Gender, Cycling and urban contexts

Towards a conceptual and methodological framework for comparative international studies

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The bicycle is well known as a socially inclusive and sustainable mobility tool, affordable, efficient and accessible regardless of age or gender.

However, in many cities around the world, women are underrepresented as cyclists.
Adapted from Pucher and Buehler (2012)
Women generally commute differently than men.

The reasons for these differences may be cultural and social, such as the uneven division of domestic work and women's vulnerability to public insecurity.

Risks and fears can be real or perceived.
How (and why) women are underrepresented in different urban contexts (global north and south)?
Many factors have been proposed to explain these global and gender differences: infrastructure, urban planning policies, security, income, access to other transport modes, climate, slope, etc.
Age

Children's commute depends greatly on their parents who are models for them and who contribute to the formation of their habits (Québec, 2009).

Some parents discourage girls from cycling because of concerns about their safety (Frater et Kingham, 2018).

It's not uncommon to hear women of all ages talk about lack of confidence in their own ability to ride a bike (Pucher et Buehler, 2012).
Objective

The aim is to propose a conceptual and methodological framework to identify and classify the factors influencing gender differences in cycling from an international comparative perspective.

In particular, the goal is to understand the practice of cycling among young women in Montreal and Belo Horizonte and to assess how the environment influences women's personal decision.
Montreal and Belo Horizonte are similar in size and population density.
Methodology

Quantitative approaches are important and useful, but sometimes there is a lack of **understanding of the social and cultural side**. People are always influenced by the environment and by social rules (**sometimes invisible**).

We propose to do a research in 3 scales, using a **mixed and comparative approach**.
Mixed approach

Quantitative + Qualitative

The advantage is to do a further analysis of the object, analyzing the data from surveys and, after this step, take a closer look at the object, searching how to explain the quantitative results.
Comparative approach

The advantage of doing comparative research is that the phenomenon can be better understood (Bryman, 2012).

Why the interest in doing comparative research between Montreal and Belo Horizonte?
Why Montreal and Belo Horizonte?

Montreal:
- Area: 431.50 km²
- Population: 1.7 mi
- Urban context: North America
- Women count for more than 40% of the cyclists.

Belo Horizonte:
- Area: 330.90 km²
- Population: 2.5 mi
- Urban context: South America
- Women are less than 8% of regular cyclists.

Wide range of buses, metro lines and shared bike systems.

 Ranked as the top city in North America for cyclists (2019 – Coya institute)

The first city in Brazil to receive a system of shared electric bikes.

What are cycling practices among young women in Montreal and Belo Horizonte?

Research in 3 Scales

Urban context
City actions / Interviews

Women’s mobility
Surveys

Speech
Interviews
1. Municipal analysis: *intra-city scale*

2. Compare Montreal and Belo Horizonte: *inter-city scale*
Other analyses could be done, such as conducting interviews with professionals, **women of different ages or ethnic groups**, or seeking the point of view of non-cyclists.

But we must be aware of the **resources available**, either the time or research funding.
This research, for its comparative nature, can highlight ways to overcome obstacles to women’s cycling in Brazil.

It may also help to understand contemporary challenges in promoting cycling and proposing more gender-sensitive mobility in urban planning policies.
Obrigada, Thank you, Merci

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