

Boy Racers, Dunkirk Spirit and the Pompey Bounce:

The use of movement and mobility in impression management and identity formation

Dr. Charles Musselwhite

Centre for Transport & Society, University of the West of England

Room 3Q30 Email: Charles.Musselwhite@uwe.ac.uk



Overview

Introduction

Re-examine 4 past projects

Re-explained in 3 contexts

1. Young drivers: Boy racers

2. Slow moving traffic: Dunkirk Spirit

3. Walking: Pompey bounce

Conclusion

Introduction

The social nature of transport



Social nature of transport

View traffic and transport environment as a social situation

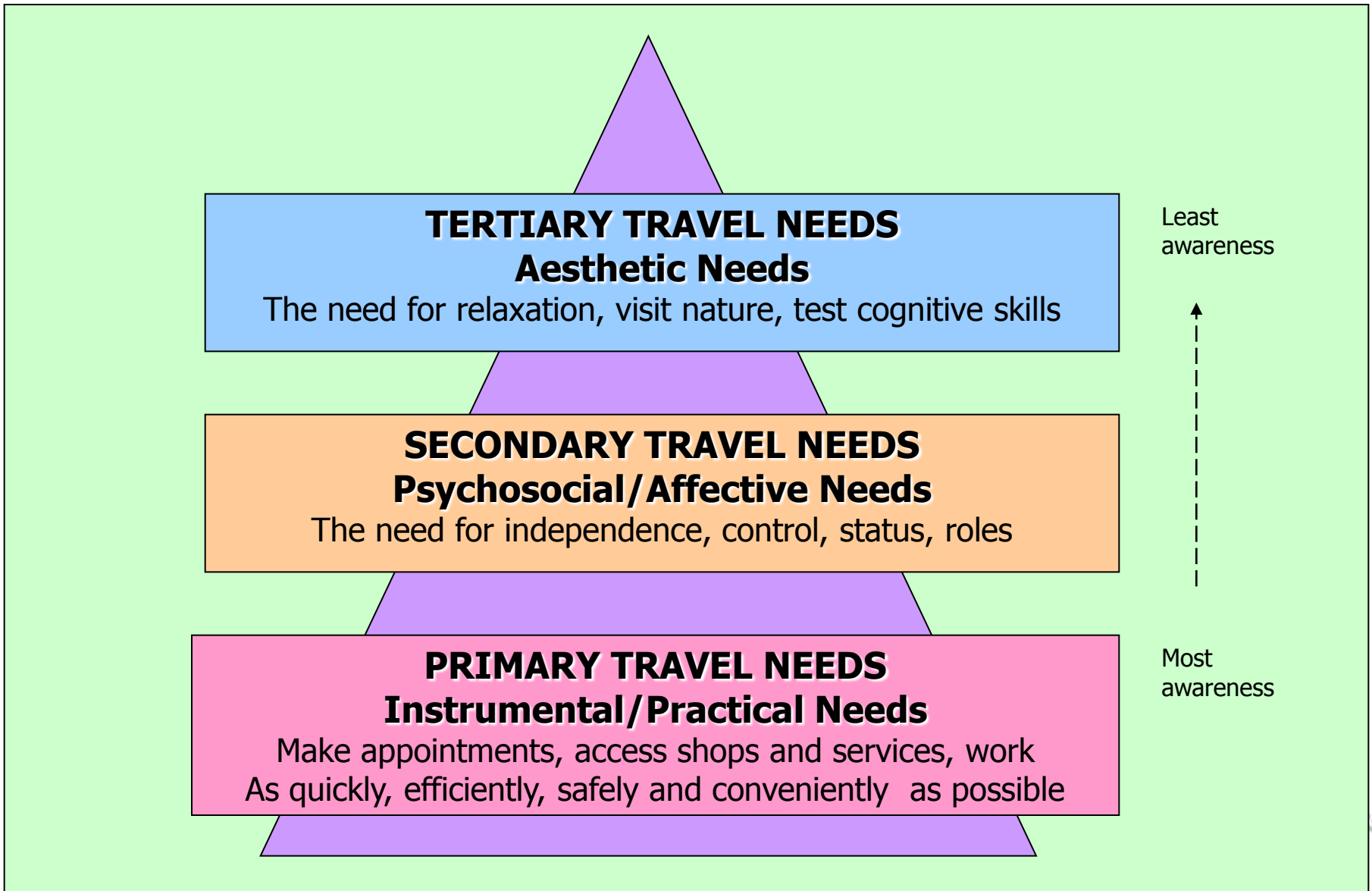
- Haglund and Aberg (2000)
 - that traffic and transport should be viewed as a social situation where drivers interact and influence each other

- O'Connell (2002) states the understanding traffic and transport
 - “must not be based on an erroneous model of humans as abstract rational actors, isolated from their social context and operating on purely ‘objective’ criteria” (pg. 201).

Haglund, M. & Åberg, L. (2000). Speed choice in relation to speed limit and influences from other drivers. *Transportation Research Part F*, **3**, 39-51

O'Connell, M. (2002). Social psychological principles: 'The group inside the person'. In R. Fuller & J.A. Santos (2002) *Human Factors for Highway Engineers*, Amsterdam: Pergamon, 201-215

Travel Needs



Aim of today's presentation

- To consider how people use transport and movement in order to express elements of themselves to the outside world.
 - (1) Between modal motivations: modal choice
 - (2) Behaviours within modes: behaviour while moving

- Building on studies that have addressed
 - Symbolic and affective aspects of the car
 - Expressive driver behaviour and attitudes
 - Travel time use

“We’ve also misunderstood what consumer goods actually *mean* to people, ignoring their connections with personal identity, esteem and belonging. Nowhere have we got things more wrong than in understanding car use. Pleas for people to cut car use in favour of public transport are on their own more or less a waste of time because they miss the fundamental point. Cars are much more than a means of getting from A to B. Indeed if that were all they were good for, these expensive items wouldn’t be needed at all in many, if not most, people’s lives. The car is less about transport and more about a sense of freedom, perceived convenience and personal identity.” (Hounsham, 2006, pg.8)

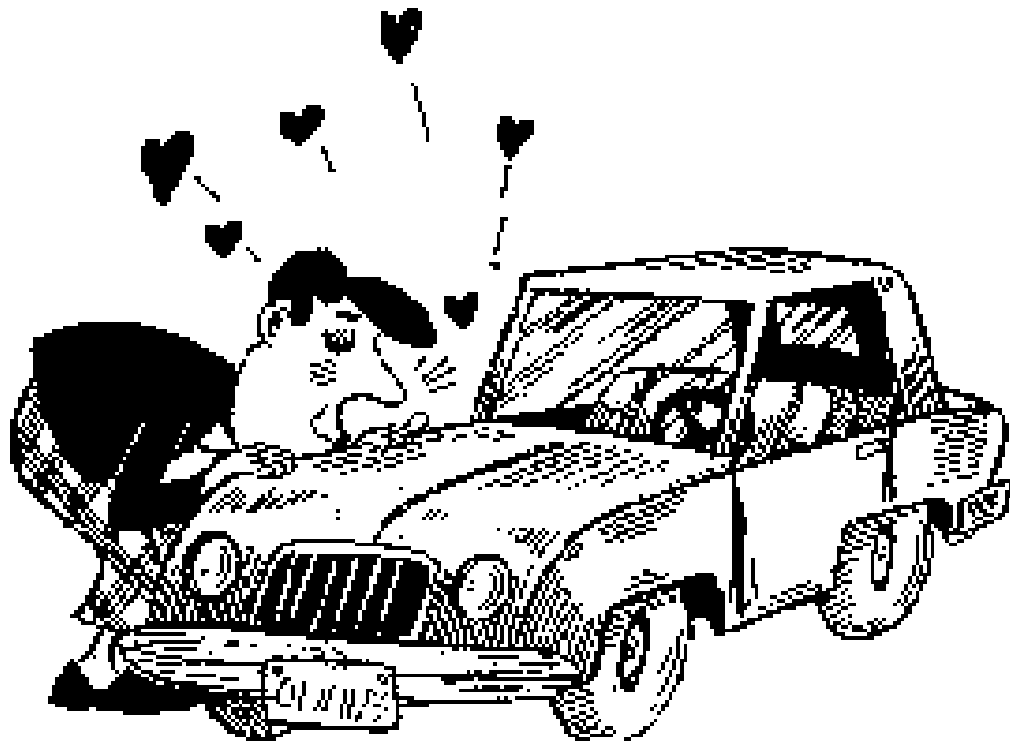
Methodology

Re-analysis from 4 projects and analysis of 1 new project

April 2000- June 2004	Driver behaviour and attitudes towards risk (EPSRC) Understanding driver's conceptualisations of risk	54 interviews
Jan. 2006- Oct. 2007	Prolonging safe driving of older people (EPSRC/BBSRC) Understanding older people's driving needs	56 int., FG, diary
April 2006- Sept. 2007	The public acceptability of road pricing (DfT) Attitudes towards being charged for using road space	480 in re- convened FG
Sept. 2007- May 2009	Public attitudes towards road user safety (DfT) Perceptions and understanding of road user safety	238 in re- convened FG
Sept. 2010- Jan.2011	Observations of walking behaviour (unfunded) Making inferences from others walking body language	48 in FGs



Autophilia?
How I Learned
to Stop Worrying
and Love My Car
or
Love my car and
love me!



Symobilism of the car

The need to travel when, where & how often you like

- Independence
- Human right

“It’s very important. It is basic human rights being able to do what we want when we want”

“It’s what we fought for in the war. The right to drive when we want where we want.”

- Freedom

“Everybody wants that personal freedom that we have been sold”

- Cost

Boy and girl racers



F: I dress my car up, you know to make it look nice

M: Typical girl

F: Shut up.

M: (mocking) Like a dolly?

F: Shut up you. I mean, you know you give it you know a personality...

M: Yeah and a name. I bet you have haven't you

F: well yeah, it's called Olly. LAUGHS from group

F: But you know it's mine and I want to show the world it's mine. Stamp my personality on it. So I have stickers...cuddly toys. GROANS from the group

F: what you don't at all

M: no

F: no modifications?

M: well yeah. Hell yeah. I've got an ace ICE (in car entertainment system) I put in. I saved up and put in myself. Sub woofer in the boot

F: there you are

M: that's not dressing it up. That's essential (laughs). Well it is. It has a function. It ain't just pretty

F: The lights and stuff are. On it. The dials and knobs, lights and that they're pretty

M: shut up"

■ Decoration

Females

Aesthetic

Males

"purpose"

But
actually
aesthetic?

Boy and girl racers



■ Decoration

Males –
purpose
but
actually
aesthetic

Females
directly
linked and
thought
about

M: you got go faster stripes.

R: Have you got them?

M: No no way.

R: have you got nothing on your vehicle then?

M: er no no. Well I did put a spoiler on the back and I bought chrome (finishing pack)

R: OK, so why?

M: looks nicer doesn't it?

R: do people say so?

M: yes

R: who?

M: mates and that. And sometimes people who know you know. They say you know – 'nice wheels mate'. It matters, shows you know what you're doing with cars and that

R: And that's important

M: yeah it is I think."

"My car. It's pink and fluffy inside but it has a 2 litre engine, spoiler and alloys. It kind of like me. A tomboy. Hard on the outside but still soft and girly on the inside"

But more than this...also linked to driver behaviour

■ Risky driving

Largely a male preserve

As borne out in the statistics

M: I'm probably an aggressive driver, yeah. I am. My mates would say so. I don't think I'm dangerous, but I take risks yeah.

R: why?

M: I don't know really. I just do you know, It's me.

R: Are you a risky person would you say?

M: not really. I think you do just drive like that don't you. You know at my age. You know. I think you'd look silly driving slow and that like an old dodderer when you're my age."

M: "It's fun isn't it. To floor the accelerator. You get a buzz.

Q: Do older people do that?

M: No way!

Q: Why not?

M: Er I suppose they've done it. Haven't they. It's no longer a thrill

M: And they don't have the reactions to do it, as you do when you're young

Driving behaviour as an expression

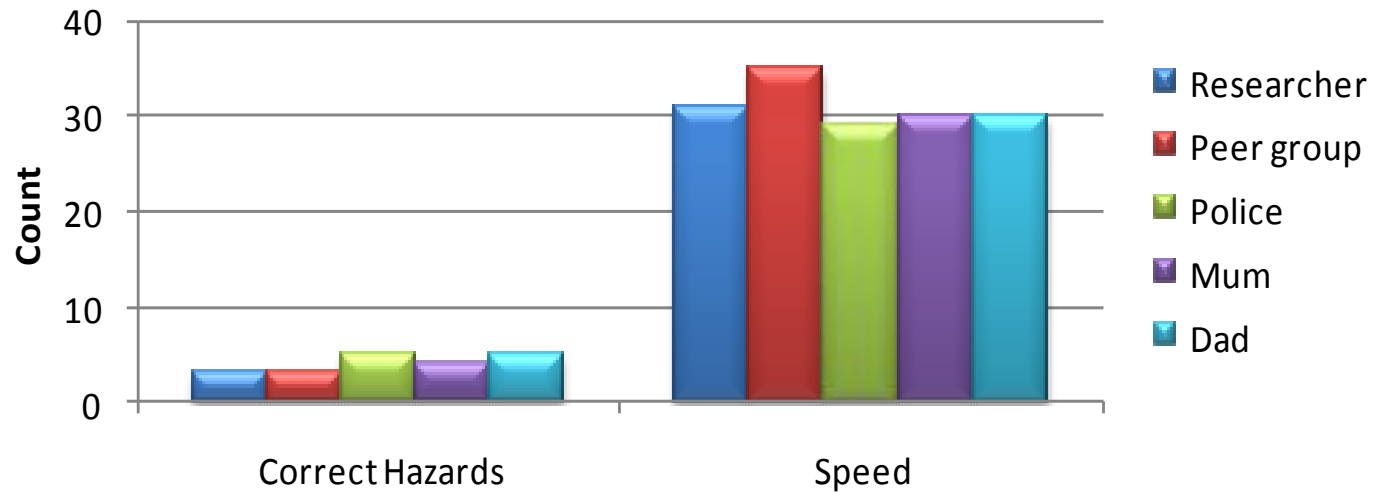
- Driving behaviour shows something about the self
- Different person behind the wheel?
- Deindividuation vs. Identity
 - Loss of identity in group situation vs. deliberate attempt to manipulate impression to others

Driven by the need to present oneself in a certain light

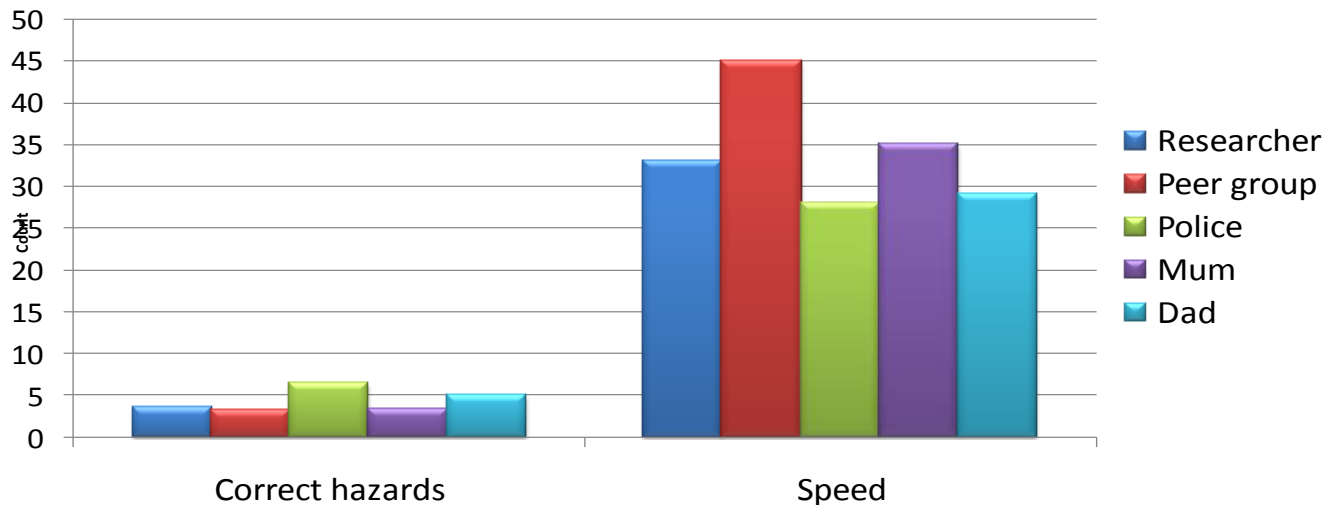
- Deliberate attempt to manipulate others' impression of oneself through the type of driving displayed



Reported hazards and speeds by young female drivers (17-20 yrs) when being observed



Reported hazards and speed by young male drivers (17-20 yrs) when being observed



Findings

Key findings

- On average - higher speeds and more risks taken by young drivers in peer observed category.
- On average - lower speeds and less risks taken by young drivers in police observed category.
- Ordinary driving category sees average speeds and average risks.
- Males more pronounced high and low speed and risks than females

Differences amongst drivers

- Some drive in “ordinary” condition same as they would if being observed by peers –strongly driven by need to impress others (38% male; 20% female)
- Some stable across all conditions – strong moral obligation (15% male, 18% female)
- Unusual “outliers?” – scary dads, sensible view of peers

So why cars and why now?

- But if linked to
 - Identity
 - Status
 - Roles within groups

- How did we express things like this before the car (was affordable)
 - House
 - Jobs
 - Family

- Change in society?
 - Lack of permanence in jobs,
 - delay of adulthood and extension of childhood
 - change in financial status (can't afford house, but can afford cars – mid credit)

DRIVE TO WORK



Dunkirk Spirit Congestion

Negative Affect of congestion

■ Practical level

- Late for work, appointments, lost business, lost time with family

■ Emotional level

- Stress, frustration, anger

“It’s just like proper road rage. I could just ram everyone out the way.”

“It is very tiring in the morning, and by the time you get to work, you are snappy, and can’t be bothered.”

Story Telling

■ *Animated*

■ *Boasting*

– *Time sat in traffic*

"M: I sit in traffic every day going along the M4, it takes about an hour to go seven miles. I haven't any other choice. I have to do it for getting to work.

M: Me. Mine is around 2 hours for 10 miles, seriously. Every day., It drives you crazy but you're right you gotta do it for work"

– Route taken, sense of fighting way through – a battle to be fought and won?

"You don't have to go that way mate. No. I try a route via Corkhill Way, turn left at the Radlett Roundabout and then right then left onto Thomason Street, take a right and you're back on the main road, much quicker"

Battle ground

■ Foraging to provide

"It's like a battle ground you go through each day on your way to work. You know what I'm saying. When I get there you are tired and stressed but you have to do it don't you. It's part of the working day. It's what you do for your work, for your family, you know, for yourself"

"yeah yeah. It's hard every day to do it. But what choice. Someone's got to do work and bring the money home. So I sit there and think that otherwise I'd stress out big time"

■ Part of wider stresses but ownership/embodiment of that status and role

"Although it's awful, right, I suppose it's what you have to do now. I have to work, I have to get to work. I don't like either! But what else is there. It's a big investment the time, the stress, but I get paid and I have a job"

■ Sense of achievement for completion

- Self-actualisation?

All in it together

- All In it together – Dunkirk Spirit (evacuation of troops, 1940). Pull together in times of adversity (esp. British)

"I mean it's no different for others is it. We're all going to work. We all moan about it. But we all face it together. And we do all get through it!"

"People'll help you. Down the pub a stranger overheard me saying how I get stuck and he suggested a new route which I do now. It helps a little!"

"People are more tolerant I would say, if you say I am late because I was stuck in traffic and like 10 years ago it'd be 'like you what?'"

- All in it together preferred to demand management, certainly to road pricing

You grin and bear it! Everyone's in the same boat. You can't escape it but no one can. I suppose its fair!

Yes fairer than say paying for it

Yes I'd agree with that"

- Normality – part of society, working

- Being alive – having done something important



Protection

- Protected time and space
 - Role(less), (lack of) responsibility

- Protected space
 - Psychological Detachment

 - Unwanted arousal (Stradling)

 - Social-less travel

"I can do what I want when I want, I can light-up a fag, sit back and listen to the radio on what channel I want to. Nobody shouts into a mobile phone, its relaxing"

- Close but distant
 - Visual presentation only.

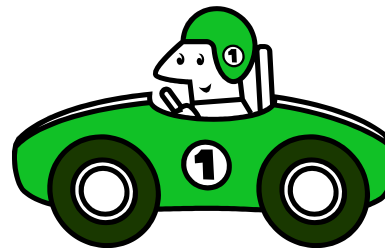
Ownership of congestion

- Essential users reduces negative affect
 - Workers
- Non-essential users enhances negative affect
 - Older people, younger people, mums with children, foreigners, migrants
- In-group vs. out-group distinction
- The government
 - Local Authority
 - National
- You, me, everyone, us – **We *are* traffic**
 - We are all responsible and must be part of the solution
 - Much more likely to be mentioned by younger people 17-25 year olds
 - Some older people also mentioned this 65 years + (some felt their generation was responsible for letting this happen!)

Reducing negative affect

- Change route
- Change time
- Change mode?

- Personalise space
 - Set up home
 - Decorate
 - Own space



The Pompey Bounce!

Walking
behaviour as an
expression



The Bounce

- The way we walk says something about our selves?
- Do we manipulate the way we walk?
 - Like we do for driving?
- Can a “signature of human (e)motion” be identified?
 - Advantages of other types of biometric identification
- Deliberate and non-deliberate walking styles



- People asked to identify distinctive walking patterns
- But are distinctive
 - 10 types identified by participants from 50 clips
 - One of the most striking was termed the “Pompey Bounce”
 - Seen it before, easily recognisable

Explanations

■ Interviews about the Pompey Bounce

Young – teenage: often associated with particular individuals

It's what them geezers do. Sort of walk with a high energy and that. It's a mush thing.

Linked with dress. Almost (but not exclusively) male

I think it's their trainers. All pumped up they are. Girls do it too.

Linked to social events

You see groups of them on the ferry on a Saturday night. All dressed up and doing that kind of walk thing

Linked to status, class and roles

It's generally a working-class thing isn't it. That walk they do!

Explanations

A second stage “on the spot” Interviews with 23 Pompey Bouncers
(21 male, 2 female; all aged 18-25)

Answers vary on a continuum

Affronted,

“I don’t deliberately do it. No way. It’s just the way I walk”

Part of being confident

“I think I walk confidently. I’m proud of who I am.”

It is deliberate,

“Yeah, it’s a swagger, it’s a statement of intent of who I am. It gives me gravitas. It announces this is me”

Conclusions

- **The importance of movement as an expressive activity**
- **Other modes**
 - **Cycling**
 - **The curious case of train drivers**
- **Change in philosophy and methodology**
 - **Static research methods to movement based**
- **Can we re-direct the expressive activity**
 - **Away from driving to improve safety**
 - **To other modes**
 - **To social elements away from transport**
- **Changes over time**
 - **Cohort**
 - **Age**
- **The future: Virtual travel**

Many thanks to my participants, to Hebba Haddad and Ian Shergold my Researchers working with me on all of this, to Verity Smith and Peter Lansley for interest and dedication on the initial SPARC project.

Further information

Dr Charles Musselwhite

Senior Lecturer

Centre for Transport & Society

Charles.Musselwhite@uwe.ac.uk

0117 32 83010

www.transport.uwe.ac.uk/staff/charles.asp

