

# **The Road to Inclusive Mobility and Accessibility: Interweaving Intersectional Feminism with Disability Discourse through Cycling in the Philippines<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

One of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of United Nations is Goal 11: “Sustainable Cities and Communities.” This goal emphasizes the importance of safe and inclusive mobility and transportation for all, especially for women and children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. With this, Philippine legislators filed bills and implemented guidelines to safeguard and promote cycle commuting. These bills intend to re-introduce cycling to the public as the cheapest, most sustainable, reliable, and safest form of transportation. However, do these policies address the problems that vulnerable road users experience? Are these bills responsive to the issues of safety, economic status, and welfare of the marginalized cyclist? Do these policies commit to safe, inclusive, and sustainable mobility for everybody? This paper attempts to analyze legislative bills regarding bicycle commuting in the Philippines through interweaving intersectional feminism and disability studies. Since intersectional feminism is a

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<sup>1</sup> This research is a reframed version of my previous paper entitled, “Babae on Bikes: Intersectional Feminism and Public Policy in the Philippines” (Sarza, 2021). Here, instead of referring only to intersectional feminism to highlight the concerns of Filipina cyclists, I am also merging disability justice as one of the objectives in promoting safe, accessible, and inclusive mobility in the Philippines. Said integration addresses the knowledge deficit regarding disability discourse in the academe and public policy.

paradigm that analyzes the overlapping oppression of race, gender, and class, this paper first explores the two main problems that marginalized cyclists face in the Philippines: safety and economic injustice. Next, this paper uses social constructivism instead of the medical model of disability in dismantling ableism in public policy. This study then evaluates the proposed bill on bicycling commuting; the Senate Bill No. 1518 or “The Safe Pathways Act or of 2020”. The paper concludes that such public policies are ableist, exclusivist, and disregard gender issues. The research also offers specific recommendations on further developing future public policies on mobility and transportation, making them more inclusive, responsive, and empowering.

**Keywords:** intersectional feminism, disability studies, bicycle commuting, cycling and disability, inclusive mobility and transportation

## 1. Riding through Inclusive Mobility and Accessibility

The United Nation’s Economic and Social Council (henceforth UNESCAP) emphasizes the importance of “safe and inclusive transport and mobility,” or “the ability to safely and reliably access a preferred destination by navigating in an environment considerate of individual needs”.<sup>2</sup> Basically, an inclusive and sustainable transportation system that enables all persons, regardless of gender, socio-economic status, race, etc., to travel or move from one point to another with ease but without fear for their lives, property, or safety at any given time or circumstance. Its inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals (henceforth SDG) cements the UN’s belief that “safe and inclusive transport and mobility can, thus, have a domino effect towards enhancing an inclusive society that leaves no one behind”.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the route to an inclusive and accessible road for everybody is still unclear as data on road traffic incidents provides a bleak picture.

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<sup>2</sup> UNESCAP, *Safe and Inclusive Transport and Mobility* (Bangkok: UNESCAP, 2020), [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/EN\\_4\\_SAFE%20AND%20INCLUSIVE%20TRANSPORT%20AND%20MOBILITY.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/EN_4_SAFE%20AND%20INCLUSIVE%20TRANSPORT%20AND%20MOBILITY.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

According to the World Health Organization, 97% of transport-related deaths happen on roads, and 62.5% are from the Asia Pacific region; Southeast Asia accounted for 18.96% of 2013 to 17.76% of 2016.<sup>4</sup> It is noteworthy that among these fatalities, the “vulnerable road users, namely pedestrians, cyclists, and users of motorized two- and three-wheelers, represent 54.8 % of fatalities in Asia and the Pacific.” In relation to this, Southeast Asia (75.2%) along with Northeast Asia (66.1%) have the highest percentage of vulnerable road user fatalities.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, when the entire Luzon was placed on an “enhanced community quarantine” (ECQ) on 16 March 2020, it exposed numerous transportation woes.<sup>6</sup> Borders were closed, economic activities were halted, and public transportation that served the ordinary Filipino, such as jeepneys, buses, and even tricycles, were discontinued. Pre-pandemic commuting, especially in Metro Manila, was already a challenge, but because of the dreaded virus, the difficulty was magnified. As history has proven repeatedly, when everything fails, people re/turn to cycling<sup>7</sup>. This surge is not exclusive to the Philippines; in Europe, which has existing bike-friendly cities, the demand for bikes, gears, outfits, and infrastructure increased due to the pandemic.<sup>8</sup> The major bike manufacturers, namely Giant, Canyon, Specialized, and most recently, Santa Cruz, admit that their price and production increased up to 12%, citing the demand and logistical costs issues brought by the virus.<sup>9</sup> But then again, the Philippine experience is different: unlike its

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>6</sup> Raul Dancel, “Coronavirus: Duterte places a third of the Philippines on sweeping lockdown,” *The Straits Times*, March 23, 2020. <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/coronavirus-massive-cracks-in-manila-lockdown-luzon-under-enhanced-community-quarantine>.

<sup>7</sup> This paper uses “cycling” or “cycle” to refer to non-motorized modes of transportation or mobility, which includes bicycle, e-bikes, wheelchair, scooters, etc.; “bicycle” or “bikes” refers to two-wheeled vehicles. Either way, both cycles and bicycles are used by women and the disabled. As such, this paper uses both terms accordingly.

<sup>8</sup> Kate Vandy, “Coronavirus: How Pandemic Sparked European Cycling Revolution,” *BBC News*, October 2, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54353914>.

<sup>9</sup> Liam Cahill, “Specialized, Giant, and Canyon Increase Prices,” *road.cc*, November 5, 2020, <https://road.cc/content/news/specialized-canyon-and-giant-increase-bike-prices-278405>. See also Miller, Matt. 2021. “Citing Pandemic Issues, Santa Cruz Bicycles Increases Retail Prices.” *Singletracks*, March 10, 2021. <https://www.singletracks.com/mtb-news/citing-pandemic-issues-santa-cruz-bicycles-increases-retail-prices/>.

neighboring Asian countries, the Filipino consciousness has always been indifferent to non-motorized commuting; its lack of adequate infrastructures and absence of public policy to safeguard and protect cyclists just prove that the country is auto-centric and not bike- or even pedestrian-friendly. However, what public policy cultivates a bike-friendly, walkable, sustainable, inclusive, and safe street? Do the bicycle commuting bills promote safety for all, especially the vulnerable sectors of society, such as women, children, PWDs, and older people? Do the guidelines in building infrastructures for cycle commuting consider their welfare? Why is there a need to reflect on the lived experiences of the bicycle commuting Filipina and the barriers that hamper the mobility of disabled<sup>10</sup> people?

This paper aims to analyze legislative bills that refer to bicycle commuting in the Philippines. Essentially, it integrates (1) intersectional feminism and (2) disability analysis. Intersectional feminism, a framework famously coined by Kimberly Crenshaw, evaluates the webbed oppression of gender, race, class, age, etc. inherent in public policy.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, the merging of Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's feminist disability analysis entails the use of a social constructivist model of "disability;" this rejection of the medical model or the deficit approach acknowledges that "disability" is a valid

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<sup>10</sup> This paper shall use the terms "PWD" or "disabled persons" to factually and descriptively refer to persons experiencing "disability/ies" instead of euphemisms, such as "differently abled" or "special needs," which "deny the reality of disability as a meaningful concept or experience" (Pulrang 2020). According to World Health Organization's (2011,4) *World Report on Disability*, "Disability is the umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions, referring to the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors)." Additionally, WHO (2011, 4) also recognizes that among PWDs, the term "disability" is an "evolving concept" that it is "not an attribute of the person" but "an interaction." In the Philippines, according to the National Disability Prevalence Survey (NDPS) of 2016, there is a higher percentage of females than males who experienced severe disability (15% and 9%, respectively). Those who experienced moderate disability level were also higher for females at 49% than for males at 45%.

<sup>11</sup> Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989), 139-167. See also Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1991): 1241-1299.

category in analyzing accessibility and inclusivity of public transportation.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, since intersectional feminism is a framework that can recognize the lived experiences of a Filipina commuting cyclist, this paper first explores the two core problems they encounter in the Philippines: safety and economic injustice. This study uses Cruz's article, *Women, Cycling, and Sustainable Cities*, to draw out the "deterrents to women's cycling."<sup>13</sup> Cruz's paper maintains that these factors highly discourage Filipino women from considering cycling in general, not just for commuting, and then argues that these factors shall be considered if Metro Manila strives to be a "gender-responsive and cycling-friendly."<sup>14</sup> Since Cruz's article analyzes pre-pandemic cycling, "safety" does not refer to "COVID-19 free" yet and it does not cover persons with disability. In contrast, this research evaluates explicitly the proposed bill on bicycling commuting, which is "The Safe Pathways Act" (henceforth SPA) or Senate Bill No. 1518 of 2020, and expands the scope from Metro Manila to the urban spaces in the Philippines then ushers in the integration of intersectional feminism with disability analysis.<sup>15</sup> As this paper interweaves intersectional feminism with disability studies, it further recognizes that disability is a crucial identity; it is a source of oppression, yet in discussions regarding transportation and mobility in the Philippines, it is unfortunately taken for granted. Instead of defining "disability" as a medical concept, this research adopts Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's social model: "like gender – [disability] is a concept that pervades all aspects of culture: its structuring institutions, social identities, cultural practices, political positions, historical communities, and the shared human experience of embodiment."<sup>16</sup> Hence, the dis/abled binary is not so much of a biological or physiological limitation. Rather it is how a society or

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<sup>12</sup> Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory," *The National Women's Studies Association Journal (NWSA Journal)*, (Autumn 2002): 1-32.

<sup>13</sup> Maritess Cruz, "Women, Cycling, and Sustainable Cities. *Philippine Journal of Social Development* 9 (2017): 91-109.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> SPA is supposed to be a mitigating response to transportation issues intensified by the pandemic.

<sup>16</sup> Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory," *The National Women's Studies Association Journal (NWSA Journal)*, (Autumn 2002), 4.

culture perceives different bodies in a specific time and space.<sup>17</sup> With this, one is considered a “person with disability” not because of being quadriplegic or living with a damaged vision but “disability is the result of the interaction between living with impairments and an environment filled with physical, attitudinal, communication and social barriers.” Suppose the concept of “disability” is framed as such; it is *ableism* or “structural discrimination against disabled people” that needs remedying and not persons with disability who are mostly living with lifelong impairments.<sup>18</sup> Towards the end, this paper concludes that SPA is ableist and exclusivist, and it disregards gender issues: the problematic space provided for women and other vulnerable road users is not remedied but is rather amplified. Through intersectional analysis and feminist disability studies, this research offers specific recommendations on developing public policies further in the post-pandemic future, making them more inclusive, responsive, and empowering.

## 2. Where Wheels Would Weave: Merging Intersectional Feminism and Feminist Disability Discourse

### 2.1 Merging Lanes: Cycling and the Vulnerable Road Users

Historically speaking, the bike is manufactured specifically for men. The geometry, fit, purpose, outfit, gears, rules – everything about it caters to men’s mobility and ego. In fact, whenever a woman attempts to cycle, she is demonized. But what happened in the 1890s made bicycling not just another mode of transportation but also a symbol of freedom for women. Suffragist leader Susan B. Anthony (1896; Dawson, 2011) notably mentions that the bicycle “has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world” as “It gives women a feeling of freedom and self-reliance.” Bicycles had become the trusty steeds of

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<sup>17</sup> Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “First Person: Rosemarie Garland-Thomson,” *Emory Report*, July 6, 2004, [https://www.emory.edu/EMORY\\_REPORT/erarchive/2004/July/er%20july%206/7\\_6\\_04firstperson.html](https://www.emory.edu/EMORY_REPORT/erarchive/2004/July/er%20july%206/7_6_04firstperson.html): 20.

<sup>18</sup> Mariette Bates and Emily Brooks, “Section 2: Developmental Disability as a Social Construct,” *Introducing Developmental Disability Through a Disability Studies Perspective*, <https://introducingdevelopmentaldisability.commons.gc.cuny.edu/section-2-developmental-disability-as-a-social-construct/>

first-wave feminists when they campaigned for votes for women. Hanging their banners and blocking Churchill's barricades, the image of a cycling woman protesting for freedom is so powerful that Elswick Cycles and Manufacturing Company (now Elswick Bikes), a bicycle company in England, produced special bicycles for the suffragists.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, even if the words "cycling" and "disability" appear to be strange bedfellows, cycling has been used by disabled persons since mid-seventeenth century. Stephan Farfler, a German paraplegic himself, invented the first self-propelled carriage.<sup>20</sup> Eventually, this served as the precursor to modern tricycles and bicycles. Historically, cycles specifically designed for the disabled are classified as follows: pedal cycles, handcycles, chair transporters, sociable (side-by-side), stability machines, tandems, and power-assisted bikes. Although all these seven have unique designs, the general considerations are comfort, accessibility to a person who has mobility problems, and stability.

Like other cyclists, PWDs cycle for numerous reasons. According to Inckle, for most people with disabilities, cycling is easier and more convenient than walking.<sup>21</sup> For instance, Joy Habana, a one-legged delivery rider and pest-control staff rides a bicycle even if he pedals with one leg because it is cheaper and more convenient than a motorcycle and faster than walking.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, through her qualitative study of disabled people who cycle, she claims that "Cycling offers people with disabilities a form of physical exercise, which is also an opportunity to experience mobility, independence, and freedom".<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Kenneth Florey, *Women's Suffrage Memorabilia an Illustrated Historical Study* (North Carolina: McFarland&Company, 2013). See also JR Thorpe, "The feminist history of bicycles," *Bustle*, May 13, 2017, Accessed March 1, 2021, <https://www.bustle.com/p/the-feminist-history-of-bicycles-57455>.

<sup>20</sup> Chelsy Tomashoff, "Who Invented the Wheelchair? Complete History Explained," May 10, 2023, <https://elderlyguides.com/who-invented-wheelchair/>.

<sup>21</sup> Kay Inckle, "Disability, Cycling and Health: Impacts and (Missed) Opportunities in Public Health," *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research* 22, no. 1. DOI: 10.16993/sjdr.695.

<sup>22</sup> MGP, GMA News, "One-legged Delivery Rider Who Travels by Bike Inspires Netizens," *GMA News*, June 1, 2021, <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/hashtag/content/789808/one-legged-delivery-rider-who-travels-by-bike-inspires-netizens/story/>.

<sup>23</sup> Kay Inckle, "Disability, Cycling and Health: Impacts and (Missed) Opportunities in Public Health," *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research* 22, no. 1. DOI: 10.16993/sjdr.695: 425.

The good benefits of cycling for mental health and wellbeing are crucial, especially for those whose disabilities are amplified by their economic and medical conditions. This is true in the case of Artemio Enario, a barangay volunteer worker in Cebu, as he still chooses to continue bicycling even after his leg is amputated due to tetanus infection; cycling makes him happy, and it serves as his exercise, too.<sup>24</sup>

### 2.1.1 First Wheel: Intersectional Feminism

As the bicycle becomes the symbol of women's liberation, another metaphor inspired by mobility is constructed to fuel Black feminism: the intersection. Crenshaw, an American lawyer and philosopher, asks us to imagine this:

Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination.<sup>25</sup>

Through this, Crenshaw illustrates that a Black woman could experience multi-layered oppression by virtue of her race, economic status, gender, sexuality, language, etc. This interwoven discrimination should be addressed to initiate effective reforms in the society. If an institution - in this case, the law - turns a blind eye on one or three of these aspects, Crenshaw thinks that Black women will not be emancipated:

Judicial decisions which premise intersectional relief on a showing that Black women are specifically recognized as a class are analogous to a doctor's decision at the

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<sup>24</sup> Immae Lachica, "Let this PWD Cyclist from Lapu-Lapu Inspire You Today," *Cebu Daily News*, March 27, 2021, <https://cebudailynews.inquirer.net/369868/let-this-pwd-cyclist-from-lapu-lapu-inspire-you-today#ixzz8JafBWrLM>.

<sup>25</sup> Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989), 149.



scene of an accident to treat an accident victim only if the injury is recognized by medical insurance. Similarly, providing legal relief only when Black women show that their claims are based on race or on sex is analogous to calling an ambulance for the victim only after the driver responsible for the injuries is identified. But it is not always easy to reconstruct an accident: Sometimes the skid marks and the injuries simply indicate that they occurred simultaneously, frustrating efforts to determine which driver caused the harm. In these cases the tendency seems to be that no driver is held responsible, no treatment is administered, and the involved parties simply get back in their cars and zoom away.<sup>26</sup>

This is the main point of intersectionality. Since the effects of discrimination are deeply embedded, intersectional feminism instigates analysis that shall consider the multifaceted roots of discrimination. Systems of oppression continue to thrive up to this day precisely because these marginal aspects, such as race and gender, remain overlooked. Hence, the perpetrators run free while the oppressed are still shackled.

Although intersectional feminism has its roots in Black feminism, other disciplines use this paradigm as a “primary tool for theorizing identity and oppression”.<sup>27</sup> One of these important fields is public policy or policy making. As it centers on crafting solutions to respond to certain problems, intersectionality in public policy starts by acknowledging “that to address complex inequities, a one-size-fits-all approach does not work”.<sup>28</sup> Recognizing the need to address the “matrix of domination” as coined by Collins, intersectionality in policy making considers the multifaceted identities of a person - race, gender, and class – as interlocking sources of oppression.<sup>29</sup> For example, in applying intersectional feminism in policy making that will resolve teenage

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Renee Cormier and Olena Hankivsky, “Intersectionality and Public Policy: Some Lessons from Existing Models,” *Political Research Quarterly* 64 (2011), 217-299. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912910376385>.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>29</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990).

pregnancy in the Philippines during the pandemic, it is a mistake to focus on the behavior of these young moms alone. What are the gender norms in the Philippines that may prohibit access to proper sex education and reproductive health? How does poverty play a role in this case? Are young lesbian moms considered? How about pregnancies caused by sexual violence, such as rape and incestuous relationships? When these questions are considered, one uncovers the interwoven layers of discrimination that Filipino women experience. This spells the importance of intersectionality in governance and public policy: as soon as these interlocking levels of oppression are recognized, it makes strategies or action plans inclusive, responsive, and empowering.

### 2.1.2. Second Wheel: Feminist Disability Theory

Garland-Thomson is a feminist educator, bioethicist, and disability justice advocate. Her feminist disability theory legitimizes the lived experiences and intersections of people with disabilities and women:

A feminist disability theory denaturalizes disability by unseating the dominant assumption that disability is something that is wrong with someone. By this I mean, of course, that it mobilizes feminism's highly developed and complex critique of gender, class, race, ethnicity, and sexuality as exclusionary and oppressive systems rather than as a natural and appropriate order of things.<sup>30</sup>

Along with this is the recognition that although intersectional feminism acknowledges different spheres of a woman's identity, such as gender, race, class, etc., disability is often neglected. In fact, feminist disability studies is a relatively new field. In a special issue on "Gender, Disability, and Intersectionality" of the *Gender & Society* journal, editors reveal that journal articles discussing gendered experiences of people with disabilities are few; existing literature focuses on feminist scholarship

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<sup>30</sup> Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory," *The National Women's Studies Association Journal (NWSA Journal)*, (Autumn 2002), 6.

and disability, which is mostly about White disabled people.<sup>31</sup> Even if disabled people exist everywhere and are ever-present in arts, media, mythologies, etc., they are excluded from academic discussions and drafting public policies. With this, Garland-Thomson claims that the objective of disability studies is to “reimagine disability, to challenge our collective representations of disability as an exclusionary and oppressive system rather than as the natural and appropriate order of things”.<sup>32</sup> This serves as the springboard of the social constructivist model of disability. Departing from the medical model of disability entails three coordinated efforts: (1) the recognition that disability exists as an important experience of persons, (2) the social model helps us understand *and* accept item (1), and (3) “it helps integrate disability into our knowledge of human experience and history and to integrate disabled people into our culture”.<sup>33</sup> This spells out the importance of merging intersectional feminism with feminist disability studies: it is a valuable tool in dismantling sociocultural constraints and uncovering ableist structures that limit persons with disability.

An important study on disability and public health and policy by Inckle highlights two important conclusions.<sup>34</sup> Along with positive effects on the environment and economics, cycling “had broader mental health and wellbeing impacts in terms of feelings of freedom, joy, and independence, which are not only crucial to good mental health but are also uncommon for disabled people because of the barriers they face in regards to mobility, exercise, and autonomy”.<sup>35</sup> Here, she shares that although there are 70% of people with disabilities *can* cycle, because of certain barriers, only 6% of them choose to do so regularly.<sup>36</sup> Among these notable barriers are (1) public policy and (2) knowledge regarding cycling and health. Unfortunately, discussions about public

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<sup>31</sup> Heather Dillaway, Laura Mauldin, and Nancy Naples, “From the Guest Editors: Gender, Disability, and Intersectionality,” *Gender & Society* 33, no. 1 (February 2019), 6-7.

<sup>32</sup> Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “First Person: Rosemarie Garland-Thomson,” *Emory Report*, July 6, 2004, [https://www.emory.edu/EMORY\\_REPORT/erarchive/2004/July/er%20july%2006/7\\_6\\_04firstperson.html](https://www.emory.edu/EMORY_REPORT/erarchive/2004/July/er%20july%2006/7_6_04firstperson.html).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Kay Inckle, “Disability, Cycling and Health: Impacts and (Missed) Opportunities in Public Health.” *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research* 22, no. 1 (2019). DOI: 10.16993/sjdr.695.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 417.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 418.

transportation and mobility ignore the concerns of persons with disability. Policymakers assume that roads, pedestrian lanes, walkways, etc., are for all citizens having the same bodies and experiences. This ableism is also reflected in the knowledge gap among health professionals; as an everyday transportation means, cycling combats a sedentary lifestyle and lowers the risk of heart problems and depression among persons with disability, yet “cycling had never been recommended to any of the participants by a health professional – including those who advocated static cycling machines as part of physiotherapy”.<sup>37</sup>

## 2.2 She is Safe if Space is Shared, is She?

In a study focusing on the streets of Metro Manila, Cruz argues that to transform the urban space into a “sustainable city,” it should first address the factors that discourage women from cycling.<sup>38</sup> She then identifies these “deterrents to women’s adoption of cycling as a transport mode” in the Philippines: “(1) safety concerns, (2) deviant images of cyclists, and (3) compliance to the demands of normative femininity”.<sup>39</sup> For this research, while all three are valid, this study focuses more on the first factor since it is the most alarming. Cruz recognizes that “Safety is the dominant discourse that cyclists deploy in their advocacy, simply because cycling is potentially life threatening”.<sup>40</sup> This is essentially true in the Philippines. According to the Metro Manila Development Authority’s (MMDA) Metro Manila Accident Reporting and Analysis System (MMARAS), they recorded a grand total of 71,891 road crash incidents in 2022, and 2,829 (2.05%) of which were non-motorized vehicles (bicycles, e-bikes, and or pedicabs) involved.<sup>41</sup> It is important to note that while MMDA considers age bracket, vehicle types, and accident factors, the agency does not have a record of the sex, gender, and disability of those involved. Last 2021, MMDA recorded

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 418.

<sup>38</sup> Maritess Cruz, “Women, Cycling, and Sustainable Cities,” *Philippine Journal of Social Development* 9 (2017): 91-109.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 95.

<sup>41</sup> MMDA-TEC-Road Safety Unit, *MMARAS Annual Report 2022*, [https://mmda.gov.ph/images/Home/FOI/MMARAS/MMARAS\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2022.pdf](https://mmda.gov.ph/images/Home/FOI/MMARAS/MMARAS_Annual_Report_2022.pdf).

2,844 (2.53%) incidents, 840 of which resulted in damage to property, 35 were fatal, and 1,969 caused non-fatal injury.<sup>42</sup>

Unfortunately, the issues of safety when it comes to women and cycling do not just cover physical risk. Filipino women who choose to cycle also experience inappropriate treatments, such as catcalling and other forms of sexual harassment. “Padyak Pinay” on Facebook, which describes itself as a “society and culture website,” chronicles the lived experiences of cycling women in the streets of Metro Manila.<sup>43</sup> Aside from Facebook, they made an app called “Cyclist Stories on Catcalling,” which aims to stop street harassment by mapping areas where women experience catcalling, ogling, or other inappropriate behavior while cycling.<sup>44</sup> This is to inform, warn, and encourage Filipino women to consider bicycle commuting despite the risk of sexual assault. Through the users' narratives, women look after each other on the streets. Most importantly, women's experiences in the streets of Metro Manila are so harrowing that they needed these platforms to express themselves while protecting other cyclists, too.

One of the sources of oppression that should be highlighted here is economic injustice. Filipino women and PWDs belong to a developing country, and poverty always harms them most. As the Philippines suffers from a transportation crisis that was heightened by the pandemic, bicycle commuting could have been made accessible to them. Unfortunately, the Philippines implemented a “pink tax” or “menstrual tax.” This form of taxation and marketing ploy explains why women’s products are more expensive than men’s. This is the same in cycling; the gears, outfits, bikes, safety equipment, etc., sold to women cost more. Compared to men’s, women’s gears are made to be more “fashionable” (pink) but less durable or functional. Moreover, due to women’s anatomy and safety issues, they are expected to spend more

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<sup>42</sup> MMDA-TEC-Road Safety Unit, MMARAS Annual Report 2021 [https://mmda.gov.ph/images/Home/FOI/MMARAS/MMARAS\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2021.pdf](https://mmda.gov.ph/images/Home/FOI/MMARAS/MMARAS_Annual_Report_2021.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> Padyak Pinay, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/padyakpinay>.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, June 7, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=725174938283837&set=pcb.725175941617070>. See also Amie Cruz, “This Group of Women Cyclists are Out to Stop Street Harassment in the Metro,” *preen.ph*. June 8, 2020, <https://preen.ph/111596/padyak-pinay-cyclists-catcalling-bn>. The Cyclist Stories on Catcalling app is accessible at <https://canvis.app/mprgKi>.

on their protective equipment (i.e., sports bra, padded cycling shorts, napkin, fitted bike frame and saddle, pepper spray, etc.).

On the other hand, even if the Philippines adopts the Magna Carta of Persons with Disabilities and BP 344 or the Accessibility Law of 1983, which refers to the mobility and transportation of PWDs, it is extremely far from its actual application. For instance, the implementing rules and regulations referring to the street or road usage are as follows:

4.2.1 Streets, highways and transport related structures to be constructed – Streets, highways and transport related structures shall be provided with the following barrier-free facilities and accessibility features at every pedestrian crossing: ramps and other accessible features in buildings of the Sectoral offices and attached agencies of DOTC; transportation terminals and passenger waiting areas for use of disabled person;

- a) Cut-out curbs and accessible ramps at the sidewalks.
- b) Audio-visual aids for crossing<sup>45</sup>

However, a separate study conducted in 2018 at Cainta, Rizal claims that footbridges are poorly lit, pedestrian crossings do not have ramps nor any existing methods for people who are blind to cross, and sidewalks even have open utility holes and ambulant vendors.<sup>46</sup> These inaccessible government projects affect both non-PWDs and PWDs alike. Still, according to their research, the latter are more burdened than the former. These barriers affect their mobility, livelihood, health, and even their sense of self. Furthermore, this gap between public policy and implementation with regards to disability is a concrete manifestation of the deficit model of disability; non-PWDs are understood as “normal” while PWDs are framed as “abnormal” or “lacking,” and so the latter deserve less or insincere services than the

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<sup>45</sup> An Act to Enhance the Mobility of Disabled Persons by Requiring Certain Buildings, Institutions, Establishments and Public Utilities to Install Facilities and Other Devices – IRR of BP 344. n.d. National Council on Disability Affairs. <https://ncda.gov.ph/disability-laws/implementing-rules-and-regulations-irr/irr-of-bp-344/>.

<sup>46</sup> Rizal Justine Brylle Pajarin, Jose Regin Regidor, and Conrad Matthew Soriano, “Assessment of Mobility of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Cainta,” *Philippine Transportation Journal* 1, no. 1 (2018), 5.

former. Notwithstanding, there are only a few local government units that offer services to people with disabilities. One laudable effort is Marikina's PWD-friendly tricycle which is spacious enough to accommodate a wheelchair and three companions, has a ramp easily accessible to PWDs without the need to be carried, and has security features like straps and a siren.<sup>47</sup> Since Marikina's tricycle for PWDs is the first and only one of its kind, most people with disabilities are left to fend for themselves.

The health, economic, sustainability and social effects of cycling benefit the PWDs, yet there are only a few disabled persons who attempt to do so, and the silence between the academe and policymaking is deafening. Inckle refers to this dominant perception of disability as the "deficit approach," which focuses on "deficiency and intrinsic flaws" and emphasizes on what the individual "cannot do":

Ultimately, the deficit model prevents cycling being acknowledged as a means of mobility for disabled people and cycles being recognised as mobility aids. It impedes access to cycling for disabled people, whose opportunities to discover and experience cycling are curtailed, and it feeds attitudinal and perceptual barriers which not only have significant impacts on the emotional well-being of disabled people, but also result in wider barriers in policy, infrastructure and practice.<sup>48</sup>

Sourced from an ableist perspective, the deficit approach is harmful for disabled people because it forces them to fit in a world designed for and by abled bodies. In turn, "This creates a binary in which ability and disability are positioned as opposite and unequal, and thus, to be disabled is to be defined as entirely without ability".<sup>49</sup> With this, "disability" is not essential (natural) but constructed. The stereotypes and prejudice that PWDs experience are very much magnified when legislation disregards their welfare.

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<sup>47</sup> Patty Pasion, "Tricycles for the Disabled a Dream Come True in Marikina," *Rappler*, January 13, 2016. <https://www.rappler.com/nation/118791-pwds-public-transportation/>.

<sup>48</sup> Kay Inckle, "Disabled Cyclists and the Deficit Model of Disability," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (Fall 2019), 98.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

### 3. Dissecting the Intersections of the Safe Pathways Act

On 27 September 2022, the SPA or Senate Bill No. 1518 of 2020 was unanimously approved for third and final reading in the Senate. The bill is primarily authored by Senator Pia Cayetano, a noted triathlon herself and an advocate of sustainable cities. What are the salient points included in this bill?

*Physical Infrastructures.* First, if this bill passes as a law, it mandates that the government establish the “Safe Pathways Network” (henceforth SPN) solely for non-motorized vehicles. SPN shall include (1) bicycle lanes (permanent), (2) pop-up bicycle lanes (temporary) (3) slow streets or roads that are for “designated network of people” (i.e., delivery, trash collections, etc.) and (4) the health facilities loop, which is reserved for healthcare workers. SPN shall “connect users to essential destinations such as medical facilities, public and private facilities frequented by people, school, when they do open, and other similar places that may be identified”.<sup>50</sup> Because this is a response to mitigate the effects of COVID-19, the space of these bike lanes shall follow the 1-meter physical distancing requirement. Secondly, parking spaces for bicycles and non-motorized vehicles shall be provided in all public places, such as malls, schools, churches, government offices, etc.

*Roles of Public and Private Sectors.* This bill specifically mentions that both the government and private sectors are enjoined to promote cycling and walking. Moreover, facilities and programs that advocate for such things as shower and changing rooms shall also observe physical distancing.

*Safe Pathways as Permanent.* This bill mandates that physical improvements for the walking and cycling community shall be made permanent even in the post-pandemic future. As such, this also allocates funds to build and maintain these.

*A Response to UNDP.* It is also important to note that the bill mentions that “it is in line with the state’s commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)” identified by the United Nations Development Programs (UNDP).<sup>51</sup> SDGs aim “to end poverty, protect

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<sup>50</sup> S.No. 1582 An act establishing a safe pathways network of bicycle lanes and slow streets and for other purposes. Accessed 5 March 2021. <http://legacy.senate.gov.ph/lisdata/3288631212!.pdf>.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.



the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.” The Philippines is one of the signatories of UNDP’s Strategic Plan. SPA identifies the following goals: SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being); SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy); SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure); SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities); SDG 13 (Climate Action); and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).<sup>52</sup> The enactment of the Safe Pathways Bill in the future ensures the building of proper infrastructure that shall share roads with cyclists, allot parking areas, and appropriate funding. This effort is commendable because building these physical facilities is a big step towards urban sustainability. However, does it alleviate the factors discouraging women and PWDs from considering cycling a viable and safe way to commute? Since the bill merely focuses on bicycle lanes, pop-up lanes, parking spaces, and the like, SPA is apparently disregarding gender issues and exclusivism. It only addresses the issue of lack of physical space for cyclists in general, but how about a safe space where women can travel without fear, regardless of time and attire? Sadly, it is also silent about the economic problems that both women and persons with disabilities are facing, especially during the pandemic. How can Filipinos acquire their cycling gear now that the market prices have increased? Moreover, as SPA mentions that it complies with the SDGs, it cannot disregard the plight of women and disabled cyclists; UNDP particularly includes “women’s empowerment and gender equality” as one of its Signature Solutions. SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), one of the SDGs identified by the bill, lists the following as two of UNDP’s target goals:

By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons

By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities<sup>53</sup>

Since UNDP recognizes the importance of inclusivity in mobility, it particularly highlights the welfare of women and disabled people. This is where the importance of intersectionality and disability analysis in policymaking comes in: “policy is not neutral as it is not experienced in the same way by all populations and that important differences and concomitant needs have to be taken into account”.<sup>54</sup> Applying intersectional and feminist disability analysis to public policy requires that we also consider the margins where systems of oppression thrive. Disregarding the lived experiences of the Filipina and disabled cycling community pushes us away from making our streets safe and sustainable.

Some possible recommendations for the improvement of the SPA that consider the vulnerable cycling community are the inclusion of gender sensitivity workshops in acquiring driver’s license, tax subsidies for companies that market and manufacture gears and equipment for women without the “pink tax,” tax relief for employees who are bike commuting single mothers or those who are the main care providers of their PWD family members, removal of VAT on women’s essentials like napkins and tampons, hiring of Anti-Bastos Traffic Enforcers (ATE) in SPN, the establishment of clean and sanitary breastfeeding stations in SPNs, fund research for PWD studies and gender and disability mainstreaming efforts, and inclusion of more women and PWD policymakers.

#### 4. Conclusions

The pandemic caused many problems and further exposes issues in our society and the government. One of the most pressing issues is public transportation. Efforts to improve it are being made, such as passing of SPA for the second and final reading. However, through intersectional feminism and disability analysis, they show that

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<sup>53</sup> UN Sustainable Development Goals. n.d. Accessed March 5, 2021. <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>.

<sup>54</sup> Renee Cormier and Olena Hankivsky, “Intersectionality and Public Policy: Some Lessons from Existing Models,” *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 64, 217-299. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912910376385>: 218.

the factors that discourage women and PWDs from cycling in the Philippines are not addressed. With this, this study recommends the consideration of the interlocking layer of oppression, such as race, gender, class, and disability, so the nation can nurture sustainable cities and communities. The road to inclusivity and accessibility on the streets of the Philippines is still long and sometimes obstructed, but it can start with one pedal at a time.

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