject to be analyzed. It is also necessary to always be open to the possibility of recoding the examined material (Strauss & Corbin, 2002).

After rereading the transcriptions several times, the analysis was carried out. In the first instance, I proceeded to open coding, in the second instance to the axial coding, and finally, the families of networks were created. However, as proposed by Strauss and Corbin (2002), the coding process is not linear, but rather the various types of coding are overlapped and interlocked as new ways of understanding how the phenomenon emerges, and this leads to restructuring the proposed model.

To analyze the sociodemographic data extracted from the questionnaire, the statistical program SPSS 0.21 was used, which allowed us to perform the descriptive analyses.

Results

Based on the analysis of the results, the following categories were created: *Rules that participants acknowledge*, *Compliance with the rules*, *Proposals to reduce the regulatory noncompliance*, and *Relationships and interactions among passengers*. For each category, except for the recognition of rules, quotes from the participants were selected and are shown in table 3.

Table 3. Comments by the participants

2-A	Even people who occupy the place they are meant to, in the new subways, such as the disabled or pregnant women, someone gets on and takes the designated seat when he or she should not, then you have to tell him/her. I think it is a reflection of what happens in society, the disregard for others.
2-B	The point of having higher frequency makes a person not feel the need to try to travel in some other way, so they say, "Ok, the next one (i.e. subway) will be here in two minutes so that's it, I would rather wait two more minutes". And besides, I know those two minutes mean the subway won't be too crowded.
2-1	Here in Buenos Aires, the eighty centimeters of yellow (i.e., waiting line) exists, but I don't respect it! I don't respect it, because if I do, someone will jump ahead and beat me into the subway. I know that really well.
2-2	What is not respected is the rule of "first-come, first go in", for example, when the subway is arriving, once the subway stops, you might be first, but whoever was last might push his way through to be first and won't respect the one who was already there.
2-3	This is important, people will try to race and beat others for a seat. I've noticed that in many cases, especially women. If a man is walking to a seat, the woman will jump ahead and beat him to the seat.
2-4	I stay by the door, because I'm generally carrying stuff. If I don't do this, I cannot get out, at least during rush hour. I commute from Florida to Pueyrredon, and if I'm not near the door that opens to get off at Pueyrredon, I cannot get out. If I'm right by the door that opens, I will get off and get back on, but I always stay around that spot. But there are people that will stay and won't move, so come on, get off, we all get off, too, and then you can get back on again.
2-5	Even though the seat for the elderly is well marked, there are people who will look at their phone and appear distracted ... so they don't give up their seat.
2-6	Well, to me something that really changed are the escalators. Before, you would just get on and stay there like you are supposed to. For safety reasons you are not supposed to walk or run on the escalator, but over the years the anxiety level has gone up so much or more people have traveled around the world that when people get on an escalator they will stand to one side, leaving room for those who are in a hurry to go right through, maybe because there are people who are in a hurry to make a connection or are in a hurry to run some errands, I don't know. But now you can tell how this is becoming more of a cultural way, to stand to one side, either left or right, and I think it's a good thing because it'll benefit the one who's in a hurry. I'm not sure if it's ok for safety reasons, but I think it's fine people do this.

2-7	Something happened for being crafty. It happens that on the B subway, the Medrano B station, the escalator won't work and sometimes it does. It's not happening right now, but six or eight months ago, in Castro Barros station, on the side you get off the subway, it wasn't working either. Well, during that week both escalators didn't work, and the one in Florida station also broke, and I said "fuck". I always knew the Medrano station and this one weren't working... so I said no! I will go through this way, and I did. So, the ticket office guard told me "Sir, sir! You need to go through this way to pay", and I said, "Yes, you are right, but the escalator is not working, and I am using the service". The guy ignored me, and I didn't pay.
2-8	For example, when they say that you can't get on or off when the buzzer sounds, and you still try to make it in by pushing before the door closes. I don't think they respect that, you can hear the buzzer, and you make the impossible to get on.
2-9	People are dirty and careless.
2-10	(..) And then the politeness of people when they get on the subway and you can see people laying down or occupying two seats. Then you see people talking on their phones like they were in their home, yelling and all.
3-1	If they use the TV on the platforms to repeat a message saying to give up their seat to a pregnant woman all the time, people will be more committed to respect that rule, and when people see that someone is not giving up their seat, people will enforce that rule.
3-2	Besides, I see people that don't pay plenty of times, but if there's police saying, "No, you can't go through there, no", then people comply. There's a lot of people that don't pay and go through the door that can be opened (i.e. the emergency door).
4-1	Yes, I think people are more thoughtful and united on that subject. You see something weird then you will try to make eye contact with the person who might be a victim of a theft.
4-2	I try to ironize it with a joke. People, since you don't know me, I want to let you know that I'm getting off at the next stop, so the person will know I'm getting off. It's in the script, right? So, if they refuse to acknowledge it, then I will use the force. I already explained that I'm getting off so therefore let me go through.
4-3	I see that every passenger on the subway is in his own world, listening to music. You generally won't find people talking. I see that everyone has headphones, books. If they are sitting, they are mostly reading, it's like everyone is doing their own thing. They notice the station they need to get off at and they get off. It mostly begins and ends there.
4-4	The issue is when the subway is packed, totally overwhelmed. You need to prepare to get off and everyone is in the way. So, everyone starts pushing, and that makes people start yelling, most people have headphones, and they cannot hear the one who's getting off, and when they are getting pushed, without trying to be rude, the one with headphones will get annoyed, turn around and say, "Why are you pushing me?", and that usually leads to fights but it's unavoidable.

Source: own elaboration

1) Rules that participants acknowledge

Safety rules: These are rules that indicate how people should behave to keep their physical integrity and that of the rest of the passengers in the subway. Within this set of rules, the participants acknowledged one group of rules that allude to the processes of *evacuation due to fire, accidents, or technical problems of the cars* and a second group of rules that seek to prevent any accident related to the *operation of the subway*.

Evacuation due to fire, accidents, or technical problems in the cars: Pushing the emergency button in case of fire, taking the hammer to break the window in case of fire, using the ladder that is beneath the seats, waiting for the hydraulic doors to open, not getting off the car, and waiting for an indication of where to go.

Subway Functions Rules: No leaning on the doors, no standing between the cars, no walking on the escalator, no entering the car when hearing the sound that signals the doors are closing, no smoking, holding hands with their children, no running in the subway, no putting hands or arms outside of the window, and waiting behind the yellow line on the platform.

Additionally, two more rules are acknowledged. One refers to the care of passengers when they *faint*. According to this rule, the affected person must be helped to get off at the next station to be seen by specialized personnel. The other rule refers to *being watchful on one's belongings* so that they are not victims of theft. In this case, participants recognized that this action is communicated with posters, statements by the conductor, by the security guards, and among the passengers

since thefts are quite common. Theft occur so frequently that all the participants in the focus groups reported being victims of theft or having witnessed when one occurred.

The participants mentioned that some rules may exist, but they are not clearly stated, for example, the evacuation of passengers due to an accident. In some of the focus groups, the people said that the process should be disclosed to the public and that this should be done in a simple way by utilizing the internal network of television.

Rules of coexistence: These account for those rules that regulate the relationships and interactions among people in the subway. There are explicit rules, those that people recognize from posters and signs, and there are implicit ones, that participants learn from the socialization and coexistence in the space with other people. The explicit rules, and those that the people mentioned the most, were: giving their seat to pregnant women, disabled, or elderly; letting people get off before entering the car; and not standing at the door or close to it. In addition, the participants noted a rule in the Buenos Aires subway that is not applied, and it is that there should be indicative lines on the floor of the platform so that people know where the doors of the cars are going to be opened so they could wait in a more orderly way.

Implicit rules, which are called *basic norms* are those that people should know and fulfill out of respect for other passengers: (a) Keeping an appropriate distance from people. One participant said that they were 60 centimeters away from other passengers, especially at times when there is crowding of passengers and space is reduced; (b) Use the due seat space. Participants stated that in some units the seats do not have divisions indicating the space that each passenger should occupy, quite often, this causes people to abuse the

space they should use; (c) Do not talk loudly on cell phones; (d) Do not get on the subway with bags or any object that may bother passengers, because they abuse the space intended to each passenger; and (e) First-come, first go in.

2) Compliance with the rules

Participants said that there is a tendency to transgress all rules, creating a pattern of non-compliance. The only rules agreed upon by the participants were: no smoking, no hands out the windows, watching their belongings, and helping if someone faint. The other rules are poorly respected. Among the reasons why rules are generally disobeyed, two positions are observed: (a) People do not respect the rules because they do not have values, and there is not anyone to enforce and sanction them, and (b) people fail to comply with rules because the conditions of the subway journey make it impossible for them to obey. The first refers to the fact that the normative problem is the responsibility of the people, while the second focuses on the problem that the company or institution provides.

Regarding these two concepts, the participants stated the reason underlying the noncompliance with different rules and why they or others defy them. At the same time, they explained that safety standards are less respected than those of coexistence since when interacting with others, people are more compliant.

Here are some of the rules and reasons that reinforce their noncompliance:

1. *Do not step over the yellow line*: Participants noted that this rule is not met for two reasons. Firstly, in most subway lines, the arrival time of the subway is not indicated, so, anxiously waiting, people approach the tracks and go beyond the safety line to look and see if the subway is

coming. The second reason is associated with the crowding of passengers. As the cars are stuffed with passengers, especially during peak hours, passengers wait on the yellow line to be closer and to be able to enter the car first. As previously mentioned, there are no lines indicating where to wait, but people crowd and try to walk in as fast as possible.

2. *“First come, first go in” is not respected:* In the subway, although there is no line or lines that organizes people, there is a logic regarding who comes first. The people who arrive earlier approach and pile up closer to the yellow line. However, and in relation to the previous rule, there are passengers who go ahead without respecting the other passengers or move along the yellow line, where they should not walk.

3. *Let passengers exit before you enter:* The participants stated that this rule is not met. People waiting on the platform are desperate to get in and do not wait for passengers to get off. This causes friction, shock, and social unrest because there is no order. According to the participants, people want to travel and lose as little time as possible, and when they see that the doors open, they are pushed aggressively to enter, and no rules are respected.

4. *Do not lean against the doors:* The participants said that a few years ago, a new dynamic was established where people get on the car, and instead of moving toward the inside of the car, they stand near the door. The participants explained that many of them do it because transportation is so crowded, and they prefer to be close so that they can get off more easily. However, other participants clarified that this new dynamic is observed even when the cars are relatively empty, and people can move about comfortably.

5. *Yield the seats:* Most of the participants stated that they do not give up their seat with the consideration that they should. They explained that people sit down, use their cell phone, read or close their eyes, and are not attentive to the needs of passengers who have priority to sit, and it also happens with seats that are specifically reserved for them. However, if the need was clear or if other passengers or the person who needs it requests it, people stand and give up their seat.

6. *Do not walk on the escalator:* This rule generates confusion, and people from different perspectives say that it is not complied with. Some participants have travelled abroad, and in other countries, if people want to speed up their trip, they go up the left side of the escalator, and if they simply want to be transported by it, they stay on the right side. In the Buenos Aires subway, people are prohibited from walking to prevent accidents, but in the practice, these two contradictory rules coexist and create arguments between passengers and a social unrest.

7. *Not to pay the ticket:* However, people did not mention paying for the trip as a rule. One participant said that he did not pay for his trip once because the three station escalators did not work. The other participants said that it is not a daily practice, but that they have seen this happening sometimes since there is no enforcement.

8. *Do not enter when the buzzer sounds signaling the doors closing:* Some participants said that passengers enter the car even though the buzzer has announced the closing of doors or when they are closing. This is problematic, since this causes slight delays. Moreover, it endangers the safety of the person who is shoving through the door.

9. *Keep the subway clean:* Some participants said that people throw their trash on the floor and do not take care of public spaces.

10. *Rules of coexistence*: Most of the participants pointed out that in the moment of greater harmony among passengers, the most implicit social rules, for example, respecting others, not shouting, not pushing, not speaking very loudly on the phone, and keeping distance between passengers, are not respected. There are other rules, such as not carrying bags or any large item that may bother others, is something that is not met at any time, even when the cars are not full. Additionally, they suggest that sometimes people occupy a greater part of the seat that would make them more comfortable, but they use space intended to another passenger.

3) Proposals to reduce the degree of noncompliance

Before the discussions that took place regarding (non)compliance with the rules, some participants suggested taking various actions to remedy the noncompliance in the subway:

1. *Increase in signage*: The participants suggested that there should be more signs, although most of them pointed out that they have increased in relation to a few years ago, as well as sound warnings and advertisements on the internal network of televisions. They argued that the increased communication of rules will increase the awareness of them and also encourage other passengers to report those who infringe the rules.

2. *Increase in security personnel*: The people in the focus groups stated that if there were officers/agents regulating the behavior of the passengers, there would be greater compliance.

Regarding the relationships and interactions between passengers, the participants told that four different dynamics can be found:

1. *Positive relationship*: They stated that there are some situations when a good relationship between passengers is fostered. Firstly, they said that in the face of health problems, people are supportive and helpful to those who needed it. Secondly, before thefts occur in the subway, the people are attentive and warn another passenger who may become a victim of robbery. Thirdly, they remarked that there are people who do not give up their seat, but there are also people who request that the seat be given to the person who needs it.

2. *Ambivalent relationship*: There are participants who stressed that relationships depend more on the context. When the cars are very full or there are delays or inconveniences, the mood of the passengers is bad, and the situations become tense, with people confronting one another. However, when the environment is more relaxed, people are friendly, and relationships are positive.

3. *There was no relationship between passengers*: Participants alluded to no interaction among people. They emphasized that each passenger is busy with their cell phone, listening to music, reading, or putting on makeup, but they do not pay attention to other people. Each passenger is glued to what they are doing or thinking about, and there is no willingness to dialogue. They stated two main reasons that could explain such little interaction. One is that the travel time is short, people got on and already knew that they would get off within a few minutes. The other reason is that in the subway, there is no landscape or view to admire, and this makes the passengers feel forced to look at other people and generate uncomfortable eye contact.

4. *Negative relationship*: Some participants said that relationships in the subway are tense because too much people are travelling and also because of the degree of disregard for people. This leads

people to push each other, raise their voices, and create discomfort and even physical aggressions.

Discussion

Regarding the first objective, which sought to describe the rules that participants acknowledged, it was noted that there are rules that come from the institution (See table 1) and that are recognized (e.g., yielding the seats, not leaning on the door, not entering the car when you hear the buzzer signaling the doors are closing, not smoking, etc.). However, many were not mentioned by the participants, indicating some degree of ignorance (e.g., not eating or drinking in the subway). There was another group of rules of coexistence that people noticed are not written but are learned and shared by the passengers (e.g., keeping an appropriate distance, not talking loudly on their cell phone, and occupying an appropriate part of the seat); people have consensus here and believe these rules should regulate social interactions.

As proposed by Zaporozhets (2014) and Zhao and Siu (2014), these rules are learned by socializing in a space, regulating the expected behavior, and when they are not respected, they cause discomfort. For example, as one participant's session showed, he asked permission to move within the car, get to the door, and get off. That is, he behaved in a proper manner. However, when he was not heard, he resorted to an act of physical aggression like pushing the rest of the passengers. In this case, control and social sanctions (Brauer & Chaurand, 2010; Chekroun & Brauer, 2002) did not work, and for this reason, individuals chose to resort to other behaviors that broke the implicit rules and generated aggression. Moreover, there was another group of safety rules that participants stated that are not linked to those regulated by SBASE (e.g., do not stop between cars) but that people recognized informally.

In relation to the second objective, the analysis of the perception of normative (non)compliance, it was observed that most participants perceived a high degree of noncompliance. Many of the rules that participants are aware of, they do not believe that people respect. This would indicate that breaching the rules does not come from ignorance or misinformation, as it was previously explained, but that infringement is conscious.

Even though they said that there was a high degree of noncompliance, there were some standards more respected than others. Ocejia et al. (2001) argued that regulatory compliance depends on the perception of legitimacy of the rule. That is, when people believe that the rule is fair, it increases their adherence. In this sense, when the participants stated that the rules were respected to a greater extent, such as "giving up their seat to the one who has priority", which is a rule of basic coexistence and respect, and safety rules such as "do not lean on the door", the legitimacy of the rule is implicitly distinguished. It does not mean that people think that leaning on the doors is acceptable. They believe that with crowds of people, leaning on the doors is something inevitable, and they solve certain problems such as walking through the car among a crowd of people. The safety rule gets irrelevant or incoherent due to the dynamics of the operation of the subway, and people start not respecting it. However, it is interesting to note that when the cars are not stuffed with passengers, some of them still stay at the door. That is to say, although it no longer responds to the logic of noncompliance, the behavior is automated, the action is decontextualized, and thus, a new norm is naturalized.

This new strategy that is learned and adopted does not solve the social or group problem, but it is a strategy used by individuals to adapt to the system. Regular infringement indicates that there is a problem due to the discrepancy

between formal or explicit rules and informal or implicit rules (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004). However, on this phenomenon, one must think about whether the rule is still functional and, if it is, how to adapt it to the new context; if not, how to change it. The problem is when conflicting rules coexist and cause confusion and deviation from the rules (Beramendi, 2014). Analyzing some answers from the participants, they made sure to step on the yellow line to be able to get on the car earlier and that no one was ahead of them. This rule is clear and functional since it demarcates a space to avoid any accident. However, due to the number of passengers and the low frequency of the subway, participants broke this rule to be able to get on and not to waste time, so that they would not miss the subway. The most consistent solution given was to increase the frequency of the subway, but there are other rules that help the ordering of passengers, such as adding lines that demarcate where the doors open, and people can line up there. As Maister (1985) puts it, waiting on the subway, just like waiting for trains, generates more anxiety, because people wait for it as an amorphous mass when it is not clear who came first. In this sense, creating a new rule that organizes the space can reduce anxiety and deter people from disobeying the safety rule “do not step over the yellow line”.

Furthermore, the rules have the challenge of managing public space, while controlling and respecting the freedom of people so that some do not inhibit the expression of others (Zhao & Siu, 2014). The participants in these focus groups mainly raised the need for a competent authority to regulate and sanction. As mentioned above, this authority actor is necessary, but it is not the most effective, especially when the rules are widely disrespected (Beramendi & Romero Gianotti, 2019) and because it is expensive due to the need for constant control. To a lesser extent,

participants mentioned the need for the authorities to exercise control and ensure that the rules are complied with. In these cases, the participants raised the need for the rules to be displayed on posters or signs, so that the institution takes responsibility for the rule-making, so that it does not look like one's personal choice. In this sense, it is hard for people to demand that the rules be adhered to. As Böhmer (2010) and Nésis (2005) put it, in the local context, people find it hard to put themselves in the place of a whistleblower, pointing out that someone is not following a rule that others do, and for this reason, he or she draws an advantage. This can also be an effect, as argued by Brauer and Chaurand (2010), that if the infraction becomes common, it is adopted as a descriptive social norm and there will be greater tolerance, and this makes it difficult for people to exercise social control.

From the stories, we observed that the infractions caused discomfort and that it affects interpersonal relationships. Above all, this was observed in the hours of greatest agglomeration, where people recognized that a tense and aggressive relationship between people occurs. This is seen in other studies, where the heat, smell, and discomfort caused by overcrowding contribute to aggressive behavior and negative interpersonal responses (Mohd Mahudin et al., 2012). However, participants stated that in the subway there is no interaction between passengers. The routes are direct, the trip is fast, and there is no landscape to distract the passengers, so people are engaged with some activity or thought. In this sense, this environment can make difficult for people to express any discomfort or tolerate the disregard of another passenger.

In order to generate changes, a space must be provided where the rights of the people are cared for and not corrupted by others and, at the same time, the reason that underlies the infraction

needs to be understood since it responds to an institutional dynamic which must be changed or formalized.

Furthermore, it is extremely important to begin to empower the passengers to enforce the rules and, in that way, they will also positively regulate their behavior and disobey less. Not only is the awareness of the rules necessary, but promoting social control to improve coexistence in the public transportation is imperative as well. If normative noncompliance is addressed from these angles, the perception of violence, discomfort, or disrespect experienced by passengers can be reversed, and a space of comfort, trust, and wellbeing can be achieved in the subway.

This study shows some limitations. Firstly, in the design of the questionnaire, participants were asked only orally and, as a condition to start answering, about their place of residence. However, the lack of this information added in the questionnaire makes it impossible to know if there are differences between residents of these urban areas. Secondly, the sample tends to have a bias in relation to the participant's social class and their schooling. Finally, passengers should have been asked in the questionnaire which lines of the metro they used.

Considering this qualitative study, for future research, the objectives are to design two scales to assess normative (non)compliance in the metro and the extent to which a normative transgression is uncomfortable for passengers. It also should be planned to deepen the social interaction among passengers to analyze which social climate prevails. In these future studies, the characteristic of the sample will be more balanced.

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