

SENSE OF BELONGING IN WOMEN'S SPACE THROUGH
SPATIAL PLANNING

LOOI CHIA WEI

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Architecture

School of Architecture
Faculty of Built Environment and Surveying
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

JULY 2022

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, a strong enduring woman who has spent her life showering my family with her love, who has inspired me to strive for my future even when there are obstacles along the way, just keep swimming.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to everyone who has helped me in this process to complete the project successfully. Firstly, I would like to give special thanks to the supervisor and co-supervisor of this project, Ar Norshahida Binti Azili and Dr Alice Sabrina Binti Ismail for their patience, expertise, and encouragement, who have guided me to produce and improve myself throughout the project. Under their guidance, I can overcome difficulties experienced in my progress. Also, I would like to show my appreciation to Prof Dr Syed Ahmad Iskandar Bin Syed Ariffi and Ms Jamalia Marsin, my previous advisor and co-advisor, who are greatly involved in the beginning process and distributed useful information from their expertise to assist with the project.

Next, I would like to thank my dearest parents, Mr Looi Cheng Soon and Mdm Ang Choon Neh, who have given me relentless love and support from the beginning of the journey of the semester. For they have always been there to motivate and inspire me to achieve greater heights in completing my thesis dissertation. Also, special attention to my sisters, Ms Looi Chia Ming and Ms Looi Chia Yee, who always tolerate, support and advise me when I seek help from them.

Finally, to my beloved thesis coursemates, Mr Amirul Hakeem Alias and Ms Nur 'Zulaikha Asus, who have shared their knowledge and companionship to finish this project together. With each of them in the process, I am grateful for the achievement of this project. This thesis is dedicated to them.

ABSTRACT

Women have strived to achieve gender equality for years in Malaysia to provide better opportunities and ensure a better future for young girls. Unfortunately, the awareness of the impact of gender inequality is insensitive to other members of society besides women themselves. In order to advocate the vision of the Ministry of Women and Family Development, participation from the community to support the change is crucial to heighten the progress of Malaysian women to bridge the gender gap. However, gender equity movements are often dominated by women as women struggle with more challenges in gender inequality. Therefore, the gender issues movement cannot grow with just women alone, for social settings to gain corrective measures, participation from women and the community, men, are essential for true change to be achieved. Numerous research studies regarding women-related issues have been published, most of the studies are on western women who share different cultures, beliefs, and backgrounds. Therefore, there is a literature gap on south-eastern women's needs specifically in spatial comfort and experience where practised culture and norms are contributing factors. The purpose of this research is to investigate spatial planning spaces for women and men in women's spaces to create a sense of belonging that also promotes the participation of the community in providing support and raising awareness of gender equality amongst women. In the study, two methods of approach are adopted using a quantitative and qualitative approach through literature reviews and conducting survey questionnaires. The findings from the literature review are used as a baseline to construct survey questions in the next methodology. For the survey questions, a sampling of 62 respondents 34 women and 28 men are used to evaluate the data collected. The data is categorized into three: (a) needs and programs of women, (b) spatial comfort for women, and (c) willingness and factors for men to participate. The outcome of the research suggests spatial approaches to achieve both genders' sense of belonging in community spaces in Malaysia, such results may differ in other contexts of different social cultures. The findings of the research can be beneficial to other academic researchers in further studies.

ABSTRAK

Sejak dahulu, wanita telah berusaha untuk mencapai kesaksamaan gender di Malaysia untuk menyediakan peluang yang lebih baik dan memastikan masa depan yang lebih baik untuk generasi muda. Malah, anggota masyarakat lain kurang sensitif dengan kesedaran tentang kesan ketidaksamaan gender selain wanita sendiri. Bagi memperjuangkan misi Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat, penyertaan daripada masyarakat untuk menyokong perubahan adalah penting untuk meningkatkan kemajuan wanita Malaysia untuk merapatkan jurang gender. Walau bagaimanapun, pergerakan ekuiti gender sering didominasi oleh wanita sahaja kerana wanita menghadapi lebih banyak cabaran dalam ketidaksamaan gender. Oleh itu, pembangunan isu gender tidak boleh berkembang dengan penyertaan wanita sahaja, langkah pembetulan perlu diambil untuk memutus isu sosial ini, namun, penyertaan daripada wanita dan masyarakat, lelaki, adalah penting untuk melihat perubahan dicapai. Banyak kajian penyelidikan yang berkaitan dengan isu wanita telah diterbitkan, kebanyakan kajian ialah meluputi konteks wanita barat yang mempunyai budaya, kepercayaan dan latar belakang yang berbeza. Oleh itu, terdapat jurang kesusasteraan mengenai keperluan wanita tenggara khususnya dalam keselesaan ruang dan pengalaman di mana budaya dan norma yang diamalkan merupakan faktor penyumbang. Tujuan penyelidikan ini adalah untuk menyiasat ruang perancangan spatial untuk wanita dan lelaki di ruang wanita untuk mewujudkan semangat kekitaan yang juga menggalakkan penyertaan masyarakat dalam memberikan sokongan dan meningkatkan kesedaran tentang kesaksamaan gender di kalangan wanita. Dalam kajian, dua kaedah pendekatan diguna pakai menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dan kualitatif melalui tinjauan literatur dan menjalankan soal selidik tinjauan. Dapatan daripada kajian literatur digunakan sebagai garis asas untuk membina soalan tinjauan dalam metodologi seterusnya. Bagi soalan tinjauan, persampelan 62 orang responden yang terdiri daripada 34 orang wanita dan 28 orang lelaki digunakan untuk menilai data yang dikumpul. Data tersebut dikategorikan kepada tiga: (a) keperluan dan program wanita, (b) keselesaan ruang untuk wanita, dan (c) kesediaan dan faktor lelaki untuk mengambil bahagian. Hasil penyelidikan mencadangkan pendekatan spatial untuk mencapai semangat kekitaan kedua-dua jantina dalam ruang komuniti di Malaysia, keputusan tersebut mungkin berbeza dalam konteks lain budaya sosial yang berbeza. Dapatan kajian boleh memberi manfaat kepada penyelidik akademik lain dalam kajian lanjutan.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | TITLE | PAGE |
|------------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| | DECLARATION | iii |
| | DEDICATION | iv |
| | ACKNOWLEDGEMENT | v |
| | ABSTRACT | vi |
| | ABSTRAK | vii |
| | TABLE OF CONTENTS | viii |
| | LIST OF TABLES | xi |
| | LIST OF FIGURES | xii |
| | LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS | xiii |
| | LIST OF APPENDICES | xiv |
| CHAPTER 1 | INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1 | Introduction | 1 |
| 1.2 | Problem Background | 2 |
| 1.3 | Problem Statement | 3 |
| | 1.3.1 Social Issues | 3 |
| | 1.3.2 Architectural Issues | 4 |
| 1.4 | Research Aim | 5 |
| 1.5 | Research Objectives | 5 |
| 1.6 | Research Questions | 5 |
| 1.7 | Research Methodology | 6 |
| 1.8 | Significance of Research | 7 |
| 1.9 | Scope of Study | 7 |
| CHAPTER 2 | LITERATURE REVIEW | 9 |
| 2.1 | Introduction | 9 |
| 2.2 | Theory of Space | 9 |
| 2.3 | Sense of Belonging | 10 |

| | | |
|------------------|--|-----------|
| 2.3.1 | Physical Attributes | 11 |
| 2.3.2 | Cognitive Attributes | 13 |
| 2.3.3 | Social Attributes | 14 |
| 2.4 | Participation of Community | 15 |
| 2.4.1 | Who Participates and Why | 15 |
| 2.4.2 | Why – Importance of Participation | 16 |
| 2.4.3 | Where and When – Occurrence of Participation | 17 |
| 2.4.4 | How Community Participates | 17 |
| 2.5 | Culture of Malaysia Women | 18 |
| 2.5.1 | Conservative | 18 |
| 2.5.2 | Collectivism | 19 |
| 2.5.3 | Gender Roles | 20 |
| 2.6 | Spaces of Femininity | 22 |
| 2.7 | Women Spaces in Public Spaces | 23 |
| CHAPTER 3 | RESEARCH METHODOLOGY | 25 |
| 3.1 | Introduction | 25 |
| 3.2 | Research Approach and Framework | 25 |
| 3.3 | Qualitative Approach (Secondary Data) | 27 |
| 3.3.1 | Literature Review | 27 |
| 3.3.2 | Case Studies | 27 |
| 3.4 | Quantitative Approach (Primary Data) | 28 |
| 3.4.1 | Survey Questionnaire | 28 |
| 3.5 | Selection of Participants | 32 |
| 3.6 | Chapter Summary | 32 |
| CHAPTER 4 | FINDINGS | 35 |
| 4.1 | Introduction | 35 |
| 4.2 | Case Studies Findings | 35 |
| 4.2.1.1 | Sensitivity to women’s needs of a space | 39 |
| 4.2.1.2 | Not approachable to others | 40 |
| 4.2.1.3 | Absence of women community platform | 40 |

| | | |
|-------------------|--|-----------|
| 4.3 | Survey Questionnaire Findings | 41 |
| 4.3.1 | Demographics | 41 |
| 4.3.2 | Results | 43 |
| 4.3.2.1 | Needs and programs of women | 45 |
| 4.3.2.2 | Willingness and factors for men to participate | 45 |
| 4.3.2.3 | Spatial comfort for women | 46 |
| 4.4 | Chapter Summary | 47 |
| CHAPTER 5 | RECOMMENDATIONS | 49 |
| 5.1 | Result and Discussion | 49 |
| 5.2 | Empowering Activities | 51 |
| 5.3 | Spatial Planning of Women’s Space for Sense of Belonging | 53 |
| 5.4 | Sense of belonging to the community | 60 |
| 5.4.1 | Symbol of women | 61 |
| 5.5 | Chapter Summary | 61 |
| CHAPTER 6 | CONCLUSION | 63 |
| 6.1 | Summary | 63 |
| 6.2 | Limitation | 65 |
| REFERENCES | | 67 |

LIST OF TABLES

| TABLE NO. | TITLE | PAGE |
|------------------|--|-------------|
| Table 4.1 | Findings of Case Studies | 36 |
| Table 4.2 | Demographics of respondents | 42 |
| Table 4.3 | Findings from the survey questionnaire | 44 |
| Table 5.1 | Recommendation for determinants of space | 50 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| FIGURE NO. | TITLE | PAGE |
|-------------------|--|-------------|
| Figure 1.1 | Research Methodology Framework (Source: Author). | 6 |
| Figure 2.1 | Sense of Place and its impact factors (Falihat, 2006; Author). | 11 |
| Figure 2.2 | Relationship of the theory of space for women (Hall, 1966; Lefebvre, 1991; Author). | 13 |
| Figure 3.1 | Structure Method of Approaches (Source: Author). | 26 |
| Figure 3.2 | Structure of Survey Questions (Source: Author). | 29 |
| Figure 5.1 | Women's cognitive experience through space (Source: Author) | 55 |
| Figure 5.2 | Encourage community sense of belonging in public to personal spaces through branching (Source: Author) | 56 |
| Figure 5.3 | Spatial determinants of women's space (Source: Author) | 59 |

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | | |
|------|---|--|
| UTM | - | Universiti Teknologi Malaysia |
| UN | - | United Nations |
| F | - | Female |
| M | - | Male |
| SWCO | - | Singapore Council of Women's Organisations |
| NUA | - | New Urban Agenda |
| MCQ | - | Multiple-choice Question |
| YSQ | - | Polar Question |
| LQ | - | Likert Question |
| OQ | - | Open-ended Questions |

LIST OF APPENDICES

| APPENDIX | TITLE | PAGE |
|-----------------|---|-------------|
| Appendix A | Perception of Johor Bahru Community Questionnaire | 70 |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The paper consists of six chapters on the research topic to identify spatial planning for women and men in women's spaces to create a sense of belonging in community settings. In this chapter, the scope of the study is explained including the intention, research aim, significance of the study, the process that takes place in collecting data for the study, results of findings collected, the argument of the findings and a conclusion. The purpose is to give a comprehensive interpretation of the topic of study. In chapter 2, a compilation of different resources from various research regarding the significance of the study is presented. The information collected is evaluated and constructed into key points of the study as a baseline to proceed further in the research. The next chapter, chapter 3 is a broad chapter of the methodology of the research with a detailed explanation of the approaches and constructive framework that is produced in the process of evaluating the effective way of collecting data. The following chapter, chapter 4, includes the findings of the research presented and summarized for arguments. Then, chapter 5, is a discussion relating the findings to the core of the research to explain the implications of the outcome. Finally, the last chapter summarizes the findings, answering each research question followed by the limitations and contribution to future research.

1.2 Problem Background

Malaysian women agree to balance career and domestic responsibilities, and gender stereotyping are more pressing concern compared to the global audience according to a study from Ipsos (2018). The study revealed that 47%, nearly half, of the global population thinks that equality between men and women will be achieved in their lifetime but the current estimates by the World Economic Forum predict that it can be achieved for another 217 years with the present progress rate. Meanwhile, Malaysia and a large number of countries guess it will be 20 years or less. However, 56% of Malaysians from the same proportion agree that achieving equality is important and also believe that the progress has been made enough.

In various reports, the movement should involve the community namely husbands, parents and community leaders, who can impact the ability of women and girls to be included in programs equally. Therefore, mobilizing community support for them is essential to have a perspective of women's concerns and security. Essentially, to execute the current is to gradually have a common ground for the community and women to participate in activities for a sustainable cohesive community. Guidance has also been taken to establish child-friendly and elderly spaces and girls' safe spaces that are frequently associated with women. Women should have a sense of belonging in public spaces rather than a general insensitive design of spatial planning.

Women's movement and feminism in Malaysia have strengthened since its birth in the early 1980s. Women have been known to stand up for each other, but the movement is far from achieving equality, hence, community support is crucial to bridge the gender gap. Community participation is the social process of voluntarily taking part in events in the community life, services and resources. Community participation is important to address opportunities and issues from a special interest group that volunteers to improve conditions and have better local control. It is often paired with strengthening community interest and promoting participation in community programmes to support intervention efforts. Therefore, community

participation is a strategy to aid struggles of gender stigma and educate them of the importance on their role in this movement.

1.3 Problem Statement

This paper addresses social and architectural issues related to gender inequality among women. To provide them with equal opportunities instead of being limited to a stereotyped role.

1.3.1 Social Issues

The awareness of community participation in gender equality issues has not changed since the beginning of the women's movement in Malaysia. The gender stigma remains to oppress the daily lives of women that are not discussed enough or taken more seriously by other parties other than women representatives themselves. Gender roles of stay-at-home mothers eventually become lasting homemakers which affects them to have limited social circle. Secondly, due to the gender stigma, women stop working and committing fully as a parent resulting in a working gap between gender leaving a majority of women financially vulnerable. Thirdly, gender issue involves both genders, unfortunately, the lack of support from another half of the community results in women's dominant movement. They make up for the remaining population. According to UN Women (2018), change cannot be achieved solely from just women. This movement needs everyone for true change to happen. Therefore, it is essential to conduct this study to encourage all members of the community to know their role in this movement.

1.3.2 Architectural Issues

Community spaces are spaces for community activities, these general public spaces do not provide the best consideration for women users and lack design sensitivity. Therefore, most of those spaces are occupied by men while women are not frequent users as they don't have a sense of belonging. The generalised design approach to public spaces is less sensitive to women's needs of space as there is less consideration for their safety, accessibility, lighting and comfort. Moreover, spaces for women portrayed in public such as transit women seats eliminate a connection with the other gender. Non-users of the space gradually grow unpleasant feelings of women's exclusiveness making them taboo to be close to them.

This impression can develop into prejudice towards women, segregating them from the community and failing to educate the other gender about the purpose of women's space. Thirdly, women's welfare organizations in Malaysia provide support services for women are available. However, the location and accessibility of the physical help station are poorly developed as a place for women to support each other to gain social connections. The absence of a women's community platform from women's organizations lessens the opportunity to raise awareness in the community and provide a safe space for women with needs of assistance to approach. Spatial approaches to women's space separate them from the community; hence, community engagement is unsuccessful.

1.4 Research Aim

The aim of this research is to investigate spatial planning spaces of women spaces for women and men through a sense of belonging that also promotes the participation of the community in providing support and raising awareness of gender equality amongst women.

1.5 Research Objectives

The following three objectives will address the aim of this research:

- (a) To evaluate women's needs for space and services of the women's organization that can assist women to fulfil their needs in society.
- (b) To validate and identify women's preferences for a safe, secure, and comfortable space for their use.
- (c) To re-evaluate spatial determinants of women's spaces to create a sense of belonging for women and their supporting community.

1.6 Research Questions

The research objectives are reflected by the following three research questions to address the research aim:

- (a) What support activities needed can be incorporated effectively into women's spaces to make them more accessible to women?
- (b) What are women's preferences of spatial experience that they perceive as safe, secure, and comfortable?
- (c) How can women's space be friendly and interactive to women and other users of the community through spatial planning?

1.7 Research Methodology

A mixed method of qualitative and quantitative approaches is used in the methodology to analyze spatial planning that creates a sense of belonging for women and the community through literature review and survey questionnaires. The literature review of various authors is analyzed within the scope of the study. Also, the study is conducted through questionnaire surveys with a sampling of 62 respondents, 34 females and 28 males, from all age groups; Answering Likert and open-ended questions with questions based on the research methodology framework as shown in Figure 1.1.

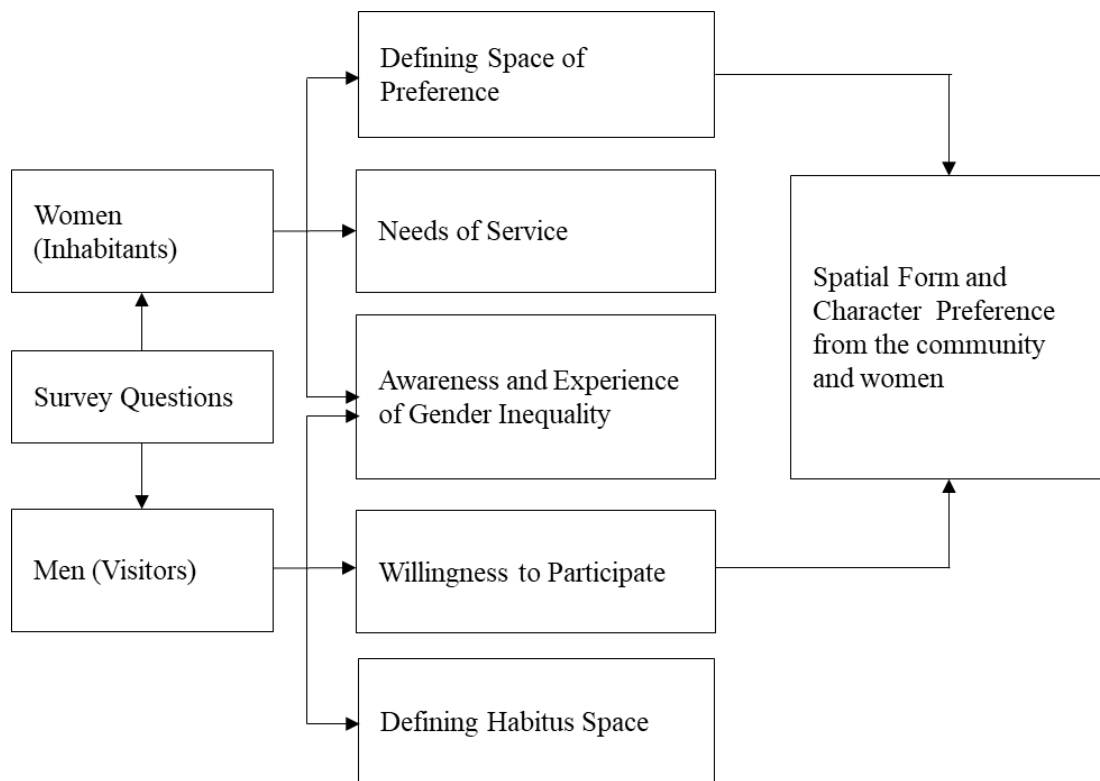


Figure 1.1 Research Methodology Framework (Source: Author).

1.8 Significance of Research

This research evaluates women's space in a communal context for community participation and identifies the strategies of approach in spatial planning. The findings will assist future research on women's spaces and the sense of belonging in community spaces.

1.9 Scope of Study

The scope of the research study is based on the following;

- (a) This research is conducted amongst women in Malaysia that have a similar social culture to other south-eastern countries.
- (b) The study focuses on women's needs and defining a comfort space through literature reviews, case study analysis, and survey questionnaires.
- (c) The study also examines the spatial planning that is considerate to all users of the community emphasizing a sense of belonging.

REFERENCES

- Baumeister, R., & Leary, M. (1995). The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497-529. doi:DOI:10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497
- Beebeejaun, Y. (2016). Gender, urban space, and the right to everyday life. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 39(3). doi:DOI:10.1080/07352166.2016.1255526
- Block, K., Croft, A., Souza, L. D., & Schmader, T. (2019). Do people care if men don't care about caring? The asymmetry in support for changing gender roles. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 83(3). doi:DOI:10.1016/j.jesp.2019.03.013
- Bratch, N., & Tsouros, A. (1990). Principles and strategies of effective community participation. *Health Promotion International*, 5(3), 199-208. doi:https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/5.3.199
- Epstein, S. (1990). Cognitive-Experiential Self- Theory: An Integrative Theory of Personality. *Handbook of Psychology*.
- Falahat, M. S. (2006). The Concept of Sense of Place and Its Forming Factors. *The Fine Arts Magazine*, 27.
- Filkins, R., Allen, J. C., & Cordes, S. (2009). Predicting community satisfaction among rural residents: An integrative model. *Rural Sociology*(1), 72-86. doi:10.1111/j.1549-0831.2000.tb00343.x
- Florin, P. R., & Wandersman, A. (1984). Cognitive social learning and participation in community development. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 12(6). doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00922619
- Green, B. L., McAllister, C. L., & Tarte, J. M. (2004). The Strengths-Based Practices Inventory: A Tool for Measuring Strengths-Based Service Delivery in Early Childhood and Family Support Programs. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/104438940408500310
- Hall, E. T. (1966). *The hidden dimension* (1 ed.). Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.

- Ipsos. (2018). Malaysia: Top Issues Faced by Women and Misperceptions of Women Empowerment. Retrieved from <https://www.ipsos.com/en-my/malaysia-top-issues-faced-women-misperceptions-women-empowerment>
- Khalid, N. S., Othman, R. N. R., & Marzukhi, M. A. (2020). Public Spaces and Gender: Testing The Relationship of Spatial Configuration Of Street Networks. *PLANNING MALAYSIA* 18(14). doi:DOI:10.21837/pm.v18i14.820
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space*: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Lynch, K. (1976). *Managing the Sense of a Region*. Cambridge: MA: MIT Press.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A Theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50, 370-396.
- McLeod, S. A. (2014). Carl Rogers Theory. Retrieved from www.simplypsychology.org/carl-rogers.html
- Minton, A. (2009). *Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-First Century City*: Penguin Books.
- Murray, H. A. (1938). *Explorations in Personality*: Oxford University Press.
- Nawawi, N. M., Rahim, Z. A., Majid, N. H. A., & JahnKassim, P. S. (2017). Women Space in the Design of Masjid in Malaysia: How Much Space do Women Need? *Advanced Science Letters*, 23(7), 5. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1166/asl.2017.9255>
- Reis, H., Sheldon, K., Gable, S. L., & Roscoe, J. (2000). Daily Well-Being: The Role of Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26(4), 419-435. doi:DOI:10.1177/0146167200266002
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78. doi:DOI: 10.1037/110003-066X.55.1.68
- Seamon, D. (2018). *Life Takes Place: Phenomenology, Lifeworlds, and Place Making*: Routledge.
- Seamon, D., & Sowers, J. (2008). Place and Placelessness, Edward Relph. *Key Texts in Human Geography*, 43-51. doi:DOI:10.4135/9781446213742.n5
- Smith, R. T. (1984). Anthropology and the Concept of Social Class. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 13, 28. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2155678>
- Spergel, I. A. (1969). *Community Problem Solving; The Delinquency Example*: Univ of Chicago Pr.

- Steele, F. (1981). *The Sense of Place*: CBI Publishing Company.
- Vallerand, R. J. (1997). Toward A Hierarchical Model of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 29, 271-360. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(08\)60019-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60019-2)
- Wandersman, A., & Giamartino, G. A. (1980). Community and individual difference characteristics as influences on initial participation. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 8, 217–228.
- Women, U. (2018). SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Retrieved from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality><https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality>