

## **FR11.10.20 Gender and Social Relations in the Multi Ethnic City**

### **Gendering Urban Space: How Feminist Theoretical Frameworks can help us Explore Social Relations and Inequality in and through Urban Space**

Presenter: Megan Heim-LaFrombois, Auburn University (meh0085@auburn.edu)

Authors: Megan Heim-LaFrombois, Auburn University

Since the late 1970s, a diverse and comprehensive body of academic literature has been developed that examines urban spaces, processes, and planning with explicit attention paid to how space embodies social relations of power, including gender, race, class, and sexuality relations of power. A feminist, or gender-based, focus has waxed and waned over the decades, with some arguing that we have reached a critical point in the scholarship where gender and other social relations have been subsumed by general 'equity' issues. What, then, does research and scholarship look like that lends itself to this approach and what can be garnered through it? Based on my qualitative research exploring participatory forms of urban planning, this paper highlights the key principles and importance of examining urban space and processes from a feminist framework. I highlight five key areas, which are not mutually exclusive and are in fact deeply entwined, which provide one way of defining such a framework: 1) the use of intersectional analysis in which multiple and compounding relations of power can be explored; 2) a focus on to the everyday lived experiences of individuals; 3) an examination of how space is gendered (and raced, classed, etc.); 4) the moving of so-called 'private' activities into the 'public' view and a blurring of the distinction between the two; and 5) a broadening of our understanding of 'infrastructures.' This paper also provides case studies and examples from the field in which these issues have played out, demonstrating the additional value that such an analytical approach brings to urban studies and opening up new opportunities for creating more inclusive spaces.

### **Girlz to Women: Overcoming the Obstacles to Leadership Faced by Girls and Women in 21st Century U.S. Bicycling**

Presenter: Gwen Urey, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona (gurey@cpp.edu)

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Social justice activists are urging bicycle advocates and planners to better understand the diversity of people who bicycle and the specific contexts of bicycling. Mainstream advocacy and planning focus heavily on creating bike infrastructure as part of development (with gentrification implications). The mobility needs of bicyclists, especially in communities of color, remain poorly understood and largely un-addressed. Persistent gender inequity inhibits the potential of women and girls both as bicyclists and as leaders in bicycling communities. This paper presents findings from two qualitative studies: 1) interviews with women who are leaders in Southern California's bicycling community either through their roles with cycling organizations or as educators with League Certified Instructor status; and 2) interviews with staff of "Earn-A-Bike" programs for youth spanning nine states and four time zones. Women bicycling leaders articulate family and community biases against their riding. For many, their emergence as leaders came long after their contested emergence as bicycle riders. As teenagers and young adults, to choose a bicycle for transportation meant, for many, risking criticism from parents, ridicule from peers, and street-level harassment. The leaders of tomorrow may not have it much better: in "Earn-A-Bike" programs, intersectional gender parity is especially important, particularly in

underserved communities. However, too often girls miss out: their participation in the skill-building and networking opportunities of “Earn-A-Bike” programs is lower than boys, and drops off increasingly as they mature into and women. Gendered notions of who is a bicyclist, and how do and should bicyclists exercise their “right to the street” need greater examination. Planning for bicycling infrastructure—both “hard” and “soft”—needs to reflect more inclusionary thinking.

### **Consuming High-Rises: The Minds of Young Women in Neo-liberal Mumbai**

Presenter: Ramya Ramanath, DePaul University (rramanat@depaul.edu)

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Media reports since India's 2011 census have consistently discussed its standing as the world's youngest nation. More than half of its population has come of age in the late 1990s, a period of high economic growth following privatization. Journalistic accounts stereotypically depict the changes by the consumption practices of young adult Indians. Use of cell phones and other mobile devices, the choices in fashion, food, movies, and music—all serve as an index of the universal forces of globalization, liberalization and privatization. Imageries like these draw attention to a monolithic middle-class identity which obscures more than it reveals. This article calls for an alternative narration that brings the complexities of gender, class, religion, and caste into constructions of a key signifier of young India—its high-rise residential apartments.

Unlike its predecessors that housed the city's lower, middle and upper-class residents, it is Mumbai's slum and squatter dwellers that are the more recent owners of high-rise, high-density apartments. Given this context, the article examines how young adult women brought up in the city's slums: 1) define the risks and opportunities of slum living? and 2) deal with disruptions in their place attachments following relocation to high-rises?

The article will bring together the social and spatial elements of their experiences and highlight the value of a geographical perspective in the interdisciplinary field of youth development. Data collected comprises two focus group discussions with a total of 35 young women, personal semi-structured interviews with six other young women, informal street interviews, and observation at key formal and informal sites where young women got together. Young people's experiences uncovered in the research demonstrates their agency by considering the ways in which they create a sense of inclusion for themselves, put up with and/or resist exclusionary processes in their new habitats.