Monthly Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Indexed Journal
Received on: 05/06/2021

Accepted on: 21/06/2021

Scientific Journal Impact Factor: 5.743
Publication Date: 30/06/2021

Gender Inequalities in the Use of Technologies of Mobility in Accra and Kumasi, Ghana-West Africa. The Case of the Motorcycle.

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Abstract: Mobility is an emerging area in cultural and rhetorical studies. Over the years, there have been emerging studies on technologies of mobility (Adom- Asamoah et al. 2020), (Cresswell, 2006), (Dunckel-Graglia, 2013), (Flanary, 2004), and (Hallenbeck 2016). These studies have highlighted mobility within the urban context, mobility concerning gender, and the spaces and place in which mobility occurs.

This essay highlights how women's mobility concerning the use of technologies of mobility has been restricted. It also draws on rhetorical studies to establish a relation between mobility and rhetorical studies. The essay, through autoethnographic information, showed that mobility in certain parts of African countries, specifically Ghana-West Africa, is gendered. Men have greater access to technologies of mobility than women. The piece concluded by suggesting ways in which technologies of mobility can be used equally among males and females.

Key Words: Mobility, Rhetorical Studies, Technologies of Mobility, and Gender.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Mobility is an emerging inquiry area in rhetorical studies. In this fast-growing world that we find ourselves in, the movement of bodies, space, and places become crucial in rhetorical studies. Mobility examines the "experienced and embodied practice of movement" with interest in how "human mobility is practiced and experienced through the body" and consideration of "different kinds of bodily movement" (Cresswell, 2006). Mobility functions as an essential framework relevant to "established modes of rhetorical inquiry" (Samek, 2017). Technologies of mobility as an aspect of mobility are part and parcel of our lives because they aid us in our day-to-day movement. One can attest that we use various mobile technologies such as cars, motorcycles, bicycles, wheelchairs daily. Since mobility encourages us as scholars to ask questions about how people move, things move, and ideas move, it is prudent to have the following questions in mind (Cresswell, 2006). How would one feel when you are denied access or use to some of these technologies of mobility? Your movement would be restricted, and you may spend more time completing activities that could have been carried out in a short period, given the availability of technologies of mobility.

In many African countries, people rely on transport, and access to mobility technologies is crucial. However, despite the need for these technologies of mobility, the access or use of these are gendered. There are inequalities between men and women in accessing technologies of mobility. The interactions between gender constructs, women's mobility, and transport development are strongly evident in the African context (Porter, 2008). Thus, women's mobility is limited in most parts of West Africa, especially in Accra and Kumasi, Ghana.

Scholarship on mobility within rhetorical studies or cultural studies is concerned about migration, stoppage, border rhetoric, citizenship, gender and technology, and public memory. In the area of rhetorical mobility, Bernard-Donals (2019) asserts that "mobility is the engine that makes rhetoric work.". "That is to say that mobility is a critical element in rhetoric. It is crucial to the study of rhetoric. It helps keeps rhetoric moving because of its involvement in things like space, bodies, place resides in rhetoric. After all, we see rhetoric in every aspect of life. The influx of people, disturbance, violence, and movement technology evolution have shown how rhetoric and mobility are inseparable. In her works, Samek explains that mobility is important in rhetorical studies because it can help rhetorical scholars decide "themes of movement, space, and place in public discourse" (p.209). Mobility as a framework asks rhetorical critics to consider how bodies, environment, space, and place contribute to meaning making (Samek, 2017).

2. RHETORICAL STUDIES AND MOBILITY:

Over the years, various studies on technologies of mobility have emerged. Some of these studies come from urban and transportation planning; (Adom-Asamoah et al., 2019), (Porter, 2008) (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016), (Flanary, 2004), Porter et al., 2011), (Dunckel-Graglia, 2013) geography; (Dando, 2017), rhetorical studies; (Ostergaard, 2016), (Towns, 2016), (Hallenbeck, 2016) (Samek, 2017), (Harris, 2017) and (Jack, 2016). Rhetorical scholars are always interested in the movement/mobility of space and bodies as they referred to this movement as a "phenomenon" (Samek,

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH CULTURE SOCIETY ISSN: 2456-6683 Volume - 5, Issue - 6, June - 2021

Monthly Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Indexed Journal Scientific Journal Impact Factor: 5.743

Received on: 05/06/2021 Accepted on: 21/06/2021 Publication Date: 30/06/2021

2017). Giving the studies in rhetorical studies, I set forth to ask the following question to situate my inquiry area in the

- 1)What rhetorical interventions have been made into women's limited possibilities for mobility in Accra and Kumasi, Ghana?
- 2) How have those interventions worked?

field of rhetorical studies.

3) What rhetoric is behind the women limited possibilities of using a motorcycle for mobility in Accra and Kumasi, Ghana?

These are legitimate questions, given that they will situate my conversation in rhetorical studies and set forth discussions in the field of inquiry. In Ghana, female drivers are intimidated on the road whether they are driving or riding a motorcycle. Road users feel women are not courageous enough to ride or drive. People even desert public buses that women drivers drive. I am concerned about why women are mostly seen as weaker and fearful vessels, even though the narrative is changing. Therefore, no matter the area we find ourselves in, women should be given a chance as their male counterparts. In answering the questions above, scholars of feminist rhetoric and mobility technologies have carried out studies in this regard. A few rhetorical works that have intervened in women's limited mobility possibilities are (Hallenbeck, 2016), (Samek, 2017), (Harris, 2017) and (Jack, 2016). It is important to note that some works on the limitation of women's mobility in mobility technologies also come from urban planning, geography, and health. These works will also help me analyze limited women's mobility in Accra and Kumasi, Ghana, concerning using the motorcycle as a technology/ machine of mobility.

In answering the second question, given Hallenbeck's (2016) perspective, women were brough about the change in the bicycle design because it was perceived as a male tool/machine, and riding it was meant for men only. Only males could ride it in the nineteenth century in the US. They also argued that women did not have the attire that could be used to ride the bicycle. A similar reason can be said of women's use of the motorcycle in Accra and Kumasi. There is the notion that women are not supposed to ride motorcycles in Ghana's southern part (Accra and Kumasi) because people see riding motor as men's work, and they will raise an eyebrow when they see a woman riding one. Women are mostly seen as a weaker and fearful vessel. Apart from this, society does not pave the way possible for women to ride motorcycles. The nature of the road and its use by drivers and pedestrians do not create space for women to ride motorcycles, especially in town. Hallenbeck's work has intervened in this area. Hallenbeck's (2016) interventions come in the form of positioning the woman in a place that makes it possible for her to ride the bicycle without being discriminated against. She also proposes women cyclists' attire that women wear to ride the bicycle because they did not have the appropriate attire, thus linking bodies, fashion, and technology. Hallenbeck's work brought about the introduction of attire meant for riding. Regarding technology, they produced a new form of the bicycle, which she termed the "safety' bicycle, and wrote manuals directing the bicycle they manufactured (p.15).

Samek (2017) answers the second question by defining running, a rhetorical activity (a form of mobility) "as a mode of public address" (p.222). Samek (2017) asserts that rhetorician scholars can use mobility as a framework if they are interested in research concerning "space, place, citizenship, and social movement." Her work challenges the "patriarchal order" of running as a mobile activity (p.223). According to Samek (2017), running was an activity meant for only men to participate. We see that running that was perceived as men's job is now practiced by both genders equally, and we do have female athletes doing well in the field. These interventions have achieved the aims and goals as all of them, in one way or the other, get the women doing what they initially thought or was reserved for men.

Harris (2017) study reveals that the road structure and how the road is constructed in the city are gendered, which gives restrictions to movement. If this is the case, the availability of space for women will be limited. "the white slavery controversy shows how networks can be construed as dangerous, limiting mobility for some people such as women" (p.38). The nature of roads constructed in Accra and Kumasi makes it dangerous for women to ride motorcycles. This instills some fear in them. The city then becomes a site of danger for them.

Jack (2016) uses the breast pump as a technology used by women to ease women's problems due to their need to return to work after delivery. As a wearable technology, this breast pump makes things easy for the breastfeeding mother who must return to work a few weeks after delivery; connecting to the inquiry; it can be said that when provisions are made for women to ride the motorcycle, performing their duties will be much easier. They would not have to spend long hours queuing at bus stations to get a bus. We have countries that use women-only transport probably because of the sexual harassment and violence women experience in public transport systems (Dunckel-Graglia, 2013). Allowing women to ride the motorcycle will be one way to avoid sexual harassment and violence in their everyday commutes activities and "reduce the gender inequality embedded in the public transit system" (Dunckel-Graglia, 2013).

The various interventions brought forth by rhetorical scholars such as (Hallenbeck, 2016), and (Samek, 2017) have been relatively successful in their case area and in some parts of the world as women are now seen riding bicycles, writing about it, and engaging in diverse bicycle activities as an exercise and a profession. Despite these studies that have intervened in limited women's mobility, some countries and cities such as Accra and Kumasi still face the patriarchal way of handling mobility technologies.

In this article, I seek to explore why women's mobility is limited regarding mobility technologies, such as the motorcycle in Accra and Kumasi. I propose that women's mobility should not be limited in using mobile technologies such as motorcycles in Accra and Kumasi and some parts of Africa by asking these questions and proposing solutions; why women tend not to use the motorcycle in the southern part of Ghana, specifically Kumasi and Accra? What accounts for the dominant use of motorcycles among men leaving women behind? Why does society tend to talk against the few women that ride motorcycles? I will argue against the notion that riding a motorcycle is a "job" for the men and not women in these two cities. With these questions in mind, I discuss why women tend not to use the motorcycle to move within space and place in the southern part of Ghana compared to their female counterparts in the northern part of Ghana. I offer the reasons that account for the dominant use of motorcycles among men and society's perception of women riding bicycles. Studies have been done in urban planning and geographies that align with these questions, and I would draw views from them to buttress my points. I would also use the feminist theory to explain why mobility patterns are characterized as 'gendered' and discuss how women's transport needs are different from those of men because of safety concerns, sociocultural norms, and differential access to private means of transport (Loukaitou-Sideris 2016).

In most West African countries, the standard means of mobility/ transport is motorcycles. They find the motorcycle a convenient machine for mobility, and most citizens can afford it. Ghana is not an exception as many people ride the motorcycle because that is what they can afford, and it is easier to escape traffic with the use of the motorcycle. People rely on these bikes to carry out their day to day activities. However, despite the need for the motorcycle, the use of it by women is limited. This has caused difficulties in women accessing places and resources since women have no access to motorized forms of transport to aid them in mobility. Despite the critical roles' women play and the need for women to have access to these means to go about their daily activities, they do not have access. It is challenging to say how women are treated when it comes to using mobile technologies in Accra and Kumasi. Despite significant changes in development policy conceptualization of women therein over the last two decades, transport policy and practice have generally failed to incorporate or even acknowledge the gendered nature of transport tasks or the possible implications of their interventions (Flanary, 2004). Cultural expectations and societal structure form individuals' activities through social norms and assumptions about the different activities that men and women should 'naturally' perform. The expectation of what a man or woman should do builds up to "complex ways with changing notions of responsibility and agency" (Flanary 2004). Women's mobility in cities is not only challenged by physical, economic, cultural, and psychological constraints but also inadequate transportation policies that often neglect or disregard women's needs" (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016). Gender issues about mobility are essential to developing gender-sensitive and gender-proof policies (Loukaitou-Sideris 2016). If women can ride motorcycles in Accra and Kumasi, their mobility will increase, and the ordeal they go through in moving around every day would be lessened. It will help women spend the time they could have used in public transport or walking for other productive things. One of the things that cause mobility limitation concerning the mobility of technologies is economic hardship, but this cannot be said of Accra and Kumasi's women. According to reports, people in the northern sector are more impoverished compared to those in the south. So, if someone in the north can afford a motorcycle, it should not be a problem for people in Accra and Kumasi.

3. CASE DESCRIPTION:

Accra is the capital city of Ghana, located in the southern part of Ghana. It is made up of twelve government districts, eleven municipal assemblies, and Accra metropolitan assemble. It is surrounded by parks, museums, markets, beaches, and monuments to honor past presidents and leaders who fought to gain independence. It has a population of 5,055,900. It is the most densely populated city in Ghana. The most popular means of transport is the "trotro" and motorcycle known as "okada." People also patronize the services of the public buses known as "Ayalolo."

On the other hand, Kumasi is the capital of the Ashanti region in Ghana's southern part. It is a city with a population of 3,348,000. It is also known as the garden city. Its dense spatial structure hosts the cultural/craft center, museum, business stores, trade, and service enterprises. Unlike other Ghana cities that experience an equal means of motorization among both men and women, Accra and Kumasi are cities whose patriarchal perspective of cycling is dominant. The most common means of transportation around these cities are "trotro" (troski), motorcycle (Okada), and tricycle known as "Pragya." The use of private means of transport is also dominant among the rich. While the use of "Okada" (motorcycle) provides a fast, flexible, and inexpensive transportation method in both cities, its use is gendered. Men are usually the ones seen riding for both private and commercial purposes. According to Song et al. (2019), men tend to have priority access to motorcycles than women (p.155)

4. TECHNOLOGIES OF MOBILITY AND GENDER: THE FEMINIST VIEW:

Scholars have asked questions of how movement shapes gender and gender shapes movement (Hanson, 2010). The feminist perspective came about as a result of how women were treated regarding mobility and mobility technologies. In the nineteenth - century in Europe, it was a "highly inappropriate thing for women to go out into city street on their own "(Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016). However, during the twentieth -century, women in America and Europe appeared to change the narrative by becoming riders. They also realized that the woman's responsibility both outside

and inside of her home merits the woman to have easy mobility technologies, which will lessen their work. They saw how women suffer at the bus station, probably because they might be carrying large items and waiting in the queue. Feminists have stated that gender and mobility are inseparable and are concerned about historical and current injustices women faced in moving freely around the city.

While men's movement is not limited and can quickly go about in the public space without hindrance, women are not. Feminist scholars have also expressed their views on the issue of technology of mobility and gender. Their views come from the fact that a person's ability to move freely without limitation is characterized as freedom of movement (Hanson, 2010). However, they termed restriction or limitation of movement as oppression, exclusion, and subordination (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016). Women, unlike their male counterparts, have primarily been affected in terms of limited mobility. The inability for women to move freely with mobility technologies in public space obstructs the freedom of movement. Women's limited mobility in both "identity and space has been in some cultural contexts a crucial means of subordination" (Loukaitou-Sideris ,2016). According to feminist scholars, control over mobility is "indirect and implicit." They stated that factors such as religious rules or cultural norms prevent women from driving vehicles or riding motorcycles, limiting or reducing their mobility(Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016). Society sees women as vulnerable and that they do not have to use technologies of mobility alone. According to Hanson (2010), "feminist interest in gender and mobility relates to how mobility /immobility impacts the power relations and dynamics embedded in gender and how gender affects mobility and transport, differentiating travel patterns and behavior" (p.549). Feminist scholars have also advocated for a theoretical approach that will enhance our understanding of social and cultural mobility. This will help scholars to understand the diverse relationships between gender and mobility.

5. THE CONVERSATION:

I am a woman and a black woman, for that matter. I was born and bred from the northern part of Ghana and moved to south of Ghana in 2013.I have lived in both the northern and southern parts of Ghana. I have witnessed how mobility and mobility technologies go on in these areas. In the northern part of Ghana, in my experience, transportation and movement within the city are mainly done using bicycles, tricycles, motorcycles, and donkey-drawn carts. The standard means of mobility within the city is the motorcycle. In the northern part of Ghana, only the very rich can afford cars, ordinary people, and some rich people ride motorcycles. The poor can either afford bicycles those that cannot afford bicycle walk. So, majority of the people in the northern part of the country use motorcycles. Both men and women engage in the activity of riding the motorcycle for their daily rounds. There is no limited possibility of women riding motorcycles in the northern part of Ghana. Riding motorcycles is the order of the day. It will interest you to see a woman teaching a man how to ride a motorcycle in Ghana's northern part. Women use the motorcycle to go to work, the market for shopping, and the farm and do many motorcycle activities. For instance, in my village, women even use the motorcycle to carry water from the borehole to their houses. This reduces their work burden as to carrying the basin of water on their head. However, the situation cannot be said of the women in the southern part of Ghana. Using myself as an example, when I am in the northern part of Ghana, I ride a motorcycle to undertake my daily activities, but I cannot do the same in the southern part.

One of the reasons women do not ride motorcycles in Accra and Kumasi is the road's nature. The roads are designed in a way that only people driving cars can use it. If you must ride a motorcycle, you will have to use the pedestrian way, which is dangerous because you must use it with people walking, which may cause accidents. On the other hand, men riding motorcycles can compete with drivers because of their courageous nature.

Another reason is the fact that the nature of traffic in these two cities is cumbersome. Women are not able to navigate their way out of these busy routes. Also, the perception of the society on the few women riding a motorcycle is terrible. In my experience, society sees women who ride motorcycles as gender-benders, making other women not interested in riding a motorcycle. They did not want to be called names and tagged as women who behave like men. In the southern part, they see riding motorcycles as men's jobs. This should not be the case. Women should be able to ride the motorcycle freely without any hindrances to their movement. In short, women are considered fearful beings and should not be allowed to ride motorcycles. Society thinks the riding of a motorcycle is meant for men, and so they raise an eyebrow when they see women riding some. I will say that people in Accra and Kumasi's behavior regarding women riding motorcycles send them back to the colonial era even though we have risen to the post-colonial era. The low motorization rate of women in Kumasi and Accra has forced women to use public transportation, facing sexual harassment. This is one of the reasons why Dunckel-Graglia (2013) proposes the use of women-only transport in his study. How then do we fill the gap in women's limited mobility?

I propose that they should be measures to stop the inequalities experienced by women in their day-to-day mobility/movement. The roads of the cities of Kumasi and Accra are not gender-neutral. Men and women should be given equal opportunities to use a motorcycle in Accra and Kumasi's cities.

One such intervention is the implementation of gender-specific policies in transportation. According to "Gender equality and mobility," "the implementation of these policies will not only reduce the inequality of gender mobility, but it will also help a more environmentally-friendly development as women adopt environmental-friendly mobility

patterns." These measures of implementation in transport planning have seen success in cities around Europe. Equal mobility opportunities are reached by providing foot and bicycle traffic and designing a safe network of paths for pedestrians and cyclists ("Gender equality and mobility"). This can be achieved by involving women in the planning and decision-making process. The issue of women's mobility in these two cities has to do with empowerment. According to Lee, "feminist scholars argue that a woman's ability to be mobile directly affects her access to resources and economic opportunities" (p. 89). In line with this, many feminist scholars have concluded that women getting access to mobility technologies such as the motorcycle "brings an emancipatory effect for them by allowing" movement through public space freely and traversing physical and social boundaries with ease. (89). Women should be empowered by providing the necessary amenities that will enable them to move around with the motorcycle without fear and panic. The ministry of roads in both cities should engage women in decision-making concerning the construction and designing of roads. If roads are designed to give space to motorization, I think more women would use the motorcycle in going about their daily activities.

Also, the society (people of Kumasi and Accra) should be sensitized about women's benefits in riding the motorcycle. People should be given the education that riding a motorcycle is not only meant for men. They should see the motorcycle as a machine where both sexes could ride without limitation. Some of the benefits women will get if allowed to ride the motorcycle without any hindrance is, they will be able to get more time to perform their daily activities. They will not have to spend long hours at the bus station. The rate of sexual harassment experienced by women in public transport would also be reduced. If society is educated on the need to get equal mobility for both men and women and that they should not ridicule women who ride motorcycles, more women will do away with shyness and begin to ride a motorcycle. This is because equal access to transportation technologies is necessary (Uteng, 1970)

Furthermore, according to Uteng (1970), enforcing more rigorous monitoring of efforts to correct gender bias is another way to have women have equal use of the motorcycle in the southern part of Ghana (Uteng, 1970). Laws should be put in place to punish people who mock women who engage in motorcycles. This will serve as a deterrent to others. Policymakers should understand that women's mobility needs are more significant than that of men and that they should be provided with the necessary resources to help them in their daily movement.

6. CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, gender issues in research about mobility are crucial to society's development in which we find ourselves. Women's mobility has attracted the attention of many scholars. This essay explores women's limited mobility possibilities in Accra and Kumasi regarding the use of mobility technologies. It demonstrates that women's mobility can contribute to the rhetoric of place and space. I suggest how women's mobility can increase by arguing against the patriarchal perspectives of space's use and structure (roads). It is clear from the essay that the use of mobility technologies, such as the motorcycle, is gendered. However, I suggested ways in which there can be equality in motorcycling between men and women and its benefits. Some ways to increase women's use of the motorcycle are implementing gender-specific transport policies, enforcing laws to punish road users that intimidate women drivers, and educating people on the need for everyone to have equal access to mobility technologies.

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