ABSTRACT
Within writing on walking practices, walking has often been presented as pleasurable, relaxing, and even liberatory. Research using walking interviews has recognised that different kinds of bodies can be excluded from mobile methods, impacting upon place-based knowledge production. However, the social and cultural politics of the walking interview remains underplayed, an omission that is acutely apparent in a context of urban diversity. This article investigates the ways in which walking practices intersect with social difference, particularly in relation to faith, ethnicity and gender. It argues for the need to pluralise mobile methods in order to more subtly address social distinctions, and further offers empirical observations on the embodied experiences and socio-spatial practices of Muslim women in the city of Birmingham, U.K.

L’entretien en marchant: recherche des (im)mobilités auprès des femmes musulmanes

RÉSUMÉ
Dans ce qui est écrit sur les pratiques de marche, la marche est souvent présentée comme une activité de plaisir, de détente et même de libération. La recherche utilisant l’entretien en marchant a souvent reconnu que différentes sortes de corps peuvent être exclus des méthodes mobiles, avec des conséquences sur la production de connaissance à partir du lieu. Pourtant, les politiques sociales et culturelles de l’entretien en marchant reste minimisée, une omission qui est extrêmement apparente dans le contexte de la diversité urbaine. Cet article explore les façons dont les pratiques de marche sont à la croisée de la différence sociale, en particulier dans les domaines de la confession, de l’ethicité et du genre. Il plaide pour la nécessité de pluraliser les méthodes mobiles afin d’aborder les distinctions sociales de façon plus subtile et propose en outre des observations empiriques sur les expériences incarnées et les pratiques socio-spatiales des femmes musulmanes dans la ville de Birmingham au Royaume-Uni.

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La entrevista pedestre: la investigación de (in)movilidades con mujeres musulmanas

RESUMEN
Dentro de la escritura sobre prácticas pedestres, el caminar a menudo se ha presentado como placentero, relajante e incluso liberador. La investigación mediante entrevistas pedestres ha reconocido que diferentes tipos de organismos pueden ser excluidos de métodos móviles, teniendo así un impacto sobre la producción de conocimiento basado en el lugar. Sin embargo, las políticas sociales y culturales de la entrevista pedestre siguen siendo subestimadas, una omisión que es sumamente evidente en un contexto de diversidad urbana. Este artículo investiga las formas en que el caminar se cruza con la diferencia social, en particular en relación con la fe, la etnia y el género. Se argumenta a favor de la necesidad de pluralizar los métodos móviles con el fin de abordar de manera más sutil las distinciones sociales y, además, ofrece observaciones empíricas sobre las experiencias corporales y las prácticas socio-espaciales de las mujeres musulmanas en la ciudad de Birmingham, Reino Unido.

Introduction
This paper argues for a critical re-engagement with the walking interview in order to explore the socio-spatial experiences of minority groups in urban public space. Through a case study group of mixed-ethnic Muslim women enrolled at a women only college in Birmingham, U.K., it critically reviews the walking interview as method, and, in particular, its under-addressed ethnic, gendered and moral dimensions. Walking interviews hinge upon the need for research questions to be ‘framed by a “place” that can be walked’, which means ‘the act of walking will exclude certain types of participants’ (Evans & Jones, 2011, p. 849). But despite work on the politics of mobility (Cresswell, 2010), and more specific empirical research into walking interviews and embodiment (Middleton, 2010, 2011a, 2011b), geographical investigation into how walking intersects with social difference has been surprisingly neglected. To address this lacuna in research, the paper does two things: first, and primarily, it offers a critical account of the walking interview that makes a methodological contribution to geographical literature on the design and use of mobile methods to investigate in/exclusion. Second, it offers a valuable case study through which to consider the daily negotiations and embodied experiences of Muslim women migrants in urban public space, contributing to debates on pluralism. By attending to these aims an explicit critique of the universal appropriation of the walking interview is presented, which highlights the social and cultural relations in both walking as act, and its use as a research method.

The evolving social significance of walking practices has formed the basis of historical and contemporary studies in social sciences and arts and humanities. In the nineteenth century walking was transformed into a mode of leisure for European elites, influenced by the landscape writings of Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Cresswell, 2010; Ingold, 2004). Ingold has argued that walking for pleasure is based on ‘the striding gait of boot-clad Europeans’ (2004, p. 315). Following this historical narrative, understanding of leisure-walking practices may have been shaped by elite European social milieus, however what alternative perspectives are offered by tracing everyday walking in a contemporary city? More specifically, how do we make sense of the ways multiple ethnic and cultural groups
converge in the city, and the different attitudes towards and practices of walking in a context of pluralism? Universalising how any given body navigates space risks flattening out the complexity of the ways in which individuals experience the built environment. Consideration to the social and cultural implications of the tools we use to engage others and how we represent the environments we live in is particularly timely in a context of increasing diversity in European cities and anxiety over notions of increasing ethnic-cultural segregation. This article argues that thinking carefully about the socio-spatial and cultural politics of using particular methods with different people on the move is needed to foster a more sensitive understanding of ‘constellations of mobility’ – ‘particular patterns of movement, representations of movement, and ways of practicing movement that make sense together’ (Cresswell, 2010, p. 18).

Special attention is needed for greater sensitivity to the role faith, spirituality and morality performs in the social, cultural and material landscape (see Hatziprookopiou & Evergeti, 2014; Kuppinger, 2014; Oosterbaan, 2014). In cities and neighbourhoods where there are high levels of people who identify themselves as part of a religious or faith-based group, recognising contingent systems of belief is integral to understanding the dynamics of place. The technique of talking while walking enables recording how place-based meaning, embodiment, spirituality and everyday practices come together. In advancing the need to pluralise the walking interview as method, the paper also serves to offer some specific reflections on the embodied experiences and spatial practices of the case study group. It focuses on Muslim women residents in the neighbourhood of Balsall Heath, an inner-city suburb located within the ward of Sparkbrook. The ward has received considerable media attention due to ‘Operation Trojan Horse’, an investigation into Muslim extremism in primary and secondary school governance. Largely negative media coverage of the area centred on conservative Islam and radicalisation is overlaid upon its reputation as a former red light district (Hubbard & Sanders, 2003). The area has been sensationalised by politicians and media, therefore, as a place of illicit, dangerous and transgressive behaviour.

Re-visiting the walking interview in this socio-spatial context highlights what I argue are Eurocentric secular assumptions bound within the usage and analysis of conventional urban walking interviews. Across the research ‘the issue of visibility’ – of social observation and social pressures around potential transgressions – interrupt salutary descriptions of the liberatory qualities of the walking interview (Green & Singleton, 2007, p. 117; also see Dwyer, 1998; Mohammad, 2013). For many the flows and tensions of moving between sites by publicly walking along the street reveals the social and cultural politics of using the walking interview as a method for place-based knowledge production. This article therefore advances that more critical and nuanced empirical engagement with mobile methods is necessary to attend to the everyday socio-spatial practices of diverse, marginalised and/or vulnerable groups. To provide context for the need for contributions on walking and its intersections with gender, ethnicity and faith, literatures are outlined in the next section that variously engage with walking and difference. The article will then move on to discussion of extant research on Muslim women and spatial practices to advance how pluralising the walking interview can provide new insights into everyday negotiations and decision-making that inform human mobilities.

**Walking and difference**

Human mobility is ‘practiced mobility that is enacted and experienced through the body’ (Cresswell, 2010, p. 20). Tim Cresswell has identified the need for a politics of mobility in which walking (along with dancing, driving, flying, running, and so forth) is recognised as a
practice shaped by different bodies (Cresswell, 2010). Accounting for heterogeneity is particularly pertinent in cities that can be viewed as encounters; that is spaces of meeting with multiple kinds of people (Simonsen, 2008). In convening difference, cities contain ‘spatial delimitations of ethnic and cultural difference’ which means that ethnicity intersects the spatial in ways that are not always physically manifest or visible (Simonsen, 2008). Ethnic exclusions and inclusions can form part of the very construction of public space (Simonsen, 2008, p. 155), along with other intersectional markers of class, gender, race, religion, sexuality, age, and so forth. Social differences involving power relations are paced out through mobile methods with reflection on how ‘mobilities are both productive of such social relations and produced by them’ (Cresswell, 2010, p. 21). As a spatialised and embodied research tool, walking interviews enable insights into the dynamic emotional, affectual and physical relations of power-differentiated people within the everyday fabric of urban life. In the instances where social and cultural life is not walked, for any multitude of reasons, other kinds of knowledge on immobility, connectivity and control in urban space begin to emerge.

Reflecting continued interest in theories of practice and non-representational theory (see Merriman, 2014; Thrift & Dewsbury, 2000; Wilson, 2011), within the discipline of geography the importance of mapping mobility builds upon a distinguished tradition. Of particular influence has been the contribution of Swedish geographer Hägerstrand (1970) in developing a mapping of ‘time-geography.’ Hägerstrand showed how human action always takes place within shared coordinates of space and time, giving rise to an ethics based around space and time conviviality. Yet critiques of time-geography advanced by cultural and feminist geographers have exposed a lack of attention to the distinction between public and private space, failure to account for unequal access to time as a resource, and elision of corporeality ‘that appears to erase a difference in the everyday’ (Davies, 2001; Haraway, 1988; Rose, 1993, p. 19, p. 28).

Attempts to move beyond the dichotomy of represented and lived in human mobility practices were further developed in the field of ‘new walking practices’ (as coined by Lorimer, 2011). Multidisciplinary in scope, the work is unified by ‘a commitment to thinking through … walking itself’ (Horton, Christensen, Kraftl, & Hadfield-Hill, 2014, p. 97). Walking for leisure has been variously engaged in the exploration of knowledges and connectivities with the natural environment (Lorimer & Lund, 2003, 2008), including auto-ethnographic and intercorporeal ethnographic accounts of landscape (Macpherson, 2009; Warren, 2013; Wylie, 2005a, 2005b), and artistic dérives in the city (O’Rourke, 2013; Pile, 2005; Pinder, 2001, 2005; Rendell, 2006). Across these studies emphasis is given to the embodied experience of walking and knowledge production. Writing on the history of walking, Solnit reflects:

Walking ... is the intentional act closest to the unwilled rhythms of the body, to breathing and the beating of the heart.... Walking, ideally, is a state in which the mind, the body, and the world are aligned, as though they were three characters finally in conversation together, three notes suddenly making a chord. (2001, p. 5)

Here, the embodied experience of walking is described in terms of physical liberation; a union is forged through motion between mind, body and world. Yet, varying degrees, intensities and challenges complicate a uniform representation of rhythmic relaxation. Walking practices are specific to different bodies and situations, particularities of place and systems of belief.

The pacing of lives and social relations through the medium of walking is intimately bound with geometries of power. In feminist work, research on the typically masculine figure of the flâneur has highlighted both the social politics of writing on urban walking, and the gendering of leisure walking (for instance Scalway, 2006; Simonsen, 2004; Wolff, 2006). On the often problematic representation of walking, Middleton observes:
[T]he emancipatory potential and democratic possibilities of urban walking are far from straightforward and unproblematic as much of the literature on walking in the city is imbued with a degree of romanticism whereby walking is often considered, without question, as a positive urban practice (2010, p. 579).

This emancipatory tendency is traced back to the writing of French social theorist, Michel de Certeau (1984). De Certeau frames walking as an everyday practice – or ‘tactic’ – that can open democratic possibilities by deviating from the strategies employed by urban planners, architects and engineers to exert power over citizen behaviour. Yet, walking has too neatly been positioned as a political act where citizens have the power to resist and reject the dominant moral and social order written into the cityscape (Hubbard, 2006, p. 107). While avoiding simple alignments of walking and freedom, following Paasche and Sidaway (2010), walking practices can expose power including the ways in which power is structured through security and policing that the mobile body navigates in the public spaces of the city.

Read together these literatures on walking and power reveal there are multiple structural barriers, both physical and perceptual, that are presented in the act of walking in the city for different people. Of particular significance, scholarship on the geographies of fear and gender shows the spatial tactics used by females while attempting to negotiate, or avoid, cities and the built environment (Davidson, 2000; Mohammad, 2013; Pain, 2001; Valentine, 1989, 1992). Most urban studies on fear have focused on public spaces and encounters with strangers, but other variables that shape women's spatial practices should not be overlooked, including private and semi-private spaces (e.g. homes, workplaces) (Pain, 2001), and mental maps that ‘become sedimented over the lifecourse’ guiding ‘assessments of risk and safety in the city’ (Mohammad, 2013, p. 1804). Reflecting on mental health and people who live with anxiety, McGrath, Reavey, and Brown (2008, p. 57) observe that ‘experience is equally affective, spatial, embodied, material, technological and so on’. The challenge for researchers is to ‘keep this multiplicity – both difference and irreducibility – central to the analysis without prioritising one set of planes over another’ (McGrath, Reavey, & Brown, 2008).

In representing a sense of place, therefore, the multiple ways in which people are in/excluded in the built environment must be fully acknowledged (Warren, 2013, 2014). Pluralising the walking interview speaks to the fact that there is ‘something’ that could not be quantified in words, descriptions (see Degen, 2008) or, indeed, sometimes in the ability to en-act walking. Walking practices have, like all forms of mobility, ‘a physical reality, they are encoded culturally and socially, and they are experienced through practice’ (Cresswell, 2010, p. 20). Thus, a lack of social confidence or freedom to take part in a walking interview does not negate nor reduce the legitimacy of that account of public space. Instead it reveals (im)mobilities that give emphasis to the complex ways in which ‘the public environment of British cities is encoded with very different values’ (Mohammad, 2013, p. 1805). This is particularly pertinent to an analysis of who can or cannot exercise power to shape the visible practices and representation of urban public space, and give voice to its heterogeneity.

**Muslim women and spatial practices in the city**

In 2009 Hopkins and Gale argued that there ‘remains considerable scope for additional research on the relationship between texts, beliefs and Muslim spatial practices’ (2009, p. 13). A greater weighting of research focusing on space and spirituality, instead of Muslim identity politics, was suggested to re-balance the field (Hopkins & Gale, 2009). Muslims living
in the U.K. of course have a broad range of ethnic and national states of origin, migration trajectories and cultural heritage, and distinctive ways of connecting with aspects of sectarian establishment (Hopkins & Gale, 2009, p. 14). As a social category ‘Muslim women’ can work to obfuscate the significant cultural and spiritual differences between female followers of Islam, even within an area such as the Sparkbrook ward which is often represented as amongst the most conservative in the U.K. (see Mohammad, 2013). Generational differences and whether diasporic Muslim communities have rural or urban ties are further key variables that inform urban spatial practices in Britain (Mohammad, 2013). For as Shaheed (1999, p. 61) argues, any call to reflect on ‘the position and status of Muslim women’ is problematic, implying ‘a universality and uniformity that simply does not exist’ which is ‘exclusive of all non-Muslims and is insulated from any other social, political or culturally relevant influences such as structures of power, the technological revolution and the culture of consumerism’.

A ‘glaring’ connection has been diagnosed between public anxieties about Islam in Britain and the proliferation of recent research on Muslim place, identity and community by British geographers and on British geographies (Kong, 2007, p. 182). Discussing ‘Little Pakistan’, an ethnic-territorial imaginary that encompasses Balsall Heath, Mohammad observes: ‘Non-white residential clustering is constructed on the one hand as isolating and insular, and on the other as static and homogenous, sites which foster alien values threatening to national security’ (2013, p. 1802). This fear of segregation and its associations with extremism is evident in invasive religious-ethic counter-terrorist measures such as increased CCTV surveillance as part of the PREVENT Strategy HM Government (2008, 2011). Highly controversial, the PREVENT Strategy, devised by the Home office and the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism in the wake of the 7 July 2005 London bombings, supported a proliferation of security measures targeted at the ‘radicalisation’ of UK-based Muslim communities (Heath-Kelly, 2013). It has intensified an urban landscape politics that has privileged discussion on secularism and religion, rather than inequality, racism and marginalisation.

In a growing body of work, geographers on religion looking at Islam have taken as their site and scale of analysis mosques, schools, the home and the body (Heath-Kelly, 2013). These sites and scales can be framed according to binary analytic tendencies. Firstly, mosques and schools have been the central sites of analysis for Muslim geographies that are informed by a cultural politics approach to explain the place of Islam in society (Dunn, 2001; Gale & Naylor, 2002; Wilson, 2013, 2014; also see Kong, 1993a, 1993b). In focusing on institutional nodes in the public realm this work can be understood as building out of the early theories of religion that designated locations in which religion is sited – the subject, structures of society, institutions – to encourage appreciation of how religion functions in society (Durkheim, [1912] 1976; Hopkins, Kong, & Olson, 2013, p. 5). Secondly, at the scale of the home, the domestic space preoccupies literature that has considered the ascribed role of ‘mother’ and ‘nurturer’ to Muslim women (Kandiyoti, 1996; Mohammad, 2005; Phillips, 2009). A dualistic approach can be observed between the domestic and public sphere, analysed along gendered roles. For instance, Phillips observes: ‘The house … is particularly important for Muslim women whose everyday mobility and participation in the public (more masculine) spheres of education and work may be closely regulated’ (Brah, Hickman, & Mac an Ghaill, 1999; Mohammad, 1999; Phillips, 2009, p. 24).

Attending to the mobilities of Muslim women cuts across these binaries of the public/private revealing points of departure and exchange. This builds upon a body of work that seeks to ‘unhinge’ the category and representation of Muslim women (Falah & Nagel, 2005, p. 9),
subverting normative gender expectations through advancing new perspectives on the spatialised roles of Muslim women in issues of access to labour markets (Bowlby & Lloyd-Evans, 2009; see also Mohammad, 2013), political organisation (Shaheed, 1999), community and leisure spaces (Green & Singleton, 2007) and educational experiences and aspirations (Dwyer & Shah, 2009). In-depth qualitative research accounts have generated personal narratives that complicate the view of Muslim women as domestically bound, suggesting instead ‘that everyday decision-making takes place at the intersection between gender, culture and political-economic processes’ (Dwyer, 2000; Falah & Nagel, 2005, p. 9; Yeoh & Khoo, 1998). Furthermore, ‘Muslim place-making activities’, including pious greetings and using flexible spaces for Muslim purposes, creates a contingent, shared secular-sacred social geography in European cities (Hatziprokopiou & Evergeti, 2014; Kuppinger, 2014). Reading across these studies points towards the importance of considering the mobilities of Muslim women in the U.K. as they intersect public and private space, renegotiating their own positionality and dynamics of place in the process. Thus, a connection is drawn between everyday mobilities exercised in urban walking practices and broader issues of social mobility. Pluralising the walking interview and the insights it offers reveals not only the relative ease or resistance experienced by women on pathways as they encounter the social and built environment in real-time. It also offers an arena through which to talk and reflect upon wider socio-spatial experiences that inform understanding of place-based, social and embodied geographies.

**Pluralising the walking interview**

Responding to human mobility difference in the reflexive use of walking interviews guided the research process. This section outlines the methodological approach that included an initial stage of empirical data collection to gain more in-depth insights into the kinds of places visited, and physical and perceptual barriers to access and engagement in the local urban environment. Data collection was conducted between 2012 and 2014, with empirics from a classroom-based exercise (n = 26 students) informing the adaptation and analysis of the walking interviews (n = 11 students; 40–180 mins in duration).

The area of Balsall Heath, Birmingham, was selected for several reasons. First, Balsall Heath is diverse. In the most recent U.K. census of 2011, 60% of the population recorded themselves as Asian and 10% as Arab, with 71% stating their religion as Muslim (Census, 2011). Second, the regulation and policing of women informs the social history of its streets, with historic public clashes between prostitutes and local vigilantes (see Hubbard & Sanders, 2003). Third, the neighbourhood has a fast-developing infrastructure of trusts, charities, forums, educational institutions, a library, shops, cultural arts venues, parks and places of worship that serve as resources and nodes for resident groups (Warren & Jones, 2015). The neighbourhood therefore offers a pertinent case study site for investigating how social difference meets with mobile methods, particularly along intersectional ethnic, faith-based and gendered lines.

The support of a local adult education teacher was enlisted to help recruit participants. The community researcher, a second-generation Pakistani Muslim woman, worked at the women only college in Balsall Heath. In an area that is one of the focal points of the PREVENT Strategy an embedded local intermediary with established social networks was key in assisting the research and mediating initial distrust of outsiders (see Mohammad, 2013). Participants in the study reflected the wider profile of the students with the college; most were first-generation migrants from countries of origins including Pakistan, Bangladesh,
Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan, The Republic of Sudan and Algeria. As was recom-
mended by teachers and management at the women’s only college, the research process was facilitated by a female university researcher to avoid any discomfort from social gender-mixing. While this raises issues around intersectionality and positionality, especially on issues of gender and faith, in view of the college facilitators at least a female researcher was more appropriate than an unrelated male (of any faith).

Participatory research processes should advance through dialogue (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007; also Pain, Kesby, & Askins, 2012). The methodological approach detailed in this article was guided by the aims of co-producing knowledge and mutual reciprocity in the research process. Our community researcher viewed the research project as a skills and knowledge-building opportunity for the consenting participants: to meet a university researcher; develop their language skills and confidence; and to broaden knowledge of public provision available at the neighbourhood and city level. The contested notion of ‘women Muslims’ as a homogeneous category is important in this context, with diversity across participants, in terms of ethnicity, culture and spirituality. Indicative of this variance is that friendship groups in the classroom shared similar styles of dress, wearing: black abayas with tightly wrapped hijabs; loosely fitted, colourful headscarves; or uncovered hair and Westernised clothes (such as jeans). Bonding characteristics included shared language, and piety, with one group leaving the classroom together for afternoon prayer. Time was built into the research process with the initial stage involved developing trust and facilitating learning by attending a number of college classes over a term. In these classes the conventional techniques of the walking interview were introduced. For those who did not feel comfortable undertaking a walking interview, or who did not have the time, the classroom mapping exercise was developed as an alternative means to represent socio-spatial experiences of the neighbourhood.

Appropriated from Steve Cinderby’s on-street Participatory Geographic Information Systems (2009), the classroom-based exercise involved participants flagging on a large A-O map any places the women had visited in recreational time using simple Post-It notes (Figures 1 and 2). Clear variance in social responsibilities and levels of independence were evident from the classroom-based mapping exercise. Characteristic of the integrated comments in the exercise were: ‘I go with my daughter to the park’; ‘I go walking for half an hour with my friends’; and ‘I go to my sister’s for dinner’ (Figures 1 and 2). Reported encounters with public space were short in duration, often accompanied by children, husbands, extended family, or friends, and rarely undertaken alone. But practices were not necessarily bounded by the need to stay ‘local’. Two groups noted their regular travel beyond the local neighbourhood for city centre shopping at mainstream high street stores. Further, extensive use of mobile technologies opens the scope of spatial practices observed in the study. Translocal connections with family and friends living in countries of origin and different U.K. cities, showed multidimensional and non-linear geometries of practice. A distinction needs to be made, therefore, between physical and social boundary-making as is explored further later. What was clear is that walking and talking with a ‘stranger’, without a practical purpose, was outside of socio-spatial norms for the participants. Walking for leisure when it does occur was a recreational practice undertaken typically in an extended family context.

Integrating understanding from the initial stages of data collection, the need for greater flexibility in conducting walking interviews was required. Each interview scenario was tailored to the subject and their stated preferences. Participants were offered choice in how walking interviews were undertaken: either independently, or accompanied; as part of a
friendship group, and with children or partners. There was nevertheless a significant drop-off in participation in the walking interviews. Despite intermediation from the community researcher a number of scheduled walking interviews were cancelled – primarily for reasons provided of bad weather, and memory lapses of arranged meetings. Additionally, lack of time due to caring duties for elderly relatives and children, and other domestic responsibilities were cited as contributing factors for withdrawal (see Davies, 2001). In a context of pluralism whether people are defined as citizens and enfranchised or whether they co-constitute society while operating under the law can inform withdrawal from the public sphere (Oosterbaan, 2014). Potential tensions over migrant legal status compound the ‘issue of visibility’, hitherto read along cultural and religious lines of transgression (Green & Singleton, 2007, p. 117). Fear of the unknown, insecurity, and time constraints advance understanding beyond standard interpretations of a patriarchal Islamic social order and culture for why

\[ \text{Figure 1. Participants in classroom-based cultural mapping exercise, Women only college, Balsall Heath. Source: Author.} \]

\[ \text{Figure 2. Participants in classroom-based cultural mapping exercise, Women only college, Balsall Heath. Source: Author.} \]
Muslim women migrants may experience distinct barriers to engagement in urban public life, in the U.K., and elsewhere.

**Urban walking interviews with Muslim women migrants**

In the sections that follow reflexive practice on the methodology of the walking interview and embodied geographies of difference is presented. Empirical evidence is detailed from the selected case study group of Muslim women migrants that, it is argued, highlights a partiality of understanding that has continued to dominate the use and analysis of the mobile method.

**Power and position**

An important distinction between the guided walking interview (Paulos & Goodman, 2004; Reed, 2002) and natural ‘go-along’ (Carpiano, 2009; Kusenbach, 2003) – where the researcher accompanies the participant on their everyday routine – informs the dynamics of the walking interview. The guided walking interview, or tour, is led by the researcher along a route that is selected because it is empirically useful in answering a pre-agreed research question. A researcher-led walking interview may therefore ask participants to diverge from their standard track. Meanwhile a natural go-along is comparable to a ‘shadowing’ technique that can ‘capture sometimes hidden or unnoticed habitual relations with place and the environment’ (Evans & Jones, 2011, p. 850).

In an attempt to map traces of diverse cultural participation in the local neighbourhood adopting a walking interview methodology that mobilised the assets of the go-along allowed insights into nodes of activity, and those places ‘in-between’, biographical and familial resonances, and social-spatial architecture. By siting the walking interviews in the area in which the participants were resident the aim was to position their lived and local knowledges as that of the ‘expert’ (and de-centre the ‘expert’ knowledge of the academic) (see Elwood & Martin, 2000). Yet in process some walking interviews took on the qualities of a research-led guided tour where participants lacked confidence, personal or knowledge-based, to direct the route.

The first two women to undertake the go-along arrived in the reception area of the college. Aaleyah and Haifa, from Sudan and Libya respectively, were both dressed in floor length black abayas with black hijabs and facial veils. They greeted friends in the college with a right handshake and ‘Insha’Allah’ (Arabic for ‘God willing’ or ‘if Allah wills’). When greeting a close friend, this was accompanied by three kisses on the cheeks. Most of the women passing through the college reception wore floor-length black abayas. Some wore colour, and embroidery or patterns on their abaya sleeves and headscarfs, such as red, white and gold stripes.

Aaleyah and Haifa guided the walking interview to the Saheli Women’s Gym, situated next door to the college, and then onwards to a local grocery shop. Aaleyah and Haifa asked the researcher to accompany them to the gym and to help enrol Aaleyah as a member (Haifa said it was ‘too complicated’ to join herself). Aaleyah sought multiple assurances she would not encounter a man in the gym, after observing in the programme a weekly male-only session scheduled. In the grocery shop, Aaleyah checked that tinned food were halal by carefully reading the ingredients list written in Arabic. The researcher then asked: ‘So where
are we going to next?' Aaleyah replied: ‘I don’t know.’ The researcher tried again to encourage a participant-led walking interview: ‘Where else do you go in the area?’ To which Aaleyah said: ‘You’re choosing now, because I don’t know’. 

In this example a challenge is posed to extant discussion of power relations in walking interviews that have too readily suggested empowerment of the individual is enabled by allowing the participant to lead decision-making (see Anderson, 2004; Evans & Jones, 2011, p. 849). According to a more normative rationale, participant determination of a walking route can ‘overcome traditional interviewer/interviewee power relations’ in order ‘to forge something uniquely collaborative’ (Anderson, 2004, p. 258). In fact this methodological causality – self-determination leading to greater empowerment – should be reconsidered when it is held in tension with cultural and social difference, and the hierarchies of power between the researcher and researched. A deferential approach to the cultural authority of ‘the teacher’ (in this case a university researcher) was a key contributing factor that frustrated attempts to realign power relations through research design in the walking interview. Further inter-generational asymmetry in power was evident between the participants: the older female led; the younger female followed. Participants regularly asked for reassurance that their selected route was suitable, and whether the researcher would like to visit anywhere in particular. Rather than ‘empowering’ the participants, the go-along scenario in this case proved challenging. It pushed beyond comfort zones where leading the route meant unwanted authority was assumed, exacerbating any unease in what is already an unusual socio-spatial situation.

Addressing the sometimes awkward and discomforting dynamics of the walking interviews as a research tool ought to therefore take into account relations and dissonances between the interviewer and interviewee(s) on key issues of participation and decision-making. Quite unintentionally, this can be sharpened in attempts to disrupt knowledge hierarchies given differences of expectation in research dynamics, informed by distinct social, cultural and educational backgrounds. Relatedly, researching using walking interviews could be strengthened by consideration given to multiple encodings and values in any given transect of urban public space, as is explored further in the next sub-section.

**Negotiating unease**

The walking interview combines participant observation and semi-structured interviewing, both of which foreground context in knowledge construction. Participant observation involves researchers ‘deliberately immersing’ themselves in the worlds of cultural groups, to participate as well as observe the ‘everyday rhythms and routines’ of groups and communities (Cook, 2003, p. 127). Discussions of place in relation to walking interviews have centred upon how to support participants to feel at ease during the research process (Anderson, 2004; Elwood & Martin, 2000). The ways that places are socially structured can lead to feelings of belonging or exclusion, along with possession and control of particular individuals and groups, especially those who tend to hold less power in public space.

In fact, spatial tactics used to minimise risk in public space by the Muslim women in this study, such as travelling in cars, in groups, or not at all, calls into question the suitability of the walking interview for some. While safety is voiced as a concern in the study by Green and Singleton (2007), enmeshed in cautious engagements with public space is the protection of honour and modesty. Social observation and pressures around female behaviour,
including potential transgressions, reveal a cultural and moral politics to traversing public space in walking interviews (Green & Singleton, 2007, p. 117; also see Dwyer, 1998; Mohammad, 2013). Mohammad observes on ‘Little Pakistan’, encompassing Balsall Heath, that ‘these tight-knit, dense, multidimensional, reciprocal relationships’ are bound in shared history and migration, however they ‘also support the “noseyness” associated with small communities’ which can translate into ‘surveillance and control’ (2013, p. 1809).

Physical and social risk-taking and its moral dimensions arose as key issues in a number of walking interviews. An example is the case of a young woman who had lived in Balsall Heath for 17 years after migrating from Yemen. Thana wore a black abaya and headscarf with embellishment. Keen to talk, her shyness was indicated through avoidance of eye contact. Walking along the street, Thana was keen to show the houses where she lived with her father and where her extended family are resident – all located on the same road as her college. Thana told the researcher she is married with a child, but her husband works in Saudi Arabia due to U.K. visa restrictions. Fear was articulated often; she avoids leaving the house in the evening and worries about road accidents. Despite living in Balsall Heath most her life, Thana said: ‘I’m so scared of the road, I listen to the cars… You have to think of the cars or otherwise they’re going to hit you and run away’. Socio-spatial tactics included negotiating the dangers of cars on busy roads, but concern was also expressed at disrespect shown by car drivers. As the researcher and Thana walked together along a pavement in Balsall Heath a car beeped its horn. Thana was visibly upset; she shook her head, and quickened her rate of walking and talking:

That’s rude … I’ve never seen him before. That’s what I’m trying to tell my daughter, don’t talk to strangers. Strangers are bad. Just pretend that you don’t know them. No, don’t look at them. Just go inside.

Thana interpreted this ‘rude’ street experience through a lens of modesty and honour, further reflecting that men would not beep the horn of a car at women they know.

In making an argument for the need to pluralise the walking interview, the article further offers empirical comments on the case study group that reflect on their embodied experiences and spatial practices during the research process. Thana's avoidance of public situations where she might be physically hurt or socially and morally disrespected extended to a nearby park, where football and cricket facilities are built close to the children’s play area. Taking a route that avoided passing the park, Thana said there are ‘too much men down there… They like whistling and everything at women’. Instead, once a week ‘when we have a day off, like from college or from house cleaning’, in the safe conviviality of her family she walks to another larger green space nearby. When walking for leisure is experienced, it is within particular cultural and familial dynamics as a sociable inter-generational activity, where friends and kinship networks are greeted along the way pointing towards the particularly unusual dynamics of walking with a university researcher in a go-along scenario.

The go-along gave further insights into the embodied responses to the social-spatial architecture of the neighbourhood by another participant, Aisha. A student from Afghanistan, Aisha had lived in the U.K. for three years and has a husband and daughter. Her hair was uncovered and she wore Western-style clothes of skinny jeans, converse trainers, a yellow scarf, and bright pink lipstick. Her eyebrows were carefully threaded. While walking she talked about her life. In Afghanistan she wanted to be a doctor, but now she is living in the U.K. with a child and husband there is not enough time for university study. While she has a large circle of friends in Afghanistan, her social life in the U.K. is limited to the wives of her
husband’s friends. Aisha took the researcher to the local park, but then expressed reservations: ‘I don’t like this place, I have to [come] because of my daughter, [who] says, “I like to play here”’. Asked to explain these comments further, Aisha replied:

**Aisha:** To be honest with you I just went yesterday in here and somebody plays [sport] behind me. Yes, it doesn’t look good for me... and I think it’s my last time I come here.

**Researcher:** What were they doing?

**Aisha:** I don’t know if they play basketball or it was cricket or something like that. They play, they’re shouting when they’re playing, it doesn’t look quiet for me, the place, that’s why I think it’s my last time to come here.

**Researcher:** Were they shouting at you?

**Aisha:** Not really, because I don’t listen to them and I don’t look at them. I was busy on the phone and maybe it’s possible if something say they shout for another people, because they don’t look like a good personality for me.

In comments that emphasise the need for cultural and faith-based sensitivity when planning a go-along, Aisha’s primary concern was judgement by other Muslims in the neighbourhood if observed in close proximity to men, especially if they were behaving indecorously. For as Aisha reflected later in the interview: ‘It doesn’t look clean for me’. As the bearers of izzit (honour) women’s encounters with na-murrham (unrelated men) are often more controlled in Muslim societies and communities (Mohammad, 2013, p. 1805). Afshar (1994, p. 130) explains how Muslim women tend to be positioned as ‘the transmitters of cultural values and identities’ and ‘the standard bearers of the group’s private and public dignity’. These insights are reinforced by the need to feel ‘comfortable’ in their physical surroundings as two other participants expanded upon:

**Researcher:** Why wouldn’t you feel comfortable in some places?

**Wardah:** Because it’s mixed... Islam is not mixed

**Researcher:** But the [larger] park is OK?

**Rasha:** For mixed yeah. Keep to yourself [and it] is OK. Everybody can do what they want.

Empirical observations of Muslim women’s spatial practices are helpful in exposing and interrogating a masculinist language of possession at play within extant discourse of walking practices and interviews. For the case study group in the research, as recent non-economic religious minority migrants, the power of place is neither possessed nor harnessed. As Casey observes, ‘places [can] possess us – in perception, as in memory … insinuating themselves into our lives’ (Casey, 2000, p. 199). Far from ‘harnessing the power of place’ (Anderson, 2004, p. 257), the experience of negotiating and navigating the body within a dominant secular liberal public realm may be perceived as socially and morally transgressive and, in a couple of instances, fear-inducing. The presence and effects of religion ‘beyond the officially sacred’ (Kong, 2001, p. 228) means that behaviour for some is both self-regulated and culturally conditioned in the everyday spaces of the street and park. Insights into boundaries in the neighbourhood that mark out spaces of exclusion or belonging are brought into clearer focus through accompanied walking, which includes daily negotiations informed by structural and personal perceptions of faith, culture and gender politics.
Traversing gender, culture and economy

Empirical and reflexive observations in this research resist an essentialising account of the nature and experience of walking in the city. The politicised material and epistemological landscape of the neighbourhood means special recognition should be given to the wide-ranging cultural lives and embodied experiences of the female Muslim migrants engaged in the study. This awareness is even more significant in an area where the population has been stigmatised according to certain symbolic markers, such as mosques and faith-based education (Dwyer & Parutis, 2013; Gale, 2004; Gale & Naylor, 2002). Notably, for some of the women walking publically alone was an everyday practice. Moreover, in these instances, walking for leisure was seemingly uncomplicated, as was engaging with public institutions and resources that feature in the local landscape, such as libraries and art centres, and other places of education and recreation.

The following interview with Nyla characterises an ambivalent relationship with walking in the city. Nyla is from Bangladesh and wore a simple red and yellow salwar kameez, red headscarf and tailored black jacket. She was confident, warm and quick to laugh throughout the go-along. Nyla told the researcher she had lived in the area over 15 years since getting married and having four children. She had a route planned. Nyla guided the researcher to a nearby playground which she visits twice a week, and spends time with other mothers from the area. Next to the playground is a community centre that is used for children’s clubs and weddings. Rubbish bags are piled high against the wall, but go unremarked (Figure 3). Nyla guided the researcher past the house she takes Koranic lessons in, and the primary school playground where her youngest child is enrolled. Passing by her home, Nyla invited the researcher in for refreshments and to meet her husband. The unanticipated detour has characteristics of the natural go-along with the participant directing the places, people and activities encountered.

Over tea and biscuits, Nyla and her husband discussed his attitude to her everyday recreational walking. They laughed about him relishing getting rid of her each day: ‘she likes her independence, I like my peace’ (Nyla’s husband, Balsall Heath). While he ‘doesn’t mind her going out walking,’ the husband contends that ‘a lot of Asian and Arab men don’t like their women walking to places.’ The statement positions the freedom for women to engage

Figure 3. Walking interview with Nyla in Balsall Heath. Source: Author.
in walking practices as progressive. It also reveals assumptions that the Asian and Arab women in the area are married, heterosexual and conform to a gender hierarchy (see Mohammad, 2013, p. 1805). These comments expose what is often a thin line between talking about other people’s cultural patriarchal narratives and reinforcing them.

Afterwards, Nyla guided the researcher to the local library. She visits occasionally with her children because it is ‘only five minutes walk away’ (field diary notes; for images of the go-along see Figures 3 and 4). Nyla’s daily mobility includes college, the park and local library, showing degrees of freedom that intersect the boundary often drawn between the domestic and public sphere for Muslim women. This greater porosity between public and private space is indicated by the go-along for educational, recreational and economic purposes. Nyla does not currently work, however attending classes in college enables the opportunity to become economically active in the future. Independent and enthusiastic engagements with walking for leisure, education, and potentially for work are further shown in the following case study, pluralising representations of spatial practices of Muslim women within an area stigmatised as particularly conservative.

The informal sociality of the go-along scenario lends itself to engaging with youthful, confident and street-wise subjects for whom walking and talking in their neighbourhood for recreation is already embraced as part of their everyday routine. Two articulate and ambitious 18-year-old British Pakistani twins were keen to guide the researcher on their usual route around Cannon Hill Park which they practice ‘two or three times a day’ (Madeeha and Maimoona, Balsall Heath). The teenagers were fashionably dressed in a style that combined conservative Islamic and contemporary urban elements. Madeeha and Maimoona wore prominent gold hoop earrings and bracelets, carefully drawn black eye liner and white i-pod headphones on display over the material of their black hijabs. Regular visitation to the local park was explained due to the perception of the space as suitable for Muslim females because its large-scale means close gender-mixing is avoidable, and its accessibility. Exercising by walking to the park, or to the gym, was part of their daily practices:

Madeeha: Yes, we go a lot to the park… We feel safe because we’ve just got a [women’s only] gym around here, and then after the gym we like to go for a walk again.
Maimoona: Or if we decide not to go gym, we just go for a walk in the evening with friends or something like that.

For some Muslim women concern for tarnishing their personal and familial honour can inhibit public behaviours (Afshar, 1994; Green & Singleton, 2007). Madeeha and Maimoona observe a Koranic interpretation of gender segregation, for instance in the women-only gym they attend. However, despite ‘the greater the potential for control’ (Mohammad, 2013, p. 1810) due to ‘all our family’ (Madeeha) living in the area including ‘my four uncles, my auntie, grandmother’ (Maimoona), they openly enjoy participating in a range of cultural activities including forms termed haram by some of their peers. During the go-along the researcher was introduced to an immersive exhibition at a local arts centre, and the participants talked animatedly about dancing at special occasions, such as weddings and the annual Birmingham Eid Mela festival, visiting funfairs, and watching Bollywood films.

Born in Birmingham, the broad-ranging mobilities of Madeeha and Maimoona, and their aspirations, point towards their contemporary, youthful, urban identities as second-generation migrants and the opportunities perceived to be available to them in the city. The twins want to be ‘business women’ and ‘make money’ (Madeeha and Maimoona, Balsall Heath). Asked what kind of business, Maimoona replied that she would ‘love to work here on reception’ with reference to the women only college. They expressed the desire to ‘live in Balsall Heath forever’. Their verbal and bodily practices show the limitations of patriarchal, reactionary narratives at work within and outside Pakistani communities that reinforce the idea of the Muslim women’s place as domestically bound, and also foreground a strong attachment with the neighbourhood scale. Thinking through movement with methods for Muslim women, reveals the contemporary overlapping relations of public-private and sacred-secular spaces in everyday lived practices that take place between gender, culture and economy (see Falah & Nagel, 2005, p. 9; also Dwyer, 2000; Dwyer & Shah, 2009; Yeoh & Khoo, 1998). These intersections offer critical insights into how diversity meets public life observed at the scale of the neighbourhood where tracing different kinds of mobility enables insights into the formation of new agencies and, potentially, new subjectivities.

**Mobile technologies and spatial interconnectedness**

Gillian Rose argues for common concerns of time-space geography and feminism where quotidian paths and constraints are linked to larger structures of society (1993, p. 18). While the walking interview has some limitations, as outlined earlier, the method can reveal the embodied pathways of those who are often marginalised, and highlight some of the cultural and social structures that may shape individual choices on those pathways. Undertaken in the physical spaces of the local neighbourhood, the walking methodology need not reinforce unidimensional, linear geometries. For, importantly, the usage and discussion of mobile technologies by participants during interviews reveals a constellation of connectivity with different people and places.

Thana discussed how her clothes and jewellery were bought from Yemen where prices were more affordable. Using the social media application Whatsapp, her mum and sister take photographs of dresses, abayas, scarfs and jewellery, and send them for approval, before purchasing and posting the products to Birmingham. Meanwhile Aaleyah explained during her walking interview how she uses Skype to participate in classes with her Imam who teaches from Saudi Arabia. All of the women in the study owned mobile phones using them to speak with friends and family in different cities and their countries of origin. The walking
interview can therefore make visible often undocumented activities and networks that shape migrant lives in the U.K., and elsewhere. While place-attachment was strong at the local level in the case study group, spatial ranges were cosmopolitan, with kinship networks in Cardiff and Leicester most prominent. And yet, practices in the case study group did not appear socially cosmopolitan. The researcher was the first speaker of English as a primary language that most of the participants had spoken with in an extended conversation (beyond short exchanges, for instance, buying items in a supermarket). Given this, the walking interviews provided an opportunity to practice their language skills utilising the researcher as a resource, with women who often relied on word of mouth for vital day-to-day information, such as availability of employment opportunities and housing.

Attending to plurality in the walking interview by consideration of how everyday practices introduce different kinds of mobility interpenetrates the physical, perceptual and technological. The local neighbourhood is a powerful signifier, incorporating dimensions of security and control, and yet to some extent this boundary is an imaginary. Notions of where the neighbourhood boundary lies were varied in the classroom-based exercise. Moreover, everyday routines that took place in the neighbourhood were regularly punctuated by inter-city and international phone calls and messages revealing spatial interconnectedness especially around consumption patterns, family and faith. Security/insecurity have been identified by Sidaway (2009) as shared master keys that shape experiences of walking in the urban landscape. In this study of women in South Birmingham, alternative shared keys are foregrounded: family and kinship ties; honour; instabilities in legal and economic status; and desire for further education. Folded into everyday urban life are socio-spatial practices that in some cases are shaped by a geography of fear and anxiety. However, taken together the accounts caution against overstating and eliding differences, and essentialising Muslim women as a category that in turn serves to delimit and reinforce exclusions and border-marking.

Conclusion: the socio-spatial and cultural politics of walking interviews

Over the last few years an increasing number of scholars have advanced research on mobilities and the geographies of diversity. But the ways in which everyday mobilities and diversity interpenetrate each other, most evidently in spaces of the city, remains under-investigated. Departing from universalising tendencies that make claims for the liberatory power of walking, this article has instead argued that appreciation of walking practices, including walking interviews, would benefit from greater engagement with the interstices of faith, ethnicity and gender. This involves reflection on the cultural and spatial politics of qualitative methods, and how they can be tailored towards pluralism, especially in fast-changing urban environments. It therefore contributes to wider debates on the relationship of power and mobility (Cresswell, 2010; Merriman, 2014; Middleton, 2010, 2011a, 2011b), but advances these by arguing for the first time the need to recognise contingent systems of belief along with intersectional markers of gender and ethnicity in the design and use of mobile methods.

By revisiting the walking interview with attention to social difference, the normative masculine, secular and Euro-centric body through which geographical accounts of walking has typically been imagined and performed is highlighted in its partiality. Pluralising the walking interview in relation to a case study group of Muslim women migrants gives new emphasis to the demands of the method, particularly when undertaken within socially mixed and disordered dynamics of urban public space. Nuancing the walking interview as method
by building trust over time, choice over classroom-based or public exercises, and flexibility in who accompanies and who leads the route, advances the need for walking to be recognised as a multi-layered and complex act, even amongst the able-bodied. Methodologically, the fall in participation from classroom to street, and finding that orientating the neighbourhood without a practical purpose could push the boundaries of comfort for our women, challenges valuations of walking as uniformly positive, or even as a fairly neutral activity (Solnit, 2001; also see Middleton, 2010). In fact, walking for leisure, often framed as an everyday practice, was highly unusual for most. By bringing together walking interviews with cultural difference improved understanding is therefore advanced on the realistic extent to which the go-along can de-centre authority and realign power-dynamics.

These insights add new social and moral layers of understanding to Ingold and Lee (2008) on ‘everyday’ and ‘unusual’ walks. The anthropologists elucidate three productive outcomes on walking with interviewees: walking as action establishes connectivity with the environment; the routes selected allows for a mobile and dynamic understanding of places; and walking with others creates a distinctive sociability. In this present research reciprocal co-learning in place-based knowledge production indicates the value of the method when it is socially and morally appropriate. Where concern over patriarchal community judgement is felt, in this instance around gender, faith and what constitutes ‘good’ behaviour, then normative representation of productive connectivity in the go-along scenario can more accurately lapse into experiences of embarrassment and discomfort. The moral ambiguity in a universalising approach to designing and practicing mobile methods in a context of social difference can be addressed by pluralising the process. To this end, this article stresses how qualitative methods ought to be tailored sensitively in order to offer insights into the lives of others, in particular those who experience marginalisation from mainstream society most acutely.

Over the past ten years academic and more practice-based enquiry into walking practices across Geography and Arts and Humanities have started to push forward the question of embodied experience (see Middleton, 2010, 2011a, 2011b; Wylie, 2005a, 2005b), which this research seeks to advance further. By bringing into dialogue the geographies of mobile methods, along with offering some expanded empirical observations on Muslim women and everyday urban spatial practices in the U.K., this article extends upon existing work by explicitly highlighting the need to move away from a universal body that speaks for other bodies, cultures and beliefs. In a new line of enquiry, it reveals (im)mobilities of a minority faith group in urban public space, which emphasises the always distinctive cultural and social relations in walking practices, and its use as a qualitative research method. Moving forward it proposes that by pluralising the walking interview we can more subtly engage the heterogeneous socio-spatial practices and embodied experiences of different and diverse people, thus revealing, in turn, finer grained insights into geographies of in/exclusion in urban public space.

Notes

1. Personal questions about age, class, marital status, country of origin, and rural/urban connections were avoided to protect the women; however, this information was introduced by some of the participants unsolicited.
2. An Arabic term meaning ‘forbidden’ under Islamic law.
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