

An exploration of the urban pedestrian  
experience, including how it is affected by  
the presence of motor traffic

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## Abstract

The experience of urban walking is one that can form an important package of time in people's daily routine, with 8 million hours being spent daily walking in urban areas in the UK. This study explores urban walking experience as a holistic and multi-faceted experience. It examines this experience with particularly novel foci on areas within the inner worlds of pedestrians and how these interact with elements within their surroundings, including other pedestrians. The study also contains a specific interest in pedestrian experience of motor traffic: an influential but little researched factor in modern city life.

A data-led, qualitative approach to data collection and analysis is used, employing phenomenological commitments. The approach represents advances in capturing and understanding pedestrian experience. Two phases of data collection utilized walk-alongs and interviews recalling walking trips. Interviews progressed from discussing details in the walking experience to consideration of its essence.

Findings add to previous knowledge by presenting four themes which seek to represent core, essential elements of the urban walking experience. These themes expose elements in the social, emotional and thought lives of the urban pedestrian. The pedestrian experience is understood as being created by triangular relationships between the inner world of the pedestrian, the outer experienced city and the physical act of walking itself. Complexities within these relationships are elucidated. Implications include that the inner cognitive life of the pedestrian should, where possible, be both protected and inspired by the walked environment. Findings about the pedestrian experience of motor traffic are also presented. Ways in which the negative effects of traffic are mitigated for the pedestrian are detailed. These include various types of barriers and the view that motor traffic is necessary for city life. Conclusions indicate areas for policy consideration and further research, which the study's new ideas on walking inform.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

People, activities, objects and places; all can be loved because of the experiences they provide. Many things are hated and resented because of the experiences they inflict. Between these extremes are many experiences that are more mixed or mild, that people navigate through, trying to maximise the positives and avoid the negatives. The experience a thing provides, loved or hated or mild, forms part of the meaning it holds in the life of the person experiencing it.

Many people spend regular periods of time walking in urban areas. These periods can be times of complex experiences. There are other pedestrians, cars and cycles, the dramas of modern city life, hurried thoughts or elaborate daydreams, weather and watches to attend to. Binding these experiences is the process of walking itself, which has been described as 'the most obvious and the most obscure thing in the world' (Solnit, 2001, p3). Solnit's description suggests walking is both familiar and immediate, and yet difficult to define or pin down.

This thesis is about exploring and understanding the experience of urban walking, which is commonly and regularly encountered yet rarely written or talked about. As part of the study there is also specific consideration of the pedestrian experience of motor traffic: an influential but little researched factor in modern city life. Inductive data-led analysis, holding phenomenological commitments, is used as a vehicle for accomplishing the study's purpose of seeking the essence of these experiences. The analysis seeks to develop new ways of thinking about walking, synthesized and developed from participant descriptions of their pedestrian experience. These new ways of thinking can in turn inform policy.

The study aims at a holistic understanding of walking that goes beyond understanding walking solely in terms of the aesthetics and practicalities of walking provision and beyond understanding it as a physical exercise that can promote health. The study adds to these elements the detailed consideration that urban walking can serve a number of important psychological, emotional, social and spiritual functions.

This chapter will begin by explaining the background to the study, before outlining its scope. It will then present the research questions and explain the significance of phenomenology for the study's approach before finally presenting a brief outline of the thesis chapters' contents.



## Background to the study

It has been estimated that 80% of the UK population of around 60 million people live in urban areas (Pointer, 2005). For many of these, walking in urban areas will be a regular experience. It can be estimated that in the UK 8 million hours are spent daily walking in urban areas (combining figures from DfT, 2006, cited by National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, 2006, and Pointer, 2005).

The study of urban walking can be viewed as important from a number of different vantage points, including those of sustainable society, local community and the individual. The benefits of urban walking can also be classified by its different components: its component of physical activity and its experiential facets for instance.

At the level of a sustainable society, walking is important in its potential for replacing car trips. By so doing it can help alleviate the problems of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (European Federation for Transport and Environment, 2009), traffic congestion (West of England Partnership, 2006,) injury or death from collisions (DfT 2010) and the breakdown of streets as social spaces (Hamilton-Baillie, 2008).

Walking has also been seen to have benefits at the level of local communities: as a mode of transport it is an option available to people of all incomes and social groups and has been cited as a marker of civilised society (Penolosa, cited in Lo, 2009, p.161). Higher levels of walking can lead to greater feelings of community cohesion and urban vibrancy, to the extent that it has been suggested that those who walk 'create' a city (De Certeau, 1984, cited in Bean et al., 2008, p.2834).

At the level of the individual, walking can have multi-faceted benefits, in terms of physical health, mental well-being and experiential aspects. The physical activity of walking (Health Education Authority 2000) can reduce the risk of a number of diseases, including heart disease, stroke and others. It can also help reduce the risk of obesity. (Improved health through increased walking can also create economic savings at a societal level.) Walking can also benefit the individual in psychological areas: Gatrell (2013) for example has suggested that walking can provide a time for spirituality, a time to think, a time for social contact or solitude and a time for addressing tricky problems. Writers have referred to walking being a time to work off angst (Solnit 2001) and reduce stress (Darker et al. 2007). It has also been found to be a way of relieving 'depressive symptoms' (Mobily et al. (1996, p.119).

In addition to these benefits walking can be important for the individual as an experience: as examples, it is a way in which a person can explore and connect with their city, it is a time that may be spent alone or with others and it is a time when body, thoughts and surroundings can interact with one another.

Despite the range of benefits from walking and despite how common it is, there has been little fine grained analysis of the urban walking experience and its essential elements. Middleton (2011) has noted that there has been little recognition of walking *experience* in UK walking policy and policy related studies. This is part of the wider tradition in transportation research in which there has not been a strong focus on the experiential aspects of transport. In recent years though there has been increasing recognition of these aspects through work done surrounding the concepts of travel time use (Lyons & Urry, 2005) and positive utility (Mokhtarian & Salomon 2001) and more recently through the mobilities turn.

Research on travel time use suggests that travellers can value and make use of their time spent travelling beyond that of simply reaching a destination. Positive utility of travel similarly suggests that time spent travelling can be a useful and enjoyable experience. Both of these concepts then highlight that time spent travelling can have uses beyond that of geographical relocation, and both include some focus on travel as an experience.

More recently, the mobility turn suggests a number of sociological and geographical ideas that had previously been conceptualised as pertaining to fixed locations can also be examined in the context of mobility, i.e. they can be understood as acting upon people, goods and ideas that are in the process of moving (Cresswell, 2011). Thus these studies also have started to examine transport in ways that go beyond the motivation of reaching destinations. Following this increased recognition of transport as an experience, there have recently been a small number of studies focusing on the experience of walking specifically (Middleton 2009, 2010). However such studies are still rare and the urban walking experience remains significantly underexplored. The argument has been made that urban walking is important in a number of ways and one of these is its importance as an experience, but that this experiential aspect has been under researched.

This thesis also contains a specific examination of the pedestrian experience of motor traffic. Taylor, (2003), Sheller & Urry, (2000), and others have made strong claims about the import of this experience for modern city life:

'To understand our aesthetic experience of road traffic in the modern city is in large measure to understand our aesthetic experience of the modern city, period' (Taylor, 2003, p.1611).

'The social sciences have generally ignored the motor car and its awesome consequences for social life. ... It has been presumed that the movement, noise, smell, visual intrusion and environmental hazards of the car are largely irrelevant to deciphering the nature of city life.' (Sheller and Urry, 2000, p.737).

However despite these claims very little study has been conducted on this topic, (as Sheller and Urry, 2000, intimate above,) and even less has drawn on participant based data. Thus the investigation into pedestrian experience of motor traffic is in a very under researched area but an area which affects many people's daily lives.

### **Study scope and research questions**

It has been said of walking that it is a topic that 'inevitably leads into other subjects. Walking is a subject that is always straying.' (Solnit 2001, p.8 summarising Thoreau). In validation of this, walking has been considered of importance within a number of different academic fields. Thus the study draws on previous research from a number of disciplines, including transport, urban studies literature, psychology, public health, human geography, transport geography, cultural studies, sociology and ethnography. Some of these are sometimes found combined in the new mobilities literatures.

Although it has been noted above that there is not a great amount of previous evidence on the urban pedestrian experience, there has arguably been more written on rural walking, looking at it in part through an experiential paradigm (Wylie 2005, Crust et al., 2011, for example).

Writing about rural walking dates from the romantic era in Britain but also includes contemporary writing (see for instance Edensor, 2000). So the thesis draws on writing about rural as well as urban walking. Because of this, comparisons between rural and urban walking have been used to structure the discussion at a number of places throughout the thesis. It should be noted that, in this study, when comparing rural and urban walking, 'rural walking' is used to denote leisure countryside walking, that is often away from trafficked roads and rural settlements. Clearly this is not the only walking that takes place in rural areas.

The discussion has argued that urban walking is important and more specifically is important as an experience. The aim of this thesis then is to pursue an understanding of the urban walking experience. Within this aim it was considered that motor traffic would play an important role in urban pedestrian experience so that a specific focus on this also would be

useful. Literature about psychological benefits of walking suggested that this too would be an important area to examine, one that had not been previously covered in great qualitative detail. These considerations led to the formation of three research questions:

1: What can be learnt about the essence of urban pedestrian experience?

2: What are the psychological and emotional benefits of the urban pedestrian experience?

3: What can be learnt about the essence of the pedestrian experience of motor traffic?

Research question 1 seeks to uncover elements of urban walking experience that many pedestrians will encounter. The question sought to pursue in an open ended manner core elements of the urban walking experience. It can be important for social scientists to examine experience for two reasons. The first is that experience is important in its own right. The second is that once understood, experience can be sensitively designed for.

Research question 2 differs from 1 and 3 in forming a less neutral approach to the pedestrian experience: While 1 and 3 simply seek to understand the experience, including positive and negative aspects, the 2<sup>nd</sup> question looks specifically at benefits of the experience. Examining the benefits has pragmatic value, as it can help those wishing to promote urban walking. The question focuses on psychological and emotional benefits. Less is known about this type of benefit for the pedestrian than physical health benefits for instance. This research question reflects a conviction underpinning the study that the psychological and emotional well-being of pedestrians is important and that this can be affected by the experience they have of their urban walk.

Research question 3 looks at the pedestrian experience of motor traffic. It seeks to understand the core elements of this specific element within the pedestrian experience in a manner similar to research question 1. In a sense research question 3 is a subdivision of research question 1 and contributes towards the answering of research question 1.

The research questions' focus on exploration of everyday experience led to a phenomenological influence in the study, which is explored in chapter 5. Van Manen (1997, p.62) states that 'The point of phenomenological research is to 'borrow' other people's experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience.' The study has some phenomenological commitments but is not considered to be a fully phenomenological study. (Why this is so will be explained in chapter 5). Examples of the phenomenological influences include that the study places a greater emphasis on the 'what' of

the experience than the 'why' of it. The description of the 'what' of the experience is analysed and through analysis is developed into theory. Also in line with phenomenological influences the study sought to uncover the essential elements of the experience, and to examine the phenomena as it appeared within the pedestrian's awareness.

## Thesis structure

The thesis consists of 11 chapters. Chapters 2 to 4 discuss literature in relation to the study. Chapter 5 presents the research design. Chapters 6 to 10 present and discuss findings and chapter 11 concludes. A summary of the contents of these chapters is as follows:

Chapter 2 largely looks at the 'how' of how walking and transport in general have been studied. The chapter first justifies, from fields outside of transport, the importance of experience within human existence. It then gives an overview of the usage of and trends within walking, using statistics, financial figures and a brief overview of policy in the area. The chapter goes on to chart an increasing interest within transport research in transport as an experience. This increase has grown from quantitative research into walking, through the bodies of literature surrounding positive utility of transport and travel time use, and into the more recent mobilities literature.

Chapter 3 lays bare some of the backbone that runs beneath the study. It also prepares for themes that were developed from the primary data and findings about the urban walking experience. The chapter discusses one factor that may shape the urban walking experience. This is the urban environment. It also explores some of the factors that may comprise the walking experience as it takes place; these are social encounter and walking as a time to think. In addition it considers effects on well-being that may result from the walking experience.

Chapter 4 discusses previous evidence around the topic of pedestrian experience of motor traffic. It is shown that there has been very little previous research conducted on this topic. The importance of motor traffic's effect on pedestrian experience and pedestrian well-being is discussed; however so is the idea that these disbenefits of motor traffic have to be measured against the benefits of car based mobility.

Chapter 5 presents the research design. The chapter first looks at elements common to the two phases of data collection conducted, including the decision to do qualitative study and to maintain some phenomenological commitments. It then presents in detail the methods and rationale of each phase of data collection: The *Urban walking phase* mainly addressed research questions 1 and 2. It consisted of room interviews with individual participants, using a

novel method of exploring the participants' urban walking trips. The *Experience of motor traffic phase* mainly addressed research question 3. It consisted of walkalong interviews, where a participant walked with me through the city and discussed their experience of motor traffic. The chapter also discusses issues surrounding collecting rich data on difficult to talk about topics, and the ways through which walking could be focused on as an experience.

Chapter 6 is the first of four chapters which each present a theme from data of the *Urban walking phase* of data collection. The theme for chapter 6 is that walking in itself can be unobtrusive. Two things are meant by this concept: The first is that the idea of going or being on an urban walk might not be one to which we pay much attention. The second is that we may not normally be highly conscious of the physical action of walking. This chapter raises issues of what a walk really is. Exceptions to the unobtrusiveness of walking, i.e. situations in which attention does become focused on the fact that we are walking are also given.

Chapter 7 presents the second theme from data which is an account of the gradations of social encounter in urban walking. It comments upon the previous notions that pedestrian social encounter can be classified either as an enjoyable and community building experience on the one hand or threats to personal safety on the other. It briefly provides supporting evidence for these notions but then goes on to suggest there may be greater subtlety to pedestrian social encounter than this: it presents a variety of different forms of pedestrian social encounters and gradations of positive and negative emotion that these can cause in the pedestrians themselves.

Chapter 8 focuses on emotional benefits that urban walks can engender. A shift towards more positive states of mind, enabled by walking, is seen to come both from the reduction of negative mind states, such as anxiety and depression, but also from the stimulation of positive mind states, such as 'flow', mindfulness and deeper states of mind.

Chapter 9 examines a more cerebral side of urban walking. It presents walking as a time to think. It suggests that urban walking has certain strengths and weaknesses as a time to think. It goes on to suggest that it can therefore encourage certain types of thinking; these include problem solving, personal reflection and daydreaming. Different ways in which the thoughts of the walker can interact with surroundings are examined. Factors which may vary for different trips and which may affect walking as a time to think, such as the time pressure attendant on the trip, are discussed.

Chapter 10 presents themes from the data surrounding the pedestrian experience of motor traffic. It confirms previous assertions that the presence of motor traffic can have negative impacts on pedestrian experience. This is in part through the noise and danger of traffic. However these negative impacts are shown to be mitigated to varying degrees by perceived barriers that separate pedestrian from motor traffic. These barriers can be ambiguous: on the one hand protective but on the other constraining for the pedestrian. The negative presence of motor traffic can also be mitigated by the feeling that motor traffic is a necessary part of city life.

Chapter 11 draws together the conclusions from the previous chapters, and adds further insights, aiming towards a summary of an essence of urban walking and pedestrian experience of motor traffic. It highlights the main concept to come out of this study: that urban pedestrian experience can be understood in terms of triangular relationships between the inner world of the pedestrian, the outer experienced city and the physical movement of walking. The chapter also highlights areas relevant for policy, reflects on the methodology and gives ideas for further research.

## Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the aim and scope of the research, and has indicated that little research has been conducted into urban pedestrian experience. The identification of the potential importance of the experience led to the formation of the three research questions.

The following three chapters will position in greater detail why the research questions are important through critical analysis of research in the academic fields indicated above. To begin, chapter 2 will examine the reasons for studying walking and why it should be studied as an experience and will summarise a historical development towards an increasing understanding of travel as an experience.

## Chapter 2: Previous ways of looking at walking and transport and the importance of travel experience.

This chapter is mainly about the 'how' of looking at walking and transport more generally. It will give an account of previous ways of looking at walking and transport in a number of bodies of literature. By giving insight into these viewpoints on walking it will position the present study in relation to them. It will thus provide a background for comprehending what is new in the present study, and how its way of viewing walking is justified and conducive to new understanding.

The chapter emphasises the simple claim that experiences tend to be very central to many people's lives. It also goes on to illustrate that despite this transport research has often neglected to consider journey 'experience' as an important constituent of understanding transport, or when it has, much of the depth and subtleties of such experience have not been accessed and fully explored.

The first section of the chapter will step outside of 'transport' in order to argue that experiences are important to most human beings. The next section of the chapter will look at understanding walking through statistics, financial figures and related policy. The chapter will go on to examine quantitative transport research into walking and the ways in which it has not yet led to a full understanding of walking as an experience. Towards the end of the chapter though it will be shown that the experiential aspects of transport have been increasingly recognised by transport research. This has particularly occurred through the concepts of positive utility and travel time use. The last section will briefly summarise how the cross disciplinary 'mobilities literature' has further advanced an emphasis on travel as an experience in recent years.

The literature review chapters will draw on evidence from the fields of transport research, geography, urban studies, public health, mobilities and transport geography. This chapter will sometimes talk about ways of viewing the specific mode of walking and sometimes ways of viewing transport more generally. This is because there is an insufficient literature base specifically on walking to illustrate every necessary point. The next chapter focuses more exclusively on walking.



## Experiences and experientialism

This section will argue one important point that is foundational to the thesis and the way that it looks at walking. It is that for most human beings those phenomena known as 'experiences' are very important. This point will be briefly argued from areas of human existence outside of transport. Stepping temporarily outside of the realm of transport is important in order to build the case that experiences are generally important to much of human existence, and have been recognised as such. The study will go on to apply this viewpoint to its topic of urban walking. The areas of human existence that will be reviewed here include national well-being, business, marketing, gift giving, self and art.

Growing recognition suggests understanding experiences is important in assessing the level of success of a nation (New Economic Foundation, 2009, Diener, 2000). The New Economic Foundation (2009, p.2) for instance suggest indicators of national well-being should include peoples 'experiences, feelings and perceptions of how their lives are going' and that a shift is needed towards 'more meaningful measures of progress which capture the richness of people's lived experience'(p.3).

Evidence of the importance of experiences is also seen in the fact that they can be sold. Over time economic understanding has seen a process of development, from first including just basic materials, to then including manufactured goods and then to including services (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Pine and Gilmore suggest that a fourth development has emerged, which is the commoditisation of experiences. Pine & Gilmore (1998) find much evidence to support their argument. The selling of experiences has a long history: Through theme parks such as Disney land for example. Beyond this Pine & Gilmore, in 1998, gave many examples of a wide range of businesses that had realized the importance of selling experiences.

Experiences can also have sufficient significance to be used for selling material goods. The significance of experiences for selling goods led to Schmitt (1998) labelling a new breed of marketers as 'experiential marketers' (p.53). Schmitt proposed that experiential marketers view consumers as: 'rational and emotional human beings who are concerned with achieving pleasurable experiences'(p.53) In light of this understanding experiential marketing does not consider and sell the features of the product so much as the experience that the product will evoke for the consumer: He gives the example that experiential marketers sell shampoo, not on the basis of what it consists of as a product, but in relation to the bathroom experience it facilitates and improves. Using experiences to sell material products has often been employed in advertising. The scenario of a bubble bath transporting the bather to an experience of a

tropical island, or a car being used to cut across panoramic deserts is common. A list of adverts which have tethered material products to experiences, however tenuously, would be a long one.

To recap, this section of the review is demonstrating that experiences are a generally important aspect of human existence. In support of this it has been argued that experiences are increasingly being recognised as useful indicators of national progress, that experiences are valuable enough to be sold and that experiences can provide powerful leverage when selling material goods to consumers. This viewpoint of the general importance of experiences will be applied to the topic of the present study.

The importance of experiences is also highlighted in studies finding that experiential gifts (gifts that consist of a purchased experience) bring more happiness than material gifts (Howell & Hill, 2009, Carter & Gilovich, 2012, Van Boven, 2005). These studies have sought to uncover why experiences may be important to people. One explanation offered is that experiences are perceived as being central and somehow internal to the self (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, Carter & Gilovich, 2012). Through a series of seven statistical experiments, some of which were designed to mitigate the weaknesses found in the others, Carter & Gilovich (2012) examined whether recent experiential purchases or material purchases seemed more central to the participants' perception of self. They found that participants were more likely to include the experiential purchases when talking about their own 'life story' (p.1307). They conclude then that somehow experiences become more internal to us than possessions. They suggest that: 'we are quite literally the sum total of our experiences. We are not, however materialistic we might be, the sum total of our possessions' (p.1304).

As a last brief addition to the evidence that understanding 'experience' is vital to understanding human existence, the arts can be pointed to as a huge area of aesthetic, emotional, spiritual, commercial and academic interest which usually, by nature, consists of creating experiences.

In conclusion this opening section of the chapter has argued for the importance of experiences in a number of different contexts. The present study builds upon the importance of experiences in order to form its understanding of walking. There is not a great deal of precedence for doing so. Before the mobilities turn there was little academic study of quotidian urban walking as an experience. Two reasons for this can be presented but then challenged.

The first possible reason is that the daily walking experience, unlike the commercial examples of sellable experiences given above, is one of little financial importance, (note that all of the literature quoted in the discussion above is looking at 'experience' in areas where it has solid financial implications). Perhaps then walking experience has historically been under researched as it has been seen as of little economic interest. This idea is challenged though by the recent growth of public health interest in active modes of transport, which suggests that higher levels of walking would have huge financial implications, for governments and individuals. These will be summarised in the next section.

Secondly it could be asserted that urban walking experience has been so little researched because it tends to be less interesting and rich than the experiences that might be depicted in adverts or brought as gifts or encapsulated in art. However, in opposition to this assertion, a growing body of work around artists and cultural commentators can be pointed to who are linking walking with artistic practice (Pinder, 2001, Pink et al., 2010). In addition it can be argued that quotidian walking experience is significant through its regularity. While experiences like art and holidays may represent a 'peak' in intensity and pleasure of experience, daily travel can intimate a lot about a person's life. Thus it has been argued that the urban walking experience has recognisable potential both for financial import, and intrinsic interest and richness.

It would be inaccurate to suggest that all previous research into transport has ignored experiential aspects of travel. As examples Edensor (2003) has reexamined the experience of driving on motorways, and Jones (2005) has written about his experiences of a cycle route in Birmingham. Examples of studies specifically on the walking experience will be discussed in chapter 3. The discussion will now turn to different ways in which walking can be understood. To begin with an understanding of walking defined by statistics, financial figures and policy will be summarized.

### **Examining walking through statistics, financial figures and policy**

One way in which walking can be viewed is through statistics about its usage and benefits, and through examination of the policy which has addressed it. This section will give some defining statistics about how much walking is done and about who, where and for what purpose people walk. It will then comment on declining levels of walking during the last sixty years and the policy that has started recently to address these levels. The benefits associated with walking will be summarised, along with some negatives perceived to attend the mode.

The section will suggest that walking has begun to be seen as very beneficial, particularly in relation to health benefits of walking. It will also suggest that until relatively recently walking was seen in UK as not being a priority for policy attention, although this has begun to change.

An important question to ask in order to set the context for this thesis is how much walking is done. In 2007, 23% of all trips made in Great Britain were on foot only (DfT, 2007a, cited in *The Ramblers*, 2010). As would be expected most of these walking trips are shorter journeys.

Despite these positive figures, there is still substantial leeway for walking levels to increase: 19% of trips less than a mile are travelled in cars (Chatterjee & Dudley, 2012, p.57) Presumably the potential for more short journeys longer than a mile to be walked would be even greater (as a greater proportion of these would at present be made by car). Cities encourage higher levels of walking than other areas (*The Ramblers*, 2010). In London, approaching 25% of trips are walked trips. (TfL, 2010, cited in *The Ramblers*, 2010). It should be highlighted that in addition to foot only trips, many trips by other modes involve some walking (Wener & Evans, 2007).

Who walks? The majority of people are able to walk. Only 4% need assistance in order to walk outside (DfT, 2003 cited in *The Ramblers*, 2010). The age and gender groups that walk most are girls and boys of less than 17, and women between 30 and 39 (*The Ramblers*, 2010). Walking increases for men from the ages of 30-39 to the ages of 60-69 and walking is more likely to be undertaken than sport later in life (*The Ramblers*, 2010 citing Sport England 2009c). However, after 70, walking decreases for both sexes. (DfT 2007a cited in *The Ramblers*, 2010.) At the other end of the age range, around 50% of primary school children walk to school and slightly less of secondary school children (DfT, 2007a cited in *The Ramblers*, 2010).

There are a wide range of reasons why people walk. Walks can be in order to 'Carry out small errands, take a child to school, get to work, school or college, visit friends and relatives (and) visit social places' (TfL, 2011). It can also be a recreational activity. 22% of the population walk longer than 30 minutes for recreation every month (*The Ramblers*, 2013). This is about twice the number that swim or go to the gym, and nearly three times the number that cycle. Thus Wener & Evans (2007) suggest that walking can be expected to be a popular form of exercise as it is already the most practiced form of exercise amongst the general public. Walking is also the most carried out non-occupational activity (*The Ramblers*, 2013).

So it can be seen that walking is common, particularly for short trips. Nevertheless, evidence suggests the level of walking in the UK has generally been in decline for a number of decades (*The Ramblers*, 2010, *The Ramblers*, 2013, Chatterjee & Dudley, 2012, DfT, 2004a). This can be

understood in terms of the amount of walking each person does, or the percentage of trips that are walking trips. The distance walked per person in Great Britain fell by 30% between 1975 and 2010 (The Ramblers, 2013). The percentage of trips that are walking trips fell by 32% between 1986 and 2011 (The Ramblers, 2013). The general trend in recent decades then has been a decline in the level of walking.

The decline in walking has been attributed to increases in car use (The Ramblers, 2010), destinations being more spread out so that less are in walkable distance compared to previous decades (Chatterjee & Dudley, 2012) and poor walking environments (Chatterjee & Dudley, 2012). It can be argued that levels of walking have not been helped by a lack of effective policy interest in the mode until fairly recent.

However, within the last two decades policy has started to address walking and walking environments. In terms of major transport policy documents, both the 1998 transport paper and the Ten year plan in 2000 made some mention of walking (Chatterjee & Dudley, 2012). Following these, 'Walking and cycling, an action plan' (DfT, 2004a, p.11) focused more specifically on walking.

'Walking and cycling, an action plan' addressed issues surrounding the walking environment. These included considering the quality of public spaces. It is not the only policy or policy related document to stress the importance of walking environment. Several other documents highlight its importance. In 2007, the Manual for Streets was released (DfT, 2007). This guidance looked at the quality of streets and how their quality as 'place' should be promoted, in relation to their function as conduits for mobility. This agenda included increased sensitivity in designing for pedestrians and cyclists. Further reference to the importance of attractive walking environments was made by Department of the environment, transport and the regions towns (2000). Sinnett et al. (2011) have concluded the aesthetic attractiveness of the walking environment has been found to be the most common element linking environments and good levels of walking. Other guidance (DfT, 2004) has made moves to establish a hierarchy of different road users in which pedestrians can sometimes come at the top. Previous paradigms had favoured motor traffic over pedestrians (Sinnett et al. 2011).

Final evidence of an increased policy interest in walking environment has been the concept of the five C's in relation to walking (TfL, 2004, DfT 2004). This concept suggests that walking environments should encourage walking through being connected, convivial, conspicuous, comfortable and convenient. The importance of walking environment for walking uptake has

also been borne out in Surveys. 74% of surveyed Londoners for instance said they would be encouraged to walk more by improved walking routes (TfL, 2011, p.1).

Not all thinking around walking has focused on the walking environment. Smarter choices (Cairns et al., 2004) is a study that suggests the traveller themselves, rather than the environment they travel through, could be the target of efforts to achieve modal shift. This study suggested that as well as using hard measures such as congestion charging, a shift away from car use towards cycling and walking could be pursued by softer measures. These include making people aware of the opportunity for and benefits of, active modes of travel. This can be achieved through travel planning, personal travel planning and travel awareness campaigns.

### **Benefits and negatives associated with walking**

It can be argued that previous research on walking has been shaped, pragmatically, by the range of benefits the pedestrian mode has traditionally been seen to provide. In recent policy and surrounding studies, walking has been associated with several main benefits. These include benefits of reduced car use, benefits for local community, benefits for mental health and well-being and benefits for physical health. These benefits, particularly the latter, have in turn been seen to hold great potential for economic benefits to be derived from higher levels of walking.

Firstly, increased levels of walking can lead to fewer short trips being taken in cars (Mackett, 2003). There is now a firm evidence base indicating that car use has serious negative effects for individuals and societies. These include contribution to CO2 emissions, (European Federation for Transport and Environment, 2009), congestion costs (West of England Partnership, 2006), and injury and death from collisions (DfT 2010).

Policy documents and commissioned reports often suggest that higher levels of walking in neighbourhoods can also lead to increased social capital and feelings of community (DfT, 2007, The Ramblers, 2013, TfL, 2004, Sinnett et al., 2011, Department of the environment, transport and the regions, 2000). The term social capital denotes the result of interactions between individuals which can take the form of socialising, political involvements and volunteer activities (Sinnett et al, 2011. p.13).

Walking, as a form of physical activity, is also widely considered to have benefits for mental health and well-being (The Ramblers, 2013, Sinnett et al. 2011). For instance a publication by the Walking for health organisation (The Ramblers, 2013, p.5) summarises that physical activity can increase self-esteem and reduce anxiety, depression and other negative mental states.

There is a great emphasis, in policy and related documents, on the benefits that walking can have on physical health. At present around 95% of adults are taking insufficient exercise (The Ramblers, 2013). Physical inactivity is a major threat to good public health. It has been estimated that it is 'responsible for 17% of premature deaths in the UK, 10.5% of heart disease cases, 13% of type 2 diabetes cases and around 18% of cases of colon and breast cancer' (Lee et al. 2012, cited in The Ramblers, 2013, p.4).

Walking has many strengths as a form of healthy exercise. It costs nothing, it is relatively easy, it does not require equipment and can be carried out almost anywhere (The Ramblers, 2013). (Although Freund & Martin (2004) argue that walking and the fitness it can enable are facilitated partly by the social and physical environment, and not only the will of the would-be walker.) The Ramblers report that 95% of adults consider walking a good way to stay healthy (The Ramblers, 2010) and in a survey the most common reason Londoners gave for taking walking trips was health, although the proportion giving this reason has declined (TfL, 2011). The health benefits of walking has led to the 'Walking for health' organisation which runs local walks aimed at improving and maintaining people's health.

Poor health due to inactive lifestyles has heavy economic costs. Sinnett et al. (2011) bring together figures that cardiovascular disease cost the UK £29 billion in 2004 and obesity and being overweight, cost the UK £7 billion in 2001, an annual figure that was predicted to increase. Such cardiovascular disease and obesity can be ameliorated by physical activity. Thus inactivity is estimated to have a heavy cost. In 2007 the cost of physical inactivity for the NHS was estimated to be from £1 billion to £1.8 billion (Allender et al. 2007, and Department for health, 2009, cited in The Ramblers, 2013, p.9). Physical inactivity has costs beyond these though, in 2007, total costs of inactivity were estimated at £8.3 billion, including £5.5 billion in absence from work and £1 billion in premature deaths (The Ramblers, 2013, p.9).

Looking at the smaller scale, studies have suggested that individual local walking schemes can have strong economic benefits. One study found that 'every £1 spent on a health walk scheme saved the local NHS £7' (Heron & Bradshaw, 2011, summarised in The Ramblers, 2013). Sinnett et al. (2011, p.8) looked at a number of studies on walking and concluded that 'investment in the walking environment is likely to be at least, if not better, value for money than other transport projects.' The Eddington report (2006) also championed the economic potential of small scale walking schemes and suggested that schemes to make walking more attractive can have benefit cost ratios of more than 10.

Much of the research into understanding walking has been motivated by the social, physical health and economic benefits given above. But this thesis will go on to argue that to view the benefits of walking as solely those of social sustainability and physical health is incomplete. The thesis will suggest that walking has further aspects and benefits that are more experiential in nature. Once the importance of human experience is acknowledged, urban walking is seen in a different light.

This section of the review has spelt out, using statistics, many positives associated with walking. But of course it can be asked why people are not always walking at present when possible. The reasons may originate in the trip makers themselves. Chatterjee & Dudley (2012) suggest that it is very unlikely that campaigns to promote walking could persuade huge numbers of car drivers to leave car use, because of their attachment to that mode of travel. Such attachments are formed due to personal benefits of car use. These include ease of use and boons for personal identity (Gifford, 2007), practicality and enjoyment (Ellaway et al. 2003) and having an individualistic travel space (Blumen, 2000).

The Ramblers (2010, p.4) report on surveys about why people do not walk. The surveys suggest that common reasons given included 'lack of time, the weather, unattractive walking environments, fears for safety and personal security and Lack of knowledge of the walking environment and/or of the benefits and ease of walking.'

As well as reasons originating in individual trip makers, another type of reason why more do not walk may be organisational. TfL (2004) suggests that organisation of promoting walking can be difficult to achieve because of the number of different people and institutions that need to be involved in it.

There is some debate whether high levels of walking are necessarily a good thing. Turrell et al. (2013) view the high levels of walking often found in disadvantaged neighbourhoods positively, due to the problems of obesity associated with such areas. However, Bostock (2001) argues the low income mothers she researched viewed walking as a negative experience forced on them by not owning a car. They reported having to walk in unpleasant environments, walking for too great distances and with children who became miserable through fatigue. Bostock also suggests forced reliance on walking can have some negatives on health as some of the mothers were unable to meet health appointments as having no other option but walking to access the appointments.



The above mentioned negative attitudes towards walking need to be balanced with more positive attitudes towards the mode that people can have, and which highlight the potential of walking. According to the Ramblers walking can be attractive to people for social reasons, as a time to relax or think, and a way of exploring the outdoors. Positive attitudes were also espoused in a 2002 ONS Omnibus survey, summarised by Chatterjee & Dudley (2012, p.57). It found that respondents agreed walking should be promoted for health reasons, for environmental reasons, and to reduce congestion.

In conclusion on this section, a picture of walking has been formed through relevant statistics. In terms of financial figures, higher levels of walking can be seen to be very positive. However, the benefits often focused on have largely omitted experiential benefits of walking (aside from the building of social capital). A summary of policy has suggested that previous to the last two decades, walking was under addressed in policy, due perhaps to the conviction that walking levels would maintain themselves, without concerted assistance. When policy has addressed walking, it has often focused on improving the walking environment.

The remainder of this chapter will chart an increasing recognition, in transport research, of the experiential aspects of walking. To begin with, quantitative study of walking will be discussed.

### **Quantitative studies of walking behavior**

Much of the research that has been carried out into walking has been quantitative in nature (Li et al. 2005, Salvador et al. 2010, Landis et al., 2001, Foster et al., 2004, Cleland 2008). Such studies have informed those planning urban areas about factors in the built environment that are associated with higher levels of walking. This has been used to recommend how to design and manage urban areas in order to encourage walking. However, in terms of the present aim of understanding the lived experience of walking, there is opportunity, in a number of key areas, to build on the knowledge gained by quantitative studies by using other approaches.

The walking experience can be conceptualised as an interaction between factors originating from within pedestrians themselves and factors originating in their surrounding environment. Many quantitative studies of walking have focused mainly on a mixture of environmental factors influencing walking and basic demographic factors (Li et al., 2005, Cleland et al., 2008, Foster et al., 2004, Turrell et al. 2013). For instance, Li et al. (2005, p.561) collected information on 'age, sex, marital status, education, household income and health status.'

Determining how demographic variables may be related to walking behaviour is important. However, there may be other types of factors within individuals that also affect how they

experience walking. These may be uncovered by a more detailed exploration of how the walking experience is produced. For example whether the walker is in a hurry. Do they like being amongst people? Are they preoccupied? What are they thinking about? Do they enjoy exercise? Do they want to get away from the indoors? Understanding these elements may have the potential to add dimensions to the understanding of the walking experience and its structure.

So it is possible that the walking experience may be created by interactions of environmental factors and a range of personal factors. There is an opportunity for study which more fully explores the 'complex' and subjective ways in which people interact with their environment (Smith 2009, p.128, Andrew et al. 2012). Andrew et al. (2012, p.1927) critique a preference that has been given to 'objective' measures of walking environment over people's perceptions. They suggest this preference has led to an emphasis on the walking environment itself, rather than the way in which it is actually experienced. This has left little room for an understanding of relevant subjective experiences on the part of the pedestrian. Similarly Smith (2009) criticises the assumption, implicit in much of transport research, of the pedestrian as a rational machine that reacts to objective surroundings in a simple, objective and rational way. She instead comments that emotions, feelings and other 'psychological factors' (p.128) influence the way pedestrians react to their surroundings, and thus the way they will behave (see also Brown et al., 2007, p.37).

A number of studies, such as Foster et al. (2004) have begun to research people's perceptions of their walked environment, rather than objective measures of that environment.

Investigation of the perceptions researched though are limited by the closed nature of the types of questions that can be asked in surveys of large numbers of people, questions such as whether the pedestrian perceives it is safe to walk and whether they perceive there is much traffic. The understanding gained from these questions cannot provide an account of the 'complex' and subjective reactions to environment to which Smith (2009, p.128) was referring.

Numerous insights from psychology support Smith's assertion that the way environment affects experience can be complex. For instance appraisal theory (Lazarus, 1991) suggests that the emotional reaction we have to a situation will depend on the goals we have for that situation. An illustration can be supposed of an uphill stretch of a walk. If one walker is seeking to get fit through walking, the hill may be relished. If a second walker is seeking to relax on a stroll, the hill may have negative impact. To make a simplistic statement that hills please or displease walkers, while instructive as an overall finding, would simplify the rich and

diverse experiences of the two walkers. Such insights then strengthen the assertion that it would be helpful to study walking in such a way that does not imply a deterministic and one way causality between walking environment and walking experience (Andrew et al. 2012). The pedestrian's experience of walking may be shaped, in part, by factors originating from within him or herself.

It has been mentioned above that quantitative studies have looked at factors within the walking environment and how these relate to walking behaviour. Some of these studies have looked at pedestrian perceptions of environment as well as more objective measures of the environment (Li et al., 2005, Cleland et al., 2008). But in the case of these studies, due to the large sample size, the questions about these perceptions are highly structured and 'closed', inviting agreement or disagreement with a statement, using a Likert scale or yes/no response. So quantitative studies have succeeded in measuring the importance of various perceptions of walking environment. A gap remains though for a study that allows pedestrians greater freedom to extemporise in detail on their thoughts about their walking experience.

Previous quantitative research of the walking experience also raises questions around when the best time is to survey pedestrians about their walking. Some studies have asked for perceptions of walking environment at the time of walking (Landis et al., 2001, Brown et al., 2007). This strategy has advantages: the participant does not have to struggle to recollect their walking experience, but can see and hear the quality of the environment present around them. They can also consider features within the walking environment in detail, as they are presently before their eyes. It could be argued though that by requiring the participant to pay scrupulous attention to the walking environment, the essence of their usual walking experience may be lost. In fact other types of research have suggested that an experience that is still in the process of being undergone cannot properly be reflected on and that interviews looking back on past experiences offer greater potential for understanding the essence of that experience (Van Manen, 1997, p.10).

A final point with regard to the previous quantitative investigations into walking is that their motivation for studying the topic area has been to understand what leads to higher levels of walking behaviour. However, as this chapter has already argued, the present study also considers walking experience to be important in its own right, regardless of ensuing behaviour. This gives the present study a slightly different emphasis and agenda to some of the research that has gone before.

In conclusion, this section has commented on quantitative investigations into walking. Such investigations have usefully identified links between socio-demographic factors, objective measurements of walking environment, perceptions of walking environment, and resulting levels of walking. But gaps remain in our knowledge about walking. These include understandings of the detailed ways with which walking is experienced and how different people's psychological characteristics may affect their experience. Thus Andrew et al. (2012, p.1927) comment that there is a need for qualitative methods that tell 'other stories' about walking and walking environments. The previous quantitative research could be complemented with investigation that allows pedestrians to go into more detail about their experiences, and with investigation that takes place in recollection, in order to get at the essence of the walking experience.

The next section will look at developments within transport research that have begun to look more at travel as an experience. Due to the lack of examples specifically concerned with walking, the section will often look at transport in general.

### **Positive Utility of travel and travel time use**

Positive utility is a concept through which positives of travel experience have been investigated. It is first useful to define utility. This term can be defined as 'the satisfaction or pleasure that an individual derives from the consumption of a good or service' (Collins dictionary of economics, 2005). It is the 'ultimate goal of economic activity' (The Penguin dictionary of economics, 2003). In other words it is the desired outcome of economic transactions and decisions. However, it remains hard to define and observe in itself (The Penguin dictionary of economics, 2003). It can though be deduced from willingness to pay. So if a commuter were offered the chance to either cycle or drive to work, the degree to which the person was prepared to pay for one mode over the other might reveal how much they valued each mode and how much utility (positive or negative) it had for them.

The conceptualisation of positive utility of travel constituted an important step towards considering the experience of travel within transport academia (Mokhtarian & Salomon, 2001). Using this concept, Mokhtarian & Salomon began to talk about travel, in itself, having the potential for positive utility, presumably meaning that there are elements in travel that some people might pay *for* rather than pay to avoid. This went against the previous assumption in much study of transport that travel was a disutility, and that trip makers always sought to minimise the time and cost spent on it. The concept of positive utility suggested people may have a liking for travel in itself, even to the point of engaging in travel in which the process of

travel itself is the main aim, and a destination almost incidental. Mokhtarian & Salomon list recreational walking as an example of such travel.

Mokhtarian & Salomon's (2001) claims about a positive utility of travel were backed with evidence. They provided empirical evidence from a U.S. survey of more than 1900 respondents including the finding that more than 75% of respondents reported 'sometimes or often travelling 'just for the fun of it'' (p.707) and more than 66% of respondents disagreed that 'the only good thing about travelling is arriving at your destination' (p.711).

The issue of whether time spent travelling has positive aspects is shown by Mokhtarian & Salomon's study to have important practical implications. They comment that transport models have been based on an assumption that trip makers seek to minimise the time and cost that each trip makes. A positive utility of travel would also have ramifications for economic appraisal of transport schemes, which traditionally considered that a large benefit of a scheme consists of reductions in people's travel time.

Mokhtarian & Salomon identify three categories into which a 'liking for travel' amongst trip makers might fall. These are: 'The activities conducted at the destination', 'Activities that can be conducted while travelling' and 'The activity of travelling itself' (p.701). The second and third of these are particularly relevant for the present study as, instead of focusing on the trip destination, they focus attention on the time spent travelling, suggesting that it can have value or use. The second category of liking for travel, consisting of 'activities that can be conducted while travelling' suggests that time spent travelling can, from one vantage point, be considered simply a package of time within the day. This package of time can be spent opportunistically on activities which may or may not be related to the act of travel itself. It can be conjectured that the range of activities that can be opportunistically carried out while travelling may vary by mode of transport. Thus time spent walking may offer potential for a different range of activities than those offered by driving or cycling.

Mokhtarian & Salomon go into more detail on activities that can be conducted while travelling. They suggest that while these can include 'activities,' in the conventional use of the word, such as making telephone calls and using the internet, they can also include 'anti activities' (p.702). These are pastimes which may involve less overt professional benefit, such as 'relaxing', 'shifting gears' and 'thinking' (p.702). Mokhtarian & Salomon (2001, p.702) comment anecdotally that they knew people who found their commute very valuable as a time for these anti activities and quote Edmonson, (1998, p.46) who suggested that 'driving has become America's most important source of quiet time. Lyons & Urry (2005) further substantiate this

possibility by listing a number of anti-activity pastimes which may be conducted and valued while travelling, such as listening to music.

The third category of activity, taken from Mohktarian & Salomon above is that of 'the activity of travelling itself' (p.701). It is worth noting here that examples of such aspects, suggested by the study, include experiential aspects: It mentions 'sensation of speed, movement through and exposure to the environment, the scenic beauty or other attraction of a route' (p.703). Here then is an indication that travel may, by its nature, be intrinsically rich in certain experiential pleasures, as well as being a daily package of time that can be used opportunistically.

It has been seen that the conceptualisation of positive utility constituted an increased focus in transport academia on what actually occurs while travelling, rather than seeing travel simply as a delay experienced between a trip origin and destination. The idea of a positive utility of travel was developed by Lyons & Urry (2005) using the terminology of 'travel time use' (p.263). This concept is self-explanatory, simply referring to the uses that trip makers might find in their time spent travelling. While Lyons & Urry listed and discussed possible travel time uses, their discussion emphasised the travel time use of those driving or travelling by train, more than it did those walking. This has left a gap in knowledge.

Like Mokhtarian & Salomon, Lyons & Urry talk about travel time use in terms of wider aspects of human existence beyond the boundaries of what would be considered productive in an economic sense. They comment for instance that 'restful travel' may lead to 'a refreshed or more attentive participation in activities at work or at home' (p.272). Elsewhere they suggest that the 'positive (productive) value' of travel time may come through 'working, playing, socialising, sleeping, etc. during the journey' (p.269).

The distinctive activities and pastimes that might be conducted while urban walking is an interesting topic provoked by the work on travel time use. Lyons and Urry (2005) focus largely on car and train travel, due to some elements shared in common by those vehicles and an office. The walking experience is not seated and physically encapsulated. Thus its 'travel time use' if it has any, may be different to that of car or train. The potential for travel time use while walking is a topic that has been little researched, in those terms, although Middleton (2009) has examined it. Middleton (2009) criticises an understanding of travel time that is based solely on the clock and the assumption that people always seek to minimise their travel time (i.e. travel as quickly as possible). In contrast some of her participants reported walking time as

being a valuable time for thinking about work. Middleton suggests that walking may facilitate activities conducted while traveling that may not be possible with other modes.

In conclusion on this section, the work on positive utility of travel and travel time use is important for the present study because it questions the assumption that travel is merely a matter of spending time and money in order to reach a destination. It becomes seen as a process which may have value and even enjoyment in itself.

The work on positive utility of travel and travel time use suggests that travel time may have benefits for the traveller. Economic evaluation of travel time can incorporate a measurement of these benefits. However, it is also important to understand the details and subtleties of what such benefits consist of, to understand the importance urban walking holds for well-being and daily city life. A more recent academic body of work, drawing on theory from a number of disciplines has begun to look at experiential benefits and other aspects of time spent travelling. This body of work is the 'mobilities turn' and will be discussed in the next section.

### **The mobilities turn**

The mobilities turn is a cross disciplinary paradigm which has emerged relatively recently and which, like the evidence from travel time use and positive utility literatures, has suggested there is much more to travel than getting from origin to destination (Cresswell, 2011, Sheller & Urry, 2006). This paradigm draws from (and fuses, Cresswell 2011) a wide range of academic fields, including 'anthropology, cultural studies, geography, migration studies, science and technology studies, tourism and transport studies and sociology,' (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p.207).

A main idea within the mobilities turn is that phenomena that had previously been viewed as happening at fixed geographical locations or in static states only (in fields such as sociology and politics) can also be helpfully studied as happening on the move. This change, from studying things in static situations to studying them as they move, is wide ranging in its extent. As one example, in the mobilities literature, place is conceived of as something which can be on the move (Sheller & Urry 2006). An outcome from this possibility is that identity, drawn from place, can also be fashioned on the move (Cresswell, 2011). Similarly societies, individuals, ideas and goods, 'sociality' (Cresswell, 2011, p.551) and even 'ontology and epistemology' (Cresswell, 2011, p.551) can all be understood in the mobilities turn as occurring during movement. In this way mobilities work adds understanding of the 'meaning' and practices

associated with mobility to the understanding of the movement itself, which had been the main focus in many previous transport studies (Cresswell, 2010, p.19).

Some studies on walking specifically have drawn on insights from the mobilities paradigm, (Middleton, 2009, Vergunst, 2010). Middleton, 2009, for instance looks at walking as a 'spatiotemporal practice.' She looks at subjective experiences of time in relation to walking, and uses the concept of 'rhythm' as one in which 'time, space and identity interrelate as people walk' (p.1955). However the list of studies on walking, drawing from mobilities insight, is not long.

Mobilities thinking supports the importance of the experiential realities of travel examined in the present study, suggesting that, when travelling, people may encounter some of the same types of experiential realities as they do when stationary (Cresswell, 2011, p.552). Sheller & Urry (2006, p.216) comment that the theoretical underpinning of mobilities work suggests that different travel modes entail 'different experiences, performances and affordances.' Similarly Cresswell (2011, p.554) comments on some studies about travel which he says are in harmony with the mobilities movement because they are about 'the experience of moving'. There is a strand of concern with experiences then within mobilities thinking, which is precedent for the present study.

The present study draws less upon other elements within the mobilities turn. One such element is that mobilities literature has been seen by some as being very rich in social theory and theoretical language (see Shaw & Hesse, 2010). As illustrative of this, no less than six distinct and substantial bodies of theory have been identified as underpinning mobilities work (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Many examples could be given of studies which analyse walking that are dense with theory (such as Edensor, 2010 and Morris, 2004). Middleton (2010, p.575) has commented that many of the recent academic studies on walking have been 'highly abstract theorisations.' In contrast, the aim of the present study is to make an account of the quotidian urban walking experience using a language which is nearer that used by the walking participants. This is for the pragmatic reason that understanding how pedestrians themselves think and talk about their walking experiences can offer insights useful for promoting walking and for understanding how pedestrians themselves conceive of the usefulness or otherwise of their time spent walking. An approach to walking that is more inductive is one of the distinctive aspects of the understanding gained by the present study.

Mobilities literature, like the work on positive utility and travel time use before it, has increased the awareness that travel is about more than time lost and money spent. Travel can



be an important daily experience. Mobilities literature has gone beyond the positive utility and travel time use literature by addressing factors of journey experience in more detail. However, mobilities writing is often firmly based within social, political and cultural theory. A more inductive study expressing findings in language closer to that of pedestrian participants offers potential to uncover new aspects of the walking experience.

## Conclusions

This chapter has described some previous ways of seeing travel, and has prepared the positioning of the present study in relation to these viewpoints. The main theme to emerge is the importance of understanding experience when examining the pedestrian mode. The arguments surrounding this theme will be summarised:

The chapter began by arguing, from evidence outside of the transport context, that experiences are a generally important facet of human experience, important enough to be useful markers of a society's success and important enough to be used for selling products and to be sold themselves. The thesis takes from this evidence its assertion that understanding walking in an experiential light is important. Two possible reasons for a counter argument: that walking is unimportant due to it having little economic import, and that it is an experience of only inconsequential interest, were presented but refuted.

The chapter then looked at statistics and policy which reveal the traditional motivations for research into walking. The importance of these motivations, such as the benefits for public health and the transport system of more people walking, has been affirmed. Such motivations indeed form a main reason for studying walking. However, an additional important motivation for examining walking, is that of understanding its significance as an experience. It has been argued that this has been insufficiently explored in the previous bodies of evidence surrounding walking.

The chapter went on to look at traditional quantitative study of correlations between built environment and demographic factors and levels of walking. It was suggested while understanding such correlations is useful for planning for walking, gaps remain that other types of investigation could fill. For instance, there could be greater understanding of the structure of the walking experience, *as an experience*. There could be greater understanding of the subtleties and richness of the walking experience, and how these might in part be determined by psychological factors within the pedestrian.

The development of an increasing focus on experiential aspects of travel in transport academia was traced through the concepts of positive utility of travel and travel time use. Evidence from Mokhtarian & Salomon (2001) suggested that people might enjoy or find useful the actual experience of travel; to the extent that they might engage in non-essential journeys. An important concept from their work is that the positives that can be found in travel experience can either be specific to the inherent characteristics of traveling or can simply be the opportunistic use of a package of time during the day.

The work surrounding concepts of positive utility of travel and travel time use suggested that time spent travelling may have value for people. This does not necessarily mean work-related or goal-focused achievement. For instance, Mokhtarian and Salomon's concept of 'anti activities' (p.702) that travelers may engage in, such as daydreaming or relaxing. Such experiences can be included in economic measurements of, for instance, people's preference of one travel mode over another. A gap in knowledge remains though concerning the detail and structure of the experiences.

The importance of the mobilities turn for this thesis has been briefly outlined. The mobilities turn has further explored the importance of experiential aspects of travel, which the present study builds upon. However, the mobilities literature is also often very rich in social theory and theoretical language. In contrast to this the present study seeks the construction and synthesis of an understanding of walking that is close to the language and ideas used by participants themselves.

In conclusion this chapter started by arguing that there are important reasons to study and encourage quotidian walking. The chapter has also argued that experience is important to most people. Putting these arguments together, the importance is seen of studying the experience of quotidian walking, in order to understand the softer and more psychological aspects of travel behavior, as well as to understand a common, for many daily, human experience.

This chapter has positioned the way the present study approaches walking in relation to previous bodies of literature. In other words it has defined and justified the 'how' of how walking will be approached in this thesis. The next chapter will prepare more for the 'what' of the findings to come. It will discuss evidence from literature in relation to the themes that were drawn from the primary data collection and will discuss factors that may feed into and out of the urban walking experience.



## Chapter 3: Concepts underlying the study and evidence relevant to the data themes

This chapter lays bare some of the backbone running beneath the present study. It also prepares for themes that were developed from the primary data about the urban walking experience. Many experiences can in part be understood as existing within a chain of cause and effect. There are factors that contribute to the experience being what it is, there are factors that comprise the experience as it takes place and there are effects which result from the experience. In line with such a structure this chapter will discuss one factor that may shape the urban walking experience, this is the urban environment. It will discuss some of the factors that may comprise the walking experience as it takes place, these are social encounter and walking as a time to think. In addition it will discuss effects that may result from the walking experience; effects on well-being.

The chapter will also discuss the possibility that walking, in itself, may be an unobtrusive activity in the mind of the walker. This is a pivotal point within the thesis, as it suggests that walking time may be important as a time for the pedestrian to attend to things besides their walking.

This chapter will focus specifically on what has been written previously about walking. There has been surprisingly little writing on the urban experience of walking specifically. There has arguably been more written on rural walking as an experience than on urban walking. For this reason when the chapter discusses the importance of the walking environment it will in part compare urban and rural environments. In some instances only short extracts of evidence about the themes developed in the findings have been found in previous literature. These have been brought together to form the arguments and questions that inform the study's findings. The chapter begins by examining the potential importance of city environment on the urban walking experience.

### The influence of the urban environment on walking

Much of the writing on walking experience has been about the effect the walked environment has on it. This will be looked at here using reference to policy and policy related material dealing with the urban walking environment and also work including comparisons of rural and urban walking environments. Positives attributed to urban walking environments will be discussed before negatives.

Some have argued for the virtues city environments hold for walking. For instance, the city has been described as 'a key setting in which walking as practice has been explored' (Pink et al., 2010, p.2). The city environment can provide certain characteristics for a walking experience that can be summed up in the concept of interest. Cities such as Paris have been considered historically to offer the pedestrian 'A visual and sensual feast' (Berman, cited in Urry, 2007, p.68). Some enjoy the city because of its gregarious aspect. Urry (2007) reports how historically Paris offered urban walkers a host of other walkers to take interest in. In addition to the interest of other pedestrians, Urry writes of the walked city offering 'interrelations between bodily movement, fantasy, memory and the texture of urban life' (p.70). Similarly, in vibrant terms, Sontag (1979, p.55 cited in Urry, 2007 p.70) describes the city as a 'landscape of voluptuous extremes'.

In studies surrounding policy there are also allusions to urban walking environments inspiring interest for the pedestrian. The Manual for Streets (DfT, 2007, p.63) suggests that time passes faster for pedestrians when they are walking in 'rich and stimulating' streets. Other guidance recommends that the walking environment should be 'interesting' and should allow for interesting activities whilst walking such as talking, window shopping and stopping to take in views (DfT, 2004, p.8). There are different types of interest and such references rarely refer to the importance of inspiring the thoughts and imagination of the walker. More often the focus is on the aesthetic attractiveness and practicality of walking conditions. Documents mention aesthetic factors such as 'attractive materials' that suit the specific location (DfT, 2004, p.8, DfT, 2007) which should be kept functional and clean (DfT, 2004 ). In terms of practicalities, well maintained pavements are mentioned (DfT, 2004a) as are the removal of obstacles impairing progress such as rubbish and abandoned cars (DfT, 2004a). The evidence for the importance of such aspects for providing positive walking environments is strong (Sinnott et al. 2011).

Urban walking environments are not always viewed positively. They can demand the pedestrian's conscious attention simply in order to be navigated. A plan for 'Making London a walkable city (TfL, 2004, p.6) admitted that in some places in the capital:

'Concentration and effort are required to steer through the obstacle course of inappropriately designed and placed street furniture, poles supporting traffic signage, bursting rubbish bags, uneven and dirty paving, dug-up roads and footpaths while at the same time avoiding collision with vehicles and other pedestrians.'

This description details urban surroundings that require 'concentration and effort' in a negative sense. The same document refers elsewhere to such surroundings being 'threatening or confusing' (p.23), hinting at the way they may dominate cognitive attention. In addition of course it must be recognised that urban conditions for walking will vary from place to place. Urry (2007, p.73) writes of housing estates as places of 'absence' and it is likely that more writing has been conducted on walks in colourful city central areas than walks in estates and suburbs.

Urban walking environments and quotidian urban life have sometimes been framed negatively in comparison to rural environments. Edensor (2000) summarises writings by lovers of rural walking. These give the impression that some prefer rural walking environments as they can provide greater degrees of solitude and freedom from social control. These walkers have suggested that urban environments can produce sensory overstimulation, there being so many different sensory experiences in the city that in effect they cancel each other out. In comparison to these negatives of urban living, romantic writers (summarised by Edensor, 2000) eulogise about the benefits of rural walking, often in relation to its restorative qualities for mind and body, which the countryside is believed to inspire to greater life.

This section has detailed some positives and negatives that have been attributed to the urban walking environment. It has suggested that city environments can provide interest for the walker. Policy has sometimes touched on the importance of providing cognitive and imaginative interest for the pedestrian but in the main has considered that positive urban walking environments depend on aesthetic and practical qualities of infrastructure. Negatively urban walking environments can demand pedestrian attention in a distracting, unenjoyable way. Urban environments have been perceived (by some) particularly negatively in comparison to rural conditions.

The city environment may result, positively or negatively, in effects on walking behavior. However, it may also have impacts on pedestrians' well-being, during and following trips. The importance of pedestrian well-being is fundamental for much of this thesis. It will be discussed next.

### **Well-being and the emotional benefits of walking**

The proposition that pedestrian well-being is important is implicit within the findings in this thesis and also underlies research question 2. Thus the concept of well-being will now be

considered, as well as the emotional and psychological benefits previously associated with walking.

Well-being can be defined in wide ranging ways. Ryan & Deci (2001) suggest definitions of well-being are in two groups. Firstly the 'hedonic viewpoint' (p.143) involves the measurement of 'subjective well-being' and suggests well-being is about 'positive affect,' 'life satisfaction' (p.161), 'pleasure' and 'happiness' (p.143). So this definition focuses on achieving a pleasurable rather than painful existence. This pleasure can derive from positive emotion and transitory experiences but it can also be gained from achieving life goals. Secondly the 'eudaimonic viewpoint' (p.161) relates to the 'fully functioning person' and suggests a life in harmony with deeply held values and the realisation of personal potential. This may be distinct from a life of pleasant experiences. Ryan & Deci (2001, p.142) suggest though that the hedonic and eudaimonic definitions of well-being, while being distinct from each other, can overlap. The aspects of well-being implicit in the present study touch on both definitions of well-being. 'Subjective well-being' is a concept associated with the hedonic concept of well-being. Diener (2000) conceives of subjective well-being as including transitory pleasures and emotion. The findings of the present study will imply that walking provides a certain set of experiential qualities and opportunities which can impact the subjective well-being of the pedestrian. However, this possibility should be framed in light of the idea of adaption (Diener, 2000). This suggests that when people's circumstances improve or deteriorate, their subjective well-being is temporarily affected accordingly but then quickly returns to that person's normal baseline. This has implications for the present study, it suggests that if the walking experience does effect well-being, it may do so only in tandem with the pedestrian's characteristic level of well-being, and may affect their well-being on a temporary basis only. These ideas suggest limitations to the extent to which walking may affect well-being. On the other hand there is evidence to suggest that a high level of subjective well-being is more due to having frequent mildly positive emotions than having infrequent intensely positive emotions (Diener, 2000). Clearly it is possible that urban walks may provide frequent, mildly positive experiences.

Walking may impact human well-being in a number of ways, by improving physical health for example, by reducing the traffic congestion endemic in many societies and by reducing Co2 emissions. However, such benefits are not the subject of this experientially focused study. The present study will highlight effects of walking on well-being, as an experience that can both cause transitory states of mind and which can contribute to achievement of longer term aims in a person's life.

A recent development in understanding the importance of the walking experience for well-being has been explicated by Gatrell (2013) who explores links between walking and well-being, (well-being as a concept that includes but spreads broader than physical health). Gatrell (2013, p.100) cites the New Economic Foundation ([www.neweconomics.org](http://www.neweconomics.org)) as suggesting that well-being may depend on factors including: being 'active', developing 'social connections', and taking 'notice' 'of one's surroundings'. It can be argued that these three elements contain significant experiential aspects. Gatrell goes on to use these three elements in order to look at how well-being may be impacted by walking. His main point is that previously well-being had often been conceptualised as related to static places but, in light of the mobilities turn, can also be understood in relation to people as they move.

The aspects linking walking and well-being that Gatrell (2013) identifies from other studies include walking as a time for 'spirituality' (p.102), a time to think, a time for social contact or solitude and a time for addressing 'tricky problems' (p.102). All of these are themes that will be taken up from the data of the present study. Some of these elements can be relevant to a hedonic understanding of well-being and some to a eudaimonic understanding as discussed above. These elements could be considered examples of the emotional and psychological benefits that research question 2 of the present study seeks to explore and that will be discussed next.

Walking has been found to provide emotional and psychological benefits both through the reduction of negative mind states and promotion of positive ones. However, it will be argued that evidence regarding this has more often been in relation to rural walking than urban walking. Thus gaps of knowledge remain concerning whether and how urban walkers may actually experience such benefits.

A common way in which both travel in general and walking in particular have been seen to offer emotional benefits is by offering respite or escape. This is often escape from the trials of everyday life. Ory & Mokhtarian (2005, p.99) for instance suggest that travel in general can be used to 'temporarily escape obligations, routines and/or tensions at home or work'. They found that people who often travel 'mainly to be alone', and also people with children under 15 years old, tended to enjoy commuting. The paper hypothesises that these two groups of people may enjoy relief from the pressures that can come from work and family. Ory & Mokhtarian (2005, p.98) also contend that travel may be an escape from 'cabin fever', the tension that can arise from being trapped in one building or confined space.



The idea of escape or respite also arises in work on walking specifically. Long distance walkers have reported enjoying their walks as an opportunity to escape from everyday life (Crust et al., 2011). This escape included a reduction of both present responsibilities and access to technology. Crust et al. (2011, p.258) raise the concept of a 'bubble' which walkers enter during their walks. This 'bubble' temporarily separates them from the demands and concerns of everyday life. It can be inferred from Crust et al. that the bubble also simultaneously engages the walkers with their (natural) surroundings. So the 'bubble' disengages the walker from one situation and engages them in another, the result being temporary escape and distraction from the trials of daily life. Clearly the type of walking examined by Crust et al., rural walks lasting at least six days, is distinct from quotidian urban walking. There is little evidence on whether short urban trips can also have a 'bubble' effect.

The exercise component of walking may provide other emotional and mental benefits. Many studies have been conducted into the psychological benefits of exercise in general. Fox (1999) conducted a meta-review summarising such studies and concluded that 'several hundred studies' (p.411) provided strong evidence that exercise could help mental health both negatively and positively: negatively by treating and reducing conditions such as depression, stress and anxiety, positively by improving mood and self-esteem. It is not surprising then that, as a form of exercise, walking shows evidence of improving mood by both reducing negatives and building positives.

In terms of reducing negative states, previous studies have referred to walking in order to work off angst has been referred to (Solnit, 2001). The reduction of stress through urban (Darker et al., 2007) and long distance rural walking (Crust et al., 2011) has been noted in qualitative study. For example, one of Crust et al.'s (2011, p.257) participants stated: 'My head is completely cleared of issues: it relaxes me, I'm enjoying it, and you know, it's a stress buster. It does completely take the stress away.'

Besides stress, other negative mental and emotional conditions have also been reported reduced through walking. Mobily et al. (1996) provide quantitative evidence of depression in older adults being reduced by daily walking. And Gatrell (2013, p101) cites Pretty et al. (2005) on a scheme to encourage walking among people from deprived areas which showed reductions in levels of a range of negative emotions including 'anger, confusion, depression, fatigue and tension.'

However, the emotional benefits of walking may extend beyond those of reducing negative emotions. A recent focus within psychology has sought to comprehend and encourage actively

positive mind states, rather than only reducing negative states (Crust et al. 2011). In light of this approach Crust et al. (2011) highlight three concepts associated with increased psychological positivity, (taken from Seligman and Csikszentmihaly, 2000). The areas are: 'the life of enjoyment', which refers to enjoyable mind states and emotions, 'the life of engagement', which concerns being enjoyably involved with a task and 'the life of affiliation', which consists of the ways in which people find life meaningful and purposeful (Crust et al. 2011, p.244). Crust et al. consider these aspects to be very relevant to the uplifting effect of long distance walking. It is interesting to consider whether they might also make briefer urban walks an uplifting experience. Referring back to the discussion on definitions of well-being given above, Seligman and Csikszentmihaly's three components of positivity in life may be relevant to both the hedonic and eudaimonic conceptions of well-being.

Crust et al. (2011) are not alone in contending there might be an actively positivity-producing impact of walking. Darker et al. (2007) for instance report on participants who said they walked in order to achieve relaxation. Positive states of mind can also be specifically encouraged from interacting with surroundings; the idea of being 'stimulated' (Edensor 2000, p.86) and engaged (Maddrell, 2011) with walked surroundings and traversed landscapes are present in the literature (see also Guell et al., 2012).

There are also states of positivity alluded to in relation to walking that could be considered deeper states of mind. These states are alluded to in a variety of terms ranging from the psychological to the spiritual. An ingredient of the positive 'life of engagement' outlined above is that of 'flow' (Crust et al, 2011, p.244). Crust et al. (2011, p.254) report that their long distance walkers became involved in the process of walking to the extent that it became 'effortless' and 'all sense of time was lost.' Crust et al. conclude then that the walkers were experiencing a sense of flow, similar to that experienced by sportsmen/women or creative people during performance. The degree to which Crust et al.'s walking participants experienced flow, varied greatly from person to person. It is worth noting the obvious point that 'flow' is a positive and enjoyable experience, conducive to increased well-being. Maddrell (2011, p.25) similarly reports a description given by a pilgrim of her walking experience that Maddrell identifies as "'flow,' with its heightened sense of 'mindfulness' of present experience..." This quote combines the concept of flow with that of mindfulness. Mindfulness involves a relaxing awareness of thoughts, sensations in the body and other phenomena which present themselves to the awareness and is a practice that can be carried out while walking (Carmody & Baer, 2008).

In addition to the terms flow and mindfulness some descriptions of deeper states whilst walking are of a spiritual timbre. For instance Edensor (2000, p.88) concludes that the writings he reviews suggest walking can aim at 'a higher state of consciousness or intellectual focus' and cites Trevelyn as claiming that walking can achieve 'the harmony of body, mind and soul...made one together in mystic harmony with the earth' (Edensor 2000, p89 citing Mitchell, 1979, p.61). Also in a spiritual vein, walking 'Faith pilgrims' have been recorded as reporting 'the sense of travelling towards or closer with God' (Maddrell, 2011, p.28).

So some deep positive states from walking have been suggested from literature, but it is important to note that the studies cited, Maddrell (2011), Crust et al. (2011) and Edensor (2000), all seem to be about largely rural walking. In fact in his context of writing on 'Walking in the British countryside' Edensor (2000, p.87) is often explicitly contrasting walking in the countryside with the urban setting.

In conclusion then, while there is evidence of walking both reducing a range of negative mind states and promoting a range of positive ones, there is little empirical evidence of whether this might take place in quotidian urban walking and what form it might take. In particular there is a lack of detailed information about how quotidian walkers may experience these emotional and psychological benefits.

The above discussion has given some definition of well-being and considered how it may be affected by the experience of urban walking, with a particular focus on potential psychological and emotional benefits of walking. It could be imagined that increased well-being might be gained through enjoyment of the physical movement of walking. However, there are questions to be asked about the degree to which the act of walking itself draws attention to itself. These will be addressed next.

### **Walking itself may be unobtrusive**

Many people may take the phenomenon of their walking for granted. Ingold (2004, p.315) comments: 'Ever since men have walked, no-one has ever asked why they walk, how they walk, whether they walk, whether they might walk better' (Ingold, 2004, p.315).

It is possible that walking is an unobtrusive phenomenon which does not greatly draw the walker's attention to itself. This possibility will be explored. It will be seen that when a conscious awareness of walking has been evidenced in academic writing, this has often been in the rural context. A wider question will also be addressed of whether people generally think

about walking, while walking or not walking. Finally it will be suggested that an unobtrusive nature of walking can mean it facilitates other experiences and interests.

Evidence can be found both for and against the proposition that walkers tend to be aware of their bodily movement while walking. The evidence for will be discussed first. A few papers have focused specifically on aspects of the walking body, such as legs and feet (Ingold 2004) and gait (Gross et al. 2012). Gross et al. draw attention towards bodily aspects of walking through studying the associations between movements of the walking body and different emotions. They found for instance that people experiencing 'joy and anger' (p. 202) walked faster than when experiencing 'sadness' (p.202). These studies are examples of academics focusing on the walking body, but do not necessarily imply that walkers themselves focus on it.

Auto-ethnographic accounts of walking take a step nearer to suggesting a reflexive awareness of the walking body. Wylie's (2005, p.239) account of walking a coastal path included awareness of his own moving body. At one point for instance he narrates crossing a stream, paying attention to the placing of his feet and ascending an embankment.

Reflexive awareness of the walking body has also been championed in historical traditions concerning rural walking (Edensor, 2000, p.96). Edensor suggests that in such traditions, 'the body in nature is conceived as healthier and fitter and thus more able to sense and to feel, to be more aware of itself and its 'natural' propensities'. The idea here is that walking in rural areas increases an awareness of the body, the aim of this awareness can be to enjoy increased ability to 'sense and feel.' Another aim for paying attention to the walking body can be to improve posture and gait. Thus Edensor, (2000) notes some writings have prescribed a detailed method for how the rural walker should move their body.

When walking in the countryside, times of specific challenge can lead to particular awareness of the body (Edensor, 2000, p.101). These might be times when the walker suffers headaches, 'muscle fatigue' and blisters etc. as well as the eventualities of navigating 'barbed wire', cowpats and climbing over fences. In addition the changing qualities of ground underfoot can draw the attention of the rural walker to their balance.

So then there is a strand in literature of people being aware of the body as they walk. But note both Wylie (2005) and Edensor's (2000) writings above dealt with rural walking. It is not necessarily the case that urban walking would include a similar awareness of the body. Very little evidence concerning the extent to which urban walkers pay attention to their walking body was found in the literature reviewed. This is a gap in knowledge.

As well as simple awareness and monitoring of the body and its movement while walking, it has been suggested in literature that the body (Solnit, 2001) and bodily movement (Ingold, 2004) can produce forms of knowledge. Solnit (2001, p6) for instance suggests: 'It is the movement as well as the sights...make things happen in the mind.' This implies that the body's walking movement can facilitate greater insight in the mind. So a strand of evidence surrounding walkers becoming aware of their body and its movement while walking has been elucidated. However, as noted above, more instances of this strand have been found in studies concerning rural walking and very little participant based data has supported it.

There is also an opposing theme in literature. This contends that the bodily movement of walking can go almost unnoticed. Solnit (2001) for instance repeatedly suggests that walking in itself does not preoccupy the mind. In fact it can be hard to even identify what the experience of walking is. She calls walking 'the most obvious and the most obscure thing in the world' (p.3) and also 'the something closest to doing nothing' (p5). These phrases suggest that there is something elusive about walking. They suggest that walking does not preoccupy the attention. Nor does walking give the sense of actually doing something that can easily be defined. Solnit's account does not draw on empirical evidence and only scarce extracts of relevant evidence have been found that support the idea that bodily movement may go unnoticed when walking, particularly in urban areas.

One such extract is a quote by a participant in Middleton (2010, p.583). The participant depicted his bodily movement of walking as largely unconscious; he talked of hardly being aware that he was walking and suggested that his legs just took him to where he was going, without much conscious attention. Middleton analysed her participant's comments in relation to Hubbard's (2006, cited in Middleton, 2010) contention that as the body moves through urban space, the mind does not have to pay conscious attention to the movement. Guell et al. (2012, p.236) corroborate the idea that the bodily movement of walking can be almost unconscious, citing Green (2009, p.27) that it can be a 'largely taken for granted accomplishment'.

The ability to walk without conscious awareness of walking could be due to walking being what Merleau Ponty (2002, p.166) categorises as a 'habit'. He gives touch typing as an example of this kind of ability. Someone may well be able to touch type without being able to consciously 'know' where each letter is on the keyboard. In this case it is as if the knowledge of how to type is in the hands, rather than in the conscious mind. Similarly it may be contended that the

control of walking may be in the body, and may not always present itself to the conscious mind.

Another way in which the physical aspect of walking may be unobtrusive is in its level of exertion. Darker et al. (2007) report that their participants did not see walking as 'proper exercise' (p.2176). They instead saw it as being too easy to be worthwhile as exercise. While there are forms of more intensive walking such as power walking, there can be, Darker et al. report, the perception that walking has limited potential as exercise.

It has been argued that there is thinking and evidence present in literature which presents two opposing possibilities. The first is that the walker is aware of their body and its movement while walking and the second is that the walker is unaware of their body and its movement while walking and their awareness is taken up by other things. There is slightly more evidence of the first possibility than the second. But little has been written on the topic either way, especially in relation to urban walking.

If pedestrians do not think greatly about the fact of their walking, this may facilitate their thinking about other things. Some in fact have suggested walking is a process which naturally serves to fix our attention on things other than itself. Solnit (2001. p8) for example gives an idea taken from Thoreau that walking as a topic 'inevitably leads into other subjects. Walking is a subject that is always straying.' The attention of the walker may turn from their ambulation inwards, into thoughts and ruminations. For instance walking has been found to be 'an experience which takes one out of the world, and into an inner realm', (Darker et al, 2007, p.2178). Alternatively walking may focus the walker's attention on external interests. Evidence of this can be taken from the use of the 'walk-along' (an interview in which researcher and participant talk whilst walking together, Kusenbach, 2003, Carpiano, 2009, Bendiner-Viai, 2005). The success of this method in these studies relies on walking facilitating meditation on, and insight into, the walked surroundings.

It has been argued that evidence can be found in literature both for and against the proposition that walkers tend to be aware of their bodily movement while walking. There was perhaps more evidence that walkers are aware of their body and its movement. However, this evidence was taken from studies into rural rather than urban walking, and was not participant based data (although of course this is not the only valid type of data). However, while some evidence was found to support both sides of the debate, there was not a lot. There is then a gap in research in this area. A gap that is important to fill because, as the discussion has summarised, if walkers do not attend to their walking, it is possible that walking time is used to

contemplate the inner or outer world instead. If walking *is* found to facilitate other areas of interest during journeys then one such interest may be that of social encounter.

### Walking as a social encounter

Walking as a time of social encounter has begun to be explored, in both urban and rural settings. Fear of other pedestrians in terms of crime and personal safety is a negative form of social encounter that has been noted (Ziegler & Schwanen, 2011, Demerath & Levinger, 2003). A common and contrasting idea is that increased levels of walking can bring multiple and positive social and community benefits to those living in urban areas. Some have made strong statements about the benefits of people walking, as example the suggestion by Demerath & Levinger (2003, p.218) that if cities had catered better for pedestrians there might be fewer problems 'such as a lack of community, moral disintegration, and social isolation'. Demerath & Levinger claim the social benefits of people walking include increased feelings of safety, sharing of local information and even the formation of friendships, where interaction is repeated. Social interactions may help create meaning for walkers (Demerath & Levinger, 2003 and Crust et al., 2011). Demerath & Levinger (2003, p.218) for instance talk of the creation of 'shared meanings of the world and self'. While such studies do draw out some social negatives involved in walking experience it is possible that there are (little explored) gradations of social encounter lying between fear of crime at one extreme and meaningful community creation at the other. An example that has been commented on is the varying degrees of sociability in streets at night between those who are drinking and feeling sociable, and those that are not (Vergunst, 2010).

The evidence highlighted then has emphasised that walking can be a form of important social encounter. However, at the same time there are also strands of evidence about the solitary aspects of (even urban) walking. For example the literature surrounding the solitary Flaneur, whom Urry (2007, p.69) describes as 'an observant and solitary man strolling around the city and partly able to be lost in the crowds of other walkers at the same time that he explored them.' It has been argued that the city itself, with its sensory and social overload, may in fact lead to a seeking of privacy and solitude on the streets and the developing of 'an attitude of reserve and insensitivity to feeling' in urban dwellers who become 'reserved, detached and blasé' (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p.215 summarising Simmel, 1997). In keeping with such an attitude, Vergunst (2010) notes that engaging other pedestrians on city streets in conversation for any reason than a short functional exchange of information, may lead to distrust and discomfort. This highlights for Vergunst a norm of 'privacy' (p.380) which attends city walking.

So there seems to be an ambiguity or even a 'paradox' (Vergunst, 2010, p.384) that urban walking can both be public and private, social and solitary. This ambiguity has been made explicit. Vergunst for instance cites Solnit (2001) as reporting that in some countries courting couples are able to walk in streets together because the setting provides a space that has both public and private aspects. Similarly Solnit (2001, p.24) suggests that for a figure such as Kierkegaard, walking was 'A way to be among people for a man who could not be with them, a way to bask in the faint human warmth of brief encounters, acquaintances' greetings, and overheard conversations.' So there is the sense of the city pedestrian both being in, and not in, a social arena. Of course there is also the possibility of an either/or relationship between solitary and social aspects of walking. Long distance rural walkers have reported that the benefits of having time to think and the benefits of interacting with others were in a sense opposed, so that they switched back and forth while walking between being alone with thoughts and interacting. So whether urban walking is primarily a public, social time or a private, solitary time could be an important question to approach. There has been little research which focuses significantly on this question with participant based empirical data.

The range of different social interactions that walkers can encounter is also important to consider. At a practical and physical level, other pedestrians can constitute obstacles, who have to be navigated around (Vergunst, 2010). Beyond this interactions can range from a brief exchange between passersby to in depth conversations between friends (Demerath & Levinger 2003). Groups of people walking can interact with other groups. Crust et al. (2011) report this phenomenon in rural long distance walking. It may be less common in urban settings although liaisons between groups of young men and young women have been recounted (Vergunst, 2010). The important point is that the social interactions that may pass between pedestrians are not uniform in their character or significance. And just as different types of interaction are available, different pedestrians may be looking for different types and levels of interaction while walking. As already noted, Vergunst (2010) observes that at night time revelers and other passers-by may have contrasting social aims such that 'One person's desire for familiarity meets only another's desire to be hidden'(p.386). Here again is a hint that in order to understand pedestrian social encounter, the gradations of different encounters, and the different resulting emotion, needs to be comprehended.

In conclusion on this section, some of the evidence given above on social encounter while walking was from a rural rather than urban context. While there is evidence on the topic of urban pedestrian social encounter, there is not a great deal drawing on participant accounts (often the research has data collected by observational rather than interview method or is in



the form of a 'thought piece'). In particular there has not been a fine grained investigation of the different types of social interactions of pedestrians, drawing on interviews. There is enough evidence to suggest though that pedestrian social interaction, and its desirability to the people involved, may include a lot of variation in its quality, import, intensity and emotion.

This section has suggested that urban walking has components of interaction with other people. However, it has also suggested that it can have elements of solitude. One benefit of solitude is that it can provide time to think. Walking as a time to think will be discussed next.

### Walking as a time to think

It has been claimed that walking is a good time for thinking (Solnit, 2001). Solnit's account of walking includes an exploration of great individuals of history who were keen walkers. She gives Rousseau as a famous example of someone who conducted his elevated levels of thinking only when walking. This is in keeping with Edensor's (2000) conclusion that walking has been viewed as leading to high levels of intellectual thought.

There is experimental evidence to support the assertion that walking can aid thinking (Opezzo & Schwartz, 2014, Berman et al., 2008, Netz et al. 2007). These studies have often looked at the effect of environment type on the walker's ability to think. Berman et al. (2008) suggest from their findings that natural environments replenish the mind's ability to think more effectively than urban environments. They suggest this is because natural environments provide gentle stimulation for the mind compared to urban environments containing elements such as cars. As well as comparing natural and urban walked environments, the effect of indoor verses outdoor environments have been investigated. Opezzo & Schwartz (2014) found that walking outside is better for thinking than walking inside.

Opezzo & Schwartz (2014) also found however that the physical act of walking itself was a more important determinant of ability to think than whether the walk was indoors or outdoors. They found that people pushed in wheelchairs for a period were less able to think creatively than people who had been walking, indoors or outdoors, although some experiments they did were more conclusive in this respect than others. Qualitative work also has commented on links between the physical movement of walking and thought. Edensor (2000, p.98) for instance cites Barron (1875, p.15-16) as making the assertion that legs ought to be thought of as 'reflective organs' because moving them can inspire the mind.

A specific quality of the walking body's physical movement that may aid thinking is that of rhythm. Solnit (2001, p.5) comments that 'the rhythm of walking generates a kind of rhythm of

thinking.’ One of Middleton’s (2009, p.1956) walking participants raised the same idea by suggesting that walking created a ‘metronome effect’ that influenced their thinking. The participant used the idea of a metronome to suggest that the speed of their walking was mirrored in the thoughts they had. Thus one explanation of why the physical movement of walking might be conducive to thinking is a matching or mirroring resonating between outer physical movement and inner mental movement. Maddrell (2011, p.16) for instance suggests that in a walking pilgrimage the ‘demands and challenges of the outer physical journey’ and the ‘inner intellectual, emotional and spiritual journey’ are interwoven.

The inner movement of thought may be related to the progressive traversing of geographical space and environments while walking. Solnit (2001, p13) for instance suggests ‘Exploring the world is one of the best ways of exploring the mind and walking travels both terrains’. Similarly Edensor (2000, p.86) quotes Robinson (1989) as suggesting ‘as one enters the variety and movement of the outside world, the space for interior wandering also grows.’ Here there is a possibility that it may be the changing of our surroundings as we walk that might in part encourage and feed our trains of thought.

As well as its physical movement, the limitations of walking time may shape it as a time to think. Walking is limited in the activities that can be carried out whilst underway. It is limited for instance compared to the activities that Lyons & Urry (2005) list as being possibly during train travel, which include ‘reading for leisure’, ‘writing’ and ‘typing’. These activities are harder to carry out whilst walking due to the difficulty of using a laptop etc. This might suggest that forms of thinking that do not require laptops or paper might be nurtured during time spent walking.

If walking can be a fruitful time to think, the walked surroundings themselves may be able to inspire thoughts. One organisation that has explored interesting the pedestrian’s imagination is Living Streets, a charity set up to champion the cause of pedestrians. They have promoted activities linking walking and the enjoyment of imagination and thought. These include ‘themed led walks’, ‘interactive games’ ‘treasure hunts’ (Living streets, 2012, p.7) and heritage walks (Living streets, 2014). The importance of themed walks and historic walks has also been mentioned in previous guidance (DfT, 2004, P.26).

This brief summary then has suggested so far that walking can provide a special opportunity for thinking and that this might in part be explained by the rhythmic movement of walking, a ‘consonance’ (Solnit, 2001, p.6) between inner and outer movement, and the limitations of thinking tools that can be used.

There is evidence of another interesting aspect of walking as time to think. This is that walking might lend itself particularly to specific types of thinking. The literature reviewed yielded hints that the types of thinking that walking might lend itself to may include thinking about things to be done at the trip destination, processing and solving general problems, personal reflection and inspirational thinking fed by the unconscious, (which can also be called daydreaming).

The idea of thinking about what will happen at the walking trip's destination was raised by one of Middleton's (2010) participants who, while walking, made lists of things to be done at their destination. Thus walking can be a package of time, which can be used to organise the following and potentially busier package of time spent at work or other destinations. Walking can also be conducive to thinking through problems (Crust et al. 2011, Darker, 2007). Crust et al.'s (2011, p.254) long distance walkers for instance commented on being able to achieve 'clear thinking' about problems while walking that arrived at 'alternative solutions'. Little evidence was found of urban walkers similarly using walking to aid problem solving.

Reflection is another form of thinking conducted whilst walking that is evidenced in literature. The walking pilgrimage can be a setting in which walking is used as a 'time-space for reflection' (Maddrell, 2011, p.15). Crust et al.'s (2011, p.245) participants similarly reported their walks being a good time for reflection. Those participants did their reflecting in rural settings and it seems such settings may particularly aid the process. Edensor (2000, p.86) comments that writing about rural walking suggests that the sensations of walking in the countryside 'can free the mind and generate reflexivity, whether through philosophical thinking or aesthetic contemplation.' This may lead to 'self-restoration, through what has been called the 'walking cure'' (Edensor, 2000, p.86). The studies cited with regard to walking as a time to reflect largely relate to rural walking and Edensor (2000) suggests that achieving effective reflection has been considered difficult in urban settings. So questions are raised of whether such reflection is possible in quotidian urban walking.

The final type of thinking whilst walking that literature touches upon is a type of inspirational thinking, fed by the unconscious, which can include daydreaming. There is a sense that walking can be a time for free, 'blue sky', thinking (Solnit, 2001, Edensor, 2000). There is some experimental evidence to back the conjecture that walking may aid creative thinking. Oppizzo & Schwartz (2014) found in four experiments that walking increases people's creative thinking capacity. Some scant qualitative empirical evidence is also present of urban walking being a time for inspirational thinking and daydreaming: one of Darker et al.'s (2007, p.2178) participants used walking as a time for her 'mind to wander.' Another of their participants

commented that while walking 'Sometimes I am just day-dreaming, which is really fun' (p.2178). But such evidence has not been developed in literature.

In conclusion evidence suggests that walking may be a good time for thinking. Some experimental evidence to this effect has been given. I have given some slightly speculative reasons for why walking may be a good time to think. This includes a 'consonance' (Solnit, 2001) between the inner movement of thought and the outer realities of the moving body and also with the geographical traversing of space. It has also been suggested that there is some evidence that walking can be particularly conducive for certain types of thinking. However, evidence of this being so in the case of urban walking is scarce and there is no study known to the author that specifically focuses on urban walking particularly facilitating certain types of thinking.

## Conclusion

In conclusion the chapter has discussed the city environment, which may be a factor that influences the urban walking experience. The chapter has made claims about the importance of urban walking as an experience. It has argued for example that the experience may affect human well-being, that it might contain specific emotional and psychological benefits, that it might involve a variety of social encounters and may aid thinking.

Evidence taken from literature regarding these aspects however has often been a gathering of short extracts from different sources. The chapter has repeatedly commented that there are gaps in knowledge about much of the urban walking experience. In particular there has been very little research carried out on walking that fulfils *all five* of the following criteria:

- 1) That is about urban walking rather than rural walking
- 2) That examines walking as an experience rather than looking at walking behaviour
- 3) That uses qualitative rather than quantitative methods
- 4) That uses participant based data rather than intuitions or auto ethnographic methods
- 5) That examines contemporary walking rather than a history of walking and walkers.

Chapter 5 will define the research design of the present study, a design that meets these five criteria.

It is instructive to highlight that this chapter has suggested that urban walking environments have more often been considered in terms of their practical and aesthetic qualities, than their influence on the cognitive or imaginative life. This is despite, as the chapter has also suggested, walking having been considered important as a time to think. Chapters 9 and 11 will explore

these issues in more detail. Chapter 9 will also further explore ideas introduced here, that there might be reasons for walking being a good time to think and that walking might be particularly conducive to certain types of thinking. Evidence about these ideas in relation to specifically urban walking has been very scarce prior to the present study.

The chapter has also discussed walking as social encounter, and has suggested that this topic may be one containing subtleties; urban walking can be valued as either public or solitary and can include a range of different types of interaction. Urban walking as social encounter will be explored in chapter 7. It can be suggested that both social encounter and having time to think could be pertinent to the pedestrian well-being that has been described earlier in the chapter and that underpins the thesis as a whole. In addition arguments both for and against the idea that walking in itself draws the attention of the walker have been given. This idea will be explored in chapter 6. The next chapter will present evidence from previous research in relation to the 3<sup>rd</sup> research question, which focuses on pedestrian experience of motor traffic.

## Chapter 4: The importance of motor traffic and barriers formed against it

'The social sciences have generally ignored the motor car and its awesome consequences for social life... It has been presumed that the movement, noise, smell, visual intrusion and environmental hazards of the car are largely irrelevant to deciphering the nature of city life (Sheller & Urry, 2000 p.737 and 738).

This thesis proposes that motor traffic provides a significant influence on the urban walking experience and in fact constitutes a major aspect of the experience of a city. This contention has been made previously by Taylor (2003) He suggests that 'to understand our aesthetic experience of road traffic in the modern city is in large measure to understand our aesthetic experience of the modern city, period' (p.1611) However, as Sheller & Urry (2000) state, the experience of it by those outside the car is little documented in academic writing. Issues surrounding actual physical collision between cars and pedestrians have been well documented (Rosen & Sander, 2009, Anderson et al., 1997, for example). But the wider effects on pedestrians of traffic's presence has been largely ignored.

One focus and phase of data collection for the present study examines the overall urban pedestrian experience. The other phase of data collection was dedicated to a sub focus within this, that of the pedestrian experience of motor traffic. This chapter will present evidence to justify this sub focus. It will also prepare for some themes that were developed from the data findings, which will be presented in chapter 10. In large part what follows will build on the basic foundation laid in chapter 2: that it is important to understand the pedestrian mode in terms of experiences. The chapter also refers to some of the benefits of walking described in chapter 3, by asserting that these benefits can be seriously impaired by the presence of motor traffic. Thus the chapter will make clear that it is important to understand the experience of motor traffic because it is one of the dominant elements in the urban pedestrian experience.

The scarcity of previous research into pedestrian experience of motor traffic shapes the first sections of this chapter. These sections highlight the gap that exists in prior evidence on the topic. They also give explanations as to why this gap may have persisted prior to the present study. However the chapter then goes on to argue that investigating pedestrian experience of motor traffic is important. This is because of the potential for negative effects on pedestrian well-being and pedestrian experience of place. However the understanding of these negatives must be nuanced: they have to be held in tension with an admission of the benefits of car mobility. The chapter will also start to put together, from previous studies, the concept that

relationships between motor traffic and pedestrians in cities can be understood in terms of barriers.

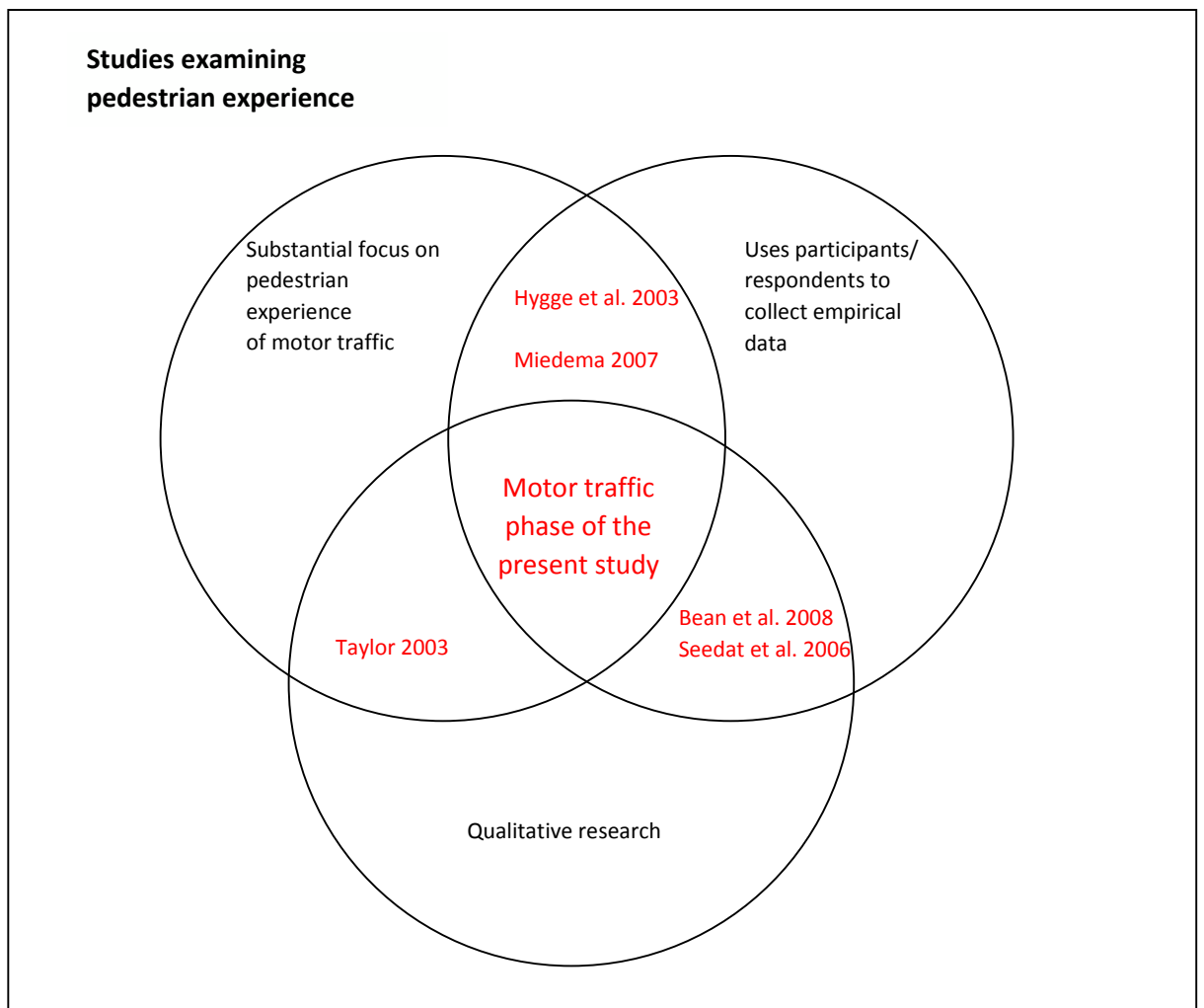
### The gap in evidence and why it had remained

This chapter is partly shaped by the fact that there is little previous evidence surrounding pedestrian experience of motor traffic. A lack of research on the topic has been commented on by Sheller & Urry (2000) and Taylor (2003). Taylor for instance states:

'There is a dearth of literature on the impact of road traffic on people's actual sensory experience of urban environments – on what it actually feels like to be outside and moving about modern cities dominated by motor vehicles' (Taylor, 2003, p.1610).

The gap in evidence surrounding pedestrian experience of motor traffic can be delineated in a diagram. Figure 1 illustrates that prior to the present study there was no a) qualitative research b) focusing on the pedestrian experience of motor traffic c) using data gained from participants. The figure shows that while a number of studies were found that were adjacent to this gap none filled it exactly.

**Figure 1 Showing gap in literature and adjacent studies**



The studies adjacent to the gap identified, as depicted in the figure 1 will now be briefly discussed. The nearest the gap has come to being filled was by Taylor 2003. This paper is an analysis of the 'aesthetic experience of traffic in the modern city' (p.1609). A point that Taylor makes several times is that despite how prevalent and dominating motor traffic is in the city, there are few accounts of what aesthetic and other effects it has on those outside the vehicles.

Taylor maps out a number of conjectures of what elements are important in the pedestrian's experience of motor traffic. These ideas seem, intuitively, accurate and convincing. However no participant data collection was carried out to support the large and detailed claims that the paper makes about the nature of the experience of motor traffic. Taylor himself makes this plain, asserting that he is using the method of 'the analytical philosopher rather than the empirical scientist' (p.1614). Investigating whether collecting data from participants would confirm Taylor's intuitions was an interest in my thinking when designing the *Experience of motor traffic phase* of data collection.



Figure 1 shows another two papers that were qualitative, about pedestrian experience and used data drawn from participants. These are Bean et al. (2008) and Seedat et al. (2006). However these do not focus in great detail on the impacts of motor traffic: Bean et al. (2008) do however mention that cars may lead to a loss of communal life on streets. Seedat et al.'s (2006) study includes an interest in experience of road traffic. They comment for instance on pedestrian participants feeling subordinate to motor vehicles. However this interest was just one of the foci in their paper, which also examined issues surrounding personal safety, crowding and sexual harassment. So the paper was not greatly focused on the element of motor traffic within the pedestrian experience.

Seedat et al.'s research also differed from the present study by looking exclusively at female pedestrians in African and Asian cities. Some of the experiences these pedestrians encountered, including harassment and crime, were significantly shaped by gender issues. However the types of comments they gave about their experiences of motor traffic could have equally been made by men. So gender did not seem to be an important factor in their experience of motor traffic. In this respect Seedat et al.'s study was not significantly removed from the present study (which engaged with female and male participants). However the cities in which Seedat et al.'s participants lived clearly had substantially different driving cultures and conditions than the U.K. In this respect Seedat et al.'s research was different to the present study.

Figure 1 also shows two experimental studies that looked at a specific element of the experience of motor traffic (its noise) and which used participants to collect data. These were Hygge et al. (2003) and Miedema (2007). However Hygge et al. collected quantitative data in an experimental setting and Miedema's book chapter was a review drawing mainly on quantitative rather than qualitative data. So these studies differed from the present study by focusing only on the specific topic of the noise of motor traffic and neither used qualitative data collection. (The implications of motor traffic noise for pedestrian well-being which these studies highlighted will be discussed later in this chapter.)

The gap in literature which the present study addresses has been defined by highlighting the papers reviewed which are nearest to it in topic and method. A much wider body of papers has been reviewed that contributed to an understanding of the topic but which were not as close or significant to the topic of the present study as those highlighted above. Taylor's study (2003) has been a useful foundational document for examining the topic. However the main point the discussion has so far made is that there is not much written precedent or evidence

surrounding the topic of pedestrian experience of motor traffic. The obvious question is 'why not?'

One possible explanation for why pedestrian experience of motor traffic has remained largely undocumented is that it is not, sensually or imaginatively, an interesting experience. This argument is supported by Taylor (2003). He describes pedestrian experience of motor traffic being, in one aspect, over stimulating due to its danger (and thus something we seek to disengage from and shut out). At the same time, Taylor suggests, the experience can also be 'dull and monotonous' (p.1611). He suggests that this combination of overstimulation and monotony from motor traffic can 'numb our sensibilities' (p1611). Perhaps then experience of motor traffic has been little thought or written about because it is in some ways hard to focus attention on or take interest in.

Habituation to the presence of motor traffic is another possible reason why it has been little researched (Taylor, 2003): as Taylor suggests, we are creatures that get used to situations and can become less aware of situations we are repeatedly exposed to. However other everyday experiences that we may have, such as walking through a favourite park to work, seem to sustain a greater degree of interest than the experience of motor traffic. So it is likely that habituation is only part of the answer for why we have not paid more attention to the experience of traffic.

Pedestrian experience of motor traffic might also have been little researched because it has been seen as unchangeable, something about which nothing can be done. The view is that given the economic and private forces behind car use, the presence of cars in cities will continue until it becomes impossible. Sheller & Urry (2000) go some way to contesting this view. They refer to cities in the 1970's that adopted policies to attempt to reduce car use and promote other modes; showing that there can be a will to take action against car use. Sheller & Urry (2000) also speculate on changes which could lessen the effects of motor traffic, including slower and smaller cars and improvements for users of other modes, etc. Perhaps then the view that heavily trafficked cities are unavoidable is questionable.

However there is an underlying problem that may be more intransigent: it can be suggested that cities, by virtue of being cities, will always be places that are both crowded and places that people seek to move through quickly. Evidence for this problem, inherent in all city life, is found in history. Despite the suggestion that city life was able to be more 'reflective' and 'meditative' before the invention of the car (Taylor, 2003, p.1611) history would suggest otherwise. This was due to the danger, excrement and noise associated with the mobility

provided by horses (Jacobs, 1992). Even in areas where there are large numbers of cyclists or pedestrians only, cities can have a feeling of being overcrowded and over stimulating. Perhaps then to equate experiential problems in cities with the presence of motor traffic and to equate the removal of cars with a great pacifying of city life, are oversimplifications.

Another reason for a scarcity of evidence around pedestrian experience of motor traffic is that car use (particularly 'my own car use') may be considered necessary by many. If a thing is considered necessary the usefulness of discussing its benefits and drawbacks may be considered questionable. 'Automobility' (Bean et al., 2008, p.2832, Sheller & Urry, 2000, p.737) is a term relevant to a perceived necessity of car use. The term refers to the ways in which much of our life, including work and social life, can be both enabled by but also dependent upon, car use. For instance, cars can be used to benefit loved ones and for other important social activities (Bean et al., 2008).

Cars enable us to reach activities that are more distant more quickly (Jain & Guiver, 2001) but we then become dependent upon the vehicle to maintain our attendance. Sheller & Urry (2000) suggest that this dependence is a strong force. This is to the extent that it withstands the influence of policy seeking to encourage more sustainable urban environments, through encouraging shift from car use to other modes. In addition to dependency on car use, even when car travel is not strictly necessary, Sheller & Urry (2000) point out that it can still be attractive, due to the 'seamless' and protected ( p.745) qualities of car travel compared to public transport etc. Car use can also be attractive for the driver through conferring identity and affective boons (Steg, 2005).

So the argument is being made that one reason why pedestrian experience of motor traffic may be under researched is that culturally and politically car use may simply be seen as being necessary. If individuals consider that the life they live necessitates car use, a discussion of the car's detrimental effects on city life may be seen as inconsequential. In addition, beyond being seen as necessary, personal car use can be attractive.

The centrality of the benefits from car use for the individual raises questions about how he or she would view motor traffic as a pedestrian. Sheller & Urry (2000) comment on possible ambivalences in this area, suggesting that people can simultaneously value their own car use and campaign against the building of new roads for example.

Some possible reasons have been given for why a gap persists in research and evidence surrounding pedestrian experience of motor traffic. However it will now be argued that

pedestrian experience of motor traffic is a topic that is important to study because it is an important component within the overall urban walking experience. The importance of the effect of motor traffic will be examined in two respects: effects on well-being and effects on experience of place.

### **The implications of motor traffic for pedestrian well-being**

Strong claims have been made about the significance of motor traffic for pedestrian well-being (Taylor, 2003). Taylor claims that traffic can negatively affect pedestrian well-being, to the degree of causing 'acute discomfort' and being 'unbearable' (p.1617). Motor traffic may adversely affect pedestrian well-being either by inhibiting the positives within the walking experience, or by introducing actual negatives into the experience. Examples of both possibilities will now be discussed.

Benefits of the urban walking experience have been outlined in the previous chapter. These include urban walking being a time to think, constituting social encounter and holding other emotional and spiritual benefits. Taylor (2003) suggests traffic might impair some of these benefits. Specifically he suggests that motor traffic prevents urban walking from being 'reflective or meditative' (p.1623). He also suggests that motor traffic may preoccupy pedestrians such that they are hindered from thinking or talking about other things. Traffic noise may be a significant factor in this: the sounds of motor traffic have been found, in an experimental setting, to affect the functioning of people's memory (Hygge et al. p.13). It was found that road traffic noise impaired children's ability to recall text. Given that conversation and contemplation can rely on recall ability, the finding would suggest that such activities would be impaired near loud motor traffic. A related experiment found that even when mental tasks can be performed during exposure to traffic noise, they exact a 'physiological cost' (Miedema, 2007). So even if people can think and talk near traffic, for some doing so may entail added effort and stress.

Motor traffic may also impair pedestrian well-being by delaying them when crossing roads (Taylor, 2003). Hine & Russell (1993) also highlight this possibility by suggesting that heavy traffic can form a barrier that impedes crossing. This is inconvenient practically but Taylor (2003, p.1618) asserts it may also have emotional costs in that it might create 'tension and frustration' within the pedestrian.

Motor traffic may have negative effects in less concrete ways. Specifically, the presence of motor traffic may be uncomfortable for pedestrians to be near. Little evidence concerning the

presence of motor traffic was found although it is referred to by Sheller & Urry (2000, p.738) who alluded to the 'movement, smell' and 'visual intrusion' of the car. It is also a general theme within Taylor (2003).

Motor traffic might also induce fear in pedestrians: a fear that might even dissuade them from walking (Bean et al., 2008). There is some evidence that pedestrians might experience fear of traffic even while on the pavement. Landis et al. (2001, p.83) for instance found pedestrians on the pavement had a sense of safety which varied according to the degree of separation from the passing traffic. This implies they did not always feel 100 percent safe even on the pavement. Concern for safety when negotiating traffic may lead to further effects on pedestrians. Taylor (2003) claims these include pedestrians being 'constantly keyed up' (p.1621) or 'alert and ready' (p.1621). Song et al. (2007) similarly refer to traffic producing stress. Taylor (2003) suggests that this is particularly true for guardians of young children and for the 'physically infirm or handicapped' (p.1622).

Claims of ways in which motor traffic can negatively affect pedestrian well-being have been made then. However prior to the present study, claims about motor traffic's effects on well-being have often been made without substantiating evidence. For instance, Aldred & Woodcock (2008) make strong claims about the oppressive impacts of car use. They claim that: 'Danger and noise from high traffic volumes can sever communities, reduce access to services and employment, increase stress and reduce social support networks.' (p.489). They also state 'The stress of traffic noise and danger can harm mental health' (p.491). However they do not refer to evidence for these ideas.

It has been argued that motor traffic may have important effects on pedestrian well-being. Claims have also been made that motor traffic also affects the experience of places that the pedestrian moves through. These will be discussed next.

### **Motor traffic affects place, but offers mobility**

Strong claims have been made about the importance of motor traffic on experience of urban place. Taylor (2003) asserts 'our aesthetic experience of the city is very significantly shaped and even dominated by our experience of traffic' (p.1623). The effects of motor vehicles on the places they pass through has been considered to be largely negative for those outside the vehicles (Cabe, 2008).

A common idea within previous studies is that motor traffic diminishes the quality of spaces it passes through. Spaces used heavily by car traffic in cities have been labelled 'non places'

(Bean et al. 2008, p.2836, citing Webber, 1964). Such spaces have been seen as lacking authenticity (Bean et al 2008, p.2836) and impeding interpersonal communication (Taylor, 2003, Bean et al. 2008). Taylor suggests trafficked spaces are 'depersonalised' (p.1620) because pedestrians will only be able to relate to vehicles and not those driving them. Taylor also asserts that our appreciation of urban place may shrink under the demanding influence of motor traffic. Previous writers then have presented a picture of motor traffic impoverishing and dehumanising city space.

Two arguments have been raised which might soften the idea that motor traffic destroys a healthy sense of place (Bean et al. 2008). Firstly, Bean et al. suggest that a (highly mobile) sense of place can be achieved in car dominated areas, but by those inside the vehicles. Secondly they argue that pedestrian places can be strikingly inauthentic even without the influence of cars. They give Disneyland as an example (p.2836). However neither of these arguments directly contradicts the idea, predominant in previous writing on the topic, that motor traffic lessens pedestrian sense of place.

A negative effect of motor traffic on place raises a broader question: How important is having attractive places within a city in relation to having the benefits afforded by heavy car use? Sheller & Urry (2000, p.740) summarise that the traditional view within urban studies is that for optimal sociality, there should be a certain 'balance between locality and mobility'. The tradition suggests that for good sociality there needs to be the possibility of attachments to locations and 'spaces' (p.740) within the city. However Sheller and Urry go on to suggest that such a view neglects to comprehend the view that 'mobility is in some respects constitutive of democracy' (p.741): A statement which leans towards the importance of car mobility. They suggest that while disrupting some types of sociality, car use can facilitate others. In conclusion on this section it has been suggested that motor traffic may negatively affect pedestrian experience of place but that this cost has to be weighed against the social benefits of car mobility in the city.

The above discussion has argued that motor traffic is probably a negative presence for the pedestrian. It has been thought to negatively affect pedestrian well-being and sense of place. The discussion has also outlined that many, particularly in light of their own car use, consider car use to be necessary in the modern city. One way of dealing with negative influences that cannot be entirely removed is to build barriers against them. The concept of barriers is one that was developed from the data of the present study and will be prepared for here.

## The importance of barriers between motor traffic and pedestrians

The idea of barriers will be an important concept for the understanding of pedestrian experience of motor traffic, presented in chapter 10. Imrie (2001) argues that in general cities have been seen as places of 'barriered and bounded space'. He gives the example of busy roads inhibiting movement from place to place. However, he also gives other examples of barriered space in cities, such as the boundaries formed by apartheid and barriers between genders in Islamic cities. Imrie comments importantly on the 'ambiguous' nature of barriers: they can protect from what is outside, but they also restrict and confine what is inside the barrier. So perhaps the barriers necessitated between motor traffic and pedestrians may both offer protection to, but also confine, those experiencing them. These two contrasting aspects of barriers will be discussed here, along with the possibility that barriers can form almost a segregation between driver and pedestrian.

Traffic can act as a barrier that does not allow pedestrians in, or more accurately, across. It thus acts as a barrier, impeding and delaying the pedestrian. This impedance can particularly affect those who have a reduced ability to cross safely, such as the young, older people and the less physically mobile (Jain & Guiver, 2001). For those who find crossing more difficult, a road can form a barrier which severs one area of a city from another (Jain & Guiver, 2001, p.574).

Traffic has been found to form physical but also psychological barriers to pedestrians who are seeking to cross. (Hine & Russell, 1993). Hine & Russell found that such barrier effects could influence crossing behaviour and other pedestrian travel behaviours. As well as being temporal, the delay incurred when crossing the road may have emotional aspects, causing feelings of 'tension and frustration' in the pedestrian (Taylor, 2003, p.1618).

Traffic has also been found to act as a barrier in more subtle and pervasive ways. Appleyard (1981) found that heavy motor traffic acted as a barrier reducing social interaction between neighbours on streets. Perhaps this barrier is partly formed of fear: respondents reported being scared to go out onto their street, if it was heavily trafficked.

Barriers have also arisen in order to keep the influence of motor traffic away from the pedestrian and their world. The most obvious and physical of these is the pavement. Landis et al. (2001, p.61) found that having a pavement was important to pedestrian's feelings of safety. Landis et al. suggest that the wider a pavement (i.e. the further the pedestrian can be from the

traffic,) the greater the perception of safety. Other physical objects can also serve as barriers to keep the traffic out. These include parked cars and trees (Landis et al. 2001).

However the influence of traffic is not entirely curtailed by the presence of pavement and trees: it can overflow the banks of its designated road space. Taylor (2003) for instance talks of city architecture becoming hemmed in by the panoply of signs necessitated by motor traffic. Appleyard (1981, p.24) found that a person's sense of territory in their house and on the pavement could similarly be affected by effects of heavy motor traffic that went beyond issues of safety and crossing: he found that in lighter trafficked streets residents felt that their 'personal territory' extended into the street in front of their house, but in heavily trafficked streets it did not venture beyond their front door. So the inhibiting effect of motor traffic goes beyond its allotted road space.

The manner in which the influence of motor traffic spills beyond its road space may necessitate the use of psychological barriers to keep the influence of motor traffic out of the pedestrian's 'world'. Talking about city life in general, Milgram (1974) talks about city dwellers automatically filtering out a lot of what they encounter in the city, including other people, in order to cope with high levels of sensory input and information that crowded city life entails. Thus he talks about residents in small towns being more friendly and open than those in big cities. Previous studies suggest that the ability to filter out is also used as a barrier against city traffic: Taylor (2003, p.1615) talks about the necessity for pedestrians of 'screening out' the motor traffic from their awareness. Traffic noise is also described as something which people try to 'block out' (Miedema, 2007, p.58).

There is likely to be variation of sensitivity amongst people to the onslaught of sensory input that motor traffic and city life in general can create: this variation is shown, at one extreme, in the condition of sensory defensiveness. This is a condition in which the sufferer finds even generally benign sensory input, such as shaking hands (p.448) or the sound of people talking (p.447) to be uncomfortable and anxiety forming. (Kinnealey et al., 1995). People with this extreme condition were found to use an interesting range of strategies for dealing with their discomfort. These included avoiding the disturbing situation altogether, preparing for it mentally, rationalising the situation and engaging with distractions in order to take the mind off the disturbing sense. The point being made is that for some people who are highly sensitive to sensory input, everyday sensory experiences can cause significant discomfort, and that they respond to these inputs with mental strategies and defenses. It is possible then that a larger



proportion of people may use similar defenses to cope with the dominant sensory phenomenon of city traffic.

Another conceptual barrier, relevant to drivers and pedestrians, is a kind of schism between the different mode users. Such that those within cars and those outside are conceptualised to be of two different and disconnected groups. This conceptualisation is strongly suggested in Sheller & Urry (2000). They talk for instance of drivers who 'are insulated as they dwell- within-the-car' (p.746). They seem to largely picture two parallel cities: the city of the pedestrian and the city of the driver. Similarly it has been suggested that people's experience of traffic (Taylor, 2003) will vary whether they are experiencing it from inside a vehicle or outside. This would imply that the relationship between driver and pedestrian is somewhat 'depersonalised' (Taylor, 2000, p.1620). However, chapter 10 will suggest some factors that may transcend the 'depersonalised' schism.

## Conclusion

This chapter has justified the importance of studying pedestrian experience of motor traffic in terms of the significance of traffic for pedestrian well-being and experience of place. This justification relies on the proposition given in chapter 2 that experiences, positive or negative, are important to people, can be an important component of their well-being and can influence behavior.

It has been argued that motor traffic might impair some of the experiential benefits of urban walking as outlined in chapter 3. It may also inspire fear and stress within the pedestrian. However claims to this effect have not been backed, previous to the present study, with substantiating evidence.

Pedestrians' experience of place may be impaired by motor traffic. As has been discussed however, Sheller & Urry (2000) contend that the importance of attractive public places has to be understood in relation to and in tension with the benefits that car mobility brings to the social and economic life of a city. Adding to this understanding the idea that cities would be crowded and fast moving, even if every car were to be removed, it can be seen that a conclusion that 'cars are bad' would be simplistic. Instead, there are likely to be subtleties and tensions within pedestrians' views on their experience of motor traffic, especially if they are drivers themselves. These tensions remind us more broadly that while the walked experience aspect of city life may be important, it is not the only important aspect: a city has to function economically, socially, logistically etc. The pedestrian experience of motor traffic is one

element of city life that is surrounded by other pieces of the city jigsaw, and has to be understood as such. The fact remains that this piece of the jigsaw has been largely undocumented and there is insufficient understanding of its importance in relation to the other jigsaw pieces.

Despite the apparent importance of motor traffic for the urban pedestrian experience, a gap in evidence remained previous to the present study. It has been suggested that this might be because the experience of motor traffic is one that is hard to focus attention on. This may be because it is not a rich experience and is one that many people are used to and may also be one that people see no solution to, and thus one not worth debating.

In preparation for the findings in chapter 10 it has been suggested that motor traffic can be conceptualised as forming barriers in city spaces. It forms barriers which prevent pedestrians from crossing. The pedestrian space is likewise barriered: pavements, trees and parked cars provide shelter from traffic to some extent. However, the influence of motor traffic also encroaches through these shelters in such a way that pedestrians must form psychological barriers by screening or blocking it out. A final way in which the concept of barriers has been presented is the concept of a separation or schism existing between the two groups of road users: the drivers and the pedestrians.

The literature review chapters have set the context for the two phases of data collection in the present study. The literature reviewed informed the design and foci of the methodology and methods. The next chapter will detail and explore the design and foci.

## Chapter 5: Research design

Methodology and methods were designed that would meet the challenges raised by the study's research questions. In particular, it was anticipated that gaining rich qualitative data on the topics being investigated would be a challenge. Talking about the quotidian urban walking experience might prove difficult for participants, and talking about their specific experience of motor traffic within this even more so (reasons for anticipating this difficulty will be explained later). Another challenge posed by the research questions is that they necessitate addressing the pedestrian experience '*as an experience*.' Thus methodology and methods were necessary which could obtain rich and experiential descriptions.

This chapter will narrate how these challenges were tackled in the research design. It will document the process by which decision after decision was made as the final form of the data collection phases were honed in upon. It will also discuss some of the practicalities of the data collection.

The primary research comprised of two phases of data collection. This chapter will first look at features of the methodology that were common to both phases. It will then discuss elements specific to each of the two phases: the *Experience of motor traffic phase* and the *Urban walking phase*. Then conclusions will be drawn.

### The choice of qualitative research, phenomenological commitments and thematic analysis

Given the research questions of this study, qualitative data collection and analysis were chosen. There was a strong case for this choice. It suited the open ended and exploratory nature of the research questions (Pattern 2002, p.353). It suited the approach of entering data collection without pre-held hypotheses to prove or disprove. Qualitative research is also useful in making new discoveries and unexpected findings (Hayes, 1997). It also enables a more in depth investigation of a smaller number of participant's experiences rather than a shallower survey of a greater number of people (Pattern, 2002 p.14).

A quantitative methodology was discounted. Quantitative enquiry could examine features of walking experience: for instance respondents could be asked to rate the importance of different aspects of their walking experience on a Likert scale. However, this would not allow for the same level of detailed response as qualitative investigation (Pattern, 2002, p.14).

The study's epistemological approach could be said to be realist in that it assumes that something accurate about people's experience can be known through the accounts of it they give (Willig 2001, Braun & Clark, 2006). Clearly there are issues surrounding this assumption. A realist approach may fail to explicate that participants may shape their account according to the social realities surrounding them and the interview environment they find themselves in. The study does not focus in detail on the way that participants may have been constructing their accounts in this way.

More broadly, with a realist approach there are issues surrounding how an experience such as walking, which is multi-faceted and multi-sensory, can be turned accurately into a verbal account (Braun & Clark, 2006). However, the study's assumption that there is a valid connection between people's experiences and their accounts of those experiences is in line with its phenomenologically influenced standpoint. In addition to this, to focus on the social factors influencing the shaping of participants' accounts, while valid, would have necessarily taken some focus and emphasis away from the pedestrian experiences being described, in a finite piece of research.

By seeking to 'interpret' the participants' experiences the research also has hermeneutical and reflexive elements: I have not been able to understand the participants' interpretations directly or with pure objectivity, but have added a degree of my interpretation of their accounts during the process of the analysis (Willig 2001). In light of this interpretative aspect, an element of reflexive self-awareness is necessary (Giorgi & Giorgi 2008).

I debated at length whether to use phenomenology, Interpretative phenomenological analysis or Thematic analysis as the basis with which to structure data collection and analysis. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was discounted as it is normally applied to situations which are of life changing importance (Eatough & Smith, 2008) such as losing a limb (Murray 2004). Urban pedestrian experience is not usually such a situation. This left phenomenology and thematic analysis as more likely possibilities. In explaining the decision of whether to use these, it is useful to revisit the research questions. These are:

1. What can be learnt about the essence of urban pedestrian experience?
2. What are the psychological and emotional benefits of the urban pedestrian experience?
3. What can be learnt about the essence of the pedestrian experience of motor traffic?

As can be seen, the first and third questions focus on the essence of an experience. Phenomenology can be thought of as a science of experience (Pattern, 2002) and was thus a good fit as an approach to addressing the research questions. Phenomenology 'focuses on descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience' (Pattern, 2002, p.107). Phenomenology also seeks to learn the essences of these experiences: the core meanings that are commonly experienced in relation to a particular experience.

### Definitions of essence and experience

Research questions 1 and 3 above include the terms 'essence' and 'experience'. Both these terms are commonly used and difficult to define. The meaning of the terms 'essence' and 'experience' that underlie the present study, will be discussed from dictionary definitions and from phenomenological related sources.

Dictionary definitions suggest that essence refers to a quality of a thing that is inherently characteristic of it, and without which it could not be what it is. For instance, it is an 'intrinsic nature' of a thing (The New Oxford Dictionary of English, 1998) and it is 'a characteristic or intrinsic feature of a thing which determines its identity' (Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus, 1999). The dictionaries also highlight that an essence of something has importance for that thing's existence. It is an 'indispensable quality' (The New Oxford Dictionary of English, 1998) and is 'fundamental' (The New Oxford Dictionary of English, 1998). Dictionary definitions additionally suggest essence can have an inward quality. The Chambers Dictionary (2003) for instance defines it as 'the *inner* distinctive nature'.

To further define the essences pursued in this study, the research questions show that specific types of essences, the essence of *experiences*, are being sought. It is for this reason that the study takes influence from phenomenology, as phenomenology can be understood as transforming 'lived experience into a textual expression of its essence' (Van Manen, 1997, p.36, see also Crotty, 1996).

In harmony with the dictionary definitions above, some phenomenological studies suggest that the essence of a thing has a distinguishing function. Van Manen (1997) for instance suggests that the essence of a thing is defined through difference and sameness. The essence of poetry might be the element(s) that different poems have in common and the elements that make them different to prose.

One way to define how I have understood essence for this study is to look at how I practically sought to uncover it. As this chapter will later discuss, in the participant interviews I sought to lead people back to their descriptions of walking in order to 'strip away preconceptions' and get nearer to the truth of what they have experienced (McNamara, 2005).

To define essence then, dictionary definitions suggest that essence is characteristic and inherent in a thing, it is important to that thing's existence and can have an inward quality. From phenomenological writings it has been seen that essence can have a distinguishing function and that I have sought to uncover essence by stripping away preconceptions. I have stated above that the present study, like most phenomenologically orientated work seeks to explore the essence of experiences. This leads to the need to define experience also.

Human experience is something so central to human existence that it is hard to define. However, some relevant facets of experience in the present study will be discussed, from literature surrounding phenomenology and dictionary definitions.

Dictionary definitions suggest that there is something inherently *personal*, or *pertaining to the person*, in the process of experiencing. Chambers talks of an experience as something 'by which one is affected' and Collins talks of 'direct personal participation.' An experience can be encountered (The New Oxford Dictionary of English, 1998) or undergone (The New Oxford Dictionary of English, 1998, Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus, 1999).

Dictionary definitions also refer to processes by which the person encounters the experience. These processes include 'participation', (Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus, 1999) 'observation', (Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus, 1999) and 'sensation, perception or knowledge', (The Chambers dictionary, 2003). So two aspects of experiences that come out of the dictionary definitions are that they are related to a person, and that they are encountered by certain personal processes.

Writings on phenomenology also offer a number of relevant ideas about experience. One of these is that experience can be understood through the concept of intentionality. This concept provides an understanding of the relation between the experience a subject has and the object they experience. Phenomenology suggests that every experience or consciousness we have as a subject is directed towards some object (Crotty, 1996). The consciousness is directed toward the object but never fully encompasses it. Thus human experience is always pointing to an object beyond itself (Crotty, 1996).

Phenomenology also suggests that an experience is something that with effort can be understood in a deeper, fresher way (Van Manen, 1997). Thus the present study seeks a more comprehensive understanding of pedestrian experience than might be gained from casual consideration. According to writings on phenomenology a third aspect of experiences is that they have a discernible structure, which can be investigated. Hence phenomenology might seek to understand 'What makes loneliness, loneliness' (Crotty, 1996). This understanding of the essential structure of the experience, according to Van Manen (1997), can help the nature and significance of the experience to be grasped in a new way.

A further aspect of experience that the present study asserts is that experience can be transmitted. In effect this assertion suggests I was able to become more experienced about pedestrian experience, in order to write about it, through the descriptions given to me by others. The possibility of this process is contested by some in phenomenology. However, in support, Van Manen (1997) suggests that 'the point of phenomenological research is to 'borrow' other people's experiences....in order to be better able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience.'

So experiences have been defined as personal, and enabled by personal processes. Writings on phenomenology suggest that experiences are always directed towards an object, are things that can be investigated in deeper fresher ways, have a discernible structure and can be conveyed from person to person by description. Discussion has drawn on phenomenological influence as a basis for understanding essence and experience. However phenomenology is far from a homogenised field in a number of key respects, some of these will be discussed next.

### **Different understandings of phenomenology**

The term phenomenology has become contested and used in a variety of ways (Pattern, 2002, p.104). Amongst these ways it can have its original philosophical connotation. As Pattern notes, it has also been used to connote a 'social science analytical perspective or orientation'.

An important distinction between two kinds of phenomenology is made by Crotty (1996). He distinguishes traditional phenomenology, based on the work of the original phenomenological philosophers, with phenomenology as often found in contemporary social science, particularly nursing research. He is very critical of the latter, which can be called 'new phenomenology'. He suggests that new phenomenology has an emphasis on subjective reactions to a situation. In contrast, the original phenomenology had the motive of returning to 'the things themselves' (albeit through subjectivity). In other words it seeks to gain an understanding of the essential

objective reality of a phenomenon, via the subjective awareness of the phenomenologist. This aim of the original phenomenology was contrary to the present study which sought to examine the everyday subjective experience of the pedestrian. In addition, Crotty highlights some strenuous requirements of traditional phenomenology. One is that the reflections on an experience must be conducted by someone who has experience in phenomenology. The implication for this research study would be that only participants trained in phenomenology could be involved. In addition philosophical phenomenology is associated with an unusual epistemology, it involves looking at quotidian experiences from a radical non-everyday perspective. However, it is the *everyday* perspective that would be most relevant for most urban walkers. Thus while 'new phenomenology' was considered an option for the data analysis, the original philosophical form of phenomenology was discounted.

Phenomenological commitments have been claimed by previous studies into the walking experience (Crust et al., 2011). Crust et al. highlight in their description of their methodology that phenomenology is more concerned with the 'what' of an experience (i.e. a description of it) than seeking to explain the 'why' of the experience. This is an emphasis shared by the current study, which seeks to understand the 'what' of pedestrian experience and synthesis this understanding into theory. In general it seems that when a phenomenological approach has been taken to the walking experience it has been in the wider social science sense, or what has above been termed above 'new' phenomenology rather than the original philosophical discipline (Crust et al., 2011, Seedat et al, 2006, Darker et al 2007).

The present study has phenomenological commitments then because it is a study seeking to discern and describe essential or core elements of a lived experience. It could be called a 'new phenomenological' study. It perhaps cannot be called simply phenomenology because it does not share the epistemological intricacies of the original phenomenological philosophic approaches.

In terms of structuring the analytical process, Thematic analysis was chosen. This has the advantages of being able to develop themes *across* participants whereas the phenomenological analysis and certainly Interpretative phenomenological analysis would have a stronger emphasis on analyzing each individual separately. Thematic analysis can be used either in a 'deductive' way that is closely linked to pre-held theoretical interests of the researcher, or a more inductive 'bottom up' approach (Braun & Clark 2006, p.12). The inductive approach means that the themes are closely linked with the data (Braun & Clark, 2006) and the ways in which the participants themselves think about the interview topic. For



the present study it was decided to try and be as inductive as possible. Instead of approaching the interviews through a theoretical lens, such as feminism or political theory, it was decided to try to let the analysis draw mainly from the data itself. It could not be purely inductive as I could not help but have some preconceptions. However, it was hoped the analysis would be closely linked to the ways in which participants 'naturally' thought about their experiences.

### The relevance of Non-representational theory for the study

Another approach to analysis relevant to the present study is Non-representational theory (NRT). This is less a single theory than a way of thinking and is relevant to this thesis in a number of ways. One is that it tends to explore 'what is present in experience' and 'the bare bones of actual occasions' (Thrift, 2008, p2). NRT is concerned with bringing everyday experiences to life, and may deploy a range of methods including performing arts for this purpose. NRT analysis can be seen as something that is performed, rather than a representation that lifelessly symbolises a separate reality. NRT's motivation has been identified by Thrift, (2008, p.2) as 'producing a permanent supplement to the ordinary, a sacrament for the everyday'. Whilst the present study does not explicitly focus on bringing the experience of urban walking 'to life', it *is* concerned with an everyday experience that has emotional and embodied depth.

There is a focus in NRT on pre-cognitive elements of existence and how these can be attended to (Thrift, 2008, p.7, Cloke et al., 2014, P.744). NRT could perhaps be said to focus on the soup of happenings (made of both human and non-human elements) that precedes and lies beyond, or on the edge of, human awareness and consciousness. NRT views things that are usually written and talked about as only a small portion of the things that humans encounter. As will be seen in the findings, the walking experience may be one in which there are relations between what lies within conscious awareness and what lies on the edges of or beyond it.

A key notion within NRT is that of affect. While the meaning of this term in NRT is disputed (Anderson, 2014, p.761), affect has been defined as denoting 'unformed and unstructured intensities that although not necessarily experienced or possessed by a subject correspond to the passage from one bodily state to another and are therefore analysable in terms of their effects' (The Dictionary of human geography, 2009, p.8). In NRT then, affects are motivations to either increase, decrease or change bodily action according to the environment. These motivations are not necessarily so conscious as to be recognisably personal. They can inhabit the preconscious world consisting of both human and non-human elements. Thus Wylie (2005,

p.236) defines an affect as 'a field perhaps of awe, irritation or serenity, which exceeds, enters into, and ranges over the sensations and emotions of a subject who feels.' Affects can create 'the background sense of an event or practice or space' (Anderson, 2014, p.763).

NRT can have some affinities with phenomenology. Both can approach 'the lived immediacy of actual experience before any reflection on it' (Thrift, 2008, p.6). NRT work can seek to create descriptions that are focused on the original experience in question. Thus, for example, Wylie (2005, p.236) in an NRT influenced study sought not 'to examine the sociological or historical meanings of walking' but rather the initial experience of self in the landscape.

A number of ways in which NRT is in harmony with the aims of the present project have been discussed. There are also some ways in which the approach is less in keeping with my present aims. A feature of NRT is that it is 'anti-biographical and pre-individual. It trades in modes of perception which are not subject based' (Thrift, 2008, p.7). (Thus, for example, Wylie (2005, p.237) writes of disassembling the 'romantic, solitary, walking self'.) Instead of focusing on human subjects as whole entities, Thrift (2008, p.13) focuses on Spinoza's conception of a plane incorporating both human and non-human components from which awareness emerges. In using thematic analysis, the present study does not have as strong an emphasis on specific participants (as whole entities) as it would have had if for instance Interpretative phenomenological analysis had been used. The analysis does not though deconstruct human subjects into specific and 'pre-individual' interactions between the walker and their surroundings.

NRT also tends to be averse to symbolic analysis in which theory is developed to symbolise and structure a description of an experience (The dictionary of human geography, 2009, p.504). Such symbolism and structuring can be seen by NRT as deadening (Lorimer, 2005) or stifling of the original experience. NRT can also be averse to analysis that is thematic in structure. Wylie (2005, p. 235) for instance, in an NRT influenced work, aimed to produce a 'fragmentary and narrational rather than thematic or schematic structure'. In contrast, the present findings will be presented in an ordered, thematic manner.

There is an emphasis in NRT interactions between human and non-human elements with 'equal' importance being attributed to both (Thrift, 2008, p.9). The paradigm focuses on assemblages of human and non-human elements coming together. The present study, does record interactions between walkers and their inanimate walking environment. However, the final aim of the research is to focus on the human experience, and how the inanimate affects this. So perhaps in this respect the thesis differs in emphasis from a NRT study. Part of the

study is also interested in person to person interactions, with chapter 7 focusing on the social encounter aspect of walking. This focus was justified by the interpersonal aspects of urban walking being of importance to the participants.

NRT seeks to work in such a way that it can 'co-produce new events by engaging with and intervening in the practices that compose life' (Dictionary of human geography, 2009, p.503). In other words NRT studies are in part things that are *done*. Perhaps it is for this reason that Thrift (2008, p.12) has suggested dance and other performing arts are important for NRT. As this chapter will go on to discuss, walkalong interviews were used in the present study. These could be said in a sense to partly coproduce the experience on which the interview is based. However in some senses they are still in depth interviews, which are arguably less suited to a NRT outlook.

Transport and mobility topics have been addressed by NRT. For example, Bissell (2014) examines the ways in which a commute changes for the commuter, through time and repetition. The study looks at the importance of understanding the experience of journeys. It looks at the interaction of commuter and their travel surroundings, and goes some way to look at these interactions at a sub personal level. The paper is an example of an NRT study that is less about finding symbolic patterns across data and is rather about the research as a performance, as discussed above.

Thrift (2008, p.10) suggests that in NRT the human body is not considered as separate from the things that surround it. This interest in the relation between the human body and its surroundings, in the specific instance of walking, is taken up by Wylie (2005). Wylie writes on the changing interactions between walking self and rural landscape and changing perceptions of these. The affects stimulated by walking are recorded as changing according to the landscape type and changing fatigue levels of the walker. In keeping with NRT, Wylie's writing technique takes on poetic descriptions of landscapes and philosophical, phenomenological explorations of the relation between landscape and the walking body. (Thus the paper highlights that phenomenology and NRT can overlap). The writing seeks very much to be situated in the experience that the author had of walking, with significant portions of the text describing the walk itself. This helps to bring Wylie's original experience to life in the text.

The above methodological elements of the research were common to both phases of data collection. Conducting two phases of data collection enabled one of the phases to be focused specifically on investigating the pedestrian experience of motor traffic (research question 3) and the other to look at urban walking more generally (research questions 1 and 2). In

addition, the two phases enable pedestrian experience to be explored from two different angles. For example, as will be seen, one phase looked at the experience as it happened, and the other in recollection. These two phases will now be discussed separately.

In this chapter the *Experience of motor traffic phase* of data collection will be discussed before the *Urban walking phase* because this is the chronological order in which the phases were conducted. Throughout the rest of the thesis the *Urban walking phase* is presented first for thematic and continuity reasons.

### Experience of motor traffic phase of data collection

Following from a gap in literature as reported in chapter 4, research question 3 was intended to explore pedestrian experience of motor traffic. The question was:

What can be learnt about the essence of the pedestrian experience of motor traffic?

It was realised that this might be a difficult topic to talk about. I experimented with talking to myself about, and noting down, my impressions of motor traffic, and found it a task requiring some effort. This section will present how the first phase of data collection was designed in such a way as to make talking about motor traffic as easy for participants as possible. One method previously found useful for making talking about walking experience easy is the walkalong interview (Miaux et al. 2010).

The walkalong interview, where the participant and I walked together in an outside setting was chosen as the method with which to structure this phase of data collection. This method was resonant with the research's commitment to capturing experiences. Kelly et al. (2011, p.1505) found that walkalongs enabled the achievement of 'richness and authenticity' in pedestrian comments on motor traffic. Anderson (2004) suggests that the walking component of walkalongs also provides a rhythmic movement that can aid reminiscing and that can inspire the conversation. The walkalong format also produces a 'more collaborative' and less 'interrogative' interview encounter (Anderson, 2004, p.260).

It has been suggested that 'there is no place without self and no self without place' Casey (2001, p.684, cited in Anderson, 2004, p.255). Thus it could be concluded that walkalongs would make possible the examination of interactions between pedestrian selves and motorised places, which would be impossible from a room based interview, as certain aspects of the pedestrian self would only awaken once in situ. More specifically, walkalongs would enable rich data by providing real life prompts to conversation, such as the sound of a passing ambulance etc. Moles (2008) has commented that a walkalong interview is in effect an

interview between three parties, the interviewer, the interviewee and their surroundings. She suggests that in effect the surroundings contribute their own input to the interview, sometimes interrupting or provoking discussion.

Room interviews and focus groups were discounted as methods, due to the prediction that participants would find talking about motor traffic, in a room setting, difficult. Focus groups were also discounted due to a phenomenological emphasis on individual experience.

It was decided to conduct the majority of the walkalong interviews in a city centre. City centres contain a variety of traffic conditions as well as variety from street to street in the numbers of pedestrians and cyclists on the move. The city centre is also an area in which many people will walk at some point, making it a commonly experienced and relevant example of pedestrian experience of city traffic. The city centre can also often be considered to be the heart of the city (Portas 2011); an area towards which tourists and residents alike are likely to gravitate.

Bristol's city centre was chosen over Bath's. Bath's centre was discounted as it lacked variety in traffic conditions on different streets. In contrast Bristol's centre has a number of strikingly different road conditions, ranging from a busy four lane inner ring road to completely pedestrianised areas. The challenge of obtaining rich qualitative data was thus being addressed by exploring the contrast of different roads with different conditions. As will be seen, setting up the dynamics of contrast in an attempt to elicit rich data was a recurring feature in the methods used for data collection.

Three specific walkalong routes in Bristol city centre were devised. A number of roads and streets in the centre were explored and their important characteristics noted. A table showing some examples of these characteristics and streets can be seen in figure 2. Variety of characteristics was sought. There was precedent in Kelly et al. (2011) for considering factors such as pavement width, presence of barriers (trees and parked cars) and different levels of car traffic (seen in figure 2) when designing routes to investigate pedestrian experience.

Three routes around the city centre were devised. Routes 1 and 2 were identical to each other except that they were walked in opposite directions. This was in order that 'pause points' (to be explained below) could be conducted at different places during the route. It was also due to anticipation that some of the interviews might run out of time before the route was completed. This did in fact occur in several interviews. The design of routes 1 and 2 incorporated the following contrasting roads: St. Augustine's Parade featured four lanes of traffic and wide pavements, Baldwin street included two lanes of traffic, Corn Street is

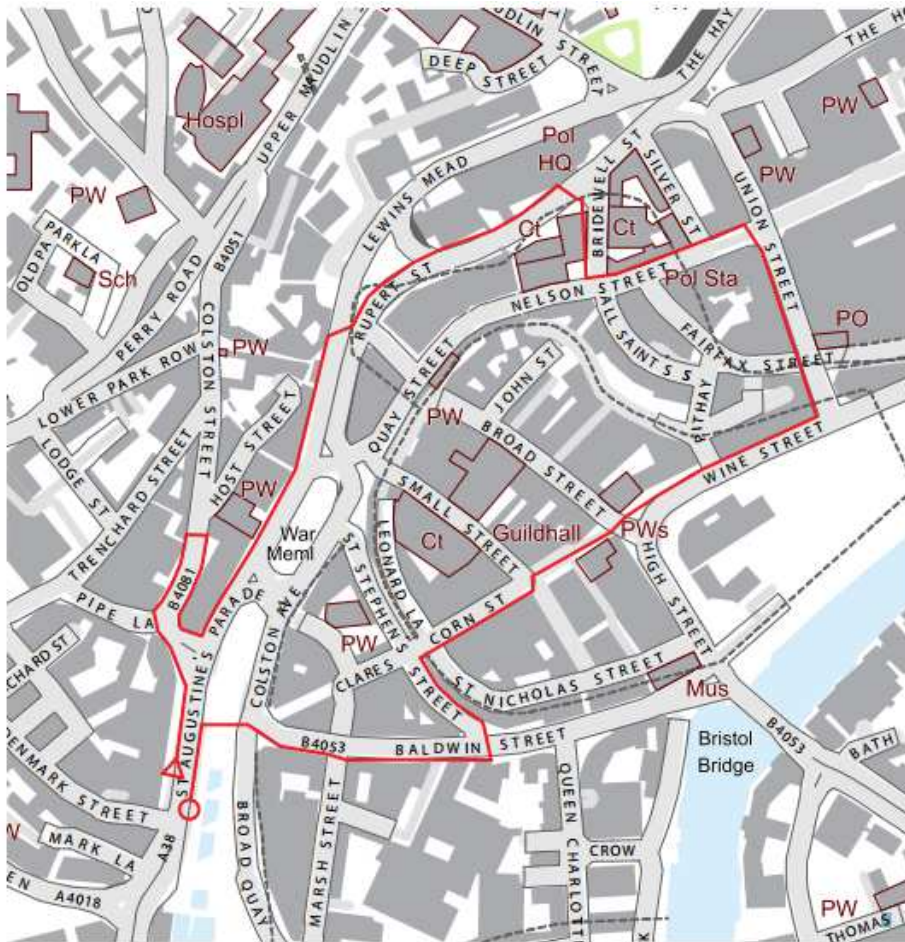
conventionally attractive and part of its length is pedestrianised, Union street is one way and has lots of trees and parked cars, Nelson street has light traffic and Rupert Street has heavy traffic. The routes were thus designed to enable the participant to comment on very different experiences of motor traffic, and pedestrian environment, in different roads.

Route 3 was designed to incorporate, like routes 1 and 2, a variety of roads and traffic conditions. Its design included some roads missed by routes 1 and 2. Route 3 included the one way Union Street, the Haymarket and Bond Street which have multiple lanes of traffic and pavements of varying widths. The route passed the St James Roundabout, a roundabout usually thought to be particularly unattractive. It also included a substantial walk along Broadmead, a pedestrianised shopping area. Between them the two routes captured a good proportion of the roads, and roads of differing characteristics, within Bristol city centre. Maps of the routes, as well as example photographs of the different conditions, are shown in figures 3 to 7.

**Figure 2 Table showing characteristics of different streets considered for city centre walkalong routes**

City and route	Road/Street name	2 way motor traffic/1way /Pedestrianised?	Total number of lanes of motor traffic	Motor traffic Volume (Rough estimate)	Shops present on road?(Many/ Some/ Few/ none)	Width of pavement	Pedestrian crossing facilities (Frequent, medium, sparse)	Trees present? (Many/ Some/ None)	Parked cars present? (Many /Some/Few /none)
Bristol	Broadmead	Pedestrianised	0	0	Many	N/A	N/A		None
Bristol	St Augustine's Parade	2 Way	4	Medium to heavy	Many	Wide	Frequent	Some -on one side	None
Bristol	Corn street	1 way	1	Light to medium	Many	Medium	None?	None	Some
Bristol	Newfoundland Street	2 way	5 + two bus lanes	Heavy	Some (on one side only)	Wide	Sparse	Medium	None
Bristol	Park street (upper)	2 way	2	Medium	Many	Wide	Sparse	None (above park)	Some
Bristol	Lower Maudlin street (mid section)	1 Way	1	Light to medium	None	Narrow to medium	Sparse	None	Lots
Bristol	Union street (E. end)	1 way	1	Heavy	Many	Wide	Sparse	Many	Many

Figure 3 Route 1 and 2

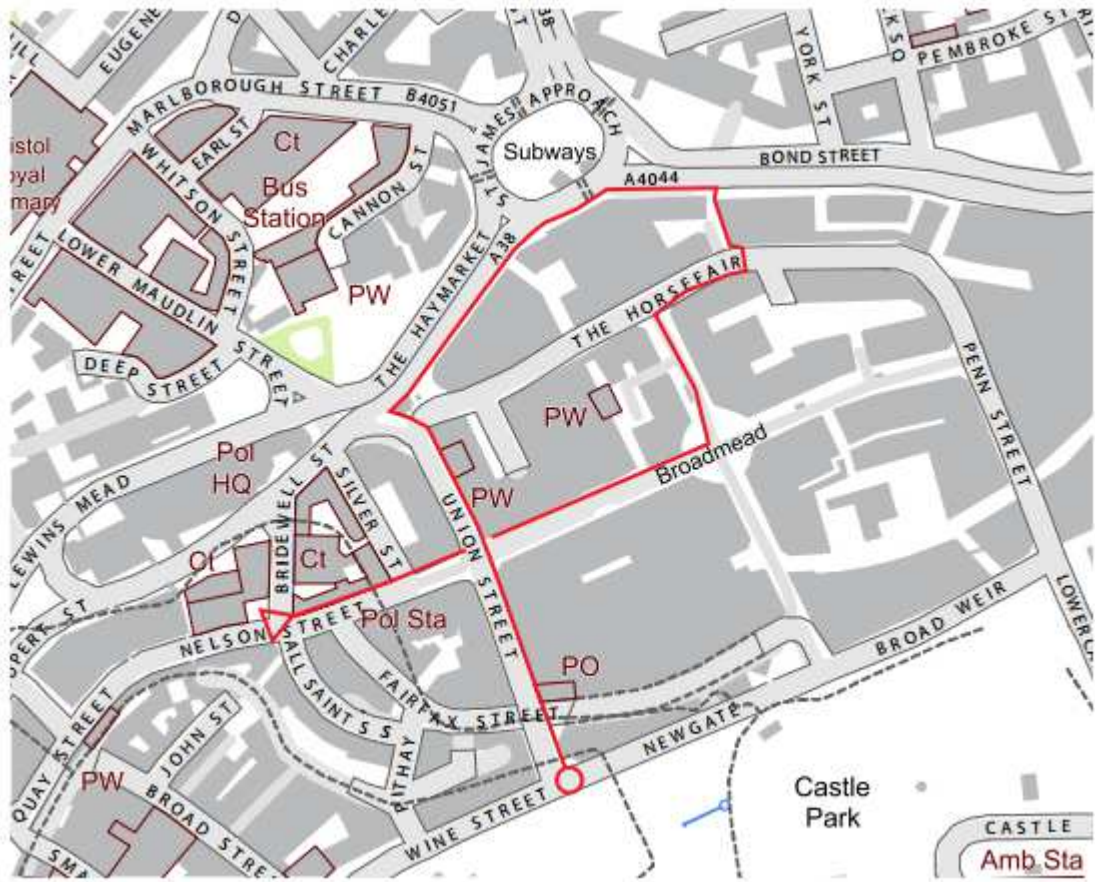


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Route 2 was identical to this Route 1 except it was walked in the opposite direction. This was in order that pause points could be conducted at different places during the route and also in anticipation that some of the interviews might run out of time before the route was completed, which did in fact occur in several interviews.



Figure 4 Route 3

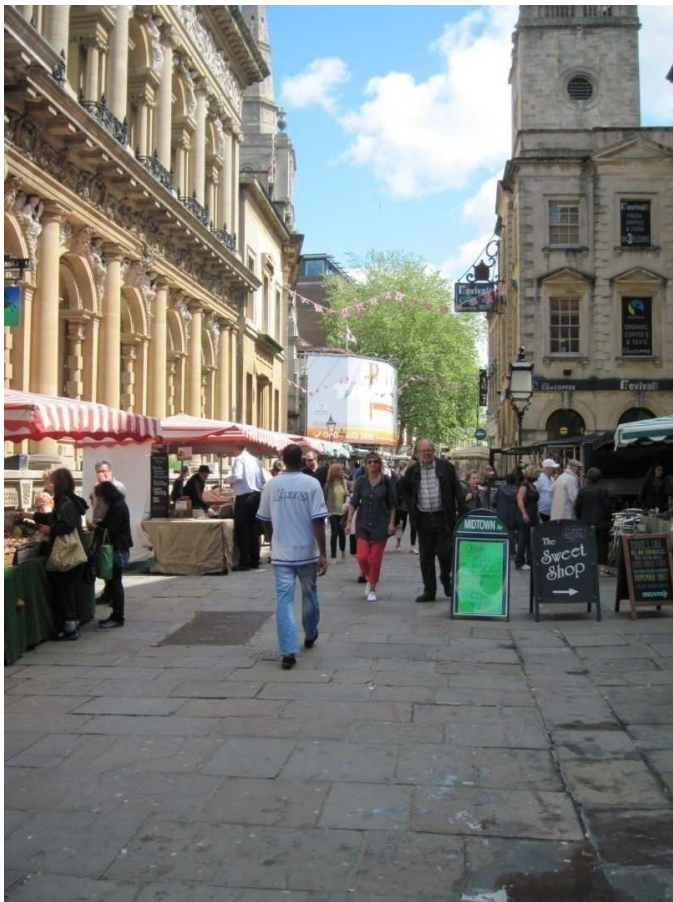


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**Figure 5 Example of street included, St Augustine's parade: 4 lanes of medium to heavy traffic, wide pavements**



**Figure 6 Example of street included, Corn street: pedestrianised**



**Figure 7 Example of street included, Wine Street: two lanes, light traffic**



### Experience of motor traffic phase - Interview structure

The structure of the city centre walkalongs fell into two elements (although these bled into each other in beneficial ways). The first was open conversation in which I had a sheet of prepared questions to ask if needed (Smith, 1995, Smith & Eatough, 2007)(the topic guide used can be found at Appendix 1) but in which considerable leeway was given for the participant to talk about what was of interest to them, within the topic area. This leeway was in line with the phenomenological commitments of the study (Eatough & Smith, 2008, Willig, 2001).

As the topic guide demonstrates there were a number of phenomenologically orientated questions aimed at uncovering the 'essence' of pedestrian experience of motor traffic, such as: 'how would you describe the essence of being near motor traffic?' However, there were also more concrete questions that were easier to answer, for example: 'What do you feel when waiting to cross?' and 'Is the experience of cars pleasant/unpleasant/neutral?' Using a mixture of both more straightforward questions about experience and deeper, more fundamental questions, would be a feature of both phases of data collection. The easier questions allowed the participant to 'warm' to the topic. Following these the more fundamental

phenomenological questions allowed conversation to consider core elements and meanings of the experience.

There were a large number of potential questions that I prepared for the interviews (see Appendix 1). The decisions on which of these questions to ask and when were improvised during the interview. This was in order to maximise the natural flow of conversation and to ensure that the conversation was pursuing what was really important to the participant.

The second element of the city centre walkalong interviews was a more structured 'pause point'. At two locations in each walkalong interview the participant and I stopped and the participant was asked to fill out a form about their view of traffic conditions at that point. The 'pause point' form can be found at Appendix 2. The participants completed two exercises. They first ranked ten possible changes to the traffic and road conditions that they could make, in order of preference. Then they gave their opinion on conditions on that road and whether they considered them 'Good, medium or bad'. The pause points served a useful function in reinvigorating the conversation about motor traffic and road conditions and further engaging the participants with their surroundings.

Most of the interviews were conducted during daylight hours during April to June. The time of year was helpful as participants were more willing to stop at pause points and linger to make observations than they probably would have been in the winter months.

Given the purpose of the interviews, they might have been conducted at different, specified, times of day (such as during rush hour) in order to experience contrasting amounts of traffic. However this same effect was achieved by walking on busier and quieter roads. Similarly another function of conducting interviews at different times of day would be to encounter differing numbers of pedestrians. This also was achieved by the variety of roads that the routes included. Hence there was little drawback with conducting the interviews at times convenient to the participants.

An obvious omission within the data collection was that none of the interviews were conducted in darkness. This was in order to avoid increased risk from traffic and personal safety concerns. The latter may have deterred participants from stopping and commenting on some of the less frequented roads that we walked along.

Eleven walkalong interviews were conducted. This number was appropriate to achieve saturation on a specific and defined area of investigation. Eight walkalongs were in the city centre. In addition three were conducted with participants on their commute to work. These

interviews were conducted simply to add variety to the data collected, this variety would help to provide rich data and understanding. The commute walkalongs provided contrast to the city centre walkalongs as they were in other areas of the city, were participant rather than researcher led and were trips that would normally be taken within a daily time frame, (and which might therefore be influenced by time pressure). The focus of the commute walkalongs was the same as that of the city centre walkalongs: the pedestrian's experience of motor traffic.

Participants for this phase of data collection were recruited through a number of channels: invitations to participate were given at the beginning of large choir rehearsals in Bristol, organisations serving elderly people such as U3A, Bristol older people's forum, Age UK and the Salvation army were targeted, some participants were recruited through casual conversations about the PhD, some were recruited who had previously been participants in other research projects and some attended my church. The participants gained were diverse in a number of key respects, as will be described below. Again variety was being sought, although as a qualitative methodology with a small number of participants, strict representativeness, as obtained by random sampling etc. would not be possible or meaningful.

Figure 8 shows good variety of sex and age in the participants. It also shows two other aspects which influenced choice of participant: their residential area and how much they reported driving. A variety of residential areas was welcome as a rough indicator of varied incomes. These areas were spread out across the city (see figure 9). A variety amongst how much driving participants did was welcome as it would diminish the possibility of every participant being strongly 'anti-car' or every participant being a motor enthusiast. There was then good variation between the participants in a number of key respects.

**Figure 8 Demographics of Experience of motor traffic phase participants**

<b>Alias Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Household area</b>	<b>How much did they report driving?</b>
Alison	50s	F	Totterdown	A little
Beth	20s	F	Horfield	Medium
Cecilia	20s	F	Westbury upon trim	Never
Clair	60s	F	Henbury	Medium
Dave	40s	M	Yate	Never
Graham	30s	M	St Andrews	A little (did not own car)
Jess	40s	F	Small village in Somerset	A lot
John	70s	M	Southville	A little
Laura	20s	F	St. Paul's	Medium/A lot
Mary	60s	F	Sea Mills	A lot
Susan	70s	F	Whitchurch	Medium/A lot

**Figure 9 Showing geographical spread of Experience of motor traffic phase participants' residential areas in Bristol**



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While Figure 8 Shows that in key respects there was variety amongst participants, in one aspect there was more homogeneity. It became apparent during the interviews that all those being interviewed had a friendly and kind disposition. Perhaps this had led them to volunteer in the first place. So perhaps the sample consisted of more benevolent people than is representative. This is noted here as it has bearing on some of the findings in chapter 10. A further limitation within the participant samples should be conceded. Of the 31 participants used (across both phases of data collection) only one was not white. This was despite efforts to access and involve people from ethnic minorities.

An outcome of being a frequent pedestrian and not owning a car was that prior to the experience of motor traffic interviews I may have been expecting a 'them and us' pedestrian attitude towards car drivers and traffic. However, as chapter 10 will highlight, being drivers themselves, many of the pedestrian participants had beneficent and empathetic attitudes towards the drivers we saw.

Participants were briefed about the research and its aims and were asked to give their informed consent to participate. Information sheets given to participants to read prior to the interview and consent forms they signed can be found at Appendices 3 and 4. As the consent form shows, participants were made aware that they could withdraw from the interview or ask for their interview not to be used in the research. They were encouraged to tell me if they became tired walking and were asked to confirm that they saw no unusual risk for them in taking part in the research. The interviews were recorded with lapel mics and minidisc recorders and fully transcribed in order that every part of the interviews could be given equal attention.

### **Analysis of the Experience of motor traffic phase**

The first phase of data was initially analysed using thematic analysis. Braun & Clark's (2006) comprehensive outline of how to conduct thematic analysis was consulted, as were notes and experiences from psychological research training modules.

Following Braun & Clark's (2006) guide, initial notes about possible codes were made when transcribing. The data was then read through again to establish an overall understanding of it (phase 1 of Braun & Clark's guide). Further notes on coding were made at this stage. I then went through coding the data, writing the codes on paper copies of the transcripts with a list of the codes formed being made on a separate sheet of paper, showing the page numbers indicating where each instance of each code occurred (phase 2 in Braun & Clark).

Then the codes were examined to see how they could be combined into themes (Braun & Clark phase 3). Creating themes was a combination of seeing how codes would fit together naturally, with consideration to the research questions. A few attempts were made at arriving at satisfactory themes (phase 4). Then a first draft of an analysis was written out (phase 6).

However, the analysis produced was lacking in qualitative richness and insight and did not reach far below the surface of the data, perhaps because I was overly concerned with finding immediate relevance for transport policy. For this reason the data was reanalysed with a greater phenomenological emphasis and with less commitment to finding immediate policy relevance. The data was re-examined on a participant by participant basis. After this to add more structure to the analytical understanding of the data, mind maps of each interview were produced. Then in a further two stages of analysis, themes spanning across participants were re-examined. The final stage of presenting the findings was to write them up. As with most qualitative research the writing itself is a final stage of analysis.



In conclusion on the *Experience of motor traffic phase* of data collection, the decisions made in order to obtain data of the desired quality have been discussed and justified. As has been seen in the discussion a driving force behind much of the design of this phase was the challenge of getting rich data on a hard to talk about topic. For example, it was for this reason that walkalong interviews were chosen and that Bristol city centre was chosen. Perhaps it is the difficulty of talking about the experience of motor traffic that made a number of iterations of analysis necessary for this phase of data collection.

Having completed the first phase of data collection, designs were prepared for the second phase. A number of designs were tried and abandoned for various reasons before the final design for an *Urban walking phase* of data collection was settled upon. This design will now be presented.

### Urban walking phase of data collection

The *Urban walking phase* of data collection would address research questions 1 and 2:

1. What can be learnt about the essence of urban pedestrian experience?
2. What are the psychological and emotional benefits of the urban pedestrian experience?

It was decided that the *Urban walking phase* also would use individual interviews as these are suitable for the understanding of experience as perceived *by the individual*, which a phenomenological emphasis seeks to uncover. However, the *Urban walking phase* would contrast with the *Experience of motor traffic phase* by using reflective room based interviews instead of walkalongs. The different interview settings of the two phases would provide two different and complementary avenues of insight.

Chapter 2 noted that some have championed the use of interviews that look reflectively on experiences in the past. Such a technique is in harmony with the phenomenological commitment to uncovering a mundane experience in a fresh way (Van Manen, 1997, p.10). Van Manen suggests that an experience that is still in the process of being undergone cannot properly be reflected on. In relation to this point I found in my own experience, through experimenting, that thinking about the experience of walking, whilst walking, significantly altered the experience. This may be because walking is usually a relatively unconscious act (Wunderlich, 2008). Thus a room based reflection on the participant's normal walking experience might enable facets of understanding that walkalong interviews would miss.

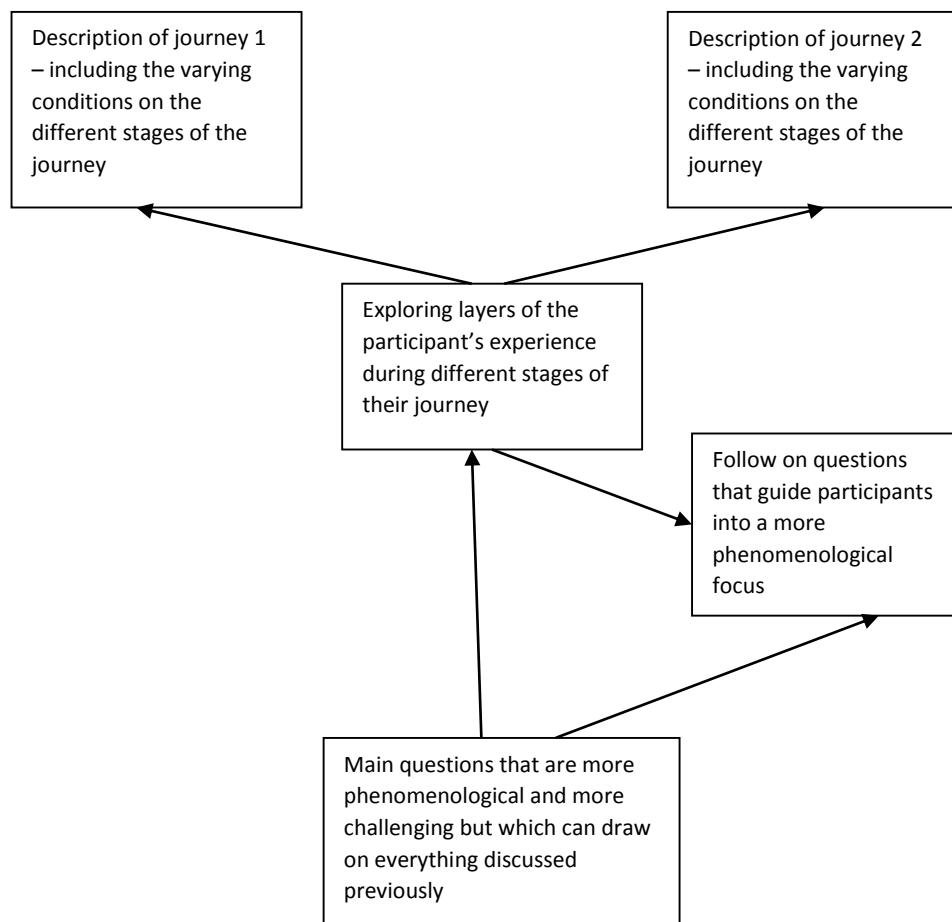
## Urban walking phase Interview structure

The *Urban walking phase* interview process was created from 5 elements (some of these in effect blended into each other during the interview):

1. Prior to interview participants wrote descriptions of two regular walking journeys.
2. At the start of the interview the participant and I recapped the participant's two descriptions.
3. Layers of further detail were added to the descriptions of the journeys, in order to further build up the picture of what the experience consisted of.
4. When talking about the journey details, follow on questions were introduced that drew conversation towards the more phenomenological questions.
5. For the second half of the interview more phenomenological questions were asked, seeking to get nearer and nearer to answering research question 1.

The way in which these elements interlinked and enriched each other is shown in figure 10.

**Figure 10 Showing the dynamics that interview process drew upon**



These elements will now be discussed more fully and justified. It was predicted that exploring the essence of pedestrian experience (a regular and often taken for granted experience) might be difficult for participants who might be neither versed in phenomenologically influenced investigation nor necessarily suited to it. Thus a system of initially 'prompting' the conversation, allowing a natural and easy way for interview discussion to begin, was necessary. Previous research contains numerous examples of prompts being used to encourage productive interviews (Middleton, 2010, Harper, 2002). The use of prompts for conversation was as follows: Prior to interview participants wrote descriptions of two regular journeys. They were encouraged to describe two contrasting trips, although the ways in which they contrasted were left open. Participants were encouraged to divide the routes they described into stages of differing walking conditions. They were encouraged to add descriptions of things they felt, saw, thought about etc. Appendix 7 gives the information sheet that conveyed the requirements for this task to participants.

There are examples of specific journeys being recounted by a researcher as autobiographical prompts for an analytical discussion, (Jones, 2005, Wylie, 2005) although research in which *participants* recount an example journey was not identified. However, it is common in phenomenological research to ask participants to reflect on a given experience by bringing to mind specific incidents or examples of it, rather than to think about it in more abstract terms (see Becker, 1987, for example).

Participants were left to choose for themselves whether they wrote a description of commute trips or other trips. Participants wrote of commute trips, journeys to education, trips to leisure destinations, errand trips and circular walks taken purely for the sake of the journey. It was decided to not focus solely on commute trips because there have been a number of studies which look at the use of commute time by various mode users (Blumen, 2000, Turcotte, 2005, Gatersleben & Uzzell, 2007 and Redmond & Mokhtarian, 2001). Conversely it was decided not to focus solely on leisure trips because this would exclude the large number of work related city trips. More importantly phenomenology, as mentioned above, seeks to explore the core essences of an experience. By looking at both leisure and commute trips some core elements, common to all urban walking might be elucidated. It was also predicted that there would be differences between commute and leisure trips, resulting from factors such as time pressure and the need to think about work etc. The richness of these contrasts, between commute and leisure trips, might improve the understanding of urban walking.

At the beginning of the interview the participant and I went through the journey descriptions to refresh memory and focus attention. I drew a schematic representation of the journey on a large sheet of paper. This aided and clarified conversation. The discussion then sought to add 'layers' of detail to the initial description of the journey experience. Participants were asked what they considered to be important aspects of their experience. For instance they might wish to talk about their thoughts and feelings whilst walking, or sensory experiences, or experiences of other travellers. If they had no ideas some potential layers were offered to them that they could then talk about in relation to the different stages of the journey. The layers I suggested were introduced to further prompt and enrich conversation but not to limit it. The list of layers I suggested were amalgamated from a process of brainstorming, reading literature and considering themes that had emerged from the *Experience of motor traffic phase* data. It can be found at Appendix 5.

As a participant talked about the layers and specific aspects of their journeys, follow up questions were asked that drew the conversation towards a more phenomenological focus. Examples of these follow up questions are laid out in the Interview schedule in Appendix 6.

The first part of the interview then was intended to create a momentum and interest within the interview. Having spent 30 or 40 minutes talking about the specific aspects of their walking experience the conversation was steered towards more fundamental issues of what the participant thought were the essential aspects or core meaning of their pedestrian experience. This was achieved by the introduction of 'phenomenologically oriented' questions. These questions would be more challenging for the participant but when answering they were able to draw upon all the detail discussed previously in the interview. A full interview schedule can be seen at Appendix 6.

In general my approach was to address the first research question, in as neutral a way as possible. This was because I was confident that if I achieved descriptions of the essence of urban walking, there would be positive aspects within it which would answer research question 2 (which is in some ways a pragmatic application of the answers to question 1). This turned out to be the case.

However, while seeking to devise neutral questions about walking, it should be noted that an important personal circumstance may have shaped the research. This is that while owning a driving licence I have never owned a car. I am not a keen cyclist. Hence my main and favourite mode of transport within cities is walking. Thus it is likely that I have had a tendency to pick up on the positives of urban walking. However, even recognising this tendency, it would become

clear to me during data collection that most participants interviewed were naturally positive about walking, although participants Alan and Wilson were exceptions to this.

For my own clarity I formalised an expression of orientation for both the interview and analysis elements of the *Urban walking phase*. The main features of the orientation were as follows:

- 1) In essence I asked 'what' questions, seeking to ask 'what is it about the urban pedestrian experience (for the participant) that makes it what it is?'
- 2) I was orientated towards the phenomena as they appeared within the participant's awareness (Crotty, 1996). The 'phenomena' might either be physical entities that comprise the external conditions of the pedestrian environment, or might be the pedestrian experience itself.
- 3) I sought to identify the 'pervading essence' of the urban pedestrian experience.
- 4) I sought, with the participant, either to bracket off and go beyond any knowledge, preconceptions, usual ways of perceiving or taken-for-granted assumptions about the pedestrian experience (Van Manen, 1997, McNamara, 2005) or to at least to acknowledge such assumptions in order to reveal their 'shallow or concealing nature' (Van Manen, 1997, p.47).
- 5) The participant was led back to their account repeatedly to 'strip away preconceptions' and get nearer to the truth of what they have experienced (McNamara, 2005, p.699).
- 6) I acted as a 'co-participant or co-investigator' within the interview in order to seek to maintain the orientation of the interview as described above.

This defining of the interview and analytical orientation was intended to help to meet the challenge of maintaining commitments to phenomenology in order to focus on the essence of the walking experience.

The interview process was reviewed after the first 3 interviews to see if it was achieving objectives. In general I felt it was. Having completed half of the twenty interviews, I reviewed the interview recordings gathered so far, analysed my interview technique and considered if any adjustments needed to be made. One adjustment I made was to leave more silence into which participants could speak, thus taking an even less directional role in the interview. I also decided to try to voice my questions more simply and succinctly.

The participants interviewed in the *Urban walking phase* were different to those interviewed for the *Experience of motor traffic phase*. Participants were recruited through a number of

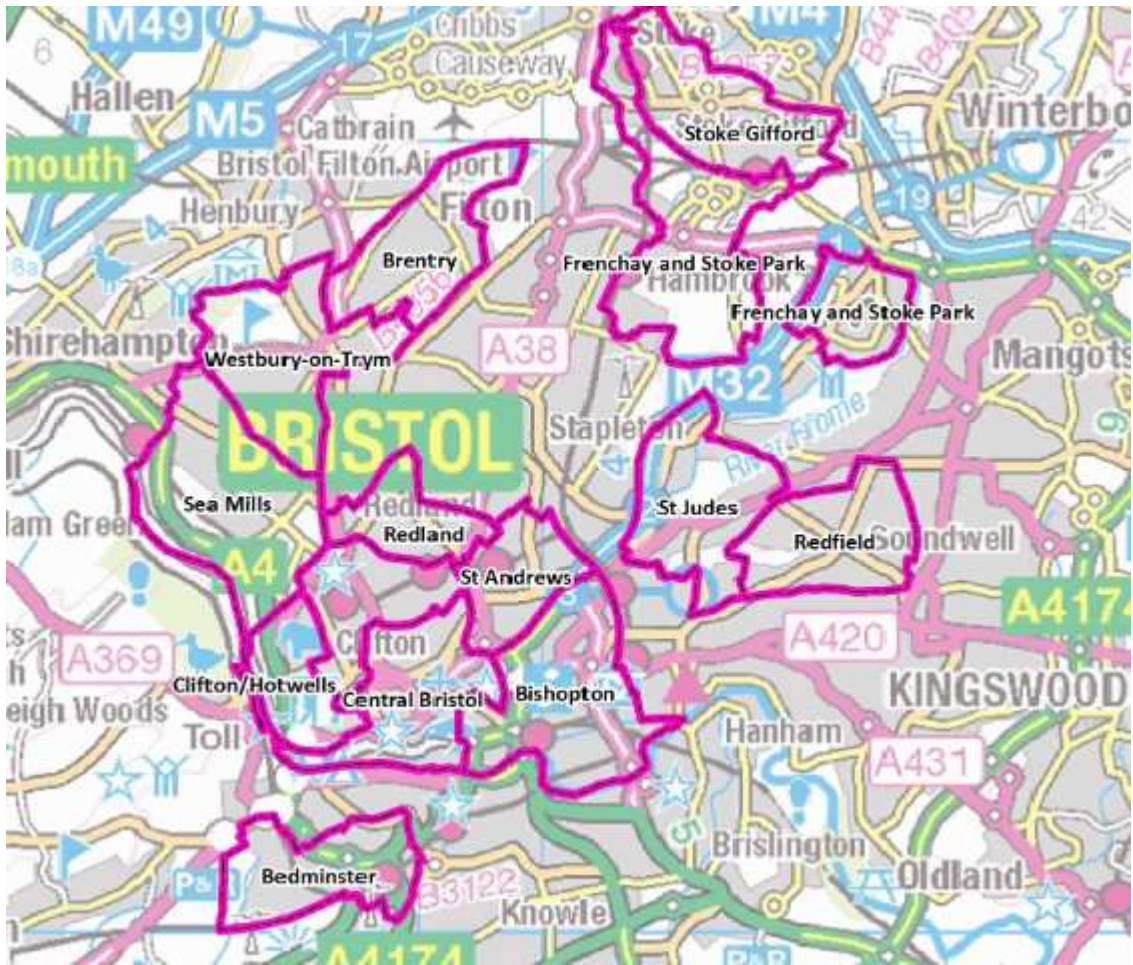
channels including: Bristol civic society, volunteers and one client at a local soup kitchen, a local Greenpeace group, employees at a children centre and snowball sampling. Participants were recruited in order to achieve a sample with people of different ages, gender, occupation and walking behaviour. It was desirable to recruit some participants who walked a lot and some who walked very infrequently. While there was a good variety in how much participants walked there was only one who walked very infrequently. There was great variety amongst the participants however in how interested they were in urban walking. The recruitment characteristics of the participants interviewed are shown in Figure 11, and Figure 12 shows that participants were recruited who lived in different areas of the city.

Participants were briefed about the research and its aims and were asked to give their informed consent to participate. Information sheets given to participants to read prior to the interview and consent forms they signed can be found at Appendices 7 and 8. The consent form shows that participants were made aware that they could withdraw from the interview at any time. They also had an opportunity to see a transcript after it had been produced and were given the option to request changes or withdrawal of their transcript. The interviews were recorded with a digital Dictaphone and were fully transcribed in order that every part of the interviews could be given equal attention.

**Figure 11 Demographics of Urban walking phase participants**

<b>Alias Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Household area</b>	<b>Walking behaviour</b>
Maisie	18-30	F	Café assistant manager	Central Bristol	'Walks everywhere' unless going to another town
Melanie	18-30	F	PhD student	Bishopston	Mostly walks. Drives two or three times a week
Lucy	18-30	F	Nursery worker	Hotwells	'Walks everywhere'
Howard	18-30	M	PhD Student	City Centre	
Wilson	18-30	M	Administrator	Stoke Gifford	Walks to work, prefers to run when possible
Ben	18-30	M	Unemployed	St. Judes	Frequent – walks 3 or 4 times a day.
Sofie	30s	F	PhD student	Stoke Bishop	Several times a week
Zoe	30s	F	Early years practitioner and Community support worker	Brentry	Walks everyday
Caroline	30s	F	Teacher	Redfield	Walks a few times a week
Lee	30s	M	Student/Lift engineer	Stoke Gifford	Walks less than using car, bike and running
Brian	30s	M	Civil servant	Village outside Bristol	Walks short journeys. Time pressure sometimes stops him walking.
James	40s	M	Artist	Clifton	Frequent
Jackie	50s	F	Archeology and history roles	Redland	More than a mile a day
Jane	50s	F	Finance	Frenchay	A lot. Including long urban walks
Alan	50s	M	Financial services – semi retired	Sea mills	Limited. Less than once a month.
Derek	50s	M	Bookshop employee and Stain glass artist	St Andrews	A lot. Every day and goes on long walks.
Greg	50s	M	Unemployed	Bedminster	Walks a lot. Everyday usually
Rose	60s	F	Voluntary sector	Redland	Walks somewhere everyday and goes on walking holidays.
Robert	60s	M	Chartered surveyor	Hotwells	Walks a lot. Had not used car in last three months
Lily	70s	F	Retired	Westbury upon trym	Limited. Between one and four times a week.

Figure 12 Showing geographical spread of Urban walking participants' residential areas in Bristol



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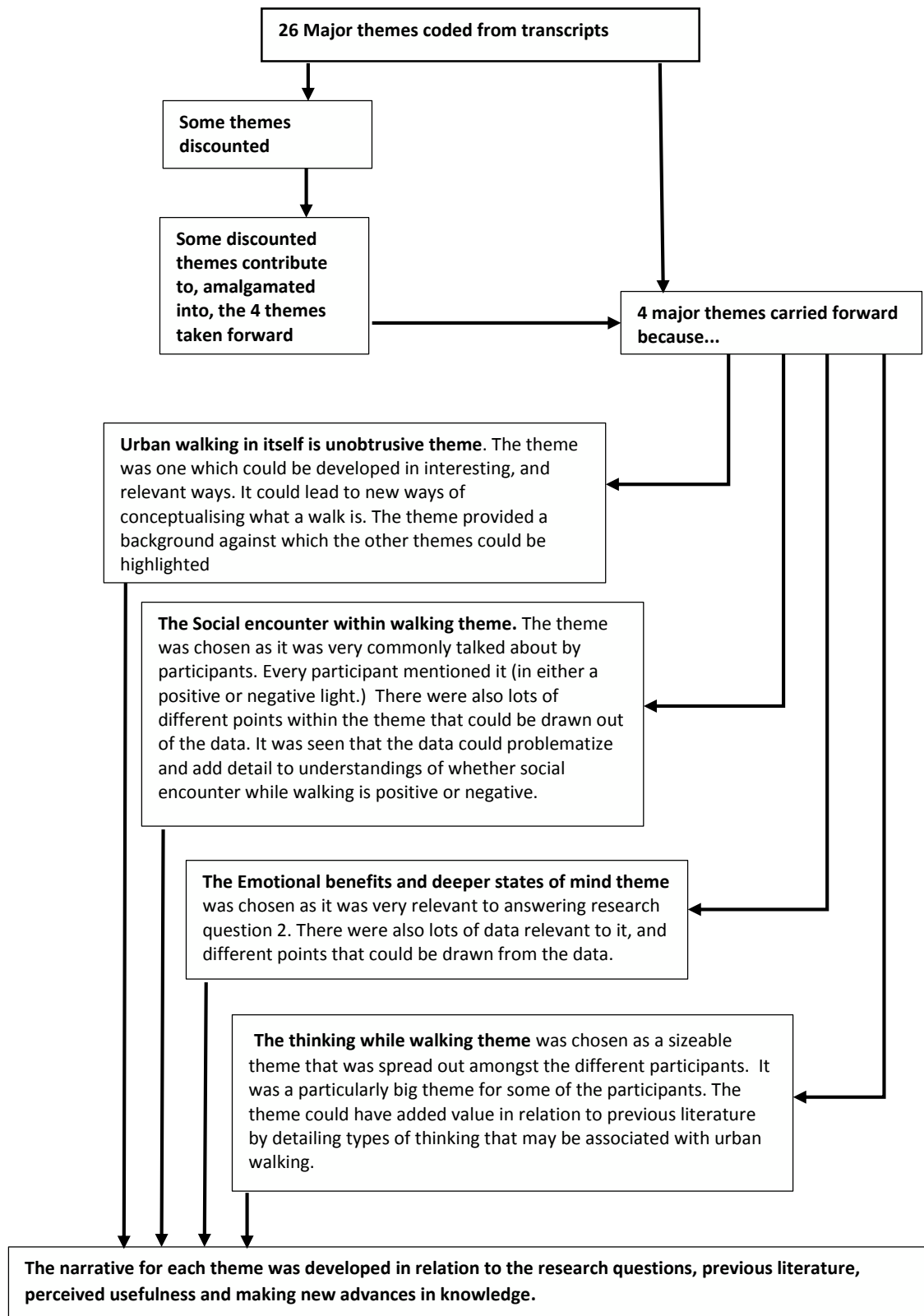
## Urban walking phase data analysis

Data were analysed in a number of steps. As mentioned above the first 10 interviews were listened through half way through the data collection process and at this point some of the main themes arising thus far were written down.

Analysis started in earnest when each participant's transcript was read through looking for main, minor and submerged themes. Data relevant to these themes (from any of the participants) were then agglomerated. This resulted in a set of 26 potential major themes and 32 potential minor themes. As examples, potential major themes that were coded but abandoned included: the negatives of walking, walking as a way to contact, walking as freedom or liberty, time cost and necessity of walking, multi-sensory, walking in different areas of town and a chance to encounter the unexpected. Several of the rejected major themes have contributed to, or have been amalgamated into, the four themes chosen for the analysis. Examples of the former include: the limitations of walking, attending to surroundings or lost in own world, observing changes in surroundings, walking in urban areas compared to rural, and the physical motion aspect of walking.

Figure 13 shows the process by which four main themes were selected from the Urban walking phase of data collection. The four themes were analysed using the six steps of thematic analysis, as described by Braun & Clark 2006, and as detailed in the 'Analysis of the Experience of motor traffic phase data' section above in this chapter.

Figure 13 Outlining process by which four themes on urban walking selected



## Conclusion

In relation to the challenge of how to obtain rich qualitative data on difficult to talk about topics, this chapter has highlighted that rich data was partly achieved through the use of contrasts. As examples, the real life setting of the walkalongs were in contrast to the reflective room interviews, the streets chosen for the walkalong interviews were chosen for being different to each other, participants of different ages and gender were recruited and the journey descriptions provided for the room interviews were contrasting, where possible.

Rich data was also obtained by the use of prompts to conversation. The *Experience of motor traffic phase* put participants in the presence of real life prompts, the traffic and conditions surrounding them as we walked. The *Urban walking phase* used prompts of recalling journeys in memory. Thus both phases created the dynamic of concentration on specific details of pedestrian experience. This built a momentum within the interviews which carried through into the more difficult sections of the interviews that sought to address the general essence of the pedestrian experience.

The research methods were designed to capture the pedestrian experience in two different ways, one phase examined it at the time of the experience, and the other examined it through reflection. These two different methods are contrasting. However, both rely on the ability of the participant and researcher to turn experience into words. A limitation of the study is that what is in some aspects a non-verbal experience was conveyed to me through the use of words. When preparing their descriptions, participants were invited, not instructed, to photograph their route if they wished, this was not stressed and only one did.

Another area of limitation with the methodology can be labelled its specificity. In order to conduct in-depth research into the walking experience the participants were a specific and relatively small sample of people. So undoubtedly a different group of participants, or walkalongs conducted in a different city, or different area within the city, could have led to different findings. The use of prompts, while necessary to produce rich data also introduced a specificity into the accounts. For example, in the walkalongs what participants said about the walking experience in general may have been influenced by the specific roads we were in. However, a level of specificity within qualitative research is unavoidable and the methodology is still valid as a way of exploring possibilities and potentialities that the urban pedestrian experience holds.

The different facets of this piece of research (research questions, literature review, research design, and analysis) are interactive and interlinked with each other. Thus while it has been stated at the beginning of this chapter that the methodology and methods were designed to answer the research questions, the methodology and methods have also played their own role in shaping the overall thesis. It is useful to reflect on the ways in which they have done this.

The decision to use a qualitative methodology has limited the extent to which the relative importance of the various aspects of the walking experience can be ascertained. For instance if a quantitative study had been conducted, the importance of the presence of motor traffic compared to the importance of good pavements could have been measured. Alternatively the importance of the experiential aspects of the walking mode could have been compared to other factors such as the time cost of walking. The qualitative data does not measure the importance of elements within pedestrian experience in this way.

The choice of phenomenology and individual interviews gave the research's approach to urban walking an individualistic slant. This is in contrast for instance to findings that might have been gained if walkalong interviews had been conducted using a group of friends or a family as a group of participants. However, the individualistic emphasis is justified given that many urban walking trips are undertaken alone.

The choice of having phenomenological commitments has also strengthened the research questions' emphasis on the 'what' of the experience. In other words these commitments direct the research into describing what the experience is like rather than seeking sociological, political, gender or other reasons that might explain the 'why' behind the pedestrian experience. This understanding of the 'what' of the experience can then be synthesized and developed into theory.

The decision to use phenomenology also affects the study's approach to the participants' language. There is the assumption in phenomenology that there is a reality 'out there' which can be known via a person's subjectivity, and that people's use of language about that experience can be relied upon. This is in contrast to approaches which stress the social, cultural and political forces which may lead the participant to construct their interview account in a certain way. In general the present study has not focused greatly on the way these forces may have influenced the interview accounts. This was to allow maximum focus to be allocated to the experience that the participants were talking about, the pedestrian experience itself.

So the general point has been made that the methodology and methods do not simply facilitate the research questions in a transparent way, they also have a shaping influence on the research as a whole. Methodological aspects which have shaped the study in this way have been summarised.

This chapter has documented the research design. The next five chapters will present themes constructed from the data. The first 4 of these chapters relate to the *Urban walking phase* of data collection, the last relates to the *Experience of motor traffic phase*.

## Chapter 6: Urban walking in itself can be unobtrusive

This chapter will present the simple assertion that urban walking is often an easy experience and that for this reason is in itself often unobtrusive. Because of its unobtrusive nature, walking can lead our awareness onto other interests, internal or external. This tendency of walking is commented on by Solnit (2001, p.8) who takes from Thoreau the idea that the topic of walking 'inevitably leads into other subjects. Walking is a subject that is always straying.'

The idea of walking having a taken for granted and unobtrusive nature predates the present study. Solnit (2001, p.3) amongst others has commented that walking is, 'the most obvious and the most obscure thing in the world.' There is little previous evidence though concerning the unobtrusiveness of walking. The present study makes a new contribution by supplying participant data supporting the idea. It is an important contribution because if walking itself is unobtrusive, this unobtrusiveness may facilitate the pursuit of other interests while walking. Some of these will be documented in the ensuing chapters.

I have referred above to 'walking itself'. I mean two things by this term. The first is the walk as an entity which one might talk about, as in 'I have just been out for a walk' for instance. The second is the physical action of walking, the movement of the body. In relation to the latter where I say above that walking itself can facilitate other interests, these may include seeing the sights of the city or having time to think etc. In other words, elements that are experienced during a walk but which are not the element of bodily movement. In fact this chapter will go on to raise questions about what 'a walk' is.

The chapter will outline several facets or angles from which walking can be considered unobtrusive. These facets are not perfectly distinct, but overlap to some extent. They include the ideas that people do not normally think much about their walking, that the physical aspect of walking often goes unnoticed, that walking comes naturally to many of us and is thus taken for granted and that walking often serves to focus our attention on experiences other than itself.

While the overriding message of the chapter is that walking in itself can be unobtrusive this is qualified with specific exceptions. For instance, the physical act of walking can become noticeable when the walk is long or the body painful. These exceptions are looked at through comparison between urban and rural walking.

The chapter will finally discuss the issues that it has raised surrounding the first research question: What can be learnt about the essence of urban pedestrian experience? The conclusions will also discuss academic and practical implications of the chapter's main themes.

### **Is urban walking normally thought about?**

Although walking has historically been written and thought about to a degree, some have suggested that, in day to day life, walking is often taken for granted and thought little about. Balzac (cited in Ingold, 2004, p.315) for instance asserts that: 'Ever since men have walked, no-one has ever asked why they walk, how they walk, whether they walk, whether they might walk better.' Thus an interesting question to ask of the data is whether participants normally think about walking, either when walking or at other times.

Middleton (2010) used participant data to explore walking. Her participants, it appears from her papers, talked about their walking experience with relative ease, indicating that it is something that can be fairly easily thought and talked about. Participants in the present study also generally talked about their walking experience without difficulty. I found they could usually talk on the topic for about an hour without too much strain.

So Middleton's writings and my interview experiences would suggest walking is something people can think about. In contrast though, there was also indication in the data that in practice some of the participants did not usually think much about their walking. Melanie related that before the interview she would never have thought about walking but rather it was just part of her life:

'...until you emailed me, I'd never have thought about it, it's just as in you walk because you need to get somewhere ...'

Melanie here sees walking in a functional way. Similarly Lily commented that the walking experience held quite a mundane and lowly position in her life:

Tom '...Do you view the walking experience as an experience in the same way or not so much?'

Lily 'Not really, I just regard it as part of my everyday life...like sort of getting undressed and getting into bed.'

Perhaps Lily chooses the metaphor of getting undressed as it is a transitional activity between two states, being awake and being asleep. It is a transition that can be accomplished with little

attention. In a similar way she perhaps sees walking as a mundane transition between two places.

Some participants had thought more about walking. Rose for instance had worked for the government in relation to walking and clearly enjoyed walking as an activity. However, the general sense from the interviews was that thinking about walking was unusual for the participants. This suggests that walking may inspire and relate most to another mode of being than the cognitive, perhaps the world of affect as described in NRT. Walking is perhaps an encounter where the progress of the body and the spurs of the environment meet in affects which often do not develop into conscious thought.

Some participants also suggested that they did not think about the fact of walking, even while walking. For instance Rose said:

‘...so I don’t think I think to myself ‘Oh I’m walking’, except when it gets quite tiring uphill right at the end after tennis probably.’

The lack of attention to the walk, whilst walking, parallels an observation by Highmore (2004, p.310 cited in Middleton, 2011, p.2876) on commuting, by different modes, that ‘commuters often describe their lack of attention to the actuality of these journeys, undertaken it would seem, as if on autopilot.’ The present work suggests that, in the case of walking, this unawareness can extend to trips of different purposes.

The discussion has suggested that urban walking was not usually very noticeable in the participants’ daily thoughts. They tended not to think about it, neither whilst walking nor at other times. In NRT terms the affects encountered whilst walking do not always develop into cognition about the walk. It has been suggested that one reason for this might be that it does not carry strong significance for personal identity. Another respect in which walking may go quite unnoticed is its physical aspect, walking as the act of bodily motion.

### **Was the physical aspect of walking noticeable to participants?**

Historically there has been the view that a walk in the countryside can improve physical health and reconnect the rural walker with their body and its capabilities (Edensor, 2000). Writing about rural walking has highlighted the enjoyment of the physical act of walking (Solnit, 2001, p.82). Awareness of the walking body has been thought to enable the development of an effective stride (Edensor, 2000, p.97 citing Williams, 1979, p.94). In the urban context Taylor (2003) comments that the physical act of walking may also announce itself in pleasure, pleasure in the ease of walking downhill for instance. In the present study, Ben hinted at



enjoying walking as a physical act, his use of 'stomp' suggesting an expressive and perhaps relished physicality in his urban walking.

'I will just go for a walk, I just go and stomp somewhere'

However, Ben was the exception in describing the physical element of urban walking with relish. There was little evidence of any positive, enjoyable attention to the body while urban walking. In fact, explicit comments were made indicating that the participants did not notice the physical aspect of their urban walking. For instance Zoe commented:

Zoe '...Yeah and physical movement again, I don't ever really think, 'Right oh I'm using my legs or body, to walk, it's just er...'

Tom '..You don't pay attention to it really...'

Zoe 'No and I guess because I do it every day, it's just a normal thing in my life. If you're a driver and you go for a walk, it's a completely different experience, but for me, I, it's just an everyday thing in my life, it's a natural thing'

Similarly Rose felt she does not have to focus on the 'mechanics of walking' in the same way that she would the mechanics of driving or of cycling, suggesting that as a process of moving, walking takes less attention. Comments indicating that the physical aspect of walking can go unnoticed were in harmony with Solnit's (2001, p.5) contention that walking as an act is 'the something closest to doing nothing'. It also confirms Hubbard's contention (2006, p.119 cited in Middleton, p.2781) that 'we do not have to think about the way we move through urban space: our body feels its way'. An unconscious control of the body may in fact facilitate effective movement through complex urban environments (Middleton, 2011).

Because for many people the mechanics of walking does not need attention, walking can be a time for other interests. Subsequent chapters (7 to 9) will explore some of these. In fact the repetitive rhythmic nature of the physical act may actually increase concentration on other interests. James talked of the rhythm of walking and Derek talked of enjoying a steady pace. In both cases the effect of this rhythm was not an increased attention on the body or its physical movement, but an increased and more vivid engagement with creative thoughts (both participants have involvement with visual arts).

Whether pedestrians pay attention to their physical movement or not also has implications for whether they regard walking as worthwhile exercise. It has been suggested that walking could be a successful way of tackling obesity, and that appealing to people's interest in their health

could be a strong strategy in promoting walking and cycling (Pucher & Dijkstra, 2003). However, Green (2009) has questioned whether walking is always motivated by health motives, and whether other motives, including cultural and political, may be more important in the decision to walk. Darker et al. (2007, p2175) reported that their participants did not 'value walking as a form of exercise' or consider it to be 'proper exercise' (p.2176). Their data also suggested that walking 'is a means of acquiring 'exercise' almost surreptitiously'. So a question is raised about whether walking is seen as being vigorous enough for it to be effectively promoted as exercise.

It was Darker et al.'s view of the surreptitiousness of walking as exercise that was echoed in the present data. Rose for instance talked about walking being 'the sort of exercise you take without knowing it.' This surreptitious physicality of walking may be a double edged sword: On the one hand it means walking could be promotable as exercise which does not hurt and is hardly noticeable, as Rose indicated. On the other hand people may fail, like Darker et al. suggest, to believe it is 'proper' exercise at all.

The surreptitiousness of walking was not limited to conceptions of exercise: Rose suggested that walking had an unobtrusive healing effect on her knee and broadened out this idea to suggest that walking can unobtrusively make people feel better 'in all sorts of ways':

'I had recurrent knee problems, and that I used to have to do specific exercise for that was a drag, so as soon as my knees stopped hurting I gave it up but (it) just sort of disappears when you're, when you're walking so I think it's quite magic actually. I think, I think it's a way of making you feel better in all sorts of ways, without actually noticing that that's what you're doing, it's an incidental, I don't go because it's going to make me feel better, I go because I want to do it and I really, really enjoy it and it makes me feel better...mm...'

Rose terms walking as 'magic.' Magic often relies on things being unseen. This suggests that in some ways the act of walking is a shadowy and subtle process that, as Rose indicates, is hard to notice. Ben echoed this idea of the surreptitious healing effect of walking, but in relation to his emotional state. He commented that while walking did 'wonders' for him in this respect, he could not explain why. In both Rose's and Ben's cases it seems that walking is acting upon the walker in ways that are beyond their awareness but that have positive effects that are noticeable. Perhaps then it is in a pre-personal and pre-cognitive 'plane', as proposed by NRT, that positive interactions in, and effects of, walking are taking place.

This section has so far suggested that the physical aspect of walking can go almost unnoticed. However some allusions were made in the interviews to specific situations in which the urban walker did become aware of bodily movement. These instances were mainly painful or negative. They can be usefully examined using some comparison to writing on rural walking. It is a useful comparison because many of the ways the physical act becomes noticeable are manifest to a greater degree in rural rather than urban walking.

In rural walking, the physical aspect of walking is made conscious by difficult ground underfoot and obstacles to surmount. Streams have to be crossed and banks clambered up (Wylie, 2005, p.239) 'barbed wire' and cowpats have to be navigated and fences climbed (Edensor, 2000, p.101) In addition the changing qualities of ground underfoot can draw the rural walker's attention to their balance.

The urban participants interviewed in the present study did not talk often about the quality of paving etc. But the rural cowpat and changing qualities of ground underfoot did find some echo in city streets. Caroline complained of having to navigate dog faeces, particularly as she has young children, and Lily, the eldest participant, talked about the hazards of slippery pavements. So in these instances difficulties under foot draw attention to the physicality of moving, in urban as in rural walking. But the weight of the data suggested that the urban walker has to pay less attention to the pavement than a rural walker does to the muddy or stony path. So difficulties underfoot were only a minor reason for the physical aspect of walking becoming noticeable for the urban walker.

Another reason the physical aspect of walking can be noticeable is when the walk is long. Leisure walks in the countryside can be long and thus painful. Wylie (2005, p.243) gives a forlorn description of his fatigue on his coastal path walk, noting the aches in various parts of his body and the accompanying melancholy. Similarly to Wylie, long distance rural walkers, interviewed by Crust et al. (2011) commented on times of hardship from the physical aspect of walking.

In comparison, the majority of the participants' walks described for the interviews were shorter than rural hikes. Only 3 participants from the 31 interviewed in total gave evidence of regularly taking long urban walks: Cecelia, interviewed in the *Experience of motor traffic phase*, walks everywhere she can reach in less than an hour and a half on foot. Jane is probably unusual in regularly taking 10 mile urban walks with her husband. Derek also reported going on long walks. But his walks, starting in the city, often foraged out into the countryside.

The majority of the urban walks talked about were short. Perhaps this is one characteristic that makes their physical component less noticeable. Brian alluded to this possibility. He also suggested that if an urban walk is over a certain distance he will begin to look for another mode to use:

'..So I think it can be, quite relaxing in that respect....although there's a point at which it just becomes...it just wears you out, depending on what, you know, if you're...If I walk too far then I feel I probably should have taken my bike.'

Another situation, shared by rural and urban routes, in which the physical exertion of walking can become noticeable is walking uphill (a common experience for the Bristol based participants). Howard for instance commented on becoming exhausted walking up a city incline. Rose, as another example, stated:

'...I think the uphill and downhill makes a difference too it struck me I hadn't brought a, I hadn't brought that out in my description that it does, it does feel , particularly coming back from tennis, it feels materially different and more of an effort to walk, when you're going uphill.'

Another specific instance in which the physical aspect of walking can become noticeable is when walking becomes painful. This may be a function of the walk's length, hilliness of the route or the health of the walker. In rural leisure walking, intense awareness of the body can dominate consciousness during times of bodily discomfort, when for instance the walker suffers headaches, 'muscle fatigue' and blisters (Edensor, 2000, p.101).

It is likely that a short urban commute would trouble fewer adults than a long rural hike in the country. There was though evidence of physical discomfort while walking in some of the interviews. Sofie stated that aching muscles could affect her enjoyment of urban walking and Jackie commented on becoming aware of walking due to the onset of arthritis:

'The physical aspect of walking, up until six months ago absolutely not really aware of the physical aspect of walking at all, because you just walk.....but in the last six months I'm becoming aware of....an element of pain in walking, which is...that I've had investigated...which is the onset of Osteoarthritis, which is fun (Jackie and Tom small laugh)....It's a real nuisance for someone like me who's really physically active.....So, (Jackie laughing) I am aware of the physical aspect of walking because I am now aware of it because it's painful.'

In this quote Jackie makes explicit the link between an increasing presence of pain and her increasing awareness of the physical aspect of walking.

This chapter is suggesting that walking in itself can be unobtrusive and hardly noticeable. This section of the chapter started by suggesting that the physical aspect of urban walking in particular can be unobtrusive. It has also highlighted that there can be specific exceptions to this. These exceptions have been considered in comparison to rural leisure walking. They include problems with ground underfoot, length and hilliness of route and times when the body becomes painful. Due largely to the shorter length of most urban walks, it is likely that these factors are less often relevant to urban walks than rural leisure walks.

Another dimension of the physical aspect of walking is that walking offers a 'knowing the world through the body' (Solnit, 2001, p.29). In a study of the importance of legs and feet Ingold (2004, p.330) argues that 'we perceive not with the eyes, the ears or the surface of the skin, but with the whole body'. He notes that we largely 'touch' the world through our feet. Similarly Miaux et al. (2010) suggests walking experience 'is based, at least in part, on the experience of the body'.

The idea of 'knowing the world through the body' was, however, absent in the participant interviews. It is relevant to surmise why this was so. Perhaps there are elements in the city environment that promote the attention given to sight and sound over awareness of the world through the rest of the body. Such elements may include danger from traffic and other pedestrians for instance. (The sensory stimuli and danger proceeding from motor traffic will be discussed in chapter 10.) These are dangers sensed more through the eyes and ears than the rest of the body. In support of the idea that vision and hearing are prioritised in city environments, there were far more references in the interviews to what participants heard and, particularly, saw whilst walking than to sensations in the rest of their bodies.

Alternatively possibly the unyielding, predictable and even boring quality of concrete and pavement underfoot discourages the urban walker from focusing attention on feet and legs, (compared with the sensuality and unpredictability of walking on rural paths for instance). Due to such factors in the city an expansive enjoyment of the walking body may be inhibited in the urban walk, compared to the rural walk where the body is 'more able to sense and to feel, to be more aware of itself and its 'natural' propensities' (Edensor, 2000 p.96, summarising traditions on rural walking).

This section of the discussion has argued that the actual physical movement element of urban walking went largely unnoticed by the participants. This has been contrasted with rural walking, which writings suggest can increase an expansive awareness of the whole body. Instances when the physical aspect of walking in cities become noticeable have been given however, such as when the body is tired, or painful, or is exerted in walking uphill. An additional likely exception would be the increased attention that has to be paid to movement by the elderly and disabled.

Some reasons have been given why more attention is not given to the physical body and its movement while walking in the city: the dangers of city environments may draw attention to sight and sound, and predictable ground surfaces may negate the need to pay attention to feet. Another reason why we pay little attention to the walking body in general will now be discussed. This is that walking is often an unobtrusive action because it is an unconscious ability.

### **Walking comes very naturally to most adults**

Merleau Ponty (2002 p.166) labels as 'habits' our unconscious abilities. He gives the example of touch typing in which someone may be able to touch type without the conscious knowledge of where each letter is on the keyboard. It can be argued that walking can go almost unnoticed as an activity because it similarly comes naturally to us. Lee made this specific point when asked how the pedestrian experience presents itself to his awareness:

Tom 'Just, if the pedestrian experience is something you perceive with your mind, with your whole mind, just how it kind of presents itself, how the experience presents itself to your mind, as you're walking basically, or to, to your awareness.'

Lee 'I suppose, I suppose just natural'

Tom 'Ok, yeah yeah yeah,'

Lee 'I mean when we talk about evolution and the fact that man ended up walking rather than being on all fours or whatever, it's kind of like considered, or seen by many to be the most natural thing that humans do.....but then...it can be taken for granted because...It can be taken for granted as well because you think to yourself 'Ahh, I'm...everyone walks' but they don't.'

Lee associates the innateness of walking with taking it for granted. The idea that walking can be taken for granted has figured in previous studies (Guell, 2012). Asked the same question as Lee, Melanie also pointed to the innateness of the act of walking:

Tom           ‘Can you describe the ways in which the pedestrian experience arises in your consciousness or awareness?’

Melanie       ‘Yeah, then I suppose....that would be indicative, I would think, that sort of....that, it seems to be such a part of, my consciousness while I’m doing it maybe that it almost seems...natural...to....yeah, I don’t know, that’s really interesting because I’d never thought of it that way but I think it is true that I separate those things out, in thinking about them, but then if you come, if you bring them back together....I don’t know, maybe it’s that it’s such a part of it that it’s....sort of all consuming’

Melanie suggests above that for her walking goes unnoticed not because it is a distant or tenuous experience but because it is so primary, so near to us. Walking is so integral to her that it seems natural and she hardly notices it. This neatly echoes Solnit’s (2001, p.3) assertion that walking is: ‘The most obvious and the most obscure thing in the world’. Perhaps walking is so close to us that we do not focus on it. It can be likened to silence which can be so close to us as we listen that we do not notice it, or the underlying paper that is so integral to a fine art drawing that we do not focus on it. Melanie uses the metaphor of breathing to express this idea:

‘Well it’s (walking is) secondary....either it’s unobtrusive and secondary or it’s so primary if you like, that it doesn’t occur, just in the way that you don’t think of breathing I suppose.....where it’s such a fact of what’s happening, of the situation.....yeah, which is funny I suppose....because I would never think of it that way, and I would never think of walking....as..an experience in its own right.’

Melanie joins the idea of walking being so primary to us that we do not notice it, to claiming that she never thinks about walking as an experience in its own right. This may be relevant more widely to many urban walkers: in the same way that few people will attend to their own breathing (unless they have motivations of meditation or mindfulness), many able bodied pedestrians may ignore the movement of the body when taking a daily walking trip.

It has so far been suggested that urban walking may be little thought about by many people, both when walking and when not, that the physical aspect of moving the body often goes unnoticed as it comes so naturally to most pedestrians. With these facets of the

unobtrusiveness of walking in mind, a useful metaphor can be formed, drawing together observations on Melanie and other participants.

### Walking as a self-effacing party host

Tom           ‘Yeah...so it’s almost, I mean you wouldn’t, so for instance maybe if you go to a musical concert, you might say ‘Oh that was a really intense experience or whatever’ but would you say when you’re walking it’s not a similarly....preoccupying experience or...?’

Melanie       ‘...I don’t think so I mean ....maybe because, I think in my mind or my way of thinking about it, I tend to separate out walking....from....because I do tend to think about work a lot while I walk, I tend to separate those things out so I could home and say ‘Oh I’ve just had a really, good think about my work’ but in my mind I don’t connect that to the walking.’

In the above quote Melanie separates, in her mind, the act of walking from what she does while walking (thinking about her work). She will be aware of her thoughts about her work but will pay little attention to the fact that she has been walking. This can suggest the metaphor that walking in itself i.e. the physical act and accomplishment of the body which takes the person from place to place, is like a fluent and self-effacing party host, who introduces us to other experiences, such as the sights and sounds of the city, or trains of thought on other matters but who then discreetly disappears from our consciousness. In her next comment Melanie reiterates that she thinks of the walking aspect of her experience as separate from all the other experiences it enables:

‘.....I tend to separate out the walking...to thinking just about the physical act of walking...from...whatever I’m doing or whatever I’m thinking about or even...the sort of social side of it, or you know I...If I want to get out of the house, it’s, I don’t think of it as I want to go out to walk, I want to go out to...see another person’s face or do you know what I mean to... interact with somebody.....but, yeah...but I suppose when you’ve, when you fuse those things, they are connected I guess, they are connected aren’t they....that’s interesting....’

In the above quote Melanie indicates again that she normally separates in her mind the physical act of walking from all the other things she experiences while walking. She even goes as far as to ignore the hosting walk altogether (‘I don’t think of it as I want to go out to walk’) in order to pay attention to the guest ‘experiences’, which she has separated from the host. The guest experiences, for Melanie, include experiencing trains of thought and the outdoors, and seeing and interacting with people. Melanie concentrates on these and the walk itself is



forgotten. Rose similarly indicates how her mind becomes unconscious of her walking itself and instead goes off on 'wonderful tangents'.

'I think one of the things about walking is you're not conscious you're doing it, so my, my mind will go off on one of my wonderful tangents and I may be, I may just be on autopilot, on a familiar, on a familiar route so...'

Rose made a comment which again borders on the metaphor of the party host, suggesting that the process of walking 'brings you in touch with a lot of life', like a host introducing you to guests.

'..Yeah..yeah..all of it, I think the great thing about walking....is...it's just part of life, and it brings you in touch with a lot of life. You don't have to do anything terribly deliberately to get, you don't know quite what sort of experience you will get on a particular day'

Melanie and Rose were not the only participants to suggest that when walking, they are not preoccupied with the walking act itself. The weight of the data strongly suggested that when the participants thought about their walking, the majority thought more about things they might see on the way, their surroundings, people they meet, and various travel time uses rather than the fact and experience of walking itself.

It is worth reiterating here the already discussed exceptions and nuances to the unobtrusiveness of walking. So the urban walk itself may be like a self-effacing party host but we do become aware of them when the walk becomes strenuous in length or gradient, or painful, or when it demands the cognitive attention needed for crossing roads and navigating other pedestrians and cyclists. So the host can reappear in these often negative ways.

The unobtrusiveness of the walking mode can lead to it forming a canvas on which other interests can be explored. The literature review in chapter 3 speculated that because of walking's unobtrusive nature it might introduce us to experiences both of the inner and outer worlds. This was in fact found to be the case in the present data.

In terms of inner experiences, as will be discussed in chapter 9, walking can lead to introspective personal reflection and daydreaming. This concurs with Darker et al.'s (2007, p.2178) assertion that walking can take us 'out of the world, and into an inner realm.' Derek gave a vivid description of his experience of this. He describes going deeper into his unconscious and his ideas, to the extent that he forgets his walked surroundings:

(As I'm walking) 'I'll slip deeper and deeper in a sense of trance, and then that is deeper and deeper into my unconscious, and that gives not only a deeper sense of comfort, but you can, weirdly, this sounds weird, 'cos you're seemingly cutting off, I have no concept of even what's going on around me if I'm walking, if I'm really concentrating on my idea, as I said earlier.'

The unobtrusiveness of the act of walking can also enable attention to be focused on outward experiences. There was evidence of pedestrians having a variety of interests in their walked surroundings. Jackie for instance enjoys walking because she has professional interests in both architecture and biology. This means that she enjoys specific buildings, (she gave the example of an orthodox church) and also seeing plants while she walks. Similarly Howard's interest in a lack of social equality in Bristol was touched upon and brought into his walks through affluent and deprived neighbourhoods. Rose commented that for her, one of the enjoyments of walking is that she can walk in the company of others who have different interests and who can thus comment on their surroundings in different ways. So if she walks with an expert in fashion, that person can point out people's clothes, whilst an expert in flora can highlight plants etc.

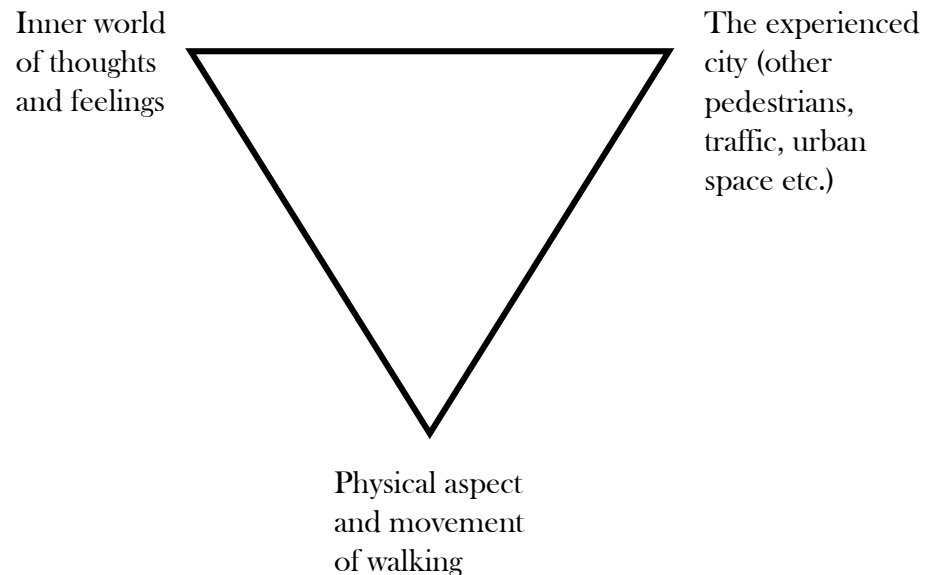
So the data suggests that due to its unobtrusive quality walking can introduce us to other interests that are outward or inward looking. In fact it is hard to think of many activities which can be as flexible as walking in terms of helping us explore either outer or inner worlds. Thinking about the physical aspect of walking and how it can facilitate concentration on either outer or inner worlds, can begin to move discussion towards answering a question of 'what is the experience of an urban walk?' This starts to inform an answer to research question 1: what can be learnt about the essence of urban pedestrian experience?

## Conclusions

This chapter has raised implicit questions surrounding what a walk is. Is it only the physical movement aspect or is it the whole package of the overall experience? To illustrate this question it can be asked whether a walk is purely the act of bodily movement. If so then this would suggest that walking on a treadmill constitutes a walk. Or is walking the process of moving slowly through surroundings, in which case could using a mobility scooter be classed as taking a walk? Do the surroundings have to be outside or can a person take a walk indoors? (See Darker et al., 2007.) This chapter's ideas, particularly those about walking introducing the pedestrian to inner and outer worlds, begin to move discussion towards a concept of what constitutes the experience of an urban walk. In answer to the above questions of whether a walk is purely the bodily movement or whether it necessitates surroundings etc., the urban

walk can be conceptualised as a triangle of relationships between the physical aspect of movement, the inner worlds of the walker and the outer world, the experienced city. This concept is visualised in figure 14.

**Figure 14 Concept of what constitutes the experience of an urban walk**



This chapter has suggested that the bottom point of the triangle, the physical aspect of walking, is in itself unobtrusive and in some ways acts as a feeder, facilitating and even intensifying the walker's attention on the other two points. Certainly in the data overall the participants talked much more about the inner world and the experienced city aspects of walking than they did about its physical aspect. Exceptions to this have been given. Awareness of the physical act of walking itself may be stimulated during physical difficulties, when ground underfoot is difficult, the route is long or hilly or the body painful. It has been suggested that in this respect rural walking may involve greater or more frequent awareness of the body than urban.

The triangle concept is not exhaustive of what constitutes the experience of an urban walk; it does not for example take account of the temporality of walking. Middleton (2009) for instance has explored the importance of the different subjective experiences of time that pedestrians encounter, besides that of time as mechanically measured by the clock. The triangle does though take account of a substantial number of factors in the pedestrian experience.

As has been discussed in chapter 5, NRT posits, and studies, a world of affects that can be pre-cognitive, lying on or beyond the boundaries of awareness. It seems clear that this is a good way of understanding much of the urban walking experience, particularly in relation to the act of walking itself: The walk, if there is such a thing, often inhabits those places between the walked environment and the awareness and cognitions of the walker.

The picture has been formed of benefits of urban walking, arising subtly and indefinably out of the pre-cognitive realm of the walk. But in addition difficulties and pains that arise when walking also bring the walk into the realm of the walker's awareness. These difficulties can impact the walker's awareness in less subtle ways than the benefits.

Two implications of the chapter's theme that walking itself can be unobtrusive can be drawn. The first is that it highlights a problem with academic research into urban walking experience. This is that obviously to research the experience the academic has to think and write about it. However, as it appears to be an experience that is often little thought about in day to day experience, this process of focusing on walking may fail to represent the unconscious or semi-conscious role it can often have in daily life. The possibility of this has been previously alluded to by Middleton (2011) who suggests that the normal unconscious nature of habitual life may be difficult if not impossible for those who experience it to talk or write about accurately. Perhaps then research into walking should include an NRT perspective on the parts of experience that lie on the edge of the walker's awareness, and the interactions between walker and walked surroundings that elude consciousness.

The second implication regards the promotion of walking. Trying to promote walking as exercise may have limited success if people tend to focus on aspects other than physical movement while walking. This is not to say that the exercise value of walking is not an important outcome of walking, just that it may not be the way to promote walking. As this chapter has suggested the physical act of walking tends to lead attention not to itself but to exploration of the inner and outer worlds. Perhaps then the opportunity to explore these worlds could be a very promotable aspect of urban walking.

The physical aspect of walking and specifically its unobtrusive nature have been discussed in this chapter. The next four chapters will look at themes that fall mainly on the other two points of the triangle. The first of these four will examine the different gradations of social encounter that can occur within the pedestrian experience and the different types of emotion they can create in the pedestrian.



## Chapter 7: The gradations of social encounter while urban walking

This chapter proposes that, in relation to research question 1, social encounter can be considered one of the essential elements of the urban walking experience. However, the chapter shows pedestrians' social encounters to be nuanced and variable, both between and within individuals. It argues that it is necessary to understand the social aspect of city walking as a series of gradations of different encounters and different reactions to them.

Discussion will begin by presenting substantiating evidence from the data to support the ideas raised in previous studies that the social encounter aspect of urban walking can involve the negative of personal safety fear and the positive of increased sense of community. However, the discussion will then turn to examining the gradation of reactions to social encounter between the extremes of personal safety fears and enjoyable, community building interactions. It will be shown that the level of social encounter that a pedestrian experiences depends in part on their level of gregariousness.

Different types of social encounter will be discussed, such as 'bumping into' acquaintances and the more diffuse and constant experience of walking amongst strangers. These encounters raise the question of whether the balance between social encounter and solitude can be controlled by the pedestrian. Unless indicated otherwise, the participants quoted are from the *Urban walking phase* of data collection.

### Negative and Positive extremes of social experience

Previous literature has often portrayed extremes of social interaction. The negative extreme is crime and fear for personal safety. A UK based study has noted that 'a substantial majority' of people do not go out after dark, in order to avoid being victims of crime (Painter, 1996, p.193). Seedat et al. (2006) have recounted in more detail the crime suffered by specifically female pedestrians in Johannesburg and Delhi. These reported serious personal safety risk from frequent sexual harassment and other crime. In comparison to their participants, the women interviewed in the present study evinced a similar although much milder concern for personal safety. Clair, a participant in her sixties, reported not feeling safe walking in the city centre in the evening and commented that:

'I have friends of my age who wouldn't *dream* of going out in the evening, to the city...cos they're afraid of being a pedestrian.' (Clair - *Experience of motor traffic participant*)

Similarly Lucy feels more comfortable walking at night if there is traffic and “a few pedestrians” around. This supports Demerath & Levinger’s (2003) contention that increased levels of people walking can lead to increased feelings of personal safety (see also Painter, 1996.)

In general though there was little discussion, by the women interviewed, of the significance of personal safety fears. Perhaps a reason why it wasn’t frequently mentioned was hinted at by Jackie who said:

‘...If I was walking alone on other bits of the downs, particularly at night time, well I wouldn’t be walking there, just because It’s kind of, would it be safe or not?’

It may be that the women interviewed, many of whom lived in fairly affluent areas, tend to avoid walking in places and at times they consider higher risk.

In contrast to the findings of Foster et al. (2004) it was noticeable in the present data that overall men commented more on personal safety fears while walking than women. With only twenty participants in the *Urban walking phase*, significantly less than Foster et al. used, this shouldn’t be taken as quantitative evidence that more men fear crime while walking than women. It does though emphasise that personal safety fear can constitute part of the male walking experience and perhaps along with traffic can be one of its main negatives. Wilson, for example, was particularly concerned about personal safety while walking, both in affluent and deprived areas of the city. He reported not listening to music so he could hear who was walking behind him and walking more quickly at night. James, Brian and Greg also raised concern about their safety while walking.

So a negative extreme within social encounter of interpersonal crime and the fear surrounding it was evinced in the data. This confirmed findings in previous research. The present data suggested that the possibility of crime shaped some women’s decisions about whether to make a trip and coloured the walking experience of some men with apprehension and fear.

However, as well as the importance of the fear of crime, previous literature has also pointed to the positive extreme of urban walking fostering and nurturing a sense of community (Cabe, 2008, Demerath & Levinger, 2003). This benefit of walking appeared in the present data. James, for instance, talked of turning off his iPhone in order to be open to other people:

‘Yeah it’s very much communal yeah...it’s the kind of time whereas I might otherwise put on iPhone or have a conversation on the phone, I might turn them off specifically so that I can

interact with those around me, 'cos it's one of those few times where you get the chance necessarily to do that, so, in that particular way, so yeah.'

James seems to be suggesting that walking presents a unique opportunity for social interaction 'in that particular way.' The street is an obvious forum for James to be among, and therefore to possibly engage, people who are strangers.

Other participants also found walking a time for positive social interaction. Rose reported her enjoyment of meeting and chatting to neighbours, a process she felt 'puts a different perspective on things'. Lee too met neighbours when walking in his area. This sometimes led to him doing odd jobs for more elderly residents, a neat example of walking leading to increased social cohesion. He also reported meeting a local woman who was a fount of knowledge, or gossip, about what was going on in the neighbourhood, an example of the sharing of local knowledge, a possible benefit of pedestrian activity suggested by Demerath & Levinger (2003). Lee found the resulting sense of neighbourhood pleasant, commenting: 'and it's nice to be in a community where you know people'. He particularly highlighted elements of reciprocity and support arising from interaction with neighbours:

Tom 'Yeah...yeah you say about...you see neighbours on the short walk and stuff...yeah so you've got a sense of community when you're out walking...'

Lee 'Yeah...and you almost feel like you're not alone, you, you can share, if there's any issues you can share your issues with people and they can help you out...'

Not every participant encountered a sustaining community through their walking. Lily, a lady in her seventies, bemoaned a lack of chances to meet her neighbours. Jane complained of a lack of community in her neighbourhood and attributed this to insufficient numbers of people walking. These variations highlight that the local norms of the neighbourhood lived in are potentially important factors in a pedestrian's social experience. All the *Urban walking phase* interviews were of people living in Bristol, a city that is likely to have different norms of interaction to London or Leeds (see Milgram, 1974 for this idea). It may also be significant that the four participants who seemed most positive about engaging other pedestrians in conversation, James, Rose, Lucy and Robert, all lived in affluent areas of Bristol.

So in conclusion on this section the present data has briefly supported two findings in previous literature: that urban walking can include the negative of personal safety fears and the positive of the enjoyment and building of community.



## Pedestrians' preferences affect levels of social encounter

The data also reveals that pedestrian social encounter is more complex than consisting simply of personal safety fears on the one hand and enjoyable community building on the other. It is more complex, in part, because the degree to which different pedestrians enjoy the social aspect of urban walking depends on their own gregariousness as pedestrians. (Being gregarious can be defined as 'enjoying the company of others' (Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus, 1999) and being 'sociable'.) With this comes an interesting question of whether a person walking unaccompanied within a city is inside or outside of a social space or whether, conversely, they are inside or outside of a state of solitude. As will be seen a high level of sociability in the pedestrian can lead to an urban walk being valued for social reasons. However, by other pedestrians it can be valued as a time of solitude. Vergunst (2010, p.386) has previously hinted at contrasting levels of gregariousness existing amongst different pedestrians. He suggested that on the street, 'One person's desire for familiarity meets only another's desire to be hidden.'

Perhaps the most social pedestrians interviewed were James, Lucy and Rose. These participants enjoyed urban walking as a time for interacting with strangers a time rich with social potential. James for instance reported nodding and smiling at unknown passers-by and sometimes striking up conversation:

'Yeah, so if there is any sort of glance of recognition there at least we can meet and nod and smile and if they do say hello of course, I will say hello. If they say 'Nice night for it isn't it?' I'll say 'Ooo lovely!' (Tom laughs) 'and, all of a sudden your journey's a whole lot better.'

Here there is the sense that James' interactions with strangers have a mood lifting benefit for him. Similar to James, Lucy also recounted talking to strangers. She reported starting conversations with drivers at traffic lights and also talking with dog owners.

'...yeah I think it can be nice just to chat, to say, to chat to random people and I think people kind of...appreciate it so it's nice and...dog walkers, dog walkers are approachable, you can talk to them.'

Lucy's conviction that other people 'appreciate' such interactions is a reminder that social interaction need not be motivated solely by self-interest, it is also a way of giving and sharing time with others. James and Lucy's perception of the street as a viable social domain challenges the contention that with strangers, pedestrians will aim for a 'distinctive

maintenance of privacy despite the public setting of the street' (Vergunst, 2010, p.380). In fact James eschews devices such as his iPhone that would enforce privacy.

However, other participants were at the other end of the spectrum from the gregariousness of James and Lucy. Ben, Derek and also Melanie to an extent, seemed to value, while walking, the 'maintenance of privacy' (Vergunst, 2010, p.380). They valued urban walking as a time of solitude. Ben clearly intimated that he values the privacy and solitude of walking, even in the city. In fact he suggested that he can 'process' his problems while walking because the people around him are strangers and as such have no right of access to his thoughts. So for Ben a valued benefit of walking in the city is that the people around him do not have, and cannot demand, the right to engage him about his problems. In that sense for Ben the 'social' space of a street is one that can be secretive and covered, conferring a degree of solitude:

'Right but...that's how I get my problems sorted. That's how I process what I need to process. It's like: go out for a walk, got that time, got that...I mean, don't matter what anybody else thinks, I'm getting on with my business, I mean if they want to know what's going on then it's like 'Well why are you being so nosy like?' I'm there doing my thing, you should just be doing your thing.'

Ben's comment suggests that each urban walker is just doing their own 'thing', and does not have the right to engage others. He would seem to value walking as an individualistic act then and in fact considers this the way it 'should' be: 'you should just be doing your thing.' This individualistic attitude perhaps suggests a 'depersonalised' experience of city life (see Taylor, 2003, p.1620). This contrasts with the communal possibilities reported by Lucy and James above.

Derek, like Ben, welcomes the solitary aspect of walking in the city. He commented on preferring his own solitary walks to organised hikes in the countryside. He talked about such hikes being deeply uncomfortable for him and of difficulties talking with the rest of the hiking group. In comparison he finds solitary walking a form of freedom:

'So no I wasn't good because I'm not a, I can waffle on, but I'm not good in public, I'm not good with people I just go completely off the subject or become unnerved. So yes it's (solitary walking is) a freedom, a freedom and a...cheap form of enjoyment probably.'

The understanding of some people preferring their walk to be a social experience and others preferring theirs to be a time of solitude has been prefigured in writing about rural walking: Edensor (2000) in his summary of Romantic writings on walking suggests that walkers have

disagreed over whether rural leisure walking should be done alone or in groups. He relates that some have expressed strong feelings that walking with others can disrupt the contemplative potential of walking. This preference for solitude in rural walking can be inspired by the desire to enjoy nature, a motivation less relevant in the urban context. But some rural walkers' dislike of meeting others may be the same as some urban walkers'. It may be a matter of personality. Certainly some of the rural walkers summarised by Edensor showed a strong antipathy to the presence of other people.

It can be suggested from the data that preference for social interaction while walking may reflect the pedestrian's wider personality: Certainly Derek and Ben's enjoyment of solitude while walking is part of a more general preference for solitude. Derek for instance considered himself solitary and introverted:

'I'd think I'd need that 'get out' and I'm a solitary, I'm too introverted, I'm not sociable, so I find that my way of sort of freeing in a way.'

Ben also talked frequently about his need to get away from people in general and clearly this is more general than a preference to avoid people solely when walking:

'Like I'll go into a shop, or I'll walk past a shop thinking 'Oh I need something' and look at how many people's in there, if it's too packed I'll just walk away and come back at a later time, because it's just, I can't deal with it...'

So whether people view their urban walk as an opportunity for solitude or social encounter may well depend on their wider character. It would seem from the data above that there is some degree of flexibility in whether the urban walk is experienced as social or solitary. The city is both unlike a party, where non interaction may be uncomfortable, and unlike a bus where interaction with strangers may be more difficult. (Lucy makes this point, contrasting the superior social potential of walking to that of riding the bus.) Milgram (1974) has suggested that in a large city it is simply impractical for pedestrians to interact with strangers. Overall, the present data questions this view. The cases of James, Lucy and Rose suggest that they can and do enjoy interacting with strangers in the city.

### Is the level of social encounter controllable?

If then the walking experience is flexible in terms of the degree of social interaction experienced, can this level of social interaction be actively controlled by the walker? Melanie suggests at one point in her interview that it can. She suggests she is able to 'dictate the parameters' of her social interactions while walking. This enables her to find a balance

between her social interactions and having solitude in which to think about her research work. She adds that the level of social interaction is 'very much on your own terms':

'...Yeah, and I think it allows you to have that, at the same time as having a very individual, sort of...mental, intellectual experience, do you know what I mean, if you are working through your own research, unless you're like that person at the party...or out to dinner or whatever that's just going through the minutiae of the research, which you're not going to be because it sucks...it (walking) allows you to have that sort of: 'I'll be social for this, you know, interaction', but then I can...you can shut that off very quickly or *you* (emphasised) dictate the parameters of that'.

In the above quote Melanie purposefully limits the social aspect of her walk by quickly 'shutting off' socially after an interaction. Another way she reports controlling the level of social interaction when she needs to think about her work is by choosing a route with quieter roads. Similarly Caroline suggests that in effect the level of her social encounters can be adjusted by the route she chooses; she particularly enjoys a route to her children's school that passes through a cemetery because she is less likely to bump into people she knows.

Melanie goes on to suggest she can also increase the amount of social interaction she has by engaging the security guard in her local shop:

'...you know we say hello and ask after each other, 'cos that's nice to do sometimes, you know when you've been stuck inside for a long time, you just want to say Hi to somebody and...but it's very much on your terms I suppose.'

The phrase 'on your own terms' that Melanie uses is significant and suggests a choice and freedom in some elements of social interaction on the streets. In addition to Melanie's analytical account of the control she has over social interactions, James and Lucy also implied that they considered the opportunity to socialise when walking was in their own hands, while Ben felt he had the right to choose not to interact with people. This is all evidence that pedestrians might achieve as much or as little social interaction while walking in the city as they desire.

However, there was also evidence that pedestrians can find themselves in social interaction with people they 'bump into' and that this can be unavoidable unless they wish to appear rude. Some participants welcomed these unanticipated meetings. Robert cheerfully adds ten minutes more than he needs onto his trips to his local shops, with the expectation he will meet somebody he knows and will chat with them. He indicated in his interview that he felt as a

man in his sixties he had more time at his disposal than he had in earlier phases of life. Lee also seemed to enjoy meeting people in his neighbourhood, reporting it made him feel like he is not alone, but did report that the walk to Tesco could take 'a lot longer than it has to be' due to meeting and chatting with so many neighbours.

The interviews suggested that meeting acquaintances while walking can also be unwelcome. Melanie felt it offers her no choice but to engage socially:

'...It's not at all your choice and you have to say hello, which is both really, it makes me sound like a mean, mean person, I know that and it is nice once you've said 'hello (makes sound indicating chatting) whatever', but there's always that moment when you see somebody coming, well depending on who the person is I think...you think 'Oh, shit'' (said quietly, Tom laughs)

The fact that Melanie knows the person approaching her on the street seems to imply an obligation to talk to that person, whether this is desired or not. Similarly, Lee talks about walking alongside people that he recognises but has never talked to before. He recounts not being sure what to say to them but because he is walking near to them feels obliged to talk to them:

'because you're so close to each other then, once you're in that sort of...invisible line that's been drawn around you sort of thing, you're in such a close proximity you end up talking to them.'

Lee finds this situation uncomfortable and will go as far as changing his route in order to avoid it. So then it seems clear that meeting acquaintances in the street is not always desired by pedestrians. As well as bumping into acquaintances, interactions with complete strangers can be forced upon the pedestrian: Maisie talks about a homeless man who would engage her in an unpredictable fashion:

'....sometimes, catch him on a good day and he'll be lovely to you, catch him on a bad day and he'll call you all the names under the sun for absolutely no reason as you're walking past, so if I see him then that can completely change the feel of my walk because if I see him and he says like 'Morning' ( Tom laughs) then you're like 'Oh, hello.' It's, you know, it's nice, or if I walk past and he calls me a you know whatever then it's...yeah...it makes me feel really anxious, and really uncomfortable so...he's a funny one.'

Maisie's account suggests that the pedestrian does not have complete control over the social experiences they encounter, even with strangers. Some encounters are initiated by others,

whether desired or not. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, in the extreme case this may take the form of crime. But it may also take a less severe but still significant form of unpleasantness as Maisie relates above. Maisie's quote shows that the effect of this stranger on her walk can affect her emotional state, making her 'anxious, and really uncomfortable.' There is then a possible vulnerability and unpredictability implied in the social encounter element of the urban pedestrian experience. The pedestrian does not know who they will encounter, acquaintance or otherwise, and how that person will affect them, when they set out on the journey.

Another forced interaction with strangers on the street is with street fundraisers. Both Lily, a lady in her seventies, and Laura, a participant in the *Experience of motor traffic phase*, reported feeling hassled by these. A further type of interaction initiated by strangers is begging, which occasioned feelings of guilt in Sofie.

A recap of the discussion up to this point can show that simple generalisations about urban walking as a social encounter are hard to draw. For instance it has been seen from James, Lucy and Rose that walking as social encounter can be enjoyed. But conversely it has been seen from Derek and Ben that it can be disliked. It has been seen that urban walking can be an opportunity for solitude as well as sociability. It has also been seen from Melanie that the amount of social encounter experienced while walking can be controlled to a degree, but not entirely, due to the occurrences of bumping into acquaintances or interactions initiated by strangers.

Instead of generalisations about whether urban walking is social or not, then, perhaps it is more fitting to talk about choice and freedom. Participants have a level of choice about how social their urban walking experience is. However, instances such as bumping into acquaintances prevents this choice from being complete. This section of the chapter has highlighted pedestrians' meetings with people known to them to some degree. Discussion now turns to the more constant and more diffuse type of social encounter while walking in the city: the aspect of walking amongst strangers.

### **Distant proximity to strangers**

The experience of walking amongst complete strangers can be understood with a concept of distant proximity. This idea is simply that when walking among strangers an individual is both physically proximal to others but also emotionally and relationally distant from them. This

concept can be considered in its two halves, the emotional distance and the physical proximity.

Melanie gives a description of the emotional distance that can be experienced walking amongst strangers:

'I don't know why I need to make that explicit...but it allows you to engage with the world in a way that's really passive and very...almost... not...almost quiet, but that seems like an odd way to put it, but do you know what I' ...yeah where you don't need to invest much of yourself into it and you don't need to really put yourself out there.'

Melanie suggests an emotional distance with passers-by which leads to a 'quiet' type of social encounter, and one in which 'you don't need to invest much of yourself.' As previously mentioned, Ben similarly values the almost secretive and sheltering distance he has from strangers while walking. This sense of emotional distance is also conveyed in Solnit's (2001, p.4) description of Kierkegaard's walking: He found walking 'a way to be among people for a man who could not be with them, a way to bask in the faint human warmth of brief encounters, acquaintances' greetings and overheard conversations.' Notice the 'faint' conveys the same sense of emotional distance. The sense of being distant and almost anonymous while walking among the city crowds also echoes the historic figure of the Flaneur (Urry, 2007, p.69).

Pedestrians may in part remain emotionally distant as they pass due to the temporal brevity of most interactions: as pedestrians cross each other from opposite directions there is very limited time in which to have a significant encounter. Nonetheless James finds brief glimpses into other people's lives enjoyable:

James '...now and again you catch little bits of peoples' conversations as you go past...that can be quite charming in certain ways...especially if you hear someone pass and you hear something positive and loving and nice and...'

Tom '...if two people walking together...'

James '...Yeah you get that ten second soundbite...and if it's like 'Oh, but he's just so cute, I couldn't possibly, you know, do anything bad to him' you get that warm fuzzy feeling, you know: 'Oh that's nice to hear' sort of thing...(text omitted)...Yeah or if its daylight hours etc, you've got the Mums and pushchairs and kids and stuff and its 'Mummy can we stop by...' and you know just that ten second sound bite can be quite charming in...its own little way.'

So James enjoys such encounters and was enthusiastic about enjoying the extracts from strangers' lives. Even if such snippets of overheard conversation include quite revelatory statements though, they pass too quickly to lead to any more meaningful encounter.

Perhaps it is because urban pedestrians are used to a state of emotional and relational distance while walking that when walking in parallel and in step with a stranger they can become uncomfortable. Wilson and Lee reported this feeling. Wilson felt it is due to a sense of intruding on the other pedestrian's space (and maybe threatening a desired sense of disconnection):

'Either you go further and quicker or slower, let them (inaudible)...because I'm a quicker walker, I'd rather speed up and just, I feel that I don't want to be intruding on their space, when I'm walking with them...So yeah, even though you're both in the same pace, it gets annoying...'

Another reason why walking in step with a stranger may cause discomfort is that it may raise personal safety fears in either person about what the other will do: any but the briefest of encounters with other pedestrians may lead 'to suspicion and alarm' (Vergunst, 2010, p.380). (As already noted this was seen not to be always the case with some of my participants who reported happily engaging strangers in conversations). So it has been argued that there is usually an emotional and relational distance between strangers as they pass on the city street.

The other aspect of the distant proximity concept is the physical proximity to others. Participants had a range of reactions to this. Lucy did mention preferring having some other pedestrians present when walking at night. (The pedestrian preference for being amongst other walkers at night has been referred to by Painter, 1996.) But the majority of participants had a preference for quieter rather than busier pavements

Crowding on pavements presents a pragmatic, physical challenge for the pedestrian: such crowds have to be physically navigated through. Vergunst (2010, p.380) gives an interesting account of this, suggesting that pedestrians take 'a kind of pride in the small skills, the gestures, of negotiating the busy street in a smooth manner, without needing to vary their pace too much or being made to stop.' The idea of not 'being made to stop' is significant and Vergunst associates it with a pleasant rhythm of walking. Perhaps Taylor (2003, p.1616) is right then when he says that we walk in corridors of movement and that when these are interrupted we are frustrated. However, Taylor speculated that it was motor traffic and waiting to cross it that would frustrate us. In the present data there was evidence that other



pedestrians also have this effect on the progress-oriented walker, such as Cecilia (*Experience of motor traffic phase*):

‘like students just stand on the triangle and they all stand in clumps and they’re all in the way, and I go through them with my friend and I literally will just push them out the way like ‘Thank you, thank you for standing in the way.’ Because they don’t seem to get it...that actually other people have things to do and standing in the middle of the pavement having a conversation isn’t the best place. So yeah, yeah pedestrians definitely frustrate me more than cars...’

Here Cecilia is frustrated by people standing still and conversing with each other. In another complaint about other pedestrians she talks about people walking slowly in front of her, ‘weaving’ and ‘ambling along’ with umbrellas. In both cases it may be a lack of visual contact that leads to the other pedestrians inconveniencing Cecilia. However, the plea of visual ignorance cannot always be claimed by the inconvenient pedestrian. Graham (*Experience of motor traffic phase*) was upset by other pedestrians walking double file towards him and refusing to yield, forcing him onto the road. Seeming from our interview to be a phlegmatic and mild mannered person this lack of manners angered him, more in fact than the motor traffic that our interview was about.

Is the basic, physical navigation needed to pass other pedestrians a form of social encounter? Ingold (2004, p.328) suggests it is. He suggests it is a ‘sociality’ formed by peoples ‘movements’. Perhaps it is for this reason that other people who impede progress create a greater ire in Graham and Cecilia than an inconvenient inanimate object might. People are expected to be social in their use of the pavement and to know better than to impede others.

Physical proximity to strangers while walking creates difficulties for Derek and Ben that go beyond those of physical navigation. In Derek it produces a sense of desperation:

‘...you can’t help being squashed up against a hundred people walking in the other direction, in the centre of town: you’re craving to slip off down side roads or find another way to your destination.’

In Ben it produces anger.

Tom ‘Ok, that’s interesting, so yeah you say like there that you like the harbourside because it’s more peaceful and you said before that you don’t like it too much when there’s lots of people,’

Ben ‘No I don’t, no.’

Tom 'Is it because it's just stressful or what is it?'

Ben 'Um it does wind me up, (inaudible) I find myself thinking 'You little prick, get out of my way' (said with humour, Tom laughs). And I get hot, I get antsy. Right and oo I just want to explode.'

Returning to the concept of distant proximity: it has been seen that in the pedestrian's physical proximity to strangers there is potential for social interaction but also discomfort. In the emotional distance from strangers there is potential for a type of solitude. One reason that has been suggested for why some city dwellers may seek emotional distance from others is that of 'overload' (Milgram, 1974, p.1462). This idea suggests that because there is so much sensory input in the city coming from so many people, less attention is paid to each person and some are disregarded altogether. However, although this may be the case for some of the participants interviewed, others actively enjoyed the denseness of sensory input in the city. James for instance talked of being able to enjoy a quick succession of visual images when walking and riding his bike and Rose commented on enjoying streets, both when they were quiet and when they were densely populated.

So in conclusion on the concept of distant proximity, it has been seen that walking amongst strangers in a city can be an emotionally distanced experience. This distance was valued by some participants and when it becomes compromised, by walking in step with a stranger, there can be discomfort. Within the distanced experience there can though be 'snippets' of insight into other people's lives, which James for example enjoyed. The physical proximity to other pedestrians experienced in city walking can cause frustration when navigating pavements. In Derek and Ben it went beyond this, to causing negative emotional reactions.

The term 'distant proximity' is intentionally self-contradictory and conveys the hard to define nature of city streets as a social space. In some senses they are public and social, even crowded, but at the same time they can be a space in which only faint interaction with others takes place and a degree of privacy can be maintained. Conclusions on the whole chapter will now be drawn.

## Conclusion

The first simple conclusion to draw is that the social encounter of urban walking was considered important by participants. There was not a single participant who did not mention it at all, either positively or negatively. Its importance for every participant was one reason why it had obvious potential as a theme to pull out from the data. There would be a strong

case for saying that urban walking is the mode of transport involving most social encounter, maybe alongside public transport. It might be supposed then that walking could be promoted as 'the social mode'.

However, the chapter has focused on the different gradations of social encounter that feature in different pedestrians' experiences and the varying degrees to which these can be welcome. It has suggested that being among other pedestrians is not always experienced as a beneficial, community building situation. The emotion that pedestrian social encounter inspires can vary greatly according to the personality of the pedestrian. Different participants had different responses to walking amongst strangers and different responses to bumping into people they knew.

Consider the scenarios of two pedestrians, derived from the discussion in this chapter. The first person is very gregarious. They nod and greet strangers as they pass by, generally being cheered by any interactions they receive back. They seek to reduce the emotional distance they have from strangers. In addition they may meet people they know to varying degrees and these can be engaged in conversation, thus building the pedestrian's sense of local community and social rootedness.

The second person dislikes being near people. They dislike the physical proximity with strangers that can make them desperate or angry. They value the relational distance they have from strangers, and the privacy of passing strangers having no access into their thoughts. They value their walk for its solitary aspect. They dislike meeting acquaintances, feel held up by them, and will take routes to minimise this possibility.

These scenarios show extremes of how pedestrians experience social encounter. Many people will fall into gradations between the two. Many such gradations and subtleties were found in the data. The point is that, in order to understand urban pedestrian experience, there is a need to understand these subtleties and gradations of social encounter and of its desirability for the pedestrian. The detail that the present study provides about the different feelings that different pedestrians can have about social encounter adds nuance to the very positive picture often painted in policy related documents of the community building virtues of having more people walking.

The fact that some people enjoy their social encounter whilst walking while others avoid it raises the question of how much choice there is for the pedestrian in the level of social encounter they experience. The car has been considered a transport mode in which there is a

high level of controllability in the level of social contact encountered (Lyons and Urry, 2005). The car driver can welcome anyone they wish into the car, or not. In the case of walking though, this chapter has given a variety of answers about how much control there is over social encounters. Melanie felt that to a degree she could choose the amount of social interaction she had while walking, but that in some instances she was forced to interact. Thus it seems the pedestrian cannot pick and choose all their social encounters, some happen to them, as is the case with advances from street fundraisers and beggars. Further, for Ben and Derek walking in the city generally entailed being amongst a barrage of other people, a situation which they had no power to avoid, and which they struggled with. Despite this, elements of choice with regard to social encounter do remain. The evidence from the participants hinted that a gregarious person will create more social encounters on a walk than a lover of solitude will.

The chapter has also explored a concept of distant proximity: That when amongst strangers pedestrians are often emotionally distant but physically proximal from other passers-by. Often the participants did not enjoy the physical proximity of this experience. The implication from this is that maximising the space available for pedestrians would be desirable, although this might induce more pedestrian traffic. The specifics of how this could be achieved could be an area for further research.

The discussion has omitted one obvious form of sociability while walking in the city: walking accompanied by others. This has been omitted because participants talked about it little; it was usually commented on only by mums such as Caroline and Zoe who walk with children. The participants suggested that this experience can be both positive and stressful (see Bostock, 2011). Obviously walking with known others is a common experience and could also be a possibility for future research.

The chapter has raised issues of whether the city street is a depersonalised place or not. It was seen that with his social disposition James viewed the streets as a place of welcome encounters, a community of passing strangers it could be imagined. On the other hand Ben viewed the streets as a less personal place, where people should mind their own business and get on with their own thing. The data then in some cases supports and in some challenges the contention that city life is essentially individualistic and uncaring (see Milgram, 1974). The question of whether city streets are experienced as depersonalised by the pedestrian will be revisited in chapter 10 in relation to the effects of motor traffic on pedestrian experience.

As has been seen in this chapter, the social encounter aspects of walking can have emotional effects. The next chapter will examine other ways in which walking can affect the emotions and state of mind of the walker.

## Chapter 8: Emotional benefits and deeper states of mind

This chapter will focus on emotional benefits that (mainly solitary) urban walks can engender. Along with the social encounter of walking, presented in chapter 7, and walking as a time to think, presented in chapter 9, it presents a key facet of the urban walking experience. The fact that walking has physical, social, cerebral, and here emotional aspects shows what a holistic experience it can be. This chapter will flesh out some of the ways in which walking and emotion can interact. As such it advances our understanding of previous studies that have found correlations between walking and mental health.

This chapter will highlight two aspects in which walking can improve the walker's emotional health. It will suggest that walking can both reduce negative mind states, and promote positive ones. The first section will discuss how walking can be used to soothe negative emotion. The second section discusses how shutting the front door and going for a walk can have emotional significance, both in getting out of the indoor environment and encountering the outdoor environment. A specific way in which the walked surroundings and the inner world of the walker can connect, through the process of having memories will be examined. The chapter will then look at deeper positive states of mind that walking can engender. Conclusions are then drawn. All the participants quoted in this chapter were from the *Urban walking phase* of data collection.

### Soothing and 'wearing out' negative emotions

The data supports previous evidence that walking can be beneficial for 'depressive symptoms' (Mobily et al. (1996, p.119), 'stress' (Crust et al. 2011, p.257), and 'anger' and 'tension' (Gatrell (2013, p.101). Derek and Ben were the two participants who most appreciated walking for the purpose of ameliorating negative emotions and both reported going on long walks. Ben reported walks of eight miles, and Derek gave an example route of a long walk through Bristol and showed blood under a toenail that he attributed to excessive walking. But although Ben talked about walking in emotionally graphic terms (he referred to it as 'stomping') and pointed to strong emotional benefits of walking ('it does wonders') he finds it hard to identify and describe how exactly walking soothes his emotions. However at one in his interview Ben does define some ways in which the walking process helps his negative moods:

'...it gives me something to do, and I do most of my thinking, If I've got summat on my mind or something's wound me up or I'm just in one of them moods, I just think : 'F\_\_\_ it', just grab a bottle of water and just go for a walk and nine times out of ten when I get back home, the

problem whatever it was, or the way I was feeling then, it's just completely subsided.....It's just gone.'

In the above quote it seems the walking has a cognitive element of being time to think about problems: Ben suggests the walk is when 'I do most of my thinking' in order to address 'the problem'. The walk also seems to have a mood changing component: 'Or the way I was feeling then, it's just completely subsided.' Thirdly there is a small hint that the walk imparts a sense of expression, or achievement: 'it gives me something to do'. So perhaps a combination of these three elements helps Ben to reduce negative mood by walking. Going for walks does seem an integral part of Ben's managing of his life. He also uses walking for soothing himself when unable to sleep:

Ben 'A couple of night ago I couldn't sleep properly, right it was three, four o'clock in the morning, so I thought (inaudible), right, got my shoes on, got dressed again, and just went out for a walk, just around the town and that for half hour, 45 minutes. Came back, got back into my three quarters and that and crashed straight out.'

Derek also reported walking in order to tire or wear himself out. He may have meant by this that walking wears out negative emotions although alternatively he may also simply have been referring to wearing out excess physical energy:

'So the central core (about walking) is journey, another core is a deeper sense of relaxation and it's wearing me out which is quite good.'

Derek goes on long walks in order to wear himself out. Ben goes for both long and short walks, reporting that emotional benefits can be gained from walks as short as 5 or 10 minutes. In general Ben described the benefits of his walks in terms of having peace with himself, and achieving calm. This harmonises with Darker et al.'s (2007, p.2179) finding that walking had 'therapeutic' value for their participants and that it can 'enable people to feel soothed, calmed, and refreshed.'

Ben was the participant who seemed to have the highest level of negative emotion in his life. Thus he was the participant who seemed to benefit most from walking's ability to reduce negative emotions. But Maisie, who seemed generally happier, also reported going for a walk when experiencing negative emotions:

'I'll often go for a walk to like clear my head, or if I've got something on my mind or if I'm feeling...If I'm feeling particularly sad or anxious about something then I'll walk'

So Ben is not alone in finding walking helpful when experiencing negative emotions.

In conclusion on this section, although a theme has been developed around the soothing of negative emotions through walking, the way in which this process occurs is not clear. Once again, as in chapter 6 it seems the physical movement aspect of walking is unobtrusive. For instance none of the participants described the movements of their walking body and how this made them feel better emotionally. The process through which a walk through our local streets helps us to feel less negative remains unclear. It may, as Ben's narrative suggests, entail cognitive, mood, escape and achievement elements.

### **Moving from indoors to outdoors**

Data suggested that people could experience emotional benefit from walking through the simple act of leaving their house and through encountering outdoor surroundings. The benefit of being able to leave the house was often framed in terms of escape: Derek, talking about what would happen if he could not walk, referred to needing it as a 'get out'. Referring to what would happen if he could not walk he commented:

'I don't know what I'd do actually, sticking bottle tops on things G\_\_ knows, I'd probably go deranged, I'd think I'd need that 'get out''

Derek's allusion to going 'deranged' is a humorous turn of phrase, but it suggests, in his case, emotional disadvantages of being restricted to the house. Melanie also talked about sometimes wanting to get out of the house, but of all the participants it was Ben who laid the most importance on getting out:

'Yeah, because before I'll be walking round my mum's place, right and she's got two doors to her kitchen, and it goes into her front room and that and I end up walking around and around, upstairs, downstairs and it's like, I feel like I'm going stir crazy, because I've been in for too long.'

This quote shows an affect, the combination of restlessness in and the confining environment of his Mum's house, creating frustration that becomes conscious as a feeling of 'going stir crazy'. The quote suggests there may be some validity in Ory & Mokhtarian's (2005, p.98) contention that travel, in this case walking, may offer a cure for general 'cabin fever.' Travel can ease a disliked situation of being indoors all day. Leaving the house may also serve a more specific emotional purpose however: there may be relationships or responsibilities indoors that a person seek temporary escape from. Ory & Mokhtarian (2005) for instance have suggested that exiting the house can temporarily reduce negative emotions when there is



domestic tension within the house. Echoing this, Ben described using long walks in order to escape domestic arguments he sensed were brewing with his ex-partner. Similarly Maisie talked of going out for a walk after an argument with her boyfriend:

‘or if I’ve had an argument with my boyfriend (Maisie laughs) it doesn’t happen often but when it does I like to, to go for a walk because, not only does it get me out of the house, because I live with him and his mum, so it’s a bit intense, so it gets me out of the house which is nice.’

The cases, present in the data, of walking in order to get out of the house are not necessary trips prompted by destination. For example they are not commutes. The quotes above suggest that while some trips are pulled from in front, by needing to reach a destination, others may be pushed from behind, by emotional dictates.

As well as providing escape from being indoors, walking may also provide emotional uplift in its provision of outdoor surroundings. Darker et al. (2007, p.2177) made this point in relation to one of their participants who did not perceive a walk on a treadmill as a ‘proper’ walk because it did not include the experience of being outside. From this, in terms of having emotional benefit, a walk with the exercise but without the ‘outdoors’ would not be a walk. It is interesting that Darker et al.’s participant did not specify a rural area as necessary for a ‘proper’ walk, but only walking outdoors; urban walking may not be in ‘the great outdoors’ but it still constitutes being outdoors and can be valued as such.

One way in which the participants of the present study seemed affected by going outdoors to walk is through being emotionally invested in their surroundings. This affirms the idea that walkers can be ‘stimulated’ (Edensor, 2000, p.86) and engaged (Maddrell, 2011) by their surroundings. Sofie for example explicitly stated that elements of her outdoor surroundings, big buildings and big spaces, could affect her emotionally while walking. She also considered that different walks could be chosen for their different emotional impacts:

‘...but then when you’ve done a certain walk several times you might know that it would provoke a certain emotion, if that’s what you are after, then you do that walk’.

This is a strong statement of the importance of the emotional impact of walks: That it can even influence route choice. There was however variety among the participants to the degree that they were emotionally invested in their walked surroundings. James for instance talked a lot and with passion about elements of his walked surroundings that he likes and elements he does not. At some points they enthuse him, at other points they make him uncomfortable. But

in contrast Wilson is much less invested in his surroundings as he walks through them. So the extent to which participants become affected by their surroundings can vary greatly from person to person.

The emotional impact of walked surroundings can be positive or negative. Rose talked about the negative impact some ugly railings that had been installed in her park had made on her:

‘And for, for sev’, well probably a few weeks I found it really quite upsetting to go in because I’d be jarred and you know, your thought process can go dow’, into a negative spiral can’t it, you know.’

So urban surroundings can hold negative impact for the pedestrian: Ugliness, busyness and traffic can affect mood negatively (the negative emotional impact of motor traffic on the pedestrian will be discussed in chapter 10). Previous research had reported the negative effect of walking through deprived areas for low income mothers (Bostock, 2001). But participants of the present study also talked about the positive emotional effect of things such as flowers:

Rose ‘But generally it can happen the other way and you...you see a whole load of bluebells in the wood in the park and you think ‘Oh wonderful’, it reminds you of where you’ve seen bluebells before...’

As Rose makes explicit, a small stimulus in her walked surroundings can elicit an ongoing change of mood. It can be noted that interaction between walker and environment does not only happen in the shadowy world of the pre-cognitive. It can be a conscious and cognitive interaction. Thus Rose gives the impression that one positive or negative aspect of her walked surroundings can lead to a new train of thought:

‘...feeling particular sorts of air or...smelling the freshness in the park sometimes after rain and or just, just being glad you’re there....and so your mood shifts and then you start thinking...yeah just generally positive thoughts I think, but, equally I can, you will gather, get very niggled by some of the things that they’ve done.’

The idea of a walk providing a set of inspirations or triggers to thought will be looked at again in chapter 9. But here triggers perceived in the environment are seen to lead to mood shifts, via affect, cognition and the senses. Rose gives the example of ‘smelling the freshness in the park.’ An overall impression from Rose, Sofie and others was that one way that walked surroundings can affect the mood of the pedestrian is by providing stimulation for the senses. Sofie, for instance made this possibility explicit:

Tom 'What does it feel like to experience the surroundings?'

Sofie 'Well, its stimulating, because you see.....different colours, and textures and....but also can be feeling the wind blow.... and hearing the birds, so it's multi-sensory.'

It is through the senses that the immediate environment is perceived. Walking and driving differ in the degree to which this environment can be controlled. Blumen (2000, p.740), for instance, records that rural drivers can control their car environment including its auditory aspect to establish 'a detached, pleasant atmosphere.' Similarly Lyons & Urry (2005) highlight the high level of control that a driver can exercise on their immediate environment, in terms of social interaction and auditory environment. In contrast to the car though, the present data hints that being in a less controlled environment through walking, while admittedly jeopardising comfort, may impart some emotional benefits. For instance Jackie talks about going out in the uncontrolled elements:

' ....whereas the one (walk) on the downs is, does have an emotional element because it's relaxing, freeing...it can be exhilarating. I mean it's wonderful to be up there when it's a windy day....in the autumn and getting a blast of, blast of fresh air...'

Here Jackie explicitly associates the (uncontrolled) element of weather with emotions of 'exhilaration' and freedom. Similarly Sofie alludes to the uncontrollable aspects of her walked surroundings being 'refreshing'. In a similar vein, Derek extolled the virtues of having natural and slightly chaotic surroundings. He contrasted this with an over-developed order imposed by local authorities. He felt that living in such ordered road layouts led to urbanites being 'very ordered controlling people.' So some of the participants seemed to enjoy some unregulated elements within their walking environment.

This section of the chapter has looked at how the walked environment can inspire emotion, how its potency in this respect varied greatly amongst participants, and how it can have either a positive or negative effect. The section has reported some ways in which features in the environment can trigger emotion and how this often comes through affect, the senses and cognitions inspired by the sensed feature.

Again walking can be viewed as an interaction between inner and outer worlds. Solnit (2001, p.6) has alluded to this, suggesting that 'the mind is also a landscape of sorts and that walking is one way to traverse it.' This chapter is showing that the interaction between inner and outer world can have an emotional facet. One further way in which this interaction can take place is through the provocation of memories.

## Accessing memory and history through walking

A number of participants talked of walks in certain streets and areas provoking personal memories for them. Lee for instance, finds walking along a road in which he previously spent time working brings back memories. He also sees people that he recognises from that time period. This is pleasant and brings a feeling of belonging.

‘..and I know someone on \_\_\_\_ Road so I kind of relate to it quite well it kind of brings back memories when I walk down there, and you think of the past in some respects...’

Similarly to Lee, James talked about certain locations bringing back memories for him:

‘... you just look at a particular spot and you think ‘Oh my goodness, two summers ago I was there with my Malaysian friend \_\_\_\_\_, and we drank wine and ate some chocolate teddy bears and chatted and happily, you know, wiled the night away, sort of thing and ‘wow that was amazing – stood right outside of that O2 building there’ and ...yeah that sort of thing can come into your mind’

For Lee and James then memories were triggered by specific locations, a certain road or spot. The links found between memories and place support the contention by Moles (2008) that repeated walking in a place, over time, can imbue the place with importance for the walker. She suggests that in her research of a park, her repeated walks there led to her accumulating knowledge which then shaped her experience of that place. Thus, when walking in a familiar place, the inner world of the pedestrian can provide memories and knowledge that may shape the experience of the walking environment.

For Rose (a retired person) memories can be triggered just by seeing strangers in different phases of life:

‘...and these people, many of whom, if they’re going to work, look anxious, are off...and you see the gangs of school children and it reminds you of how you used to walk to school with your friends or people of various ages and the parents taking their children to school, it reminds you of how you did that’.

Memories can be triggered then by streets and locations but also from people we see. In general participants seemed to find being reminded of their past pleasant, although perhaps unpleasant memories were not volunteered within the interview situation.

Participants’ sense of connecting with the past through walking went beyond memories from their own past. The city streets and features within them enabled participants to feel

connected to a history beyond their own. This was often the case with older streets and street features. Both Rose and Lee talked of getting a 'sense of history' from certain roads. Perhaps the word 'sense' here conveys a hard to define or delineate impression of history. Rose related:

'...It used to be part of the drove road, to take sheep to Gloucester, so you've got the gate, and I often think about that, (I) think about the sheep going to market down that road, they used to come along the road at the back here and down through the park, wasn't a park then, it was fields, but you get a sense of history...'

Some participants went beyond getting a general sense of history and suggested that combining the historical streets and features they could see with a degree of imagination they could almost contact history by walking in the street. Derek was the prime example of this. He talked particularly of walking in London:

'Strange mixtures because there were so many things historically interesting within London, the wonderful thing is that whatever footstep you take you walk in the footsteps of so many people from all elements of time, famous, rich/poor, whatever, and that's lovely, I feel that more than any other place in the world, but I, when I tread those streets, (I'm) stepping into that time frame or what were that person's thoughts in that moment in time....whoever it is, you're walking in the footsteps of Oscar Wilde if you're going up Shaftesbury Avenue, you could be any saint, sinner or whatever, great criminal. That's lovely, I love entering into that, you know, teleport time-space, you could just tap into their moments, their thoughts, their experiences: *that* ( his emphasis) I like about London'.

There's a sense of solidarity between Derek and previous generations, he imagines he can step into the experiences of long passed people by being able to see the same streets and buildings that they saw. There is a sense of community from the streets that transcends time: Derek feels he is sharing a street with people of previous generations: with Oscar Wilde, the famous, the good and the bad from the past. Derek goes on to describe a city as a 'tardis realm': the inference being that historical streets can enable a journey back in time:

Derek 'So, I think it was fantastic but that was the lovely thing about London it was an endless geographical time machine, it was tardis realm, absolutely brilliant. So that, that's lovely and I've never had that anywhere else on the planet actually but I (inaudible) my hand touching the door handle of somewhere and I'm *woosh*: I just feel I'm tapping into something

else, you can almost, whether it's your fantasy or not, touch into different people's emotions, thoughts or different element of time..'

James 'It's the microstories that are happening in my mind, it's the microstories about the building that was built in front of me: who built it, how it was built, it's the sign above the pub, how it was painted and what it conveyed to someone in the nineteen hundreds and what it conveys now and, you know, the heritage of the place, how many people have been past here, was Dickens ever here at some point?'

In Derek's and James' quotes above we see that there is some physical object that is seen almost as a conduit between past and present: Derek talks about touching a door handle and James about an old pub sign. Such objects are conceived as a pivot connecting present and past times. Although the idea that the past can actually be accessed through them requires an element of fantasy, such objects are unarguably something we have in common with previous generations. Melanie also talked of 'transporting' herself back through time, through experiencing old architecture in Bristol:

'...but definitely around the University where it's also Georgian buildings, you could sort of imagine why that path is here and the people that used to walk up and down it I think it's much easier to sort of, it's a totally sounds like an American abroad 'It's so old' (her emphasis: Tom laughs) and I know that but I think it's easier to sort of transport yourself or to imagine, what these places would have been like....before cars or I don't know...'

Melanie comments that some streets make it easier to imagine the past. None of the participants suggested that they can actually contact history through experiencing antiquated features of the urban environment. However the activation of their imagination in this respect provides them with interest and enjoyment as they consider ages previous to their own lifetime.

Comments by Derek suggest that the imagination of social history conjured up by streets and buildings is also in a sense part of the social encounter of walking that was discussed in chapter 7: Derek identified a solidarity with previous generations who had paced the same streets. This may have a deepening effect on the experience of the city. A deepening state of mind from walking was an experience commonly commented on by participants. Imagining social history may also encourage feelings of belonging: an aspect of the life of affiliation that is a component of positive psychology and which Crust et al. (2011) have sought previously to apply to walking.

The process of personal memories or imagined memories of previous eras being inspired by features such as old streets and buildings may be one by which walkers bond to the areas they walk through. There is the wider possibility that streets and the physical materiality of the street might somehow create imaginative and emotional response in the walker, which then connects the walker to their environment. In the same ways that music can solidify emotions and bring them into consciousness, and stories can bring imagination into focus, the city environment may contain features that serve as templates with which the emotions and imagination connect. The street may provide a play pen consisting of a whole range of incidences and features that the imagination can wonder about. The way in which environmental features can lead to trains of thought and emotion will be further discussed in chapter 9.

The inspiration of memory and imagination is one way in which the experience of a walk can be deepening. Accessing deeper states of mind through walking was an important theme to arise concerning the emotional life of the pedestrian. It will be turned to next.

### **Deeper states of mind while walking**

Some participants made connections between walking and deeper states of mind. Care should be taken in calling these states spiritual but certainly adjectives such as 'deep', 'meditative', 'refreshing' and 'trancelike' were used by the participants.

Two Christian participants for example mentioned in passing using walks as a time for prayer: James prayed while walking and Lucy thought walking was a time which could be used for prayer (although she normally found herself daydreaming instead). Praying is often a process of inner verbalisation but other deep states are accessed by a neutral observation of thoughts and senses. The present data supports previous suggestions that walking can be similar to meditation or an exercise of mindfulness (Carmody & Baer, 2008). For example Jackie referred to recreational walking in a large park in the city having 'a meditative feel.' Rose mentioned sometimes relaxing by 'not thinking' while walking. Similarly Sofie more explicitly raised the possibility of practicing mindfulness while walking:

Sofie 'Yeah, sometimes I might not be thinking....anything....of substance...but being mindful....of the surroundings....yeah.'

Tom 'Ok, and this mindfulness, is this kind of related to a meditation technique or is it from some kind of source or...?'

Sofie 'No, not really'

Tom 'It's really just focusing on what there is to see and...?'

Sofie 'mm hmm I kind of, I think, have been brought up to do that or it's my natural disposition (Sofie laughs).....yeah'

Tom 'And do you enjoy it, this kind of being mindful of what...'

Sofie '...yeah.....It feels to me that I am making the most of the walk, if I absorb what there is to see.'

In the conclusions of chapter 6 it was suggested that the walking experience can be conceived of as constituting a triangular interplay between inner and outer worlds and the physical aspect of moving. It is interesting that in Sofie's quote above, she enjoys mindfulness because it allows her to 'absorb' her outer surroundings. She suggests that paying attention to her walked surroundings (i.e. the outer world) is one way of 'making the most of the walk.' As will be discussed below however Derek and other participants suggested that another aspect of making the most of walking is to use it to open to an inner world.

Derek also pointed to a meditative potential within walking. He referred to it as a way of finding a 'deeper peace' and discussed what he perceives as a quest for peace being pursued by many in Western societies. Interestingly he reported that walking enabled him to pursue a meditative state of mind in a way that he could not achieve with disciplines such as yoga or seated meditation which require a physical stillness. So perhaps the simple act of walking, moving, provides a physical outlet which accompanies a deepening of awareness of inner or outer worlds. Again as in chapter 6 the physical aspect of walking is seen enabling and feeding increased awareness of inner and outer worlds. Derek reported:

'...and again I need that movement, because when I've gone to Yoga previously I just can't hold a single pose, I find it a wind up. (Tom laughs) But I need the movement in the thing in the... whatever the act is. And they tie together for me, I can get deeper spirituality without any religious thing, and walking can be a part of that...'

Similarly James also raises the possibility that it is because walking provides a degree of activity that it can help reach deeper states of mind:

'because you're doing something rather than absolutely nothing, it's enough to prevent you dropping off to sleep, and it can almost send you into a trancelike state.'

James suggests that it is the rhythm of an activity such as walking which can have a meditative effect. A pleasurable rhythm of walking which can 'take over the body' has been previously



talked about by Vergunst (2010, p.380). As a visual artist James suggested that such rhythmic and mindless activity could lead to a 'timeless place which is the epicentre of all creativity.' Derek, also having interest in visual art, likewise drew links between the rhythmic aspect of walking and the creation of artistic ideas.

'..and I think so many times when I'm walking and I can really switch off and keep the pace going, wonderful ideas come to me and far richer connection to the unconscious and I can absolutely fire up ideas, artistic ideas, just ways of thinking of problems in life, and they come to me when they are deeply settled, rhythm is there...'

So here the rhythm or 'pace' of walking carries Derek into a rich artistic inner world. Also in the above quote is a reference to the meditative aspect of walking establishing a 'far richer connection to the unconscious.' Derek talked about this elsewhere, saying:

'My conscious mind is taking in all that's going around but you can find a really deeper inner connections that you can really explore your unconscious mind and that comes through walking and there's a trance like state that I can get into which I find hard to do if I were doing like seated meditation or if there was a Buddhist centre or something'.

As well as including an increased connection to or exploration of the unconscious mind, Derek also suggested that the trance-like states he enters when walking would include a cessation of the mundane worries on his mind and also becoming unaware of his body:

'..but for walking I can complet', physically not feel my body and stop of the thoughts and process', of really the rubbish at the front of your mind....<text omitted>....and also, weirdly it's the body sensation that goes altogether, I have no concept, I'm just gliding, I'm just moving, my mind is just moving, and that's quite wonderful it's only when I snap back and think 'Oh my G\_\_' I'm slightly aware of that for a second, you snap back into your body, and that's enrichening'.

These descriptions by Derek and James seem resonant of a state of 'flow'. Crust et al (2011, p.254) report that their long distance walking participants experienced 'flow', to the extent that walking became effortless and 'all sense of time was lost.' James' description of a 'timeless place which is the epicentre of all creativity' is similar to this.

It has been suggested then that walking in general may induce meditative, deeper states. However several participants raised the idea that these states were hampered when walking in a city. Rose for example suggested that in towns as opposed to walking in the countryside she has to stay on her guard more and cannot 'dream as much' (although she still reported

extensive daydreaming sessions). Derek gives more insight into this. For him one of the conditions necessary for peaceful deepening states of mind is non-intrusive surroundings:

‘I’d say, yeah it depends, it’s not only what the buildings look like or pretty or whatever, it could be an ugly setting but it is feeling relaxed in yourself and I think the more we settle and feel comfortable with our environment, they’re not intruding on us or making us you know frightened or staying aware, you find a deeper peace in your mind...’

Derek stipulates that conditions for a deepening peace while walking are that his surroundings be non-intrusive. If they are intrusive they make him stay ‘aware’ of his surroundings. Clearly many factors within the busy city environment can be intrusive, and thus Derek showed some preference for walking in rural settings as they would allow him to settle into his mind. In the language of NRT then, the affects, which form ‘the background sense of an event or practice’ (Anderson, 2014) can in urban settings be unsettling, intrusive and requiring conscious attention.

One of the main intrusions in the city is the presence of motor traffic and the necessity of negotiating it. Hence Vergunst (2010, p.380) has written about the pleasurable rhythm of walking and the way that ‘Crossing roads....normally means an unwelcome break in the rhythm.’ The experience of motor traffic will be examined in chapter 10.

Overall then there is the feeling that in order to enjoy refreshing inner states there needs to be an uninterrupted and non-intruded upon quality to a walk, which enables the walker’s mind to settle. However, for participants, to varying degrees, these qualities are hampered when walking in the city, largely and explicitly by the presence of motor traffic.

To summarise this section, walking has been seen to encourage deeper states of mind, both relating the sensed city and the inner worlds of the pedestrian. It allows a physical outlet which is not present in seated meditation for example. The rhythm of its movement may contribute to deepened states. Some of these states constitute ‘flow’ in which day to day worries are quietened. Such states though may be hampered by intrusion of elements within city life.

This section has made explicit a symbiosis of the plain and quotidian with the rich and vivid. Walking in itself has been seen as a trancelike repetitive activity by James and mindfulness as a passive absorption of surroundings through the senses by Sofie. However these simple unprepossessing aspects of walking were associated by the participants with rich and refreshing states of mind: In James’ and Derek’s case creative states of mind, and in other

participants', states of peace. The physical movement of walking, which is again seen as unobtrusive, invites the walker into richer states of mind.

## Conclusion

In recent years there has been a shift among some psychologists from focusing on reducing and treating negative psychological problems towards enhancing positive psychological states (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000): States such as the 'flow' discussed in the last section of the chapter for example. While the beginning of this chapter looked at how walking can reduce negative states of mind, such as sadness, anxiety and 'cabin fever', the chapter has gone on to suggest walking can do more than this. Walking can encourage states of mind that are actually positive.

The data hints though that some of the deeper states of mind associated with walking may be more fully enjoyed in rural leisure walks. This was certainly Derek and Rose's conviction. In terms of emotional benefit perhaps the chief boon of urban walking is convenience: it is available just the other side of the doorstep. As such walking may offer 'bite size' emotional relief. However the short duration of many urban walking trips might place limits on how significant an escape from their normal life urban walkers can achieve, at least in comparison to long distance rural walking (Crust et al., 2011, p.258). Another reason that rural walking might be more emotionally beneficial is that there are fewer interruptions to the inner life of the walker as they move.

The remainder of this chapter will provide a summary of how the emotional aspects of urban walking play out upon the three points of the triangle concept (as shown in figure 14, chapter 6). The chapter has highlighted that the physical act of walking (the bottom point on the triangle) can have emotional benefits by wearing the walker out. The physical act was also sometimes considered to aid the achieving of deeper states of mind. Derek, for instance, said the physical act of walking was more helpful to him than a seated meditation could be. Rhythm was an aspect of the physical movement which both James and Derek suggested lead to deeper creative states of mind.

Walking can enable deeper states of mind through mindfulness of the experienced city (the top right point of the triangle). for example experiencing the outer surroundings without thinking about them. Conversely, Derek reported enjoying a deeper state of mind where he became almost unaware of his body and its movement, and moved into an internal

contemplation of artistic ideas (top left corner of the triangle). So deeper states of mind can be associated with either of the top two corners of the triangle.

The chapter has also shown that the experienced city point on the triangle can impact the emotional inner life of the walker. This was seen in Sofie being so affected by the buildings and spaces she experienced as a pedestrian that she sometimes chose routes according to their emotional impact. It was also seen in Rose's mood being affected by small external triggers. In Rose's case the external trigger led to trains of thought, either positive or negative. This will be discussed more in the next chapter.

Through memory and imagined social history, the inner life of the pedestrian and the experienced city can be bound together and can enhance each other. Memories and imagination seem to deepen the experience of the outer city. I argue this was one of the strongest ways in which inner worlds and experienced city were seen to interact in the data.

It should be understood from the above that walked surroundings are imbued with the potential to inspire the inner world of memory, emotion, thought and imagination. Thus characteristics of the walking environment beyond the aesthetic (i.e. whether pavements and street furniture look attractive) and practical (i.e. whether pavements are easy to walk on) can be considered important to the pedestrian. If people are encouraged to invest their inner worlds, such as their thinking, their imagination, their memory, into and onto the experienced city, they may feel more invested in walking.

This chapter has looked at the emotional aspects of urban walking: how the way the pedestrian feels is part of the essence of their walking experience. The next chapter will look at its more cognitive side: How walking can be used as a time to think.

## Chapter 9: Urban walking as a time to think

This chapter will suggest that urban walking has certain strengths and certain weaknesses as a time to think. It will also discuss some of the types of thinking that participants spoke of engaging in when walking.

It is important that the chapter should not overgeneralise from the data about which types of thinking can be conducted while walking. Clearly an urban pedestrian is free to think about virtually anything while walking, in any manner. However, there were some commonalities amongst participants about the types of thinking they engaged in, and logical reasons can be given for why walking may suit these types of thinking.

The chapter will make reference to the triangular concept raised in chapter 6. This concept suggests that much of the walking experience derives from the interaction of the inner worlds, outer worlds and the physical aspect of walking. The relevance of this concept to the theme of walking as a time to think will be explored more fully in the chapter conclusions.

The second half of the chapter will look at the types of thinking which may be frequently associated with time spent walking. Before that, the first half of the chapter will consider what strengths and weaknesses the urban walking experience has as a time to think.

### Limits on work tools, pressure and distractions while walking

Many urban walks happen before, after or during a day's work. While not every job requires a lot of thought and planning, many do and the majority of the participants interviewed had occupations that required substantial cognitive effort. Therefore walking as a time to think about work or study will be discussed. A strength of walking time in this respect can be highlighted: Because the use of thinking tools (such as pen, paper and laptop) are limited when walking, an inhibitory pressure and expectation to think is also consequentially limited. This can free the mind to arrive at fresh solutions and insights. Walking as a time for 'switching off from technology and responsibilities' has been previously noted by Crust et al. (2011, p.254) in a rural context.

Some modes of travel can be relatively conducive for office type work. For instance time on a train can be used for paper-based or laptop work. In contrast the nature of walking, where the pedestrian is moving and navigating the city in a standing position could be thought to limit it as a time to work. The use of paper or laptop while walking is problematic and while smart phones can be viewed while walking, even this is not very convenient. Thus it might be thought

that certain types of thinking about work might be limited for the pedestrian. It is not surprising Jackie commented that for some types of thinking she would prefer to be sitting down with paper, rather than walking.

However, participants also alluded to the lack of paper, laptop etc. as being a strength of walking as thinking time. Being away from such work materials can lead to a lowering of the expectation to think. It is partly the absence of things (work materials) that shape the affect that the walker encounters. This paradoxically can lead to fresh insights about work. Lucy for example talked about walking being a time when she does not officially have to be thinking (due to not being near a computer) and so paradoxically is a time she can have ideas:

'...or you know the same when maybe I was studying thinking 'Oh you know I've just been spen', I've been forever stuck on this essay or you know trying to write this or doing whatever, now I can think about something else and I'm not in front of my computer so there's no pressure. Although at the same time sometimes just walking along (inaudible) it's an experience everyone has, it's sometimes doing the random things like, when you're *not* (emphasised) trying to think of something is when you suddenly have a good idea.'

Lucy's comments suggest it is due to a reduced expectation to make headway in her work whilst walking that she is able to have insights. Lee also referred to a drop in expectation on him to think that led to insights:

'Yeah because I think also there's no pressure on you. Sometimes it's like when they say about writer's block. When you're almost told to do something, that's when you struggle to do it because it's almost like that, invisible pressure on you, but when you're just going about your everyday life sometimes, suddenly, the.... join up the dots and you can see things a lot clearer.'

Both Lee and Lucy talk about the removal of 'blocks' or being stuck, when thinking while walking. This is facilitated by a drop in expectations about thinking. In this respect urban walking seems similar to rural walking which Crust et al. (2011) found can represent a time where there is a lessened focus on thinking, which enables a relaxation leading to ideas and solutions.

It is not only work materials that are limited when walking in the city. Walking is a time when entertainment opportunities are at least relatively limited. It is true that pedestrians can listen to music and look at smart phones to some extent. But the latter activity is relatively limited in comparison to when sitting on a bus or passenger seat of a car. Perhaps then with its reduced potential for media entertainment, walking retains a slight degree of austerity in modern life.

Jane alluded to this with a comment that her husband likes to walk in order to 'think things through' partly because it helps him to avoid the 'distractions' in the house. Melanie also talked about escaping the distractions that a computer provides during work time, such as news websites etc.

So one strength and weakness of walking as a time to think is what it precludes: the use of paper and computer and the attendant pressures. More positively, walking also provides the thinker with aids and spurs to thought. These are his or her walked surroundings.

### **The interaction between thoughts and surroundings whilst walking**

Chapter 6 presented the concept that the walking experience can be partly understood as a triangular relationship between the inner worlds of thought and feeling, the outer world of the experienced city and the physical movement aspect of walking. This section will discuss interactions between the world of thought and the surroundings in the experienced city.

Rose talked about how one element of her walking environment could set her off thinking on a train of thought:

'...you know sometimes I think about something that's happening during the day and then something you see when you're walking will trigger thoughts.'

So the walked environment itself can present materials that may inspire or interact with a person's train of thought. In this respect it can offer an ever changing variety of triggers to contemplation. This idea is reminiscent of Robinson (1989, cited by Edensor, 2000, p.86) who says 'as one enters the variety and movement of the outside world, the space for interior wandering also grows.' Robinson also is drawing a link between the outer variation of surroundings and the inner thought process. So it can be seen that interactions between walker and walked surroundings are not always unconscious or semi-conscious affects. They can sometimes be very conscious and cognitive.

Urban walking may offer different sources for trains of thought, to rural walking. Rose for instance talked of more 'human dramas' happening upon urban rather than rural walks. She also talked of seeing people at different stages of life and how this led her to musing on her own life. So the environment provided by urban walking is likely to offer different, but still valuable, prompts to thought, to those offered in the countryside. Berman et al. (2008, p.1207) have commented on this possibility, suggesting that natural environments can provide prompts to thought that are 'intriguing' and 'modest', the idea being that natural surroundings do not assault or force the walker's attention. In comparison, Berman et al. suggest that man-

made environments contain more prompts to thought that force the walker's attention, such as cars which must be avoided. This portrays urban environments in a negative light with regard to providing prompts to thought.

Some examples of how Rose's urban surroundings inspire her thought processes were positive, some were negative. For instance she talks of how some unsightly steps put in her park cause her to have negative chains of thought:

'...they've put some incredibly ugly steps in our local park, well the steps are alright it's the railings that are really awful, the steps in themselves would be inoffensive. And for, for sev', well probably a few weeks I found it really quite upsetting to go in because I'd be jarred and you know, your thought process can go down', into a negative spiral can't it, you know: 'Oh look they've made this ugly. Oh, you know, isn't that typical, things get spoiled. Oh this council is rubbish.' Or whatever your thought process is.'

Interestingly Rose's thoughts go from the specifics of the steps to other more general ideas: 'things get spoiled.' Thus the quote shows one example of a specific feature of the walked surroundings leading to other topics. Lee's interview also gave insight into how inner thoughts and the walked environment can interact. At one point he commented on ways in which thinking about his walked surroundings and other trains of thought can either inspire or obscure each other:

'Yeah it can work in a way where I'm thinking about the day ahead, and then I'll see something and suddenly I'll...start thinking about that instead, and then, after I've thought about that for a while, I'll try to go back to what I was thinking about beforehand (Tom laughs) and I, sometimes I can't remember what it was. Or it could be the other way round, it could be I'll be looking at something and then I'll think 'Oh shit I forgot something', or ....you know, it's weird, but it's almost like it's, they overlap each other'

Here Lee has thoughts about his surroundings and thoughts about other matters such as his coming day at work. These two topics of thought can interrupt or 'overlap' each other. Lee indicates that sometimes paying attention to surroundings can interrupt his train of thought. Thus thought processes and paying attention to surroundings may be in opposition. Lily also implied a possible opposition between observing surroundings and thinking about things when she commented that it is when she has nothing to look at while walking (because it's dark) that she will tend to concentrate on thoughts:



Tom 'Right Ok and in general, what do you think the differences are, walking in the day and walking in the dark? In terms of the experience..'

Lily 'Well if you're walking in the dark, there's really, there's nothing really to look at because it is dark, that's the main thing....so one is more inclined to be thinking.' (Lily laughs)

Similarly, following a train of thought may sometimes be in tension with other elements of walked surroundings: Melanie particularly highlights a tension between encountering people she knows on her walk, and thinking about her work.

Some strengths and weaknesses of the urban walking experience as a time to think have been discussed. The objection could be raised though that given the variety amongst pedestrians and the variety amongst urban walking environments, the types of thinking conducted while walking could be very variable. It is thus worth noting a few ways in which walking as a time to think may vary.

### How different walks may have different potential as times to think

One way walking as a time to think may vary is according to the amount of attention the pedestrian has to pay in order to navigate streets and remain safe. Jackie for instance referred to walking as a time when she could make connections and insights. However, she reported that this was dependent on her surroundings not being too cognitively demanding. (In the following quote she is comparing a relaxed walk in a city park with walking on busy streets):

'And sometimes if your brain is just freewheeling, you can, it sort of makes connections...that it doesn't when you're busy thinking about other mundane things like traffic or pedestrians...It's like freeing up memory...on a computer'

The metaphor of the memory on a computer perhaps suggests that as the attention paid to levels of traffic and other pedestrians increases, thoughts on other matters can be impaired. Thus Jackie describes an example of walking conditions that can enable her to have insights on issues she is thinking about:

'Whereas if you're just walking on grass, and you've got a mile, and you know the route...'

This is a description of a walking environment where, for several reasons, there is little necessity to be jogged out of a creative or insightful reverie: 'walking on grass' conveys there is no traffic to cope with, the mile intimates a sizable distance ahead, giving sufficient time to get involved in thoughts and knowing the route means there is no way finding task to do. Such conditions are not always present in city walks and Derek for instance commented that the

necessity of crossing roads and other cognitive challenges on city routes can affect his ability to conduct deep thinking when walking in the city.

Melanie also strengthens the claim that when walking becomes more cognitively demanding the ability to think about other things diminishes. She reported that her ability to think while walking is reduced by the practicalities of negotiating the pavement with a pram. This is an example of how the addition of a tool, the pram, an extension to Melanie's body, can change the lived experience of urban walking.

Another factor that affects walking as a time to think is whether and to what extent the trip is time pressured. For instance the trip may be a commute, arriving for a specified start time at work. Participants discussed trips of a variety of purposes, including commutes and leisure trips and including trips with different degrees of time pressure.

Brian and Alan talked about time pressured trips. When on these trips they planned and thought about stage points along the route which they would aim to reach by a certain time. If Brian failed to meet one of these times, he might run to catch up with his schedule. This suggests that if a trip is time pressured, measuring progress can attract the attention of the walker. This might diminish the freedom to think about other things. In this way the purpose of the trip may sometimes be a limiting factor on walking as a time to think, when the purpose of the trip results in time pressure. It should be noted that the amount of time pressure on a trip is not simply a function on whether it is a commute or not. Lucy, for instance, seemed more time pressurised for a non-work journey than for her work journey and Jane reported her work journey not being too pressurised.

Sophie differed from Brian and Alan in that even on time pressured trips she would become calmer once she settled into the journey, due to a fatalistic acceptance that there was little she could do to move any faster. This suggests that walking as a time to think may be unaffected, for some walkers by the time pressure resulting from time sensitive trip purposes.

Rose hinted that walking faster under time pressure might be at odds with her normal pleasure of daydreaming whilst walking:

'as I go I have to keep looking at my watch and going fast, so I go on the way down I may not be meandering in my thoughts quite as much except I do, I get so...carried away in the park that I slow down and, anyway.'

The implication here is that when Rose walks faster she daydreams less, and when she daydreams more she walks slower. There is a parallel with Jackie's account here. Jackie

suggested that when the cognitive task of the walk itself is less, when walking in a park for instance, the mind is more able to think about other things, because the process of walking does not draw attention to itself. Similarly when Rose is under less time pressure, because of a less time sensitive trip destination, that aspect of the walk draws less attention to itself and she is able to daydream more.

The amount of cognitive attention needed when walking was one element that participants alluded to when comparing walking as a time to think with other modes. In general they suggested that walking is cognitively easier (and thus allows more thinking on other topics) than other modes because of a smaller personal responsibility and concern surrounding safety. For this reason some participants, (Jane, Lee) thought walking had advantages over driving as a time to think and some (Jane, Alan, Ben) thought it had advantages over cycling as a time to think. Howard felt that even as a car passenger, he was more preoccupied with safety than he was as a pedestrian.

There was some evidence then that walking offers specific strengths and weaknesses as a time to think, which are potentially different to those presented by other modes. This suggestion though must be tentative and further research is necessary before strong claims can be made about the virtues of walking as a time to think, compared to other modes.

In conclusion on the first main idea of this chapter it has been suggested urban walking has certain strengths and weaknesses as a time to think. These include that there may be a drop in pressure when walking, because of thinking equipment such as laptop and paper not being easily usable, which can paradoxically help thinking in some ways. Thinking about walked surroundings can add another layer of complexity to walking as a time to think. Some recognition has been given to the variation that must exist amongst walking trips as a time to think.

It is logical that the specific strengths and weakness that urban walking offers would mean it is used for certain types of thinking. Data contained evidence of three types of thinking being conducted while walking.

### **Walking as a good time for processing and solving problems**

Data suggested that the urban walking experience may have strengths as a time for processing and solving problems. Caroline for instance commented:

‘...it’s kind of like a problem solving exercise isn’t it when you’re going on a walk and thinking things through as well.’

Similarly Melanie reported walking when faced with a thinking problem. It is interesting to note that in Melanie's case the prime motivation for this walk is seeking a problem's solution, rather than reaching a physical destination. Such is the efficacy of walking as a time to think for her:

'Often I go out *to walk* (emphasised) if I'm stuck thinking about something, you know stuck on something - 'Oh I'm going to go for a walk'' (said in tone indicating frustration).

Ben also found walking a good way of processing problems:

Tom 'Do you think you get quite lost in thoughts then when you walk?'

Ben 'I do, I do very much yeah, especially if I've got a lot going through my head, right I've got a lot of emotional stuff going on, or I've got a load of problems that I'm trying to deal with or just generally life, right I do....find myself wondering in my head when I'm walking, and it's like I bump into something and it's like 'Whooh' (Tom laughs) 'let's get back to the moment shall we?' It's like being on another planet basically. Right but....that's how I get my problems sorted. That's how I process what I need to process.'

Walking enables Ben to lose himself in his thoughts and in this way process problems. In general then it seems that some participants found walking a useful time for addressing problems. It can yield insights into urban walking to consider reasons why it may be a good time to process and solve problems.

The first possible reason why walking is a good time for solving problems was given in the first half of this chapter. It is that walking time represents a drop in expectations of how much work will be done. The in tray is on hold and pedestrians are away from the tools with which many work, such as laptop and paper. Paradoxically, as noted above, participants commented that this drop in expectation could lead to insights and solutions being promoted in their thinking.

A second possible reason why walking might be a good time to process problems is that the physical activity of walking itself may help to release the emotional pressures associated with the problem. In effect walking may become like a rhythmic gesticulation, expressing and easing emotions. If this seems too speculative it is apposite to point out that the simple underlying idea here is that emotional state and bodily movement are mirrored. As evidence of this idea Gross et al. (2012) experimentally examined the effects of different emotions on walking gait. They found that people walked faster when joyful or angry than when sad. This is evidence then that emotions experienced can influence the act of walking. As further evidence, previous chapters have already commented on the emotional benefits of walking;

particularly the reduction of negative mind states through walking, a process which, as has been discussed, there is good evidence for in literature (Crust et al., 2011, Mobily et al., 1996, Gatrell, 2013, citing Pretty et al., 2005). If walking reduces negative mind states then it is logical that walking would be a good time to consider and attempt to solve problems.

Another possibility, raised from the data, for why walking may be a good time to address problems is that the purposeful and directed physical progress of walking may encourage a mirrored progress in thoughts. This idea was raised by Melanie.

‘Yeah it helps the flow of thinking and I think it just...helps you, maybe it’s something about the marching forward, that the forward motion maybe that keeps....that your mind maybe sort of mimics, do you know what I mean and sort of....yeah, you don’t get stuck in the same way or I feel like I never go round in the same sort of circles, that I do if I’m sort of trying to work something out..(sitting down)’.

Melanie mentions ‘marching forward’ and ‘forward motion’. Logically it is likely that any progress, even that of geographical relocation, is welcome when addressing problems because what is desired when addressing a problem is movement, and not impasse. However, this reason for why walking is good for processing problems can only be ventured tentatively as it was raised by Melanie only, with no other participant saying anything similar.

For some problems, walking when facing a problem may lead the walker away from a location with which the full extent of the problem is associated – i.e. the home or the office. This may be helpful. A good example of this in the data is in Ben’s interview. He contrasts ‘going off’ (walking) and being able to think about his problems, with being ‘locked in’ where ‘it just feels like my whole world’s coming in on top of me.’

‘..Yeah, exactly. Right and I just go off right and think about problems, money problems, things that I got going on in my head. What’s the best way to work it out. Right because I can have that moment’s peace where it’s like I *can*’ (emphasised) ‘get my thoughts together and I can actually sit down and work it out: ‘Right I got this, I need this to do this...let’s do it this way.’ And nine times out of ten it gets sorted....But when I’m surrounded or I’m locked in it just feels like my whole world’s coming in on top of me, right and I really hate that feeling.’

Maybe while we are walking, we perceive ourselves somewhat removed from our problems in a way that we may not while sitting at home. Perhaps when we are walking we are less fully opened to the realities of our daily ongoing existence which can at times be negative.

A final reason, taken from previous research rather than present data, why walking may be a good time for solving problems, is that the aerobic exercise simply increases cognitive ability, thus facilitating better attempts at reaching solutions (Netz et al. 2007). Netz et al. discuss potential explanations for this which are situated in the body's chemistry. The present data does not comment on these.

In conclusion on this section some participants considered urban walking a good time for addressing and solving problems. This suggests that one way in which urban walking can support good mental health is by providing a way that some find helpful to contemplate the problems that arise in their life.

### **Walking as a good time for reflection**

As highlighted in chapter 3 there is evidence from literature that rural walking is often considered a good time for reflection (Maddrell, 2011, Crust et al., 2011, Edensor, 2000). But is urban walking a similarly good time for reflection? Edensor (2000, p.86) has suggested maybe not. He comments that states of 'reflexivity' 'are believed to be difficult to achieve in an urban context'.

A number of participants commented that their urban walks can in fact be a good time for reflection (Lee, Jane, Brian, Lucy and Maisie). For those living in cities urban walking may represent more quotidian, shorter times for reflection than a rural hike. Participants reported reflecting on their day at work when walking home through the city. Jane for instance commented that on her walk home she gets the chance to reflect 'a little bit' on her day. The process of reflecting on the working day, on the way home, shows how, as mobilities literature suggests, time spent travelling is not an amputated period of time, distinct from the life lived at the locations that precede and follow it. Echoes of the day spent at work persist through the journey home, and processing these seemed to serve a purpose for the participants.

Reflection was mainly talked about in the context of solitary urban walking, and alongside the working day another reported topic for reflection was self. Lee for instance commented:

'..Dominant factors' (in the walking experience) 'are probably...so recognising what's going on around me. But I think more so, personal reflection I think, I'm thinking more about myself than I am what's going on around me.'

In the first half of this chapter it was suggested that interaction with surroundings may be part of the profile for the types of thinking urban walks are conducive to. Personal reflection though is one type of thinking which is quite separate to interaction with surroundings as it will

often take the form on ruminating steadily on one subject, often in memory: the day at work, or self, for instance. So in returning to the concept of the triangle, personal reflection would be an instance where the pedestrian is drawn toward their inner world, at the expense of awareness of their outer surroundings. Hence Lee contrasted the process of reflection against paying attention to surroundings, thus suggesting the two processes are not highly interactive:

‘Yeah...yeah...definitely and more, I think, If I was to look at all the times I’ve walked in my life there’s probably more time I spend thinking about my own life and what’s involved in my own life than I do thinking about the physical environment around me.....’

Amongst participants the process of reflection seemed to be valued as useful: Maisie talks about it being ‘really important’ to have alone time for reflecting on her day on her walk home while Lucy considered herself wasteful for not reflecting enough while walking:

‘...I don’t often have very productive thoughts when I’m walking, so yes, theoretically I think it could be a really useful time for...reflection, but I usually waste it (Lucy and Tom laugh) to be honest, but uh....hmm.’

In conclusion on urban walking as a time for reflection, just as walking may lead to a drop in pressure or expectation to think that may facilitate fresh insights into problems, so to the drop in pressure may enable a period of reflection while walking.

### **Walking as a time for Inspirational thinking or day dreaming.**

It was suggested earlier that walking can constitute a drop in the pressure or expectation for the walker to think. It was suggested that paradoxically this drop in pressure or expectation can facilitate certain types of thinking. This might be particularly relevant to inspirational thinking, fed by the unconscious mind. In the following quote Lee explicitly relates the gaining of unforced, inspirational insight with the drop in pressure to think when walking:

‘Yeah because I think also there’s no pressure on you. Sometimes it’s like when they say about writer’s block. When you’re almost told to do something, that’s when you struggle to do it because it’s almost like that, invisible pressure on you, but when you’re just going about your everyday life sometimes, suddenly, the.... join up the dots and you can see things a lot clearer.’

There was amongst a number of participants the connection between the relative cognitive relaxation of walking and more creative, less ordered and perhaps more inspirational thinking. A link has been found in previous research between walking and creative inspirational thinking. Oppezzo & Schwartz (2014) found that both the physical movement aspect and the

outdoor surroundings of walking increased creative thinking amongst subjects. In line with their findings, Lee reported inspirational insights and mental solutions coming to him while walking or running:

'I've definitely had that in the past where I've....been walking or running and I've....got clear mind and I suddenly, 'ah', a light bulb moment when you suddenly think 'Ah..why don't I just do that and that solves it, solves my problem, or issue or.....'

Jackie likened her thinking while on a non pressured walk to the thoughts that drift in and out of mind just before falling asleep, again it is the drop in pressure to think that leads Jackie to having interesting ideas:

Jackie 'It's kind of a bit like...that... few moments, if you're in, either when you're just going off to sleep....where....If you have been working.....right up to the minute before you decide, right you're going to bed...you're head's whirring.... so you can't necessarily get to sleep straight away because if you've stopped working half an hour before, made a cup of tea, just let your brain kind of, slow down a bit, then you usually, as your head hits the pillow, you've got a little while while your brain just kind of....wanders, not quite aimlessly but.....meanders back and forth, and sometimes interesting thoughts pop in at that point but sometimes you just, it just randomly.....gently drifting off to sleep. Or if you wake in the night and it's, you've been sleeping, you're sleeping lightly, you drift back, into sleep, so in a sense as you're walking....your thoughts can drift in and out without you having to force them to a pattern or force a concentration on them...'

Tom 'Definitely, thanks, that's amazing, yeah. So it's less purpose driven'

Jackie 'It's completely less purpose driven, it's, it's an aimless one. It's one of the reasons why, if I do do that walk I do it because it's, it's partly physical but it's also mental relaxation.....'

As Jackie describes it, the lack of force being applied to the thinking gives it a certain, perhaps more unconscious quality. Jackie's description of the thinking is interesting: 'while your brain just kind of....wanders, not quite aimlessly but.....meanders back and forth, and sometimes interesting thoughts pop in at that point.' There is the sense of effortless thinking which, as Jackie agrees with me, is less purpose driven than at other times of the day.

Such unforced thinking has been highlighted above as being useful for problem solving, perhaps gaining insight into a work problem for instance. Such problem solving in relation to work problems may particularly be associated with journeys to and from work. Lee reported



thinking about tasks facing in him on his way into university. Unforced thinking can also be a recreation. Lucy and Rose both talked about enjoying daydreaming whilst walking. Lucy mentioned it often during our interview:

'...just walking, doesn't seem to be, by myself, doesn't seem to be that...much...of an interesting thing, though at the same time I quite enjoy listening to music or....you know, daydreaming about things, even if I have someone with me, I sometimes wish 'Oh I wish I was by myself' so I could be doing my usual, sort of....in my own little world rath', so....yeah....But I do I do sometimes though, the downside of that is I sometimes think, 'Oh actually should I really be paying more attention to the world around me and more appreciating where I am.'

Lucy contrasts daydreaming to paying attention to her surroundings. Again then, in terms of the triangle, daydreaming for Lucy is a type of thinking which carries her into her inner world and away from the experienced city. Rose also enjoys the chance to 'dream' while walking in the city. She expressed delight at having a butterfly brain and thoughts which go off on tangents all the time. In some contrast to Lucy, Rose's daydreams can be inspired by things she sees in her surroundings. She also indicated that her daydreaming could be intruded upon by traffic.

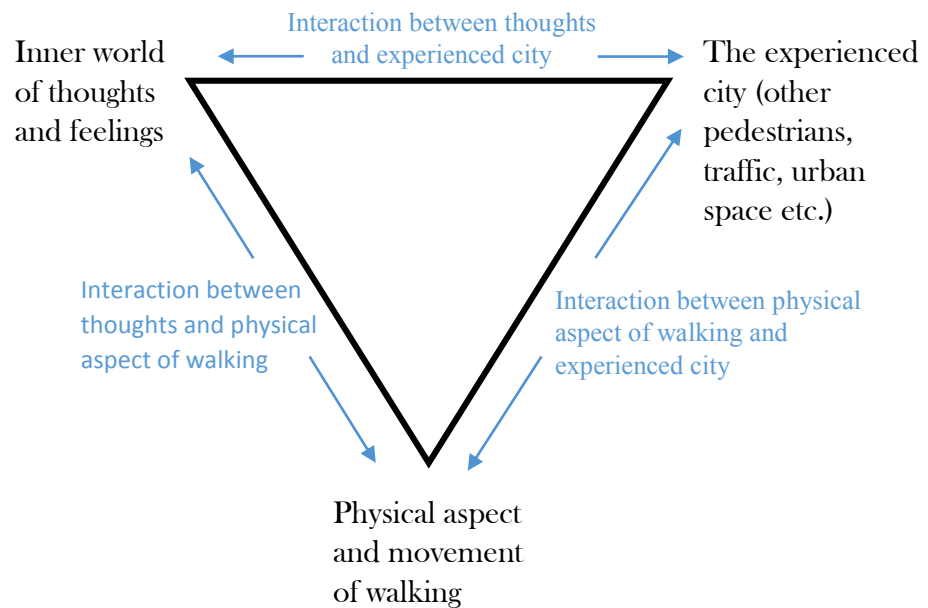
In conclusion on urban walking as a time for inspirational thinking and daydreaming, the present data has shown that urban walking can be a rich time for thinking of this type. This finding runs counter to the claim by Freud & Martin (2004) that when walking, the pedestrian must give up the right to daydream. The present data significantly adds to what had been very scant evidence of walkers daydreaming in previous literature.

## Conclusion

The chapter has looked at urban walking as having a set of strengths and weaknesses that shape it as a time to think. It has also discussed some of the types of thinking associated with urban walking by participants. The chapter has suggested that a time to think is an important constituent of the urban walking experience. This is perhaps surprising because logically it might be thought that the essence of urban walking would be concerned with physical movement and experiencing the city. Despite this the inner life of thought was an important aspect of urban walking, for some of the participants.

The above discussion has highlighted a number of strengths and weaknesses that urban walking has as a time to think. It has also highlighted some types of thinking that walking might particularly lead to. How do these play out upon the triangle concept as shown in figure 15?

**Figure 15 Concept of interactions with thought on the different sides of the triangle**



The first (top) side of the triangle represents the interactions between a pedestrian's inner thoughts and the experienced city. This chapter has shown that these interactions can take a number of forms. It has been seen that some types of thought can serve to take a pedestrian towards their inner world and absent them from their surroundings. This was seen in Lee's personal reflection and Lucy's daydreams, two types of thinking that did not need input from present surroundings. Another example, given in this chapter, is Ben's contemplations of problems that led him so deeply into his inner world that often a near collision with an obstacle would shock him back into awareness of his surroundings.

At other points in the chapter it has been seen that elements in the experienced city can inspire and trigger new trains of thought. Examples include Rose's trains of thought being triggered by small features of the environment. Other examples include Lee analysing his surroundings and Alan passing time by thinking about his surroundings.

The experienced city can also interrupt the thought life as well as inspiring it. As examples, Rose felt less able to daydream due to having to stay on her guard in the city, and Derek found deep contemplation being precluded by interruptions and the necessity of having to negotiate the city.

A final point to make in relation to the interactions between thoughts and the experienced city is that they may differ to the cognitive benefits offered by walking in natural surroundings. Previous research has found that natural environments produce a different range of cognitive challenges to urban environments, with the effect that walking in natural environments replenishes cognitive resources in comparison to walking in urban areas (Berman et al. 2008).

The second side of the triangle (bottom left) represents the interaction between a pedestrian's thoughts and the physical aspect of their walking. Literature has commented on the association between movement or exercise and increased ability to be creative and solve problems (Netz et al. 2007). Participants made some comments on links between the physical movement of walking and making mental progress. Melanie thought that the physical progress of the body encouraged a mirrored progress in her thoughts. Both James and Derek linked the physical rhythm of the walking movement with creative thinking with Derek suggesting the physical aspect of walking increased his ability to think.

The third side of the triangle is that of the relationship between the physical aspect of walking and the experienced city. This is the side least indicated in participant comments on walking as a time to think. Previous evidence has suggested that if movement is difficult, particularly for the elderly, then this can reduce the attention that can be paid to other cognitive tasks, such as memorising (Li et al. 2001). This would suggest that if the experienced city raises difficulties with moving, the pedestrian may pay attention to their physical progress at the expense of thinking about other things. But there was little evidence regarding this in the present study. Melanie did indicate though that when physical movement through the city is hampered, in her case by traveling with a pram, then she has less ability to think about other things.

In concluding on the triangle concept. The fact that urban walking can be valued as a time to think shows us that understanding the experience of urban walking goes far beyond the factors plannable by transport and urban planners. In other words there is more to the urban walking experience than the experienced city. This chapter suggests that walking is a multi-faceted, complex and holistic experience with many different daily uses for city dwellers. The person walking does not merely become 'a pedestrian' or 'a walker'; they remain people with days to reflect upon, problems to solve and daydreams to enjoy. Once again the physical walk itself serves as an unobtrusive host, to enable these thinking experiences.

The data has provided some preliminary evidence that the potential for thinking offered by walking may differ to that of other modes, largely due to the easier cognitive challenge walking

poses compared to cycling or driving for example. However, these findings are only preliminary and need further substantiating research.

The obvious practical implication for this chapter is that walking can be a good facilitator of thought. This may have relevance in the business sphere and mental health spheres. The data supports Oppedizo and Schwartz's (2014) contention that walking could be encouraged by companies as a good way to think about things. For instance group brainstorming sessions could be carried out outdoors and on the move. Additionally when an employee is stuck on a certain problem, a walk could be conducive to new insight.

Walking could also be recommended for those with mental and emotional problems. Perhaps people suffering with these problems could be encouraged to combine thinking tasks and taking a walk. Further research would be needed to see whether there are ways in which the combination of walking and thinking can be beneficial to mental health.

One factor in urban walking, as opposed to rural leisure walking, which may inhibit walking time as a time to think is the interruption and danger stemming from motor traffic. The next chapter will turn to examine the pedestrian experience of motor traffic.

## Chapter 10: Pedestrian experience of motor traffic

'There is a dearth of literature on the impact of road traffic on people's actual sensory experience of urban environments – on what it feels like to be outside and moving about modern cities dominated by motor vehicles' (Taylor 2003).

Chapter 4 noted that Taylor (2003) and others have made strong claims that city motor traffic has serious negative effects on pedestrians. This chapter will discuss the first in-depth participant based qualitative data to detail these effects. However the chapter will also suggest that for some pedestrians the negative effects of motor traffic are not as bad as had been supposed.

There was a lot of variation in the degrees to which participants were affected by traffic. A large portion of this chapter will look at why this might be so. It will be suggested that the concepts of barriers and necessity are particularly relevant when considering how the potentially negative presence of traffic might be mitigated or diminished for the pedestrian.

Most of the data referred to in this chapter come from the *Experience of motor traffic phase* of data collection, but some come from the *Urban walking phase* of data collection, because participants in that phase also sometimes talked about the part motor traffic played in their walking experience. It will be made clear when interview quotes and points are taken from that phase of data collection.

To begin, the argument will be made that, in terms of its presence, motor traffic is a primarily negative feature of the city, but that this negativity is diminished, to varying degrees, by barriers. These barriers can be physical, such as pavements for example, or can be mental. They can lessen the negatives of motor traffic for the pedestrian, but may also restrict the pedestrian in various ways. The first step to display in this argument is that, initially and basically, motor traffic is a negative presence for the pedestrian.

### The negative presence of motor traffic

Chapter 4 indicated that motor traffic has been thought to have substantial effects on pedestrians. Taylor (2003) suggests that pedestrians suffer a range of negative emotions due to motor traffic and that motor traffic can affect well-being to the point of being 'unbearable' (p.1617). Did the data of the present study bear out his claims?

Three aspects of the data confirmed that motor traffic can have substantial negative effects on pedestrians. These were participant reports of changing travel behaviour in order to avoid

heavily trafficked roads, relief expressed on escaping traffic when entering pedestrianised areas and descriptions of negative feelings about traffic. The descriptions of negative feelings about traffic will be explored first, with specific foci on the noise and danger coming from motor traffic.

Previous literature has suggested motor traffic may have a negative, oppressive effect on pedestrians through its aesthetic impacts (Taylor 2003, Sheller & Urry, 2000). Taylor, (2003) suggests that the visual and auditory aspects of traffic may be significant. The present study's participants did not consider the visual aspect of motor traffic to be particularly important. However many of them commented on traffic noise as being significant. A significant characteristic of noise is that it often permeates space; it is not deterred by pavements for example (although barriers can be built against it, May & Osman, 1980). Jess was the participant most affected by motor traffic, and it was traffic noise that particularly bothered her:

'Yeah it is, it's the noise that gets me.'

The phrase 'gets me' suggests the traffic getting a hold on and dominating Jess's awareness, in an unpleasant way. This has the effect of spoiling the experience of the city for Jess:

'Yeah I think I probably just concentrate on where I'm going. I wouldn't walk around for pleasure, in an environment this noisy...'

This quote indicates the pervasiveness of noise: it is not only the cars that are loci of noise, the whole 'environment' is noisy. It is perhaps through the noise then that Jess feels she is caught in the presence of traffic and feels 'got' by it. The noise of traffic also makes it difficult for Jess to concentrate:

'Yeah it's probably the thing I notice most. It's the thing I, it's probably the one negative thing I find about coming into a city, there's a lot of positive things and that's probably the biggest negative....yeah so um (coughs) I find it quite hard to concentrate....with the noise'

Other participants including Cecilia, Alison and Beth also considered the noise of traffic can hinder conversations with others or even their thinking. Several of the older participants felt that noise can have a greater impact on older people. Mary and Clair for instance both felt that the challenge of having conversations near motor traffic was compounded by having lost some of their hearing.

Traffic noise can affect pedestrian travel behaviour as well as their experience. Graham cited traffic noise as one reason why he would choose pedestrianised routes when walking through the centre. These examples suggest then that noise was a particularly influential aspect of motor traffic for some, though not all, of the participants interviewed.

Safety and danger were also of primary concern for the participants in relation to traffic. This confirms statements to this effect by Taylor (2003) and Bean et al (2008), and others. Taylor (2003) suggests that the potential danger from motor traffic is fundamental in the pedestrian's experience of traffic. He suggests that this danger can lead to the pedestrians' attention being commanded by vehicles, which in turn reduces their appreciation of their urban surroundings. The danger can also be a stated barrier to people walking (Bean et al. 2008).

In the present study the importance of danger and safety in relation to traffic was shown in answers to the question 'What is important to you as a pedestrian?' Jess, John and Mary all mentioned their own safety in their first response. For example:

Tom 'So I guess the first question would be 'what's important to you as a pedestrian?'

John 'Well safety most times, and particularly when you get older of course because....you get...you give the traffic more deference, obviously, than you used to.'

There is a distinction to be made in feeling in danger when on the pavement or when crossing the road. Most of the participants seemed to feel safe while on the pavement. This is significant as much of the pedestrian's time while walking is spent on the pavement. This is an example of how entities as inanimate as pavements can be intimately involved in the emotional hues of different places in the city centre. In terms of feeling in danger when crossing, predictably the two oldest participants felt the least safe: John considered his difficulty in walking fast or running when crossing created safety issues and Susan reported feeling less 'indestructible' than when in her youth, and highlighted some crossings in Bristol that she felt were problematic.

The danger posed by traffic had affective consequences. It was argued in chapter 8 that urban walking can induce positive states of mind, but for Derek and Rose these were hampered by the threat of danger from traffic. Derek (*Urban walking phase*) talks about the effect of the danger of cars in cities in strong terms. With some humour, he likens them to 'sharks' which disrupt what would otherwise be, similar to swimming, a relaxing process of walking:

'I suppose you just separate from the daily world going on around you, but also somehow, like through meditation, it becomes refreshing and enriching. It is it's relaxing the mind, there's

continually a computer working out all these things and cataloguing, analysing things and...dealing with our lives, so it becomes a mini step in a balance as well as a...it makes the journey far more enjoyable. Makes it lovely, that's where the cars come in, that's the problem' (T laughs) 'The cars are the prob, they're the sharks in the swimming experience you see.' (said with humour) 'I want to dive into the pool but 'whoops, Oh my G\_\_ there's these little black fins out there somewhere and they stop me relaxing''

The idea that pedestrians have to watch out for cars, in a similar way to swimmers watching for sharks adds credence to Taylor's (2003) claim that the danger of traffic means pedestrians have to be continuously on their guard .

Derek evinced quite strong reactions to motor traffic. His emotional state while walking which otherwise would be relaxed and meditative could be turned, by cars, into a state of 'fight or flight' The reference to a state of 'fight or flight' adds weight to Taylor's conviction that motor traffic means the pedestrian has to remain 'keyed up' and 'alert' (Taylor, 2003, p.1621):

'you have to be, it's fight or flight from caveman days, it's brought up to date. You could, you have to look, you have to be conscious like a terrified bird, it turns us all a little bit into that...'

This prompting into a changed bodily state that is keyed up for action fits neatly into the category of a strong affect, as defined by NRT (The Dictionary of human geography, 2009, p.8). The emotional outcome for Derek is a result of a precognitive interaction between himself and the potentially dangerous surroundings.

So some participants indicated that motor traffic was a negative presence in terms of the noise it produces and the danger it poses.

As well as the specific elements of noise and danger, participants also referred to motor traffic in more general negative terms. Susan, for instance, referred to it being 'a nightmare':

'No, I don't. Not, I don't think, not any more than probably I've said, I mean , it is all a nightmare and it's going to continue to be as I said because of the volume of traffic, and I can't see, you know, there's got to be some improvement, something will be done.'

The situation seems bad enough to Susan that something must be done to improve it. At another point Susan referred to traffic being horrendous:

Tom 'Ok....Is there anything else you'd like to say about motor traffic or do you think we've uh?..'

Susan 'Just that I think it's horrendous all of it (said with a small laugh)....Really, isn't it?'



In both of her comments, Susan uses the word 'all', suggesting that the negative influence of motor traffic may be pervasive or widespread. The way Susan uses the word suggests something that there is a lot of, an impression that is strengthened by another summary Susan gives of traffic:

Tom 'And how would you describe motor traffic, to someone who had never come across it before?'

Susan 'Oh very hectic, very fast, lots of it, yeah, everything, yeah,'

One of the defining aspects Susan notes of traffic is that there is 'lots of it'. So Susan's comments hint that perhaps one aspect of the negativity associated with cars in cities is the sheer quantity of them. This quantity may be one reason for the 'dominance' that Taylor (2003, p.1613) and Sheller & Urry (2000) attribute to city traffic. So as well as their noise and danger, one of the negative elements identified in motor vehicles is their proliferation.

As well as the proliferation of motor traffic, a number of participants commented on the unceasing nature of motor traffic's presence. Graham labelled it 'incessant' and Jess repeatedly called it relentless, her repetition of the term suggesting that this was an important idea for her:

Jess '.....It's just relentless, it's relentless as well that's what gets me, it's just relentless noise and...'

Tom 'Yeah it keeps going.'

So traffic had negative import, for some participants, in its noise, danger, proliferation and continuity.

A second strand of evidence that pedestrians are affected negatively by the presence of traffic was found in some participants reporting changing their trip making behaviour or route according to the amount of traffic on that route. Three participants (Graham, Jess and Laura) reported that their route choice would sometimes be influenced by the amount of traffic on that route.

Jess made explicit that she would prefer pedestrianised routes for the experiential reasons of being able to enjoy other pedestrians more and feeling 'more relaxed'. This is in contrast to a more destination oriented focus she has in motorised streets:

(speaking in a pedestrianised street) 'It's funny I'm stopping, I'm looking at people's faces here, I'm much more relaxed, yeah much more kind of, I haven't got my head down: just trying to

get to where...I'm trying to get to....I would always choose, if there was a pedestrian way, I'd always choose to go that way, definitely.' (Jess)

Other participants reported using other modes or forgoing trips altogether, due to not enjoying being a pedestrian near traffic: Alison recounted not walking because it would mean being alongside a busy road and Rose frequents a certain tennis club less often than she otherwise would because of the heavily trafficked route to it.

This evidence confirms the idea that motor traffic can affect the travel behaviour, including whether to make the trip, mode choice and route choice of pedestrians. Hine & Russell (1993) had previously found survey evidence of pedestrians changing behaviour due to busy roads: pedestrians asked in their survey stated that the busyness of the road led to them taking different routes (16%) or even using a different mode for their trip (34%). But in general prior to the present study evidence about motor traffic leading to changes in pedestrian travel behaviour had been scarce and weak (Jacobsen et al. 2009).

So, in summary, the second strand of evidence for the negative influence of motor traffic on pedestrians, is its reported effect on trip behaviour. The third strand of evidence is that pedestrians expressed relief on entering pedestrianised areas.

It was very noticeable in the interviews that even participants who showed little concern about the presence of motor traffic in trafficked streets were visibly and audibly relieved to enter pedestrianised areas. A number of the participants expressed relief in an 'ahhh' exhalation or similar:

Graham (As we walk onto pedestrianised street) 'Ahh' (said in tone of pleasure - Graham laughs)

Mary 'But this is much, I can feel my ears going 'Ah'' (indicating relaxation - Tom and Mary laugh) '..... It's quite pleasant isn't it really?'

Dave '...so there is a lot less urgency and necessity and speed and obviously there's no traffic, but, it's almost like a bit of a 'Huhh'' (exhales in relaxation) 'moment, a nice and chest out....'

This evidence suggests a relaxation of some degree of tension or discomfort that had been present in the motorised streets. The quotes above hint that this tension might come from the noise of traffic (Mary) or in the haste that motor traffic causes (Dave).

So far the evidence supports claims made in previous literature by Taylor (2003) and others, that motor traffic can have substantial and negative effects on pedestrians. The evidence includes participants describing traffic in negative ways, particularly its noise and danger. They also reported changing travel behavior in order to avoid it and expressed relief on escaping it when entering pedestrianised areas. While providing novel participant based evidence, it was no surprise that pedestrians often saw motor traffic in negative terms. However, I was more surprised that there was a great deal of variation in the degree to which participants were affected by traffic.

### Variation in sensitivity to motor traffic

Due to noise and danger it could be supposed that all pedestrians would be highly affected by motor traffic but this was not the case. Participants varied greatly in the extent to which they were affected, with some little concerned by traffic:

Tom 'Do you find it distracting to your thought processes to be near the traffic or...do you find it fine?'

Alison 'I suppose I've got used to it, I mean I've been doing this, quite a long time now, and so I can filter it out if necessary..'

Traffic is not too much of a problem for Alison because she 'filters it out' of her awareness. This suggests that Alison distances her conscious awareness from elements of her semi-conscious awareness of her surroundings. Slightly differently, Clair emphasised being aware and alert to the traffic but still considered it 'not a problem':

'Yes...when I come into the city, which I do often...I'm aware of traffic....and so I look out for it and you know where it's coming from most of the time (said humorously)...I use the crossings....and I'm alert to the traffic...so that's not a problem.'

Although Clair is 'aware' of traffic her statement shows that she sees the influence of traffic purely in terms of potential physical contact. When she says she knows where traffic is 'coming from' and that she is 'alert' to it, this suggests that she is not focusing on the general presence of the nearby traffic, but only the possibility of actual collision, while crossing. She seems untroubled by its general presence, and confident of avoiding actual collision. Beth also was not concerned about motor traffic:

Tom 'Would you say there is anything specific about you, or in your personality, that effects.....the way you experience traffic, or?....'

Beth 'Yeah.....I don't tend to get really bothered.....Like it just doesn't faze me really.'

The term 'faze' suggests having the ability to function diminished by something stressful or surprising. Beth suggests she can function without problem, in the presence of motor traffic.

To sum up the evidence and argument so far, participants were affected by the presence of motor traffic to greatly varying degrees: some were strongly affected by it while others stated they were little concerned by the presence of motor traffic. It will be suggested that some participants being unconcerned by motor traffic can be explained partly with the concept of necessity, and first, with the concept of barriers.

### **Barriers and pedestrian well-being**

Chapter 4 began to explore the concepts of barriers. Barriers, by their nature, create and separate two sides: they separate what is on one side of the barrier from what is on the other. Because motor traffic is a generally negative influence for the pedestrian, as detailed above, it will be argued that barriers come into play in creating separation between car and pedestrian. Different types of barriers will be discussed in the coming sections: physical ones such as the pavement, and mental ones, such as seeking to block out traffic from the awareness. Barriers can be ambiguous: they can facilitate safety and orderliness, such as in the case of the white lines in the middle of a road, separating opposing directions of traffic. But barriers can also restrict movement. Barriers can restrict what is inside (such as with prison walls) and can exclude what is outside (such as with national borders and turnstiles).

Of the barriers that act to separate the car from the pedestrian, the most obvious, common and physical is the pavement. In general the pavement was perceived by participants as an effective barrier against the danger of actually being hit by traffic. This is an important point, it suggests Taylor's (2003) contention that traffic dominates pedestrian attention because of the danger it poses, may be a simplification: at least while they were on the pavement the majority of participants felt secure.

However some participants had less faith in the pavement as a barrier against physical contact with cars: Greg for instance (interviewed in the *Urban walking phase*) had observed the effects of drivers mounting pavements which led to his preferring to walk behind a barrier of parked cars:

Greg '...if you look out the window there, somebody, the metal fence that goes along the riverbank, when I was away on holiday, somebody, a car went into it....it's right... everybody cycles and walks down there and they've done it, I think the railings up the other side, they've

been hit twice since I've been here, and there's another one done a few months ago, just down the road so it's quite disconcerting knowing there's these drivers mounting the pavement's every couple of weeks'

Tom 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, so you don't necessarily feel ... that safe on the pavement if you're..'

Greg 'No, no...I like try and walk, on this, on the side where, on this side, on this road, you can only park on one side but...it's a bit safer behind the cars.'

Greg's comments show that not only is Greg perceiving himself to be in actual danger while on the pavement, but that this perception also gives walking on the pavement a negative emotional hue. For instance he feels disconcerted on the pavement. He also demonstrates a defensive state of mind: 'it's a bit safer behind the cars.' Here then is the possibility that the potential danger posed by motor traffic can create a negative emotional timbre to the pedestrian experience, even while the pedestrian is on the pavement. The potential for perceptions of safety on the pavement, as well as actual safety, to be important has been previously hinted at by Landis et al. (2001).

Of course, the protection offered by pavements against traffic are not uniform. Pavements can be lined with parked cars and trees offering further protection, and may be wide or narrow. Greg and Jess both welcomed parked cars as an additional barrier against traffic, in addition to the pavement. The data then supports Landis et al.'s (2001, p.86) finding that being physically separated from the traffic by objects like parked cars increases pedestrian 'comfort or sense of safety'.

Previous literature has suggested that wider pavements are welcomed by pedestrians. This may be due to a sense of wider pavements forming a safer barrier (Landis et al. (2001) and wider pavements facilitating a more socially convivial atmosphere (Bean et al. (2008). The participants of the present study did seem less happy with narrow pavements. Laura felt somewhat unsafe on narrow pavements. In particular she reported concern about buses that seemed to pass only millimetres from her while she was on the pavement.

The presence and noise of motor traffic can also be perceived to permeate pavement space, although again this differed by participant. Cecilia and Beth for instance were able to almost completely ignore the presence of traffic while they were safely on the pavement: Cecilia, while on the pavement, clearly perceived herself to be outside of any influence from traffic:

Cecilia 'If I take a bus though I would, but..'

Tom 'You'd be aware of...'

Cecilia 'I suppose because I'm on transport other than obviously my legs...So then I would pay more attention because you, you kind of pay more attention to your surroundings then because you're in' (emphasised) 'the traffic.....so like road congestion would affect you more. Whereas now I can just, it doesn't because it's only...me; it's just the other people sharing the pavement, that get in the way.'

It is perhaps not intuitive that Cecilia would consider herself outside the influence of traffic by virtue of being on the pavement, considering particularly the noise and smell from traffic and Cecilia does say elsewhere that busy roads can make it hard for her to think. Nevertheless In the above quote Cecilia considers the pavement a place where the only problem she encounters from other travellers comes from other pedestrians that 'get in the way'. So it would seem that for people like Cecilia, who only consider themselves to be affected by travellers sharing the same spatial area as them, pavements can represent substantial barriers against the effects of motor traffic.

For other participants though the influence and noise of motor traffic seemed to invade their pavement space to a troubling degree. This was particularly the case with Jess. Jess, even on the pavement referred to feeling 'dominated' and 'threatened' by the presence of traffic, for instance:

'I find it quite dominates....dominates my senses being here, the traffic, yeah.'

Such phrases suggest Jess finds herself in a passive state in relation to the sensory outputs of motor traffic. They convey a sense of violence almost. As Jess finds the pavement an insufficient barrier against the presence of traffic she also constructs additional barriers against it. These are barriers constructed in her own mind (a process which was accompanied by some negative stress). Jess commented that by talking about traffic, we were thinking about something that she normal tries to 'block out':

'Um, well I would largely just try and block it out, so I'm actually thinking about something that I would generally try and shut out of my mind, really.....um because of the negative, negative way I feel about it.'

Thus Jess adds confirmation to the idea that pedestrians may have to maintain something like mental barriers that 'screen' (Taylor, 2003, p1615) or 'block' (Meidema, 2007, p.58) the traffic out. Interestingly Jess commented that the process of actually talking and thinking about the traffic as we walked together in some ways made the experience of traffic noise easier for her:

Jess '.....you know as I'm actually thinking about it, concentrating on it, it actually feels less negative concentrating on it in a funny sort of way, rather than trying to shut it out of my mind.'

Tom 'That's interesting, so the process of trying to block it out is quite a negative...'

Jess 'Yeah, I think it is, Yeah, it's trying to pretend it's not there or you know, yeah.'

This strengthens the evidence for Miedema's (2007) argument that while mental activities can be carried out in the presence of motor traffic noise, this often entails an attempt to block out the traffic noise by focusing on the task, a process which can elicit stress. As well as causing stress the necessity of mentally blocking out the effects of motor traffic can hamper other mental activities and pastimes. Rose (*Urban walking phase*) gave evidence for this. She states that because she is 'on guard' against traffic she is not able to devote the attention to dreaming she otherwise would:

'...and I think cars are a big problem walking in towns, so you have to stay on your guard in towns more you can't dream as much...not quite!' (Rose laughs)

In a more practical vein Cecilia is someone who does not like to waste time, and who tries to use walking time as a time for mental tasks such as making lists. However, she finds this is more difficult on busy, and particularly noisy streets:

'I don't, I don't like the amount of noise.....I prefer the peaceful parts of my walk where you kind of, you don't get.....It doesn't, you don't get interrupted, if I'm trying to think of things or I'm trying to like...write a list in my head then uh then it's much nicer to be somewhere peaceful.'

Similarly Laura gave an example of having reduced ability to think on busy roads: she related that a few days prior to our interview she had received a business call in which her caller had wanted to arrange meeting dates, but she had been unable to focus on this as she had to 'concentrate on the traffic' and so had had to ring him back at a later time. Such evidence is in keeping with Miedema's (2007) suggestion that noise may lead to people not attempting mental tasks at all when in noisy situations.

So having suggested in chapter 9 that urban walking can be a useful time for various types of thinking, there is the possibility that heavily trafficked areas may cause people to refrain from using their walking time for thinking or may otherwise cause them to attempt it with reduced levels of ability.

A last note on creating barriers against traffic noise is that this can be done to some extent with the use of music in headphones. Mary commented that this was common. As it happened, the participants interviewed in the *Experience of motor traffic phase* reported not using headphones much. This was for various reasons. Mary for example wanted to be aware of the world around her:

'I think the other thing is, with the noise.....you see an awful lot of people, plugged in...listening to their iPhones, doing that, and so It's taking off that.....it's taking that noise away, they've got another noise in their ears, which they prefer.....is that why people do that? I'm not sure....but I don't...I don't enjoy ....I don't enjoy things in my ears very much....and I, I'm much more happy to be aware of what's going on, I don't want to be in on my world.....'

It may well have just been chance that the pedestrians interviewed did not use headphones much, as from observation it would seem a common practice.

It has been argued that pedestrians rely on barriers from motor traffic in order to protect their well-being. These barriers can be physical, such as rows of parked cars and the pavement, but can also be the mental act of blocking out traffic. The concept of barriers is also relevant to understanding motor traffic in the sense that barriers can segment space. Thus it will be argued that motor traffic space is barriered or bounded space.

### **Barriers and pedestrian space**

Motor traffic can be understood as creating a barriered space for the pedestrian. It can be a physical barrier which squeezes pedestrians onto pavements, the margins of road space, channelling them between wall and road. Jess likened this effect to being channelled through an Ikea store:

'...forced, forced into a....I feel like (I'm) going round Ikea.....Yeah forced into a particular channel, and particularly when there's a lot of pedestrians as well, or they're all going the other way, or you know, then, just having that barrier of the traffic probably....intensifies that....so.....yeah.....'

In comparison to the Ikea metaphor used of trafficked streets, Susan spoke of the spatial freedom experienced as we moved into a pedestrianised area:

Tom 'Yeah, sure.....what do you er.....particularly like about pedestrianised areas?'



Susan 'Well it's that sense of freedom isn't it. You know I can walk and nobody's gonna knock me down or I'm not having to look, shall I do this? Cross here? Shall I not cross? It's a sense of freedom isn't it really? I mean it's sort of like walking in the park really or in open space isn't it? Short of being mugged, of course but... (Susan and Tom laugh)...It's that feeling of freedom isn't it, and space and more confidence I would think...'

Comparing Jess's account of a motorised road space and Susan's of a pedestrianised road, it can be seen that the main issue raised by both is that of freedom. Jess refers to being 'forced into a particular channel' by traffic. As in an Ikea store, she feels strongly constrained to move in only one direction. This constraint comes not only from the traffic itself, but also from the other pedestrians who are compressed into the pavement space. In comparison Susan refers to the 'freedom' and 'space' of pedestrianised areas. She talks specifically of not having to be concerned about crossing from one side of the street to the other. So the quotes suggest that motor traffic creates boundaries which compress pedestrian space, and limit pedestrian freedom.

Motor traffic not only constrains pedestrians to the pavement, it can also create a delaying barrier against crossing. Taylor (2003) asserted that because physical progress is part of the walking experience (and perhaps it's main purpose) having to wait to cross the barrier of traffic can cause 'tension and frustration' (p.1618). The assertion that negative emotions accompany being delayed in crossing was not borne out by all the participants interviewed. However Cecilia, a very time conscious walker, did find waiting to cross a frustrating experience. Graham also found crossing roads in Bristol inconvenient, although he attributed the fault of this more to the authorities responsible for pedestrian crossings than to motor traffic and drivers.

While it was the case that some participants had some problems surrounding crossing they did not in general bear anger towards drivers for delaying or obstructing them. Graham for example exhibited an understanding attitude towards motor traffic, considering it to have as much a right to the city centre as pedestrians.

'....it's more to do with the poor planning around pedestrian crossings than it is to do with, then it is to do with the traffic itself really. I mean obviously these streets were built with vehicles in mind so it's, you know, that is part of the city centre as much as....pedestrians really...'

Predictably, Susan and John, the oldest participants interviewed about motor traffic, expressed some apprehension about crossing. However this apprehension did not constitute real

frustration or anger. Both Susan and John attributed difficulties in crossing to their own decreased agility, rather than to the presence of cars:

‘.....when you’re young you’re indestructible aren’t you. You think nothing can touch you. And you’ve got more confidence so you take more chances don’t you....And of course you’re slower when you’re older. You know you’re not going to run across as quick as you would at twenty. You know? So...yeah.....’ (Susan)

So far it has been seen that motor traffic forms barriers in space such that pedestrians are constrained and compressed onto pavements and are delayed in crossing road space. The data suggest such barrier effects can diminish some of the positives that exist in the urban pedestrian experience. Chapter 8 proposed that urban walking can confer emotional benefits: both reductions of negative mind states but also the promotion of positive ones such as ‘flow’. In the following quote Derek (*Urban walking phase*) suggests that if he can establish a ‘pace’ and a ‘rhythm’ he can experience creative states. However he finds that the barriers of roads and traffic mean he has to stop and ‘come to’ and this disturbs the otherwise pleasurable and positive state:

‘... and I think so many times when I’m walking and I can really switch off and keep the pace going, wonderful ideas come to me and far richer connection to the unconscious and I can absolutely fire up ideas, artistic ideas, just ways of thinking of problems in life, and they come to me when they are deeply settled, rhythm is there but, now I only get that if I’m within a building or somewhere where there is, no road, no one’s going to stop me, I don’t have to stop and check the lights or I’m not going to walk out in front of a bicycle...’

Derek makes explicit that having to check the lights to see if it’s safe to cross prevents his entering deeper states of mind when walking. Rose (*Urban walking phase*) similarly suggests that arriving at main roads that she has to cross snaps her out of a state of ‘reverie’:

‘So I go along in my little reverie and it’s a bit of a shock if something vaguely unpleasant or dangerous intrudes on that. Or if I know when I get to a main road that I’ve got to stop...yeah.’

It can be argued then that motor traffic on roads creates a staccato, interrupting effect on what would otherwise be the rhythmic flowing effect of walking. It creates an affect that jolts the pedestrian into conscious awareness of surroundings. The quotes above lend weight to Vergunst’s (2010, p.381) suggestion that while pedestrians can find pleasure in the rhythm of walking and navigating the streets ‘Crossing roads....normally means an unwelcome break in the rhythm’ (p.380).

In conclusion on this section, some participants did suffer negative effects on well-being from motor traffic although the picture Taylor (2003) paints of pedestrians being constantly 'keyed up' and 'alert' (p.1621) seems something of a generalisation: the degree to which participants suffered from proximity to motor traffic varied greatly from person to person. This variation can in part be understood by different perceptions individuals had of barriers against traffic: barriers against physical contact with traffic, the presence of traffic and noise of traffic. The discussion above lends credence to Landis et al.'s (2001) assertion that pedestrian experience may be affected by issues of barriers and spatiality such as 'presence of a sidewalk', 'lateral separation from motor vehicle traffic', and 'barriers and buffers between pedestrians and motor vehicle traffic' (p.83).

Pedestrians then seek to rely on different barriers against the traffic, but as has been seen traffic also acts as barrier that confines pedestrians to pavements, delays crossing road space and interrupts the 'flow' of urban walks. So the presence of motor traffic in urban areas can result in such areas being definable as places of barriers.

### **A perceived barrier between two worlds**

The concept of barriers will be looked at in one final aspect. It is argued that, despite the proximity of driver and pedestrian in the city street, the 'worlds' of the driver and the pedestrian have been perceived by academics and others to be 'worlds apart', separated as if by a barrier. This is such that those within cars and those outside are conceptualised to be of two different and disconnected groups. This is strongly suggested in Sheller & Urry (2000). This would imply that the relationship between driver and pedestrian is somewhat 'depersonalised' (Taylor, 2003, p.1620). Thus it might be expected that pedestrians would view motor traffic in impersonal ways.

There were in fact comments in the interviews that suggested somewhat dehumanised relationships between pedestrian and driver. As examples Dave commented on a lack of respect between driver and pedestrian:

'But there are a lot of people who....don't treat traffic with respect and traffic just doesn't treat people with respect and so it can, as I said earlier....just create angst....'

In Dave's quote 'traffic' is seen as an entity which neither gives respect to nor gains it from the pedestrian. With a similar theme of dehumanised relationships Laura likened traffic to animals:

Laura 'It...' (Said louder) 'That bus just there it actually came very close to you.'

Tom 'Yeah'

Laura 'It's very in your face and intrusive.....and it's almost like animals, on the road'

Tom 'Yeah...in what sense'

Laura 'Well I mean if I'd never seen any traffic and I'd seen....because cars seem to have a personality which is of course the driver in them....maybe the driver's rushing or...they're not concentrating...and things like the revving of the car....it's quite animal like really'.

I was expecting motor traffic to be perceived as a noisy, impersonal force in the city, as the quotes from Dave and Laura would suggest. However, overall the participants perceived human relations to exist between driver and pedestrian. There seemed to be humanising bridges built between the pedestrian participants and the drivers they observed. These bridges took the form of empathy directed at drivers and values applied to them. Empathy entails being able to put yourself in the position of another. Empathy towards drivers was made manifest in the interviews by participants, including Graham, John, Laura, Mary and Susan, starting, unprovoked, to describe situations from a driver's point of view.

'And there's that bit where people cross, all the time and there's cars come up the hill and so they're probably desperate to just get straight out, out from that junction, because they're coming up a hill and they're probably having to, you know, put the hand brake on and what not and rather than do that, they'd rather just shoot straight through really.' (Graham)

Note in Graham's comments that he empathises with driver's emotions, referring to their desperation to get out of a junction. This suggests that Graham is not just monitoring driver behaviour in a functional way, as it relates to his own progress as a pedestrian. In the same way Susan empathises with drivers' emotions. She considers the impatience they may be experiencing:

'Yeah.....absolutely because everybody wants to get where they are going...and they want it how they want it don't they, which is nature, its life isn't it.....I mean as I say, you're sat in a car and you don't want to be sat there with the clutch, holding it from sliding back, you think 'Uh, let's get up here and get out', so you're impatient'.

The obvious explanation for the participant's empathy towards drivers is that most of them drive themselves or have driven in the past. For this reason it is easy for them to consider what drivers are doing and what they may be feeling about a given situation. It is being argued that

this empathy forms a sense of human relationship with drivers which goes some way to diminishing the sense that drivers and pedestrians exist in different 'worlds'.

The empathy and benevolence expressed towards drivers by participants were surprising given Taylor's (2003) contention that pedestrians' experience of cars would be 'depersonalised' and that people would view moving vehicles as 'inanimate objects' (p.1611). In refutation of this idea participants readily saw and thought about the driver within the vehicle. A couple of participants expressed concern for those who have to drive. Graham felt concern for his brother who he considered to suffer from stress with a job that involved much driving and Beth sympathised more generally with any who have long car commutes. John highlighted his concern and even guilt that pedestrians can make life difficult for drivers:

'...particularly us as pedestrians...lots of us don't obey the...phases in the traffic lights and I think we give....the poor bus drivers particularly.... and the private driver of course, all sorts of problems which I don't think they ought to have...I mean I think they've got enough problems without us, as pedestrians, adding to them.'

Drivers are depicted by John in very human terms. They are seen as having problems to cope with. The importance of the humanity of drivers was similarly emphasised by Jess in her concern for their destination. The destination of the drivers affected how she felt about the cars. For instance if she thought the drivers were going to social events, in the evening, she felt more positively about the presence of vehicles, whereas if she thought they were hurrying to work then she viewed the traffic more negatively:

'I think in the evening where people are, even if it's still busy here, which it probably would be, I'd feel that people were going out to the pub and restaurants and it was a bit more chilled and everyone's enjoying themselves...I think I'd feel more positive about the traffic then, I don't know why.'

Thus the motor traffic-pedestrian space was seen in some ways as one of human relationship.

So it has been argued that while some have contended that there is a significant barrier between the world of the driver and the world of the pedestrian, empathy and benevolence seemed to bridge this barrier, as far as the participants were concerned.

The discussion so far has included the ideas that essentially the presence of motor traffic is a negative one for the city pedestrian to endure. But it has been observed that some of the participants seemed little concerned by it. The discussion has argued that this is partly explainable by barriers between traffic and pedestrian. Another factor that might explain only

mild negativity towards traffic in some participants is the perception that motor traffic is necessary in the city.

### The perceived necessity of motor traffic

A number of participants saw positive aspects in motor traffic. In fact they saw it as necessary to a city, and city life. The idea that car mobility can be seen as necessary to city life has been visited previously by Sheller & Urry (2000, p.743). They suggest that whilst the socialities of some spaces are injured by car traffic, other social opportunities are created and in fact depend on it. They argue that car mobility cannot be simply considered a bad thing, since it facilitates many beneficial activities and playing a part in 'democratic life'. Chapter 2 noted that Bostock (2001) for instance argues that not being able to afford motorised transport can deny low income mothers the ability to attend health appointments.

Cars enable people to get from one area of a city to another, in order to see friends or family or to attend social or religious events. This highlights an interesting balancing act between maintaining the sociality of streets and providing the ability for individuals to achieve maximal social interaction in the city. Some of the present data supported the idea that traffic was perceived as necessary for the modern city:

'Well....it's vital, I mean it's...you expect it, I live in a city....I don't mind the traffic, I mean it's necessary and I mean, you know...people, shops need their deliveries.' (Clair)

As Clair's quote suggests, traffic was sometimes seen as a necessary life blood of modern city life. Traffic is seen as inherent in Clair's choice to 'live in a city'. Motor traffic is seen by Clair as necessary not only for the movement of people but also goods such as shop deliveries. This aspect of the necessity of motor traffic also featured in Mary's thinking. For instance:

'Yeah...You've got to have the delivery trucks obviously coming to deliver, you know, stuff to the shops.'

So while this chapter has stressed some serious effects of motor traffic on pedestrian well-being and city place, participants also saw in motor traffic the necessary movements of city life. This lessened their antipathy to traffic. There is a whole 'side' of the experience of motor traffic that I did not anticipate and yet which is important to many people's experience. It is the importance of their own car travel. Perhaps this was surprising to me as I do not have a car and do not find one necessary very often. Most of the participants did drive however and often hinted that for them to be over critical of car drivers would be hypocritical. Hence

questions about whether cars are good or bad were answered by a number of participants with allusions to their own car use:

Tom 'How would you describe your attitude to motor cars in general? Would you say you are in favour of them or?...'

John 'Oh yeah, I must be, because I mean I'm an owner of a motor car anyway, so yeah...and I think they're a great advantage and again....certainly, I would be lost without mine.'

John feels he 'must' be in favour of cars, due to his valuing of his own car use.

Tom 'And what would you say your attitude to motor traffic is in general? – In society, do you think it is a necessary thing? A good thing?'

Beth 'Yeah, I think because I'm a driver.....I just see it as a necessary thing for a lot of people.....'

Beth is explicit that one reason for her considering car use necessary is that she uses a car herself. The above quotes show Beth and John very explicitly linking the necessity of motor traffic with their own car use. It could be suggested that cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) may have prevented the participants from holding negative attitudes towards driving when they themselves drive.

Susan showed the wrestle between her negative experience of traffic as a pedestrian, calling it horrendous, and her need for a car to 'get around'.

Tom 'Ok....Is there anything else you'd like to say about motor traffic or do you think we've uh?..'

Susan 'Just that I think its horrendous all of it (said with a small laugh). ...Really, isn't it? But we need it to get around don't we....and we all want to be getting out or parking where we wanna be.'

Susan both endures the negative presence of traffic and enjoys her own car use. However some people do not drive. Automobility has been noted to cause inequality so that those who cannot drive suffer the consequences of car use but do not share in its benefits (Bean et al., 2008, Jain & Guiver, 2001). It might be supposed that those who would perceive car use to be negative, unnecessary and harmful would be those who do not or cannot use a car themselves. However this was not the case with the participants interviewed: Jess was negative about motor traffic, despite being a driver. There was a hint that this was because as

we walked in the streets she perceived herself in the role of a pedestrian, which was distinct in her mind from her driving. In the following quote she is talking from the perspective of a pedestrian but remembers that a motorised road had been useful for her as a driver previously:

Tom 'Yeah do you think that has a factor on how you view traffic the fact that you drive...'

Jess 'Oh definite, yeah definitely yeah I mean I'm talking as a pedestrian so.....probably quite frustration, if you couldn't get to.....you know, where you wanted to. And this road was very useful for me a couple of weeks ago.....so, yeah.'

Jess was negative about motor traffic despite being a driver. Conversely Cecilia was not troubled by motor traffic, despite being unable to drive. Similarly Graham saw the necessity of traffic despite not having a car.

In conclusion it has been argued that the perceived necessity of motor traffic lessened the negative feelings towards it in some participants. In particular participants often linked the general necessity of motor traffic with their valuing of their own car use. But traffic was also considered necessary in wider terms, such as shops needing deliveries.

There is a balance to consider, as Sheller & Urry (2000) suggest, between the social and experiential life of the city as enabled by pleasant street environments and the social life of the city as enabled by unrestricted car use. Graham felt his way towards such a balance in his concluding statement:

'.....you feel like there are possible ways you could avoid there being so, so much traffic in city centres really....and whether it really is that necessary.....but I don't know.....I'm open to the fact that it probably is necessary, so....there you go.....however unpleasant.'

Graham here concedes that he thinks traffic is necessary to a city 'however unpleasant' it may be. However he feels that there must be ways for there to be less traffic. It could be suggested that other modes should be further encouraged and car use kept to a minimum. Participants were united in disapproving of excessive car use. But such strategies are more easily talked about than achieved, on a citywide basis.

## Conclusion

In conclusion the data presented in this chapter suggests that motor traffic can have negative effects on pedestrian well-being and pedestrian space. This idea had not previously been supported with participant based research. However the data also suggests that there was



variation in the degree to which participants were concerned by motor traffic. One reason given for why some showed little negativity towards motor traffic was that there are barriers they can rely on to diminish the effect it has. A second reason explored was that participants considered motor traffic necessary.

This chapter has suggested that the concept of barriers is relevant to pedestrian experience of motor traffic in three ways. Pedestrians rely on barriers in order to protect their well-being from the influence of traffic. Secondly due to the negative presence of motor traffic, the road arena, as frequented by driver and pedestrian, can be characterized as a barriered space, a space which constrains and delays pedestrians. Thirdly the nature of cars and pedestrians means that a barrier could be thought of as separating them, such that drivers and pedestrians could be thought of as existing in separate worlds. However a number of factors have been seen to transcend the barriers existing between the world of the driver and the world of the pedestrian. These are empathy and benevolence towards drivers and the perceived necessity of motor traffic.

The perceived necessity of motor traffic is a factor which lessened the participants' negativity towards the traffic we experienced in the interviews. It was often linked to participants' valuing of their own car use. The data suggested that Sheller & Urry's (2000) contention that despite being sometimes detrimental to quality of place, in terms of facilitating mobility, car use is supportive of city life, was agreed with by a number of participants.

I have a particularly experiential take on life. Thus I may have a particularly experiential (and thus negative) view of the presence of motor traffic in city streets. Some participants did talk about experiential aspects of motor traffic in strong terms, vindicating the overall claim of this thesis that experiential aspects of urban walking are important. Others however took a more pragmatic view of motor traffic. They discerned in cars and lorries a practical function necessary to the life of the city.

Chapters 8 and 9 respectively suggested that urban walking can have emotional benefits and can provide a time to think. This chapter has suggested that part of the price paid for having motor trafficked cities maybe the curtailing of some of these benefits. Chapter 8 suggested that urban walking may help to reduce negative mind states and promote positive ones. However it seems that motor traffic in urban areas can have the opposite effect: both by providing negative emotional experiences and curtailing positive emotional renewal whilst walking.

Chapter 6 presented the idea that the urban walking can be seen in terms of triangular relationships between the inner world, the outer experienced city and the physical movement of walking. Motor traffic has been seen in this chapter as necessitating barriers which may diminish an enjoyable and beneficent cross fertilization between these factors in the walking experience. For example, traffic has been seen to constitute physical barriers, which can constrain and interrupt the physical movement aspect of walking. As quotes from Derek and Rose have shown the interruptions and danger posed by traffic also meant they felt less able to 'dream' and consider their inner worlds while walking. So the danger present in the experienced city takes away attention from the inner worlds.

Quotes from Jess have shown that she tries to cope with the presence of traffic by blocking it out of her mind. So in effect she tries to erect barriers between her inner world and her experienced surroundings. This further inhibits interactions between those two points on the triangle.

More generally this chapter has suggested at points that it may be in the pre-conscious world of affects, as explored by NRT, that negative impacts of traffic's presence exist. It is perhaps negative affect caused by interacting with traffic that makes pedestrianised areas comparatively relaxing. A result of negative traffic-related affect may be city walkers distancing themselves from their semi-conscious awareness of their surroundings or trying consciously to block it out. There is a sense in this chapter of the tension that exists between the awareness of the pedestrian and their semi-conscious mind which cannot help but deal and interact with the demands placed upon it by moving traffic. The effects of traffic are blocked out for some by the existence of pavements. This reveals an interesting interaction between the pedestrians' perceptions of where is 'safe' and the inanimate pavement itself.

So the evidence presented in this chapter suggests that motor traffic interrupts with barriers what would otherwise be a rich experience, one rich in both inner and outer aspects and the interactions between the two. It supports Taylor's (2003, p.1623) assertion that motor traffic in cities can impair urban walking's potential for being 'quietly reflective or meditative, as it was once able to be'. However, while evidence from Derek and others vindicates the first half of Taylor's statement the second half has to be questioned: 'as it was once able to be'. As chapter 4 pointed out, Jacobs (1992) and others have commented that before motorised traffic, horse transport made streets chaotic, almost inhuman places. So it may well be the irreducible problem of many people needing to move from place to place that disrupts reflection and meditation in the city, not the specific presence of the motor car.

It has been suggested that the negative emotional impacts caused by traffic can lead to changes of pedestrian behaviour including changes of destination, mode choice and route choice. The next and final chapter will draw more conclusions about the experiential aspects of urban walking explored in this study.

## Chapter 11: Conclusions

This chapter has several aims. It will summarise the study's answers to the research questions and will reflect on methodological issues. It will also draw out broad implications for ways of considering policy surrounding walking. The study has focused on the *essence* of pedestrian urban experience. It is therefore able to provide new insight into the walking experience and to highlight broad areas that are relevant to policy. However the study has not focused on the particulars of how the experience is affected by specific features of the walked environment (width of pavements, number of streetlamps etc). This means it does not directly provide detailed policy implications (such as specific street design guidance). For this reason a substantial part of this chapter discusses ideas for future research which could bridge the gap between the new ideas found in this thesis and practical, detailed implications for designing useful pedestrian environments. Brief indications for further research are given as the chapter progresses, but are discussed in more detail in a dedicated section towards the end of the chapter.

The research questions for this study were:

- 1: What can be learnt about the essence of urban pedestrian experience?
- 2: What are the psychological and emotional benefits of the urban pedestrian experience?
- 3: What can be learnt about the essence of the pedestrian experience of motor traffic?

This chapter's answers to research questions 1 and 2 have, to some extent, to be given together, as the two are entwined in some of the main conceptual developments to come out of the study. After discussion of these developments some answers more specific to research question 2 and 3 will be given in turn. The chapter will continue with methodological reflections, including reflections of the relevance of NRT for the study. After this ideas for further research before final reflections are laid out and summary answers to the research questions are given. To begin, the main concept to be developed from the findings will be discussed.

### The concept of triangular interactions

The main concept to be developed from data is that much of what constitutes the urban pedestrian experience can be understood in terms of triangular relations between the physical movement of walking, the inner life of the pedestrian and the outer experienced city. This

concept will be discussed with contributions from across the findings in chapters 6, 8, 9 and 10. The concept contributes answers to both research questions 1 and 2.

The triangle concept was introduced in chapter 6 in relation to the unobtrusiveness of the physical movement of walking. So the first aspect of the triangle to be examined is this physical movement aspect and its relation to the inner world and experienced city.

Chapter 6 proposed that the physical movement of walking in itself is often unobtrusive and is little thought about by the walker. This is a specific instance of Middleton's (2011) contention that walking can be habitual. Participants talked far less about the physical aspect of walking than about the other two points on the triangle. Drawing out the unobtrusiveness of the physical aspect, and other aspects of urban walking, as discussed in chapter 6, is a theoretical development provided by the research that can inform future approaches to understanding what is important in urban walking experience.

The concept was developed that the physical movement of walking acts as an unobtrusive feeder, leading awareness to experiences of the inner worlds and external experienced city like a party host introducing guests. The party host concept suggests the idea that there are experiences surrounding walking that may be as or more important than walking itself. These may provide different angles for successfully conceptualising what an urban walk is. The urban walker may be more concerned with *experiencing the city on foot* rather than specifically *enjoying a walk*. Similarly they may be more concerned with *having a time for personal contemplation while moving or enjoying the interplay between inner and outer worlds, facilitated by a naturally human speed of movement*, rather than enjoying a walk. So maybe walks should not always be conceptualised from the point of view of walking, but rather as a group of different experiences, internal and external, in which walking is a common factor.

One way in which the physical movement of walking itself may lead attention to other experiences is through rhythm. As chapter 8 discussed, the rhythm of walking may play a part in leading to deeper explorations of the inner world. For example the idea arose that for some the physical movement of walking might be more helpful for achieving deeper states of mind than a seated meditation. As noted in chapter 3 the rhythm of walking had previously been linked with inner phenomena such as thoughts, by Solnit, 2001, Middleton, 2009 and others.

Chapter 9 explored the interaction between the physical movement of walking and the inner world of the pedestrian in terms of the pedestrian's thoughts. In this area it built on previous studies that had found associations between walking and other exercise, and an increased

ability to be creative and solve problems (Oppezzo & Schwartz, 2014, Netz et al. 2007). Chapter 9 presented some potential insights into how this process might work. Concepts were developed that the physical progress of the body might encourage a mirrored progress in thoughts and that the physical rhythm of the walking movement may be conducive to creative thinking.

Exceptions to the usual unobtrusiveness of the physical act were highlighted in chapter 6. Awareness of the walking body may be stimulated during physical difficulties: When ground underfoot is difficult, the body painful or the route long or hilly. It was noted that in this respect rural walking may involve greater or more frequent awareness of the body than urban as such conditions are more frequent in rural hikes. An additional quality noted of the physical movement of walking is that it can be used to purposefully wear out the walker. Overall though, a key finding for the first research question is that the physical act of walking was found in general to be an unobtrusive factor, rarely brought into focus by participant comments.

In contrast, participants talked a lot about experiential elements that fall on the two top points of the triangle: the inner world and the experienced city, and the interactions between these two areas. These will be discussed next. This discussion provides part of the study's answer to research question 2: What are the psychological and emotional benefits of the urban pedestrian experience?

Chapter 8 raised concepts exploring the binding together of the inner life of the pedestrian and their experience of the city. Such a binding is likely to result in an increased emotional, cognitive and imaginative walking experience and also, I suggest, in a deepened awareness of place. Chapter 8 gave the example of the triggering of memory and imagined social history as an example of the ways the experienced city and the inner world can be connected and mutually enhanced. Perhaps others could be investigated in further research.

Chapter 8 also discussed deep states of mind. These constitute some of the psychological and emotional benefits of urban walking. Interestingly these deep states of mind can be associated with either the inner world of the pedestrian or the outer experienced city: one participant reported entering a state of mindfulness of the experienced city, in which internal thoughts were minimised and observation of the city was enjoyed. Conversely another reported moving into an internal contemplation of artistic ideas in which he became unaware of other, outer aspects of his walk.

The reports of these deepened states of mind emphasise that urban walking can have emotional benefits that go beyond mitigating negative states such as cabin fever. In recent years there has been a shift among some psychologists from focusing on reducing and treating psychological problems towards enhancing positive psychological states (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000): States such as 'flow' for example. The data suggest that for some people, such states can be inspired by urban walking. City dwellers can access 'bite size' experiences of such states simply by crossing their door step. However urban walking may face challenges in offering such psychological states, particularly in comparison to rural walking: data suggested that the necessities of negotiating traffic and other threats could interrupt the flow of such states and that this was less of a problem in rural walking.

Chapter 8 also discussed features of the walked environment affecting the emotions of the pedestrian. This was seen in one participant being affected by buildings and spaces to the degree that she sometimes chooses routes according to their emotional impact. It was also seen in another's mood being affected by small external triggers. These triggers led to trains of thought which in turn led to emotional states. So a number of ways in which the interaction of experienced city and inner world can lead to psychological and emotional benefits have been offered by the study. In some cases the emotions caused by walks came via trains of thought: a small detail seen in the walked surroundings inspired a positive or negative musing on a related topic.

The top side of the triangle also consists of interactions between the pedestrian's inner thoughts and the experienced city. Data suggested some of the thinking a pedestrian may do is separate from the experienced city and may in fact need protection from it. Other forms of thinking can be inspired by the urban environment. Chapter 9 argued that the interactions between a pedestrian's inner thoughts and the experienced city can take a number of forms. It was seen that some types of thought can serve to take a pedestrian towards their inner world and absent them from their surroundings. Such types of thinking included personal reflection and daydreams. These two types of thinking did not need input from walked surroundings. Another example, given in Chapter 9, was the contemplation of problems that led one participant so deeply into his inner world that only a near collision with an obstacle would shock him back into awareness of his surroundings.

However, data suggest that these types of thinking, which are largely divorced from outer stimuli can be interrupted by factors in the experienced city. Daydreaming could be disturbed by having to stay on guard in the city, and deep contemplation could be precluded by

interruptions and the necessity of having to negotiate the city. Practical implications of the idea that in some ways the inner life of the pedestrian needs protection from the experienced city will be discussed below.

However Chapter 9 also argued that other types of thinking are inspired by the surrounding city. Examples include trains of thought being triggered by small features of the environment, surroundings being analysed by the pedestrian and surroundings being otherwise thought about in order to pass time. So the experienced city can threaten some types of thinking whilst walking, but inspire others.

It is informative to consider the elements in the experienced city that might distinguish it from the walked environment in rural areas. This study suggests that significant defining factors of the city environment are other people, both pedestrians (chapter 7) and people in cars (chapter 10). In a positive sense other people in cities can provide human drama. However, obviously urban designers cannot position pedestrians for positive effect in the same way as street lights or pavements, so that the human element of the experienced city is one that remains partly chaotic and unplannable. This chaotic element within urban walking may in fact be a strength. Surely one of the enjoyable aspects of some rural walking is the experience of the chaos and order of natural surroundings. An echo of this may be experienced in cities within the movements of other pedestrians.

It has been suggested above that in some cases the inner world point of the triangle and the experienced city point can mutually enhance each other, while in others they can compete against each other for the pedestrian's attention. Perhaps a deeper understanding of the walking experience is gained through considering more widely that in some ways the points on the triangle may enhance each other, i.e. to pay attention to one point may inspire the paying of increased attention to the others, whereas at other times they may vie against each other for the attention of the walker.

In general the thesis has emphasised the importance of the inner world for the urban walking experience (the top left corner of the triangle,) and surrounding issues. This concept is not entirely new, however the degree of focus on it and the detail provided in relation to it constitute conceptual developments that can aid further investigation into the experience. By focusing on the inner world of the pedestrian the study has added to the work of Middleton (2009, 2010) and others in answering the call by Andrew et al. (2012) to provide new stories about walking. These stories extend beyond the understanding of one way causality



proceeding from walking environment into walking experience, which is sometimes found in public health studies of walkability (Andrews et al. 2012).

It is worth noting that the triangle does not provide an exhaustive understanding of urban walking experience. It either does not encompass, or underplays the importance of, temporality, the financial savings of walking, the weather and the part that technologies such as smart phones may play in the experience. There was not much data collected surrounding phone use whilst walking. This is surprising. Participants were free to talk about it. It may simply be due to chance that those interviewed did not tend to consult their phones much whilst walking, or did not report doing so.

The triangle also underemphasises the fact that realistically in many instances urban walking time is a package of time between two other packages of time, at work and home for instance, which are likely to often be more significant in the attentions of the person, than their time spent walking. For example work time may involve dealing with significant issues, and time at home can involve family relationships and domestic duties. Thus the triangle concept perhaps underplays the significance for urban walking time of the time that has preceded it and the time that will follow it. In the same way that perceptions of colours change according to what colour they are next to, perhaps an additional understanding of walking time would be gained by understanding it in comparison to the times preceding and following the temporal span of the journey.

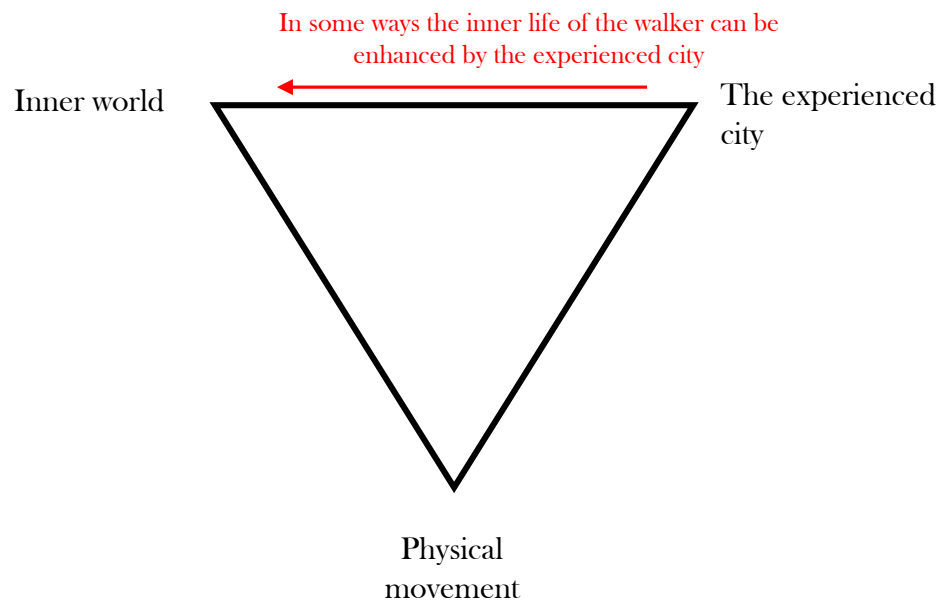
A Specific aspect in which the destination (and thus a part of the trip's purpose) may influence the trip experience that has been highlighted is the time pressure that attends some trip purposes. Through inducing time pressure, a trip's destination may limit the ability to daydream and think whilst walking. The trip destination may also affect the content of what the walker thinks about. Chapter 9 noted that thinking about work may naturally be associated with walking to and from the workplace. Chapter 8 noted that the 'purpose' of a trip is sometimes to move away from an origin as much as it is to arrive at a destination.

A better understanding of how origin and destination effect the experience of the trip would lead to greater understanding of how walking time fits into the mosaic of the day. This is an opportunity for further research. However if the pedestrian has thoughts or feelings about their destination or origin whilst walking this can legitimately be considered under the 'inner world' triangle point.

Despite these limitations it has been argued that the essence of urban pedestrian experience (research question 1) can be usefully understood by detailed analysis of the relationships between the inner world of the pedestrian, the city they experience and the physical movement of walking. Two main implications drawn from the triangle concept will now be discussed.

### Implications of the triangle for urban design

**Figure 16 Showing first implication of triangle for urban design**



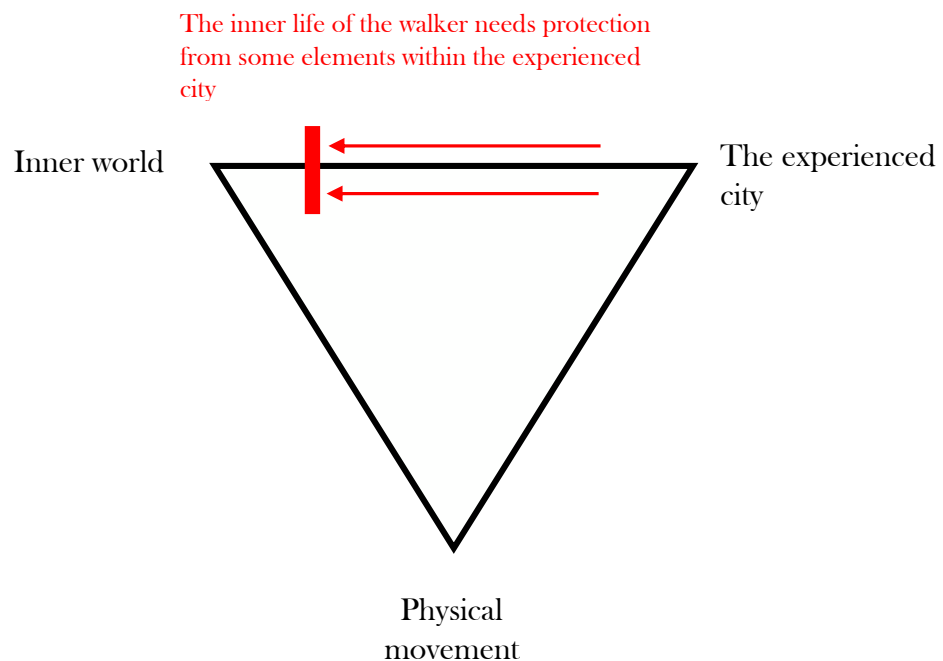
Understanding that the walked environment can influence the pedestrian experience and pedestrian behaviour is intuitive and is not new (Sinnott et al., 2011, DfT, 2007, DfT, 2004, DfT, 2004a). However as chapter 3 discussed, previous studies have usually focused on the aesthetics of the walking environment, whether it looks attractive, and also the practicalities, whether the walking route is easy to physically negotiate and navigate.

The data of the present study suggests that in addition to the concerns of aesthetics and the practical ease of progress, the ways in which the walked surroundings stimulate the thoughts, emotions and imagination of the walker are also important. As chapter 3 detailed there are some hints of the importance of walking environments inspiring the interest of the pedestrian, in previous studies and policy. But these only hint at the importance of inspiring the walker and may in some cases be referring to interesting the pedestrian visually rather than cognitively.

My research has detailed some of the ways in which the imaginative and cognitive elements of walks take place and are important. The data suggested that there is a particularly strong and positive emotive potential in the interaction of streets and the imagining of bygone eras. Further research could investigate ways in which walks and walking environments could be made emotionally, cognitively and imaginatively stimulating in a positive sense. Of course, to champion the importance of inspiring the imagination or emotions of pedestrians is not to dismiss the importance of aesthetic attractiveness and practicality of the walking environment and it is worth noting that aesthetically pleasing infrastructure features can, in themselves, be triggers to thought. There was evidence of this in the interviews.

While elements of the experienced city might inspire the pedestrian's inner world, other elements may threaten and disrupt it. Chapter 9 conveyed the general sense that some of the types of thinking valued when walking, such as problem solving, personal reflection and daydreaming, necessitated being able to 'lose yourself' in the inner world of thoughts. Such types of thinking require the pedestrian to be able to exist in the top left corner of the triangle without being interrupted or disrupted by elements in the city such as motor traffic, cyclists, crowding and poor walking conditions.

**Figure 17 Showing second implication of triangle for urban design**



So if the often valued inner life and thought life of the pedestrian is to be enjoyed it needs to be protected as far as possible from disrupting elements in the city environment that might require the pedestrian's attention. So cognitive tasks that require the pedestrian's attention as

they navigate the city should be minimised. Chapter 3 discussed previous indication that pedestrians may have to pay significant amounts of attention to negotiating their progress, (although these have not been measured or quantified): the chapter discussed a plan for 'Making London a walkable city (TfL, 2004, p.6) that admitted that in some places in the capital walking conditions do the exact opposite of offering the low cognitive challenge that can enable walking to be valued as a time to think. This could have impacts on well-being. It could also impact business and the economy in areas of cities where a large numbers of commuters are part of the knowledge economy, and need to think for a living.

The aim of making the pedestrian's progress as easy as possible is not new, it has been championed by previous policy and reports (DfT, 2007) However the contribution of the present study is to understand that not only are easy routes attractive and fast for the pedestrian to use, they may also help the pedestrian to enjoy deeper and more involved trains of thought while they walk. Thus creating easy walking routes is seen to be doubly important. Further research could seek to achieve better understanding of the detailed ways in which the city environment can help or hinder the thought life of the pedestrian. This area for further research will be explored in more detail towards the end of this chapter.

The data suggest that clear demarcation between pedestrian, cyclist and motor traffic spaces are welcome. If pedestrians feel they have a space to themselves they do not have to be so 'on guard' which, as some participants reported, can hamper enjoyment of the inner life when walking. This suggests that there is a debate to be had about the Shared space approach to road space. Shared space might be argued from the present study to be antithetical to protecting the thought life of pedestrian because it relies on travellers of different modes being alert and paying attention to each other. So in general separation between modes would seem conducive to protecting the inner life of the pedestrian.

If the inner life of the pedestrian is protected, walking time can be a useful and promotable resource as a time to think for the pedestrian, a valuable package of time out during their day. If on the other hand the pedestrian has to be constantly harried by dodging clutter on pavements, watching out for cyclists and rushing across inconvenient crossing points etc. then their time spent walking will be of little value except in attaining their destination.

### **Further psychological and emotional benefits of the urban pedestrian experience**

The triangle concept and related implications are not the only findings to come from this study in relation to research question 2. Further ways in which urban walking can hold psychological

benefits were explored, particularly in the areas of walking as a social encounter and a time to think.

Social encounter is one benefit of walking that could be termed 'psychological and emotional'. The overwhelming impression found in policy documents and commissioned reports is that higher levels of walking in neighbourhoods are beneficial in terms of increased social capital and feelings of community (DfT,2007, The Ramblers, 2013, TfL, 2004, Sinnet et al., 2011, Department of the environment, transport and the regions, 2000).

The present study does not seek to deny or disparage the social benefits, at a community level, accruing from more people walking. However Chapter 7 does suggest that the social interaction of pedestrians is not always welcome or enjoyable. It suggests that the enjoyment of the social encounter of urban walking varies greatly, according to the personality of the pedestrian and also with the degree to which the various types of encounter can be controlled. Such encounter is not always enjoyable for everyone. While some participants enjoyed their pedestrian social encounters greatly, in others it produced frustration and anger or interrupted other uses they had envisaged for their time spent walking.

Chapter 7 also presented the idea that the social encounter of urban walking often takes the form of distant proximity. The distant aspect within this idea refers to the emotional distance pedestrians have from other passers-by. Perhaps this aspect of urban walking could make walking a useful resource which could be recommended to those seeking contact with other people, but from a distance, and without the demands of intense interaction and communication. Solnit's (2001) account of the walking of Soren Kierkegaard suggests the philosopher found it attractive for this reason.

When not interacting socially, pedestrians can use walking as a time to think. The types of thinking associated with walking in the data may be particularly restorative in terms of mental and emotional health. For instance participants reported walking as a conducive activity during which to solve problems. They also reported walking as a useful time for personal reflection. By enabling the walker to explore the deeper issues in their lives and themselves, this type of thinking too may yield mental and emotional benefits. The third type of thinking discussed in chapter 9 was that of inspirational thinking or daydreaming. This may have benefits of restoration and relaxation. It may also allow for moments of insight and inspiration that may speak into the pedestrian's life in unexpected ways.

The exploration of walking as a time to think in this study may have practical implications in the business sphere and mental health sphere. The data supports Oppizzo & Schwartz's (2014) contention that walking could be encouraged by companies as a good way to think inspirationally about tasks. For instance group brainstorming sessions could be carried out outdoors and on the move. Additionally, when an employee is stuck on a certain problem, a walk could be conducive to new insight.

Walking could also be recommended for those with mental and emotional problems. This is not a new idea, the therapeutic value of walking has been previously noted by Plante et al. (2007), Mobily et al. (1996, p.119) and others. However the present study makes a new contribution in this area by proposing that the interaction between walking and thinking may be particularly therapeutic. Perhaps then people suffering with difficult mind states could be encouraged to combine thinking tasks with walking. This study has examined some of the ways in which walking and thinking can interact but further research could usefully explore whether specific walking and thinking tasks could be recommended as beneficial to mental health.

In addition to walking as social encounter and walking as a time to think, the walking experience includes other factors that can reduce negative mind states. Participants reported reducing negative mind states by walking through being able to escape the indoors and through the expression of physical energy and tension. However the findings also suggest that walking should be viewed as a producer of positive mind states and not just a treatment for negative mind states. This is in line with the recent movement of positive psychology. So while the study supports the contention that urban walking can alleviate negative mind states, there should perhaps be as much emphasis on entering positive states as there is on treating negative ones.

While urban walking can increase positive mind states and decrease negative ones, chapter 10 suggested the experience of motor traffic can work in the opposite direction. The experience of motor traffic was explored in order to answer research question 3, to which I now turn.

### **Pedestrian experience of motor traffic**

Research question 3 was 'What can be learnt about the essence of the pedestrian experience of motor traffic?' This essence was found to be mainly negative. This reality had been embraced in previous policy and commissioned reports (DfT, 2007, TfL, 2004, House of Commons, 2003, Sinnett et al., 2011). It is likely that such recognition of the negatives of motor traffic was based on the intuition and personal experience of the policy and report

authors. It is now supported with participant based research. However the data also suggests that there was great variation in the degree to which participants were concerned by motor traffic and that this variation largely related to perceptions of barriers from the traffic.

Chapter 10 highlighted the importance of barriers for understanding the effect of motor traffic on pedestrians. Such barriers were seen to be ambiguous: Positively they can enable the pedestrian to be and feel protected and distanced from the traffic. Negatively, they can create for the pedestrian a feeling of being constrained, compressed and impeded. The present study confirms the understanding of these two contrasting aspects of barriers, hinted at in previous documents on pedestrian environments.

Manual for Streets (DfT, 2007,) for instance, discusses a number of different barriers from traffic. It views some of the features that can serve as barriers to protect the pedestrian from motor traffic as desirable and some as undesirable. This is a useful way of approaching barriers to traffic. The document generally champions unrestricted movement for the pedestrian, unimpeded by 'obstructions or barriers.' (DfT, 2007, p.63) a view shared by other reports (DfT, 2004).

The findings of the present study would suggest that some barriers may be considered desirable, because they enable the pedestrian to feel safe from traffic without feeling constrained and endangered by crime, while other barriers may fail to achieve this. Future research could look at the range of feelings, positive and negative, that pedestrians can have about a variety of different barriers to traffic. This would inform planning decisions about what, if any, barriers from traffic to provide for pedestrians. This idea for further research is looked at in more detail towards the end of this chapter.

The concept of barriers is relevant to answering research question 3 in another sense. The natures of motor traffic and pedestrian traffic are such that a barrier could be thought of as separating the two groups of mode users into segregated worlds. However factors have been seen to transcend the two worlds. These include empathy towards drivers and the perceived necessity of motor traffic for living in a city, often based on the participants' own car use.

Due to these factors that transcend and bridge the modes, the realm shared by pedestrian and motorist is not a depersonalized one. A practical implication of this is that Road safety campaigns could appeal to pedestrians' empathy towards drivers. As discussed in chapter 4, appealing to empathy for trip makers using different modes has already been utilized in the

recent Think road safety campaign (UK government, 2013), a campaign which encouraged mutual awareness between car drivers and motorcyclists and cyclists.

Building on the Think campaign, the present data suggests there is also some potential in appealing to pedestrian concern for motorists. The data contradicted my intuition that pedestrians would care little about those in cars. However it is worth sounding a note of caution that out of all the people approached, the participants who went on to volunteer for the walkalong interviews may be unusually benevolent: Unusually generous people may have been self-selected by the recruitment process. Therefore the wider population's level of benevolence towards drivers may be lower than that suggested by the interviews.

Some participants' experiences of motor traffic were partly shaped by their valuing of their own car use. Hence a number of participants attested to the claim that the mobility car use facilitates can be supportive to city life, despite detriment to quality of place (Sheller and Urry, 2000). Hence data suggested that the some people might be sympathetic to arguments against pedestrianisation where it is perceived to threaten motor vehicle access. However, the data strongly suggests that pedestrianised streets are perceived as desirable and enjoyable when considered specifically in terms of walking experience. So debates around each pedestrianisation scheme need to focus on the relative importance of pedestrian experience versus motor access in that situation. Research to quantify these opposing benefits on the given scheme would be instructive.

Returning to the triangular relationships between inner world, experienced city and the physical aspect of walking, motor traffic has been seen to be one of the principal elements in the city environment which can disrupt the harmony between these relationships in a number of ways. For instance motor traffic disrupts the freedom and rhythm with which pedestrians can move. The danger of the traffic can also demand attention, preventing or interrupting deep inner contemplations. This finding was predicted by Taylor (2003). So the evidence presented in this study suggests that motor traffic interrupts with barriers what would otherwise be a rich experience, rich in either inner or outer aspect or interactions between the two.

Also in relation to the triangle, the possibility was raised from one participant's comments that she reacts to the presence of motor traffic by trying to block it out of her mind. This suggests that one of the prices of motor traffic is that the pedestrian's inner world can become isolated and defensively orientated towards the city surroundings.



While the data has suggested that the experience of motor traffic is largely negative for the pedestrian a difficulty remains in making strong recommendations about how this can be remedied. This is because of the strong attachments that exist to car mobility and also due to the irreducible problem of cities needing to accommodate the movements of many individuals, by one means or another. However further research into good and bad barriers, as mentioned above, and the debates surrounding pedestrianisation may help to inform about the effective management of driver and pedestrian in cities.

## Reflections on methodology and methods

This section will discuss some of the strengths, challenges and weaknesses of the methodology. It also contains reflexive considerations, which are an important element of qualitative study (Giorgi & Giorgi 2008). First, however, the relevance of NRT for the study is reflected upon.

NRT has proved very relevant to understanding urban walking experience as much of the experience seems to happen in a semi-conscious, pre-cognitive world. Affects are relevant in understanding this. The affects arising from walking have been seen to range from therapeutic, to alarming. An example of the latter is being jolted into awareness by sudden traffic. There are complex relations between pre-cognitive affects and conscious thoughts in urban walking. Sometimes there seems a tussle between the two, as was the case in Alison filtering out her surroundings and Jess trying to defend her mind from the presence of traffic. At other times the two seem in harmony and affects lead naturally to agreeable thoughts. Sometimes pedestrians address their surroundings directly with conscious cognitions, in analyzing their surroundings for instance.

Instances of combinations of human and non-human elements, often a focus in NRT, have been highlighted. As examples, Melanie's pram changes her experience of walking, the absence of physical work materials shapes walking as a time to think and pavements interact with pedestrian experiences of safety and danger.

As discussed NRT seeks to bring everyday experiences to life. In fact Thrift (2008, p.14) sees an ethical positive in 'boosting aliveness'. This study has done this, to an extent, but also has a practical focus. It does however draw on rich interview accounts that sometimes verge on the poetic. The thesis' findings are however, presented thematically, seeking to represent themes in urban walking experience. In this respect the study is more distanced from NRT. Further NRT influenced work could usefully probe further into the semi-conscious aspects of urban walking.

The study's methodology and methods included important strengths, often relating to novelty. For instance, the use of walkalong interviews to capture rich data on the topic of experience of motor traffic was novel and largely successful. The use of written descriptions of participant journeys as a prompt to detailed discussion of journey experience was also, to my knowledge, novel. It too was helpful. Using the walkalong surroundings and the journey descriptions to begin conversations and then drawing the discussion into more abstract conceptual areas worked well. A 'new phenomenological' orientation to data collection and analysis provided a useful focus to the study and was well suited to answering the research questions. Finally, the use of thematic analysis also proved beneficial. However, the methodology also involved areas of challenges and limitation. Four of these will now be discussed.

A first area for consideration is a reflection of relevance to other studies into urban walking experience. Chapter 6 suggested that the physical aspect of urban walking often goes unnoticed and that urban walking may be little thought about in day to day life. This highlights a challenge for academic research into urban walking experience. To research the experience we have to think and write about it. However as it appears to be an experience that is often little thought about in day to day life, such thinking may misrepresent the unconscious or semi-conscious quality urban walking can often have for us.

However in some ways the reflective nature of the room interviews, which looked at walking through hindsight, was able to convey the semi-conscious element of walking: for instance participants were free to comment that in normal life they rarely thought about walking. They were also free to recall that sometimes while walking they would be lost in a world of daydreams rather than paying attention to their walk. Others were able to report being completely unaware of the body when walking. Hence the findings in chapter 6 were successful in charting in some ways the unobtrusive and semi-conscious nature of some urban trips.

The walkalong interviews were in some ways more artificial than the room interviews as they required participants to pay attention to the presence of motor traffic in ways they might not usually do. However the walkalong method was necessary to allow sufficiently rich data to be produced on a difficult to talk about topic. The implication of the semi-conscious nature of much of daily urban walking is that research methods that involve recollection of walking might be able to get to the true essence of walking in ways that walkalongs and other methods of thinking about walking whilst walking may not.

The second area concerns the study's sample. Chapter 5 documented the underrepresentation of participants from ethnic minorities in the research. This limitation within the study occurred despite efforts to access such minorities. Uncovering different attitudes towards and experiences of urban walking amongst people of different ethnicity would be an interesting avenue for further research. Another important feature of the research sample was that the participants may have been more educated than is representative of the general population. However this latter limitation did have a positive aspect: the study was seeking to understand the essence of experiences. This unavoidably requires some abstract and sophisticated apprehension. While the interviews suggested a range of intellects amongst the participants, their intellectual abilities meant that they sometimes provided abstract interpretations of their own experiences, which I would not have thought of. An example was Melanie's contemplations of the unobtrusiveness of walking itself.

The third methodological area to discuss surrounds my approach of seeking to understand urban walking experience through verbal interview accounts. This process can be questioned. Chapter 5 reported that phenomenological commitments led to the study's methodology assuming a degree of transparency in the interview accounts. It was assumed that participants could and would speak accurately about their walking experiences. As far as possible the analytical focus in this study was placed on the experience itself rather than the ways in which participants constructed accounts of it: this was because the walking experience itself was considered to be of more central interest than the construction of accounts around that experience. This in turn was because many people will encounter the urban walking experience everyday, but talking to other people about urban walking is probably a less common phenomenon. However of course the experience was only accessed through the participant accounts and these accounts cannot be taken to give a perfectly transparent and direct impression of the walking experience. So my approach could be complemented in future research by a social constructivist approach, which would deconstruct the way participants create their accounts of their walking experiences and focus on how this is affected by social and cultural factors. This could be an area for further research.

The final methodological area to discuss concerns my interests in the thesis topic that were held prior to data collection. A good degree of leeway was given to participants to talk about what interested them, within the topic area of the interview. This was in harmony with the phenomenologically influenced approach. However in reality, every researcher has pre-held interests and biases on entering a piece of research (Braun and Clark, 2006) and some of my influence, questions and prompts within the interviews will have reflected these interests. As

noted in chapter 5, half way through the urban walking interviews I listened through the interviews that had been conducted. Subsequently I tried to adopt a more open approach in the interviews. In addition to these attempts to be less directive in interviews, the walkalong method of the *Experience of motor traffic phase* actually has a strength in reducing leading by the interviewer: participants were surrounded by real life prompts such as the sound of passing sirens, or the smell of a passing bus, and conversation often flowed from these influences rather than from my prompting or questions.

This section has discussed some strengths and limitations of the study. One of the benefits of identifying the limits of a piece of research is that it can yield indications of how future studies could take forward the findings of the present study. Four of these will be discussed next.

### Ideas for further research

The first idea for future research concerns a limitation of the present study common to much qualitative work, which is that the generalisability of its findings and the importance of its claims relative to other factors are hard to gauge. The research has contended that experiential aspects of walking are important, reporting that participants had much to say on such aspects. For instance, participants commented that their choice of destination, mode and particularly route were affected by predictions of what the experience would be like. But it would be instructive to find out how important these experiential considerations are compared to the time costs, health benefits, environmental motivations and financial savings of walking. If it is found that experiential considerations are comparatively important, then this should be taken into account in efforts to promote walking through travel planning or marketing. The finding would also inform the priority given to providing conducive walking environments.

Such research would constitute a case study towards understanding to what degree travel behavioural decisions are choices between different experiences. This question could be extended to other modes. For instance, understanding could be sought concerning to what degree the choice of whether to drive or cycle is based on experiential differences between the two modes.

The comparative importance of experiential aspects of walking could be measured by asking participants to rank or rate elements of walking by importance. These could include experiential elements such as 'walking as a time to think' as well as elements relating to walking conditions, considerations of the time cost of walking and perceptions of health

benefits etc. Using a large sample an overall understanding could be gained of where the more experiential aspects of walking sit in terms of importance. The sample could compare those who walk frequently with those who do not, to ascertain whether this has an effect on the perceived importance of experiential factors. There is precedent for such research in a survey of Londoner's attitudes to walking (TfL, 2011, p.35), which asked about experiential aspects, but this survey did not ask participants to rate the importance of these aspects in relation to other aspects.

A second idea for further research proceeds from one of the limitations of the triangle concept discussed above. This limitation is that the triangle underplays what could be termed the 'relativity' of the walking experience: the possibility that time spent walking may be partly, or even largely defined and shaped in relation to the time that preceded it and the time that will follow it. The walking experience may change as the preceding and following packages of time change, in the same way that the perception of a colour changes in relation to the colours that are next to it. (For instance orange looks most vividly orange when it is next to blue.)

The idea that travel time can be shaped by the time preceding and following it is not new. The concept that travel time can provide a transition time, which enables the traveller to change their role, for instance from a work to a family persona, has been explored in previous studies (Jain & Lyons, 2008, Redmond & Mokhtarian, 2001, Blumen, 2000). The proposed research would provide added value to such evidence by investigating the extent to which the following opposing hypotheses may be true: 1) Time spent walking mainly creates 'its own' independent emotional state and experience (i.e. regardless of what has preceded and will follow it, walking time will tend to produce the same state of mind in the pedestrian whenever the person is walking). 2) The affective experience of time spent walking is mainly shaped by the times that precede and follow it (i.e. the way the pedestrian thinks and feels whilst travelling is largely shaped by what has happened before they start walking, and what they predict will happen after they arrive at their destination).

The hypotheses could be addressed quantitatively by asking people to rate their agreement with statements. This would indicate how important the aspects of the journey experience in itself are in relation to factors deriving from the trip's origin and destination. For instance agreement could be measured, by Likert scale, with the statements:

'I always tend to feel the same when I am walking home, whatever has happened at work.'

'How I feel when walking depends a lot on what has happened just before I start walking.'

‘How I feel when walking depends a lot on where I am walking to.’

The hypotheses could also be explored qualitatively by asking people to talk descriptively about the same issues.

The theoretical advancement from the research would be to understand to what degree walking time can only be understood in relation to preceding and following times in the day. There would also be instructive implications for policy makers: if the walking experience is mainly shaped by the times preceding and following it then it will be largely impervious to efforts to improve it through changing the walked environment etc. However, if, during its duration, walking time creates its own affective experience, one with its own momentum, then making interventions to improve this experience could have important implications for traveller well-being and behaviour. This idea for research has been outlined in relation to walking experience, but it could be broadened in order to examine the same questions for other modes of transport as well. Perhaps some modes would be found to create their ‘own’ experience, regardless of origin and destination, to a greater degree than others.

A third area for further research surrounds the protection of the inner life, (cognitive, emotional and imaginative) of the urban pedestrian from disruptive factors in the experienced city. Such research could seek to achieve better understanding of the detailed ways in which the city environment can help or hinder the thought life of the pedestrian. This would be important for cities, or city areas, which are seeking to compete in the knowledge economy and where a significant proportion of workers may benefit from having time that is conducive for thinking while walking before, during or after the official working day.

Chapter 3 discussed previous studies that have examined links between different walking environments and ability to think. Of these studies, some measured the effect of different environments on cognition and emotional state *after* the walk (Berman et al. 2008). Others have looked at ability to think and walk, *during* walking (Oppezzo & Schwartz, 2014, Li et al., 2001). Previous studies have usually compared urban conditions with the natural conditions of countryside or parks. It would be useful to compare different varieties of urban conditions, such as areas with high and low areas of traffic, high and low crowding on pavements and different types of infrastructure provision for pedestrians.

Developing a methodology from Oppezzo & Schwartz (2014) a participant and researcher could walk through the city together while the participant simultaneously attempts a cognitive

task and to navigate their environment. The cognitive task could be one of creative thinking (Oppezzo & Schwartz, 2014) or memorisation (Li et al. 2001).

This research could combine quantitative, verbal qualitative and observational investigations. The participant's ability to conduct the thinking tasks in differing city conditions could be measured quantitatively. Qualitatively, the pedestrian could be asked to conduct a thinking task but would also be encouraged to talk about elements in the environment that are making thinking about the task difficult (or they could talk about these having completed the walk). Observationally, any visually apparent difficulty the pedestrian had in navigating their route whilst carrying out a cognitive task could be recorded by the researcher. These different approaches could be complementary. The research would inform designers of pedestrian environments how to minimise intrusion by the walked environment into the thought life of the pedestrian. This would inform pedestrian environment design in targeted areas of cities.

A final area for further investigation would build upon the finding that barriers against traffic are important but can create ambiguous emotional states in the pedestrian. Quantitative data could be sought to measure the positive and negative feelings about various types of barriers: Positive feelings of protection from traffic and negative feelings of constraint and restriction of pedestrian space.

One challenge for such research would be to get sufficient numbers of participants to make the findings quantitatively credible: if pedestrians were simply stopped on the street for their views they might be unwilling to move with the researcher to examine a variety of barriers. An alternative would be to send pre-engaged participants along a walking route featuring various barriers, with a survey to fill as they walked. This latter option has been favoured by Landis et al. (2001), who used 75 participants and Brown et al. (2007) who used 73 participants, to examine features of the walking environment.

Landis et al. (2001) provide precedent for such research. They sent participants on a walking route with surveys to record how 'safe and comfortable they felt' at various points (p.84). This was in relation to various types and degrees of barrier against motor traffic. However the suggested further research would provide added value by dividing the examination of pedestrian feelings about barriers into the positive feelings of being protected and safe from traffic, and the negative feelings of feeling constrained and compressed by the barriers. Because the study would be looking exclusively and in detail at barriers between pedestrian and car it could examine greater subtleties of the effects on pedestrians. It could, for instance, look at different combinations of barriers, and the detailed functioning of barriers in relation

to different levels of traffic. Such research could aid designers of roads and street environments to consider the effects of different barriers in different road situations.

Having given reflections on methodology and ideas for further research the discussion will conclude with a summary of the main ideas to come from the thesis.

## Conclusion

This thesis has made novel advances to the knowledge provided by previous studies in the previously under explored area of urban walking experience. This chapter has summarised the most significant of these advances.

The thesis has argued for the importance of understanding the urban walking mode as an experience. It must be conceded that the interviews were designed in order to focus on experiential aspects, rather than other factors affecting walking behaviour, such as infrastructure provision and time and cost of walking etc. Conceding this does not though diminish the fact that experiential aspects were important to participants. For illustration, participants reported choosing their walking routes in order to facilitate their ambitions for journey experience. They reported choosing certain routes according to their emotional or cognitive impact. Some chose routes in order to regulate their emotions. Choosing routes to avoid the experience of motor traffic was common. The study suggests then that experiential, emotional and psychological factors can have very real consequences for how, whether and where people walk in the city.

The study can be seen as a case study for transport choices more widely, which can be viewed, amongst other things, as choices between different experiences. As this thesis began by suggesting, one of the main reasons we choose the relationships, activities and places that we do is the experience they give us. There is no reason why transport should be excluded from such a process of the subjective weighing up of potential experiences against each other before making decisions. This is not to discount the importance of other factors such as time and cost calculations and physical health or environmental concerns etc. for travel decisions.

The thesis has nuanced prior understandings of the urban pedestrian experience. For instance it has questioned whether social encounters are always welcomed by pedestrians, it has broadened the understanding of ways in which walking can improve mood, it has also nuanced the belief that the presence of motor traffic on our streets is always a significant negative (this was my pre-held belief before the interviews) .



The study cannot prove that its findings are generalisable for every pedestrian. It has however explored some potentialities that the urban walking experience can hold. It has also sought, in light of the research questions and phenomenological commitments, to describe some essential core elements of the experience, which make the experience what it is for a number of people, if not for everyone. A final condensed summary of these core elements, as identified in the findings, will now be given.

Much of urban walking experience can be understood as triangular interactions between the inner world, the outer experienced city and the physical aspect of walking. The physical aspect often seemed to play an unobtrusive role in the minds of the participants. Interactions between the three elements were found to have various cognitive and emotional aspects. The main implications drawn from these are that the walking environment holds potential to inspire the inner world of the pedestrian and could potentially be designed to negatively intrude on it as little as possible. These are areas for further research.

The psychological and emotional benefits of urban walking include walking as a social encounter, walking as a time to think, and both the reduction of negative and the promotion of positive states of mind. The experience of social encounters while walking can be enjoyed by some, some of the time. However the study has detailed how different social encounters can hold a spectrum of emotional impacts for different individuals.

The study has discussed the strengths and weaknesses of urban walking as a time to think, and has suggested that certain types of thinking were associated with walking time by participants. Some of these, such as problem solving, personal reflection and daydreaming are likely to hold psychological, emotional and professional benefits.

Chapter 8 discussed how deeper and positive states of mind can be facilitated by urban walking. This can be focused inwards to the worlds of thought and creativity, or outwards, through mindfulness of surroundings. It was suggested that these states are facilitated by the movement and rhythm of walking.

The data confirmed that motor traffic is a largely negative experience for pedestrians, necessitating various types of barriers that can be ambiguous in their impact: they can protect and distance the pedestrian from motor traffic but can also restrict and constrain them. These contrary aspects of barriers merit further research and should be carefully considered in the design of spaces used by pedestrian and motorist.

The study found that the relations between the pedestrian and motorist might not be as dehumanised as has been suggested previously, partly because many pedestrians use a car themselves. This car use led some pedestrians to consider car use in general as necessary and thus lessened their negativity towards it.

In conclusion, the thesis has largely focused on interaction: social encounters between pedestrians, interaction between walker and driver, between details seen in the surrounding city and trains of thought, between the body's rhythm and the state of the mind. Many of the virtues of urban walking seem to lie in its facilitation of interaction. And as a final affirmation of the urban walking experience: interaction may be pleasurable or painful, but it is hard to live without.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Experience of motor traffic phase Topic and question guide

#### Appraisal theory

What's important to you as a pedestrian  
Does motor traffic affect the things important to you  
Is experience an important aspect  
Is it relevant to your goals

#### General experience

impressions of traffic  
what if not there  
Describe to someone who never experienced it  
What if anything important about it  
How does nearness feel  
cars pleasant/unpleasant/neutral?

#### Within surroundings

more attention to motor traffic or buildings, pedestrians, pavement, friends  
does motor traffic effect experience

#### Specifics that people like dislike – emphasise this

#### Different senses

what senses important  
pleasant, unpleasant, neutral.  
Do the senses (the sound etc) remind you of anything else.  
Do you have any feelings or sensations in your body in relation to the motor traffic.

#### Memories

Does motor traffic bring back memories

#### Walkalong compared to normal experience

Differences?  
Normally notice - think about it?

#### Cognitive dissonance

Is anyone to be praised/blamed for motor traffic effects

#### Changes from street to street

#### Effect on well being

#### Experiencing m.traffic when with others

What is experiencing when with others  
Does it affect talking

#### Effects on consciousness – thinking

Does it influence ability to think about other things  
Do you do anything to direct your attention from traffic

#### Effect on energy

Stimulation? downer?

#### Crossing roads

What do you feel when waiting to cross?

#### Symbolism

does motor traffic symbolise anything?

#### Danger

Do you feel in danger or safe?

#### People in cars

Power relationship.

People or just cars?

#### Subjectivity Personality

Anything in you personally which effects?

personal characteristics

Do you think there is anything about you which will make your experience of the motor traffic different to that of other people?

#### Age

Do you think your experience of traffic has changed during your life?

#### AREAS TO EXPLORE

- 1) WHAT IS THE EXPERIENCE IN GENERAL
- 2) WHAT EFFECT DOES IT HAVE ON WELL BEING
- 3) WHAT SUBJECTIVE FACTORS ARE IMPORTANT
- 4) WHAT DO PEDS LIKE/DISLIKE SPECIFICALLY
- 5) WALKALONG METHOD

#### Phenomenology extra questions and areas

How does ped experience contrast with other experiences (perhaps walking and cycling.)

How would you describe the essence of being near motor traffic?

What does the motor traffic mean to you?

Questions aimed at what is the experience really like.

## Appendix 2: Pause point sheet

In which order of priority would you make the following changes, if you could? Please prioritise them from 1 to 10.	
Change in how many directions traffic is in (2ways, 1way)	
Change the total number of lanes of motor traffic	
Remove all traffic – pedestrianisation	
Change the number of motor vehicles	
Change the speed of the motor traffic	
Restrict certain types of vehicles (stop big lorries etc)	
Change the noise level of the motor traffic	
Change the width of pavement	
Change the pedestrian crossing facilities	
Change the number of Parked cars	

	Please tick which you think describes this road best			Please tick if you think it Good, Medium or Bad		
	Many	Medium	Few	Good	Medium	Bad
Number of motor vehicles						
Motor traffic speed (How fast for a city centre?)	Fast	Medium	Slow	Good	Medium	Bad
Noise of motor traffic	Loud	Medium	Quiet	Good	Medium	Bad
Width of pavement	Wide	Medium	Narrow	Good	Medium	Bad
Frequency of Pedestrian crossing facilities	Frequent	Medium	Sparse	Good	Medium	Bad
Number of trees	Many	Medium	Few or none	Good	Medium	Bad
Number of Parked cars	Many	Medium	Few or none	Good	Medium	Bad



## Walk along interview Information sheet

### Investigating pedestrian experience of motor traffic

Thomas Calvert PhD Student with Centre for Transport and Society, University of the West of England, Bristol

Thank you for agreeing to receive more information about taking part in a walk along interview. Please take the time to read about why the study is taking place and what it will involve. Feel free to ask any questions that you may have.

#### What is the research about?

The research is looking at the ways we, as pedestrians, experience the motor traffic in our city. The walk along interviews will be looking at this particularly in the city centre context.

It is important to note that the research will be looking at personal reactions to the motor traffic: answering such questions as ‘how does it feel to be near the busy traffic?’ or ‘how does it feel to be in this pedestrianised area?’

#### Who is the researcher?

My name is Thomas Calvert and I am undertaking the interviews as part of a PhD in transport at the University of the West of England.

#### What will the interview involve?

The interview will be a ‘walkalong’ interview. This is where the interview takes place as we walk. We will meet at a prearranged time and place in the city centre. You will be asked to sign a consent form. Then we will attach lapel microphones and put on a small bag each to carry the recording devices. This is so that what we say can be recorded as we walk. We will then walk along a preset route in the city centre, for roughly 45 minutes. The route will not be arduous and will be along routes where there are plenty of other people. Our discussion will be fairly unstructured: You will be free to talk about any aspects of your experience of motor traffic that are of interest or that are of importance to you. Along the way we will stop at two or three points. At these points you will be asked to consider different aspects of the motor traffic and which you would change if you could. The whole interview will take from 45 minutes to 1 hour in total.



**What will happen to the comments I contribute?**

The conversation we have will be written out from the recording. Then the ideas you have and comments you make will be quoted, under a fictional name, in the final PhD report, and possibly in academic journal papers etc.

**Will my taking part be confidential?**

Yes, the final report will be completely anonymous: any of your comments that are quoted will be quoted under an alias name.

**What might I gain from participating?**

A £15 voucher will be given as a thank you for participating in the interview. The interview will also give you a chance to develop and examine your ideas about an element of our surroundings that we sometimes take for granted in our cities – motor traffic. Lastly you will be contributing to others: You will be helping a PhD student to complete his thesis (for which I would be very grateful!), but more widely than this you will be contributing your ideas about motor traffic in our cities to a wide audience of academics and policy-makers.

**What if I wish to withdraw?**

If you wish you may withdraw at any time. In addition you can request to see the written transcript of the interview and, within two weeks of seeing it, can opt to withdraw your comments from the research. Your comments would then be excluded when writing up the final report.

**What will we do if there are difficult weather conditions on the day of the interview such as rain?**

If rain is forecast on the day of the interview, if you are willing, we will postpone the interview to another day.

**Who can I contact for more information?**

Please feel free to contact me for further information

Appendix 4: Experience of motor traffic phase Consent form

## Investigating pedestrian experience of motor traffic

Thomas Calvert PhD Student with Centre for Transport and Society, University of the West of England, Bristol

**Please tick box**

- 1) I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the study and have had the chance to ask questions
- 2) I confirm that I walk regularly for periods of up to 45 minutes to 1hour.
- 3) However I also understand that if walking and standing becomes uncomfortable I am encouraged to tell the researcher and we will either find a place to sit for a break or we can end the interview.
- 4) I confirm that I am familiar with the walking environment and conditions and see no unusual risk in the walk
- 5) I agree to take part in the study
- 6) I agree to the interview being tape-recorded.
- 7) I agree to wearing a lapel microphone and light bag for the purpose of tape recording.
- 8) I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications
- 9) I confirm that I have received a £15 voucher as a thank you for participation
- 10) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am allowed to withdraw at any time
- 11) I understand that I am able to ask to see the transcript (the written up copy) of our interview and that I'm able, within the period of two weeks following seeing it, to ask for the interview not to be used in the writing up of the research

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Signature

## Appendix 5: Suggestions of possible layers of pedestrian experience

**Different senses** – things you might see, hear, smell, touch (Edensor, 2000) Sound – (Vergunst, 2010) (Views – Isaacs, 2000)(Sounds and smells - Adams et al., 2007)

**Other pedestrians, motor traffic ,cyclists** – your perceptions of these other travellers (pedestrians – Middleton, 2009) (Demerath & Levinger, 2003) (Isaacs, 2000)

**Specific incidents that have happened** – Something that you can remember happening in a specific place on one of the times you made the journey

**Thoughts/feelings/emotions** - Thoughts/feelings/emotions you have or have had during the journey – (Edensor , 2010(including memories)) (Edensor walking, 2000) (Jacks, 2004) (Middleton, 2009) (creativity and freedom – Demerath & Levinger, 2003) (freedom – Isaacs, 2000) Emotions – Gross et al (2012)

**Body/physical movement** - any awareness of or issues about physical movement as you walk. (Edensor, 2000)( gait - Ingold, 2004)

**The weather** (Demerath & Levinger, 2003)

**Safety** – any awareness of your safety or that of other travellers.

**Space/body space** – Your awareness of the space around you and your body space.

**Exercise** – the physical exercise aspect of walking

**Time taken/time pressure** – the time the journey takes – any pressures that come from having to hurry (Middleton, 2009)

**Familiarity/unfamiliarity** – the importance of the journey being familiar or not (Edensor 2010)

**Pedestrian identity** – your identity as a pedestrian – maybe incidents that have highlighted this

**The road and pavement itself** - the actual physical road and the pavements and all the other associated hardware (lampposts, rubbish bins, etc) (guard rails – Hornsey, 2010) (Isaacs, 2000)

**Buildings** (Isaacs, 2000) (Jess interview)

**Crossing roads**- the act of crossing roads (Hornsey, 2010)

**Absence/presence** – are you ‘present’ to your surroundings as you walk or are you off in a world of your own? (Edensor walking in Rhythms)

**Walking alone/walking with others** (Edensor, 2000) (Vergunst rhythms of walking)(Demerath & Levinger, 2003)

**Privacy** (Vergunst, 2010)

**Rhythm** (Middleton, 2009)

**Hills** (Demerath & Levinger 2003)

**Adjectives** what adjectives would people use to describe walking (Isaacs, 2000)

**Greenery including trees and grass** (Isaacs,2000)

## Appendix 6: Urban walking phase interview schedule

### Draw diagrams

#### Layers.

#### Follow up questions (when participant has been talking about an aspect of their experience)

You have said that your experience of being a pedestrian is like this on this stage of this journey- is it like that on other stages of this journey or on the other journey? In which ways is it the same or different.

can you say anymore about what that feels like?

can you say anymore about what the experience is like?

can you describe anymore your experience of walking on this route or this part of the route

What is it about the pedestrian experience that makes you say that?

If the pedestrian experience appears to you to be made up of this or that element, how essential are these elements?

Would the pedestrian experience still be what it is if this or these elements were missing?

I could sum up what we have talked about and say 'Is this the essence of your experience of being a pedestrian as you see it?'

Other questions aimed at what is the experience really like?

#### Phenomenological questions

What do you think are the essential or core elements of the pedestrian experience for you?  
What do you think makes it what it is?

What does the pedestrian experience mean to you while you are walking?

What if anything would be missing if you didn't get time as a pedestrian?

Describe the pedestrian experience to someone who had never experienced it?

What would you say are the dominant factors in your awareness while you are walking? For instance while you are at work you might be aware of the task which you are concentrating on. While you are with people you might be aware of what you are talking about and how you feel about your companions – But what is happening in your awareness while you are on your walking journey?

then to follow up: Can you say anything more about what the experience of those factors in your awareness is like?

Can you describe the ways in which the pedestrian experience arises in your awareness?

Have there been any other specific incidents events or situations that stand out because they made it clear to you what the pedestrian experience is all about?

How would you describe your awareness of being a pedestrian while you are walking?

Difference to car, difference to cycling, difference to being indoors, difference to running.

What is the relationship between your surroundings and you – in your mind?



## Interview Information sheet

### Investigating everyday urban pedestrian experience

Thomas Calvert PhD Student with Centre for Transport and Society, University of the West of England, Bristol

Thank you for agreeing to receive more information about taking part in a PhD interview. Please take the time to read about why the study is taking place and what it will involve. Feel free to ask any questions that you may have.

#### **What is the research about, and what will it do?**

The research aims to develop a deep understanding about the ways in which people experience walking in cities, and what it means to them as individuals. The objective is to explore how understanding individual experiences might shape new academic and policy debates around the walking environment and promoting walking.

The research is seeking to answer two questions:

- 1) What does the experience of walking in cities mean to people?
- 2) What is it about the pedestrian experience that makes it what it is?

This information sheet tells you how you will be asked to contribute information that will help me answer these questions.

Your contribution to the research is important because at the moment there is not enough knowledge about walking. By asking and focusing on what the everyday urban pedestrian experience is really like for you, as you have experienced it, the research will be building a new body of knowledge about that experience. This body of knowledge, in turn, will inform academic thinking about people walking, and may go on to inform public policy in the future. It is desirable for our society for more people to walk because it can mean reduced carbon emissions, improved mental and physical health, improved feelings of community, improved quality of life and some economic benefits.

### **What will the interview involve?**

The research interview is designed so that it makes you think about the different ways in which you might experience the walking journeys you already make. This process will prompt you to talk about how you feel when you walk and how you experience the walking environment. Your own experiences of the walks you already make will shape exactly what we talk about, but we may touch on what you feel like or think about, what you see and hear when you are walking, or the people you might meet as you walk for example. There are no right or wrong answers, as I want to hear how you describe your own experience in your own words. We will however keep returning to the topic of how being a pedestrian feels 'as an experience'.

The interview will last no longer than 90 minutes and may well be shorter than this. The interview will start with a recap of what it will involve and with you signing a consent form to take part in it and you having the opportunity to ask me anything you like about the interview.

The interview will be recorded onto a digital Dictaphone.

It will start with a discussion of the accounts of the two journeys that you have produced, and where necessary I will ask more questions to help understand how you experience those journeys. For example, I might ask what things you are aware of as you walk - like people, or buildings, or traffic, or emotions. We will talk about the two journeys for about 40 minutes or so.

In the second half of the interview we will explore more fundamental questions about what makes the pedestrian experience more generally: For example, we will be working towards understanding what your experiences of being a pedestrian mean to you.

### **Will I be asked to do anything before the interview takes place?**

Yes. It would really help our interview, and make it easier for us to talk about your experiences if, before the interview, you write verbal accounts of two of the journeys that you regularly take on foot and in a town/city (or that you have regularly taken in the past). It would be ideal although not really necessary that these two walks are contrasting in some interesting ways, e.g. if one was a walk to work and another a walk to a leisure activity, or if one was a walk in suburban areas and another was a walk to a city centre etc or one might be a longer journey and the other shorter. The ways in which the two walks might contrast is entirely up to you.

These accounts need not be long. Each journey account would divide your journey into sections according to the different environments and pedestrian conditions that you pass through. Please do not name the specific streets you walk along. So for instance one journey description might be:

*'I start off in the streets in my local neighbourhood, there are not many cars and there are lots of trees. Then I walk along some busier roads, with shops and lots of people going to pubs and restaurants in the evening. The next stage of my journey is through more residential roads with wide pavements. I don't meet many other pedestrians on these roads. The final stage of my journey is entering the city centre. There are lots of other pedestrians here and all the hustle and bustle of city life.'*

It can be seen that in this account the journey is divided into stages of similar conditions (local neighbourhood, busier road, residential roads, city centre). The basic description need not be very many words.

However you are more than welcome to add more detail. You might add some words describing how you feel as you walk, or the things you see or hear, or the things you think about, or specific incidents you remember on that section of your walk or anything you find interesting. It might be of a practical or poetic nature. You might take some photographs if you happen to use that route again before the interview. This extra detail would all be very welcome but don't feel you need to do them; we can talk about such detail in the interview itself.

Please send your journey descriptions to me, by email or post, before the interview. This will provide time for both of us to reflect on the descriptions prior to the interview. However if this is not possible just bring the descriptions along to the interview.

### **Who is the researcher?**

My name is Thomas Calvert and I am undertaking the interviews as part of a PhD in transport at the University of the West of England.

### **Where will the interview take place?**

We can be very flexible where we do the interview: It could be at your house or at UWE campus or at another suitable place of your choosing (providing there is not too much background noise – so that a good audio recording of our conversation can be made).

### **What will happen to the comments I contribute?**

The conversation we have will be written out from the recording. Then the ideas you have and comments you make will be quoted, under a fictional name, in the final PhD report, and possibly in academic journal papers etc.

### **Will my taking part be confidential?**

Yes, the final report will be completely anonymous: any of your comments that are quoted will be quoted under an alias name.



**What might I gain from participating?**

A £10 voucher will be given as a thank you for participating in the interview. In addition to this you may well find discussing your experience of your regular pedestrian journeys interesting. Thirdly, you would be helping other people: by helping a PhD student to complete his thesis (for which I would be very grateful!) and by contributing to an understanding of the urban pedestrian experience in academic and potentially policy making circles.

**What if I wish to withdraw?**

If you wish you may withdraw from the research at any time. In addition, you will receive (unless you do not wish to,) a transcript (a written copy) of our interview by post or email (whichever you prefer). You will receive it within four weeks of our interview. Having received it there will be a two week period in which you can contact the researcher and ask for parts or the whole of it not to be used in the subsequent writing up of the research.

**Who can I contact for more information?**

Please feel free to contact me for further information



Faculty of the  
Built Environment



## Interview consent form

### Investigating everyday urban pedestrian experience

Thomas Calvert PhD Student with Centre for Transport and Society, University of the West of England, Bristol

**Please tick box**

- 1) I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the study and have had the chance to ask questions
- 2) I agree to take part in the study
- 3) I agree to the interview being recorded onto a digital dictaphone
- 4) I agree to the use of anonymised quotes from our interview in publications
- 5) I confirm that I have received a £10 voucher as a thank you for participation
- 6) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am allowed to withdraw at any time
- 7) I understand that I will receive, (unless I do not wish to,) a transcript (a written copy) of our interview by post or email (whichever I choose). I will receive it within four weeks of our interview. Having received it there will be a two week period in which I can contact the researcher and ask for parts or the whole of it not to be used in the subsequent writing up of the research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Signature

