

Commuting & Wellbeing: Academic Symposium
Friday 23rd June 2017 @ UWE Bristol
Programme

Time	Title
09:15-09:30	Arrival & Coffee
09:30–09:45	Introductions Kiron Chatterjee & Ben Clark
Session 1: Developing a New Research Field	
9:45-10:10	The wellbeing agenda: Opportunities for transport policy Louise Reardon (University of Leeds)
10:10-10:35	How good is our commute? An overview of empirical findings, methodological issues and policy implications Dick Ettema (Utrecht University, The Netherlands)
10:35-10:55	Discussion
10:55-11:10	Coffee break
Session 2: The Role of Spatial Context / Modal Differences in Travel Satisfaction and Wellbeing	
11:10-11:35	Exploring the role of access to public transport in commute choices and wellbeing in London Samuel Chng (University of Exeter)
11:35-12:00	Analysing the link between travel behaviour, residential location choice and well-being: A focus on travel satisfaction of leisure trips Jonas De Vos (Ghent University, Belgium)
12:00-12:20	Discussion
12:20-13:20	Lunch
Session 3: Developing Explanations / Longer Term Relationships	
13:20-13:45	Commute time quality: Exploring the role of mode and other factors using the UC Davis Campus Travel Survey Susan Handy (University of California, Davis)
13:45-14:10	Longitudinal relationships between commuting & personal wellbeing Kiron Chatterjee, Ben Clark, Adrian Davis, Adam Martin (UWE/University of Leeds)
14:10-14:30	Discussion
14:30-14:45	Coffee break
Session 4: Discussion and Consensus Statement Development	
14:45-15:30	General discussion (key contributions, research gaps)
15:30-16:00	Break-out groups on specific themes
16:00-16:30	Feedback, wrap up and next steps: Kiron Chatterjee & Ben Clark

Abstracts

The wellbeing agenda: Opportunities for transport policy

Louise Reardon, Institute for Transport Studies, University of Leeds

The past decade has seen a dramatic increase in governmental interest in the idea of wellbeing. At the international level, there are initiatives in place within the EU, OECD and UN, and at the national level within states as diverse and geographically spread as Australia, Bhutan, and the UK. This presentation will draw on a number of previous and existing research projects to provide an overview of the wellbeing and public policy landscape; focusing in particular on transport policy and the commute. First it will highlight the different ways in which wellbeing can be understood and identify the key relationships between transport and wellbeing, and where the commute fits within this. The presentation will then outline the different ways in which wellbeing research, such as that on the commute, can be used within the policy process. Here the presentation will draw on examples from recent developments within the UK context. The presentation will then draw on theories of policy change to think more broadly about where research on commuting and wellbeing could have traction in the policy arena; highlighting the potential barriers and opportunities for such an agenda.

How good is our commute? An overview of empirical findings, methodological issues and policy implications

Dick Ettema (Utrecht University, The Netherlands)

Commuting is something many of us do on a daily basis and for considerable time. Although Kahneman et al. (1997) found that the commute was among the activities people least enjoy, it may have a variety of implications on people's well-being. Not only may the commute lead to stress and fatigue, it may also lead to enjoying engagement in physical activity, finding time to do things and reflect or relax. Over the past decade knowledge has been accumulated of how the effects of commuting on well-being depend on characteristics of the commute and the traveller. This presentation will give an overview of research in this area, partly based on the presenter's own work, and partly based on the evolving literature in this area.

Topics covered will include differences between travel modes in terms of well-being effects, and the impact of travel circumstances, built environment, activities during travel and the impact of ICTs on the well-being effects of commuting. In addition, the presentation will discuss how well-being effects may be conceptualized and measured. The presentation will discuss travel satisfaction as well as emotional well-being, in terms of assumptions made regarding timescales and measurement techniques. Finally, the presentation will discuss policy implications of the research on well-being effects of travel over the past decades.

Exploring the role of access to public transport in commute choices and wellbeing in London

Samuel Chng (University of Exeter)

The way we commute affects our physical and psychological wellbeing, but the transport choices we have are afforded by our access to them. Commuters in cities often have more options, thus presenting an opportunity to investigate how access to public transport influences the relationships between commuting and wellbeing. We focused on London and found that having good public transport accessibility itself was not predictive of public transport commutes, though car commuting was 50% lower amongst those with better, compared to poorer, public transport accessibility. We investigated two aspects of wellbeing and found that life satisfaction was more closely related to the type of public transport used while mental distress was more closely related to public transport accessibility. Generally, commuters living in areas with better public transport accessibility reported lower mental distress. However, when looking specifically at public transport commuters, we also observed that they reported lower life satisfaction though its extent differed between specific

modes (i.e., bus, train or underground). Commuters who walked to work also reported higher life satisfaction, though the probability of cycling or walking to work decreased as public transport accessibility improved. Our findings suggest that the relationships between public transport accessibility, commute and wellbeing are complex and need to be interpreted with consideration of other contextual factors such as feasibility and area deprivation.

Analysing the link between travel behaviour, residential location choice and well-being: A focus on travel satisfaction of leisure trips

Jonas De Vos (Ghent University, Belgium)

Recently, studies have started analysing how people perceive their travel and how satisfied they are with it. This travel satisfaction – i.e., the mood during trips and the evaluation of these trips – can be affected by trip characteristics, such as travel mode choice and trip duration. In this study – analysing leisure trips of 1720 respondents living in the city of Ghent (Belgium) – we do not only look at the effect of mode choice on travel satisfaction, but also on the effect of travel-related attitudes and the residential location on travel satisfaction, both singly and each controlling for the other. The latter makes it possible to analyse whether people who live in their preferred neighbourhood based on travel preferences (e.g., car lovers living in suburban-type of neighbourhoods) are more satisfied than people who do not. Furthermore, we also investigate an alternative residential self-selection hypothesis in which people self-select themselves in neighbourhoods enabling them to have satisfying trips. Finally, we also look at possible outcomes of travel satisfaction. It is possible that satisfying trips with a certain mode increase the chance of choosing that mode for future trips of the same kind, whether or not this is indirect through changes in attitudes. Repetitive positively or negatively perceived trips might also affect longer-term well-being, such as life satisfaction, both directly and indirectly through the performance of - and satisfaction with - activities at the destination of the trip.

Commute time quality: Exploring the role of mode and other factors using the UC Davis Campus Travel Survey

Susan Handy (University of California, Davis)

Workers worldwide spend a significant share of their time each week getting to and from work. With a finite number of hours in a day, workers are clearly affected by their amount of commute time, but their well-being is also likely to depend on their quality of commute time. Building on previous work on the positive utility of commuting time (e.g. Redmond and Mokhtarian 2001) and recent work on subjective well-being in the transportation field (e.g. Ettema, et al. 2010), we use data from an annual survey of students and employees at the University of California, Davis, to examine factors associated with three commute characteristics that have direct ties to well-being: perceptions that commute time is wasted time, perceptions that the commute is stressful, and liking of travel modes. Ordered logit and other appropriate models are estimated to test the effect of mode while controlling for demographic, geographic, and attitudinal factors. Preliminary results show that bicycle commuters report the most positive scores on all three measures. Among undergraduate students, those taking the bus to campus are far more stressed than those bicycling to campus. Among those living outside of Davis, and thus beyond bicycling distance to campus, drivers report more negative commutes than train riders and carpoolers. These results suggest a well-being impetus for the university to invest in services that reduce driving to campus, adding to the existing financial and environmental rationales for such programs. This study further underscores the increasingly recognized importance of collecting data on qualitative aspects of travel.

Longitudinal relationships between commuting & personal wellbeing

Kiron Chatterjee, Ben Clark, Adrian Davis, Adam Martin (UWE/University of Leeds)

In the final presentation, we summarise findings from the ESRC funded 'commuting and wellbeing' project, which provided the motivation for this symposium. The project has utilised new data from the UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS) – a valuable panel survey which is tracking the lives of members of 40,000 households across the UK. We have undertaken a series of analyses of a six wave panel data set (2009/10 to 2014/14, n~27,000) drawn from the UKHLS. First we explain the extent to which sample members changed their commuting situation (journey, mode, duration) over the survey period. For example, we find that around 20% of the sample changed the origin or destination (OD) of the commute journey from one wave to the next, and a similar proportion changed commute mode from one wave to the next. Panel models are then used to identify whether such changes in commuting situation (OD, mode, duration) lead to changes in different measures of personal wellbeing over time. We consider the effects of commuting changes on life satisfaction, levels of stress, satisfaction with leisure time availability, job satisfaction and self-reported health. The models also enabled us to examine the long run effects of commuting on personal wellbeing compared to the short run effects. The presentation concludes by considering the advantages of panel data sets for analysing relationships between commuting and personal wellbeing.

Consensus statement discussion

An outcome of the symposium is the development of a 'Consensus Statement' which reflects and reports on the discussions undertaken over the course of the symposium.

Accordingly, the afternoon discussion will be structured to address the following themes.

1. What theories and concepts do we agree are most useful to research on travel behaviour, commuting and wellbeing?
2. What consensus do we have regarding the evidence on commuting and wellbeing and what is contested?
3. What are the implications of the current evidence base for policy and how do we as a research community achieve impact?
4. What limitations are there in the theory, data and methods used to analyse commuting and wellbeing?
5. What are the priorities for research (setting out an agenda, framed by research questions, and identifying theoretical, data and methodological requirements)?

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