

THE LEGACY OF AN INTERVENTION:
EXPLORING THE MOBILITIES OF TEENAGE WALKING SCHOOL BUS
'GRADUATES' IN AUCKLAND

Robin A. Kearns, Alexandra F. Boyle & Christina R. Ergler

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the mobility experiences of young people in three Auckland neighbourhoods who had, as primary school children, participated in walking school buses. This intervention engages children in routine chaperoned walking to and from school. Our contention was that this experience would leave 'traces' of enthusiasm for walking as an everyday form of active travel in an environment in which driving is the aspirational norm. We draw on interviews with 20 adolescents, and former walking school bus participants, undertaken in 2010. We interpret their accounts which reveal that they engage in complex mobilities to and from school influenced by discourses related to the sociability of walking, parental concern, and driving aspirations. We reveal an orientation to independent walking that makes it 'more than' a children's activity on the part of 'graduates' suggesting they become informal advocates for more sustainable urban mobilities through traces of walking school bus participation.

INTRODUCTION

When I walk home it's pretty much like our own high school walking school bus (Elizabeth, age 15).

Walking is the most fundamental form of human mobility, yet one that in Western urban life has been increasingly consigned to the status of consciously chosen exercise rather than routine, everyday commuting practice (Solnit, 2001). In larger New Zealand cities, parents of primary-aged children frequently engage in 'trip-chaining' in order to combine destinations such as their employment and their children's school when commuting by car (Freeman & Quigg, 2009a; Lang, Collins & Kearns, 2011; Tranter & Pawson, 2001). Despite acquiescing to the private motor vehicle, parents often express concern

at their children's lack of physical activity and freedom to roam (Bean, Kearns & Collins, 2008). Within this context of concern there has been a recent focus on the lives of children, with both a rights-based discourse (inspired by the U.N. Convention on Rights of the Child) and public health concerns around physical inactivity, converging on questions of children's relative immobilities within their home neighbourhoods (Freeman & Tranter, 2011; Gleeson & Sipe, 2006).

The trend towards chauffeuring children between home and school (frequently termed the 'school run') has been identified as an increasingly significant contributor to urban traffic congestion (Barker, 2003). This practice has been given momentum by parents' road safety fears and 'stranger danger' concerns (Matthews & Limb, 1999; Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn, 1998). A further influence has been the strong cultural expectations placed upon parents – and especially mothers – to drive children between even local destinations. Robyn Dowling's (2000) research on women in Sydney, for instance, found that private cars facilitated the performance of 'good mothering'. Driving, she argues, becomes a cultural practice adopted in the quest to minimise the (perceived) dangers facing children in public spaces. What is invariably under-recognised in this auto-mobilised mothering is the cumulative dangers of car travel, congestion and air pollution for both commuters and pedestrians (Frank & Engelke, 2005; Freeman & Quigg, 2009b; Johnson & Lu, 2011). Further, a long-term implication of the trend towards increased car travel for the trip to school is that children may grow up to be even more dependent on the car than their parents and unfamiliar with alternatives such as walking or public transport (Tranter & Pawson, 2001).

In Auckland, our study context, the majority of children are driven to school by car (Auckland Regional Transport Authority, 2007). An intervention which was developed to address children's propensity to be passengers rather than pedestrians is the walking school bus. Formulated by Australian traffic activist David Engwicht and first trialled in England in the 1990s (Kearns, Collins & Neuwelt, 2003), walking school buses quickly became established in Auckland after early research showed that more children wanted to walk to school than were allowed to do so (Collins & Kearns, 2001). These parent-mobilised systems of supervised daily walks loosely follow the regularity of times and routes one might expect of a vehicular bus (Kearns *et al.*, 2003) and have now been established at over 90 primary schools in Auckland. This intervention has simultaneously addressed two key public health and transport planning imperatives: enhancing physical activity through routine walking to and from school; and a contribution to reducing traffic congestion and emissions. Other

benefits noted include enhanced surveillance of children in the interests of injury-prevention; and, through their largely self-organising character, increased social cohesion within school communities (Collins & Kearns, 2010).

The freedom granted by walking school buses is provisional, however, with children chaperoned to and from school by parent volunteers and instructed to adhere to set routes, times and styles of walking (Kearns & Collins, 2003). As implied in its name, participation in the intervention is limited to children who can walk semi-independently, although frequently volunteer parents take infants and toddlers along in strollers.

Among the early-adopting school communities that established walking school bus routes in 2000–2001, their participants are now teenagers. The rationale for this study was that engaging with some of these young people might allow reflecting with them on walking as a mobility practice. It might also allow us to ask them how earlier routine walking experience may be influencing their current attitudes towards this form of everyday mobility. Our paper draws on accounts obtained from a purposive sample of young people who formerly participated in walking school buses in three Auckland neighbourhoods. Through semi-structured interviews, we explored their experience of walking school buses, their current attitudes and practices with respect to everyday mobility, and their aspirations regarding driving. We follow Jon Anderson's (2010:5) contention that 'traces' and places are linked. While traces are 'residues or remnants left in place by cultural life' and most obviously material in nature (e.g. discernible marks like graffiti) they can also be non-material, such as activities and emotions. Our contention was that some acculturated 'traces' of walking school bus experience would be discernable among these teenager 'graduates'.

The paper builds on previous work investigating the development and difficulties of the walking school bus system (Collins & Kearns, 2005; Kearns & Collins, 2006) by posing a yet-unasked question: what are the attitudes and everyday mobility practices of adolescents who are former 'walking school bus kids'? In other words, do the attitudes of adolescents reveal *traces of earlier and routinised walking experience*? This is an important question because the physical activity and transportation planning literatures invariably reduce walking to the analysis of cumulative trips and destinations (e.g. McDonald, 2008). The mobilities perspective concerns itself with experiences, social context and power relations rather than movement *per se* (Cresswell, 2006). We therefore seek to understand the *experience* of walking from the perspective of an indicative sample of former walking school bus participants themselves. In other words, rather than seeing walking as a means to an end, we seek to

understand the meaning and significance of this activity for young people in light of their earlier experiences as pedestrians.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. First we briefly survey studies on children's lives in the city as well as the limited literature on urban adolescent mobilities, from the perspective of the emergent field of children's geographies. We next review the approach to our study before surveying selected findings in the form of three themes that we identified in the transcribed accounts. We then reflect on the analysis and close with some brief conclusions about the value of both childhood interventions that promote active travel as well as adopting a vantage point that privileges young people's perspectives and traces of their experiences.

TRACES OF (IN)DEPENDENT (IM)MOBILITY:
A CHILDREN'S GEOGRAPHY LENS ON ADOLESCENT EXPERIENCE

To develop a context for the study we review relevant literature in two parts. First we survey issues within the field of children's urban mobilities. We then consider the less examined question of adolescent mobilities as an under-developed extension of children's mobility research.

i) *Children's urban mobilities*

We place this study within the recently developed subdiscipline of children's geographies (Holt, 2011; Hörschelmann & Van Blerk, 2012; Skelton, 2009) in which researchers have explored children's experiences in the home (e.g. Hengst, 2007; Valentine, 1997), playground (e.g. Karsten, 2003; McKendrick, Bradford & Fielder, 2000) and school (Hemming, 2008; Hollingworth, Williams, Jamieson & Beedell, 2011). The sharpening focus on children's and young people's everyday practices, the spatiality of childhood and a move away from regarding them as simply adults-in-the-making (Freeman & Tranter, 2011; Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Matthews & Limb, 1999) has been fuelled by considering young people as capable social actors and not simply subsumed into families or schools (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998; Matthews, 2001; Valentine, Butler & Skelton, 2001). Further, youthful lives are no longer viewed as universal and uniform, but rather as diverse, influenced by age, socio-economic status and historical understandings of the construction of childhood as well as geographical location (Barker, Kraftl, Horton & Tucker, 2009; Philo, 2000; Young & Barrett, 2001). Hence, researchers in this field have been striving to overcome the discrepancy that sees adults creating environments *for* children without consulting them on their needs, ideas and wishes (Collins & Kearns, 2001;

Freeman & Tranter, 2011; Spencer & Blades, 2006). Children's geographers aim to work *with* young participants instead of on their behalf and have developed child-centred, participatory methods of engagement (e.g., Ergler, 2011; Morrow, 2001; Wood, 2011). However, research on children's, and especially young people's, mobility is still limited (Barker *et al.*, 2009).

Classic studies such as Ward's (1978) *Child in the city* and Hillman, Adams and Whitelegg's (1990) investigation of changes in children's independent mobility within generations and across countries have paved the way for subsequent work on two aspects of mobility: the decline of children's independent movement between destinations (e.g. Quigg & Freeman, 2008; Rissotto & Guiliani, 2006; Tranter & Pawson, 2001); and the increase of auto-dependent trips, especially in functionally differentiated urban areas (e.g. Karsten, 1998; Tucker, Gilliland & Irwin, 2007; Zeiher, 2003). In combination, these trends have been noted as increasing near-school traffic intensity, heightening concerns for safety and ultimately reducing the enjoyment of walking. Nonetheless as Collins and Kearns (2001), as well as Quigg and Freeman (2008), have reported, despite the range of disincentives, children in their studies generally like walking. However, it has been suggested that the ensuing constraints imposed on children's freedoms can have negative impacts on the development of autonomy, physical health (through lack of exercise), and awareness of the local environment (Malone, 2007). Gleeson and Sipe (2006) offer the astute reminder that in a child-friendly city unsupervised walking would be a normative behaviour.

Commonly, contemporary children's urban mobilities are spatially fragmented through, for example, participation in extra-curricular activities (Clements, 2004; Witten, Kearns, McCreanor & Penney, 2009). The immediate neighbourhood rarely satisfies parental aspirations for their children's leisure and education, so children are 'chauffeured' to a range of destinations across urban space (Karsten, 1998). For example, a Dunedin study highlighted that many of the study participants aged 9–11 years participated in more than one activity per day often located outside their neighbourhood (Freeman & Quigg, 2009a). In larger New Zealand cities, the relaxation of school zones and the popularity of private schools has exacerbated the use of car travel to and from schools which are increasingly located outside children's own neighbourhoods (Lewis, 2004). Consequently, one body of literature has discussed the environmental impacts (e.g. CO₂ emissions) generated by these parenting practices (e.g. Freeman & Quigg, 2009b; Tranter & Sharpe, 2008). A second set of studies has explored the negative implications of children's 'retreat from the street' (Holt, Spence, Sehn & Cutumisu, 2008; Malone, 2007; Tranter & Pawson, 2001). Freeman and Vass (2010), for instance, found that children with the freedom to travel

and explore their environment independently talked more knowledgeably about places and neighbourhood inhabitants. However, these opportunities are declining given the aforementioned pressures of good parenting and auto-mobility discourse.

The ways in which young people's lives are structured by an overwhelmingly 'adultist' society remain a central consideration in understanding children's mobility (Barker *et al.*, 2009; Holt, 2004; Matthews, 2001). 'Chauffeur-ing' not only restricts children's daily potential for active mobility experiences, but also impacts upon the lives of parents who manage complex logistical schedules involving various activities and locations to comply with notions of 'good parenting' (Lareau & Weininger, 2008; Spilsbury, 2005). There are two key outcomes in this context. First, expectations on parents' and children's behaviour and their roles leave little room for children to exert agency outside the home. Second, researchers have discussed children's longing for independent, active transport, while highlighting their limited view and experience of the world as passive passengers (Mitchell *et al.*, 2007; Pooley, Turnbull & Adams, 2005).

ii) *Adolescent travel behaviour*

Compared to studies of children's mobility, there is only a small literature on teenagers and their travel behaviours. It is widely recognised that as children transition into the teenage years, the quest for greater independence can be met by continued parental restriction and institutional surveillance (Qvortrup, Corsaro & Honig, 2009). Generally speaking, recent decades have witnessed a break from traditional child-parent relations, resulting in more negotiated and democratised relationships (Gleeson & Sipe, 2006). The teenage years are a time of transition: while they increasingly are able to make their own decisions and take time away from the gaze of adults, adolescents are also limited by parental consent and age restrictions related to driving (Clifton, 2003), as well as by factors such as the availability of public transport (Wood, 2011). However, a study of 11–18 year olds by Line, Chatterjee and Lyons (2010) found that respondents' travel intentions were dominated by a desire to drive and that this aspiration was entangled with issues relating to identity, self-image, and social recognition.

As teenagers approach the age of driving eligibility, the lure of the car therefore increases. A challenge for walking advocates is that cars are not only perceived to be 'more convenient than walking and cycling,' but are also seen as 'cool' and integral to normal adult life (Lorenc, Brunton, Oliver & Oakley, 2008: 854). However, not all evidence is so emphatic. Clifton (2003) investigated where

teenagers go after school and how they travelled there. The study found that although, by late adolescence the private car had become highly integrated into young people's daily lives, younger teenagers were much more frequently using alternative forms of transport. Within the United States context, Cain's (2006) focus group analysis found teenagers' perceptions of public transport to be centred on safety concerns and that this aligned with parents' fears. In many cities there is an inevitable transition between the close surveillance of childhood and the greater independence of driving and this predisposes younger teenagers to be at least potentially regular public transport users. In London, however, free travel for teenagers since 2005 has helped overcome barriers of access and image and led to calls to reconsider the nature of 'active travel' (Jones, Steinbach, Roberts, Goodman & Green, 2012).

Increasingly, technology has been recognised as influencing contemporary adolescents' mobility (Porter, *et al.*, 2010; Thompson & Cupples, 2008). The decreased cost of cell phones has both granted greater freedoms to teenagers and extended the reach of parental surveillance. By allowing communication in public space, parents can feel more at ease and consequently permit their children more spatial and temporal freedoms (Pain, *et al.*, 2005). Williams and Williams (2005) argue that the effect of the cell phone is to allow the household to be stretched. The near-universal contact that is possible by this means allows negotiations between parents and children to now extend into the public sphere. Cell phones therefore allow young people freedom to move beyond the direct 'gaze' of parents.

One of the key findings in the systematic review by Lorenc, *et al.* (2008) was that children are responsible transport users. By this the authors mean that young people were found in the studies reviewed to have clearly formed 'views and values' about their mobility preferences and the environmental impact of different transport modes. This contention suggests that adolescents potentially express agency through the formation of alternate attitudes and the adoption of distinctive practices involving walking. As previous New Zealand research has demonstrated, adolescents especially value unstructured spaces and times for socialising beyond the 'gaze' of parents and teachers. It is in such times (before and after school) and spaces (the route between home and school) that views can be exchanged and relationships maintained without direct surveillance (Coleman, Kearns & Collins, 2010). Arguably, therefore, walking can produce and sustain adolescent social capital through 'developing the kinds of connection(s) and relationship(s) that build social networks, trust and neighbourliness' (Weller & Bruegel, 2009: 629).

A potential for teenagers carrying distinctive sets of attitudes towards walking (Lorenc, *et al.*, 2008) can be complemented by reference to Anderson's (2010) notion of 'traces' introduced earlier. The possibility that exposure to earlier influences can shape young people's attitudes and practices has been noted with respect to environmental awareness: conservationists, for instance, have been identified as invariably people who had interaction with natural settings when they were children (Louv, 2005; Wells & Lekies, 2006). From within a health research tradition, Lorenc, *et al.* (2008: 854) identify 'five overarching explanations of transport choices' which they derived from a critical analysis of 16 studies of young people's views: culture of car use (cars as convenient, cool, and integral to adult life); fear and dislike of local environments (e.g., concerns around safety, traffic and crime); responsibility as transport users (children's views – often divergent from parents – relating to the impact and benefits of their transport preferences); parental behaviour (the pressures to conform to expectations of good parenting through exercising safety-consciousness); and contextual factors (e.g. variability in young peoples' views according to age, sex and where they live). Combining traditions of epidemiology (via the foregoing systematic review) and cultural geography (via Anderson's notion of traces) allows us to suggest that influences in the past and in different locations can have 'downstream' implications. Following this hydrological metaphor, we contend that these implications can be both later in time, and spatially distant, from their origins. Just as a stream can be comprised of a single flow or a braided pattern, traces can be multiple, fleeting or ephemeral. Our initial interest in this study firmly centred on the influence of 'early exposure' to walking school bus routines and subsequent on traces of walking experience. However, echoing Lorenc, *et al.* (2008), there are also potential traces of other cultures of cars, safety and parental surveillance.

METHOD

Following the methodological commitment of children's geographers to the ethical position of young people as experts about their own lives, we sought to identify and interview adolescent walking school bus graduates by treating them as key informants. After institutional ethics approval was obtained in late 2009, potential participants were identified and recruited with the assistance of former walking school bus coordinators who had assisted the lead author with prior research a decade earlier. Coordinators agreed to contact teenagers who were known to them as former walking school bus participants during their primary school years. According to the ethical requirements, those young people who agreed to be interviewed were also asked to obtain their parents' consent. Their contact details were then passed on to the first author. Subse-

quently, a mutually agreeable time and place for an interview was arranged by the second author.

While the majority of interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis, four were conducted in pairs—either as friends or siblings. A schedule of 20 questions was followed, but in a loose and informal enough manner to allow conversational digressions to occur. The interviews averaged 20 minutes in duration. All interviews were audio-taped with the participants' consent. Of the interviews, 14 took place in family homes with two others occurring in, respectively, cafes, friends' houses, and parental workplaces.

We interviewed a total of nine boys and 11 girls in three Auckland neighbourhoods: Mt Eden and Westmere on Auckland's central isthmus, and Rothesay Bay on the North Shore. The primary school communities from which these children had graduated were all ranked 'Decile 10' by the Ministry of Education (signifying the highest level of neighbourhood affluence). This socio-economic position is unsurprising given that this decile level almost dominated the distribution of early-adopting schools in Auckland (see Collins & Kearns, 2005). The average age of participants was 13.9 years, with a range from 12 (a month short of teenage status) to 16 years.

After the interviews, audiotapes were transcribed by the second author, producing 200 pages of data. Participants were attributed pseudonyms to protect their identities. The first two authors then independently and closely read the accounts to identify apparent themes. We compared representative and exemplary passages of text and drew out insights that relate to the themes selected. Through triangulation, we reached agreement on the key themes and then used the 'Find' function of Word 2007 to assist with identifying and collating further representative passages of dialogue.

We analysed the data from the position that young people's views and values are constituted in their verbal accounts as they talk about experience in ways that others can accept and understand. Our analysis is oriented to the language used to construct the environment, events, experiences and feelings associated with their retrospective walking school bus experience as well as contemporary mobility attitudes and behaviour.

WALKING SCHOOL BUS GRADUATES' MOBILITY EXPERIENCES

Guided by the interview prompts, interviewees offered narratives that shed light on three thematic areas that can be summarised as relating to: the origins

and current status of their walking practice; their attitudes towards participating in and ending walking school bus participation; and their aspirations towards driving. We organise the discussion around these themes.

Origins and influences on current walking practice

A key factor in parents allowing their adolescents to walk independently to and from school as well as for discretionary travel appears to be the availability of cell phones. Confirming international evidence (e.g. Pain, *et al.*, 2005), there was widespread acknowledgement that cell phones not only gave parents peace of mind knowing young people can update them on location but they also offer young people the chance to potentially seek assistance should anything untoward happen. To this extent, easy and relatively cheap technology is facilitating the momentum towards independent mobility encouraged through earlier walking school bus participation. As Charles (age 14) says 'it's like now like after school I just like say, I'll just text my mum or like walk off to like a park or something'. Similarly, Elizabeth (age 15) says 'I don't think my parents would let me walk anywhere if I didn't...have a phone cos they like to know where I am'. For her, the cell phone can also be a deterrent to unwanted attention and she can 'pretend you're on the phone...[if] you see a dodgy person walking past'.

As previous local research has demonstrated (Coleman, *et al.*, 2010), adolescents especially value unstructured spaces and times for socialising beyond the 'gaze' of parents and teachers. During this time, and in these spaces, views can be exchanged and relationships maintained without the surveillance that prevails at home and school. Our narratives show that the walking journey between home and school is valued in this way. For Kelly (age 16), 'I prefer walking...you get to talk, and me and my friends walk really slow so that we can talk lots [*laughs*]...'. In an especially succinct reflection, Anna (age 14) said 'yea I think we just needed a new motive to walk' with another participant remarking that they stretch the journey as far as they can. Clearly, unfettered time and space to 'hang out' provide such a motive.

It would seem, therefore, that the adolescent desire for independence and opportunities to be free of adult supervision is assisting the continued willingness to walk by walking school bus graduates. For Charles (age 14), '... when I walk with some friends we'll take like 45 minutes to walk like 2 kilometres'. Harry (age 14) went further to suggest that walking is the fall-back practice to avoid being seen in public with parents (e.g. being driven): 'if it's gonna be like embarrassing like being seen with parents then I'll walk'. In other words, walking

as an adolescent facilitates an exit from the spaces and times of being watched over by adults unlike their earlier walking school bus experience when surveillance was integral to participation (see Kearns & Collins, 2003).

Not all respondents were keen on time with friends, however. For an equal proportion of the young people the unstructured time and space offered by walking was valued as an opportunity to be alone, frequently in the company of their music. Walking with an MP3 player was remarked upon as an enjoyable activity, so again we can note the way that technology is assisting in the maintenance of walking practice. As Charles (age 14) said: 'sometimes walking clears your head...like you can listen to your iPod'. The complex character of walking is hinted at here; it is not simply walking that 'clears your head', but rather, in Michel de Certeau's (1984) term, the *tactic* of combining walking, chosen music, and relative solitude.

Attitudes towards participating in the walking school bus

When the young people looked back to their primary school years, their parents tended to be the key influence on their everyday walking practice as well as their joining the walking school bus in particular. According to Joanna (age 13), for instance, 'the real reason I started (on the walking school bus) was because my mum started it at our school and so she needed people to do it so I got dragged along too [*laughs*]'. For some, their parents (especially mothers) were early 'converts' to the walking school bus and they walked together to school. Charles (age 14) reflected on how he and his siblings became caught up in parental enthusiasm: 'our mum always wanted us to walk...cos she co-founded it'.

The three school communities within which we interviewed teenagers were pioneers in walking school bus development and these tended to be areas where walking was accepted as a form of everyday mobility. For instance, Kelly's (age 16) continued desire to walk was not countercultural; rather 'loads of people in our community walk so it's not like it's a weird option'. About half of the participants had been driven to school prior to joining a walking school bus and, for some, this development was part of a growing understanding of sustainable transport that complemented more direct curriculum-based learning at school. Claire (age 15), for instance, implied something of an epiphany when '...the walking school bus definitely like made me...realise that you don't have to be driven everywhere'.

Our participants reflected that they tended to move on from walking school

buses and into independent walking on account of three crucial perceptions related to approaching the completion of primary school: the slowness of the walking school bus; its 'uncoolness'; and its disciplined character. Typical comments relating to each of these perceptions are, respectively:

It was too slow...yea they'd have to wait for, like, 10 minutes at every road and stuff (Charles, age 14);

It was alright when you were younger but then when you...started getting to like Year 5 and 6 it like was embarrassing (Andrea, age 14);

I remember one time I got called to the principal's office...um cos like we were, me and my friend we were in front of the leaders...yea I was told off for that... I was pretty...pretty scared (Matthew, age 14).

Importantly, however, most participants continued to walk as a routine activity once they had ended their walking school bus participation. As Kelly (age 16) said, 'yea it's not cool...so by like Year 5 we started like going off with our friends'. Presumably, a number of years' walking school bus participation grants parents the confidence to offer their children greater license to walk independently. In summary, participants generally valued their time being 'walking school bus kids', but all moved (and invariably walked) on after Year 5 or 6, retaining some degree of commitment to active travel.

It appears that cycling is a common practice soon after graduation from the walking school bus and especially during intermediate school years. Adoption of this form of mobility seems particularly associated with the desire for faster travel to and from school. For Joanna (age 13), 'I prefer[ed] to cycle cos it was quicker so...I could get to school quicker so I could leave later [in the morning]...[laughs]'. Alternatively, for Richard (age 13), 'um I think (leaving the walking school bus) was mainly cos I started biking...to get to school faster'. Significantly, however, cycling practice had waned by the time high school was reached. Just as walking school buses were generally deemed to be 'uncool' by the end of children's primary school years, so too cycling had fallen out of favour for many by early adolescence. This trend appeared associated with the desire to socialise *en route* to and from school – something difficult and unsafe to do while on the road. As the reach of young people's travel extends with age, and as they start attending more distant high schools, cycling begins to be considered riskier than walking. For Jenny (age 15), her parents:

never have much time to drive me places and come pick me up so

they encourage me and they like me to keep fit and stuff with walking or cycling but they don't like me cycling as much cos they think it's dangerous and stuff they prefer me to walk.

This comment suggests that parents' encouragement of their children to be independent is commonly counter-balanced by the imposition of restrictions generated by perceptions of safety concerns.

Another key theme that emerged was that, in retrospect, walking school bus participation afforded many interviewees some measure of independence: they could walk without parents but in a safe and structured manner. For Claire (age 15):

before I thought it was kind of un-cool to walk with my parents, they'd walk with me, but the walking school bus gave us an opportunity to walk with our friends when we weren't old enough to walk without, by ourselves...in a safe environment.

Claire's (age 15) comment about being with friends is important; walking school bus children learn from an early age that walking is as much a social activity as a means of mobility. Safety too, comes with numbers. As Richard (age 13) said:

when I was walking (with the walking school bus) it made me feel safer and real confident about walking...on my own...and then um when I, when I started walking on my own to school I didn't really notice the difference that the people were gone.

Kelly (age 16), too, acknowledged the critical and positive influence of starting walking young. Her thoughts warrant recounting at length:

I think cos we started when we were, like, quite young I think there will always be...our underlying habits of walking. It um enables you to become more independent...and when you're older it sort of it...sort of leads you onto different things so the people that get driven everywhere when they're younger that's something that they just think is normal.

To Kelly, the early practice of walking left a legacy, or in Anderson's (2010) language, a *trace*. Those young people possessing what Kelly calls 'underlying habits of walking' are seen as liberated and contrasted alongside the norma-

tive expectations of those who are driven. Both practices, in her view, can be locked into personal expectations early in young lives. The majority of 'graduates' appeared content to walk as adolescents, with some explicitly attributing the walking school bus experience as influential. For Jenny (age 15), 'I guess I kind of enjoyed it more once I did the walking school bus so I guess it has made me keep on walking places'.

In their reflections looking back on the walking school bus experiences, interviewees particularly noted the positive feelings associated with their seniority as 'walking school bus kids'. A number remarked on how they had been invited to take on leadership roles and that this kept them walking and feeling positive about 'spreading the word'. Claire (age 15), for instance, said 'when you were the old ones you [they] thought you're really cool cos you'd help the little ones' and Anna (age 14) similarly noted that 'when I was older and like kind of you know take on more responsibility...got to look after little kids or you know whatever...so that was quite fun'.

Along with the routine of organised walking, the second key influence on adolescents' acceptance of walking appears to be parental insistence, which itself could potentially be a 'trace' of earlier commitment to the walking school bus. Andrea (age 14) gives an example: '...you don't really have a choice about walking if your parents are like "I'm not picking you up" then you have to walk'. In other words, parents who resist continued chauffeuring behaviour as their children grow beyond primary school age can promote a culture of active travel. While the 'school run' appears to include 'chauffeuring' younger teenagers to and from high school because of, for instance, the burden of sports bags, walking can and does feature within extra-curricular trips. As Andrea went on to say, prompted by her parents' 'cruel to be kind' approach, 'I just have to walk otherwise there is no way of getting there'.

While participants varied in their responses, all continued to walk on a regular basis – to and from school as well as to other destinations in their neighbourhoods. For some, the transition to intermediate or high school not only led to attending a more distant location, but also the move had brought increased opportunities for sporting involvements. Thus, on account of distance as well as early morning sports practices (and the need to carry associated equipment), walking to school was no longer practical for some. Nonetheless these young people were still using active travel options such as walking for other trips and generally recognised their health-related benefits. As Charles (age 14) said:

walking is like exercise so it makes you feel good...cos it releases

endorphins so like you feel pretty good when you get to school.

Our participants expressed insights regarding not only physical but also mental health benefits of walking. As Jenny (age 15) says, it:

...kind of just makes you feel good like if you're first thing in the morning walking to school you just wake up and stuff...cause you've kind of been out in the fresh air and you've had a little like stretch of your legs and you haven't just got straight out of bed and got in the car and to the front of school and so...

Elizabeth (age 15) believed:

it's really good to like walk in the morning get your muscles pumping ...yea brain started for the day;

and Matthew (age 14) said that it:

... just felt like better like kinda woke me up...and I was like doing something good for my body and stuff.

Walking clearly made participants 'feel good', with perceived health benefits reaching across the domains of mental and physical wellbeing.

Driving aspirations

Surprisingly few of the adolescents expressed an interest in driving as a pressing alternative to active travel. While some indicated an aspirational interest, Claire's (age 15) views were typical: 'I probably just prefer to walk cos...it's a lot more social to walk...than to drive.' Here we see Claire acknowledging a limitation of driving, especially given the requirement for supervision by an adult when driving as a novice. Erin (age 14) sees driving as an ultimate eventuality, but one that need not be rushed:

I don't really have any interest in driving ...I don't want all that responsibility but I guess um when I'm maybe like seventeen I'll get my licence.

Few seemed troubled by the (then imminent) prospect of the driving age rising to 16, with one implying all drivers should be dedicated walkers first: 'to be a good driver you have to be a good pedestrian.' Another spoke of 'all

the ... younger people out there who don't really drive responsibly' and how 'I wouldn't mind not having a drivers' licence til I'm 18 because of public transport and it's just getting better ... I would find other ways of getting to places'. For Kelly (age 16), 'I've sort of thought about [getting my licence] but I'm not particularly keen on getting it just yet'.

Although our evidence is only indicative, these comments at least suggest that early exposure to routine walking can leave traces of commitment to this practice and a reluctance to rush into the more complex, expensive and less healthy (auto)mobilities of driving.

DISCUSSION: 'TO BE A GOOD DRIVER, YOU HAVE TO BE A GOOD PEDESTRIAN'

From the foregoing accounts, we can identify cultures of mobility that converge and leave traces of attitudes and behaviour among the teenagers we interviewed. The use of local footpaths by organised walking school bus programmes appears to be influential in creating, or at least adding momentum to, a culture of children's walking (as opposed to adults' driving). A decade after the introduction of walking school buses, Auckland adolescents embody these traces (in a willingness to walk) through their occupation of neighbourhood spaces and, more particularly, their walking along particular routes to and from school.

Adults also participate in walking school buses as 'drivers' and 'conductors'. Through this volunteer commitment they help establish and endorse a culture of parental concern (which, in turn, shapes children's own understandings of safety). An adult-imposed culture of discipline and safety-consciousness was evident in comments about the 'bus' being 'too slow' and waiting for walkers. Traces of resistance to this culture of parental concern were evident in teenagers' choice of their own pace and style of mobility (e.g. the speed of cycling; the pleasurable slowness of taking a long route home, talking to others or walking alone listening to music). There were also traces of acquiescence to a discourse of concern that were evident in children 'graduating' from the walking school bus and later walking with a cell phone.

Parental sanctioning of cycling and the insistence of cell phone contact speak to the traces of parental supervision that remain in high school walking practice. There is resistance to parents (i.e. expressed desire to walk alone or with friends), but we also noted a measure of cooperation with parents which appeared evident through their compliance in maintaining contact with a cell phone. There is also a co-dependent role for music and mobility; the MP3 or

iPod complements walking by bringing aural familiarity (but can add an element of risk – to ears and to general safety through inattention). Independent adolescent walking therefore incorporates elements of nonhuman technologies enabling a disposition towards the practice of active travel.

Our analysis allowed us to see independent adolescent mobility mixing walking with other forms of mobility (bicycles, buses, cars) in the context of adapting to life within a car-dominated city. Despite a commitment to walking in principle, teenagers' lives are lived in relationship to private automobiles, whether the cars are driven by parents, other motorists or themselves in the future. This contention was evident in participants who spoke of walking because their parents refused to drive them or those who expressed eventually becoming a licensed driver. In other words, and endorsing the findings of Bean, *et al.* (2008), urban walking is not an activity that is oppositional to driving, but rather is conducted in relation to motorised mobility. Perhaps this view is most economically reflected in the comment from an interviewee that 'to be a good driver, you have to be a good pedestrian.'

CONCLUSION

From this exploratory study, we suggest that the cultures coexisting in the places of children's walking are not about childhood itself, but rather concern a disposition that views the social world from a vantage point of walking. We conclude that the walking school bus intervention appears to leave a legacy among adolescents involving an openness to, if not enthusiasm for, walking. From an analysis of interview responses we showed that, for our participants, walking is a multi-faceted practice that fostered independence and sociability as well as access to friends and amenities. This is an important and promising conclusion given the study context: Auckland as a city in which driving remains the aspirational norm.

Just as pedestrian crossings can be tangible traces of activism by walking advocates, so too this study has shown a more subtle set of traces – a legacy of the earlier routinised walking generated within the neighbourhood landscape. We can speculate walking could be more widely promoted – as a banal, but potent, intervention that can advance both personal health and more sustainable cities. Within such promotion there might be scope to promote walking for teenagers as an opportunity to be with friends as well as have time alone and 'chill' after the school day. Further, parents who resist chauffeuring behaviour as their children age beyond primary school years may well be contributing, whether knowingly or unknowingly, to promoting active travel and a more sustainable,

child-friendly city.

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