Pedestrian Stories: Recovering Sustainable Urban Mobility

Colin Pooley

Abstract

For most of human history walking has been the principal form of transport for many journeys and it remains the most environmentally and socially sustainable way of travelling. This chapter uses data drawn from a range of qualitative sources to demonstrate how travelers' attitudes to walking for everyday journeys have changed over time, and to examine the reasons for these changes. It is suggested that three factors have been especially significant: perceptions of normality, attitudes to risk and perceptions of busyness. I argue that the re-establishment of past attitudes towards walking could help to produce much more sustainable urban mobility.

Key words: Walking, Qualitative, Normality; Convenience, Risk, Urban, Britain.

Introduction

Walking is the most sustainable form of transport for most short journeys and can form part of many longer multi-mode trips. It requires few resources, has low-level impact on the environment compared to other travel modes, and is accessible to most people. It thus meets the basic criteria of both environmental and social sustainability.[1] In the past, walking was the taken-for-granted form of movement for many journeys. However, current transport policies in most countries rarely view travel on foot as a form of transport that needs to be planned, and only minimal provision is made for pedestrians.[2] In this chapter, I draw on examples from Britain to demonstrate the historical significance of walking as a form of transport, and to chart the reasons for its relative neglect and decline. I argue that recognizing the

significance of the pedestrian in urban transport systems, together with the provision of improved infrastructures, could contribute significantly to a more sustainable future for urban mobility. Although the examples are drawn from Britain, the argument equally applies to most countries where automobiles dominate the transport system.

For most of human history, pedestrians have formed the main traffic in both urban and rural areas. Some people had access to animal-powered transport, and waterways were important in certain locations, but the default travel mode in urban areas was walking. From the mid-nineteenth century, wealthy nations expanded their urban public transport systems with omnibuses, suburban railways, and trams, thus increasing the mobility options. Private transport by bicycle and motor car gradually became available, but these remained the preserve of the relatively affluent well into the twentieth century. Although private or public powered transport now dominates urban streets all over the world, travel on foot continues to be important for both urban and rural areas in many poorer countries.[3]

Definitive data on walking as a transport mode are hard to come by (see below), but reliable estimates show that in the first decade of the twentieth century, approximately half of all travel to and from work in Britain was on foot, and walking probably formed a larger proportion of trips undertaken for other everyday purposes such as shopping, visiting friends, and children travelling to and from school. The sharpest decline in walking to work occurred in the 1920s, as people switched to cycling and public transport, and then in the 1960s due to increased car use.[4] By 2015, walking accounted for barely ten percent of the journeys to and from work, though some 22 per cent of all trips (for any purpose) recorded in the British National Travel Survey were on foot.[5] This is broadly similar to many other Western European countries, but significantly higher than in North America and Australia, where

walking accounts for less than ten percent of all travel.[6] Not only is walking by far the most environmentally sustainable and accessible option, but also walking for everyday trips and for leisure can contribute to good health, increased sociability and community cohesion. Walking is also the most socially inclusive form of urban transport. For those with limited time for leisure activities, walking for everyday travel can be particularly important as a route to such benefits. As walking has declined, so too has the sustainability of urban travel, while the environmental impacts of transport have increased. Consequently, those unable to access the dominant transport modes have experienced transport-related social exclusion.[7]

There is substantial social science literature on walking as an activity, but this tends to focus disproportionately on walking as a leisure activity (especially in the open countryside and on mountains), on the performativity of walking, and on the kinesthetic experience of travelling on foot. There is also literature on the perceived risks of walking, especially for women.[8] In contrast, everyday (or utility) walking undertaken as part of normal daily life is a relatively neglected topic.[9] This chapter focusses on the practical dilemmas of everyday urban walking, the ways these have changed over time, and the policies that might encourage more people to walk on a daily basis. The theory supporting this research is drawn from the field of mobility studies, where the so-called 'new mobilities paradigm' has highlighted the role of mobility in constructing and executing most aspects of everyday life.[10] There has been extensive reworking and development of the original ideas, but all the research within this framework places the human experience of movement center stage rather than simply as the process of moving from one location to another.[11] So far, there has been only limited interaction between mobilities theory and transport studies, with even less consideration of historical trends.[12] By focusing on the changing role of walking in Britain's urban transport since the 1890s, this chapter adds to the growing literature.

I now turn to the sources of data for studying the history of everyday walking in Britain, and examine their problems of use. I then develop an argument that the marginalization and decline of walking for everyday travel in Britain over the past century are the result of three main processes operating in unison: the changing norms of travel behavior that have evolved over time; the changes in personal circumstances and family structures that have affected how people travel; and the altered perceptions of risks that walkers may encounter in the street. A range of personal testimonies traces the historical trends in each process, along with the policies proposed that could make walking easier and more desirable, and thus reverse the long-run and widespread decline in everyday walking that has occurred in Britain and elsewhere.

Sources of Evidence: Recovering Past Sustainable Urban Mobility

Walking is all but invisible in many sets of transport statistics and this obscures its potential significance in creating more sustainable urban mobility practices. I argue that better understanding of the role of walking in the past can help to focus attention on this most sustainable form of travel. For instance, walking (and for that matter cycling) is excluded from Eurostat data on passenger road transport,[13] and the UK's Department for Transport only began publishing separate statistics on walking (and cycling) in 2012.[14] These were derived from the "Active People's Survey" carried out by Sport England since 2006. Although these data provide insights into utility walking, the main focus is sport and active leisure.[15] According to data for 2014–2015 utility walking in Britain is increasing slightly, with 25 per cent of the people surveyed stating they walk at least five times a week for utility purposes. As yet, the time-series is very limited and it is hard to know if this is a sustained reversal of a previous downward trend.[16] The British National Travel Survey (NTS), which

does provide some data on all travel modes from 1965 to the present, shows that the proportion of all trips undertaken on foot dropped from 34.8 per cent in 1975/6 to 22 per cent in 2015. The NTS definition of walking trips has however changed over time, for instance its first survey in 1965 excluded all trips under one mile (1.6 km). Unsurprisingly, the extent to which people walk for everyday purposes varies from place to place, largely dependent on the proximity of relevant services. Thus, utility walking in rural areas is low (though leisure walking is more common), while in urban areas where more people live close to the services and amenities they use, travel on foot is more common. This is the case in most parts of the world; for instance, 32 per cent of all travel in London is undertaken on foot, the same as in Bangalore. The equivalent figure for New York is 39 per cent (higher than most US cities), for Paris it is 47 per cent, and 27 per cent in Shanghai.[17]

While some information exists on walking as a travel mode, none of the sources gives us any insights into the experience of travelling on foot in urban areas. To understand how and why people do (or do not) walk for everyday travel, we need to dig beneath the bare statistics to uncover the motivations, barriers, and experiences related to walking in cities. Accounts of city walking can be gained from a number of sources. Interviews and oral history testimonies are useful for the recent past, although all such data, especially oral history, is dependent on both the interviewee's memory and the interviewer's skill.[18] Ideally, what is needed are first-hand accounts provided at (or close to) the time when travel took place: personal diaries written up on a daily basis can provide such insights. Diaries also have their limitations as historical sources for everyday travel: they were mostly written by more educated and affluent members of society, young women were more likely to keep diaries than other demographics, and we have no way of knowing how the writer selected what to include or exclude. It is also likely that the most mundane activities (such as everyday walking) were

under-recorded in favor of more unusual events. Nonetheless, diaries can provide significant insights into aspects of everyday travel (including walking) that are missing from other data.[19] Both oral history and diary evidence feature in this chapter, albeit limited to a small number of individual informants who cannot be considered representative of a larger population. I also wanted to find personal testimonies of walking from a larger sub-set of the population. The records of London's Central Criminal Court (the Old Bailey) from 1674 to 1913 are available on-line, and provide detailed testimonies from victims, witnesses, and those accused of a wide range of crimes in London.[20] Because much crime was committed on the streets, the accounts of what occurred (especially from witnesses and victims) also provide evidence of who was on the streets at different times of day, and what they were doing.[21] This chapter uses sample data from these records for the years 1891, 1901, and 1911 to gain a wider perspective on the experience of walking. These data also contain biases. Most crime was committed at night, so the testimonies are dominated by those on the streets after dark. Moreover, it is not possible to judge the truthfulness of statements, even though all were given under oath. However, these data have been widely used and their reliability assessed for studying criminality, and there is no reason to doubt the veracity of statements made by witnesses or victims regarding their daily movements on the street.[22] In the following sections, selected quotes illustrate my argument. Although, as with all qualitative data, the representativeness of such quotes cannot be fully assessed, and statistical representativeness is not the purpose of such research,[23] the quotes selected are drawn from a very much larger set of information available and represent themes and experiences that occurred repeatedly in the data.

The Normality of Walking

Walking for everyday travel is most common in societies and time periods that fulfil two conditions: first, where many people have limited options regarding how they travel due to the lack of technological development or access to the transport technologies available; and second, where travel on foot is perceived as the normal and taken-for-granted means of getting from one place to another. For instance, two centuries ago, the development of and access to motorized transport (both public and private) were more limited in all countries of the world.[24] In this section I focus on the extent to which walking continued to be viewed as normal in British cities as the options for travel increased both through new technologies and less restricted access. The majority of people feel more comfortable when conforming to the social norms of the society in which they live: they are reluctant to stand out from the crowd and may fear ridicule (or worse) if they are seen to transgress.[25] In most rich countries today, the perceived norm for much everyday travel is the automobile, leading to the dominant culture of automobility discussed at length in the mobilities literature.[26] A century ago, this was very different: walking would have been the only available form of travel for most people, and movement on foot would have been the taken-for-granted option for much urban travel. Gradually, while public and private motorized transport expanded, the normality of walking decreased.

Statements given at the Old Bailey trials in London show the extent to which pedestrians filled the streets of Britain's cities in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Men, women and children of all ages and social classes walked at most times of the day and night as they went about their everyday business. The Old Bailey data obviously just record those who encountered a criminal offence. These would have been a tiny minority of all pedestrians on the streets at any one time - and it is certainly not the intention of this paper to suggest that walking the streets of London in the early-twentieth century was dangerous – but there is no

reason to doubt that those who encountered criminality (as witness or victim) were a reasonably representative cross-section of a larger pedestrian population. The following testimonies illustrate the range of persons on the streets of London around 1900, and some of the activities in which they were engaged.[27]

In March 1891 Frederick Monroe was witness to a crime as he was returning home from posting a letter just before midnight:

> I am a Wesleyan minister, living in John Wesley's Home, 47, City Road—on the night of 3rd March, about a quarter to twelve, I had been to the post, and on my return I saw a gentleman walking on the other side of the road, and suddenly saw seven or eight men leap out of the shadow of a building and knock him down on the pavement.[28]

Although popping out on foot to post a letter would also be commonplace today, venturing onto the streets late at night was clearly normal for this gentleman. It was equally normal for people to walk home after an evening's entertainment, as stated in November 1891 by Alfred Hawthorne, who took a deliberately long route home, entailing a two-hour walk (presumably for the exercise and fresh air, though this is not specified): "I live at 52, Dean Street, Islington—on this Saturday I went to Sadler's Wells about seven o'clock, and left about a quarter to ten, and went for a walk round by Chapel Street, Islington, and then got home about a quarter to twelve."[29] Although most of the offenders recorded in the Old Bailey data were male, statements from witnesses and victims show that women of every social class were also present on the streets of London. In April 1901, Florence Brown was walking home from work in the evening when she was assaulted:

> I am single—I live at Rothschild Villas, Acton, with my mother, and am a waitress—I have known the prisoner about two years, and have been keeping company with him—last August I became engaged to him—we often had quarrels, but nothing very serious…on Saturday, April 20th, I was going home about 8.45 p.m., and saw him following me—I asked him where he was going—he said he was coming to see me—he had rather a disappointed look on his face, as if he did not want me to see him—we walked towards the gate next to our house.[30]

Lady Anne Carson was accosted by boys while walking near her home in Knightsbridge:

> I am the wife of Sir Edward Carson, and live at 39, Rutland Gate—between 1 and 2 p.m. on August 14th I was walking by Rutland Gate—it was raining—I had an umbrella in one hand and my dress and purse in the other—the purse was attached to my wrist by a steel chain—four or five boys came along—the prisoners were three of them—Snell stopped and seized my purse—I tried to hold it for some time, and tried to push him off with my umbrella—the others stood by—they did not molest me so far as violence was concerned.[31]

Children also walked the streets without adult company, as exemplified by the case of Harry Pracey who was accosted when walking home from school with his younger brother in February 1911:

> On February 3 I left school with my brother Albert at 4.30 p.m. I met prisoner in Hornsey Road; he asked me where the Oxford coffee shop was, and I and my brother showed it him; he took us inside and gave us tea and cake. After staying there a little while prisoner took us both by the hand to a yard where he got some bottles, which he changed for money at a beershop. He then led us up Highbury Hill to Upper Street, where he again gave us tea and cake at a coffee shop. He said he had been a soldier and had been all over the world. I did not want to go with him, but he held our hands and I was frightened. He took us to the Embankment, where he spoke to a woman. A policeman then spoke to us.[32]

Evidence from these data suggests that in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century the streets of London were, indeed, teeming with pedestrians. Men, women and children of all social classes and ages passed each other on the streets and thoroughfares were busy until late into the night. Most people had few alternatives for undertaking their everyday journeys, but even the rich (such as Lady Carson) also walked alone at times. The city was also configured in such a way that most everyday needs could be met within walking distance of home, though longer journeys on foot were also undertaken from time to time as in the case of James Nash who walked some 20 miles (32 km) in November 1910, presumably to seek work in London: "On November 25, at 1 a.m., I was standing at a coffee stall by the Elephant and Castle, having just walked from Hatfield, when Jackson offered me a cup of coffee and gave me sixpence to get a lodging."[33] For most people in early-twentieth century London, walking was the normal means of moving from place to place.

In the twenty-first century, while some people do walk regularly, for many this activity has become an uncommon and unusual form of transport: even one that can be seen as

transcending the bounds of normality. Our study of walking and cycling in four English cities demonstrated this, with one respondent stating quite simply: "You feel unusual walking."[34] Another said: "The whole thing with transport and not having a car, I do feel like a second class citizen, there's definitely a sense that as a pedestrian and a cyclist, you are definitely second class citizens."[35] It is hard to pin down when this change occurred as it was a gradual progression over almost a century.[36] In the 1920s and 1930s, walking continued to be quick, cheap and convenient for some, as evidenced by a female respondent who lived in Manchester in the 1930s: "I soon decided to get up a bit earlier and walk because….I was paying…half a crown for tram fares, and I thought I can't even save up to go home. So I started walking to work and walking back."[37] For others, however, the combination of improved public transport, greater availability and lower cost of bikes, and increasing separation of homes from workplaces as industry relocated from city centers to peripheral locations meant that travel by bus, tram, train or bike became much more practical. This is illustrated by two respondents in Glasgow and Manchester: "No, not [walking] to work because you would have to leave too early in a morning. The subway was so quick and it was so cheap;" [38] "Oh no. No it [walking] would have taken too long. Five miles, it would have taken an hour and a half. … The bike was so much quicker."[39]

The extent to which car travel supplanted walking (and much public transport use and cycling) was different for males and females, and also occurred gradually during the twentieth century. Until the 1950s, car use was generally limited in Britain.[40] It was the increased complexity of travel and the greater distances involved that often forced people to either buy a car, or use an existing car more for utility journeys rather than restricting its use mainly to leisure travel which was more common in the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, 86 per cent of British households were still without a car in 1951.[41] These points

are neatly encapsulated by two Manchester respondents: “If you had access to a car at that stage…you would have used that for leisure only. It would not have occurred to you to use it for work.”[42] “Yes I got my first car in 1954…I didn’t want a car to travel through Manchester to get to Blackley, but I knew when I was offered this job at Alderley Edge, that I would have to do it because there was no cross-country transport at all. It was just hopeless, so I decided to have a car.”[43] Once it became normal to use a car for travelling to work, its use for most other journeys—even short ones—was likely to follow, to the detriment of walking or public transport as the main travel mode. Women learned to drive much later than men, and until the 1990s, most women who travelled by car were in the passenger seat. Whereas 69 per cent of all British men held a driving license by 1975, only 29 per cent of women had one. It was not until the early 1990s that more than half of all the women in Britain could drive, and at that time, only 37 per cent of women aged 60 to 69 had a driving license, compared to 81 per cent of men. The proportion of men with a driving license has remained at about 80 per cent until the present day, with some 68 per cent of women now being able to drive.[44] Using a car for most travel has become the norm for a substantial majority of the British population. Despite the previously mentioned small increase in recorded utility walking in recent years, due mainly to growing health and environmental concerns, it is too early to know if this will be sustained–for most people walking is mainly for recreation and pleasure.[45]

The Convenience of Walking

In many respects walking is the easiest and most convenient forms of transport. It is cheap, needs no special equipment or planning and can be undertaken to at least some extent by most people of any age. It is also the only means of moving from place to place that has not changed in terms of its speed of travel, ease, and accessibility. The main factors that might discourage walking such as the need to carry luggage, inclement weather or simple tiredness,

have also not altered significantly over time. It is thus not the changes in walking itself that have led to its decline—arguably improvements in human nutrition as well as outdoor clothes and footwear should have made walking easier and more attractive—but rather the changes in the external environment and associated alternative modes of transport. The most important of these is the expansion of other transport modes, together with the fact that people have to travel longer distances to fulfil their everyday needs. Other factors also play a role, especially with respect to the decline in walking, even for short trips, in urban areas. In 2015, 7 per cent of trips by car in Britain were less than one mile (1.6 km) and 25 per cent were less than two miles (3.2 km), distances that many people could walk if necessary.[46] Numerous factors can contribute to the unwillingness of many people to walk even short distances. These include: changing life-style choices, increased female workforce participation, expanded everyday action spaces, greater educational choices for children, more sedentary life-styles and unhealthy eating habits, plus the general perceptions of busyness that lead many people to see the car as the easiest and most convenient mode of transport for almost all journeys. However, I argue that many of these life-style factors often used today as reasons for not walking more, are not in themselves new; life-styles in the twenty-first century are in fact as compatible with everyday walking (and public transport, which usually entails a walk to a bus/tram stop or train station) as they were in the past. Some people definitely build walking into their everyday travel: in 2015, some 20 per cent of men over 17, and 32 per cent of women, did not have a driving license, and 25 per cent of British households did not have access to a car.[47]

It is hard to argue that individuals and households in the past were not as busy and as pressed for time as people are today. For instance, in the early twentieth century working hours were for the most part longer than today, domestic duties were much more time consuming and

families were on average larger.[48] Men and women would find most hours of the day filled with work, domestic duties or child care, yet they had no alternative but to walk for most of their everyday needs. At times they would carry heavy loads, the weather would be as unpredictable as today, and they were undoubtedly often tired. What has probably changed most dramatically is the extent to which most people now expect to be able to achieve most tasks (including travel) quickly, and also anticipate that they will have a substantial amount of leisure time. The ability to travel quickly by car helps to facilitate both of these desires. While most activities in urban areas could still be undertaken perfectly well by a combination of walking and public transport, the desire to minimize travel time and to maximize leisure time appears to have become paramount. Again, it is hard to pin down a date at which such changes occurred: they were both gradual and segmented with significant differences in gender, age, social class and location. Selected examples from personal diaries and oral history testimonies illustrate some dimensions of this shift.

The everyday pressures of balancing work and domestic duties in the 1920s are clearly illustrated by Annie Rudolph, who lived in London. She was 17 when she kept a diary and during this period her mother died unexpectedly. As the eldest female at home, she was required to take on most of the housework and care of her younger siblings, together with continuing to assist in her father's shop and study part-time at college. Her long diary entry for Sunday May 25th, 1923 sums up her mood and how she was juggling her commitments:

> Little book I am miserable … I was up this morning before 8— (I used to roll down about 8.45 or 9) —washed the children—combed their hair—gave them breakfast and got them off to school. It was about 9 o'clock that I was able to have a cup of tea myself. Then I put a soup on the gas for father, Mark and myself

> for the shop—Then I ran up to make the beds, and dusted—went out shopping—cleaned the place round. The children don't care for soup so I had to make them potatoes and veal cutlets. I have to prepare meat and kosher it the previous day. While this was cooking I boiled some lockshen [noodles] for the soup. Dinner was ready by 12.15. Whilst the kids were eating I poured the soup into bottles, packed them and ran off to the shop—There I put on the gas to warm up and made dinner—then I washed up, being finished all that by about 3. —Then swept round, typed some letters, saw to book keeping – then it was time for tea – made that quickly then ran home to cook another dinner for Esther, of potatoes, steak—and pudding—then it was time to wash the kids—gave them supper and sent them to bed. Then father came home and wanted his supper—then I was able to sit down—it's now 10 o'clock—have just sat down. This today and every day.[49]

Despite these commitments, Annie travelled everywhere either on foot or public transport, including to and from her father's shop, which was four miles (6.5 km) from their home, a journey which she undertook on foot and tram. Indeed, she saw walking as a way of relaxing even when tired, as stated in her entry for July 23, 1923: "I'm so tired in the evenings that I'm glad to be at home. Sometimes when I have an hour to spare I go for a walk—but I'm mostly indoors."[50]

Some thirty years later, Gillian Caldwell (born 1937) was living in Edinburgh, initially studying and then working in an office. Most of her travel was by public transport (bus, tram, or train), though she sometimes walked for leisure or when public transport failed to materialize, and most trips by public transport would have entailed some walking. She did not drive herself but she had several male friends who did, and motoring was clearly the most

attractive option for her. The fact that everyday utility walking was something she did rarely is clearly suggested by her diary entry for April 19, 1955: "This wonderful weather is tout incroyable. Every morning is a joy to wake up to & so I walked to the office this morning. It was so lovely I shall do it again."[51] Her life was not especially busy (neither study nor work seemed especially demanding), and she spent a large amount of her time on leisure activities in coffee houses, at the cinema, and excursions out of Edinburgh. She had grown up in rural Cumbria (Eskdale), with limited access to public transport, so maybe this factor led her to spend as little time as possible as a pedestrian. Her attitude to what she deemed unwarranted walking is perhaps best summed up by her entry for December 28, 1953, when she was back in Eskdale for Christmas: "Uncle Stuart and I went for a walk this afternoon—I was literally forced to go! All these town dwellers have an absolute mania for walking."[52]

Whereas Gillian Caldwell seemed to have quite negative attitudes towards walking (at least when she deemed it inappropriate), many twenty-first century respondents suggested that they would like to walk more, but a combination of their commitments and family obligations made that difficult. Three interviewees from Leeds, Worcester and Leicester have typical responses: "I enjoy walking—always have done—but we don't have time to do it."[53] "With the demands of family and work and everything, there's not much time or energy [for walking]."[54] "[When you have children] you don't have any sleep and you just can't do it. You can't get up at half six every day and go to work."[55]

Although it is not possible to generalize from a small number of individual stories, these examples do demonstrate the variety of responses about everyday walking, and that the pressures of life in the past were often as great, or greater, than they are today. Convenience and life-style constraints may be excuses for not walking more, but in reality the individual

impacts of so-called time-space compression are rather less than is sometimes suggested.[56] The present-day reluctance to walk may relate more to negative attitudes regarding travel on foot (as expressed by Gillian Caldwell, even in the 1950s) than to any actual time pressures or life-style constraints.

The Risks of Walking

It is sometimes suggested that we live in a risk society, where people are highly concerned about a wide range of potential global and more local threats.[57] One aspect is the perceived dangers inherent in travelling, be they from terrorism or disease when undertaking global travel, or from traffic or assault closer to home.[58] Heightened perceptions of risk have particularly influenced present-day attitudes towards walking, with many respondents in a recent survey citing their concerns about (often unspecified) dangers as reasons for restricting the amount, location, and timing of walking. Two examples illustrate this point clearly: "If I want to go to the Post Office, there's one quite close but I'll take the car because I don't like walking through the estate....I feel very vulnerable walking some places because I can't run."[59] "I know the good areas and the bad areas in the city and I always make sure I am walking with someone, or that I am walking at the right time."[60] Paradoxically, such attitudes which limit walking can further increase perceptions of risk as streets busy with pedestrians are almost always safer (and crucially perceived to be safer) than those that are deserted. Traditional street designs, where people and traffic can flow easily, are also the safest environments for pedestrians.[61] Dangerous traffic was only rarely cited as a risk to pedestrians, though it was seen as inconvenient and causing an unpleasant walking environment. In contrast, cyclists frequently cited traffic as the risk that gave them the greatest concern. Despite the perception of risk when walking today, I argue that there is little evidence that being a pedestrian has become any more dangerous over time. More probably

in the past, when many more people walked regularly, and traffic was less regulated, the streets presented greater risks to pedestrians.[62]

The Old Bailey records from around 1900 show that the streets were not crime free, and that travelling on foot posed risks at any time of the day or night (though most crimes were committed after dark). The testimonies of diarists suggest that such risks did not significantly affect people's willingness to travel on foot (or by any other means). Although the diarists record some difficult and potentially risky encounters, there is little evidence that they altered their behavior or routes accordingly. Ida Berry (born 1884) kept a diary between 1902 and 1907, while living with her family in south Manchester. She travelled extensively (both alone and with friends or relatives) around the urban area on foot, by bicycle and on various forms of public transport and never encountered any dangers or significant inconveniences other than punctures on her bike and the effects of weather and tiredness. There is no evidence that she ever adjusted her walking routes or times to take account of perceived risks. One short quote from her diary entry for April 28th 1905 is typical: "Maud and I walked as far as 'Owens College' and back as far as Fallowfield. We were tired."[63] In London in the 1920s, Annie Rudolph had slightly more encounters that might be deemed risky—or at least gave her concern at the time—but she brushed them off lightly and there is no evidence that such occurrences altered her behavior in any way. Most such encounters were with men offering unwanted attention, as in these two instances recorded on January 8 and December 12,1923:

> Had a most annoying experience this evening. I was returning from evening school. On my ownsome of course. I heard quick foot marks behind me, and a voice said 'do you mind if I walk with you? I'm going your way!' I got the wind

up and crossed the road, but would you believe it, he crossed over too. Isn't it absurd to walk zig-zag to avoid someone one doesn't know, so I said 'I don't know you and don't want to know you. If you don't skiddadle—in other words vamoose—I'll call someone'. So he said 'Now don't talk like that kid. I want to know you.' But I turned my nose up and flew!!! Positively.[64]

I almost fainted with horror the other day. I was up West with my friend—we were strolling along looking into the shops. I was walking with my hand swinging limply. Suddenly I felt another hand touch mine—and squeeze it—I gasped—and turned. It was an old man about over 50—I went all colours—and clasping my friend—I flew along until we were a long distance from there—I was horrified. Whenever I am up West I walk—looking neither to the right or the left—It's beastly—but that's how it is.[65]

Oral history interviews with respondents who were 10 or 11 years old in the 1940s also revealed incidents where children were placed in positions of harassment and potential danger. Many respondents—predominantly female but some male—gave similar accounts of being approached by men in inappropriate ways. However, these were not experiences that affected their behavior or prevented them from walking and playing outside either in groups or alone. In most cases, children did not tell either their parents or anyone else in authority, but simply dealt with the experience and learned from it. One example from Lancaster in the late-1940s is typical:

… if any men approached us/ we were often flashed at, even in those days. …Well, you knew it was wrong and you kept well away from them, but we

> would be half-frightened and half laugh[ing]. We knew to keep away from them … An RAF chap stopped me and offered me money to go down on't (this was when I was going down into town shopping for me mother) offered me money to go down onto the canal with him. I didn't know what for, but I knew it was wrong. But I still got the shopping, and took it back home. So I wasn't so frightened, but I just knew it was wrong. … And I don't think that I ever told my parents, because sex wasn't ever talked about.[66]

In contrast, when we talked to children who were age 10/11 around the year 2000, the responses were rather different. None of the children interviewed had actually encountered any dangers or potentially threatening situations, but most (both boys and girls) stated that they were not allowed out alone and that their opportunities for walking and outdoor play were restricted by their parents because of unspecified fears of molestation or abduction. Two examples are typical: "And there's a massive big field to play football, but there's no-one to play football with. And no-one takes me, cause I can't go on my own, too dangerous.…Because someone could nab me.…Um, we're both [respondent and mother] worried about that."[67] "Because my mum says there's people hang around who we're not supposed to like.…You don't know what they're doing sometimes.…It's the same reason as I'm not allowed to go down to the field on my own, there's people around that are a bit loopy.[68]

There is no evidence that the actual risks to children or adults have increased over time. Increased CCTV surveillance and awareness of inappropriate behavior towards women and children may have actually reduced such risks, but the perceptions of risk have increased considerably, leading to self-imposed and parent-imposed restrictions on everyday mobility

on foot. It has been suggested that media coverage of rare events which then become normalized within society is partly to blame; certainly the impact of all forms of media—most notably internet-based social media—has been marked over the past two decades, but social networks operating within communities are probably equally influential in shaping social norms.[69] To return to an earlier theme, restricting walking because of perceived risks—from strangers, traffic or unspecified causes—has become normal. Parents who transcend these norms, and allow their offspring to play out or walk alone in the neighborhood, may be seen as bad parents, even though there is no evidence of real risk. Such "paranoid parenting" as it has been dubbed, can severely restrict children's freedom to get exercise in an outdoor environment, may restrict their ability to develop independence and manage risk, and leads to increased car use as children are ferried everywhere by parents.[70]

Conclusions and Solutions

The qualitative data used here cannot serve as basis for generalizations about a wider population. It does, however, provide important insights into the travel experiences and processes of change taking place within society as the usual means of moving from place to place transformed over the twentieth century. It may also be the only way to acquire long-term data on the experience of everyday walking. The changes were both gradual and segmented, with important differences in gender, age, social class, and location. The ways decisions about everyday travel were made in the past, and may still be made in the present, vary for each individual depending on factors like journey purpose, time of day, companions, luggage, and weather. Large-scale travel surveys and censuses may be misleading as they erase the diversity of individual experiences that necessarily exist. If such diverse experiences and expectations are not recognized in transport planning, the policies to promote walking can be ineffective or generate unintended consequences. Uncovering often hidden aspects of

past urban mobility can provide usable histories that inform present-day transport policy and lead to more sustainable urban futures.

In current surveys, most people state that they enjoy walking for leisure and recognize that walking is a valuable form of exercise that can contribute to good health. A quote from a respondent in Worcester illustrates this point: "I think the walking beats everything. And actually, if I ever do get a little bit of time, I really enjoy walking."[71] As motorized private transport came to dominate everyday travel, rates of walking fell markedly over the past century. However, the enjoyment factor, coupled with increased awareness of the health benefits of exercise and the environmental impacts of cars, has recently led to a slight increase in the amount of walking both for leisure and utility purposes in Britain, but as yet the gains are limited. If the trends of the past hundred years are to be reversed, we need to recognize fully the reasons why people walk only rarely, and implement policies that counteract past processes. I argue that any policy to reverse the long-term decline in urban walking, and thus promote more environmental and social sustainability in urban travel, must have three main objectives: First, make walking feel safe by increasing pavement space, restricting traffic, improving pedestrian road crossings, ensuring good lighting, maintaining pavements well by clearing them of leaves, ice, and snow when appropriate, and removing unnecessary street clutter that can obstruct pedestrians. Second, cities must be planned to make walking feel as easy and convenient as possible, so that people can access most services and facilities relatively close to home, thus minimizing the need for longer journeys. Third, and partly as a result of the previous strategies, walking must be normalized within society. If there are more people on the streets, if taking a car only a short distance to collect a newspaper or post a letter is deemed unusual (or even unacceptable), then it may be easier to establish travel on foot for short trips in urban areas as a societal norm to which most people

would happily subscribe. For longer trips, walking to a bus/tram stop or railway station would also become the norm.

Such changes are not difficult and do not require large expenditure (especially compared to the costs of new road schemes or even dedicated cycle routes which are garnering support). In Britain, policymakers have been persistently reluctant to commit expenditure explicitly targeted at improving the urban environment for walking. Pedestrians are perceived as making few demands on the urban environment; too often, implemented policies are aimed at restricting pedestrian flows and channeling them through particular routes to achieve smoother traffic flows, rather than make walking feel easy, safe, and normal. Increasing the footfall on urban streets not only benefits individuals' health and enhances the urban environment through reduced pollution and congestion, but also benefits society through greater sociability and community interaction. Some argue that the more people on the streets, the greater the incentive for others to join them, and for walking to become the travel mode of choice for short trips in urban areas. A transition to a more sustainable urban transport system can be facilitated through greater awareness of past travel behaviors, while the social, economic, environmental and health costs of not achieving such a transition are almost certainly far greater than producing a more sustainable transport future.

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Notes

[1] David Banister, *European transport policy and sustainable mobility* (London, 2000); David Banister, "The sustainable mobility paradigm," *Transport policy 15, no.* 2 (2008): 73-80.

[2] This point was made by Rod Tolley as long ago as 1990 and circumstances have not changed significantly since then: Rodney Tolley, *The greening of urban transport: planning for walking and cycling in Western cities* (London, 1990).

[3] G. Porter, "Living in a walking world: rural mobility and social equity issues in sub-Saharan Africa," *World development* 30, no. 2 (2002): 285-300; Colin Pooley, *Mobility, Migration and Transport: Historical Perspectives* (London, 2017).

[4] Colin Pooley et al., *A mobile century? Changes in everyday mobility in Britain in the twentieth century* (Aldershot, 2005).

[5] Department for Transport (DfT), *National Travel Survey 2015* (London, 2016).

[6] David Bassett et al., "Walking, cycling, and obesity rates in Europe, North America, and Australia," *Journal of Physical Activity & Health 5 no.* 6 (2008): 795-814; Colin Pooley et al., "Policies for promoting walking and cycling in England: a view from the street," *Transport Policy* 27 (2013): 66-72.

[7] David Ogilvie et al., "Promoting walking and cycling as an alternative to using cars: systematic review," *British Medical Journal* 329 (2004): 763-766; David Ogilvie et al., "Interventions to promote walking: systematic review," *British Medical Journal* 334 (2007): 1204-1207*;* Colin Pooley et al., *Promoting walking and cycling. New perspectives on sustainable travel* (Bristol, 2013); Colin Pooley, "Mobility, transport and social inclusion: Lessons from history," *Social Inclusion* 4, no. 3 (2016): 100-109.

[8] See for example: Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: a history of walking* (London: 2001); Tim Ingold, "Culture on the ground: the world perceived through feet," *Journal of Material Culture* 9, no. 3 (2004): 315-340; John Wylie, "A single day's walking: narrating self and landscape on the south west coast path," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*

30, no. 2 (2005): 234-247; Katrin Lund, "Seeing in motion and the touching eye: walking over Scotland's mountains," *Etnofoor* 18, no. 1 (2005): 27-42; Tim Ingold and Jo Vergunst, eds., *Ways of walking: ethnography and practice on foot* (Aldershot, 2008); Jennie Middleton, "Stepping in time: walking time and space in the city," *Environment and Planning A* 41, no. 8 (2009): 1943-1961; Hayden Lorimer, "Walking: new forms and spaces for studies of pedestrianism," in *Geographies of mobilities: practices, spaces, subjects,* ed. Tim Cresswell and Peter Merriman, (Farnham, 2011), 19-34.

[9] Exceptions include Jennie Middleton, "The promotion of London as a 'walkable city' and overlapping walks of life," in *Regenerating London: governance, sustainability and community in a global city,* ed. Rob Imrie et al., (Abingdon, 2009), 192-211; Peter Norton, "Street rivals: Jaywalking and the invention of the motor age street," *Technology and culture 48, no.* 2 (2007): 331-359; Peter Norton, "Urban mobility without wheels: a historiographical review of pedestrianism," in *Mobility in History: the state of the art in the history of transport, traffic and mobility,* ed. Gijs Mom et al. (Neuchâtel, 2009), 111-15; Peter Norton, *Fighting traffic: the dawn of the motor age in the American city* (Boston, 2011; Pooley et al. "Policies for promoting walking and cycling."

[10] John Urry, *Sociology beyond societies: mobilities for the twenty-first century (*London, 2000); John Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge, 2007); Mimi Sheller and John Urry, "The new mobilities paradigm," *Environment and Planning A* 38, no. 2 (2006): 207-226.

[11] See for example: Tim Cresswell, *On the move: mobility in the modern western world* (New York, 2006); Tim Cresswell and Peter Merriman, *Geographies of mobilities: practices, spaces, subjects* (Farnham, 2011); Peter Merriman, *Mobility, space and culture* (London, 2012); Peter Merriman et al., "Mobility: geographies, histories, sociologies," *Transfers 3, no.* 1 (2013): 147-65.

[12] Recent attempts to fill this gap include: Colin Divall and George Revill, "Cultures of transport: representation, practice and technology," *The Journal of Transport History* 26, no. 1 (2005): 99-111; Gijs Mom et al., "Towards a paradigm shift? A decade of transport and mobility history," in *Mobility in history: the state of the art in the history of transport, traffic and mobility,* ed. Gijs Mom et al., (Neuchâtel, 2009), 13-40; Jon Shaw and Markus Hesse, "Transport, geography and the 'new' mobilities," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 35, no. 3 (2010): 305-12; Margaret Grieco and John Urry, ed., *Mobilities: new perspectives on transport and society* (Farnham, 2011); Colin Divall et al. ed., *Transport policy: learning lessons from history* (Farnham, 2016); Pooley, *Mobility, Migration and Transport.*

[13] Eurostat Transport Statistics, 12 September 2017.

[14] Department for Transport (DfT), *Walking and cycling statistics* (London, 2016).

[15] Sport England, Active People Interactive, 12 September 2017.

[16] Department for Transport (DfT), *Local area walking and cycling: 2014-2015* (London, 2016).

[17] Land Transport Authority, "Passenger transport mode shares in world cities," *Journeys* 12 (2014): 54-64.

[18] Karen Fields, "What one cannot remember mistakenly," *Oral history* 17, no. 1 (1989): 44-53; Robert Perks, *Oral history: talking about the past* (London, 1992); Donald Ritchie, *Doing oral history* (Oxford, 2014).

[19] Robert Fothergill, *Private chronicles: a study of English diaries* (London, 1974); P. Lejeune, *On diary* (Honolulu, 2009); Colin Pooley and Marilyn Pooley, "'Mrs Harvey came home from Norwich ... her pocket picked at the station and all her money stolen': using life writing to recover the experience of travel in the past," *Journal of Migration History* 1, no. 1 (2015): 54-74.

[20] Old Bailey on-line. The proceedings of the Old Bailey, London's Central Criminal Court, 1674-1913, 12 September 2017.

[21] See for instance Peter K. Andersson, "'Bustling, crowding, and pushing': pickpockets and the nineteenth-century street crowd," *Urban History* 41, no. 2 (2014): 291-310.

[22] Robert Shoemaker, "The Old Bailey proceedings and the representation of crime and criminal justice in eighteenth-century London," *Journal of British Studies* 47, no. 3 (2008): 559-80; Heather Shore, "The Reckoning': disorderly women, informing constables and the Westminster justices, 1727–33," *Social History* 34, no. 4 (2009): 409-427; Peter King, "Ethnicity, Prejudice, and Justice: The Treatment of the Irish at the Old Bailey, 1750–1825," *Journal of British Studies* 52, no. 2 (2013): 390-414.

[23] David. Silverman, *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook* (London, 2013).

[24] Harold J. Dyos, and David Aldcroft, *British transport: an economic survey from the seventeenth century to the twentieth* (Leicester, 1969); Tomas Errázuriz, "When walking became serious: Reshaping the role of pedestrians in Santiago, 1900-1931," *The Journal of Transport History* 32, no. 1 (2011): 39-65; Norton, *Fighting traffic*; Gijs Mom, *Atlantic automobilism: emergence and persistence of the car, 1895-1940* (New York, 2014).

[25] Maria Lapinski and Rajiv Rimal, "An explication of social norms," *Communication Theory* 15, no. 2 (2005): 127-47; Cristina Bicchieri and Ryan Muldoon, "Social norms," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (Stanford, 2011).

[26] Mimi Sheller and John Urry "The city and the car," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 24, no. 4 (2000): 737-57; John Urry, "The 'system' of automobility," *Theory, Culture and Society* 21, no. 4-5 (2004): 25-39; Mike Featherstone et al., *Automobilities* (London, 2005); Jim Conley, *Car troubles: critical studies of automobility and auto-mobility* (Aldershot, 2009).

[27] 79 testimonies relating to 1891, 1901 and 1911 have been extracted as part of a project examining walking from Old Bailey Data from 1801-1911.

[28] Proceedings of the Old Bailey 1674-1913 (hereafter OB) Ref: t18910406-333.

[29] OB Ref: t18911116-59.

[30] OB Ref: t19010513-371.

[31] OB Ref: t19010910-584.

[32] OB Ref: t19110228-12.

[33] OB Ref: t19110110-9.

[34] Data from EPSRC-funded Understanding Walking and Cycling (hereafter UWAC) project, 2009-11, interview with 'Eliza', Leeds. See Pooley, *Promoting walking and cycling.*

[35] Data from UWAC project 2009-11, interview with 'Jim', Lancaster.

[36] Data used in the following section comes from oral history testimonies collected as part of a project on the journey to work in twentieth-century Britain, funded by the Leverhulme Trust. For further information see Pooley et al., *A mobile century*.

[37] Oral history interview with respondent RJ16, female, Manchester, 1930s.

[38] Oral history interview with respondent RJ52, female, Glasgow, 1930s.

[39] Oral history interview with respondent RJ24, male, Manchester, 1940s.

[40] Particularly when compared to the USA. See Mom, *Atlantic automobilism.*

[41] Department for Transport (DfT), *National Travel Survey 2015*.

[42] Oral history interview with respondent RJ04, male, Manchester, 1950s

[43] Oral history interview with respondent RJ15, female, Manchester, 1950s.

[44] Department for Transport (DfT), *National Travel Survey 2015*.

[45] Pooley et al. *Promoting walking and cycling.*

[46] Department for Transport (DfT), *National Travel Survey 2015*. There are no long-run data that allow detailed analysis of changes in journey length by car over time.

[47] Department for Transport (DfT), *National Travel Survey 2015*.

[48] John Stevenson, *British society, 1914-45* (Harmondsworth, 1984); Arthur Marwick, *British Society since 1945: The Penguin Social History of Britain* (Harmondsworth, 2003).

[49] Diary of Annie Rudolph, Bishopsgate Institute Archive, London (GDP/31).

[50] Diary of Annie Rudolph, Bishopsgate Institute Archive, London (GDP/31).

[51] Diary of Gillian Caldwell, Bishopsgate Institute Archive, London (GDP/1).

[52] Diary of Gillian Caldwell, Bishopsgate Institute Archive, London (GDP/1).

[53] Data from UWAC project 2009-11, interview with 'Jack' and 'Deidre', Leeds.

[54] Data from UWAC project 2009-11, interview with 'Percy', Worcester.

[55] Data from UWAC project 2009-11, interview with 'Cassie', Leicester.

[56] David. Harvey, *The condition of modernity. An enquiry into the origins of cultural change,* (Oxford, 1989), 284-307.

[57] Ulrich Beck, *Risk society: Towards a new modernity* (London, 1992); Ulrich Beck, "The terrorist threat world risk society revisited," *Theory, Culture & Society* 19, no. 4 (2002): 39-55.

[58] Laurie Pickup, "Hard to get around: a study of women's travel mobility," in *Women in Cities: Gender and the Urban Environment,* ed. Jo Little et al., (London, 1988), 98-116; Mayer Hillman et al., *One false move,* (London, 1990); Raoul Bianchi, "Tourism and the globalisation of fear: Analysing the politics of risk and (in) security in global travel," *Tourism and Hospitality Research* 7, no. 1 (2006): 64-74.

[59] Data from UWAC project 2009-11, interview with 'Jen', Worcester.

[60] Data from UWAC project, interview with 'Anju' and 'Pooja', Leicester.

[61] Bill Hillier, "Can streets be made safe?," *Urban design international* 9, no. 1 (2004): 31-45.

[62] Bill Luckin, "War on the roads: traffic accidents and social tension in Britain, 1939-45," *Clio Medica* 41(1997): 234-254; Bill Luckin and David Sheen, "Defining early modern automobility: The road traffic accident crisis in Manchester, 1939–45," *Cultural and Social History* 6, no. 2 (2009): 211-30.

[63] Diary of Ida Berry. Bishopsgate Institute Archive, London (GDP/28).

[64] Diary of Annie Rudolph, Bishopsgate Institute Archive, London (GDP/31).

[65] Diary of Annie Rudolph, Bishopsgate Institute Archive, London (GDP/31).

[66] Data from ESRC-funded project on changing patterns of everyday mobility (hereafter CPEM). See Pooley et al., *A mobile century*. Oral history interview with 'Teresa', born 1937, Lancaster.

[67] Data from CPEM project. Oral history interview with 'Chris', born 1992, Salford.

[68] Data from CPEM project. Interview with 'Dean', born 1990, Morecambe.

[69] Steven Kohm et al., "The Impact of Media on Fear of Crime among University Students: A Cross-National Comparison 1," *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice 54, no.* 1 (2012): 67-100; Yvonne Jewkes, *Media and crime* (London, 2015).

[70] Frank Furedi, *Paranoid parenting* (Harmondsworth, 2001); R. Pain, "Paranoid parenting? Rematerializing risk and fear for children," *Social & Cultural Geography 7, no.* 2 (2006): 221-243.

[71] Data from UWAC project 2009-11, interview with 'Percy', Worcester.