
EXPLORING PEDESTRIANS' SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF MOTOR TRAFFIC WITHIN THE ROAD ENVIRONMENT

This project is a three year PhD study. It is funded internally through a CTS studentship. It addresses a gap in knowledge, which is that there is very little known, of a rigorous academic standard, about what effect motor traffic has on the subjective experience of pedestrians and thus on their well being and behaviour.

Background

The choice of walking as a means of transport has a number of benefits for the individual walking and for society: These include health benefits, a minimisation of threat to other road users through collision, low cost, enjoyment, etc.

Car use leads to a mixture of benefits and disbenefits to the individual and to society. One of the disbenefits sometimes put forward in literature but not always, thus far, substantiated with evidence is that motor traffic has an 'oppressive' effect both on the enjoyment of people walking, and the numbers doing so. The study will address issues such as these.

The study will also build upon the growing recognition, by the New Economic Foundation among others that the well being of people in society is of importance. In light of this the study will examine whether the well being of pedestrians is affected by oppressive aspects of motor traffic.

A paper of central importance to the study was written by Taylor (2003.) This offered an account of what factors may be important in the pedestrian experience of motor traffic. However Taylor did not conduct primary research on pedestrians' experiences other than his own. He also noted a dearth of academic literature on the topic. Thus it can be seen that there are gaps in academic and practical knowledge about the effect of motor traffic on pedestrian well being and behaviour.



Research questions

The research questions for the study are:

- 1) In what ways are the subjective experiences of pedestrians affected by motor traffic?
- 2) In what ways do subjective experiences of motor traffic affect the well being of pedestrians?
- 3) How and why does an understanding of pedestrians' experience formed by examining their subjective behaviour differ from and understanding based on examining objective factors?

Methodology

The anticipated research methods that will be used will be primarily qualitative. They will consist of walk-along interviews in which pedestrians will be interviewed in situ on the streets of Bristol. There will also be room based focus groups using photographs and audio recordings of motor traffic as prompts to discussion

Findings

In this formative stage of the study, the findings so far consist of a review of relevant literature.

Literature examined has highlighted possible ways in which the pedestrian experience is affected by motor traffic.

The study will seek to explore the effects of motor traffic, through the subjective experiences of pedestrians, and substantial literature has been found that highlights the importance of understanding subjective aspects of the pedestrian experience.

References

Taylor, N. (2003) The Aesthetic Experience of traffic in the modern city. *Urban Studies*. 40 (8)

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