TOWARDS SETTING A RESEARCH AGENDA AROUND MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Traditional transport planning has tended to focus on addressing the needs of mainstream commuters through the provision of improved transport infrastructure and services, leaving out a significant number of existing and prospective users especially rural and peri-urban dwellers. However, in recent years there has been a relatively strong consensus to move towards addressing all travel needs. These travel needs include those relating to servicing social and reproductive work, as well as informal productive work – the types of activities that tend to be performed by women, yet are seldom sufficiently recognised or valued for the function they perform in sustaining households and communities (Mashiri, 1997). For development to be sustainable and equitable, gender needs to be mainstreamed into transport research and implementation initiatives. This is important for the design and implementation of transport systems that are responsive to the practical needs of women, households' and indeed communities. Mainstreaming gender is also necessary for the empowerment of women, particularly the poor, by addressing their strategic needs, such as access to socio-economic opportunities. This paper provides an overview of available literature with respect to gender and transport, highlights some information gaps and proposes areas for further research and action.

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional transport planning has tended to focus on addressing the needs of mainstream commuters through the provision of improved transport infrastructure and services, leaving out a significant number of existing and prospective users especially rural and peri-urban dwellers. However, in recent years there has been a relatively strong consensus to move towards addressing all travel needs, including those of low-income persons and special needs users. These travel needs include those relating to servicing social and reproductive work, as well as informal productive work – the types of activities that tend to be performed by women, yet are seldom sufficiently recognised or valued for the function they perform in sustaining households and communities (Mashiri, 1997). As Mahapa points out, transport programs have tended to "function in ways which prioritise men's needs and viewpoints over those of women" (Mahapa, 2003: 4). As such, transport needs arising from women's multiple roles are often not adequately addressed in transport research and implementation initiatives. Furthermore, evaluations of the success of development initiatives often neglect to reflect the gendered distribution of benefits or consider the influence of social-reproductive work on these interventions.

For development to be sustainable and equitable, gender needs to be mainstreamed into transport research and implementation initiatives. This is important for the design and implementation of transport systems that are responsive to the practical needs of women, households' and indeed communities. Mainstreaming gender is also necessary for the empowerment of women, particularly the poor by addressing their strategic needs, such as access to socio-economic opportunities. Although a few systematic gender inclusion procedures exist in developing countries to ensure gender-sensitivity and responsiveness to transport sector policies, strategies, and programs, the institutional framework as well as the official and political will to operationalise them is weak. In South Africa, where there has been limited policy planning and research implementation in this area (except for a few examples such as Mashiri & Naude, 2002), the need to put in place transport sector gender analytical frameworks and methodologies predicated upon a rights-based approach to, as Grieco put it, "move from the activities of marginal policy activists to mainstream professional practice" (Grieco, 1997:2) cannot be overemphasized.

A scan of currently available literature on gender and transport in developing countries revealed a general focus on rural transport and gender. Most of this literature emphasized, on the one hand, the transport burden women face on a daily basis, and on the other, the significant contributions that they play and could play in the future, as well as their overall roles in the transport sector. It has also revealed some gaps in gender and transport research that are yet to be sufficiently addressed. For example, many research reports have highlighted head-loading and the transport of firewood and water by rural women (Bryceson & Howe, 1992, Agarwal et al, 1994; Grieco et al, 1997; Mashiri et al, 1998; Turner et al, 1998, Maramba & Bamberger, 2001). However, there is a paucity of information relating to urban and peri-urban women's transport needs to inform policy initiatives, and what effect this has on the socio-economic and physical welfare of women and their communities. In addition, a tendency to equate "gender" with "women" has led to women's transport burdens and needs being highlighted, with insufficient attention paid to the nature and underlying drivers of the relationship between men and women.

For transport research and implementation initiatives to progress beyond this state of flux, an appraisal of the available information on gender and transport needs to be systematically undertaken with a view to developing a robust agenda for action. This paper provides an overview of available literature with respect to gender and transport, highlights some information gaps and proposes areas for further research and action.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Surveys relating to transport have increasingly incorporated gender-disaggregated figures and analyses (for example, Mashiri 1997). Gender differences and inequities in time spent on travel and transport, as well as socio-economic and health costs relating to transport, have increasingly been highlighted (Bryceson & Howe, 1992: 7; Ali-Nejadfard, 1997 & World Bank, 1999 cited by Maramba & Bamberger, 2001: 2, Mahapa, 2003: 6;). The consensus within gender and transport research has been that women bear a greater transport burden than men, particularly in the developing world, and more particularly in rural and peri-urban areas. The result is time poverty for women, especially in rural and peri-urban areas where women spend a great deal of time walking to their patches of arable land as well as to collect firewood and water, and travelling to grinding mills and dip tanks. Furthermore, although the multiplicity of women's activities – relating to commercial and subsistence production, social-reproduction and community development – have been deemed important for sustaining the households and communities, they are inadequately

supported by transport sector policies, strategies and programs (Bryceson & Howe, 1992; Calvo, 1994; Grieco, 1997; Turner et al, 1998, Maramba & Bamberger, 2001; Mashiri and Mahapa, 2002).

2.1 Demand for Transport: Women's Activities and Transport Patterns

The following tasks performed by women requiring transport means and time have been most frequently cited in gender and transport research:
- Collection of firewood and water
- Travel to grinding mills and dip tanks
- Nursing the sick and taking them to clinics and hospitals
- Trips to the market and shops
- Trips to the fields

It has been established that while women spend much time and energy performing these critical tasks, they seldom have access to appropriate modes of transport for these purposes. As indicated elsewhere in the paper, public transport often fails to provide for women's transport needs, as it tends to be structured around particular times and locations associated with mainstream commuting patterns. In many cases, especially in deep rural areas, public transport does not exist. Furthermore, research shows that most intermediate means of transport (IMT) are owned, controlled and used by men (Agarwal, 1994: 1; Bryceson & Howe, 1992: 15; Mashiri, 1997; Maramba & Bamberger, 2001: 2).

Children's transport needs and burdens have also been cited in a number of gender-sensitive analyses of transport. Most children from low-income households travel long distances – often on foot – to attend school (Porter & Blaufuss, 2002; South African Department of Labour, 2003; Murray et al, 2004). Many are unable to attend school for this reason, particularly girls whose safety is a concern (Turner et al, 1998: 1). They are also often responsible for tasks such as firewood and water collection (Porter & Blaufuss, 2002; Murray et al, 2004). Children's transport burdens and needs are often highlighted in gender and transport research, as children too generally have little control over and access to transport-related resources, and since their care is primarily entrusted to women.

While the issue of women's multiple tasks and roles relate to both rural and urban women in various ways, most of the focus on women's transport needs in developing countries, such as those stipulated above, is on rural women's transport needs and time poverty.

2.2 Women's Mobility Constraints

Women's mobility constraints have been recognised as having an impact on women's time, security and position in society. More generally, women's mobility constraints have been linked to a lack of economic growth and social sustainability in households and communities, and as having an impact on the success of development strategies (Lebo, 1999; Mahapa, 2003). A number of stakeholders in the field, including the World Bank, have asserted that women's transport burdens and needs must be addressed in order for development to be equitable, feasible and sustainable (Lebo, 1999). Thus, mainstreaming gender in the transport sector is increasingly being viewed not only as a rights issue, but also as part of a business case for development projects and investments.

While gender equity (including gendered power relations issues), mobility and access are considered as basic rights in the gender and transport discourse, increased productivity by women and the overall economic growth that could result from freeing women from the

time poverty emanating from domestic tasks, has also frequently been emphasized (Bryceson & Howe, 1992: 20; Grieco et al, 1997: 2; Maramba & Bamberger, 2001: 2). The extent to which this emphasis may contribute to women's tactical or strategic interests and objectives, however, has been questioned (Bryceson & Howe, 1992: 21). Contextual specificities could impact on the ways in which "freed up" time is used by women (for example, Mashiri et al, 1998). Furthermore, it is important not only to encourage women's participation in commercial activities, but to ensure that this participation does not merely shift the locus of their exploitation. It is thus important to understand that an increase in women's productive and commercial activities may not address the gender imbalances in time and energy spent on work, as well as imbalances in ownership and benefits gained from increased production.

The following negative impacts on poor women have frequently been raised:
- *Women's health and vulnerability:* women's health is negatively affected by head-loading (Bryceson & Howe, 1992: 7; Grieco et al, 1997: 3; Maramba & Bamberger, 2001: 11; Turner et al, 1998: 1), and a lack of access to safe transport modes can make them vulnerable to accidents (for example, when walking along transport infrastructure such as roads and paths), environmental dangers (such as snake-bites and floods in river beds) and sexual harassment (for example on public transport) (Fernando & Porter, 2002: 10)
- *Women's time poverty:* the time women spend on travel and transport in performing various tasks inhibit their participation in other social-economic and political activities, including their participation in transport initiatives.

It is germane to emphasize the oft noted view that women's vulnerabilities and socio-economic and political marginalisation compromise sustainable development and economic growth. A case in point is often cited is that women would be able to participate more not only in commercially productive activities, but also in human capacity development initiatives, such as workshops, meetings and training programs if they were relieved of the transport burden and drudgery of domestic tasks (Bryceson & Howe, 1992: 7; Grieco et al, 1997: 3; Maramba & Bamberger, 2001: 11; Turner et al, 1998: 1; Mashiri, 1998), which could improve not only women's station in society, but also the economic growth of developing countries.

2.3 Suggestions for Gender Mainstreaming

In response to research findings regarding women's transport needs and constraints, a number of gender-sensitive approaches to transport have been suggested.

In terms of transport infrastructure and services interventions that can address women's specific practical needs, the following has frequently been suggested:
- An inter-sectoral approach in relieving women's transport burden, particularly in bringing various resources to rural women (for example, water wells closer to rural homesteads and energy efficient ovens)
- Recognition of women's social-reproductive work as "work", in order to design public transport in a way that better meets women's needs
- Building of good paths, roads and bridges connecting socio-economic activity areas frequented by women and the provision of affordable transport services to enable them to travel more easily and safely
- Design and promotion of appropriate and sustainable technologies such as IMTs that can meet women's transport and access needs.

Researching and considering the role of cultural practices and beliefs is also an important step towards the design of appropriate transport interventions.

The importance of this has been identified as being two-pronged:

- Locally specific cultural practices and beliefs inform the allocation of roles, status, power, and resources within households and communities. Thus, knowledge of cultural practices and beliefs is essential for understanding the gendered ways in which households and communities function and thus for identifying various transport needs through a gender-sensitive lens.
- Cultural practices and beliefs affect the success of transport interventions. For example, the benefits for women through the introduction of IMTs will be influenced by whether or not those forms of transport are considered appropriate for women, and by the gendered control over and access to such resources (Agarwal et al, 1994: 1; Maramba & Bamberger, 2001: 2; Mwankusye, 2002: 48; Mashiri & Mahapa, 2002).

In relation to cultural practices and beliefs, stakeholders and researchers in the field have suggested key questions that need to be asked in order to conduct research that is gender sensitive, and that can be applied in the design and implementation of transport interventions that meet the needs of women. Gender-sensitive approaches require a questioning of the gendered nature of role allocation, division of labour, control over and access to resources, decision-making powers and benefits (or burdens) resulting from development interventions among other things (Mashiri & Mdoda, 2003).

The question of who benefits from transport interventions is a particularly important and challenging one, as suggested by anecdotal evidence arising from case studies. Some case studies have revealed that transport interventions meant to alleviate women's transport burdens have either entrenched the status quo or worsened the situation. For example, a reasonable assumption that the introduction of carts in a village would reduce the burden of fetching firewood by women as men would assume responsibility for this task (Mashiri et al, 1998). However, men used the technology to collect firewood for commercial use and quickly exhausted the resources close to homesteads. In the end, women had to travel even further to collect firewood for domestic use. Thus, critical analyses of case studies highlight the need to carefully examine the gendered allocation of resources and decision-making powers, and to use this knowledge to plan, implement and evaluate transport initiatives.

Another important factor is the need to meaningfully involve and consult women in the planning of transport initiatives. Often, due to culturally embedded gender roles, statuses and time-constraints, women are marginalised in the appraisal and decision-making processes. While this point has not yet been taken up sufficiently within the ambit of most transport policies and interventions, it constitutes the centerpiece of efforts to mainstream gender in transport sector activities (Grieco et al, 1997; Mahapa, 2003; Maramba and Bamberger, 2001; Turner et al, 1998).

Social norms, practices and beliefs cannot be changed overnight. For this reason some researchers and policy-makers have attempted to work within the gendered boundaries of cultural systems, drawing on local practices and beliefs to design interventions that aim to meet women's needs. Others have called for a greater emphasis on working to change local patriarchal power relations and practices, although it is often acknowledged this is a difficult outcome to achieve in many contexts (Bryceson & Howe, 1992:23). Some have observed interventions that have already shown shifts in community thinking, for example around the gendered use of IMTs (Mwankusye, 2002:48). However, in most cases suggestions on how local gender relations and their accompanying distribution of work and

access to means of transport – particularly in terms of convincing certain men that such changes are beneficial for communities - have not been sufficiently or practically addressed in the literature available. Addressing these issues, however, is recognised by many researchers in the field as necessarily having to be context-specific.

3. TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GENDER AND TRANSPORT AGENDA

3.1 Rights-Based Approach to Development

As indicated in elsewhere in this paper, mainstreaming gender into the transport sector requires intuitively, as its departure point and mainstay, a rights-based approach to development. A rights-based aproach seeks to continually improve the well-being of communities and individuals within communities, on the basis of their active, unfettered and meaningful participation in development as well as in the fair distribution of the resulting benefits (United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development – www.unhchr.ch/development/htm/menu3/b/74.htm). It is underpinned by a holistic politico-socio-economic and cultural process. The human rights approach to development is thus integrated and multidisciplinary by definition .

In addition, a rights-based approach to development is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It integrates the norms, standards and principles of the international human rights system into the plans, policies and processes of development.

It is predicated upon the following tenets, values and principles:
- Express linkage to rights
- Accountability
- Empowerment
- Participation and inclusion
- Equality and non-discrimination, and
- Interdependence and inter-relatedness
- Attention to vulnerable groups
- Universality, inalienability, undivided and indivisibility.

A rights-based approach is underpinned by a more profound commitment to empowerment in that it focuses on beneficiaries as the owners of rights and the directors of development, and emphasises the human person as the centre of the development process. This involves unfettered and untremelloed participation and decision-making by the beneficiaries. It also gives due attention to issues of accessibility, including access to development processes, institutions, information and redress. The aim is to bequeath to people the power, capacities, capabilities and access needed to change their own lives, improve their own communities and influence their own destinies.

3.2 Developing an Action Agenda

Some issues relating to gender and transport were strikingly ubiquitous in the literature scanned, while others were conspicuously absent or in need of further attention. Furthermore, while gender as a tool of analysis has been increasingly incorporated into the transport sector, various conceptual frameworks applied to current literature and analyses need to be further refined. It is thus important to identify some of the gaps in gender and transport research, and to chart the way forward in terms of the conceptual frameworks informing the gender and transport research and intervention agenda.

In order to move forward in the area of gender and transport research, these two levels of the action agenda need to be developed:

- *Empirical:* This relates to gaps in the empirical evidence. Areas requiring research need to be identified, and preliminary research conducted to discover what relevance these areas might have for the transport sector.
- *Heuristic:* This refers to ways of looking at and conceptualising issues. For research to be rigorous, the ways in which problems are defined, understood and approached need to be carefully considered.

3.3 Empirical: Gaps in the Gender and Transport Research

Generally, the literature scan revealed the need for more case studies relating to gender and transport, particularly to gender-sensitive transport interventions. Many points were repeated in the literature, and while this suggests that gender-sensitivity is in some ways being developed in the transport sector, there is a need to move *forward* by generating new knowledge in the field. Case studies are often the best means by which to do this, especially in light of the need to move beyond merely identifying gender inequities, and to begin identifying and testing gender-sensitive solutions. Critical, gender-sensitive case studies (i.e. case studies that rigorously present the methodologies applied and critically evaluate the processes and outcomes of research and interventions) can generate context-specific knowledge as well as add to and further develop research and intervention methodologies.

More specifically, at least five areas requiring research and policy implementation were identified amongst others through the literature scan:

3.3.1 Low-Income Urban Women's Transport Patterns and Needs

This area of research relates to spatial or geographical contexts in South Africa. There was a paucity of gender-sensitive information relating to urban contexts, particularly in developing countries (most of the information on urban women's transport needs related to Western countries). Urban women – and especially low-income urban women – were acknowledged as having multiple roles and tasks to perform, yet the ways in which the transport sector is or is not responding to this has not been adequately explored in the research.

There is much movement of both men and women between urban and rural spaces, especially in the context of South Africa (Smith & Mashiri, 1996). For example, many people working and living in urban areas frequently travel to see their families in rural areas. People living in rural areas often require travel to urban areas to access facilities and services not available in rural areas. Thus, urban and rural spaces cannot be viewed as discreet. Instead, transport research should involve looking at the ways in which these spaces interrelate. A starting point would be for low-income women's travel and transport needs in the urban context, including small towns located in predominantly rural areas, to be explored. This information could then be used to inform the design of research that looks at gender and transport in a more spatially integrated way, attending to the movement between urban and rural spaces.

3.3.2 Women, Transport and the Health Sector

Another approach to transport research is to take one of the functions of transport and identify an area of research related to that function. In the literature scan, the role of women as caregivers was raised, but not adequately addressed in terms of the links to transport (although Grieco in 1998 made the link between healthcare and Malawian gender and transport policies, 1998[y]). Transport and HIV/AIDS is an area of research and

intervention that is emerging. Links need to be made between health care practices and structures (formal and informal), HIV/AIDS, gender and transport.

Currently, the role of women as caregivers is taking on new and greater dimensions due to the impact of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. The restructuring and decentralisation of healthcare services in South Africa has caused shifts in terms of access to health care. One aspect of this shift is the increased participation of women as caregivers in their communities, through the formation of a number of women-based NGO's (for example, those contributing to home-based care and education around HIV/AIDS in their communities). More generally, too, an increasing burden is being placed on women (particularly poor women) to care for family and community members infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

Thus far, healthcare policies have encouraged the streamlining and decentralisation of healthcare services and the creation of "local initiative" with respect to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. However, one of the effects of these policies is that poor women are absorbing much of the burden of healthcare in an expanding informal healthcare system. Women-based NGO's and poor women in general are in need of structural support – including transport - for the expanding role they are playing in informal healthcare. The nature of the support they need and the relationship between transport, healthcare and gender (particularly with respect to the changes and issues HIV/AIDS is bringing) are an important area of research. This research could incorporate spatial development issues (including the location of caregivers in relation to various institutions, infrastructure and services) underpinned by integrated service delivery.

3.3.3 Appropriate Technology Interventions to Meet Women's Needs
Appropriate technology interventions such as the design and promotion of IMTs that could improve women's (especially poor women's) mobility and relieve them of the health burdens and the drudgery of head loading have been mentioned in much of the literature. IMTs are considered a cost-effective technology that could assist to meet women's needs, specifically relating to productive and domestic tasks in rural areas. Furthermore, IMTs - such as bicycles - have been recommended as a means of increasing the overall mobility of women, to enhance their socio-economic and political participation.

There are already case studies related to pilot interventions aimed at introducing or promoting IMTs in various contexts. The success of these interventions in terms of increasing women's mobility and alleviating time poverty has been varied. In some cases the introduction of IMTs resulted in men controlling the resource and using it for their own personal or commercial endeavours. While the commercial use of IMTs by men might seem to benefit women – through increased income for the household – case study evidence suggests that this is not always the case. The crucial question of power relations embedded in culture – especially in terms of access to and control over resources including transport technologies and monetary income has not been sufficiently researched.

Other case study reports have noted that the introduction of IMTs in certain contexts has been successful. This is especially the case of interventions that take a gender-sensitive, integrated approach, addressing gendered perceptions around modes of transport and incorporating community education and discussion around gender and mobility. However, more of this kind of locally specific research around the feasibility, efficacy and transformative potential of IMTs needs to be undertaken. More pilot projects also need to be initiated and critically evaluated to develop this area of knowledge and create a wider range of viable solutions.

The importance of information and communication technologies (ICT) in facilitating development endeavours in urban and rural areas has been growing over the years. What is not certain are the gender implications of the introduction and the subsequent mass provision of ICT in development terms. Little work has been done on the impact of ICT on transport, access to socio-economic activities and local economic development.

3.3.4 Women's Participation in the Transport Sector

As some of the available literature pointed out, there is a need to ensure women's participation at four levels:

- *As users of transport:* This relates to the questions of women's transport needs and to what extent (and how) they are being involved in research.
- *As participants and consultants in transport decision-making:* This involves the consultation and participation of local women (intended beneficiaries) in relation to transport decision-making processes.
- *As employees in the sector:* This involves the participation of women through employment at various levels of the transport sector.
- *As service providers:* This relates to women providing transport infrastructure and services to their communities.

The rationale for participation is largely two-fold:

- Women need be involved in planning, implementing and evaluating gender-sensitive policies and programmes. Particularly, women with background in or experience with the target area could provide valuable input
- For the transport sector to incorporate gender-sensitivity at all levels, the opportunity for women to gain meaningful and beneficial employment in this important growth sector needs to be incorporated.

While quotas for women's participation in the transport sector have sometimes been suggested, a quota-based approach in itself is insufficient. Merely placing women in certain spaces does not guarantee *meaningful* participation, nor should it be assumed that being female necessarily implies gender-sensitivity. Women's participation is crucial for the establishment of equitable practice and for the development of a gender-sensitive understanding of transport needs and systems. However, women's participation must be designed in a way that supports meaningful participation.

Previous case studies have suggested, for example, that women's participation in transport initiatives in their communities has been hampered by the very issues being addressed: lack of time, and lack of transport. Furthermore, local gendered cultural dynamics – such as men's control over decision-making processes – marginalizes women's participation. These issues need to be addressed, and the scope of investigation broadened. Some questions related to the meaningful participation of women in the transport sector are as follows:

In terms of women as participants and consultants in decision-making processes:

- What are the roles that women are playing in decision-making processes related to local transport services?
- What opportunities or forums exist for women to participate in these processes?
- Where consultation forums exist for the purpose of local involvement in decision-making processes, to what extent are women involved, are their voices being heard and encouraged in these forums, and in what ways do these forums support the meaningful involvement of women?

- What (gendered) social, structural, institutional and other factors are supporting and inhibiting women's participation in various decision-making processes?

In terms of women as employees in the transport sector:
- To what extent are women employed in various parts of the transport sector?
- To what extent and in which ways do women benefit from employment in various parts of the transport sector?
- Where women's employment is limited, what are the reasons for this?
- Drawing on the above-mentioned evidence, what can be done about the lack of women's employment in certain areas of the transport sector?

3.3.5 Women's Safety and Security in Transport Services

Finally, one area of research is suggested here as being particularly crucial to gender-sensitive transport strategies: women's safety and security in transport services. Sexual harassment and assault against women are unfortunately common occurrences in South Africa. It has been suggested that the threat to women and girls' safety when traveling inhibits their mobility, and sometimes affects decisions around whether or not to send girl children to school (Fernando & Porter, 2002: 10; Bid et al, 2002 cited by Fernando and Porter, 2002: 10). However, the extent and nature of the problem was not adequately covered. The various links between transport and women's safety were not explicated, contextualised or explored in terms of possible solutions.

Sexual harassment, sexual assault and other forms of assault on women during travel are disturbingly common in South Africa. These threats to women's safety impinge on women's rights to safety, security and bodily integrity. Furthermore, where the threat of sexual harassment and/or assault exists, women (and children, especially girl children) may be unlikely to use certain forms of transport (Bid et al, 2002). Their access to opportunities and resources is thus compromised. This issue also extends to women working in transport service provision, and has profound implications for the prospect of gender-equitable transformation within the transport sector, since women are often reticent to take up employment as transport service providers due to issues of safety. Similarly, employers are reticent to employ women in certain positions due to the risks to their safety. The issue of women's safety (or lack thereof) applies to diverse geographical contexts and has implications for a wide range of transport services. Furthermore, this issue cuts across many areas of transport research and types of transport interventions. Gender-sensitive transport research and interventions at all levels need to incorporate the issue of women's safety and security.

The issue of women's safety and security related to transport services is thus a broad and important area of research, with wide-ranging relevance and strategic importance. The extent and nature of the problem, the ways in which it affects women (and children) in different contexts and possible interventions are all areas in great need of research.

3.3.6 Monitoring and Evaluation of Transport Policies, Strategies and Programs

It is important to monitor and evaluate existing and future transport policies, strategies and programs with regard to mainstreaming gender and transport issues. In this regard, major evaluation paradigms include positivism/post-positivism, constructivist, transformative and pragmatic. Without prejudicing the other evaluation paradigms, the transformative paradigm appears to be the most suitable to underpin evaluation in diverse contexts described by gender and transport largely because in this paradigm, the lives and experiences of marginalized groups (e.g. women, the poor or persons disabilities) are of

significant importance. In addition, asymmetric power relationships are analyzed, the results of social inquiry are linked to action, and transformative theory is used to develop the program theory and the evaluation approach.

3.4 Heuristic Frameworks: Conceptual Approaches to Gender and Transport

The ways in which problems are identified, defined and approached is an integral part of the generation of knowledge and has implications for the creation of viable solutions. There have been a number of shifts and developments over the past forty years in the area of gender research and analysis. One major shift has been a move away from what is known as a "women in development" (or WID) approach towards a "gender and development" (GAD) approach. The GAD approach emphasises the crucial issue of power in gender relations, and aims to view gender as a system of relationships between men and women (as well as women and women, men and men) instead of merely as a set of "women's issues" (March et al, 1999).

While gender issues and feminist methodologies have in certain contexts been increasingly mainstreamed into research and policy-making, much of the literature on gender and transport still tends to relate to gender in narrow terms, equating "gender" with "women". By doing this – by targeting women and especially poor African women as a (homogenous) group – the relational dynamics of gender are bypassed and there is a failure to identify and understand the ways in which households and communities are shaped by gendered *relationships*. Furthermore, the success of interventions may be limited if women's activities, needs and identities are not adequately linked to those of men, children and other women in their communities.

Currently in South Africa, there is a strong case for focusing on women in gender research and initiatives, due to the persistent marginalisation of women in most areas of society. Incorporating heuristic frameworks that take a Gender and Development approach does not mean that this focus is to be abandoned, but merely that it should be applied in a way that takes account of the relational aspects of gender, and by extension, the relational aspects of women's issues. In essence, women should not be viewed in isolation.

It is suggested here that the following points need to be addressed and further incorporated into gender and transport heuristic frameworks:

- *Social variables intersecting gender:* It is important not only to look at "women's" status, needs and mobility constraints, but also to identify the differences between women (and between men) in the contexts being researched. For example, who are the wealthier and more powerful, or poorer and more marginalized, women in communities and households? What social or other factors have led to their position, how is it maintained, and what is their relationship to other women in the community/household? Gender is intersected and shaped by a number of variables, among them race, class, age, marital status and more. By attending to gender relations in an integrated way – instead of dichotomising and homogenising men and women – the ways in which power, resources and relationships are organised can be better understood.
- *Masculinities:* Similarly, it is important to include an evaluation of men's needs, statuses, power and resources in gender-sensitive transport research and interventions, as masculinities too have a profound impact on social, political and economic systems. Much of the literature available on gender and transport tended to focus on women as a group, rather than examining the relationships between men and women. This is especially important in light of the need to address cultural constraints to development initiatives and the empowerment of women. Without the inclusion of men in these processes, women's empowerment is unlikely to occur.

- *Women's Agency:* There is still a tendency in gender-related research and literature to present women primarily as victims. Especially in research and writing pertaining to women in developing countries, these women are presented as victims of an additive, non-negotiable system of oppression: what has often been termed triple oppression (oppression through race, class and gender). The realities of women's oppression in most parts of the globe – and particularly of African women in post-colonial contexts – should not be downplayed or bypassed by any means. However, there is also a more complex reality at work. Case study evidence suggests that many women wield their agency in multiple and dynamic ways, negotiating with and quietly subverting patriarchal power systems. These strategies are unlikely to come out in an interview or be openly expressed, but can be observed, or uncovered through indirect references. These forms of agency reveal much about the ways in which gender relations manifest on the ground and provide a basis for the empowerment of women. The impact and sustainability of interventions aimed at addressing women's needs is more likely if women's sites of agency are identified and fostered.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In order to develop and move forward with a gender agenda in the transport sector, attention must be paid to potential areas of research as well as the heuristic frameworks and methodologies applied. Thus far, the process has been initiated by a relatively small number of researchers, policy makers and programme planners in the transport sector, who have sought to incorporate gender-sensitive research and practices into the sector. However, gender sensitive approaches need to be evaluated and refined if mainstreaming gender is to have a meaningful impact on the transport sector. Furthermore, the route towards gender-sensitive solutions (not only gender-sensitive analyses) must be forged.

It has been proposed here that a number of areas relating to gender and transport single out themselves as major areas of potential research. These areas of enquiry have broad socio- economic and political relevance, and addressing the problems associated with these areas can have an important impact on sustainable development programmes. For these reasons, there is a business case for developing a gender action agenda in the transport sector.

In the South African context, as elsewhere in developing countries, women bear much of the burden of transport, and are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment and various forms of assault, particularly in the case of poor women. These issues need to be addressed rigorously if women's empowerment is to occur and if women are to participate meaningfully in development processes that benefit households, communities and nations.

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