Chapter 4

Design of Slender Columns

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4.1 Introduction

The majority of reinforced concrete columns in practice are subjected to very little secondary stresses associated with column deformations. These columns are designed as short columns using the column interaction diagrams presented in Chapter 3. Rarely, when the column height is longer than typical story height and/or the column section is small relative to column height, secondary stresses become significant, especially if end restraints are small and/or the columns are not braced against side sway. These columns are designed as "slender columns." Fig. 3.1 eloquently illustrates the secondary moments generated in a slender column by P-Δ effects. Slender columns resist lower axial loads than short columns having the same cross-section. Therefore, the slenderness effect must be considered in design, over and above the sectional capacity considerations incorporated in the interaction diagrams. The significance of slenderness effect is expressed through *slenderness ratio*.

4.2 Slenderness Ratio

The degree of slenderness in a column is expressed in terms of "slenderness ratio," defined below:

Slenderness Ratio: $k \ell_{\rm u}/r$

where, $\ell_{\rm u}$ is unsupported column length; k is effective length factor reflecting the end restraint and lateral bracing conditions of a column; and *r* is the radius of gyration, reflecting the size and shape of a column cross-section.

4.2.1 Unsupported Length, $\ell_{\rm u}$

The unsupported length $\ell_{\rm u}$ of a column is measured as the clear distance between the underside of the beam, slab, or column capital above, and the top of the beam or slab below. The unsupported length of a column may be different in two orthogonal directions depending on the supporting elements in

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respective directions. Figure 4.1 provides examples of different support conditions and corresponding unsupported lengths (ℓ_n) . Each coordinate and subscript "x" and "y" in the figure indicates the plane of the frame in which the stability of column is investigated.

Fig. 4.1 Unsupported column length, ℓ_{μ}

4.2.2 Effective Length Factor, k

The effective length factor k reflects the end restraint (support) and lateral bracing conditions of a column relative to a pin-ended and laterally braced "reference column." The reference column, shown in Fig. 4.2(a), follows a half sine wave when it buckles, and is assigned a *k* factor of 1.0. Therefore, the effective length k ℓ_u for this column is equal to the unsupported column length ℓ_u . A column with fully

restrained end conditions develops the deflected shape illustrated in Fig. 4.2(b). The portion of the column between the points of contraflexure follows a half sine wave, the same deflected shape as that of the reference column. This segment is equal to 50% of the unsupported column length $\ell_{\rm u}$. Therefore, the effective length factor k for this case is equal to 0.5. Effective length factors for columns with idealized supports can be determined from Fig. 4.2. It may be of interest to note that *k* varies between 0.5 and 1.0 for laterally braced columns, and 1.0 and ∞ for unbraced columns. A discussion of lateral bracing is provided in Sec. 4.3 to establish whether a given column can be considered to be as part of a sway or a non-sway frame.

Columns in Non-Sway Frames

Fig. 4.2 Effective Length Factor *k* for Columns

Most columns have end restraints that are neither perfectly hinged nor fully fixed. The degree of end restraint depends on the stiffness of adjoining beams relative to that of the columns. Jackson and Moreland alignment charts, given in **Slender Columns 4.1** and **4.2** can be used to determine the effective length factor *k* for different values of relative stiffnesses at column ends. The stiffness ratios ψ_A and ψ_B used in **Slender Columns 4.1** and 4.2 should reflect concrete cracking, and the effects of sustained loading. Beams and slabs are flexure dominant members and may crack significantly more than columns which are compression members. The reduced stiffness values recommended by ACI 318-05 are given in **Slender Columns 4.3**, and should be used in determining *k*. Alternatively, **Slender Columns 4.4** may be used to establish conservative values of k for braced columns².

4.2.3 Radius of Gyration, r

The radius of gyration introduces the effects of cross-sectional size and shape to slenderness. For the same cross-sectional area, a section with higher moment of inertia produces a more stable column with a lower slenderness ratio. The radius of gyration r is defined below.

$$
r = \sqrt{\frac{I}{A}}
$$
 (4-1)

It is permissible to use the approximations of $r = 0.3h$ for square and rectangular sections, and $r =$ *0.25h* for circular sections, where "h" is the overall sectional dimension in the direction stability is being considered. This is shown in Fig. 4.3.

Fig. 4.3 Radius of gyration for circular, square and rectangular sections

4.3 Lateral Bracing and Designation of Frames as Non-Sway

A frame is considered to be "non-sway" if it is sufficiently braced by lateral bracing elements like structural walls. Otherwise, it may be designated as a "sway" frame. Frames that provide lateral resistance only by columns are considered to be sway frames. Structural walls that appear in the form of elevator shafts, stairwells, partial building enclosures or simply used as interior stiffening elements provide substantial drift control and lateral bracing. In most cases, even a few structural walls may be sufficient to brace a multi-storey multi-bay building. The designer can usually determine whether the frame is non-sway or sway by inspecting the floor plan. Frames with lateral bracing elements, where the total lateral stiffness of the bracing elements provides at least six times the summation of the stiffnesses of all the columns, may be classified as non-sway. ACI 318-05 permits columns to be designed as part of a non-sway frame if the increase in column end moments due to second-order

² "Concrete Design Handbook," Cement Association of Canada, third edition, 60 Queen Street, Ottawa, ON., Canada, K1P 5Y7, 2005.

effects does not exceed 5% of the first-order end moments (Sec. 10.11.4.1). Alternatively, Section 10.11.4.2 of ACI 318-05 defines a stability index "Q" (given in Eq. 4.2), where, $Q \le 0.05$ indicates a non-sway column.

$$
Q = \frac{\sum P_u A_o}{V_{us} \ell_c} \tag{4.2}
$$

Where, $\sum P_u$ is total factored axial load acting on all the columns in a story, V_{us} is total factored story shear, Δ_0 is lateral story drift (deflection of the top of the story relative to the bottom of that story) due to Vus. The story drift Δ o should be computed using the modified EI values given in **Slender Columns 4.3** with β_d defined as the ratio of the maximum factored sustained shear within a story to the maximum factored shear in that story. If Q exceeds approximately 0.2, the structure may have to be stiffened laterally to provide overall structural stability.

4.4 Design of Slender Columns

Design of a slender column should be based on a second-order analysis which incorporates member curvature and lateral drift effects, as well as material non-linearity and sustained load effects. An alternative approach is specified in ACI 318-05 for columns with slenderness ratios not exceeding 100. This approach is commonly referred to as the "Moment Magnification Method," and is based on magnifying the end moments to account for secondary stresses. The application of this procedure is outlined in the following sections.

4.4.1 Slender Columns in Non-Sway Frames

Slenderness effects may be neglected for columns in *non-sway frames* if the following inequality is satisfied:

$$
\frac{k\ell_u}{r} \le 34 - 12(M_1 / M_2)
$$
\n(4-3)

Where
$$
(34 - 12M_1 / M_2) \le 40
$$
 (4-4)

 M_1/M_2 is the ratio of smaller to larger end moments. This ratio is negative value when the column is bent in double curvature and positive when it is bent in single curvature. Fig. 4.4 illustrates columns in double and single curvatures. Columns in non-sway frames are more stable when they bend in double curvature, with smaller secondary effects, as compared to bending in single curvature. This is reflected in Eq. (4-3) through the sign of M_1/M_2 ratio. For negative values of this ratio the limit of slenderness in Eq. (4-3) increases, allowing a wider range of columns to be treated as short columns.

Slender columns in non-sway frames are designed for factored axial force P_u and amplified moment M_c . The amplified moment is obtained by magnifying the larger of the two end moments M_2 to account for member curvature and resulting secondary moments between the supports, while the supports are braced against sidesway. If M_c computed for the curvature effect between the ends is smaller than the larger end moment M_2 , the design is carried out for M_2 .

$$
M_c = \delta_{ns} M_2 \tag{4-5}
$$

$$
\delta_{ns} = \frac{C_m}{1 - \frac{P_u}{0.75 P_c}} \ge 1.0
$$
\n(4-6)

The critical column load, P_c (Euler buckling load) is;

$$
P_c = \frac{\pi^2 EI}{(k\ell_u)^2}
$$
\n
$$
M_1
$$
\n
$$
M_1
$$
\n
$$
M_1
$$
\n
$$
M_1
$$
\n
$$
M_2
$$
\n
$$
M_1/M_2 = \text{Positive}
$$
\n
$$
M_1/M_2 = \text{Positive}
$$
\nTable Curvature

\nDouble Curvature

Fig. 4.4 Columns in Single and Double Curvature

EI in Eq. (4-7) is computed either with due considerations given to the presence of reinforcement in the section, as specified in Eq. (4-8), or approximately using Eq. (4-9).

$$
EI = \frac{0.2E_c I_g + E_s I_{se}}{I + \beta_d} \tag{4-8}
$$

where β_d is the ratio of the maximum factored axial dead load to the total factored axial load. The moment of inertia of reinforcement about the cross-sectional centroid (I_{se}) can be computed using **Slender Columns 4.5**.

$$
EI = \frac{0.4E_c I_g}{I + \beta_d} \tag{4-9}
$$

Note that Eq. (4-9) can be simplified further by assuming $\beta_d = 0.6$, in which case the equation becomes; $EI = 0.25E_cI_g$.

Coefficient C_m is equal to 1.0 for members with transverse loads between the supports. For the more common case of columns without transverse loads between the supports;

$$
C_m = 0.6 + 0.4 \frac{M_1}{M_2} \ge 0.4 \tag{4-10}
$$

Where, M_1/M_2 is positive if the column is bent in single curvature.

When the maximum factored end moment M_2 is smaller than the minimum permissible design moment $M_{2,min}$, specified in Eq. (4-11), the magnification applies to $M_{2,min}$.

$$
M_{2,min} \ge P_u(0.6 + 0.03h) \tag{4-11}
$$

where h is the cross-sectional dimension in inches in the direction of the eccentricity of load. For columns for which $M_{2,min}$ is higher than M_2 , the values of C_m , in Eq. (4-10) should either be taken 1.0 or determined based on the computed ratio of end moments (M_1/M_2) . Once the amplified moment M_c is obtained, the designer can use the appropriate interaction diagrams given in Chapter 3 to determine the required percentage of longitudinal reinforcement.

4.4.2 Slender Columns in Sway Frames

Columns in sway frames are designed for the factored axial load P_u and the combination of factored gravity load moments and magnified sway moments. This is specified below, and illustrated in Fig. 4.5.

$$
M_{I} = M_{Ins} + \delta_s M_{Is} \tag{4-12}
$$

$$
M_2 = M_{2ns} + \delta_s M_{2s} \tag{4-13}
$$

where, M_{1ns} and M_{2ns} are end moments due to factored gravity loads; and M_{1s} and M_{2s} are sway moments normally caused by factored lateral loads. All of these moments can be obtained from a firstorder elastic frame analysis. Magnified sway moments $\delta_s M_{1s}$ and $\delta_s M_{2s}$ are obtained either from a second order frame analysis, with member flexural rigidity as specified in **Slender Columnss 4.3**, or by magnifying the end moments by sway magnification factor δ_s . The sway magnification factor is calculated either as given in Eq. (4-14) or Eq. (4-15).

$$
\delta_s M_s = \frac{M_s}{1 - \frac{\sum P_u}{0.75 \sum P_c}} \ge M_s \tag{4-14}
$$

$$
\delta_s M_s = \frac{M_s}{I - Q} \ge M_s \tag{4-15}
$$

However, if δ_s computed by Eq. (4-15) exceeds 1.5, $\delta_s M_s$ shall be calculated either through second order analysis or using Eq. (4-14).

Fig. 4.5 Design moments in sway frames

In a sway frame, all the columns of a given story participate in the sway mechanism, and play roles in the stability of individual columns. Therefore, Eq. (4-14) includes $\sum P_u$ and $\sum P_c$ which give the summations of factored axial loads and critical loads for all the columns in the story, respectively. The critical column load P_c can be computed using Eqs. (4-7) through (4-9) with the effective length factor k computed for unbraced columns (for sway frames) and β_d as the ratio of the maximum factored sustained shear within the story to the maximum total factored shear in the story. Eq. (4-14) provides an average δ_s for all the columns in a story. Therefore, it yields acceptable results if all the columns in a story undergo the same story drift. When significant torsion is anticipated under lateral loading, a second order analysis is recommended for finding the amplified sway moment, $\delta_s M_s$.

The magnification of moments through Eq. (4-15) is applicable only if the sway magnification factor δ_s does not exceed 1.5. If it does, then either the second-order analysis or Eq. (4-14) should be employed (Sec. 10.13.4.2).

The sidesway magnification discussed above is intended to amplify the end moments associated with lateral drift. Although the amplified end moment is commonly the critical moment for most sway columns, columns with high slenderness ratios may experience higher amplification of moments between the ends (rather than at the ends) because of the curvature of the column along the column height. This is assumed to occur when the inequality given in Eq. $(4-16)$ is satisfied.

$$
\frac{\ell_u}{r} > \frac{35}{\sqrt{\frac{P_u}{f'_c \, A_g}}} \tag{4-16}
$$

The magnification of moment due to the curvature of column between the ends is similar to that for braced columns in non-sway frames. Therefore, if Eq. (4-16) is satisfied for a column, then the column should be designed for factored axial force P_u and magnified design moment (M_c) computed using Eqs. $(4-5)$ and $(4-6)$, with M₁ and M₂ computed from Eqs. $(4-12)$ and $(4-13)$.

Sometimes columns of a sway frame may buckle under gravity loads alone, without the effects of lateral loading. In this case one of the gravity load combinations may govern the stability of columns. The reduction of EI under sustained gravity loads may be another factor contributing to the stability of sway columns under gravity loads. Therefore, ACI 318-05 requires an additional check to safeguard against column buckling in sway frames under gravity loads alone (Sec. 10.13.6). Accordingly, the strength and stability of structure is reconsidered depending on the method of amplification used for sway moments. If a second order analysis was conducted to find $\delta_s M_{2s}$, two additional analyses are necessary using the reduced stiffness values given in **Slender Columns 4.3** with β_d taken as the ratio of the factored sustained axial dead load to total factored axial load. First, a second-order analysis is conducted under combined factored gravity loads and lateral loads equal to 0.5% of the gravity loads. Second, a first-order analysis is conducted under the same loading condition. The ratio of lateral drift obtained by the second-order analysis to that obtained by the first-order analysis is required to be limited to 2.5. If the sway moment was amplified by computing the sway magnification factor given in Eq. 4.14, as opposed to conducting second order analysis or using Eq. (4-15), then δ_s computed by using the gravity loads (ΣP_n and ΣP_n corresponding to the factored dead and live loads) is required to be positive and less than or equal to 2.5 to ensure the stability of the column. If the sway moment was amplified using Eq. (4-15), then the value of Q computed using $\sum P_{u}$ for factored dead and live loads should not exceed 0.60.

4.5 Slender Column Design Examples

SLENDER COLUMN EXAMPLE 1 - **Design of an interior column braced against sidesway.**

Consider a 10-story office building, laterally braced against sidesway by an elevator shaft (Q is computed to be much less than 0.05). The building has an atrium opening at the second floor level with a two-story high column in the opening to be designed. Design the column for the unfactored design forces given below, obtained from a first-order analysis. The framing beams are 16 in wide and 20 in deep with 23 ft (canter-to-centre) spans. The beam depth includes a slab thickness of 6 in. The story height is 14 ft (column height is 28 ft). It is assumed that the bracing elements provide full resistance to lateral forces and the columns only resist the gravity loads. Start the design with an initial column size of 20 in square. $f_c = 6,000$ psi for all beams and columns; $f_v = 60,000$ psi.

Note: Moments are positive if counterclockwise at column ends. The column is bent in double curvature.

SLENDER COLUMN EXAMPLE 2 - **Design of an exterior column in a sway frame.**

A typical floor plan and a section through a multi-story office building are shown below. Design column 3-A at the ground level for combined gravity and east-west wind loading. The results of first-order frame analysis under factored load combinations are given in the solution.

Slender Column Example 2

4.6 Slender Column Design Aids

Slender Column - 4.1 Effective Length Factor – Jackson and Moreland Alignment Chart for Columns in Braced (Non-Sway) Frames³

³ "Guide to Design Criteria for Metal Compression Members," 2nd Edition, Column Research Council, Fritz Engineering Laboratory, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA, 1966

Slender Columns - 4.2 Effective Length Factor – Jackson and Moreland Alignment Chart for Columns in Unbraced (Sway) Frames⁴

⁴ "Guide to Design Criteria for Metal Compression Members," 2nd Edition, Column Research Council, Fritz Engineering Laboratory, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA, 1966

f'_{c} (ksi)	3	$\overline{4}$	5	6	$\overline{7}$	8	9	10	
E_c (ksi)	3120	3605	4031	4415	4769	5098	5407	5700	$\frac{1}{\epsilon}$
$E_c I / I_g$ (ksi)									
Beams	1092	1262	1411	1545	1669	1784	1892	1995	0.35
Columns	2184	2524	2822	3091	3338	3569	3785	3990	0.70
Walls (Uncracked)	2184	2524	2822	3091	3338	3569	3785	3990	0.70
Walls (Cracked)	1092	1262	1411	1545	1669	1784	1892	1995	0.35
Flat Plates Flat Slabs	780	901	1008	1104	1192	1275	1352	1425	0.25

Slender Columns - 4.3 Recommended Flexural Rigidities (EI) for use in First-Order and Second Order Analyses of Frames for Design of Slender Columns

Notes:

- 1. The above values will be divided by $(1+\beta_d)$, when sustained lateral loads act or for stability checks made in accordance with Section 10.13.6 of ACI 318- 05. For non-sway frames, $β_d$ is ratio of maximum factored axial sustained load to maximum factored axial load associated with the same load combination, $\beta_d = 1.2D / (1.2D + 1.6L)$.
- 2. For sway frames, except as specified in Section 10.13.6 of ACI 318-05, β_d is ratio of maximum factored sustained shear within a story to the maximum factored shear in that story.
- 3. The above values are applicable to normal-density concrete with w_c between 90 and 155 lb/ft³.
- 4. The moment of inertia of a T-beam should be based on the effective flange width, shown in **Flexure 6.** It is generally sufficiently accurate to take I_g of a T-beam as two times the I_g for the web.
- 5. Area of a member will *not* be reduced for analysis.

Slender Columns - 4.5 Moment of Inertia of Reinforcement about Sectional Centroid5

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⁵ This table is based on Table 12-1 of MacGregor, J.G., Third Edition, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1997.