



THE CONDUCT OF TRAVEL

**BEGINNING A GENEALOGY OF
THE TRAVELLING SUBJECT**

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, June 2002

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary urban travel practices and in particular the widespread usage of automobiles have been examined by researchers through a variety of theoretical frameworks. The popularity of the motor vehicle and the concomitant unpopularity of other modes of travel are often attributed to human progress, the operation of capitalist relations of production, and/or the outcome of patriarchal social relations. Researchers who offer these explanations, both critics and protagonists of the motor vehicle, have tended to ignore, or discount, all those practices which disrupt or contradict their grand theories. It is argued in the present study, that in refusing to explicate the counter practices and counter stories of travel, researchers also ignore the potentially disruptive ways of thinking about and intervening in urban travel and urban space.

This research draws on the insights of feminist and post-structuralist theorists to open to question the way in which urban travel is presently reflected upon by urban professionals and the potential effects of these modes of reflection. Rather than focusing upon either automobile or non-automobile travel, this study locates driving, cycling, walking, skateboarding, roller-blading, and bus, tram, train, and wheelchair usage within a broader examination of urban travel practices and 'being in' urban space. The study uses the City of Adelaide, in South Australia, as a site through which to examine the way in which the spaces, bodies, and conduct of travel have been objectified and subsequently intervened upon by urban experts.

Urban travel is not taken for granted as something which can be known in more or less precise terms nor is it presumed to be something that is inherently worthy of investigation. The fact that a particular set of actions and interactions has been brought into discourse as urban travel, and the particular practices which constitute such urban travel, are themselves the object of the present enquiry. This study interrogates the conditions under which it became meaningful to create narratives about urban travel, the procedures and instruments through which practices were objectified as urban travel, the precise actions and interactions that were constituted as urban travel, as well as the interventions enabled through and the normalising effects of these processes of objectification. It is argued that the production of knowledge about being in and travelling through urban space operate to prioritise some practices over others and open up certain ways of intervening in urban space and urban movement. This focus on the production of knowledge about urban travel implicates urban experts (including researchers, planners, and administrators) in the proliferation and prioritisation of certain travel practices.