

1987

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Hill, Michael R., "The Sociology and Experiences of Pedestrians" (1987). *Sociology Department, Faculty Publications*. 437.  
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Hill, Michael R. 1987. "The Sociology and Experiences of Pedestrians." *Man-Environment Systems* (Association for the Study of Man-Environment Relations) 37 (3/4): 71-78.

## THE SOCIOLOGY AND EXPERIENCES OF PEDESTRIANS

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### 0.0 ABSTRACT

This paper introduces the sociological and experiential studies included in this special issue of Man-Environment Systems. Sociological and experiential perspectives and their interconnections are briefly explored. A sociology of sociology perspective is adopted and argues that architects, planners, engineers and other managers of vested, status quo interests fail to systematically incorporate the burgeoning social scientific work on pedestrianism due to the inherent and unavoidable political character of walking.

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This paper introduces this special issue on the sociology and experiences of pedestrians. <sup>1</sup> The studies included here utilize a variety of methodological techniques and theoretical perspectives. Collectively, these reports provide a baseline for renewed study and analysis of pedestrian experiences and the macrosociological context of those experiences. The researchers contributing to this special issue generally adopted a more comprehensive perspective on pedestrianism as a human experience than is typical in many more specialized studies of pedestrians, especially those initiated for very focused and specific purposes in the academic and applied disciplines concerned with pedestrian safety, transportation research, architecture, and urban planning. The view adopted here (and which guided the selection and editing of the following papers) holds that walking is a fundamental human activity and should be understood comprehensively, in its own right. Focus on the sociological and experiential dimensions of pedestrianism calls two exceptionally powerful theoretical paradigms into play and invites their integration in robust analyses of the social and political location of embodied, human mobility.

Walking derives its centrality in human-environment relations from: (1) the pattern and properties of the physical environment, (2) our apparent propensity to frame ourselves in social institutions, and (3) the existential contingencies resulting directly from our human condition as embodied, homo sapiens selves. Walking lies at the core of everyday life, itself the focus of increasingly sophisticated analyses (e.g., Goffman, 1959, 1963, 1971, 1974, 1981; Lefebvre, 1971; de Certeau, 1984). The social scientific study of human, mobile being in a comprehensive social and environmental context is a goal toward which the papers in this issue contribute. Comprehensive study — and the many dimensions it entails — is no small undertaking. The task of identifying and articulating the elements in even very limited social, psychological, and physical systems incorporating pedestrian activity, such as traffic intersec-

tions, raises a host of theoretical complexities (Hill, 1978, 1979). Pedestrian experiences are multi-dimensional, structured as well as structuring, and are fundamentally rooted in the complexity of human experience in real world settings. The investigations in this special issue, together with many prior studies by other authors, provide clues to workable, reasonable procedures for drawing a more comprehensive, insightful picture of pedestrian life. One clear lesson to be learned from these collective efforts is that no single technique or individual theory holds the key to a full comprehension of walking, mobility, and embodiment as basic dimensions of human and social being. My purpose here is to underscore the contributions made possible by sociological and experiential study.

### 2.0 SOCIOLOGY

Sociology is, above all else, the study of on-going institutionalized patterns such as religion, class, law, racism, education, language, sexism, family and familism, science, able-bodyism, economy, ageism, medicine, polity, patriarchy, and so on. These institutions, defined as enduring, pervasive, and coercive regulatory social patterns, are very much distinct from organizational instantiations such as prisons, churches, ghettos, schools, stores, hospitals, legislatures, etc. My definitional point being that while organizational entities are embedded in and strongly influenced by socially-generated institutional structures, institutional patterns themselves are far more comprehensive, reaching everywhere into the nooks and crannies of everyday life. Sociology also studies the institutionalized distribution of power, resources, and social rewards.

Readers unfamiliar with sociological approaches will find succinct, well-written expositions of major concepts and positions in the basic reference work for sociology, the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. A brief, coherent, and extraordinarily perceptive introduction to sociology is found in Giddens (1987). Lay interpreters of sociology too often assume that the study of groups and organizations is the core and substance of sociology. These same popularizers too frequently employ the specialized term "institution" non-technically to refer to large, anonymous and often bureaucratic organizations. Unfortunately, this popular misconception of sociology's central focus leads to superficial appreciation (if not outright disregard) for sociology's deeper and extraordinarily powerful structural analyses of societies and their interconnected systems of structural patterns (i.e., institutions).

Sociological analysis of walking does not intrinsically produce studies of how people might walk from one place to another in groups (although this project is not inherently excluded from sociological consideration). Rather, the sociologist maps the location of human experience and social interaction within the network of institutions. Walking, conceived sociologically, is examined for its place in and among religion, politics, education, racism, family, patriarchy, medicine, language, and so on. Full-scale sociological analysis is thus a tall order if comprehensively approached, so much that it necessarily eludes the relatively brief papers in this special issue. Nonetheless, the authors in this issue, notably

Mary Jo Deegan and David Lonergan, run the first sociological laps with energy and insight more than sufficient to give future researchers a running start.

### 3.0 EXPERIENTIAL ANALYSIS

The common misconception that sociology studies groups while psychology studies individuals sets up an oppositional dichotomy under which many otherwise perceptive writers erroneously assume that studies of individual experience are inherently individualistic and psychological rather than sociological and institutional. Sociologically oriented, however, experiential research pursues a situated analysis of human experience and social interactions rooted in our perspectives as embodied selves who act, decide, and make sense of our social and environmental encounters in an institutionally ordered world. Here, experiential study is not in opposition to institutional analyses as some commentators suppose. Rather, it informs these analyses and explores the day-to-day, consequential character of life in an institutionalized society such as ours. And, when existentially framed, experiential research also locates the choice points where human action alters the very social structures that pattern it.

Thus, several authors in this special issue make contributions to the sociology of walking while focusing on the experiences of individuals. Miriam Helen Hill explores the specific experiences of ten blind pedestrians in a world institutionally ordered by sighted people. George Psathas details the ethnomethodology of wayfinding in a modern urban society where directions are received in predictable, institutionalized patterns. Mark Blades and Christopher Spencer review several institutionalized practices in the scientific community that routinely underestimate the wayfinding abilities of young pedestrians. They demonstrate that institutionalizing environmentally-situated social interactions between children and adults leads to improved wayfinding by children. Finally, in my own paper on wayfinding, I explore the institutionalized ritual of "asking for directions" and discover, happily, that most people are cooperative and capable of helping a "lost" pedestrian find his way.

Rigorous experiential study is largely unfamiliar to American researchers, most of whom have been indoctrinated in the scientific rhetoric of "causal relations" and so-called "objective methods". The foundational arguments for experiential studies cannot be presented in the space available here. Interested readers unfamiliar with this perspective are guided to the following works: Reinharz (1984) is, in my view, the best American introduction to experiential research. More widely conceived, the philosophical foundations of scientific sociological experiential research rest in the phenomenological studies of Edmund Husserl (1970) and Alfred Schutz (1970, 1971a, 1971b) and the symbolic interactionist social psychology of George Herbert Mead (1934). Goffman (1971), Wolff (1973), Ryave and Schenkein (1974), Seamon (1979), and Wagner (1981) report empirically-based, experientially insightful (although sometimes behaviorally framed) studies of walking. The compatibility between experiential and sociological approaches is exemplified in Psathas (1973) and the still popular interpretation of Schutz by Berger and Luckmann (1966). T.R. Young and John Walsh (1984), Mary Jo Deegan (forthcoming), and the papers in Deegan and Hill (1987) add a constructive critical element long missing from experiential studies. Norberg-Schultz

(1971) demonstrates the power of existential phenomenology applied to architecture.

There is much insight to gain from conducting sociologically-grounded experiential studies of walking. These researches reveal the gross oversimplification and conceptual gerrymandering that so-called objective, causally-framed analyses misrepresent as "scientific". Sociologically-informed experiential research resolves the artificial schism between micro and macro studies that axiomatized positivism (Hill, 1981) promised to solve but never bridged. Experiential analyses are inherently emancipatory because the source of insight lies not in the researcher as expert, but in the experiences of ordinary people who live in and share the world with researchers.

Experiential research is not framed to advance the purposes of powerful vested interests (Reinharz, 1984). Rather, it reveals and reflexively focuses the interests and concerns of everyday people. This inherently grassroots political result makes it understandable why agencies representing established, institutionalized vested interests routinely derogate sociologically-grounded experiential studies. More perplexing is the failure of environmental managers to incorporate the majority of specialized research sponsored by vested interest groups. Exploration of this issue brings us to the sociology of sociology.

### 4.0 WALKING: A SOCIOLOGY OF SOCIOLOGY

Modern analysis of scientific work reflexively turns the tools of sociology back on sociology and other scientific endeavors (Kuhn, 1970; Gouldner, 1970; O'Neil, 1972; Hill, 1984a). Applied in this instance, the institutional structure and location of social scientific research on pedestrians thus becomes a focus of investigation. Much research on walking has been sponsored by institutionally powerful vested interests, yet even this specialized research is neither readily nor routinely incorporated by architectural urban planning, or transportation engineering. I argue here that even specialized, vested-interest research on pedestrians is frequently too problematic politically to be recognized and incorporated by mainstream environmental managers.

Research on pedestrians is highly balkanized. The full-scale study and analysis of socially and environmentally-situated walking, as the basal component of human mobility, has no specific disciplinary or academic home. Research on walking during the past fifteen years has been notably partisan (often skewed to architectonic, planning, engineering, and commercial interests), overly specialized (on automobile-pedestrian collisions, for example), and exploitative (wherein researchers use pedestrians to explore theoretical concerns unrelated to pedestrian experience *per se*, a perspective naively present in some of my own prior work). Generally speaking, these studies are performed not to explore and emancipate pedestrian experiences, but to shape, control, and otherwise influence the pedestrian environment in ways approved by institutionally powerful interest groups (such as highway contractors, automobile manufacturers, real estate developers, and regulatory government agencies). These specialized and interest-biased studies of pedestrian behavior are still not useless. They generate scientifically interesting findings and hypotheses, but - simultaneously - they lead us away from comprehensively exploring socially-situated,

embodied, human mobility in its own right. Despite all these studies of pedestrians, few researchers have studied walking as a basic, fundamental, and socially significant activity and experience. For recent exceptions, see de Certeau's (1984: 91-110) analysis of walking in the city, and Suzuki, Isozaki, Takahashi, and Yamaguchi (1982), who provide an innovative, alternative model which sorely needs translation from Japanese into English.

Specialized research on pedestrians increased by leaps and bounds during the past fifteen years. Several bibliographies and literature surveys attest to the vigor and diligence of researchers in a variety of disciplines (Akoi, 1977-78; Elkington, McGlynn, and Roberts, 1976; Flynn, 1977; Fruin, 1971; Garbrecht, 1971, 1981; Hill, 1976, 1982, 1984b; Pushkarev and Zupan, 1975; Rapoport, 1977). Nonetheless, even this specialized work is not incorporated and synthesized by the institutionalized custodians of pedestrian space: mainstream architects, engineers, and urban planners. For example, in 1986, MIT Press issued a new paperback edition of Stanford Anderson's anthology, On Streets. In the original 1978 edition, a section of the bibliography (p. 394) was devoted to "Pedestrianization and Auto-Restricted Zones". Only twenty references - with an average publication date of 1968 - were listed. More disconcerting, however, is the 1986 "Supplementary Bibliography for the Paperback Edition" which adds only two references, one from 1979 and one from 1981, to the section on "Pedestrianization and Auto-Restricted Zones" (p. 400). Many similar examples of neglect authored by architects, engineers, and development-oriented planners line the shelves of design and architecture libraries (for a critical review of one such book, see Hill, 1986). It is surprising and dismaying to see the work of so many talented social scientists go unread and unconsidered by those who have so much influence over the official conceptualization, development, and redevelopment of pedestrian environments.

Many insightful, theoretically interesting bits and pieces lodged here and there in the recent specialized work on pedestrians remain unsynthesized and unincorporated by the design disciplines. This situation poses two sociology of sociology questions: Given the activity and interest in pedestrians by designers (witness the success of the annual Boulder conferences): (1) Why does research on pedestrians remain specialized and interest-bound rather than general and basic? and (2) Why is the specialized research not systematically incorporated into the design disciplines? Obvious answers point to the balkanization of universities, corporations, research institutes, and funding agencies. Each unit has its own interests and agendas. Research conducted and funded by special interest groups rarely asks or tolerates global and/or basic questions. Explorations which cannot be maintained within the distorting and controlling confines of statistical data analyses are debunked and discarded. Yet, many "issues" considered important in our society overcome (at least partially) the seemingly inexorable tendency to specialization and quantitative scientism. Poverty, sexism, racism, bio-hazards, militarism, crises in education, and many other social problems that could - and sometimes do - get chewed up and deposited in specialized disciplinary reports nonetheless surface with surprising regularity as the subjects of reasoned, holistic, comprehensive syntheses of great intelligence and insight. The fact that pedestrian issues have yet to engender periodic multi-disciplinary syntheses suggests that the specialization and balkanization of

pedestrian-oriented researches are not per se fundamentally problematic.

What plausible thesis explains why the vast majority of the expensive, oversized design books on pedestrian districts and traffic-free zones fail to take pedestrians and specialized pedestrian-oriented research seriously? Recent social scientific work on pedestrians is easily and publicly available, and much of it was conscientiously written with the design community in mind. Bibliographic searches of the most rudimentary nature yield reams of interesting, often insightful and sensitive investigations, even if specialized rather than general in scope. It cannot be that architects, engineers and planners are too inept to use libraries and prepare literature reviews - they are far too bright, creative, and resourceful. Some other process is at work.

#### 4.1 Bias by Design

Architects, engineers, and planners place primary emphasis not on the social life and experience of pedestrians, but on the physical structure, components, and coherence of urban space. The following representative book titles underscore this point: The Geometry of the Environment; On Streets; Design and Detail of the Space Between Buildings; Cities and Space; Urban Space for Pedestrians; Walking Space for Urban Centers; Urban Space and Structures; Defensible Space; Street and Highway Design Handbook. There are exceptions, to be sure, which begin to take some limited cognizance of experiential and human dimensions, such as Appleyard's Livable Streets and Rudofsky's Streets for People. The anthropologist-designer Amos Rapoport (1977) wrote the one major exception, Human Aspects of Urban Form: Towards a Man-Environment Approach to Urban Form and Design, to-date the only thorough-going, theory-based analysis of human and cultural factors in designed pedestrian environments. Why so much attention to pure geometry and structure, on the one hand, and so little direct focus on the human, social, and experiential aspects of urban place, on the other?

Fundamental points are missed when designers talk about "accommodating" pedestrians or refer to basic human facilities such as toilets, drinking water, weather shelters, and benches as "amenities" rather than "necessities". Institutional memories have grown intolerably short when engineers characterize children who chase errant playground balls into busy streets as causing "safety hazards" rather than correctly seeing these youngsters as victims of a recent, violent, and aggressively mechanized environment (Hill, 1980). Fundamental human values appear scrambled when applications for traffic signals, crosswalk markings, and "Yield To Pedestrians" signs are routinely denied by city planners because "nobody's been killed yet". Similarly, there is something wrenching when visually handsome urban design books omit fundamental consideration of the social and embodied lives for whom vest-pocket parks, pedestrian districts, and the like are ostensibly conceived. Identifying pedestrians and their experiences front and center as the raison d'être for urban design, not something to be merely "accommodated," "predicted," or "measured," necessitates confronting the fundamentally political nature of walking and human being.

## 4.2 The Political Foundation of Walking

Walking and pedestrianism are deeply political patterns in our society. Phenomenological analyses underscore the reality that pedestrian mobility is an essential human claim (Husserl, 1970; Norberg-Schultz, 1971). Freedom to march unimpeded through the streets, to assemble unmolested in public squares are core elements of a democratic society. Free passage is a hallmark of urban civilization. At the same time, public streets are the enduring locale of civil resistance, national revolution, and problematically totalitarian convulsions. The street is a place of potential ferment, rumor, celebration, civility, and revolt. Embodied mobility unlocks these political potentials.

The unpredictable political dimensions of street life are problematic for the status quo. When free citizens assemble in public squares to exercise their democratic birthrights, there are no guarantees as to the outcome. The potential for dramatic change hangs in the air. Giddens (1987) instructively debunks the myths that social change is predictable and always lumbers slowly to its destination. Massive, emancipatory change can be swift and the street is fundamentally the locale for action when citizens in protest and revolt unite to assert their emancipatory potential. In this important sense, streets can be extraordinary places. To use Victor Turner's (1969) phrase, they are "betwixt and between" the status quo of established rule and the unanticipated patterns of the future. The outcome of citizen unity in the street may take any number of unpredictable and unforeseen paths, including anarchy, revolution, reform, retrenchment, or reaction. Mass street meetings may be orderly, reverential, celebratory, violent, lethal. The status quo is always up for grabs when a society's citizens take literally to the streets.

## 4.3 Pedestrians and Vested Interests

Those who benefit from status quo arrangements, the wealthy, the privileged, are quick to call for measures to control the streets. The police officer who may give helpful directions to a lost pedestrian stands definitely ready to suppress any "disturbance of the peace" that threatens the status quo. Well-positioned city fathers require "permits" before allowing parades, demonstrations, rockfests, and picket lines. Solicitations are licensed and policed. Unruly-looking street people get an official bum's rush. Unauthorized barricades are efficiently neutralized and cleared. Impromptu blockages of sidewalks occasioned by soapbox orators and street theater are "nuisances" and "dangers to public safety", drawing quick notice from uniformed controllers of the public pathways.

It is not surprising that employees of economically and politically privileged elites work generally to preserve institutionally-patterned advantages (Mills, 1956, 1959, 1960; Domhoff, 1983; A. Lee, 1986). Architects, designers, planners, engineers (professionals who work in the employ of the economic elite and in the halls of government administered by the political elite) support the interests of the status quo. Ideologically, the inherently conservative interests of these elites are invariably clothed in a rhetoric of growth, progress, science, innovation, and for architects especially - the avant garde.

For example, the mathematical models offered by planners to help design the future invariably rest on measures of past and present (i.e., status quo) social patterns.

This conservative and controlling political dimension of mathematical modelling is routinely masked by the self-serving - and now unconvincing - rhetoric that "science" is value-neutral and apolitical. The main task of planners is control through the utilization and enforcement of environmental legislation that differentially distributes favors and advantages to large property owners, developers, and monied commercial interests.

It is not surprising that the interests of the common pedestrian receive scant attention given a social milieu that works to the advantage of powerful, institutionalized interests. Given the emancipatory potential of pedestrian mobilization and mass political action in the streets, it would be naive not to expect the effective control of pedestrian space and pedestrian activity through legislation, planning decisions, and architectural design. Suburban shopping malls are a prime example of such control.

## 4.4 Mallspace: Anti-Democratic Walkways

Nowhere is the institutional combination of law, planning, commerce, and architecture to control pedestrian space and pedestrian activity better evidenced than in suburban shopping malls. Touted as pedestrian zones, such malls are fundamentally anti-pedestrian. Planners participate in zoning and site selection of malls in locations that require automotive transit to reach in the first place. Legislatures draw up the enabling statutes and architects design enclosed, privately-owned spaces to which the public is admitted during specified hours under specified rules.

Walkways in enclosed malls are tightly controlled spaces. They are not public places. Political activities (such as petition drives) are permitted only at the arbitrary discretion of privately-owned, commercial management firms. Most walkways in malls are patrolled by armed, private security guards, not city police officers. Mallspace is exceptionally open to surveillance - no recessed doorways or alleys here - so much so that Foucault's (1979) images of an oppressive, panopticon carceral society come readily to mind. Opening and closing times are extraordinarily effective curfews, privately determined and strictly enforced. No street vendors wander here without a legally binding contract and fees paid in advance to the mall owner - a deal to make any street-level "protection" racketeer green with envy. Street people and too boisterous teenagers are quickly and efficiently escorted off the premises of malls - no loitering allowed unless respectably attired in middle-class clothing. The deeply political meaning of pedestrianism is rudely subverted by designers who point proudly to these malls as exemplary models of "pedestrian space".

The extraordinarily controlling and coercive dimensions of mallspace are ideologically ameliorated by various techniques. These include "community events" selected and sponsored by mall owners. Typical examples are antique shows, craft fairs, holiday shows, "sidewalk" sales, and information booths for local organizations. Rarely, however, do these events represent a cross-section of the community. More often than not these "events" are thinly disguised merchandising promotions rather than spontaneous expressions of community spirit.

Many malls provide a "community room" not for "town hall meetings" but for use by management-approved

organizations. Meetings of stamp collecting clubs, garden clubs, and craft clubs are typical. The apparent availability of meeting spaces for small, local, apolitical voluntary organizations creates an erroneous image of malls as intrinsically democratic spaces, integral links in the pluralist American portrait, the crossroads of the community.

Malls, however, are the antithesis of democratic space. They are privately-owned and privately-operated for profit. Their operators are not publicly accountable. There is no meaningful or binding mechanism for citizen input into the design or operation of mallspace. As citizens, we cannot vote to extend or rescind the hours of curfew, for example. Yet, democratic-sounding rhetoric is often used to describe malls as "community centers" and the like. Insofar as this rhetoric is also used in reference to public streets, it deserves special consideration and cautionary analysis. Rights of street use and access are under constant threat from privatization, regulation, and technological encroachment. Sad to say, too many planners stand all too ready to provide legitimating rhetoric to justify privatization in the "public" interest (see, for example, D. Lee, 1987; Ryan, 1987).

#### 4.5 Politics and Democratic Streets

Democracy is a potent social symbol in American society. To effectively label something "democratic" simultaneously inspires patriotism, raises goosebumps, and strikes up the band! For this reason, we must look very carefully when this powerful political imagery is used to describe institutionally-structured pedestrian space. Democratic rhetoric can be used effectively to disguise the anti-democratic nature of mallspace. Designation of public streets as "democratic" thus requires more than passing analysis.

Mark Francis (1987), in a well-intentioned paper, offers this definition of "democratic" street:

A democratic street is one that reflects the history as well as the social and economic diversity of the larger neighborhood and city. Friendly to pedestrians and livable for residents, it also reflects social justice, economic health, and ecological vitality. The democratic street does not exclude the automobilist but provides space for vehicles by striking a more equitable balance with other street users, namely, pedestrians and bicyclists. Like the livable street, it stresses safety and comfort. Yet the democratic street also emphasizes the access and needs of many different kinds of people, provides opportunities for discovery and challenge, and actively encourages user manipulation, appropriation, and transformation. (p. 28).

With a good public relations program, however, most mallspace operators could easily claim - with some justification - to meet this definition of democratic streets. No doubt the hypothetical mallspace public relations package would include at least the following: suggestion boxes, citizen advisory boards, discovery playgrounds, local history murals painted by school children, flowers and plants tended by local garden clubs, ethnic food festivals, pet parades, and holiday storefront decorating contests. Indeed, mallspace operators are well-placed to largely fulfill Francis' definition of a democratic street precisely because of the anti-democratic control they exercise for orchestrating, approving, and financing its

component parts.

Getting at the essence of "democracy" is no small matter, for the concept is inherently radical and revolutionary. Democracy is fundamentally opposed to elite control (Dewey, 1916). At any instant in a democracy, the majority may shift its institutional gears in 180-degree turns. Francis' definition of the democratic street fruitfully generates reflection on many aspects of street life, but it lacks specific emphasis on the essential political dimensions of democracy: self-determination, rights of free passage, and freedom of assembly. Democratic streets do not result from architectonic design or public relations manipulation, they come alive through community organizing and grassroots political action.

Emancipatory pedestrian political action takes back the streets. It resists the privatization and regulation of pedestrian access. It reclaims the human scale and the social community. It claims rights of passage and assembly freed from legislative restraints, violent muggers, and automotive assault. It need not "strike a more equitable balance" with automobile users, it bans these violent, environmentally destructive machines from urban space. Democracy is not something to be negotiated, measured, or architecturally managed, it is a bundle of fundamental political rights to be used in streets, in assemblies, in polling places.

The radical potential of emancipatory democratic action is an ever present threat to the *status quo* and, for this reason, it can never be wholly embraced by architects, planners, and engineers who work for the elite. It is not surprising then that analyses exploring, emphasizing, and celebrating the emancipatory potential of the street are not forthcoming from white-collar professionals heavily invested in maintaining hierarchical social structures. Nor is it surprising that little of the specialized research of the social/behavioral sciences on pedestrians makes its way to books written by designers. Even specialized, interest-bound studies of pedestrians reveal too much. They shift the focus too far from elite interests to everyday interests rooted in the most fundamental of human spatial acts: walking. Synthesis and integration of everyday interests are too potent, too democratic. These studies are absent from the glossy pedestrian design books because they are inherently antithetical to the institutional interests served by the engineering, design, and planning professions.

The elite designers of elite-controlled space have a vested interest in largely ignoring the experiential and social dimensions of walking and pedestrianism except for rhetorical purposes. The political import of a truly democratic street takes control of the street away from elites, away from planners, engineers and architects. A democratic street is self-determined, self-governed, self-renewing. To walk is a political act. To walk asserts a right to mobility and passage. To walk with one's neighbors asserts a right to petition, to demonstrate, to assemble, debate, and vote. Whatever else may be claimed for a democratic street (cf., Francis, 1987; Clay, 1987), these rights are fundamental and inviolate.

#### 5.0 POLITICS, SOCIOLOGY, EXPERIENCE, AND WALKING

As noted above, the papers in the special issue contribute to sociological and experiential analysis of walking,

but they also explore the political aspects of walking. Mary Jo Deegan analyzes the political consequences of male control of urban streets. Males, through a variety of interconnected social practices, coercively constrict the pedestrian world available to women. Perceptively, Deegan argues that agoraphobia is not irrational. Agoraphobics understand all too well that streets are especially dangerous places for women. The next step is to consider agoraphobia as an instance of political oppression. By categorizing agoraphobics as seriously neurotic, rather than politically oppressed, a deeply political and fundamental human claim is swept under the rug by medicalizing it. When women are deprived of pedestrian mobility, they are simultaneously robbed of their basic democratic rights.

David Lonergan documents the mirror image, showing how male competition for status and prestige lead to the mechanization and degradation of previously pedestrian environments. Many residents in Lonergan's Sardinian village are pedestrians without democratic rights of self-determination, disenfranchised walkers assaulted and molested by drivers of automobiles.

Miriam Helen Hill documents the pedestrian mobility concerns of blind pedestrians and in so doing helps us better see the environment as a socially constructed reality. The urban world is constructed, ordered, and maintained to benefit the interests of sighted persons. This is a political issue. Without a social and physical environment responsive to their mobility needs, blind persons' fundamental rights are denied.

Experientially, wayfinding is the ultimate component of pedestrian mobility. It opens the environment, transforming it to become a field of action, exploration, and decision. George Psathas, Mark Blades, Christopher Spencer, and I explore wayfinding in different but complementary ways. All three studies have political implications. Indeed, the right of assembly is predicated on wayfinding ability. Blades and Spencer show how institutionalized predilections for indirect tests in psychology have routinely underestimated the wayfinding capabilities of children. Further, they show that even minimal adult sponsorship and training of youngsters greatly improves and thus empowers the wayfinding abilities of our younger citizens. Finally, my own paper challenges the specialized wayfinding studies of the type initiated by professionals holding vested interests in promoting engineering and architectonic interventions in the pedestrian world. My data corroborate Psathas' phenomenological investigation in showing that expensive, designer-implemented wayfinding aids are unnecessary when cooperative people are willing to help lost pedestrians find their way.

I believe our goal as social researchers interested in pedestrianism must be to help pedestrians tell their own stories, identify their own interests, and move politically to take back the streets from institutionally powerful vested interests. Some of the traditional tools of the social/behavioral sciences will be useful in this effort, but we must be wary when these techniques are used to measure, model, and control rather than emancipate. Critical, sociologically-grounded experiential studies are needed now in great number to give voice to pedestrians everywhere, to explore and explicate a comprehensive picture of institutionally structured pedestrian experiences, and to show ourselves that we can join with our fellow embodied walkers in democratic political action in the street.

## 6.0 NOTE

1. This is the second special issue of Man-Environment Systems to focus on pedestrians. The first was a combined issue (Numbers 1 & 2) in Volume 11, published in 1981. Preparation of the present issue was assisted by the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Albion College, and by Space Dynamics, Lincoln, Nebraska. Both furnished clerical support and personal computer facilities for final manuscript preparation.

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