Stuck in the Slow Lane: Reconceptualizing the Links between Gender, Transport and Employment

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This article draws on primary research undertaken in the North East of England to explore the way in which inequalities in access to transport resources impact on women's opportunities to enter the public domain of paid work. It advances the idea of spatiality as a social construction and, building on previous studies, it explores the way in which a gender division of transport operating in the home and at work limits women's access to temporal, financial and personal and geographic travel resources; ultimately constraining women's mobility and restricting their employment opportunities. Finally, the article will argue that, although some women can achieve 'masculine' levels of transport resources, the majority of women are stuck in the slow lane and their mobility deprivation often confines them to the private world of the family, or alternatively, to part-time, low paid work on the periphery of the labour market. This leads to the conclusion that there is an urgent need to provide women with a range of mobility choices which enhance their access to the labour market and to challenge the socially constructed processes which underpin the discrimination women face when accessing the world of paid employment.

Introduction

Policymakers and practitioners seeking to identify strategies to tackle pov-erty and social exclusion have increasingly advanced the importance of mobility. Within this framework, poor transport has come to be regarded as both a consequence and a cause of social exclusion and this has led to increasing concerns that poor transport has the potential to undermine key government objectives (Social Exclusion Unit [SEU], 2002), as well as to a new focus on providing transport that can help to make a fairer, more inclusive society (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1998, 2000a, 2000b; Department for Education and Employment, 2002; SEU, 2001). As this agenda emerges it is recognized there are sufficient differences between women's transport needs to consider them separately (Transport, Research and Consultancy [TraC], 2000, pp. 51–2). This recognition has been translated at a governmental level into a particular concern to take account of women's transport needs in planning and provision (Department for Transport, 2000) and to develop toolkits which can identify 'priorities for improvement and ... measure progress towards gender-based targets' (Hamilton and Jenkins, 2000, p. 1793).

This article seeks to develop new frameworks to understand the links between gender, transport and employment. It outlines the way in which feminist analysis of women's transport impoverishment has historically been disregarded by mainstream transport disciplines and by wider sociological frameworks. It also draws attention to shortcomings in the way in which current analysis considers the links between gender, transport and social exclusion. It then goes on to advance the idea of transport as a social construction, rather than an essentially physical resource, which allows women to link the worlds of home and work, drawing attention to the way in which women's reduced access to a range of socioeconomic resources impacts on their mobility. Following on from these contextual issues, the article draws on data from an in-depth study undertaken in the North East of England to show that transport plays a key role in allowing women to bridge the social divide between the private world of the home and the public world of work. It also demonstrates

that temporal, financial, personal and geographic resources are central to mobility and explores the way in which women's access to these resources is constrained by their position in the home and the world of employment.

Background

The dominance of econometric models of traveller behaviour

Research into transport planning and practice has consistently failed to apply a social science perspective to transport policy or to fully understand the way in which social organization can play a role in determining patterns of transport and travel. It has also demonstrated a systematic lack of understanding of the cultural and institutional structures which result in mobility deprivation (Lucas, 2003; Root, 2003).

Within this framework the issue of gender has been consistently disregarded, marginalized or misunderstood. Feminist analysis undertaken during the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, which centred on exploring women's access to transport and the impact of their gender role on their travel circum-stances in both the developed and developing world, sought to redress the gender imbalance and add a social perspective to the financial and technical frameworks which dominated debate at the time (Atkins, 1989; Castells, 1978; Focas, 1989; Greater London Council [GLC], 1986; Grieco et al., 1989, 1996; Hamilton and Jenkins, 1989; Huxley, 1988; Pickup, 1984; Turner and Fouracre, 1995; Wajcman, 1991). However, these early feminist frameworks were not taken on board by mainstream transport disciplines or in wider sociological frameworks. This absence of cross fertilization resulted in a situation in which the concept of transport poverty and its impact on social welfare was not considered as a topic for analysis (Lucas, 2003) and gender relations were not seen as important in transport research (Ortoleva and Brenman, 2003). As a result, mainstream transport research remained wedded to a model which failed to take account of the way in which spatiality is not only a physical dimension but is also a social construction (Root, 2003). Issues of personal mobility continued to be considered in the context of 'a universal, disembodied subject which is neutered without sex, gender, or any other attributed social or biological characteristic' (Imrie, 2000, p. 1643).

New understandings of the social nature of transport

A range of contemporary research and analysis has attempted to move social issues to the centre of debate. Numerous studies have sought to identify the impact of transport deprivation on individuals' access to jobs, education and training, health care, housing and other key services and activities (Church et al., 2000; Gaffron et al., 2001; Heiser, 1995; Hine and Grieco, 2003; Hine and Mitchell, 2001a, 2001b; Imrie, 2000; Jain and Guiver, 2001; Kenyon et al., 2002, p. 212; Lee and Murie, 1999; Leyshon and Thrift, 1995; SEU, 2003; TraC, 2000). Contemporary analysis has also addressed the issue of women and transport. For example, a number of studies looking at transport and social inclusion have made reference to important gender differences in the way in which men and women travel, and on women's transport needs and their personal safety when travelling (Church et al., 2000; Gaffron et al., 2001; Hine and Grieco, 2003; Hine and Mitchell, 2001a, 2001b; Kenyon et al., 2002; SEU, 2003; TraC, 2000).

Problematizing current frameworks

Although these studies have provided a useful way forward and have begun to address the social aspects of transport along with key gender issues, they have still subsumed the analysis of women's transport disadvantage and their transport needs in frameworks which are not fully gender sensitive. At the most basic level it is clear that even when considering women's mobility there is strong focus on the household as a unit of analysis, without addressing the often substantial inequality between women's and men's access to transport resources (Hamilton, 2003). This does not allow for a consideration of the way in which transport resources are actually distributed within families or reflect the fact that individual women cannot always rely upon family transport resources to secure their own personal mobility.

Alternatively, when the emphasis has been on women there has been a strong tendency to consider them within the framework of 'the travel poor' and to assume that women's transport position is synonymous with the position of disabled, elderly or young people (TraC, 2000, p. 16) while giving only marginal consideration to gender issues in their own right. Likewise, when gender is taken into account, women have been regarded as homogenous in terms of their mobility and access to transport, ultimately ignoring factors such as their economic position and family responsibilities which may exacerbate or mitigate mobility deprivation.

It is also clear that, although the concept of social exclusion offers the opportunity to explore both the formal economy and the domestic sphere, and to emphasize the interdependence of processes and relations across spheres (Daly and Saraceno, 2002, pp. 84–5), the model of social exclusion which is utilized is narrow. In this respect, analyses in transport studies operate through a hierarchical view of relations across spheres and consider women and men differently. Indeed, there is a central focus on men's access to the public sphere of paid work, and a corresponding focus on women's family ties and obligations within the private sphere. This has resulted in stereotypical assumptions about women's dependency and their 'escort' role (Coleman, 2000, p. 94), and the need to ensure their inclusion in terms of their perceived need to have access to services or to make escort trips to take children or dependent relatives on their shopping trips. At the same time, there is very little focus on women's access to the 'male' world of employment and only limited recognition of the importance of mobility in allowing women to travel from home to the place of their paid employment.

There is also a strong focus on the idea that mobility deprivation is linked to physical exclusion. This directs attention towards the accessibility prob-lems that people face when they live in isolated rural and urban areas or when there is poor public transport access, without addressing the way in which spatiality is also a social construction. That is not to say that such analysis does not take account of the way in which their social position may impact on individuals' ability to travel. However, although these factors are taken into account, the dominant discourses are still underpinned by the idea that an individual's travel position is fixed and immutable, without taking account of the processes which play a role in determining what is 'chosen' or 'shaped' by cultural and institutional structures (Root, 2003).

In the case of women, the absence of this understanding of social organization does not allow for any consideration of the way in which one's travel position may be negotiated within

the gender order. Indeed, by focusing on women's travel position as given, analysis has not taken account of the way in which women's mobility is defined by their gender role, almost regardless of their geographical location and the nature of the local public transport infrastructure.

Recognizing the social construction of women's mobility

A number of alternative analytical frameworks provide a useful way forward when considering women's mobility and their social exclusion. Writers such as Bruton (1993) and Lucas (2003) demonstrate that transport has a key enabling accessibility function which is a stimulant to economic and social life (Bruton, 1993; Lucas, 2003). Within this context, transport is more than simply a link between geographical locations. Instead, it plays a key role in shaping society, as it influences the location of productive and leisure activities and affects where people live (Bruton, 1993, p. 13). It also allows individuals to gain access to 'education, employment, shops, essential services, leisure and other social activities that are necessary to securing a good quality of life' (Lucas, 2003, p. 10). An analysis by Root (2003) suggests that travel is an institutional practice. It is influenced 'by groupings such as legislatures, mass media, bureaucracies [and] political parties', and the demand for transport is a cultural phenomenon 'fashioned out of a wide range of everyday aspirations, desires and inequalities' (Root, 2003, p. 2).

Taking this forward to consider the issue of inequality, Ortoleva and Bren-man (2003), building on the work of Schlanger, show that transportation itself is gendered, demonstrating that the division of the world into public and private, and male and female worlds has created tensions for women, because transportation has traditionally taken place in a public, male space. Analyses by Wajcman (1991) and Ortoleva and Brenman (2003) also show the contradictory nature of the transport system, which can 'restrict women's mobility and exacerbate women's confinement to the home and the immediate locality' (Wajcman, 1991, p. 126), while also allowing them to negotiate public, male space and, ultimately, to challenge the division between the private world of the home and the public world of work (Ortoleva and Brenman, 2003). The literature has shown that, in travelling between the two areas in which they operate, women are constrained by their multiple roles and social position. More particularly, it has also demonstrated that they are restricted in their access to a range of temporal, financial, personal and geographic resources (Atkins, 1989; Castells, 1978; Focas, 1989; GLC, 1986; Grieco et al., 1989; Hamilton and Jenkins, 1989; Huxley, 1988; Pickup, 1984; Wajcman, 1991).

An absence of cross fertilization across disciplines has not allowed for an exploration of the social processes restricting women's access to these key transport resources. However, the frameworks developed by Millar and Glendinning (1992) which explored a series of complex but mutually rein-forcing threads originating in a gender division of labour' which impacts on women's access to resources and, ultimately, on their poverty, provide an interesting way forward for analysis. They demonstrated that the gender division of labour assigns women a primary role in the home, whereas men are regarded as primarily operating in the labour market. This division structures relationships between men and women in the family and assigns women secondary status in the labour market, serving to legitimate and compound a differential access to family resources. It also defines women as secondary workers and ensures that their labour market participation is characterized by part-time, short-term, casual and low skilled employment, ensuring that they enter the labour market on terms that

are not equal to those of men (Millar and Glendinning, 1992, pp. 4–5). In the context of travel and transport it seems likely that women's access to the temporal, financial, personal and geographic resources that would enhance their mobility is constrained by their position in the home and the world of paid employment. Indeed, it seems likely that a 'gender division of transport' is operating which constrains women's mobility, compounds their limited access to transport resources and serves to facilitate the process of their exclusion, both socially and physically. This serves to further underpin the system of gender relations which allows women to access the public sphere but which frequently segregates them into unequal positions in the world of work (Bradley, 1999; Crompton, 1997; Crompton et al., 1996; Walby, 1997).

Method

The research reported in this article was funded by the European Social Fund, gant no. 031008NE3. It was designed to provide transport partner-ships and transport executives, officers, operators, employers and others with a better understanding of the barriers to employment experienced by women. The goal was to provide evidence to allow for the development of a transport infrastructure with the potential to enhance women's employment opportunities and economic inclusion. The research, which was developed from a feminist perspective, builds on the frameworks developed by Millar and Glendinning (1992) to explore the way in which gender mobility is socially constructed in the context of social rules or norms which determine the extent to which they are able to access transport resources, and which result in discrimination against them. It draws on data from an in-depth study undertaken in the North East of England from January 2003 to January 2004. This was undertaken to make contemporary links between gender, mobility and social exclusion, and to look in particular at a range of factors which might shape women's mobility in the home and at work. The study, which was carried out by a small group of women researchers working at Northumbria University, involved a range of quantitative and qualitative research methods with women, employers and transport policymakers and planners in the region. In order to embrace the full diversity of women's experiences, a questionnaire was sent to 36,000 women aged between 16 and 59 in the North East. Of this total number of questionnaires, 32,000 were sent by post to women randomly selected from a database derived from the electoral register and screened to exclude women aged 60 or over; 2000 were distributed to women aged 16–19 via schools and training organizations, 1000 were sent to women involved with local Sure Start projects and 1000 were distributed via Jobcentre Plus. The questionnaire was designed to explore women's perceptions of the area in which they live, their current travel patterns, their access to public and private transport and their perceptions of the transport infrastructure, as well as the links between their mobility, employment and domestic responsibilities and future employment and travel needs. We received 2904 completed questionnaires, which represented an overall response rate of 11.6 per cent.1 The characteristics of respondents were compared with data from the 2001 Census. The geographical location and ward indices of multiple deprivation ranking of the respondents' place of residence and the age, family structure and highest level of qualification of respondents were broadly representative of the North East of England working-aged female population. These quantitative data were complemented by undertaking 35 focus groups with 383 women from across the region in order to examine in detail their transport experiences and needs. This involved 24 groups, totalling 278 participants, with women from a range of employing organizations (selected to ensure

representativeness in terms of geographic location, size and sector and to ensure representation from women working in manual, middle management and professional jobs) and ten sessions, involving 105 participants, with women who do not work (including unemployed women and women currently looking after their home and family).2 Taken overall, this approach also ensured that the focus groups included single women without a family (105), women living with partners without a family (84), single mothers (102) and women living with partners and dependent children (92); and that the women were drawn from inner city (93), outer city (96) market towns (62) former coalfields (72) and rural areas (60). 3

The research also involved 22 semi-structured interviews with transport planners and transport organizations to explore the nature of the transport infrastructure in the North East and the key challenges facing policymakers and planners in relation to developing this infrastructure to facilitate women's social inclusion. In addition, a questionnaire was sent to 200 employing organizations in the North East in order to explore the extent to which employee transport needs have played a role in business planning and the way in which employers take women's transport needs into account. The organizations were selected to ensure a balance in relation to geographical location accessibility and the size of the organization and sector. We received 92 completed questionnaires, representing an overall response rate of 46.0 per cent. In-depth case-study work involving interviews with managers and an analysis of company documentation which focused on transport planning, the distribution of transport resources, shift patterns and location of site also took place in 16 employing organizations in order to look in detail at the way in which women's transport needs are considered by employers and to identify priorities for improvement.

The multi-method approach which was adopted ensured a process of complementarity in which different quantitative and qualitative aspects of the investigation dovetailed to provide a holistic picture of the issues relating to women, transport and employment (Hammersley, 1996). In policy terms, the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches is increasingly recognized as providing the highest quality of evidence to demonstrate 'what works' (Davies et al., 2000). In this respect, administering a large social survey provided the hard data which are regarded as central to evidence-based policy and practice (Davies et al., 2000). At the same time, qualitative research and, in particular, the engagement of women in the research process, both as subjects and scholars, provided an insight into the views, activities and priorities of the women affected by current practices that would otherwise have remained hidden (Mies, 1993).

This article draws on all elements of the research undertaken. It utilizes the quantitative data to provide background data in relation to women's mobility patterns and access to transport. However, it was recognized that the qualitative aspects of the research offered more opportunity to address the processes which have so far remained invisible in relation to women's mobility (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997; Mies, 1993). As a result, it draws primarily on the focus groups undertaken with women and the case-study work with employers which were primarily designed to take account of women's lived experience, and to explore the taken-for-granted assumptions that dominate in relation to women's access to travel resources in both the home and in the world of work.

The nature of women's travel

Public and private activities

The research findings suggest that travel is an important part of women's lives. The women in the study make as many journeys as the men and although their travel patterns may be different, with shorter journeys and different purposes, it is still an essential aspect of their interaction and participation in society. Much of women's travel, as mainstream research suggests, supports their domestic and social activities, and there is a heavy emphasis on escorting children and dependent relatives, and on trips to undertake household shopping. Indeed, 34.3 per cent of women travel to escort children, 19.5 per cent to escort dependent relatives and 88.0 per cent to undertake household shopping at least once a week. However, although all these activities are important to women and trans¬port studies tend to define women's travel as being of an essentially pri¬vate nature, the bulk of women's regular daily travel is undertaken to access the public sphere of paid employment, education or training. In this respect, 55.3 per cent of women involved in the research travel to engage in economic activity that is not connected to their domestic responsibilities on a daily basis and 93.6 per cent travel to undertake these activities at least once a week.

Travel and social relations

There is also a sense that women's travel and mobility is about much more than simply undertaking a journey to get from A to B. Transport does play an important part, as we might expect, in allowing women to access essential goods and services. However, in line with the frameworks advanced by Ortoleva and Brenman (2003) transport also appears to provide women with the opportunity to challenge the gendered nature of social relations by allowing them to move outside the private realm to enter the public realm of employment. The impact of transport on the changing the boundaries of the public–private divide can be seen in the way in which women discuss the social and economic benefits of travel, rather than the way it links physical sites. Indeed, the comments below show that women's concerns around travel are almost invariably linked to their need to have transport to undertake their dual role or to challenge social relations, rather than to 'get to work':

> I couldn't possibly manage to juggle home and work without adequate transport. It is just not possible.

> It has made such a difference since I got the car, I feel as if I have got my life back and I can leave the family behind without so much fuss.

> Now that I am able to drive myself and I am not reliant on him any more I don't have to ask permission about where I work and the hours I work. It is my decision.

> It is not so much about getting to work but about getting away from home.

The social nature of women's transport needs

Key travel resources

Although transport studies and transport planning processes tend to focus on physical accessibility and the nature of the transport infrastructure this emphasis is much less evident in the context of these women's lives. The women involved in the research project rarely

referred to physical location as a factor constraining their mobility, even when they were living in fairly iso-lated rural or urban areas. They did indicate that there are problems with the transport infrastructure and women from across the whole region were particularly critical of the way in which the current transport infrastructure restricts their opportunity to negotiate new job opportunities across the region. However, mirroring frameworks advanced by Wajcman (1991) and Ortoleva and Brenman (2003), which drew attention to the contradictory nature of the transport system, these concerns tended to focus on the way in which available transport does not allow them to negotiate their dual role, rather than on the infrastructure itself or on the location of the employment they wished to access. Overall, there was a heavy emphasis on the impor¬tance of time and the cost of travelling, and there was extensive reference to the issue of safety when travelling and personal travel confidence. Com¬ments demonstrating the importance of temporal, financial and personal resources for women's travel include:

It's not so much about where I live, it is just that I don't have time to travel.

Once I have dropped the kids off in the morning I can't get into town in

time to start work and I would need to be back in time for the 3.15 pick-up.

If I worked I would not really earn enough to cover the travel and still have money left.

The Metro station is quite isolated and there is no way I would travel there — even at 5 o'clock it is very frightening.

I don't feel confident when I am travelling. I worry about getting lost and I would much rather stay close to home.

The gender division of transport in the home

It is tempting at this stage to consider women's travel position and to regard it as fixed in line with their social position. However, very much in line with the model outlined by Millar and Glendinning (1992) the research demon-strates that women's access to essential travel resources is not a given. Rather, it is shaped within the context of gender relations which legitimate and com¬pound differential access to the time, money and personal resources which facilitate travel.

This gender division of transport can be seen most clearly in the home. It is here that decisions about the time and money that is available for women to travel and that ultimately affect their travel confidence are made. These decisions are underpinned by a male breadwinner–female caregiver model which results in an unequal distribution of transport resources, defining the extent and nature of women's travel and the employment they can access.

Temporal resources

The issue of time is central here. Women are constrained by their care-giving responsibilities that reduce the time that they have to travel and the times they can travel, and this, in turn, limits their employment opportunities. Of the women surveyed, 32.7 per cent said that family commitments make it dif¬ficult for them to engage in paid employment and/or education and

training. This came out even more strongly in the interviews with women where it became clear that these constraints can involve looking after preschool chil¬dren, dropping children off/picking them up from nursery or school, being at home in the morning or the afternoon to provide childcare and caring for dependent adult relatives.

Restrictions can also be of a softer nature, underpinned by a concern to be home in the morning and in the afternoon to get breakfast, make the tea or simply be there to 'make sure everyone is okay'. These responsibilities often necessitate complex trip-chaining, such as dropping children off at school on the way to work but, more importantly, they limit the length of women's travelling day, forcing them to either constrain their economic activity or to accept low-paid, part-time work that is close to home. At the same time, men, who are generally unconstrained by care-giving responsibilities, have more time to travel, and the times that they can travel are relatively unhindered. Indeed, women's role in the family as primary caregivers reduces the amount of time women have to travel but also appears to provide men with uncon¬strained temporal mobility. There appears to be very little discussion about this unequal distribution of travel time within the home. Indeed, there is an almost taken-for-granted assumption that men's travel needs are central and that their temporal needs must take priority. In this respect, women noted:

> I couldn't possibly not be here [in the mornings and afternoons]. It is my job to look after the family and it might mean that I have to work on a night after he gets in — but so be it.

> He works flexitime and I suppose he could change his hours so that I could be freed up either in the morning or at night, but we have never even dis¬cussed it — it's a no-go area.

> We did talk about him changing his hours to help out in the morning but it would have meant that he was awfully rushed because of the traffic when he got into work.

Disposable travel income

Women's differential status also impacts on the within-household allocation of disposable travel income. Women use much less of the family's income to travel by public transport, and they often referred to the way in which they are required to draw money from already restricted household budgets to accommodate their travel. At the same time, they also explained that signif-icant amounts of the family's disposable travel income are used to purchase a 'family' car. In many cases, they said that this process draws on household resources that can be ill afforded, and although it may also be heavily depen¬dent on the extra resources generated by women's employment, it rarely serves to enhance women's mobility. Indeed, although 87.0 per cent of women in the study reported living in households with a car, only 29.0 per cent reported that they had full access to private transport in the form of their own car or unrestricted access to the family car. They were much more likely to refer to a situation in which the family car is only available when not required by other, usually male, family members. Even when they reported they were living in two-car households, the women in the study had often been allocated the older or less reliable car, or their car would be appropri¬ated when needed by the men in the family. As the comments below suggest, the idea that women might require a car to travel to work is rarely part of

household discourse and this unequal distribution of financial resources is legitimated by men's status as primary breadwinners — even when their travel needs are less demanding:

> We have spent so much on a new car. We can't really afford it but he has got a hard job and he deserves it.

> I travel the furthest, I have to drop the kids off, then change from the Metro to the bus, and it takes me over an hour, and he could get a bus which would take him there in 10 minutes. But we never even discuss the idea that I would use 'our' car for work, although he will pick me up if I work late.

> He always says that he will give me a lift when I want it — but it is only when it does not stop him doing what he has planned and when he can be bothered.

> When we got a new car I got the old one. It breaks down quite a lot and I would worry about going very far in it in case I could not get back home — but it is okay for shopping and dropping the kids off at school.

Personal confidence

The issue of personal confidence is much less tangible and difficult to measure. However, it is a key factor in relation to women's travel and mobility, and a host of external factors are at play in determining women's personal confidence. Women from across the region drew attention to their concerns about crime and to worries about their own safety when travelling, especially after dark. Many of the women in the study also referred to 'no-go areas' in town and city centres and rural areas which they tend to avoid, where possible. However, in addition to these external factors, there is also evidence that women's confidence is undermined by the lack of travel associated with their primary care-giving role in the home. For example, many women referred to the way in which being 'at home all day' or being confined to the 'school-run' reduces their overall travel confidence and makes them much less likely to travel when additional opportunities arise.

The absence of sole access to a car also adds difficulties. On the one hand, the concerns women have about using public transport suggests that that they are afraid of travelling on public transport, that they find stops and stations threatening and intimidating and that they would also need to take this fear into account when making decisions about employment. On the other because they are often heavily reliant on travel as a car passenger, they rarely gain the experience of negotiating the built environment as independent travellers, reducing the area in which they would seek employment. The comments below draw attention to the circular processes at work here, in which an absence of independent travel also seems to limit the women's overall travel horizons and reduce their ability to navigate and negotiate space, ultimately impacting on their ability to travel to work outside their immediate neighbourhood:

> I get lifts most of the time. I don't think I could find my way very far on my own.

> I used to be okay travelling. Now I've been stuck in the sodding house I am nervous — like when I go out.

> Sometimes I go into the job centre and I see jobs in places that I haven't been to before. You don't get to know these places when you walk or travel by bus. I suppose

I could think about them but if you don't know the area you don't think about working there, do you?

Geographic resources

These problems with access to temporal, financial and personal travel resources are compounded by the way in which the decisions that are made around where women live are heavily informed by men's needs to travel to work, and by a taken-for-granted assumption that the family home should be easily accessible to men's place of work. When asked about the location of the family home in relation to employment opportunities, 81.2 per cent of women with partners said that their partners travel needs were more important than their own, and 42.4 per cent said that their partners' travel needs had impacted on where they currently live. The family home is therefore often situated within close proximity to core labour market opportunities in sectors such as manufacturing and construction and new opportunities in the service sector, or within easy access by car or public transport to employment at the upper echelons of organizations. The tendency to put men's travel to work needs first was picked up in some of the discussions in which women described having to move to different areas of the region of the country and/or living in areas where there is little employment available to them. To compound this situation, access to childcare where they live is often poor and new opportunities in the service sector, on industrial sites and in commercial centres may be located away from their homes, demanding levels of time, money and personal confidence to travel which are often outside the grasp of these women. As the women themselves explained:

> I moved because my husband got a better job in Sunderland. I am living away from the main town, miles from anywhere. I had a decent enough job before but there is nothing here, and I don't know anyone to look after the kids — pick them up, you know — after school

> We live near my partner's job. He starts early so we need to be close by. All of the jobs I could do are miles away.

Employment and the gender division of transport

Millar and Glendinning (1992) showed quite clearly that the processes which restrict women's access to within-household resources are also mirrored in the public sphere of work. Taking this forward to consider the issue of transport, the research demonstrated that the male breadwinner–female caregiver model that operates to constrain women's access to time, money and per-sonal and geographical resources in the home is complemented and rein-forced by a range of labour market decisions. These decisions, which are underpinned, as Millar and Glendinning (1992) argue, by notions of men as primary workers and women as secondary workers, include the location of employment opportunities, the structure of paid work and the way in which transport resources are distributed in employing organizations.

The location of employment opportunities

Earlier analysis has already shown that women's mobility is constrained by the location of the family home which supports men's needs to travel to work. This situation appears to be compounded by the frameworks under-pinning the decision-making which takes place

around the geographical location of employing organizations. Even when they are heavily dependent on the types of skills offered by women, employers still seem to disregard women's travel needs, and employing instead a model of mobility that is essentially male.

Only 48.9 per cent of employers surveyed had considered their employees' travel needs in relation to the location of the business. The employers interviewed said that employee's travel needs are not their problem and that most men and enough women can access their organizations with relative ease. There was sometimes a recognition amongst these employers that the geo-graphical location of their place of work may pose problems for women, because of the latter's lack of access to a car and the limited nature of public transport, but this is seen as a problem for the women concerned, rather than for the company itself. Indeed, only 4.6 per cent of employers had considered women's transport needs, and only 7.9 per cent were concerned about women's travel needs.

Even when business needs demand the sort of skills on offer from women, there is still a strong sense that planning for transport resources is underpinned by a male model of transport. In organizations with a high demand for administrative and secretarial workers, sales staff and tele-operators, where many more women than men are employed, there is a disregard for women's travel needs and a sense that employees have to have a car if access is difficult. The comments below from employers in the region indicate this lack of regard for women's mobility needs:

> You need a car to get here. If women haven't got cars it is tough luck. The women can apply for the jobs, but they will have to have a car.

> This site is ideal for people who come by car, but no attention has been paid to the needs of people working at lower levels. Our cleaners don't have cars and they have to walk up from the bus stop to the plant — that's a good mile.

> Most of the jobs we have suit women and it is difficult for them to get here without a car, but there are plenty of women after the jobs and they manage.

> If the plant operators [all men] were having a problem getting here we might rethink, but we can pick and choose with the administrators [all women], so transport isn't really an issue.

The structure of paid work

The way in which employers have structured much of the work available in the region around traditional office hours or shift work which requires masculine levels of transport resources also constrains women's access to employment by restricting the time when travel can take place. The process requiring employees to travel to work at times that are not possible for many women further compounds the difficulties they face as a result of a lack of temporal resources in the home. Some employers, particularly those in the service sector, have recognized the problems for women relating to the hours on offer, and as a result, they provide taxis to work and back to accommodate awkward shift patterns. Some large employers in the region are also offering flexible, part-time and home working to suit women's temporal constraints. However, these initiatives are hindered by the way in which public transport in the region is still typically providing for people travelling to nine-to-five jobs and provision outside of this pattern is poor; and by the way in which women are often forced

to work a small number of hours over a number of days, thus paying a higher percentage of their incomes on transport costs. It is also clear that the vast majority of employment that fits into this flexible category is attached to low-paid part-time work with little security. Employers recognize this exclusionary process but seem reluctant to change the status quo:

> We work office hours — if they want the job, they have to work the hours.

> Off the record, we don't want to make it too comfortable for women. If we change the hours we get more women with kids — they are always taking time off.

> They work 20 hours over five days. It means that they pay a lot for travel costs in comparison to their income.

Transport resources in employing organizations

Transport resources are also distributed unequally within employing organizations. In this sense, there is little difference in terms of men and women's experiences of a whole range of initiatives being introduced by employers across the region, including public transport subsidies and season ticket loans. However, the types of employment undertaken by men and/or their status within organizations are often accompanied by a range of additional transport resources which are not always available to women. Women rarely have company cars and mileage allowances which would reduce their need to draw on travel resources in the home; and very few women have access to reserved car parking spaces at work. Given that their care-giving responsibilities often make it difficult to journey to work at an early hour, this often means that women are unable to park when they arrive at work. Likewise, when travelling on company business, they are less likely to be provided with adequate travel expenses, and their company position means that they are more likely than men to be travelling by standard class on trains and planes. This reduces women's opportunity to work while travelling and leaves them tired and unable to face their work or care-giving responsibilities at either end of their journey. As the following comments show, women are very aware of this process:

> Because we could not get here soon enough, the car park has been the men's car park for years. We asked repeatedly for them to allocate spaces on the basis of need, taking childcare into account and they always said, no, it had to be first come, first served. Now that we have worked out a way of getting into the car park by coming in sooner and beating them into it, they want to have a new system based on seniority and length of service.

> Although I myself work in a location that is only ten minutes walk from home, most of my female colleagues travel about 10–15 miles to work. These have no parking facilities and sometimes cars have to be parked in insecure areas.

> The women working in our firm get the lowest wages, and we don't even get a space in the car park. The men are well paid. They get company cars and dedicated parking spaces. They also get mileage allowances. It is as if our travel has been forgotten about.

> Staff on good money here get perks like free car parking and company cars. We get nothing.

We travel all over the world. The men always seem to wangle business travel and we are stuck in economy. They are bright eyed and bushy tailed when they get there. I am shattered. It's the same when we get home. It takes me days to catch up on the sleep.

The impact of family structure and income

As Millar and Glendinning (1992) recognize, gender is not the only factor to impact on women's access to travel resources and affect their life chances. The research looked in particular at the way in which family structure and income interacts with gender to result in differential access to transport resources and, ultimately, to employment.

Family structure

Family structure is a critical factor. Single women with no dependents often described what can be regarded as masculine levels of transport resources in the form of unrestricted time and private transport, which allow then to enter the labour market relatively unconstrained in relation either to where they work or the hours they work. Likewise, women living only with their husbands or partners or with teenage children and other non-dependent adults also said that they can travel when they like, although a number of women in the focus groups indicated that they rarely do much independent travelling because their partners give them lifts or undertake all the family driving.

Women with preschool children, or very young children at school, or with adult relatives that need full-time care seemed to have the least time to travel and they described a situation in which their access to private transport is often constrained particularly when the overall household income level is low. Women who are single parents are clearly disadvantaged in terms of their temporal and financial resources. However, interestingly, because of their role as primary breadwinners, many women in this group indicated they needed to allocate high percentages of disposable income to travel. The importance of family structure is recognized by the women themselves:

When you are single travel is not really an issue.

There is just the two of us [husband and wife]. We go all over together. He drives. I can, but I don't.

I have got two kids under five. It is hard enough getting out of the house, never mind travelling to work.

As a single parent I have to travel to work and take the kids all over the place. So I have bought a car. I can't afford it, but I have to have it.

Income

Income levels can also make a difference to women's access to travel resources. Women in families with low incomes are, as we might expect, the most severely disadvantaged in terms of their travel resources. They said that their household budgeting rarely provides the opportunity for them to have unrestricted access to private transport and they are often unable to access enough resources to use public transport. They also reported a situation in

which they are heavily constrained in terms of time, and, as their travelling decreases, in terms of their confidence.

At the other end of the scale, women living in families with high income levels described a situation in which there is ample money to spend on both public and private transport and many of them said that they live in house-holds with two cars, offering them the opportunity to travel much more freely. It is also clear that access to an independent income makes a difference. The women said that they feel much more confident about drawing on disposable travel income when they have their own wage or salary, although this is not always evident amongst women working part-time and contributing only a small percentage of the family's overall income.

Women living in families with high incomes with caring responsibilities also referred to being able to increase the time that they have to travel by paying for the services of nannies, or by using formal childcare services, breakfast clubs and after school clubs. The impact of income and its interaction with gender can be seen in these women's comments:

> We couldn't manage without his wage, so he has to get to work. I fit in around him.

> We are comfortable money-wise, so we pay for a nanny — it makes it all so much easier to juggle and I can travel to work more or less when I like.

> My income makes all of the difference to our standard of living — so he takes them to school in the morning and I collect them at night. That way I can work full-time and we all benefit.

The shifting nature of women's mobility

While women without care responsibilities or with higher levels of income have achieved masculine levels of transport resources, there is also evidence that women's access to transport resources is not fixed, and that although they can increase their own resources, this is within the context of family structures and household budgets where resources are plentiful, and where their access is not at the expense of the men's overall share. There is also much evidence to suggest that shifts in family circumstances and in the exter¬nal environment generally impact heavily on women's travel resources and their subsequent mobility. This can be seen when children are born, when family income declines and when men's job structures and circumstances alter. As the comments below suggest, in all these cases women appear to be the net losers of transport resources and their subsequent mobility is severely constrained:

> I had my own car before the kids were born. Now we have one car. Some-times he cycles to work so I can have it, but mostly I don't use it.

> We shared the car, but now that my husband's job has moved he needs it for work all of the time.

> He used to pick them up, but his shifts have changed now, and he can't. I had to give my job up because I have no one else to do it.

Conclusions

This article has shown that, very much in line with the frameworks developed by Bruton (1993), Lucas (2003) and Root (2003), travel is much more than simply a link between geographical locations or a means of conveying women between A and B. Rather, it is an active force which is central to women's lives. As argued by Wajcman (1991) and Ortoleva and Brenman (2003), this work has also shown that travel and transport provide women with the opportunity to participate in a wide range of political, economic and social activities, and critically to transcend the traditional divide between the private sphere of the home and the public world of employment. In this con-text, the model developed by Millar and Glendinning (1992) allows for a recognition of the way in which women's ability to travel to employment is constrained, not by the geographic location of their homes or the nature of the transport infrastructure, but by a gender division of transport which restricts their access to a range of temporal, financial and personal resources that would facilitate their mobility. Access to these resources is determined in the context of gender relations in the home and at work.

The male breadwinner–female caregiver model to which Millar and Glendinning referred structures relationships in the home and serves to shape women's differential access to the temporal, financial and personal resources that would enhance their mobility. The status of women in the home results in a range of tasks being assigned to them around family care, particularly in the morning and the afternoon/evening. This process reduces the time that they have to travel and the times they can travel, limiting the length of their travelling day. Their position also legitimates their differential access to disposable travel income, often leaving them with limited resources to travel by public transport and restricted access to the family car. Women's travel confidence is also undermined by the lack of travel associated with their primary care-giving role in the home and their restricted access to private transport hinders independent travel, limiting their overall travel horizons.

Millar and Glendinning (1992) were particularly concerned to draw attention to the links between the public and private spheres. In this respect, the research has shown that the gender division of transport in the home impacts on travel relationships in the public sphere of work. Men's primary status as breadwinners informs decision-making about the geographical location of the family home and women often find themselves living in areas where there is little employment available to them. This process is mirrored in the world of work, where the planning around the geographical location of businesses and the range of transport provision required for employees is underpinned by a male model of mobility that does not take account of women's needs. It is also compounded by the way in which the structure of paid work is designed around traditional office hours or shift work, which require masculine levels of transport resources, and by a public transport system which is not responsive to women's travel needs and employment patterns. Women's secondary status in the labour market also restricts their access to a range of within-organizational travel resources and ensures that they cannot redress the gender division of transport operating within the home.

As Millar and Glendinning (1992) argued, it is vital to understand the way in which the processes taking place in the home and at work are mutually reinforcing. Women are prevented from equal participation in employment by their absence of travel resources. This imbalance constrains their subsequent position in the labour market in terms of the hours they work, the income they earn and the additional travel resources they have access to.

Their subsequent status as secondary workers within the labour market reaffirms their primary position as care-givers in the home, and as a result they have less claim on the family's travel resources.

Although there is enormous diversity in relation to the travel resources that women command, their social exclusion cannot be effectively addressed until it is recognized that their access to transport is socially constructed in the context of structures which operate to exclude them from the labour market. This is a critical issue, as we seek to move forward to address a whole range of issues, including the reshaping of work, changing the balance between home and work life, the movement of people into housing estates, the development of out-of-town employment and, critically, the development of sustainable transport. It is important to recognize that all these processes are social constructions that are taking place within a gender order which can operate at any time to restrict women's access to essential travel resources. Stuck in the slow lane, women's access to the labour market is reduced, creating a situation in which they are forced to take periods out of work, to work from home in poorly paid jobs or to take part-time or low paid work on the periphery of the labour market.

There is an urgent need to develop a transport infrastructure which recognizes and addresses these socially constructed exclusionary frameworks and provides women with a range of mobility choices. This can be achieved only by raising awareness amongst policymakers and employers of women's travel needs, increasing women's travel horizons, recognizing and supporting women's need to have access to private transport to combine work and family life, developing a flexible, reliable, efficient and safe public transport infrastructure that will offer a viable alternative, and introducing initiatives which encourage women to use greener forms of transport, including cycling and walking. These changes to the transport infrastructure also need to be supported by mobility-sensitive employment and by childcare and schooling arrangements that allow women to travel to work. Indeed, if policymakers and employers are sincere in their commitment to enhancing women's access to the labour market, radical change is needed to challenge the gender division of transport which is playing a critical role in underpinning the discrimination women face in accessing the world of paid work.

Notes

1. The response rate was very similar to that of other unsolicited surveys of this kind. The size of the sample ensured that the desired number of participants was achieved, although it is recognized there may be an error bias in relation to motivation and other potentially important factors (Fink, 2003).

2. In line with recognized best practice, the study sought to work with a typical group size of ten members (Bryman, 2001).

3.Using the definition of accessibility levels in the source (North East Assembly, 2002).

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