Mobile Literacies – Walking and Talking in Blackburn and Darwen

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Abstract

**Mobile Literacies – Walking and Talking in Blackburn and Darwen**

*A study of the literacies used by two groups participating in Health Walks run by Blackburn with Darwen Council*

In this study, I examine the literacy practices that took place during participation in group led walks organised by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council as part of their Health Walks provision. My focus was on how participation in Health Walks effects changes in individuals.

The study found its focus in anthropological participant observation with two groups of walkers. Data took the form of observational field notes, recordings of talk generated whilst walking and written accounts of walks completed by some participants. My analysis of the data included the arts based processes of creating trail maps and transcribing recorded talk onto Ordnance Survey maps. I used these processes as a heuristic to help draw out the properties of the literacies encountered and their relationship to place.

The study is rooted in an understanding of literacy as an everyday activity that permeates people’s lives and through which power relationships are expressed and sustained. I foreground oral storytelling practices and term these practices *mobile literacies.* I examined how *mobile literacies* emerge in mobility and are shaped by the landscapes through which the walkers move. I aimed to demonstrate that participation in *mobile literacies* is a significant transformational aspect of the experience of participating in Health Walks.

The study introduces the concept of *mobile literacies* as a discrete literacy practice. I characterise Mobile Literacies as emplaced, embodied collective storytelling practices that are generated by affectual response to moving through landscape. I describe how the practice offers opportunities to interrogate, extend and re – calibrate identities, express resistance and participate in collaborative acts of generation and transformation.

The study offers policy makers and practitioners an alternative lens by which to view how walkers experience their involvement in Health Walks and new tools by which to measure impact and design further initiatives. In terms of education it offers a glimpse of the affordances of walking and the local environment in developing strategies by which to involve learners in meaningful and creative language and literacy learning.

Table of contents

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Chapter 1 - Introduction and background |  | 10 |
| 1.1 Introduction |  | 10 |
| 1.2 Research focus and research questions |  | 11 |
| 1.3Adult literacy – Policy and personal experience |  | 12 |
| 1.4 Walking for Health – Policy and personal experience |  | 16 |
| 1.5 Literacy, language and walking – making connections |  | 17 |
| 1.6 Positionality – Where I come from |  | 19 |
| 1.7 Research and participants |  | 22 |
| 1.8 Conclusion |  | 24 |
| Chapter 2 – Literature Review, literacy |  | 25 |
| 2.1 Introduction |  | 25 |
| 2.2 What is literacy? |  | 25 |
| 2.3 Literacy as social practice |  | 26 |
| 2.4 Events and practices |  | 27 |
| 2.5 Literacy in context |  | 31 |
| 2.6 Purpose and identity |  | 32 |
| 2.7 Literacy and space |  | 38 |
| 2.8 Literacy and the body |  | 42 |
| 2.9 Multimodality |  | 46 |
| 2.10 Materialism and New Materialism |  | 47 |
| 2.11 Assemblage Theory and the Baroque |  | 50 |
| 2.12 Narrative and storytelling |  | 55 |
| 2.13 Conclusion |  | 64 |
| Chapter 3 - Literature Review, walking |  | 66 |
| 3.1 Introduction |  | 66 |
| 3.2 Ways of walking |  | 67 |
| 3.3 Walking as social practice |  | 69 |
| 3.4 Landscape space and place |  | 70 |
| 3.5 The body and embodied response |  | 75 |
| 3.6 Movement and its consequences |  | 77 |
| 3.7 Cognition memory and time |  | 81 |
| 3.8 Narrative and storytelling |  | 83 |
| 3.9 Conclusion |  | 86 |
| Chapter 4 - Methodology |  | 87 |
| 4.1 Introduction |  | 87 |
| 4.2 Ethnographic method |  | 89 |
| 4.3 Difficulties with ethnographic method |  | 91 |
| 4.4 Sensory ethnography |  | 93 |
| 4.5 Walking methodologies |  | 97 |
| 4.6 Beyond ethnography |  | 98 |
| 4.7 Outline of the research process |  | 101 |
|  | 4.71 Recruitment of participants | 101 |
|  | 4.72 Ethical considerations | 105 |
|  | 4.73 Data collection | 109 |
|  | 4.74 Interviews | 110 |
|  | 4.75 Participant observation | 111 |
|  | 4.76 Photographs | 111 |
|  | 4.77 Written responses | 112 |
|  | 4.78 Recording and analysis of data | 114 |
|  | 4.79 Representing data | 114 |
| 4.8 Reflexivity and my role as a researcher |  | 117 |
| 4.9 Serendipity and epiphany |  | 119 |
| 4.10 Conclusion |  | 121 |
| Chapter 5 – Findings and analysis |  | 124 |
| 5.1 Introduction to findings |  | 124 |
|  | 5.11 Canal Circular 2 | 124 |
|  | 5.12 Photographs | 129 |
|  | 5.13 Hoddlesden Houses | 130 |
|  | 5.14 Darwen Moors | 136 |
| 5.2 Introduction to analysis |  | 141 |
|  | 5.21 Walking as a social practice | 142 |
|  | 5.22 Recreational walking | 143 |
|  | 5.23 Walking as performance | 145 |
|  | 5.24 A continual stream of language | 146 |
|  | 5.25 A story of redemption | 147 |
|  | 5.26 A story of reflection | 149 |
|  | 5.27 Stories of escape | 150 |
|  | 5.28 Stories of memory and imagination | 152 |
| 5.3 Walking and talking – Mobile literacies |  | 154 |
|  | 5.31 An emplaced practice | 155 |
|  | 5.32 An embodied practice | 157 |
|  | 5.33 A material practice | 159 |
|  | 5.34 A collective practice | 161 |
| Chapter 6 - Conclusion |  | 166 |
| 6.1 Findings |  | 171 |
| 6.2 Contribution to knowledge  6.3 Contribution to practice  6.4 Contribution to research |  | 172  173  175 |
| References |  | 168 |
| Appendices |  | 177 |
| Appendix 1- Table of participants |  | 177 |
| Appendix 2- Table of walks |  | 179 |
| Appendix 3 - Table of data |  | 180 |
| Appendix 4 - Walk description – street circular |  | 182 |
| Appendix 5 - Interview transcripts – street circular |  | 185 |
| Appendix 6 - Walk description canal circular 1 |  | 188 |
| Appendix 7 - Interview transcripts canal circular 1 |  | 190 |
| Appendix 8 - Interview transcripts canal circular 2 |  | 193 |
| Appendix 9 - Interview transcripts Darwen Moor |  | 195 |
| Appendix 10 - Interview transcripts Hoddlesden Houses |  | 200 |
| Appendix 11 - Walk description Pleasington |  | 204 |
| Appendix 12 - Interview transcripts Pleasington |  | 206 |
| Appendix 13 - Information sheet |  | 210 |
| Appendix 14 - Consent form |  | 213 |
| Appendix 15 - Example of field notes |  | 215 |
| Appendix 16 - Example of walker contribution - Blackburn |  | 216 |

List of figures

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Fig 1 Canal Circular story map | 128 |
| Fig 2 Canal Circular route map | 129 |
| Fig 3 Photographs | 130 |
| Fig 4 Hoddlesden Houses story map | 135 |
| Fig 5 Hoddlesden Houses route map | 136 |
| Fig 6 Darwen Moors story map | 140 |
| Fig 7 Darwen Moors route map | 141 |

Chapter 1 – Introduction and background

**1.1 Introduction**

This study brought together two apparently disparate realms of activity, literacy and walking. I will outline my interest in both these areas and highlight an area of overlap that I believe merits exploration. My aim was to examine the role literacy and language played in taking part in Health Walks. My focus was on how participation in Health Walks effects changes in individuals, I was particularly interested in changes that were not primarily health related and the role literacy and language played in these. As a researcher, I combined professional involvement in adult literacy education with a personal involvement and interest in Walking for Health schemes. As such I was naturally orientated towards recognising similarities in the way they are placed within a policy context (Hamilton and Hillier 2002, Cavill and Foster 2011) as tools to ostensibly tackle social exclusion and to inspire change in the lives of individuals.

In this Chapter I began by outlining my research questions and describing how my focus lies in an area of overlap between literacy and language, and walking. I considered the development of adult literacy education and Walking for Health initiatives from a policy and personal perspective and described how my early experiences of place have influenced my understanding of how landscape impacts on the individual. I conclude the chapter by briefly outlining details of the research.

In Chapters 2 and 3 I examine the literature that moves beyond the conceptions of literacy and walking inherent within the Government interventions described. I drew on the fields of social anthropology (Ingold 2007) and cultural geography (Edensor 2000, 2010) to examine the act of walking. I drew on theorists within the New Literacy Studies (Street 1993) as well as theories regarding multi –modality (Kress 2010), literacy and the body (Enriquez et al 2015) literacy and place (Leander and Sheehy 2004), New Materialism (Bennett 2012) and Narrative Studies (Georgakopoulou 2007, Bamberg 2007, Langellier and Peterson 2011) to place and consider literacy at the heart of the walking experience.

**1.2 Research focus and research questions**

My research explored and examined the uses of language and literacy in group walking practices. This focus was developed through a chance encounter with a promotional video encouraging participation in Walking for Health schemes (WalkingforHealth 2015a, WalkingforHealth 2015b) which prompted me to consider exactly how the benefits being described were generated. In noting that many of the benefits were not directly health related I began to question how they were generated by the experience of walking in groups.

I intended, therefore, to examine the experience of taking part in Walking for Health excursions with a focus on the walkers’ perceived cultural and linguistic benefits. By cultural and linguistic benefits, I mean the anecdotal and recorded stories of changes in mood and sense of self, improved social relations, development of knowledge of and changed relationship with the local area and increased involvement in community activities. These benefits will have impacted on health but health impacts were not their primary outcome. I then considered the mechanisms by which these benefits arise and considered whether language and literacy played a part in the process.

My questions were:

* How was literacy and language involved in the practice of taking part in Health Walks?
* What part did literacy and language play in supporting the impacts of taking part in Health Walks?

My questions were based on assumptions regarding the overall positive impacts of taking part in Health Walks and that language and literacy do play a part in the experience. My assumptions about impacts were drawn from studies assessing outcomes of interventions as well as personal and anecdotal experience. However, my assumptions about the role of language and literacy were more instinctual and emboldened by my noticing that in talking to walkers they often mentioned language use as a key element of the experience.

**1.3 Adult Literacy – Policy and personal experience**

Adult Literacy Language and Numeracy (ALLN) began to coalesce as a new area of educational practice in the early 1970s. Prior to this, literacy need in adults was recognised and addressed sporadically, primarily in populations of young men in the army and in prisons (Jones and Marriott 95).

In 1975, the BBC broadcast a series of programmes called ‘On the Move’ aimed at adults who needed to improve their literacy. Innovatively for the time, the programmes were linked to a telephone help line; by the end of 1978 up to three hundred calls per week were being received (Hamilton and Hillier 2002 p.2). ‘On the Move’ was a response to a campaign by community based activists, The British Association of Settlements (BAS). BAS had identified literacy need amongst adults through surveys and aimed to ensure a commitment from local authorities and central government towards addressing the need (BAS 1973).

Whereas there were precedents internationally in terms of mass national literacy campaigns (Hamilton and Hillier 2002 p.4) it was the government response to the BAS campaign that initiated coordinated literacy education in Britain. Whereas ESOL and numeracy education also sprang from this root and had been aligned with the provision, it was literacy education that was the initial focus. The Adult Literacy Resource Agency (ALRA) was set up and money was identified to support local authorities to respond to the need.

Hamilton and Hillier (2002) identify four phases of policy and practice in ALLN between the mid 1970’s and 2000. In the 1970’s they describe how the provision grew and was driven by individual committed members of the government, volunteers and teachers and some very committed local authorities, particularly the Inner London Education Authority. In the early 1980s adult numeracy and ESOL joined literacy and the provision became known as Adult Basic Education and the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit became the national overseeing agency. Provision was delivered by volunteers and part time teachers, funding remained short term and precarious.

The 1992 Further and Higher Education Act introduced the incorporation of colleges at which point, all Further Education courses were taken out of local authority control. Funding for ALLN changed and it became a designated area of vocational study within Further Education. Whereas this increased the scope and consistency of programmes the new funding regime necessitated a formal audit for progression, outcomes and qualifications. Hamilton and Hillier (2002) stress how the nature of ALLN changed at this point, much of provision was ‘no longer primarily open ended and community focussed’ (Hamilton and Hillier 2002 p.13). Community provision that remained with the local education authorities was significantly weakened.

The election of a Labour Government in 1997 signalled a turning point for the field. A review of Basic Skills in 1998 led to the Moser report ‘A Fresh Start’ (Moser 1999) which suggested that 7 million adults were in need of ALLN input (OECD 1997). The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ALBSU) was set up within the Department of Education and Skills. Information and communication technology (ICT) was added as a fourth basic skill and a Skills for Life curriculum, test and qualifications for students and teachers were introduced.

A large amount of money was made available for targeted provision focusing on specific groups of adults. Although my early teaching experience was coloured by agendas of the early 1970s, my adult literacy teaching career was informed by this infusion of capital. From 1997 to 2003 I worked on government funded projects in regeneration areas. I developed family literacy programmes which were closely audited in terms of adults’ and children’s progress against national benchmarks and there were implicit assumptions about literacy encouraging agency and economic activity.

As I began working in Adult Literacy in the late 1990s I was mentored and influenced by teachers who began their careers during the early days of ALLN. There was a predominant interest in social justice, a sense of being involved in education to facilitate social change and personal transformation. Although the field had changed in the intervening years and continued to change, I was surrounded by teachers, resources and strategies formed in the period. Our work was coloured by assumptions about how language, literacy and numeracy play vital roles in cultural and social exclusion. I recognise now that this approach was an attempt to move away from a deficit model (Street 1993) where literacy need is placed firmly within the responsibility of the individual. However, in attempting to recognise the wider forces at play, in bringing learners to ALLN provision we risked using that same deficit model to describe whole communities and social groups. An approach that overshadows the focus on home and community literacies foregrounded by the social practice approach

I left work in ALLN in 2003 to work in Learner Support. Over the past 13 years the provision has undergone further significant change and is practically unrecognisable from the provision of the early 1970s. The financial crisis of 2008 and subsequent austerity measures implemented by the coalition and conservative governments have impacted significantly on funding available for ALLN provision both in Further Education and LEA. Cuts in funding have dramatically changed the adult education landscape. Since 2010 the adult skills budget which funds non - HE education and training for those 19 and over has been cut by 40% (Okolosie, L. 2015). Adults in the current climate seeking literacy education are only likely to find it by paying to join Functional Skills English classes or as a by- product of apprenticeship or traineeship programmes. In many ways, the idea and focus of adult literacy have come full circle. Adult literacy is now primarily associated with programmes focussed on developing work skills and vocational training

I currently work as a dyslexia/literacy lecturer within an Additional Learner Support Department of a Further Education College As such I teach a variety of young people with general and specific learning difficulties and/or a disengagement from literacy education, to read and write. A structural focus on developing functional literacy and achieving qualifications is the framework within which we work, however my commitment to recognising the importance and potential power of personal literacies remain. Whereas the ideological framework I carry with me can feel alien if not incompatible within the Further Education sector, I nonetheless have a degree of freedom to focus on everyday literacies in my everyday work.

I have worked in the field of adult and community literacy education and further education for 20 years. I am aware of the impact early teaching experiences have had on my understanding of literacy education, an understanding that is deeply bound up in the priorities and tensions implicit within the field of Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy Education. Foregrounding an understanding of literacy as social practice (Barton and Hamilton 1998), and assuming literacy need is a product of social exclusion, were both vital orientating factors in my approach to working in adult literacy education. As such I remain strongly orientated towards a social practice approach to literacy.

By a ‘social practice approach’ I mean the approach outlined by Barton and Hamilton (1998) that recognises the uses, values and meanings of reading and writing in everyday lives. They state that ‘recognising literacy events are patterned by institutions and power relationships requires a focus on the learner’s lived experience and demands that connections are made with learners’ literacy lives outside the classroom’ (Barton and Hamilton 1998 p.11). Consequently, I am strongly orientated towards looking for and valuing literacies in everyday life (Barton and Hamilton 1998) and recognising how literacies are situated within contexts (Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic 1999) and how they move between contexts. Whereas I recognise the flaws of the social exclusion approach I nonetheless recognise the potentially transformative potential of involvement in literacy education.

Within the research I develop the concept of mobile literacies. The concept of mobile literacies, whilst grounded in an understanding of literacy as a social practice rooted in everyday life departs from Barton and Hamilton (1998) in significant ways. Mobile literacies are oral storytelling practices evoked by movement through place that incorporate objects, bodies, landscape and affective response as modes of making meaning.

Although my conclusions posit mobile literacies as a literacy practice that does not involve printed text, it was my early experience in ALLN that crystallised my understanding of literacy as a social practice and has profoundly informed my professional practice in recognising the meanings literacy has for individuals and considering how these personal experiences are accommodated within educational settings. It is this orientation that led me to glimpse literacies in the practice of taking part in Walking for Health schemes and helped to define the research questions described above.

**1.4 Walking for Health – Policy and personal experience**

Walking, within the context of this research, meant taking part in led walks as part of a local authority Walking for Health campaign. Walking has become a key resource in the Department for Health’s preventative health policy.

The definition of a health walk is that it should be local, free, accessible to all and aimed primarily at beginners. Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (BwDBC) has provided a health walks programme for the last 14 years. This is administered through the Wellbeing Service under the Department of Culture, Leisure & Sport. The Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Health Walks programme, known as ‘Walk This Way’, is run by one part-time member of staff (funded through the local NHS trust) and approximately 20 volunteers who have been trained as volunteer walk leaders. The Blackburn with Darwen health walks range from 30 minutes to 90 minutes, but also offer a few two hour walks to allow for progression as the confidence and stamina of the walker increases over time. Approximately 14 health walks are provided during the week throughout the year. Most of these are open to the general public but they include walks for adults with special needs, carers, women only walks for speakers of other languages, and a walk organised in conjunction with Age UK.

My connection with the Walking for Health scheme in Blackburn is personal. My husband, Nick, is the member of staff employed to run the scheme for Blackburn with Darwen council for the past 11 years. He is a local authority employee responsible for the scheme across the borough. As well as leading health walks and cycling projects in Blackburn, he trains volunteers to run schemes and is heavily involved in promoting the health benefits of walking across the borough, a borough that has startling statistics for poor health outcomes and mortality. Life expectancy for both men and women is lower than the England average and the rate of deaths under age 75 from heart disease and stroke is significantly higher than the England average (Blackburn with Darwen Council 2012).

It was Nick’s involvement with the filming of a promotional video that sparked the ideas that led to this research. The event was the filming of two videos about Every Step Counts, a 12-week programme designed to support the establishing of Health Walk initiatives in boroughs (WalkingforHealth 2015a, WalkingforHealth 2015b). The videos included input from professionals involved in the scheme but also focussed on adults taking part in local walks, including the Barton St group I went on to take part in research with.

The walkers interviewed were encouraged to discuss their motivations for taking part and the impact walking had on them. Although the clear focus of the video was on health - related impacts, the unedited film sequences I viewed often mentioned impacts that lay beyond changes in health. The walkers described changes in mood and confidence, changes in sense of self, development of social contacts, development of knowledge of the local area, involvement in other community activities and development of skills. When asked to explain how health walks run, several participants explained that they meet, they walk and they talk.

**1.5 Literacy, language and walking – making connections**

As an outsider observing the Walking for Health initiative I was struck by similarities with earlier Adult Literacy Language and Numeracy initiatives. Like traditional ALLN provision, Walking for Health schemes are provided by local authorities, run and offered in a variety of community contexts relying on a few staff and many volunteers. As with ALLN provision, adults attend voluntarily and the purpose of attendance is to effect change in the personal lives of the adults involved. Within a policy context, parallels exist in the way participants are placed and purposes defined. The schemes exist to address an apparent need and aim to support adults to develop a way of being that supposedly will increase their agency in communities, whether that be through improved health and vitality or improved literacy (Cavill and Foster 2011, Walking for Health 2011). Health Walks, like ALLN provision often either target or attract specific groups, such as those with mental health needs, the long term unemployed and carers. Within a policy framework, both initiatives focus on questions of social exclusion, personal deficit, and the need for transformative change that will in some way increase personal agency and ultimately change communities.

In noting how walkers described their activity as ‘walking and talking’ I was struck by how language, appeared to play an important part in the value and impact of the Walking for Health initiative. In other words, whereas some health benefits would remain the same, other benefits would not develop if walkers were to walk alone, on a treadmill, indoors. The activity of walking in a group, of walking outdoors in the local environment appears to be a catalyst for a wide range of impacts occurring and it is my hypothesis that literacy and language play a part in these transformations

I discussed earlier how a social practice approach to literacy (Barton and Hamilton 1998) recognises the uses of literacy in everyday lives. By utilising a social practice approach to literacy as a lens through which to examine the activity of taking part in Health Walks I aim to illuminate the breadth of impacts and transformations taking part in led group walks can engender. Whereas the health benefits of taking part in the scheme are well measured and documented (Walking for Health 2014), wider changes are not and I propose that a focus on literacy and language could provide a way in to exploring this dynamic.

In doing this I moved beyond the understandings of literacy and walking embodied within the policies described above. I go on in Chapter 2 to examine literature around literacy as a social practice (Barton and Hamilton 1998), multi literacies (Cope and Kalantzis 2000) and multi- modality (Kress 2010), literacy and identity (Ivanic1998), literacy and place (Leander and Sheehy 2004)), literacy and the body (Enriquez et al 2015) and new materialism (Bennett 2012) to draw out what happens with literacy and language during a walk. My consideration of these later theories helps to inform my understanding of mobile literacies as a discrete literacy practice. Similarly, in Chapter 3, I consider literature regarding the social and culturalsignificances of walking (Solnit 2001), how walking is linked to place and identity (Janowski and Ingold 2012), community and memory (Edensor 2010) and narrative and storytelling (Bamberg 2007, Hymes1996, Georgakopoulou 2007, Langellier and Peterson 2011) to begin to make links between the two activities. Through the lens of this literature the complex intertwining of body, mind, language and place that takes place during a walk is magnified and clarified. From this perspective, an alternative understanding of the transformative potential of the walk emerges.

**1.6 Positionality – Where I come from**

I have already outlined my position in terms of my understanding of literacy and language and its place in people’s lives and wider communities. My focus on literacy as a social practice (Barton and Hamilton 1998) grew from my early training and teaching experiences in local authority run adult education provision.

My understanding of walking and the landscape as potent and meaningful forces, grows from my childhood experiences. Between the ages of four and seventeen I grew up on the outskirts of a small village in Snowdonia, rural North Wales. At first in a farm house on an exposed mountainside and then in a bungalow in a wooded valley.

The first house, Bodesi, and its surroundings, has continued to exert a significant influence on my sense of identity, my memory and subconscious throughout my adult life. I expect that many people have a strong and complex relationship with place, particularly the places of early childhood. My own experience was heightened, I think, by the particularly extreme nature of the landscape. The Ogwen valley, where I lived as a young child, is an iconic landscape. It is a deep valley through which the A5 Holyhead to London road passes. At its western end is Llyn Ogwen, and it is bordered by the Carneddau and Glyderau mountain ranges. My home stood alone, a mile and a half up a track from the main road on the slopes of Carnedd Dafydd, my view from across the valley was towards a dramatic rocky peak, Tryfan.

The peaks, and Tryfan in particular, were portrayed frequently on postcards, tea towels and the covers of climbing route books in the local tourist shops. The landscape around my home symbolised for many an ideal wild, dramatic, romantic and dangerous place. The closest house, about quarter of a mile to the West was a bunkhouse that was also used as a mountain rescue post and most weekends I would watch the mountain rescue helicopter land here before hovering over ridges to winch injured climbers to safety.

My home area was visited by thousands every year, drawn by the landscape and seeking to interact with it. I imagine myself as a small child in the fields around the farm watching as crowds of walkers and climbers arrived in the morning to toil up the slopes on every side, in brightly coloured waterproofs, with crampons clanking, and as dusk came, they went, to leave us alone in the valley again.

I was intrigued as a child by the visitors and where they went and why. I was aware that they were awed and excited by our surroundings and aware that reaching summits was important. In the nine years I lived in this valley I reached the summit of a local peak two or three times. I knew that farmers in neighbouring farms would never seek to reach the summits themselves and would only do so accidentally if led by a search for lost sheep. I was very clear as a young child that my relationship with this landscape was different to those who visited it as a leisure activity, and different again to those farmers for whom it was their workplace.

Yet we all walked the landscape in different ways, and my experiences between the ages of 4 and 12 of walking my small patch of the Ogwen valley was enormously important in developing a sense of the potency of landscape in me. As a child, my walking was playing, both alone and with my younger brother most days I would follow unmarked personal trails to my secret landmarks. I knew the lower slopes of Carnedd Dafydd in detail and would visit specific rocks, pools and hollows that held significance for me and my brother and the games we played. I knew the lichen patterns on large crags good for climbing by the stream; I knew the driest route through boggy patches; I knew the sounds of the streams by the upper pens when it had rained all night.

Our routes to these places were always well - defined but known only to us and organised by the easiest crossing and climbing places and the driest conditions. My brother and I had remarkable freedom as children to roam as we wanted and therefore developed a total sense of ownership of the tract of mountainside, maybe half a mile in each direction from the farm. We were enclosed on all sides by high peaks, both a comforting and threatening presence. The thousands of visitors who passed through the valley maybe visited once or twice a year. They saw much more in terms of scope, they reached the summits and saw beyond them, and then they left. I saw much more in terms of detail, but I rarely saw beyond the valley and I did not leave.

Living in very close contact with a changing mountainous landscape and being in that landscape as it changed with the weather and the seasons day in day out, year in year out in my formative childhood years, has been enormously important to me. It has left me with a visceral sense of how landscape impacts and interacts with the self and how being in a landscape, walking a landscape, is a way of exploring environment, time, memory and self.

There is a difficult to translate Welsh word used to describe a longing to be in a familiar landscape. Hiraeth is more than homesickness, it is to do with an embodied response to the idea of a familiar landscape. It encompasses more than ideas of home and identity and touches on how the landscape can inform and extend and salvage our sense of selves. I bring to the study therefore, a heightened perception of how local landscape interacts with those within it and believe this remains the case beyond the iconic landscapes of rural Snowdonia.

Walking is now a more standard pass - time in my life. I follow the conventions and routes set out for those who choose walking the countryside as a leisure activity. At the weekends, I walk with my family and other families in the hills and valleys of the Bowland Forest near my home, in time alone I often choose to do the same. Often, I walk the streets and parks nearby. On weekends and holidays, I visit the Lake District and consume the landscape as it is presented and packaged for us visitors, and once or twice a year I return to the Ogwen valley and view it from a visitor’s eyes reaching the summits but often unable to access the details of my childhood as they lie off route or on private land.

My motivations for walking remain complex and varied. I walk for exercise, as a social activity, as a way of exploring the area, as an opportunity for solitary reflection, for the opportunity to be outside the house, alone or in company and apparently engaged in purposeful activity. Often walking is the conduit by which other personal and social outcomes occur. I walk alone to reflect, to recover and to ruminate, I walk in company to talk and to share.

**1.7 Research and participants**

The basis of my research involved walking with and recording some talk of two regularly meeting groups affiliated with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council’s Health Walks programme. I walked with one group, the Barton St walk, on Wednesday mornings between May and August 2016 and the second group, the Darwen group between September and December 2016. The two groups differed in size, composition and the nature of the walks undertaken.

Blackburn –Barton St walk

The Barton St walk is run through the council in conjunction with Age UK and is organised by an Age UK employee. The women who lead the walks are long time participants who have been trained as walk leaders by the borough council. The walk is for Asian women and meets at the Barton Street Community Centre, approximately ¾ mile north of Blackburn town centre. Barton Street is situated in the Bastwell Ward of Blackburn. Together with the adjacent wards of Audley, Little Harwood and Shear Brow, Bastwell has a predominantly South Asian Muslim population. The Bastwell neighbourhood is situated on the northern edge of Blackburn town centre in a residential area dominated by Victorian terraced houses linked to the town’s 19th Century textile industry.

The Barton Street health walk is an urban walk which follows pavements along residential streets that link with the towpath of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal. Approximately 14 women between the ages of 50 and 75 regularly met to follow these walks. The women originally attended the walks on the advice of health professionals and present with a range of managed health conditions including arthritis, diabetes, heart conditions and depression.

Darwen – Friday morning walk

The Friday morning walk is led by a volunteer couple who have been walking with the Walking for Health scheme for over 10 years and have been trained as walk leaders by the borough council. They are a retired couple who have lived in Darwen, adjacent to Blackburn all their lives. The walk meets at various rural locations in East Lancashire. The group walks for up to an hour and a half. The walks are rural and relatively strenuous and attract up to 50 participants each week. The composition of the group is fluid, new people attend most weeks. The itinerary and meeting points for the walks are published in advance in leaflets available in Leisure Centres and doctors’ surgeries around the borough. The Friday morning walkers are primarily retired, white, and relatively physically able. Although there are more women walkers than men there are a significant number of male walkers. Within the regularly attending group, are a group of 8 women of Hong Kong Chinese background. This group grew around the attendance of one woman who began walking through the advice of her GP. The women are all connected by their involvement with the Chinese takeaway industry around Blackburn and Darwen.

**1.8 Conclusion**

I have outlined my interest in the areas of walking and literacy and explained how I am positioned within these areas by my experiences of working as an adult literacy educator and my early experiences of living in rural North Wales. I have highlighted similarities in policy approaches to government led literacy and walking initiatives, specifically in terms of how participants are placed as socially excluded and how involvement in the initiatives is posited as potentially transformational.

I go on to explore the literature around walking and literacy. Specifically, I look at the New Literacy Studies (Street 1993) and literacy as a social practice (Barton and Hamilton 1998). I consider literacy and identity (Ivanic 1998), literacy and the body (Enriquez et al 2015), literacy and space (Leander et al 2004), multi literacies (Cope and Kalantzis 2000), multimodality (Kress 2010) and New Materialism (Bennett 2012). I survey the fields of social anthropology (Ingold 2007) and cultural geography (Edensor 2000, 2010) to begin to deepen my understanding of walking as a social and culturaI act and focus in on theories around storytelling and narrative (Bamberg 2007, Hymes1996, Georgakopoulou 2007, Langellier and Peterson 2011) as a way of beginning to explore the talk that happens whilst walking. In so doing I lay the foundations for the conception of mobile literacies as a collectively generated storytelling practice that is generated through movement and incorporates bodily affect, landscape and objects as meaning making modes. In broadening and deepening my understanding of the two areas, I aim to make links between them that will illuminate my research questions and point towards a more nuanced and complex understanding of the experience of walking.

Chapter 2 – Literature review, literacy

**2.1 Introduction**

My research spans two relatively separate fields of literature, literacy and walking. In Chapters 2 and 3, I consider the two bodies of literature within the fields separately and at the end of each chapter focus on an area of overlap, that of narrative and storytelling. Within both fields however, I am concerned with an understanding of what it means to be involved in literacy and be involved in walking. I begin Chapters 2 and 3 therefore, with a consideration of what literacy, and what walking, is, before moving on to consider the experience of taking part in the activities.

In both chapters, literature is considered from the vantage point of the research questions. The questions were:

* How was literacy and language involved in the practice of taking part in led group walks?
* What part did literacy and language play in supporting the impacts of taking part in Health Walks?

**2.2 What is literacy?**

I am approaching the field of literacy with an epistemological grounding in the theorists of the New Literacy Studies (Barton and Hamilton 1998). I am rooted in an understanding of literacy as an everyday activity that permeates people’s lives and through which power relationships are expressed and sustained. Therefore, I began my focus by considering literature that examines literacy and its role in personal and social life. I considered some key tenets of the New Literacy Studies, literacy as social practice (Barton and Hamilton 1998), literacy events and practices (Barton 1994), literacy and identity (Ivanic 1998) and the importance of context (Barton, Hamilton, Ivanic 1999).

This epistemological grounding was troubled and coloured, and my research was informed, by those theorists who followed. Questions focussing on literacy and place, (Leander and Sheehy 2004) degrees to which literacy can be embodied (Enriquez et al 2015), multimodality (Kress 2010) and the implications of theories of New Materialism (Bennett 2012) help to illuminate the literacies I observed. I went on to consider current approaches to literacy (Burnett, Merchant, Pahl and Rowsell 2014, Burnett and Merchant 2016, Lenters 2016, Pahl and Rowsell 2010), that abandon dichotomies of subject/object, discursive and material and think instead in terms of intra- actions, (im)materiality, affective intensities and becoming. I concluded by considering theories and debates about storytelling as a facet of everyday life (Bamberg 2007, Georgakopoulou 2007, Langellier and Peterson 2011). These approaches are particularly orientated towards recognising how bodies, things and discourses are spatially and materially entangled. As such they offer an alternative lens that I found particularly useful in clarifying what happens when people walk and talk.

In outlining how conceptions of literacy have developed and diverged from the point of an understanding of literacy as a social practice (Barton and Hamilton 1998) embedded in everyday life, to understandings that incorporate the entanglement of space, the body, the material and affect, my concluding conception of mobile literacies take shape. Whereas my research is grounded by key concepts within the New Literacy Studies it also problematizes these key concepts. I draw on understandings of literacy practices that do not involve text (Johnson Thiel 2015) and theories around oral storytelling (Bamberg 2007, Georgakopoulou 2007, Langellier and Peterson 2011) in recognising and defining ‘mobile literacies’.

**2.3 Literacy as social practice**

My thinking and theorising about literacy was predominantly influenced by theorists engaged with the New Literacy Studies (Barton and Hamilton 1998) and theorists who emerged from this field (Burnett and Merchant 2016, Lenters 2016, Pahl and Rowsell, 2010). My research was both grounded and problematized by key concepts within the field of New Literacy Studies. By New Literacy Studies I mean the move towards alternative approaches to literacy developed over the 1980’s and early 1990’s. The following three foundational pieces of research emerged from different disciplines and with different foci. However, they share broad convergences, most importantly in conceiving of literacy as bound up in social life.

Scribner and Cole (1981) studied the literacy practices of the Vai of North West Liberia. They provided a comprehensive description of the different forms of literacy practised within the community. Vitally they included forms of literacy that existed outside the educational system. Street (1984) studied Islamic villagers in Iran, part of his study focussed on reading and writing. He carried out ethnographic fieldwork and worked from a social, anthropological basis. He describes his approach as ideological and contrasts it with an autonomous model. Whereas the autonomous model separates literacy from its context, an ideological approach, he states, accepts that,

the meaning of literacy depends on the social institutions in which it is embedded. (1984 p.8)

In Ways with Words (1983) Heath uses anthropological and social methods to describe reading and writing done in the homes, communities and schools of three Appalachian communities. She uncovered significant contrasts in how literacy is used and viewed in different contexts.

These are vital foundational pieces of work and share theories that remain structurally important to later studies of literacy. All the texts move towards a foregrounding of everyday literacy, that is the reading and writing that happens in all aspects of social life. Literacy as a social practice is the focus. Street’s distinction between ideological and autonomous models clearly marks this shift (Street 1984). The New Literacy Studies that emerged from these works recognises the importance of context in understanding literacy and how the relationship between literacy and its context is at the heart of its conception as a social practice. My research questions were built on the assumption that everyday literacy happens in all aspects of social life (Barton and Hamilton 1998). A conception of literacy as a social practice is the theoretical foundation of this study of literacy and walking. However, whereas my conclusions rest on an understanding of literacy as a social practice the definition of ‘mobile literacies’ as outlined in Chapter 5 departs significantly from Barton and Hamilton’s (1998) theories.

**2.4 Events and practices**

Within the New Literacy Studies, a distinction between literacy events and practices becomes a vital methodological tool in observing and describing literacy. Heath’s (1983) consideration of the home and school literacies of children from Trackton, Roadville and Maintown is focussed around the concept of literacy events. She defines a literacy event as ‘any action sequence, involving one or more persons, in which the production and/or comprehension of print plays a role’ (Heath, 1983 p.386). By isolating specific incidents involving the production or comprehension of print in this way Heath is able to draw out and analyse their contrasting compositions. There is a general move in the work of Scribner and Cole (1981), Street (1984) and Heath (1983) towards an understanding of the difference between actual instances of people using reading and writing in their everyday lives, literacy events and wider cultural uses of literacy, literacy practices. In recognising that literacy events are instances of culturally specific practices and framing literacy in this way, it becomes possible to move from a focus on individual skills to look at how written text is used to mediate social life and to consider how cultural and societal forces organise and shape literacy.

Barton and Hamilton (1998) studied the literacy events and practices in the lives of a group of residents from Lancaster. They used the framework of events and practices to reveal and foreground the organising forces of literacy in everyday life. In so doing they developed a focus on recognising the shared values, beliefs and possibilities for selfhood inscribed within practices. Barton and Hamilton describe literacy practices as

The general cultural ways of utilizing written language which people draw upon in their lives. In the simplest sense literacy practices are what people do with literacy. However, practices are not observable units of behaviour since they also involve attitudes, feelings and social relationships. (Barton and Hamilton 1998 p. 6)

Barton and Hamilton (1998) go on to explain that literacy practices are shaped by people’s awareness of literacy discourses and literacy constructions. How people understand and talk about literacy shapes their practices. A study of literacy within the theoretical framework of the New Literacy Studies becomes in part a study of individual’s agency within specific contexts.

A critique of the literacy event as a unit of analysis, highlights its dependence on an assumption of unities of time and space. Baynham and Prinsloo (2009) focus on the problems of framing an empirically observable action given the recognition that literacy activity can spill over time and space coordinates, a recognition that is explored further on in this chapter. Not only do literacy ‘events’ not always entirely happen in the ‘here and now’ but also literacy activity can be very small scale and incidental. Baynham and Prinsloo offer the example of glancing at motorway signs whilst driving as an activity that would slip through the net of ‘eventness’ (2009 p.11).

Notions of practice in literacy studies are influenced by Bourdieu’s (1984,1991) conception of habitus. Bourdieu (1984, 1991) developed social theory that sought to develop an epistemology of practice with a focus on agency and social power. In considering agency within social structures Bourdieu posited an epistemology of practice where social institutions are structured by the way people act and interact, but also where this human activity is structured by institutional forces. Bourdieu (1984,1991) contests that an individual’s disposition to act in certain ways is embedded by the material and social conditions they experience. This disposition will be honed by relative success or failure within specific social fields, dispositions become second nature, this second nature is habitus. Bourdieu defines habitus as ‘A structuring structure, which organises practices and the perception of practices (Bourdieu 1984 p.170). Habitus is the personal resources that an individual brings to their strategic action in a social field. Habitus is located in social fields which are constituted by interactions among individuals holding relative positions of social power within such fields. Bourdieu’s conception of the relationship between habitus and field can offer a way of understanding literacy practices in contexts.

Street (2012) describes the Learning for Empowerment Through Training in Ethnographic-Style Research (LETTER) project designed to assist adult literacy practitioners in Delhi to engage in ethnographic style research about the literacy and numeracy practices of the communities from which their literacy learners come. The project grew from the recognition that there were epistemological differences in the way the adult literacy practitioners and literacy learners viewed the world. Street (2012) reflects on how a Bourdieusian approach benefitted the project. He concludes that Bourdieu’s conception of the relationship between habitus and field helped to structure an understanding of how a dominant field associated with institutional understanding of literacy skill impacted on the learners’ and practitioners’ practices. The introduction of an ethnographic perspective introduced an alternative field where the local habitus of participants was recognised. Unlike relations with the dominant field relations within the ethnographic field were dialogic, opportunities to adopt new practices were implicit. Street (2012) describes how these contrasting perspectives, couched within terms of field/habitus relations formed the basis of the project’s work.

Bourdieu’s conception recognises that it is social power that creates the conditions for a development of habitus that then fits socially powerful practices. It also recognises that practice is shaped by human activity. There is a fluidity and potential for transformation within the conception of habitus but also a recognition of the constraints afforded by social and material conditions. The conception of habitus is useful to hold in mind as one considers how individuals have different access to various literacies, how individuals use literacies in diverse social fields, and how literacies are valued differently within these fields. It is also pertinent to remember that, according to Bourdieu, practices are shaped by human activity, that is, events can impact on practices. The potentially transformative effect of a literacy event is an important foundational assumption in my research.

Within my research I used the framework of events and practices to begin to examine what happens during a walk. I recognised events as they happened and acknowledged the structuring framework of acceptable practices within the social field of recreational walking. However, throughout the research I struggled with the slippery, unboundable nature of the literacy ‘events’ that occurred. I grasped for them as they skittered across the landscape, across time and through the memories of the walkers. Many of the events I tried to examine seemed to slip through the net of ‘eventness.’ This made developing an understanding of the defining characteristics of ‘mobile literacies’ a difficult task. Similarly, I acknowledged the practice of going for a Health Walk and recognised the relative positions of social power individuals possessed within the field of the walk. However, I also recognised that the field is unusually fluid and mutable and that walkers seemed to transform and collectively reconstruct it as they proceeded.

The idea that practices can be transformed through actions is developed by Gee (2005, 2008) working in discourse analysis and sociolinguistics. Considering literacies, he emphasises the fluidity of practices, he equates practices with models or ‘partial story lines’ for practice. He recognises how our actions can reinforce ways of doing:

Models are the way in which history, institutions and affinity groups think and act in and through us. We pick them up, often unconsciously, and operate in their terms, thereby reproducing traditional action, interaction and thinking in the domain. (2008 P.143)

However, whilst recognising the power of traditional practices to dictate our actions, Gee’s recognition that our storylines are partial, accepts that the potential to adapt practices by tweaking our actions is open. Gee’s conception of practices as partial storylines is important in terms of my understanding of the things that happened during the walks I walked. As the research progressed I began to consider that it is the restructuring of storylines through talk and reminiscence that was at the heart of how literacy reacted with walking to transformational alchemical effect.

**2.5 Literacy in context**

In recognising literacy as a social practice and detailing how instances of literacy happen within structuring but mutable social fields, it is clear, that a focus on context is central to the New Literacy Studies. Barton (1994) and Hamilton (1998) build on the foundational theorists described above and draw together the conceptual strands outlined. In ‘Literacy: An Introduction to the Ecology of Written Language’ (1994), Barton explains and defends the use of the metaphor of ecology, highlighting how an ecological approach to literacy aims to ‘understand how literacy is embedded in other human activity’ (1994 P.32). The term encapsulates the connectivity of literacy and social life, it also assumes change.

In ‘Local Literacies’ Barton and Hamilton utilise a social practices approach in an ethnographic study which documents literacy practices amongst a group of residents in Lancaster in the final decade of the twentieth century. In closely studying literacy events they clarify how literacy is not the same in all contexts. They identify domains as ‘structured patterned contexts within which literacy is used and learned’ (1998 P.10). They describe how various institutions support activities in different domains of life and recognise how socially powerful institutions tend to support dominant literacy practices. This leads to a consideration of how not all literacies are equal. Barton and Hamilton identify vernacular literacy practices as practices which are not regulated by the procedures of dominant social institutions. They suggest that vernacular literacies are ‘hybrid practices which draw on a range of practices from different domains’ (1998 p.247). Vernacular literacies are often hidden, either withheld by people or pushed away by institutions. They are not culturally valued and yet often fulfil important purposes as well as being the site of opposition and resistance. They are also often deeply and clearly entwined in people’s emotional lives (1998 p.255).

The literacy that I considered in my research was vernacular. However, it was not so much hidden or oppressed as unseen. The study attempted to draw out practices that were so embedded in everyday life, in our ways of being and doing that they were hard to identify, ethereal and unquantifiable. My final definition of ‘mobile literacies’ highlighted that they are emplaced, embodied collective storytelling practices that were generated by affectual response to moving through landscape. It was in trying to identify the uses of language, the vernacular practices that were supported within the Health Walks domain and consider their impact that I gradually moved towards this definition. The concept of vernacular literacies was a vital orientating tool in this process.

**2.6 Purpose and identity**

The relationship between literacy and its context is at the heart of its conception as a social practice. Barton and Hamilton and theorists who followed them (Crowther et al 2006) focussed on how the values and power relationships inherent within specific contexts or domains impacts on the individual and their literacy practices. A study of literacy practices and events within certain social contexts inevitably becomes a study of how literacy enacts an individual’s position, agency and sense of identity. Necessarily therefore, viewing literacy through the social practice lens magnifies the enactment of identities.

In considering how identity is enacted in the practice of going for a walk, I rely on three theorists who have explored changing conceptions of self- identity. I begin by outlining Ivanic’s (1998) consideration of how identity is established in a search for affiliation. I go on to outline Giddens’s framework of identity as narrative (1991), and conclude by considering Merchant’s (2005) position on anchored and transient identities. All three theorists helped to orientate my understanding of the literacies I observed whilst walking.

Ivanic (1998) works alongside Barton, Hamilton and those concerned with ethnographic study of situated literacies (Barton, Hamilton, Ivanic 1999). She specifically examines identity in literacy practices and events, and focusses primarily on writing. Ivanic (1998) looks at different ways of talking about identity. She highlights how identity is fluid and uses the term identities as most apt to describe the richness and dilemmas inherent in a sense of self. Ivanic (1998) pursues this fluidity by positing the verb ‘identify’ as vital in considering how individuals align themselves with groups, communities and/or sets of interests, values, beliefs and practices. She highlights the importance of thinking about identity as process and recognising how the powerful influence of dominant ideologies can control and constrain an individual’s sense of themselves (1998 p.11). Crucially, she contends that identity only establishes itself in relation to difference. In taking on identity other identities are rejected and therefore, at the point of affiliation, struggle ensues. Ivanic (1998) places this struggle in the act of writing.

I used Ivanic’s (1998) understandings to locate how identities are formed and reformed in the process of walking. She highlights how identity is established in a struggle for affiliation and how writingis at the heart of this struggle. My research considered the impact of Health Walks and what part literacy played in this and I concluded that impacts are all about self and agency. In uncovering the literacies of Health Walks identity was key. However, what I found was not so much a site of struggle as one of generation. The work of Giddens and Merchant help to clarify the generative nature of these literacies.

In Modernity and Self Identity, the sociologist Giddens (1991) describes the emergence, alongside modern institutions, of new mechanisms of self- identity. He emphasises how these new mechanisms of self -identity are shaped by, but also shape, the institutions of modernity. Central to his argument is his assertion that in the post traditional order, self -identity is reflexive. It is not a stable quality but rather an account of a person’s life.

Central to Giddens’s theory is an understanding that a post-traditional social world places people in different relationships with one another and so impacts on a sense of who we are. Identity is no longer closely correlated to place or delineated by nationhood but is continually produced and altered through action and performance. Giddens insists that whilst modernity must be understood at an institutional level it nonetheless alters the most personal aspects of everyday social life and therefore alters the self (1991 p.1).

The most defining property of modernity according to Giddens, is the dis- embedding of social life from time and space. In pre – modern societies, space was the area in which one moved, time was the experience one had while moving. However, in modern societies social space is no longer confined by these boundaries and social relations are no longer determined by proximity. A defining feature of modernity is the increasing availability of social contact with those who are not immediately present, a phenomenon that Giddens argues has led to a separation of time and place as coordinating factors of social life. Digital communication practices are a salient illustration of how social life is conducted and identities enacted beyond the boundaries of place and time.

The suggestion is therefore, that in moving away from the fixed identities associated with industrial and pre-industrial society, modernity requires identity to be contingent, multiple and malleable. Participation in social fields dis- embedded from time and space necessitates that, an individual produces, and performs various identities.

Giddens details characteristics of self – identity in modernity. He describes how the self is seen as a reflexive project for which the individual is responsible. This project of the self, forms a trajectory of development from the past to the anticipated future. Self- identity then, as a coherent phenomenon, presumes a narrative. The narrative of the self is made explicit, (Giddens 1991 p.75-76) and this line of development of the self is internally referential. Self- identity coheres in the integrating of life experiences within the narrative of self- development.

The project of self-identity is impacted by modernity. Specifically, Giddens highlights the complex diversity of choices available to individuals. Individuals integrate sets of choices and practices into what Giddens terms a ‘lifestyle’ to give material form to a narrative of self- identity. Alternative lifestyle options require consideration and planning and cohering into a whole. This can be particularly demanding given the pluralisation of different settings in modern life and the way such settings are diverse and segmented, particularly between the private and public domains (Giddens 1991 p.83).

The project of self- identity then, is a narrative project. Giddens insists that the self is made rather than simply inherited or static and the thing that we make is a reflexive project that is continuously worked at and reflected on. Self- identity requires the creation, maintenance and revision of a set of biographical narratives. To support this project, individuals draw on ‘lifestyles’ which act like ready- made templates for the narrative of the self. This narrative is a continuous and open -ended endeavour. Giddens states that:

A person’s identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor important though this is – in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going. The individual’s biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing ‘story’ about the ‘self’. (Giddens 1991 p.54)

In my analysis of data from Health Walks I highlighted that walking in groups initiated storytelling practices, practices I termed mobile literacies. Giddens’s framework of the ongoing narrative project of self- identity helps to orientate this practice in terms of its importance to the individual and the group’s efforts to ‘keep a particular narrative going’ (Giddens 1991 p.54). I described in Chapter 5 how personal stories are told and re-told as we walked. Giddens’s theory helps to recognise this practice not only as a form of reinforcing a narrative of identity but also, as I described, a way of recasting the past and shaping the future self. One of the Darwen walkers, Doreen, described the impact of her son’s death over a period of weeks and each time her focus is slightly different as she moves through and reflects on stages of grief and acceptance and imagines her future life without him. In telling these stories she is shaping her new self -identity as a bereaved mother.

Merchant’s conception of anchored and transient identities also informed my understanding of mobile literacy practices. Merchant (2005) drew on Giddens (1991) in his aim to develop principles for the analysis of identity and impression formation in children’s digital writing. Importantly for my purposes he develops the sense of self identity as a reflexive narrative project and introduces the notion of anchored and transient identities.

In considering how children perform identity in a digital writing classroom exercise, Merchant distinguishes between anchored identities, which are profoundly influenced by sustained socio – cultural practices and those transient identities which are more easily made and unmade. Transient identities he states, are easier to adopt and discard than anchored identities. As such they offer the opportunity to experiment with ways of being and explore tensions in self – identity. Merchant suggests that transient and anchored identities are not in binary opposition to each other but rather poles on a ‘continuum of multiple identity performance’ (Merchant 2005 p.304). He highlights how certain interactions, contexts and events are likely to make certain aspects of identity more or less relevant at any one time and importantly suggests that discourses and artefacts related to transient identities can interact with more settled social realities in complex ways.

I found the conception of ‘transient identities’ particularly useful in my analysis of the mobile literacies of women in Blackburn. In Chapter 5 I describe how imaginative storytelling on the theme of escape and freedom was particularly prevalent on the walks with this group. On the Street Circular walk a woman ruminates ‘I wish I could drive, I would go everywhere, alone or with friends.’ Sitting by the canal women imagined what is beneath the surface of the water and suggest ‘Maybe suitcases with forgotten things in them.’ Whilst the women engaged in practices of ‘keeping a particular narrative going’ Giddens (1991 p.54), in stories about arriving in Blackburn and their lives in the area they also, I would suggest, played with transient identities in their imaginings about what lies beyond the horizon of the Darwen moors and what might be in imaginary suitcases at the bottom of the Leeds Liverpool canal. Here mobile literacy practices offered opportunities to temporarily adopt alternative identities. Merchant (2005) describes how certain contexts and interactions are likely to make certain aspects of identity more, or less relevant at any one time. I would slightly revise his observation to suggest that the context of the Health Walk allowed for the transient identities concerned with escape, freedom and being in a rural landscape to come to the fore.

The mobile literacies I observed were practices bound up with the performing, generation and revision of identity. Theories around the ongoing reflexive narrative project of the self and how this project is enabled by context and mobility and expressed in language helped to frame the practices I observed. I conclude that the enactment of identity through ‘mobile literacies’ is one of the key ways in which language and literacy is involved in generating the non - health related impacts of taking part in Health Walks.

**2.7 Literacy and space**

A transdisciplinary ‘spatial turn’ during the final decade of the twentieth century led to a critical reconfiguration of framing theories within literacy studies, specifically the notion of context and the situatedness of literacy events (Soja 2004). This spatial turn, built on theories developed by Foucault (1980) and Lefebvre (1991) that posits space as socially constructed, mutable, and therefore potentially transformable.

Lefebvre (1991) a Marxist philosopher and sociologist introduced the concept of the production of social space. He describes a trialectic of perceived, conceived and lived space. Perceived space within this framework is mapped from readily visible practices and associated with daily routine, conceived space is planned space and dominated by ideology. In relation to the above, lived space is space that imagination seeks to change. Ideas of space as socially constructed, as not static, and as a causal force helped to unsettle understandings of literacy in context, dominant within the New Literacy Studies at the time.

Soja (2000) working in the field of political geography draws on Lefebvre and his conceptualisation of social spaces as perceived, conceived and lived. He adopts the concept of lived space and terms ‘third space’ as a similarly alternative approach that comprehends both the material and mental dimensions of spatiality but moves beyond them to alternative modes of spatial thinking. Soja foregrounds third space thinking as a way of critically restructuring binary approaches and opening up radical possibilities.

it is an invitation to enter a space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives. (2000 P.5)

This conception both helps to illuminate the limitations of earlier understandings of literacies in context and offers opportunities to reconfigure this understanding.

Leander and Sheehy (2004) explore aspects of this unsettling dynamic. They suggest that context in literacy studies is overdetermined by the focus on an apparently natural interpretation of setting. They foreground the shifting nature of space (and time) as it figures in literacy events, and state;

when we use words we are situating and resituating ourselves. When we read words we are involved in discourse relations extending in to other space times. (2004 P.3)

Leander and Sheehy (2004) critique the notion of situated literacies and suggest that space has been ‘over materialised’ (2004 p.3). Notions of situatedness that rely on particular contexts are problematic in so far as they imply a fixedness that belies the way that literacy practices can evoke a variety of contexts. Leander and Sheehy view space as undergoing constant construction, that is, as being fluid and emerging. In this view, they are influenced by social geographers who have viewed space as essentially shaped by people’s past and present activities and their perceptions of a space’s significance and possibilities (Lefebvre 1991, Soja 2000).

In the light of this transdisciplinary spatial turn New Literacy Studies developed to incorporate an understanding of the fluidity of space and time as participating factors constituting literacy events and practices. The spatial turn helps to orientate the conception of ‘mobile literacies’ as being generated in response to place. The spatial turn became a key element of research that began to push the boundaries beyond the local to the trans- local and beyond print literacies to digital and multimodal literacies (Kress 2010). An understanding of how remote sites and remote literacy practices impact on and constrain the apparently immediate context provoke Brandt and Clinton to conclude that ‘there is more going on locally than just local practice’ (2002 p.338).

Leander and Sheehy (2004) also consider the alternative argument that the material world is not rigorously considered in researching literacy. They contest that literacy spaces tend to be considered metaphorically and that whereas attention has been paid to the material tools involved in literacy events less attention has been paid to how rooms, buildings, neighbourhoods and landscapes shape the literacy events that occur within them. An understanding both of how literacy is shaped by trans- local spaces and by the materiality of immediate environments and how all these spaces coalesce to impact on literacy events and practices is pertinent to my research. The literacy events and practices I observed in my research are impacted both by the material conditions of the immediate environment and by memories and imaginings of trans- local spaces.

I go on in Chapter 3 to consider notions of space from the perspective of social anthropology and cultural geography (Cresswell 2004, Ingold 2007). In Chapter 3, space, place and landscape are considered as separate conceptions. These alternative perspectives help me to frame arguments about literacy in context within the specific conditions in which my research takes place. In Chapter 3 I describe how place, as opposed to space, is positioned as socially constructed, and as being about an embodied relationship with the world (Cresswell 2004).

Within the field of literacy of studies, Massey’s (2005) work converges with these ideas. She argues that engaging in meaning making with objects and diverse entities in a space, transforms that space to a place. According to Massey, space is a ‘simultaneity of stories so far’ and places are ‘collections of those stories, articulations within the wider power-geometrics of space’ (2005 p.130). With this in mind, the dynamic of walking and talking could be seen as the dynamic of transforming space into place. Massey’s notion of place as a ‘spatio temporal event’ (2005 p.130) highlights how it is constantly being re configured through relationships, actions and experiences. Significantly Massey’s conceptions highlight how literacy activity can transform context, a dynamic that helped me to understand the impacts of the literacy events I observed in my research.

Comber and Nixon (2008) pursue a similar focus on how literacy activity can transform its context. They have developed a critical pedagogy of place focusing on the affordances of meaning making activities with a focus on place. They describe projects with young people that use narratives of the past as a cultural resource. They state that a key characteristic of a place based approach lies in its potential to allow young people to make connections with their environments and each other and in so doing to develop a new sense of agency (2014, p.86). Crucially in their account, a move is made from undifferentiated space, to place, as links are made and it is endowed with value. Also, a new sense of agency emerges, as literacy activity takes place in, and transforms its context.

These accounts of literacy activity impacting on context resonate with observations made within my research. A key dynamic uncovered in the research is about how meaning making activities, talking or telling stories emerged through the interaction between humans, objects and landscape and how this resulted in the transformation of the space of the walk into a place through the endowment of value and a transformative arising of agency. The conception of ‘mobile literacies’ grew from this understanding of how material entanglements can generate meaning.

In literacy studies, an understanding of the mutable nature of space and the differences between space and place have helped to drive forward thought about literacy and its contexts. Within my research I combined these understandings with social geographic theories of space and place (Cresswell 2004, Edensor 2010, Wiley 2005, 2006a 2008) to help clarify the specific contexts of taking part in Health Walks. The space of walking, whether it is configured as space, place or landscape, constantly changes as we move through it and is constantly changing as we pause within it. In this way, the aptness of Leander’s concerns about context being overdetermined is brought into clear focus. Similarly, in attempting to understand the role space plays in shaping the language and literacy that happens when we walk, it is necessary to recognise its materiality. Using Leander’s considerations helps to place the space of walking, the world, in the dynamic of walking/talking. Space, the landscape, the cityscape, mutable and changing, both acts on us and is acted on by us as we move through, and the active agent, I suggest, and argue in my conclusion, is literacy and language. This understanding of how place and literacy are mutually constituted departs from earlier understanding of how literacy is shaped by context (Barton and Hamilton 1998). ‘Mobile literacies’ both draw from and transform the landscape.

**2.8 Literacy and the body**

As with the turn towards space there has been a similar move towards a recognition of the body in the human sciences over the past two decades, which is mirrored in literacy research (Farquhar and Lock 2007). Implications and affordances of a focus on the body for literacy research vary and overlap. Centring the body necessarily prioritises how individuals interact with spaces and practices around them and opens up understandings of how spaces and practices impact on bodies.

A focus on the body prioritises material and emotive responses and it is this focus that is of primary importance in analysis of my research. The notion of affective response to surroundings as an initiator of literacy activity permeated the observations I made. Work on multimodality in literacy has included bodily movement, gesture and talk as part of the multiple sign systems that make up multimodal literacy practices. Studies of young people’s multimodal literacy practices (Carrington and Marsh 2005, Jewitt and Kress 2003, Kress 1997, Vasudevan 2010) illustrates how the body is central in making meaning, how it is both inscribed and inscribes. My analysis of the experience of taking part in Health Walks included commentary on the movement of bodies and gesture and how these were elements of the meaning making activities that occurred. A focus on the body also illuminates how embodied literacy practitioners are inscribed and differently valued as variously gendered, classed, raced and dis/abled subjects. Such a focus can therefore, develop new ways of doing and understanding literacy.

In *Literacies Learning and the Body*, Enriquez et al (2015) outline four broad strands of reading literacies as embodied. They discuss how literacy practices discipline the body; they consider how literacy practices include material and discursive meaning making in discourse communities and how recognising embodied literacies foregrounds these; they consider the way that social texts make bodies and therefore bodies can be re made as social texts. Finally, they recognise that bodies are mobile, affective and indeterminate and conclude that therefore so are literacies.

In considering the first strand, (Luke 92, Kamler 97, Manyak 2004, Kontovowki 2014) assert that when bodies engage with texts they are a conduit that help to connect local practice to broader institutional and ideological mechanisms. A focus on the body can locate local micro meaning making within macro power structures. Siegel (2015) makes these connections focussing on how regulating bodies through school literacy pedagogies served to normalise disembodied theories of literacy at the macro level. This lens emphasises the disciplining or restraining of meaning makers.

The second strand focuses on embodied responses to texts and artefacts, (Johnson 2011, Johnson and Vasudevan 2012, Pahl and Rowsell 2010, Wohlwend 2011, Lewis and Dockter Tierney 2011, Burnett, Merchant Pahl and Rowsell 2014, Ehret and Hollett 2014, Leander and Boldt, 2013, Lenters 2016) This work emphasises how affective response is part of meaning making and how an affective response is performed, interpreted, recognised, read, mis- read, ignored, evaluated or diagnosed, is part of a meaning making event. Enriquez et al (2015) highlight the transformative impact of affective response:

emotions have the power to transform signs. These emotions, signs, transformations and responses are situated in time and place with material consequences for the ways identities are lived and felt. (p.9)

Affect then, is a visceral force working alongside or instead of cognitive knowing that is triggered when individuals come into contact with practices and objects. It is an unconscious resonance, or discordance and as such is both pervasive and hard to quantify.

It was these felt connections that were at the heart of the sustaining and fulfilling experiences described by the walkers in my study and as such it was vital that the role of affect and the body was foregrounded in the research. Affective responses were generated between individuals, between individuals and places and they fluxed and flowed through the route of a walk and were expressed and understood through meaning making practices. Affective responses generated by moving through landscape together was the stuff I considered when glimpsing the special meaning making that occurred whilst walking.

To foreground affective response as a foundational aspect of literacy activity required a shift in focus. Over the period of the research I gradually moved towards foregrounding embodied response as a defining characteristic of ‘mobile literacies.’ In so doing I relied on those theorists (Lenters 2016, Johnson Thiel 2015) who recognise affect as a central element of meaning making activity. Lenters (2016) considers how omission or side-lining of this visceral engagement may stem from a tendency to consider the mind as the primary site of literacy engagement. A move towards a divergent understanding of subjectivity, one that recognises how feelings, desires and felt responses propel meaning making is necessary. Burnett and Merchant (2016) echo the call for such a move, stating that ‘accounts like this are needed if educators and researchers are to explore the complexities of contemporary literacies and particularly those associated with playful opportunities for meaning making…’ (2016 p.261). In terms of my research affective responses were key in my gradual uncovering of the nature of the literacies I observed. In Chapter 4 I detailed my own tendency to side line and disregard embodied response and chart how the data I collected and my recursive analysis continually brought me back to the primacy of affect in the experiences I shared and recorded.

Enriquez et al’s (2015) third strand considers the body as a social text. A focus on the materiality of the body (Mallozzi 2011) recognises how this materiality can be read and drawn upon in re making the self. Grushka (2011) foregrounds how our subjectivity is increasingly represented by images of our bodies. She centres on students’ representations or re- representations through self- portrait. Vitally Grushka (2011) highlights how although body image is social it can be locally manipulated and reworked to shift and re- define identities. This lens helped to recognise the way that the walking body and walking bodies, proceeding along a route through a place, were performing and reforming identities. In my analysis, I used the conception of walk as narrative to help explicate the meaning making that occurred as we moved our bodies through the world. Walking as an iterative act in and of itself is the base of recognising walking as meaning making. In framing ‘mobile literacies’ as a literacy practice I extend understandings of literacy to place the body as a literacy tool.

Finally, Leander and Boldt (2013) unsettle ethnographic accounts of embodied literacy, they push beyond micro/macro mappings and suggest that this framework foregrounds oppressive discourses of literacy, knowing and being. Their focussing lens is that we live in a perpetual state of improvisation, our actions are quick and impulsive, propelled by partial knowledge and intense affect. As such embodied affective responses swirl beyond dominant ideological forces. Burnett, Merchant, Pahl and Rowsell (2014) following this line of thought develop the lens of im(materialities) as a construct that focuses on ‘the subjective experience of the interconnectedness of space, mediation, stuff and embodiment’, and draws attention to ‘the multiplicity of ways in which the material and immaterial are caught up with one another as well as the interwoven stories, discourses, values and memories that pattern individuals’ understanding and production of texts’ (2014 p.101).

This sense of a continuously emergent meaning making filtered through bodily affect resonates with the focus of my research. In collecting data, I found that this sense of improvisational ungraspable flow is what made the mobile literacies I considered so difficult to define and so tantalising to glimpse. My research dealt not in the representational but in the felt. MacLure (2011) argues for the importance of taking into account sensual dimensions in meaning making and suggests focussing on ‘those moments when we feel the body surging into the serious work of cognition’ (2011 p.106). I aimed through my research to use the lens of affect and embodiment to illuminate how taking part in Health Walks involved the walkers in emergent bodily cognition, a process that generated powerful literacies. These literacies could only be generated through movement and were partly expressed through the body. As such they depart significantly from the conceptions of literacy inherent within the foundational texts of the New Literacy Studies. There were no texts at the centre of ‘mobile literacies.’ Embodied affect was central, movement gesture and talk were the modes by which meaning was generated.

**2.9 Multimodality**

The literacies I described and analysed in my research were multimodal. By this I mean that they were constituted by multiple sign systems including bodily movement, gesture and talk.

The theoretical perspective of multimodality was precipitated by the rise of digital literacy and led to an examining of the multiple communicative modalities that underwrite literacy practices. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), Kress (1997), Jewitt and Kress (2003) and others present an understanding of literacy as being multimodal, that is a recognition that texts get meaning through visual, aural and other modalities. This theoretical perspective is dominated by a focus on digital media and the fast-changing modes of representation and communication afforded by changing technologies and the changing communicative needs of society. Kress foregrounds how meaning is made by the fusion of multiple modes. This change in the literacy landscape foregrounds the individual, the central point here is that we are meaning makers and that we use multiple modes as resources to make new meanings.

Recent critiques of multimodal theory have noted its tendency to foreground the linguistic (Bazalgette and Buckingham 2013, Kendrick et al 2010, McDonald 2012, Lenters 2016). Bazalgette and Buckingham highlight how the concept of multimodality has been taken up within curriculum policy and appropriated in a way that reinforces a distinction between print and non-print texts. They describe how this move represents a conceptual leap from multimodal analysis as a way of looking at texts to multimodal texts as a way of apparently distinguishing new kinds of text. In fact, as they assert,’ the realisation that communication may involve a diversity of modes, visual, auditory, written, musical, gestural and so on is not new’ (2013 p.97). They highlight that at its heart multimodal analysis is not about identifying modes but about recognising how modes work together to produce meanings that are more than the sum of their parts.

Lenters (2016) explores how the social semiotic multimodal approach tends towards Cartesian rationalism, that is an understanding of the mind as independently cognitively functioning. This tendency to foreground an autonomous subject at the centre of meaning making closes off the possibilities of recognising the collective and the social in meaning making. Bazalgette and Buckingham (2013) extend this point and consider how multimodal approaches can veer off into a form of determinism. In considering how modes work in meaning making they suggest that it is concluded that different modes in themselves afford different kinds of social relationship and social identity. There is an assertion that in simply changing the balance and combination of modes existing practices can be unsettled and new connections forged. However, Bazalgette and Buckingham (2013) suggest that little attention is focussed on how texts are used in everyday life and on the social and political dimensions of meaning making. In multimodal theory it would seem that the text is the be all and end all of meaning making, the collective, the social and the situated are not incorporated as elements of the process.

There were no texts at the centre of the literacies I researched. As I have highlighted, embodied affect was central, movement gesture and talk were the modes by which meaning was made. In Chapter 5 I described how the literacies I researched were collectively generated, in many senses it would seem that the focus of my research was very far from that considered by multimodal theorists. However, I found the theoretical framework useful in analysing my observations. Multimodal theory supports an untangling of the threads that constituted the meaning making that occurred on walks. In recognising these threads as modes, in analysis I could then strive to understand how they worked together to form a literacy practice that was more than the sum of its parts. In describing ‘mobile literacies’ in Chapter 5 I aimed to unpick how movement, embodied response to place and the materiality of the landscape combined to generate collective meaning making practices.

**2.10 Materialism and New Materialism**

The material aspect of meaning making has become a central tenet of much current literacy research. Proceeding from this focus, a challenge to the binaries of material and (im)material (Burnett, Merchant, Pahl and Rowsell 2014) provides a framework by which to explore how the material may evoke visceral reactions that then become embedded in texts and literacy activities.

Lenters (2016) used assemblage theory to consider the meaning making activities of an adolescent youth at home and at school. Assemblage theory views learning as occurring within assemblages or networks of people, objects and practices (DeLanda 2006, Deleuze and Guattari 1987/2004, Ingold 2011). An understanding of the role of objects in assemblages becomes key, and this placing of objects alongside human actors in the enactment of literacy practices provides a response to the anthrocentrism of social practice perspectives of literacy (Brandt and Clinton 2002, Lenters 2014, Kuby, Gulshall and Kirchhoffer 2015). Viewing objects as active participants in meaning making assemblages provides an alternative lens for exploring literacy learning and enactment. Crucially, focussing on literacy activity from the lens of assemblage theory, helps to recognise how the interactions between human beings, objects, events and practices are continually in flux and ever changing. The affect that is produced in this process of ever changing interaction is the place of transformation. Using the lens of assemblage theory helps to clarify and crystalize the understanding of literacy as emanating from the interaction of multiple actors. This understanding underpins the foregrounding of talking whilst walking as literacy in the research.

Within the field of political science, Bennett (2010) examines the material from a different angle by focusing on agency in the social and political worlds. She posits that all things in the world, living and non- living are matter and that interactions between matter, including between living and non-living, harness creative potential. She describes ‘thing power’ as ‘the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle’ (Bennett 2010 p.3).

In describing how objects have the power and potential to stimulate us into action, Bennett is suggesting more than that we ascribe meaning to things. Bennett explores the duality of our experience of interactions with things and states that there are moments where, ‘the us and the it slip slide into each other’ (2010 p.4). Bennett ascribes the capacity for agency to both humans and objects and in so doing opens up a vista where each has the potential to co -construct and transform each other. Bennett describes interactions that are meaning making and can be read therefore potentially as multi modal, materialist literacy events.

This line of thought is pursued by Johnson Thiell (2015) in an ethnographic study of young children’s play in a community space in the South East of the U.S. She observes a young boy’s play with fabric to create structures and fashion designs. Referencing New Materialism, she argues that the child’s engagement with the material can be read as a literacy practice and that this interaction creates narratives and transforms both the individual and the thing. She describes these transformative narratives as lived out through actions and bodies rather than through narrative and storytelling (2015 p.116).

I follow Johnson Thiel (2015) in arguing that engagement with the material can be read as a literacy practice. Whereas she highlights creation of costume as the embodiment of a transformative narrative I cite collective storytelling as the literacy practice that ensues from the entanglements of walking. The lens constructed in Johnson Thiel’s (2015) work is vital in beginning to glimpse the nature of the meaning making that occurs on Health Walks. Apparently meandering and intangible engagements that involve the body and visceral responses are at the heart of what is being studied. In recognising the interactions between the body, the landscape, objects in the landscape and how their interaction is channelled through language to transformative effect is at the core of the research, assemblage theory and a recognition of the role of objects as participants in meaning making is central to the endeavour.

Burnett, Merchant, Pahl and Rowsell (2014) focus on this interaction in their challenge of the binaries between the material and the immaterial. Significantly for my research they explore the reflexive and recursive relationship between the material and the immaterial. They suggest that ‘the material constantly conjures the immaterial which in turn relies on material experience for its salience’ (2014 p.92). This dance between material and immaterial is key. Burnett et al (2014) highlight how the reflexive relationship plays out, as meanings are constructed through text. That is, how the immaterial, memories, feelings and visceral reactions are materialised in texts. Recognising the text as material object that draws in and embeds the immaterial helps to bind the binary approaches together. They highlight how ephemeral or lost literacies, those that are hard to focus on or grasp, such as ‘traced inscriptions in dust on cars, street literacies such as street art and oral stories’ (Burnett et al 2014 p.97), also bind meaning making and the stuff in the world. They describe how the material is meshed with meaning and that the resonances and echoes of these meanings remain when the object is no longer there.

There are traces in this framework of a way of understanding how the talk and stories arising through the walk are resonances of meanings that arise as humans interact with the landscape and objects of the walk. Burnett et al (2014) also highlight how texts are materially situated, that is connected to the material culture of the surroundings in which they occur. Again, this focus helps to place how the route of the walk is manifested in the stories of the walk, the literacy that occurs is a dance between the material conditions of the day and the immaterial carried with the walkers.

This re- orientation towards focus on intra-actions and the theoretical lenses of (im)materiality, affective intensity and emergence was significant in framing my approach to the research. I found the field of research lent itself to an understanding of how bodies, things and discourses were spatially and materially entangled in the process of meaning making. Assemblage theory (DeLanda 2006, Deleuze and Guattari 1987/2004, Ingold 2011) and a baroque approach (Harbison 2000, Lambert 2004, Law and Mol 2002, Law 2004, 2011) have been helpful in making sense of the field and uncovering the processes of meaning making we engage in as walkers. The theoretical field helps to frame my observations that a literacy practice occurs as we walk and helps to untangle to characteristics of ‘mobile literacies.’

**2.11 Assemblage theory and the Baroque**

Assemblage theory views life and learning as enacted through assemblages, that is networks of people, objects and practices (DeLanda 2006, Deleuze and Guattari 1987/2004, Ingold 2011). By foregrounding the social and material aspects of multimodal literacy practices, a rich analysis of literacy practices is possible. The approach particularly supports the uncovering of hidden or transient practices, the alternative perspective offering a differently angled view that can help to illuminate alternative practices. As such it is invaluable in the consideration of the practices that emerge in the process of walking. Lenters (2016) introduced assemblage theory as a framework whereby literacy practices can be re envisioned to foreground objects, practices, the body and affect. This act of foregrounding moves the understanding of literacy away from the conception of literacy described in the first wave of the new Literacy Studies (Barton and Hamilton 1998) where text is at the centre of events and practices.

The term ‘assemblage’ refers to Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987, 2004) conceptions of social order. Deleuze and Guattari, working in the fields of philosophy and political activism conceive of assemblages as groupings of human and non - human components, these components participate in relationships within a specific context, the relationships are non-hierarchical, human participation is not automatically foregrounded. This conceptual tool offers the opportunity to examine the ever - shifting relationships between people, objects and practices in literacy learning and the meaning making affordances of new associations as they are made (Brandt and Clinton 2002, Leander and Boldt, 2013).

Assemblages are necessarily temporal in nature, they form for a particular purpose, (territorialise) and then reform (de-territorialise) as purposes and needs change. DeLanda (2006) describes how territorialised assemblages tend to generate more fixed motifs, rules and procedures that provide consistency and predictability in familiar and often repeated groupings.

However, territorialisation, whilst it brings stability also brings rigidity and inevitably is troubled from within by the changing nature of relationships of components and the way they flux over time. This precarious internal tension of solidifying and fragmenting within assemblages speaks to Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987, 2004) argument that the main question of philosophy is ‘What can it become?’ (Holland 2013 p.30). This ontology recognises the continually transforming nature of life as it is lived. Participants in assemblies are in the process of continual emergent becoming as they come into association with other participants. As participants move in and out of assemblies, and relationships within them are re-organised, agency is exercised, creativity ensues and transformation of people, objects and places takes place (Ingold 2011, Semetsky 2013).

Lenters (2016) asserts that, ‘Development and creativity, from an assemblage perspective require an individual to continually engage in deterritorialization’ (2016 p.284). The focus of my study is the changes, the transformations that occur, the continual becomings that emerge as we walk through an ever- changing landscape and move through ever changing assemblages. Assemblage theory helpfully scaffolds the experience of moving through a landscape, and becoming in different configurations of people and objects. I argue that the walk is the ultimate deterritorializing act and that the stories that emerge in the walking are a product of the tensions between territorialising and deterritiorializing forces and the creativity that is sparked from this tension.

An interest in baroque method has developed in the fields of cultural studies and social science (Harbison 2000, Lambert 2004, Law and Mol 2002, Law 2004, 2011). MacLure (2006) transposes this thinking to educational research, whereby she attempts to disrupt illusions of clarity or visibility associated with conventional accounts of education. She evokes ideas of rupture, entanglement and fragmentation to disconcert engagement with educational settings.

Burnett and Merchant (2016) propose a baroque approach to examining literacy that, they assert, can help reveal the messiness and contingent nature of meaning making at the heart of literacy practices. The baroque, they suggest, disturbs the ways in which meaning making is represented in research and practice and reveals new multiplicities and complexities. Law (2004, 2011) sets out six techniques of the baroque, suggesting that these techniques might be seen as a set of ‘experimental resources for understanding and appreciating the empirical differently’ (2011, p.11). Ultimately the baroque approach appears to be a re- orientation of approach that can help to generate new ways of knowing, noticing and feeling what occurs. As such I find it a useful lens through which to view my attempts to feel my way into the experience of walking and frame my understanding of the meaning making that occurs. In citing ‘mobile literacies’ as a significant impactful practice that takes place during Health Walks I am generating a new way of understanding what happens during these activities.

Merchant and Burnett (2016) employ a method of stacking stories (Burnett and Merchant 2014) to offer different accounts of actions and interaction observed in an educational setting. They offer the stories not with the aim of arriving at an ultimate truth but as a way of recognising how multiple acts of meaning making are generated through their infusions with each other and the gaps, contradictions and discontinuities melded between them. In so doing, they are able to place their observations of meaning making in a site beyond the ‘hierarchies of knowledge and linear thinking that typify representational accounts’ (MacLure 2011). They describe the process and say:

As we see these stories in relation to one another boundedness starts to dissolve and the stories become rhizomic with threads of each appearing in others sometimes surfacing, sometimes disappearing from view as different characters, objects, settings and actions are foregrounded. (Burnett and Merchant 2016 p.267)

I found this description a prescient representation of taking part in walks. As I go on to describe in Chapter 5, walking was always accompanied by multiple telling of and listening to stories. In moving between individuals and groups, past objects and through landscapes the boundedness of stories did indeed start to dissolve and threads and discontinuities emerged that helped to create an overarching theme or narrative of the event of the walk. As Burnett and Merchant (2016) use stacking stories to trouble and interrogate their observations of learning so I argue that as a group we stacked stories as we walked in such a way as to trouble and interrogate our own experiences and in so doing we co - created shared meanings specific to the place and time of our excursion.

The potential for creation engendered by walking is touched on in Burnett and Merchant’s (2016) description of a chance encounter that impacted their perceptions. Walking through a little - known city, Philadelphia, they came across the Magic Gardens, a collection of buildings and a garden decorated in mosaic created by Isaiah Zagar. They describe the surprise and impact of encountering this unusual sight and how its affective intensity destabilised their route through the city and disrupted the rational lines of thinking and talking they were pursuing.

Interestingly, linear thought and a familiar route run parallel in the description of this encounter and it is affect, the feelings evoked by the magic gardens, that then transform thought and perception. Unexpected stuff interrupts a familiar route, perceptions and thoughts are transformed. As the authors describe, ‘moving on through the streets we began to notice the textures, the details, the feeling of other buildings that we might have missed had the Magic Gardens not stopped us in our tracks’ (Burnett and Merchant 2016 p.264).

Burnett and Merchant (2016) use this encounter to illustrate how baroque sensibility disrupts the idea of an all - seeing perspective and prompts alternative perspectives on the everyday and mundane. I suggest that the story both illustrates the importance of objects and landscapes in meaning making and facilitates the possibility of seeing walking as a natural way to develop a baroque orientation. It could be argued that regular walking in unfamiliar settings expands the possibilities of chance encounters and orientates the individual towards new and alternative perspectives on the everyday and mundane. Developing a baroque perspective through walking could be an aspect of the transformative change that walkers experience, as well as an element in the creative meaning making that occurs.

**2.12 Narrative and storytelling**

Narrative studies, the analysis of storytelling in everyday life and its role in cognition and identity construction is a field of enquiry that spans the fields of sociolinguistics (Georgakopoulou 2007), narrative studies (Langellier and Peterson 2011) and folklore (Hymes 1996) as well as social anthropology (Ingold 2007, Ingold and Vergunst 2008). In considering narrative within the boundaries of my research I confined my attention to theories about narrative as a social practice, its role in identity construction and storytelling as an aspect of healthcare. As such I considered the broad nature of the narrative turn in social sciences in the last 40 years before focussing on Langellier and Peterson’s (2011) exploration of storytelling in everyday life, Bamberg (2007) and Georgakopoulou’s (2007) argument for a second turn in narrative theory to incorporate ‘small story’ research and critiques of this position (Freeman 2007). I concluded by describing research that uses narrative methodologies to improve outcomes in healthcare (Ramirez-Esparza and Pennebaker 2007, Charon 2007).

Bamberg (2007) describes a wave of narrative theorising over the last 40 years in which a number of different directions and orientations have emerged. He identifies two strands of approach in theorising and methodologically approaching narrative. The first strand focuses on what narratives of personal experience express about aspects of life. By drawing out autobiographical stories, this approach considers narrative as a way for individuals to make sense of and impose order on a chaotic flux of experience. Storytelling in this sense informs identity construction. Georgakopoulou (2007) traces this strand of the canon of narrative studies back to Labov’s (1972) model of narrative structure. A focus on ‘Labovian’ narrative is a focus on coherent autobiographical narratives drawn from research interview, this linguistically focussed framework places narrative as a detached autonomous and self- contained unit and places the individual at the heart of the process.

The second strand of approach to narrative (Bamberg 2007) focuses on frameworks that influence how sequences of events are arranged and particularised. Within this framework so called ‘master narratives’ are identified as communally shared resources, passed down through generations and used as a guide to inform choices of how to think, feel and act. Stories here are communal sense making tools.

Bamberg (2007) emphasizes how these two strands involve two different epistemological orientations to the act of storytelling. In the first, narratives that are elicited are considered to be unique products of an individual’s sense-making. However, within the second orientation, narratives are not seen as owned by the individual but rather are part of a wider repertoire of sense- making and interpretive practices. Bamberg (2007) concludes by highlighting how both approaches refocussed social science inquiry on the active role of the subject as an agent ‘in the construction of social practices on one hand, and on the other, the role of social practices as constitutive of ways of thinking, feeling and acting at the level of individual choices’(2007 p2 - 3).

I am inspired in my exploration of mobile literacy practices by the work of Hymes (1996) in his consideration of how narrative can be used to explore and convey knowledge in communities. He suggests that personal narrative particularly is depreciated as a form of knowledge but that it is nonetheless an ‘inescapable mode of thought’ (1996 p114). According to Hymes (1996) there are inequalities of opportunity in society with regard to the rights to use narrative and whose narratives are admitted to having a cognitive function. Considering this differential distribution amounts to restrictions to do with ‘fundamental functions of language, its cognitive and expressive uses in narrative form (Hymes 1996 p114). Hymes (1996) insists that narrative use of language is a universal function, not a property of subordinate cultures, and the restrictions at play regarding its use in society are to do with when storytelling is considered to be a legitimate and valid form of conveying knowledge.

Hymes (1996) describes and reflects on summers spent in Warm Springs Oregon. Importantly he links the experience of being in a place as conducive to storytelling and writes evocatively of the processes involved as the experiential flow of moving through a place crystallises in particular language use. He describes walking to places, ‘places that one can go out to in order to find and pick up things, memories, like berry patches’ (1996 p.117). He describes witnessing how a bit of experience develops into an event to be told and retold as it gradually takes on the shape of a narrative. He describes a boy’s remarks as having ‘the weight of a theme, a kernel of a story, the first act perhaps’ (1996 p.118). This focus on the characteristics of emerging stories in place is significant in terms of my research. Hymes describes witnessing events and the talk about events that are growing into more than gossip, he says:

There is a certain focussing, a certain weighting. A certain potentiality, of shared narrative form on the one hand, of consequentiality on the other. (1996 p.118)

As I go on to describe and analyse in Chapter 5 I noted the talk of walkers taking on a shared narrative form. I recorded mobile literacy events that carried the weight of a theme, the kernel of a story and I suggested that the impact of taking part in these events scaffolded the beneficial effects of participating in Health Walks. My conclusions centre around the assertion that the experience of walking in groups generates a literacy practice that catalyses beneficial impacts.

Langellier and Peterson (2011), working in the field of narrative studies recognise storytelling performances all around us. They cite storytelling as firmly embedded in people’s daily lives fulfilling sense making and identity construction functions as well as allowing for opportunities for interaction and participation in cultural conversations. They use semiotic phenomenology as an approach to explore performing narrative as a communication practice.

Semiotic phenomenology brings together the semiotic tradition of studying symbolic activity, that is language, and the phenomenological tradition of studying conscious experience. They draw on the work of Merleau–Ponty (1964a, 1964b) and Foucault (1976, 1980) in foregrounding how communication is embodied in a social world and a locus of material action and power. As such the approach requires a shift from a focus on the story text to storytelling performance. The theoretical approach requires a shift in perspective to recognise storytelling as performative, situated, embodied and interactive.

Langellier and Peterson (2011) characterise everyday storytelling as performative, reflexive, situationally and materially constrained, embodied, constrained by discursive regularities and able to legitimate and critique relations of power. The term ‘performing narrative’, incorporates both performance and performativity. Langellier and Peterson (2011) illustrate how performance and performativity are combined in storytelling by considering, Walter Benjamin’s assertion that;

The storyteller takes what he tells from experience – his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale. (Benjamin 1969 p.87)

The taking of experience and making of experience, the doing of the storytelling and what storytelling does, mirrors its performing and performative aspects. The performativity of storytelling predicates its reflexivity. As Benjamin’s description suggests, storytellers are first audiences as well as being audiences to their own performance and audiences, in responding and reciprocating become storytellers. Stories live after as well as before performance, storytelling, within this framework is socially and culturally reflexive. Langellier and Peterson (2011) highlight that this reflexivity engenders the potential to disrupt discourse conventions. Stories can be retold in new ways, they have a productive potential in their retelling. Reflexivity allows for recalibration and renewal.

Stories, Langellier and Peterson (2011) argue, are subject to situational and material constraints. ‘Situational resources and material conditions’ they say, ‘give rise to particular stories, particular performance of stories and to particular performance practices’ (2011 p.8). Within the scope of my research I described in Chapter 5 how moving through a landscape in a group afforded particular opportunities for storytelling to occur. I suggested that that the fluid nature of coupling and uncoupling that occured within a moving group allowed for personal stories to emerge safely and discretely. I highlighted how the embodied experience of moving though a familiar landscape mobilised memory in a specific way and how stories of reminiscence, stories of regaining health, stories of mortality and stories of escape and imagination emerged.

Langellier and Peterson (2011) go on to argue that storytelling is an embodied activity. Recalling Benjamin’s (1969) conception of storytelling as taking and making, they highlight how the storyteller takes up the bodily perception or recollection of an event and moves it to the bodily activity of telling the story. They conject that before narrative is performed it is lived through the body as affective experience. In storytelling, the body becomes both simultaneously the narrator and a character in the story, storytelling is an embodied practice. On the Darwen Moors walks described in Chapter 5 David began to tell me the story of his industrial accident and the later unexpected death of his colleague. As we walked together across the moor and he spoke, I began to notice the irregular rhythm of his stride, a faint echo of the limp caused by the accident he described. His story was partly told in the measure of his strides, he embodied both the narrator and the character of his story. David’s movement is an element of the enactment of his mobile literacy practice.

To take part in storytelling is to do something in and with discourse. Langellier and Peterson (2011) consider storytelling in terms of the limits that are placed on what stories are told by whom and in what way. They draw on Foucault (1976) in considering the regulatory principles that order and delimit discourse and highlight how, in examining narrative it is necessary to consider the ’possible conditions of existence that give rise to and limit discourse’(2011 p.20). In Chapter 5 I contended that discourse regulation is compromised by mobility. I argued that the experience of walking in groups seemed to generate a flood of storytelling events that would not occur in other contexts.

This ties into Langellier and Peterson’s (2011) final characteristic of everyday storytelling as legitimating and critiquing relations of power. They describe how the performative and reflexive nature of narrative renders it neither uniform nor stable. As such storytelling can challenge and change the bodily practises and material conditions in which they are embedded. Langellier and Peterson (2011) ask ‘How does storytelling regularize, transmit, reproduce and legitimate existing power relations? How does it work to thwart, critique and render such power relations fragile?’ (2011 P29). I considered these questions when exploring the mobile literacies enacted in walking.

Bamberg (2007) and Georgakopoulou (2007) differentiate between big stories and small stories. They claim that narrative research approaches to big stories have become a major methodological influence across social sciences in the last twenty years. By big stories they mean elicited life stories or stories of landmark life events. Georgakopoulou (2007) states that guiding assumptions around these stories include the idea that narrative is a privileged structure that works to bring the coordinates of time space and personhood into a unitary frame. She suggests that acceptance of this framework is based on an assumption that the person behind the narrator is made visible in the story and can then be scrutinised in the form of identity analysis. Big stories are well structured and develop in the style of a classic narration, moving from reported events and the complications within them to a high point which is evaluated and resolved (Labov 1972).

Georgakopoulou (2007) argues that this methodological framework informs understandings of what can be recognised as a story and what stories can be used to investigate identity. She foregrounds atypical stories, or small stories, as an area that could theoretically enrich traditional narrative enquiry. Small stories, in contrast to the structure of big stories, emerge in everyday talk, can be complex, collaborative and involve a multiplicity of tellings.

Georgakopoulou describes small stories as covering a range of narrative activities. They range from small and fragmented tellings to refusals to tell and deferrals of telling. She goes on to describe two key characteristics of small stories, they deal with very recent or still unfolding events and incorporate links to the participants’ previous interactions. Small stories are local, interactive and situated. They are embedded within particular socio -cultural settings and it is only within these settings that they become interpretable; part of the meaning of a small story lies in its situated nature.

In this chapter I described the New Literacy Studies’ placement of literacy as a social practice as at the heart of my understanding of the mobile literacies I researched. Georgakopoulou places small stories as social practices and in so doing encloses ideas about their relationship to context and purpose. She describes small stories as ‘vital social practices for rehearsing, exploring and negotiating the gap between actual and possible, reality and imagination’ (2007 p.152). Ultimately the social practice of telling small stories is a form of action and the meanings and impacts they generate are a result of action. The focus in small story research is on what people are doing when they tell stories and what the stories are designed to do in the social world. This involves a subtle shift in focus away from the narrative as a coherent whole and object of analysis towards a recognition of the situated and contextual nature of narrating as action.

Georgakopoulou (2007) suggests that when we study narratives we are not accessing speakers’ past experiences or their reflections on them but rather we witness talk that positions the teller in relation to the immediate context and audience. In choosing to draw on a memory or experience and bring that into the social moment, narrators are engaging in a social practice that has immediate currency and productive potential. In terms of my findings I concluded that this element of mobile literacy practice, the bringing of a memory or experience in to the current social moment is significant in terms of the beneficial impacts experienced by walkers.

The micro relations of location in narrative, where and when a narrative takes place are key constituents of its role in social practice. Georgakopoulou (2007) recognises how processes of intertextuality shape narrative (2007 p.6). Stories have a life cycle, they are told and retold, transposed and adapted to suit local contexts. The ways in which stories are transposed in time and space shape them. An individual instance of a telling can be dependent on prior tellings**.** As such a story holds within it echoes of prior tellings as well as future tellings. In Chapter 5, I described how Doreen retells the story of her son’s death every week, with gradual shifts in emphasis and increments of content as her feelings about the event shift and flux. Keith re - tells a well - known local story about a row of houses acknowledging that most of the audience know the story and have told it themselves and will tell it again in the future.

Conventional narrative analysis, analysis of big stories, places great emphasis on stories as modes for constructing identity. Georgakopoulou (2007) suggests that identity construction is equally salient in analysis of small stories but becomes a more complex enterprise. As I have described, small stories as situated social practice incorporate a significant degree of interaction. As such, constructions of self, become integrally bound up in processes of collective memory and shared interactional history**.** Identities emerge and are managed by narratives in interaction. Big story analysis is intrinsically oriented, Georgakopoulou would say (2007 p.18) to recognising identity construction as coherent and authentic. The small story self is more fragmented and relational, it cannot be easily reduced to a singular and coherent entity but rather emerges and fluxes in relation to local context.

Freeman (2007) offers a defence of big stories that focuses on the roles of reflection and interaction as opposing characteristics of big and small stories. He characterises a critique of big stories in terms of the suggestions that the immediacy of small stories confer an authenticity on them that big stories lack. He also examines the idea that big stories offer an inevitably distorted construction of self and events due to their structured, separate and reflective character. Big stories can hold a revelatory power and capacity to yield insight and understanding in a way that cannot occur in the immediacy of the present (Freeman 2007). He goes on to insist that ‘narrative reflection, far from being a step removed from life, is itself a part of life’ (Freeman 2007 p.159) and that it offers the opportunity to move beyond the confines of the moment with significant effect. Bamberg responds to these ideas by suggesting that Freeman’s focus on what talk is about, necessarily orients him as backwards focussing (2007 p.166). Bamberg (2007) argues that in focussing on talk in interaction we necessarily seize on the more complex activity of making the content of the story relevant to the immediate situation and thus how selves and identities emerge in the swell of forces that make up the interactional situation.

The big story, small story debate illuminates the question of what is happening in the practice of mobile literacies. Small story theorising helps to validate the language use I observe as narrative, many of the stories I recorded were fragmented and partly withheld. In Blackburn, I described how fragments of speech suggested an untold narrative to do with feelings of entrapment and dissatisfaction. Equally small story theory helps to validate my suggestion that it is in the communal interaction of the group, with each other, the landscape, the stories that have been told before, in the crucible of movement that crystallises the language use as narrative in action.

However, Freeman’s (2007) defence of reflection as a valid aspect of authentic experience and an opportunity to step beyond the confines of the moment, spoke to my observations regarding the impact of narration in walking. The walkers often told short but relatively structured and coherent narratives that were subsumed in reflection. The time of the walk was an opportunity for extended looking back and the stories told reflect this. I have sympathy with Freeman’s description of reflective actions as ‘life on holiday’ (2007 p.160) and his insistence that life on holiday is still part of life and potentially a regenerative and restorative practice. I recognised how taking part in Health Walks offered an opportunity to step out of the moment and as I will go on to describe in Chapter 5 I considered the reflective aspect of mobile literacies to be responsible for a large part of the positive impact of taking part in Health Walks.

Ramirez-Esparza and Pennebaker (2007) describe how narrative practices can lead to improved physical and mental health, not just in psycho- therapuetic engagement but in the potential for difficult and painful experiences to be transformed through the telling of stories. Charon (2007) describes how new narrative practices emerging in healthcare professions help to develop understanding of how narrative in the world works. Her understanding of the benefits of narrative, interestingly, draws strongly on the reflective element of the big story. She talks about how writing about an experience of ill health can confer form on a formless and chaotic experience and in so doing, allow the writer and healthcare professional to view and explore ill health anew. This opportunity for reflection she suggests has both therapeutic and clinical benefits.

**2.13 Conclusion**

I have considered perspectives on literacy arising from the development of the field of New Literacy Studies from its inception in the late 1970s to the present day. Specifically, I have focussed on the conception of literacy as a social practice (Street 1984, Heath 1983, Barton and Hamilton1998) and the description of literacy as incorporating events and practices (Scribner and Cole 1981, Street 1984, Heath 1983, Barton and Hamilton 1998). I have drawn out how recognising literacy as a social practice and embedded, albeit problematically, within a context, are foundational epistemological groundings of my research. However, in defining and describing ‘mobile literacies’ I move beyond the conceptions of literacy embedded within the New Literacy Studies. I have explored how the literacies I researched can be described as multi modal and highlighted how they are constituted by an embodied affective response. I go on to consider how using the framework of assemblage theory (DeLanda 2006, Deleuze and Guattari 1987/2004, Ingold 2011) helps to scaffold the experience of moving through a landscape and suggest that this movement enables a baroque orientation (Harbison 2000, Lambert 2004, Law and Mol 2002, Law 2004, 2011) that generates literacy activity. I conclude by outlining theories around storytelling in every -day life and consider the differences between big and small stories in terms of their characteristics and impact (Georgakopoulou 2007, Bamberg 2007, Langellier and Peterson 2011). I incorporate the theoretical positions offered in considerations of assemblage theory, New Materialism and narrative studies in positing ‘mobile literacies’ as a discrete and unique practice offering particular benefits to those who participate.

I go on to consider literature drawn from the fields of cultural geography

(Cresswell 2000, 2006, Edensor 2000, 2010) and social anthropology (Ingold

2007) that focuses on the meaning making aspects of walking and its

relation to place, the body and storytelling activity. In drawing the two fields

of literature together, I begin to focus on mobile literacies, those

specific literacy practices that I suggest are generated in the experience of

walking.

Chapter 3 – Literature Review, walking

**3.1 Introduction**

I approached an examination of literature around walking from the standpoint of a literacy educator and specialist and was keen to ensure the focus remained narrowed on the meaning making aspects of the walking experience as it is here that insight could be best drawn that related to my observations in the field. Much of the literature I considered is drawn from the fields of cultural geography (Cresswell 2000, 2006, Edensor 2000, 2010) and social anthropology (Ingold 2007). I began by considering what it meant to take part in Health Walks and ideas about walking as a social practice. I went on to examine literature relating to space, place and landscape, the body and mobility. I concluded by outlining Ingold’s (2007) theories regarding walking, knowing and storytelling. I considered how these ideas relate to the theoretical frameworks already outlined in terms of how literacy can be understood as incorporating affective embodied responses occurring within assemblages. I considered Ingold’s (2007) theories on cognition and storytelling in the light of the literature already considered on narrative (Bamberg 2007, Georgakopoulou 2007, Langellier and Peterson 2011).

In considering the disparate elements of the walking experience I found it hard to separate them out. Ultimately the walking experiences I described in my research were a symbiotic swirl of movement, landscape, bodily apprehension and language. I found that as my research developed, a consideration of landscape relied on a consideration of movement which in turn relied on a consideration of embodied response which in turn led to a consideration of cognition and memory. It is the totality of the experience that I ultimately attempted to describe in Chapter 5 and in attempting to theorise about separate elements of this whole I find myself engaged in circular analysis. Ultimately in this chapter I aimed to encircle those ideas around how a body moving within a landscape generates meaning in a way that corresponds with ideas about literacy, the body and place already detailed. Theoretical positions around walking as a social practice with meaning making properties galvanise the assertions made in my findings and analysis regarding ‘mobile literacies’ as a literacy practice generated through movement and expressed through embodied response to landscape in collective storytelling.

I continued to consider the literature in the light of the research questions which were:

* How was literacy and language involved in the practice of taking part in led group walks?
* What part did literacy and language play in supporting the impacts of taking part in Health Walks?

**3.2 Ways of walking**

When considering walking in discussion with participants in my research I frequently found a surprising variety of ‘walkings’ central to our lives. The bodily act of putting one foot in front of the other is imbued with varying significances according to context and purpose, from the mundane to the sublime. We walk to transport, to the shops, to our daughter’s house. We walk to escape, the house, the family, war and famine, stagnation, and to hide, to not be anywhere, to not be found. We walk to display, to perform and protest and we walk to be devout. In the case of Health Walks, we walk to lower our blood pressure and increase our fitness. Walking then can be invested with wildly different cultural meanings, a both deceptively simple and yet intriguingly complex act. Whilst all walks are physiologically similar they may be philosophically very different (Solnit 2001).

The Walking for Health programme encourages recreational walking. All the walking experiences I considered were instances of recreational walking, and participants’ motivations illuminated the strands from which our shared cultural understanding of walking as recreation arise.

The Romantic Movements’ idealised perspective of walking in the countryside as a meaningful and transformative act continues to impact on our understanding of recreational walking today. The poet Wordsworth, a native of the English Lake District and the poets who gathered around him saw rural walking as a mode not of travelling, but of being, and a necessary element of the creative act. A veneration of rural life, nature, scenic views and exercise outdoors permeate contemporary considerations of recreational walking and can be traced back to the influence of the Lakes poets (Gammon and Elkington 2015). Significantly, this strand of recreational walking tends to favour walking alone.

Collective walking practices owe more to the working class walking ventures into the countryside established in the 1830s and coined as rambling (Stephenson 1989, Hill 1980). Rambling is a group activity, the experience is communally constituted: companionship and shared experience are a vital element of the process. A fundamental motivation for these early group activities was to escape the factory towns and cities (Hill 1980 p.15). A veneration for nature and scenic views, a desire for a personal sense of transformation, sharing of a communal experience and the need to escape were all motivations for walking expressed by participants in the research and are all part of a common cultural understanding of what recreational walking is. Whereas Walking for Health promotional literature focuses on the health benefits of walking (Walking for Health 2014), these shared motivations, that can be traced back to the roots of the culture of recreational walking, were important in unpacking the impacts that participating in Health Walks engenders.

The practice of recreational walking therefore is ‘informed by various performative norms and values which produce distinct praxes and dispositions’ (Edensor 2000 p.81). Edensor working in the field of cultural geography, considers the regulatory norms, codes and models of behaviour that inform how and where we walk, and how we think about walking. Contending notions about how and where to walk, about appropriate clothing and conduct and desirable responses and outcomes, suffused the experience of the participants in Health Walks. Ideals and conventions framed the culture of recreational walking and were adhered to, or not adhered to, by the walkers with whom I walked.

**3.3 Walking as social practice**

The walks I engaged with in the study were collective practices, their communal constitution was at the heart of the experience. They drew on the discourse of the everyday practice of recreational walking and rambling in which the shared communal experience was valued. The epistemological grounding of my research relied on an understanding of both literacy and walking as social practices. In considering the theorists that posit walking as a social practice, ideas about the constitution of place, its relation to movement and links to how walking is a form of knowing and representing the world, are foregrounded. These ideas were unravelled and analysed throughout the chapter.

Ingold and Vergunst (2008) working in the field of social anthropology, posit all walking practices as intrinsically social activities, insisting that an individual’s movement, pace and direction are modulated by responses to the presence and social activity of others in the environment. Social relations they maintain are not enacted in situ, but ‘paced out along the ground’ (2008 p.158). Centring mobility in this way provided a lens by which to view everyday social practices, that focuses not on external correspondence between subjective states of mind and conditions of the material world but rather on the entangling flow of multiple mobilities as ongoing paths cross and are shared. Ingold and Vergunst (2008) explore the foundational significance of this lens, positing that, ‘Not only then do we walk because we are social beings but we are also social beings because we walk’ (2008 p.159). The sense in which the urge to walk engenders the social self, underlined the conclusions I made about the social significance of the literacy events I observed in my research.

The view that social life is conducted on the move and that mobility engenders sociality is the basis for Ingold’s conception of environment as a ‘zone of entanglement (2008 p.1807). This conception becomes a significant tool in my analysis of walking literacies. Ingold (2008) draws on Lefebvre (1991) who uses the term ‘meshwork’ to discuss the entangled tracks and patterns imprinted by animals and people around the immediate environment of significant places and settlements. Ingold (2008) extends this exploration when considering how people inhabit environments. He states that an environment consists not of a bounded place but a zone in which many pathways are thoroughly entangled. Considering environment as ‘zone of entanglement’ (2008 p 1807) he suggests, allows for social life to be considered not as the relations between organisms and their external environments, but rather as the ‘relations along their severally enmeshed ways of life’ (2008 p1807).

Sedimented within the concept of a ‘zone of entanglement’ are theories of place, mobility, sociality and cognition. Before returning to this concept and re- examining its importance in terms of my findings I consider ideas about place, the moving body and cognition in more detail.

**3.4 Landscape, space and place**

In describing my research, I was faced with the conundrum of how to describe the environment through which we walked. The words ‘landscape’, ‘space’ and ‘place’ enclosed shades of relationship with, and response to, surroundings.

Within the field of cultural geography Wylie (2006a, 2006b, 2008) and Cresswell (2004, 2006. 2008) foreground place as being endowed with value and meaning. Wylie (2008) suggests that it is difficult, when thinking about the colloquial everyday meanings of these words not to think in terms of space as absence and place as presence. He describes space as being about distance, isolation and disconnection and place as situatedness and belonging. Place is a dynamic medium, co- constructed by people doing things within it. Cresswell remarks, ‘Place then needs to be understood as an embodied relationship with the world. Places are constructed by people doing things and in this sense are never ‘finished’ but are constantly being performed’ (2004 p.69). In considering the spatiality of literacy I described literacy research that identified how literacy practices could transform space into place (Comber and Nixon 2008). Similarly, here the cultural geographic perspective is suggesting that activity within space transforms that space to place.

The question, with regard to what term is best to use when describing activities that took place in my research, remains. If place is best understood in terms of an embodied relationship with the world, as something lived and fluid, how then can landscape be envisaged? I suggest that there are interesting differences between the terms ‘landscape’ and ‘place’ that are pertinent to how I understood the processes of walking and meaning making I observed and took part in. Place, according to the theorists I’ve outlined, foregrounds the lived and embodied. Landscape, in its generic sense, would seem to foreground the visual, the aesthetic and the exceptional.

The term ‘landscape’ encompasses particular types of visualities, materialities and affects and condenses particular kinds of politics and power relations. Cosgrove (1985) describes the historical emergence of landscape as a concept and argues that it involves organising a view in a particular spatial and visual way and placing the viewer in a subject position that is constructed in a particular set of class relations. Visuality and power relations of all kinds seem to be inherent within the concept. There is a sense in which landscape is posited as a distinct and separate entity, something that can be taken in from a distance, from a stationery position, something that is afforded material and aesthetic value, the term retains a sense of the exceptional, of specialness.

Once practice is introduced into the notion, this understanding of landscape as distinct and special begins to dissolve. Cresswell (2008) considers the landscape/place distinction and wonders whether a focus on practice makes the use of the term landscape unsustainable. He also highlights work exploring how landscape acts as a designator of aesthetic perspective and therefore also acts as a mechanism of exclusion (Duncan 2004) .

The degrees to which certain bodies are excluded from, or have difficulty accessing certain places, how a process of landscaping certain places then politicises them, is a dynamic to which I referred when considering the places we walked, and specifically some of the differences between the two groups I walked with. In considering questions raised in the Duncans’ work, Cresswell raises the intriguing question of whether ‘landscaping becomes a way of creating a particular aesthetic that hides all other processes that are going on in it’ (Cresswell 2008 p.195). That is, that in designating a place as a landscape certain practices become hidden.

Tolia - Kelly (2010) working in the field of cultural geography, examines the value of ‘landscape’ and ‘memory’ for post - colonial migrants living in Britain and uses memory to examine how post - colonial citizenship in Britain is experienced through remembered citizenships of ‘other’ geographies abroad. In ‘Landscape, Race and Memory’ Tolia - Kelly (2010) uses visual art methodologies to consider the connection to British landscapes and memories of ’home’ landscapes of a group of South Asian women. She employs the notion of ‘citizenship’ (2010 p.4) to explore these connections. She employs an ecological understanding of citizenship. She states that ‘connections with soil, landscape and the iconographies of lived experience are central’ (2010 p.4), and highlights how identification with these ‘ecological’ textures is the foundation by which identity, and a sense of embodied belonging to place is formed.

Through her ethnography Tolia Kelly (2010) examines the body in a situated experience of landscape and in so doing uncovers how the South Asian women she works with articulate political, cultural, social and religious citizenship through their connectedness with landscape. Her work focuses on visual representations of landscape, however there are key tenets of her work that help to illuminate the importance of place in my understanding of the experience of walking.

Critically Tolia Kelly’s (2010) placing of citizenship and identity as ecologically generated and reflected help to recognise the impact of place in the generative experiences I aimed to unpick. Tolia Kelly’s (2010) work also highlights the importance of memory in understanding response to landscape. She explains how memory of other ‘geographies’ abroad explicate how post - colonial citizenship in Britain is experienced. The women I walked with in Blackburn were post- colonial migrants who had settled in Blackburn from diverse areas of Pakistan, India and Malawi. They generally had travelled to Britain as children or very young women and had been settled in Lancashire for up to 40 years. As I described in Chapter 5, affective responses to wildlife and plants often materialised on our walks, as narratives about childhood gardens. Significantly the women in Blackburn persistently drew on memories of British landscapes visited on day trips as a way of expressing dissatisfaction with the local landscape through which we walked. I would suggest that these women used memory of place as a way of articulating a complex identity and contested sense of citizenship.

When considering what term to use when describing the environment of the research I found the predominance of the visual and an exclusionary aesthetic problematic when thinking about the term landscape. However, I came to appreciate that there was a need to talk about something other than space and place and that this need was born from the fact that I was studying not the inhabiting of or doing things in a place, but the moving through, and that this moving through involved particular sensibilities and ways of perceiving.

The focus of my research was on everyday practices taking place, on the whole, in everyday places. I chose to use the word ‘landscape’ when describing the environment of the research following Rose (2008) and Wylie’s (2006b) refiguring of landscape as conceived in practice. Rose (2008) describes how discussion about landscape has moved beyond the visual to include the performative, the material and a turn to practice. She highlights how these shifts have helped to re - imagine how landscape and spectator are co-constituted. Similarly, Wylie (2006 b, 2008) explores concepts of space as absence and place, as presence and places landscape on the tipping point between the two. He describes landscape as a tension between the perceiver and perceived, subject and object, presence and absence. He focuses on how landscape draws together the interior and exterior. He states;

Landscape is precisely the tension through and in which there is set up and conducted different versions of the inside and outside – self and world – distinctive topographies of inwardness and outwardness. Landscape isn’t either objective or subjective: it’s precisely an intertwining, a simultaneous gathering and unfurling through which versions of self and world emerge as such… So the term landscape precisely denotes the tensions through which subject and object, self and world, find their measure and balance, their coil and recoil, their proximity and distance. The whole value of the concept of landscape for me is the precise manner in which it demands that we produce accounts which dapple between interiority and exteriority, perception and materiality.’ (Wylie 2008 p.203)

Wylie’s (2008) contestation that interior and exterior, subject and object are intertwined in landscape, is illuminating. In my research, I focussed on processes that occurred when walking that are to do with embodied responses to movement through places, and are expressed in language. Using Wylie’s (2008) conception of landscape as a tension between self and world, helped to frame the mechanisms by which these particular responses emerge. Wylie reviews the visuality of landscape, asserting that it is not something seen, nor a way of seeing but rather the materialities and sensibilities with which we see (Wylie 2005, 2006a 2008).

He says;

Landscape is a seeing - with, an act which precipitates and distributes subject and objects, selves and worlds. (Wylie 2008 p.203)

As such landscape can be viewed as a creative catalyst, an element in a generative process and it is this conception of landscape that I found most useful to use in considering the walking processes I studied.

Wylie (2008) places landscape at a balancing point between self and world, blurring the lines of exterior and interior. Ingold (2004) emphasises its materiality and highlights how everyday practice, materiality and embodied responses are co- constituted. The forms of the landscape are not imposed upon an impassive surface but rather emerge through activity, activity that in itself incorporates the forms of landscape as it influences capacity for movement, awareness and response. He suggests:

Through walking, in short, landscapes are woven into life, and lives are woven into the landscape, in a process that is continuous and never ending. (Ingold 2004 p.333)

In stating that walking through a landscape creates a landscape and in understanding that landscapes are made up of the everyday practices occurring within them, it became easier to begin to think in terms of landscape as a co-element of the creative processes I observed.

**3.5 The body and embodied response**

In considering the body in literacy, I highlighted how centring the body necessarily prioritises how individuals interact with spaces and practices around them and develops understandings of how spaces and practices impact on bodies. I highlighted how such a focus prioritises a material and emotive response in literacy practices. A focus on the embodied practice of walking helps to untangle a thread of experience that helps to make up the literacy practices I uncovered within my research.

Walking necessarily foregrounds bodily apprehension. The sensual experiences of a walk can be overwhelming; the smells, sounds, sights, feelings and tastes that form part of the ever- changing panoply of the experience of a walk are what constitutes the experience. Edensor (2000) highlights how an overwhelming awareness of the body can dominate the experience of walking, particularly when terrain and climate impose themselves. Walkers involved in the Health Walks I observed often spoke about embodied experiences of breathlessness, stiffness, uncertain footing, cold, heat and discomfort as well as lightness, exhilaration, and exhaustion. These affects are responses to the experience of walking, along with a sensual apprehension that moves beyond the visual.

Ingold (2004) makes the case that the property of pedestrian touch, the world perceived through the feet, is a vital element in understanding the act of walking. His argument moves beyond a recognition that walking involves bodily perception to focus on the position that we perceive not from a single vantage point but from a path of observation, in order to apprehend things, we move around them. Perception through this lens is a function of movement, and hence, walking, Ingold states, is a form of ‘circumbulatory knowing’ (Ingold 2004 p.331).

Both Ingold and Edensor consider walking as a way of knowing and perceiving, the rhythms of walking they argue, promote particular, reflexive experiences which depend for their tone and colour on the embodied, affective response to place. It is this unique, ‘experiential flow of successive moments of detachment and attachment, physical immersion and mental wandering, memory, recognition and strangeness….’ (Edensor 2010 b p.70) that I track in the walks that are the focus of the study.

I suggest that it is this experiential flow that moulds the language use I recorded into specific narrative forms. Edensor (2010 b) stresses how the experiential flow of walking, successive sensory encounters, intertwine, impact and colour an internal flow of thoughts. As experiential flow is impacted by the affordances of place, of terrain and climate, so an internal flow will be impacted and so, I argue, will language use be impacted. It is this symbiosis between place and embodied response in movement, to place, that is at the heart of the language use which is at the heart of my study. ‘Mobile literacies’ are constituted by embodied response to place, generated by movement.

Edensor’s purpose in considering the rhythms of walking is to highlight how rhythm is a dynamic characteristic of place and ‘part of the concatenation of rhythms through which place is (re)produced (2010 b p.77). The sense in which place is produced and reproduced by the experiential flow of moving through it, has impacts in terms of my multiple understandings of the literacies occurring in walking.

The notion that bodily engagement and practice with and in place has generative potential, draws us back to the question of the special properties of landscape. Ingold (2000) considers space, place and landscape and states:

….place is the union of a symbolic meaning with a delineated block of the earth’s surface. Spatial differentiation implies spatial segmentation. This is not so of landscape, however. For a place in the landscape is not ‘cut out’ from the whole, either on the plane of ideas or that of material substance. A place owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there, to the sights, sounds and indeed smells that constitute its specific ambience. And these in turn, depend on the kind of activities in which its inhabitants engage. It is from this relational context of people’s engagement with the world, in the business of dwelling, that each place draws its unique significance. Thus whereas with space meanings are attached to the world, with the landscape they’re gathered from it. (Ingold 2000 192-193)

There is a sense here in which landscape encompasses ideas of space and place in a conceptual totality. Landscape processes the meanings imposed by space and evolved in places, in moving through a landscape we at once experience and further modify these meanings. My focus was the mechanisms by which the experience and generation of these meanings were captured in a net of mobile literacies.

**3.6 Mobility and its consequences**

I have described the activity on which my research is focussed as a swirling totality incorporating landscape, bodily apprehension, mobility and language. Whilst landscape and the body then, are elements of the process, the catalyst, that which generates an explosion of meaning making is walking. Mobility is the lightning rod, the force that makes stuff happen.

In considering mobility I draw primarily on Cresswell (2006). Cresswell outlines how mobility is a fundamental facet of existence and as such plays a central role in understandings of the world and our place within it. He examines how current philosophy and social theory posit the end of sedentarism and bounded societies in favour of foundationless nomadism. He also considers the conflicting meanings that mobility encompasses in the western world being both a signifier of freedom and opportunity as well as a signifier of deviance and resistance.

Significantly Cresswell (2006) makes a theoretical distinction between mobility and movement and highlights parallels with the distinction between space and place. For Creswell movement is abstracted mobility, it describes the idea of displacement from point a to point b, as a concept, like space, it appears contentless and apparently neutral. Mobility however, like place includes implications of meaning, it is movement with social implications, movement within the context of power.

Cresswell (2006) highlights that mobility is socially constructed, that is, that despite its inevitability our ways of thinking about it are socially constructed. Constructed knowledge around mobility, he insists, is deeply implicated in the politics of the modern world. He considers this constructed knowledge around mobility from the perspective of both sedentarist and nomadic metaphysics and highlights how both rely on a sense of place as their foil and both interact with place to inform ontology, epistemology and politics as well as practice and material cultures.

Sedentarist metaphysics explores mobility from the perspective of place, rootedness and belonging; within this framework mobility becomes morally suspect, a threat. Cresswell (2006) argues that within social geography, place is positioned as an essentially moral concept and therefore mobility is primarily positioned as antithetical to moral worlds. Conversely a nomadic metaphysics (Malkki, 1992) disregards notions of attachment and foregrounds flow, flux and dynamism. Mobility here seems to offer a radical disruption of sedentary metaphysics. Most significant for the purposes of this study is the work of De Certeau (1984), and Deleuze and Guattari (1986, 1987).

De Certeau, in ‘The Practice of Everyday Life’ (1984) examines how people individualise mass culture. He uses the nomad metaphor to consider assertions of power and acts of resistance. Territory and boundaries, a mapping of a ‘proper place’ for De Certeau are the weapons of the strong. The weak, contest this territorialisation through furtive mobility, by drifting, taking short cuts, trespassing, the weak do not ‘obey the laws of the place for they are not defined or identified by it’ (p.75). Creswell comments that in this conception ‘the ordinary activities of everyday life, such as walking in the city, become acts of heroic everyday resistance’ (2006 p.15).

In Chapter 2, I considered the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1986, 1987) in terms of their conceptions of social order and the territorialisation and deterritorialization that occurs as assemblages flux and flow over time. I noted an ontology centred on the continual transformation of life as it is lived, an ontology that coalesces around metaphors of the nomad and the rhizome. They use the metaphor of the nomad to explore undisciplined mobility, rioting, revolution and guerrilla warfare. Within this framework the state is the metaphorical enemy, not because it wants to oppose mobility but because it wants to control flows of mobility, to condone acceptable conduits. The postmodern nomad here is a force of resistance against the state and all normalising powers (Deleuze and Guattari 1986 p.29).

The metaphor of the rhizome in Deleuze and Guattari (1986) marks subterranean dynamism and liberation, offering lines of escape from territorialising powers. The rhizome, unlike rooted plants, threads underground unseen, multiplies and emerges unexpectedly, is unfixed and unmanageable. It displaces the fixed and for Deleuze and Guattari (1986), makes displacement not a threat, but a virtue. In the work of both Deleuze and Guattari and De Certeau then, mobility is linked to resistance, it is steeped in anti - essentialism and anti - foundationalism, it embodies resistance to established order. As such, the focus on flux and flow emphasizes ‘becoming’ at the expense of the stability of that already achieved. Mobility as ‘becoming’, as a catalyst for creative ongoing generation, illuminates aspects of the practices of walking I observe and take part in.

The theorization of mobility discussed above helps to structure my understanding of the generative potentials of walking. However, my experience in the field throws up questions that serve to illuminate the limitations of the nomadic metaphor in particular. Specifically, I suggest that mobility is differentiated socially. Wolf (1990, 1992) notes that the postmodern nomad is unburdened by markers of gender, class, ethnicity or sexuality. She describes how the androcentric tendencies of theoretical mobility fail to illuminate many mobilities. She says:

The problems with terms like nomad maps and travel is that they are not usually located and hence (and purposely) they suggest ungrounded and unbounded movement- since the whole point is to resist selves/viewers/subjects. But the consequent suggestion of free and equal mobility is itself a deception, since we don’t all have the same access to the road. (Wolf 1992 p.54)

The notion of a gendered constraint is ironically a key theme generated by the mobility of the women I walked with. Their mobilities were at once liberating and creative but also served to draw attention to boundaries and limits. It is true to say that in certain contexts within the research access to the road served to highlight the fact that ‘we don’t all have the same access to the road’ (Wolf 1992 p.54).

Cresswell (2006), in considering nomadic metaphysics also highlights how the metaphor of the nomad draws on centuries of western romanticization of the non- western other. The conception of the nomad could be said to draw on colonial representations of non -sedentary populations as invested with desire and intrigue. Ironically then, representational strategies of colonialism are employed in the service of the non-representational.

Cresswell (2006) concludes by asserting that neither sedentary, nor nomadic metaphysics are aware of the ideological nature of the meanings they ascribe to mobility. The concepts of mobility as suspicious and threatening, and mobility as becoming and change, both hide politics, power and ideology at their heart. Whilst the metaphors of the nomad and the rhizome and concepts of mobility as becoming are useful in understanding and describing the experience of walking, there is a degree to which situatedness and fixity and the ideological encumbrances of our mobilities must also be considered in order to fully engage with what happens when we walk.

**3.7 Cognition, memory and time**

My research focussed on what happens when we walk. I analysed how the coalescing of landscape, body and movement generate mobile literacies. As I honed in on this practice, I rely on theorisation about walking and its impact on cognition and perception (Edensor 2010b, Solnit 2001) and then focussed in further on theories about mobility and narrative (Ingold 2007, Ingold and Vergunst 2008, Lund 2008).

Solnit (2001 xv) in her exploration of walking as a political and cultural activity asserts that in walking, the body and mind work together and thinking becomes a physical rhythmic act. She echoes De Certeau (1984) in concluding that walking is an argument against the Cartesian concept of the dualism of mind and body. These assertions insist that the practice of walking is also a practice of thinking, and hence a practice of operating in and representing the world. Solnit (2001) describes a consonance between internal and external passage, ‘one that suggests that the mind is also a landscape of sorts and that walking is one way to traverse it’ (2001 p.6). The enmeshed pathways of thought and walking route, running alongside and interweaving with each other, are the conduit by which the mobile literacies I go on to describe are generated.

Edensor (2010b) identifies a particular experiential flow, specific to the walking body. He explores how rhythms of walking produce time-space and the experience of place. He draws on Lefebvre (2004) who begins his study of rhythms by stating that ‘everywhere there is interaction between a place and a time and an expenditure of energy there is rhythm’(2004 p.15). Walking, Lefebvre contends, generates localised time, or temporalized space, the experience of walking then, is one of a particular tone of cognitive flow, a particular rhythm of thinking. Edensor states that:

The rhythms of walking allow for a particular experiential flow of successive moments of detachment and attachment, physical immersion and mental wandering, memory, recognition and strangeness….. (2010b p. 70)

It is this experiential flow that is specific to the mobile body, the walker. In Chapter 5 I described and analysed how this experiential flow informed the mobile literacy practices that occurred during our walks.

Ingold (2007) characterises a particular form of cognition that is born from a particular form of mobility. In considering the nature and purposes of mobilities, he makes a distinction between wayfaring and transporting. He characterises transporting as destination oriented and wayfaring as soaked in the process of making a way through the world. He asserts that it is not the employment of mechanical means that distinguishes wayfaring from transporting but the intimate bond with the environment and the affective reactions that occur. He states:

Wayfaring, I believe, is the most fundamental mode by which living beings both human and non- human inhabit the earth. By habitation I do not mean taking one’s place in a world that has been prepared in advance for the populations that arrive to reside there. The inhabitant is rather one who participates from within to the very process of the world’s continual coming into being and who, in laying a trail of life, contribute to its weave and texture. (2007 P.81)

Wayfaring here is a way of knowing and a way of generating knowledge.

Parallel to his distinction between wayfaring and transporting, Ingold (2007) distinguishes between inhabitant and occupant knowledge. The inhabitant knowledge of the wayfarer is forged in the process of moving through environments and ingesting the changing structures of the land and changing horizons as we move. Ingold would then suggest that knowledge is integrated along a path of travel, he says ‘inhabitant knowledge is alongly integrated’ (2007 p.89). Ingold uses the term ‘alongly’ to describe a way of perceiving that relies on mobility. This, is in contrast to occupant knowledge, the dominant framework of modern thought, which asserts knowledge as assembled from observations taken from a number of fixed points. Occupant knowledge, says Ingold, is upwardly integrated.

Ingold (2007) then, recognises mobility as a primary way of knowing and being, a fundamental way in which we make sense of ourselves and the world. It is the inhabitant knowledge drawn upon and generated along the paths of our walks that informs the literacies that play out along the paths of our walks. Knowledge that is alongly integrated can be expressed in the alongly integrated forms of mobile literacies.

**3.8 Narrative and storytelling**

Ingold’s conception of our urge to alongly integrate knowledge through mobility is couched within an anthropological treatise on lines. He asks, ‘What do walking, weaving, observing, storytelling, singing, drawing and writing have in common?’ (2007 p1) and concludes that they all proceed along lines. He asserts that line making subsumes everyday human activity as we use our hands, our feet and our voices, and that therefore these activities can be drawn in to a single field of enquiry, the study of lines.

As discussed, Ingold differentiates between the alongly integrated knowledge of the inhabitant and the upwardly integrated knowledge of the occupier. Inhabitant knowledge, develops along a line of travel, occupier knowledge is constructed from an array of static points. Ingold’s primary argument is that the line has been robbed of the movement from which it was generated and replaced, under the sway of modernity, by a configuration of static points. He develops this argument by contrasting wayfaring with destination oriented transport, mapping, where the cartographic map and route plan replaces the drawn sketch map and textuality where oral storytelling is replaced by the pre -composed plot.

A modern environment places its inhabitants as static points in configurations or networks of nodes but despite this we follow an urge to thread our way through these environments, tracing paths and making meanings as we go (Ingold 2007). I suggest that this urge to integrate knowledge alongly was expressed in the mobile literacies I observed as we walked. Stories told orally emerged and developed as horizons and landscapes emerged and changed as we walked. The oral story was not pre - planned and its structure had no beginning and no end. The mobile stories I recorded flowed through the lived experience of the walk; topics and themes arose in relation to the changing landscape, objects and people within which, around which and with whom we moved. The stories told were paths traced through lived experience and became part of the meshwork of lived experience; it is in this telling and retelling that knowledge was integrated.

Importantly, as the mobile story was fluid and present, it was open ended and mutable. In telling and retelling stories as we walked we were re calibrating our knowledge and changing our worlds. As Ingold highlights in telling a story, we are retracing a path through the world, but doing so as we extend that path, ‘There is no point at which the story ends and life begins’ (2007 p.93). The story, the ongoing lived experience and the walked path are interwoven lines and ‘in the story as in life, there is always somewhere further one can go’ (2007 p.93).

Ingold here highlights the transformational possibilities for change inherent in the storytelling experience, possibilities that I argue are fundamental to the impacts of participation in Health Walks.

Ingold and Vergunst (2008) interrogate analogies or comparisons between walking and storytelling. They refer to Berger who asserts that:

Stories walk, like animals and men. And their steps are not only between narrated events but between each sentence, sometimes each word. Every step is a stride over something not said. (Berger 1982 284-5)

In analysing this comparison of narrative writing or oral storytelling to walking questions arise. Is a footfall akin to a word or a sentence? Can the story of the walk be revealed in the tracks of the walker? Or does it hover in the spaces between them? Is a story revealed by what is said or what is left unsaid? I was inclined to disregard these questions as they are framed, analogies between the walk and the story were not my focus.

Rather, I was inclined to frame my observations in the assertion that just as the story is more than its words, so the walk is more than its footfalls and route, neither can be reduced. Vitally, mobile literacies, the storytelling that happens as we walk, is a combined experience that transforms both the walk and the story.

This combined walking/storytelling experience was not an event experienced in isolation. What I observed in my research was not simply a series of separate mobile tellings of stories but rather a meshwork of trails and tales that combined to form a collective experience. Ingold’s (2008) conception of the environment as a zone of entanglement helps to envisage how the walking route, the landscape, the affective responses of walkers to each other and their surrounding and the stories told combined to form the total mobile storytelling experience.

Collective generation was a vital igniter of this experience. Lund (2008) describes a similar experience watching the annual procession of San Sebastian in which a statue of the saint is carried around the village. During the procession villagers tell the story of how the statue was returned to the village after becoming mislaid during the civil war. Ingold and Vergunst (2008) highlight how through processing and storytelling, the villagers do not simply re- enact a historical story but rather continue that story. The procession ‘momentarily fuses or brings into phase the otherwise divergent and unsynchronised life trajectories of individual participants into a unified tale of belonging to this place’ (2008 p.13). Similarly, I observed on Health Walks and go on to describe and analyse in Chapter 5, how diverse strands of stories were drawn into a thicker thread of a combined tale that developed over the time of a walk, entangling all participants and resulting in a meshwork of meaning and mobility that was created and shared by all the walkers involved.

**3.9 Conclusion**

I have considered walking as a social practice and examined literature around space place and landscape, the body and mobility as it related to the walking experience. I have concluded by considering Ingold’s theories regarding walking, cognition and storytelling as the key area where theories about walking and theories about meaning making activities overlapped. I will go on to outline the focus and method of my research before drawing on the theories discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 in an examination of my findings.

Chapter 4 - Methodology

**4.1 Introduction**

This chapter introduces the observations that are the basis of the thesis and outlines the theoretical framework that supports decisions about how I collected, analysed and represented data. The empirical basis for the research is found in a qualitative exploration of Health Walks run by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council. The qualitative data collected is not intended to be generalizable, instead my objective was to explore the impacts of taking part in Health Walks and the role language and literacy played in developing these impacts with these groups.

My research questions were:

* How was literacy and language involved in the practice of taking part in led group walks?
* What part did literacy and language play in supporting the impacts of taking part in Health Walks?

At the beginning of the research process I expected to complete an ethnographic exploration of the field. I intended the research to be ethnographic, but over the process of the research, came to recognise that methodologies drawn from an anthropological participant observation approach (Ingold 2014) best described the research as it happened. At the end of the research process, I can only suggest that the research was ethnographic in its approach. By this I mean that it was driven by curiosity about an aspect of human behaviour and that this curiosity led to a period of taking part in activities with participants in the field.

The research followed the tradition of ethnographic studies of literacy practices as they occur both in and out of the classroom as discussed in the body of work known as New Literacy Studies. As I described in Chapter 2, the foundational texts of the New Literacy Studies (Street 1984, Heath 1983, Scribner and Cole 1981) developed a conception of literacy as a social practice through ethnographic observations of literacy events and practices.

Continuing this tradition, in ‘Local Literacies’ (1998) Barton and Hamilton developed close insights into the uses of literacy in everyday life drawing heavily on ethnographic research traditions. They presented their work as ethnographic highlighting four foundational ethnographic approaches (1998 p.57). These approaches are firstly to work in a real-world setting. Secondly, they foreground the importance of taking a holistic approach, attempting to capture a whole phenomenon. Thirdly they highlight the importance of work being multi-method, drawing on interviews, observations and the collection of documents. Finally, their work is interpretive, aiming to represent the participants’ perspectives (Barton and Hamilton 1998 p.57-58). Research on literacy both in and out of the classroom continues to develop based on these ethnographic approaches (Pahl 2015, Burnett and Merchant 2014/2016, Carrington and Marsh 2005, Lenters 2016). Ethnographic method, such as participant observation also form the foundations of work in social anthropology and cultural geography that I draw on in making sense of walking as a social, everyday activity (Ingold and Vergunst 2008, Edensor 2010).

However, as I go on to discuss, in retrospect I hesitate to describe the work as ethnographic. As I discuss, the research trajectory involved a gradual move away from the approaches I expected to use as I began to suspect that my methodological intentions and choices were restricting my activity in the field. I also discuss how the elusive, transitory nature of the research object evaded easy identification and use Law’s (2004a) exposition of messiness in social science to explore this problem. I conclude by discussing Ingold’s (2014) arguments against the uncritical use of ethnographic methodology to try and tease out my actual methodological practices. I will outline how his foregrounding of anthropological participant observation, knowing from the inside and concordance, along with Law’s (2004a p.116) conception of ‘resonance’ and Pink’s (2012) focus on embodiment and emplacement in sensory ethnography combined to best describe the research as it happened. I then continue to describe the research process in detail.

**4.2** **Ethnographic methods**

I begin by considering the characteristics of ethnographic methodologies and specifically sensory ethnographic perspectives. Although I was uncertain as to whether to describe my work as ethnographic it was conceived as a piece of ethnographic research and much of the research was carried out with ethnographic intentions.

Reviewing various definitions across disciplines, O Reilly offers a working definition of ethnography as:

iterative-inductive research (that evolves in design through the study), drawing on a family of methods, involving direct and sustained contact with human agents within the context of their daily lives(and cultures), watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions, and producing a richly written account that respects the irreducibility of human experience, that acknowledges the role of theory as well as the researcher’s own role and that views humans as part object/part subject. (2005 p.3)

This definition draws out key elements of ethnographic endeavour that are reflected in my experience in the field. Data for this thesis were generated through participation in a number of led walks over a period of six months. As the season changed from summer to autumn I walked a series of circular routes, some of which overlapped in a geographic area of about 20 square miles.

Iteration was a key element of the process, the structure of the experience, the initial meeting and register taking, the walking and talking and final dispersal were continuously repeated and structured encounters in the field in specific ways. As the experience was repeated inductive processes began to take place. Ethnography is a generative cyclical process, not just of uncovering and representing knowledge but of creating it. Barton and Hamilton describe ‘cycling back and forth between theory and data’ in order to identify patterns and regularities (1998 p.69). As I walked, talked, observed and reflected I not only recognised and recorded behaviours and events but also co- created the experiences.

Researching in this way required the balancing of multiple opposing positions. I wanted to engage with a situation in the field entirely on its own terms whilst also holding in mind theoretical frameworks which may have helped to explicate what was happening more generally. I was simultaneously in the position of being at once within and co-creating the field as well as observing and reflecting on the participants’ practices. An ethnographic perspective therefore requires an ongoing reflexive conversation to be held where knowledge built up from the ground is examined through a theoretical lens applied from above. My experience of conducting this research confirmed the importance of negotiating the continual tensions and abrasions that occur between what I observed and what I theorised. These two activities shaped each other, the research evolved in design and shifted in focus as events and experiences unfolded.

Heath and Street (2008) cite the recursive nature of ethnographic work as what sets it apart from other forms of qualitative research. They highlight how the ethnographer always works within a series of interlocking circles and consequently she has to keep looking in multiple ways and directions. They describe how the researcher does not enter the field as a blank slate but with hunches and curiosity, which are refined and shaped both by data from observation and theories and concepts. In the case of this research the back and forth of observing, noting, reading, thinking, observing and noting mirror the cyclical repetitious nature of our walks. As I go on to describe through my experience of data collection, analysis and representation it became clear that the recursive route to knowledge continues to be navigated after the physical walking and data collection is done.

Traditionally ethnographic method centres on participant observation, interviews and a range of other participatory research techniques developed and adapted within the context of the specific aims, constraints and affordances of the research project (Heath and Street 2008). In describing my processes of participant recruitment, data collection and ethical consideration I will explain how my methods both reflect and depart from these traditional approaches.

**4.3 Difficulties with ethnographic methods**

Departures from a traditional approach were provoked by a sense of the diffuse and ambiguous nature of that which I was trying to study. In managing this difficulty, I used Law’s (2004a) exploration of mess in social science to help frame an understanding of how to approach the difficulty methodologically. Law states (2004a) that clear descriptions don’t work when social science tries to describe things that are complex, diffuse or messy. He asks;

if much of the world is vague, diffuse or unspecific, slippery, emotional, ephemeral elusive or indistinct, changes like a kaleidoscope or doesn’t have much of a pattern at all, then where does this leave social science? How might we catch some of the realities we are currently missing? Can we know them well? Should we know them? Is ‘knowing’ the metaphor that we need? (2004a p.1)

This question resonates with the uneasiness I recorded in field notes as I participated in Health Walks. My research focus was based on hunches and intuition, I struggled to grasp or identify the meaningful literacy events I suspected were occurring and felt uncertain as to how to record and represent them.

Law makes recommendations about how a researcher can navigate research in a world that is ‘textured in terms of pains and pleasures, hope and horrors, things that slip and slide, appear and disappear’, (2004a p.1) and outlines alternative paths the researcher may take to knowing. He suggests that the researcher will need to follow the apprehensions of the body and emotional response, that is, to know through embodiment and affect. He suggests that researchers need to recalibrate ideas about clarity and rigour and be prepared to accept that knowing can become possible through techniques of deliberate imprecision. Researchers need to consider whether what they come to know makes sense in other locations that is they will need to recognise their research as a situated enquiry (Law 2004a). Finally, Law (2004a) encourages the researcher to consider how far the process of knowing a thing also brings it into being (2004a p.2).

As I go on to describe, the trajectory of my research moved towards identifying embodied and affective responses within locations. As such Law’s outline of ways to glimpse and capture the ephemeral, indefinite and irregular was a useful lens though which to view the processes in which I was involved.

Law (2004a) describes how methodological practices not only describe but also help to produce that which it describes, it is not only a set of procedures for reporting but is also performative. Recognising this performative aspect of methodology is vital in terms of the researcher discarding the set of ‘constraining normative blinkers’ (Law 2004a p.4) that an uncritical employment of methodological practices ensures. He states that if ‘research methods’ are allowed to claim methodological hegemony the researcher is put in the place of being told how to see and how to investigate. This insight resonates with my research experience. I will go on to describe how my attempts to do ethnography, and apply what I felt were appropriate methods, hindered the research. I placed obstacles in the way of the flux and flow of the experiences I was attempting to explore and it was in this turning away from the stuff of the research that I began to recognise what the stuff of the research was. Following Law (2004a), I recognised that my presence and involvement in Health Walks helped to create the practices I explore.

Law (2004a) presents a process of method assemblage as a way to articulate a sense of the world as a generative flux of forces and relations. He describes method assemblage as a process of crafting, bundling or gathering relations in three parts, whatever is present, whatever is absent but also manifestly relevant to presence, and whatever is absent but is other, because whilst necessary to presence it is hidden, repressed or uninteresting (2004a p.144). This framework rests on his post structuralist insight that whatever is made present, requires other related things to be made absent, presence is impossible without absence.

Bundling relations in this way, Law suggests, can be understood as detecting resonances in the field. Adopting a metaphysics that assumes reality to be ‘overwhelming, excessive, energetic, a set of undecided potentialities’ (Law 2004a p.145) means the research project involves detecting, attending to and therefore amplifying certain patterns or waveforms in the flux. The attending to and therefore amplifying of certain patterns, necessitates the diminishing of others, presence necessitates absence. In attending to and amplifying certain patterns those patterns become reinforced, the researcher’s attention helps to generate that which is researched.

The barriers I encountered in conducting my research and the methodological choices I made in response to these difficulties, are usefully framed in terms of an attempt to orientate myself in the flux of the Health Walk experience and a gradual detection of resonances in terms of participation in mobile literacy practices. Law’s (2004a) placement of the field of research in terms of a metaphysics of flow and flux and his description of the research process as an attendance to and magnification of resonances both described the difficulties I experienced and helped to re-orientate my research focus. Law’s (2004a) focus on the apprehensions of the body and emotional response helped to re- emphasise an element of my original research intentions.

**4.4 Sensory ethnography**

I approached my research endeavours with a clear interest in uncovering the embodied, affective and emplaced aspects of the walking experience, as a route into illuminating the role language and literacy plays in the impact of walking. As such I relied on Pink’s (2012) conception of a sensory ethnography and its acknowledgement that sensoriality is fundamental to how we explore, understand and represent other people’s lives.

Pink insists that the idea of a sensory ethnography is not simply about attending to the senses in the practice of ethnography but opens out conceptual shifts in our understanding of what ethnography itself entails. In this way, she echoes Law’s (2004a) emphasis on bodily apprehension and emotional response as necessary elements of an approach to a messy, ambiguous research field. She also pre-figures Ingold’s (2014) arguments about how embodied and emplaced research radically troubles our understanding of what ethnography entails.

Importantly Pink (2012) introduces an emplaced perspective as central to a sensory ethnography. That is, she introduces theories of place and space from anthropology and philosophy (Ingold 2007), as outlined in Chapter 3, in order to rethink the ethnographic process as a process that takes place in a social, sensory and material environment. Pink (2012) follows Howes (2005) in suggesting that the conception of embodiment is superseded by that of emplacement and offers the emergent paradigm of emplacement as the ‘sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment’ (2012 p.25).

An emplaced ethnography, she argues, attends to the question of experience ‘by accounting for the relationships between bodies, minds and the materiality and sensoriality of the environment’ (2012 p.25). It is in this question of focus that Pink’s concept becomes so clearly important to my research practices.

The initial curiosities that led me to the research area were to do with the interrelationships between language, place and movement and how these catalysed particular impacts for those taking part in Health Walks. In choosing to participate in Health Walks as a way of exploring these links I was naturally drawn to a perspective that recognises the centrality of affect and materiality in the social lives and experiences I explored. Pink states,

The experiencing, knowing and emplaced body is therefore central to the idea of a sensory ethnography. Ethnographic practice entails our multisensorial embodied engagement with others (through participation and conversation) and with their social, material, discursive and sensory environments. (2012 p.4)

My aim was to maintain and record this multisensorial embodied and emplaced engagement, in order to most closely detail the walking experiences in which I participated.

Significantly Pink uses Ingold’s (2008) conception of the way we live in relation to our environment as a ‘zone of entanglement’ (Ingold 2008 p.1807), to describe the emplacement of the sensory ethnographer. In recognising Ingold’s formulation of places as unbounded, and the sense in which they occur through movement as part of a ‘meshwork of paths’, (Ingold 2008 p1808), Pink (2012) is able to foreground the importance of our sensory engagements with material and social environments, the immediacy of perception and the actual involvement of researcher and participants in the production of the places researched.

She draws on Massey (2005) in considering the ‘locality’ of place and recognising the complexities of the relationship between local and global. In Chapter 2 I outlined arguments relating to understanding of literacy events and practices that required an interrogation of the limits of the local (Brandt and Clinton 2002). Similarly, Massey (2005) describes how ethnographic places are inevitably interwoven or entangled with the global. In my research, I focussed on the phenomenology of everyday encounters in the field, however I remained aware of how these ethnographic places extended away from the immediate and were entangled with multiple trajectories.

Within my research I followed trajectories from the immediate experience into the past and the imagined and argue that memory and imagination are key elements of the emplacement processes that occurred in walking. The sensory ethnographer then, Pink (2008) argues, is always emplaced and seeking to understand the emplacement of others. Within my research I considered two, interlinked ways of knowing and place-making as vital to my endeavour and vital to my attempts to understand the walking experience. They were questions of memory and imagination.

Pink (2008) draws on the work of Serematakis (1994) who contends that the senses ‘are a collective medium of communication’ which are ‘like language but not reducible to language.’ Serematakis (1994) suggests that the sensory landscape and objects within are sedimented with emotional and historical content that can ‘ignite gestures, discourses and acts’ (1994 p.7). She goes on to contend that these gestures, discourses and acts are not merely repetitions but ‘transformations that brings the past into the present as a natal event’ (1994 p.7). In attempting to follow a methodology that attended to the body and place, these understandings of sensory memory as embodied and continually re-enacted and transformed through practice helped to signify the importance of talk about the past as a vital and meaningful element of the impact of taking part in Health Walks.

In attempting to pay close attention to the intertwining of experience of place and body with talk and movement I was primed to glimpse instances of how moving through a place provoked the importing of an emplaced past into the present experience. Significantly in sharing the experience of a walk I was also primed to recognise how shared elements of sensory experience provoked a sharing of collective memory.

Pink (2008) also suggests that sensory ethnography requires a focus on how imagination is implicated in place making practices. She confers imagination as integral to our everyday ways of being in the world and recognises imagination as being not only thinking about the future but also about the past and about other people’s experience of the past or even of the present as it unfolds and slips into the past.

In the same way as I became primed to recognise how emplacement invoked an articulation of transformed memory so as I attended to the sensory experience of the walk I glimpsed how imagination was present and enacted in ways that transformed the immediate experience, sometimes again in collective processes. Ultimately my methodology is orientated towards an understanding that the self emerges through processes of sensory knowing and that this knowing is produced through engagement with the material, sensory and social environments of everyday life.

**4.5 Walking methodologies**

Walking has been developed as a methodological tool (Pink et al 2010, Hall 2009, Kusenbach 2003 Carpiano 2009). Although walking has traditionally been part of ethnographic fieldwork more recently a keener lens has been focussed on the role of walking in ethnography and the ethnography of walking (Ingold and Vergunst 2000). Importantly this work recognises that walking with others, sharing a walking rhythm and the experience of movement through place creates a unique affinity between researcher and participant.

As I described in the introduction to this chapter, ethnographic method can traditionally be roughly divided into participating in and observing social settings and interviewing participants. Kusenbach (2003) discusses the ‘go along interview’, and argues that the method has the potential to combine observation and interview into a fruitful hybrid method (Kusenbach 2003 p. 463). The go along interview involves the researcher accompanying the participant as they take part in familiar activities in their everyday environments. Within this framework, the researcher is able to observe and ask questions in order to develop understanding of a participant’s practices and interpretations within a specific environment. Kusenbach (2003) claims that researchers using this method are able to ‘examine their informants’ spatial practices in situ while accessing their subjects ‘interpretations of these spaces at the same time’ (Kusenbach 2003 p.457).

The areas of social life to which the go along interview offers unique insight are, according to Kusenbach (2003), areas of perception of the social and physical environment and associated spatial practices, prevalent patterns of interaction in different spheres of life and patterns of response to place that invoke memory or reflection on life history. The go along interview then (Kusenbach 2003 and Carpiano 2009) offers a unique perspective on everyday life within an environment and fuses techniques of observation and interviewing in such a way that spatial practices are highlighted. This method has primarily been used to investigate participants’ interpretations of their local environment and as such involves participants taking the lead in the routes and activities followed.

A similar approach is advocated by Anderson (Anderson 2004, Anderson and Moles 2008) researching in the area of cultural geography. Anderson uses a talking while walking approach to collect field data, an approach that captures how the practice of moving through place can instigate forms of social knowledge and ways of perceiving and understanding the world.

Anderson (2004) following Casey (2000, 2001) focuses on the ‘constitutive co ingredience’ (Casey 2001 p.684) of people and place as a potent generator of insight into social life and human construction of the world. His focus is on how place is insinuated into social constructions of knowledge and individual constructions of identity. Talking whilst walking for Anderson then is a methodological tool for paying attention to place but does not focus closely on issues of mobility or embodiment as such.

In the case of this research walking was a primary focus of the research as well as a methodological tool. Walking was method only in so far as it was an activity in which I participated. As a participant observer, I walked in groups and whilst our shared mobility generated the stuff of the research it was also part of the stuff of the research.

**4.6 Beyond ethnography**

I commented at the beginning of this chapter on my uneasiness about describing my methodology as ethnographic. I go on to describe the difficulties I encountered in carrying out methodological procedures and my movement towards accepting that participating in walking practices was my methodology. In the trajectory towards this decision I drew on Ingold’s (2014) criticisms of the use of the term ‘ethnographic’ to help orientate and sustain my practice.

Ingold argues that the term ethnography is overused (2014 p.383) and has lost much of its meaning. He is arguing from the perspective of social anthropology and anthropology’s principal methodology, participant observation. His argument is that in the conduct of our research, we meet people, we talk to them, we ask questions, we listen and we watch and that this should not be termed ethnography. Ethnographic methods, he states, are situated not in these encounters but in the retrospective conversion of these encounters as they are remembered and represented. The fault lies, he insists, ‘in a temporal distortion that continues to render the aftermath of our meetings with people as their anterior condition’ (2014 p.386). Ethnographic methodology then, he would argue, is necessarily a descriptive, representative activity.

He contrasts this with a conception of participant observation conducted with an ontological commitment to observe from the inside. This ontological commitment requires an acceptance that participation and observation are not in contradiction. Skills of perception and capacities for judgement, Ingold would argue, develop through direct engagement with our surroundings. He insists that to observe is not to objectify but rather it is to attend to and learn from persons and things. The focus for the researcher here moves from a sense of attempting to gather intelligence to simply attending to what is happening and to ‘follow along where others go and to do their bidding; whatever this might entail and wherever it might take you’ (2014 P.389). This contrast mirrors my initial unsuccessful attempts to urge walkers to reflect on their experience and generate data and my later acceptance that walking, being with walkers, observing from the inside, was a more fruitful endeavour.

Ingold uses the term ‘correspondence’ to describe how the development of one’s own perception and actions run alongside the movements of others ‘much as melodic lines are coupled in musical counterpoint’ (Ingold 2013 p.105-8). He describes how correspondence is never achieved but is continually emerging. To practice participant observation then is to join in correspondence within a group in a movement that goes forward rather than back in time. Reflection and description are not part of correspondence. There is an echo here of Law’s (2004a) notion of resonance, Law suggests that the researcher, in a field of flux and flow detects and amplifies resonances much as Ingold’s researcher engages in correspondence.

Ingold then contrasts ethnography and anthropological participant observation. One, he would say is a practice of description, the other a practice of correspondence. The ethnographer looks back, writes up, documents and describes whereas ‘a correspondent observer at large – does his or her thinking in the world’ (Ingold 2011: p.241-3). I find Ingold’s description of correspondence in participant observation chimed with my research experience not least because he works with metaphors of forward momentum, intertwining paths, weaving lines of experience that spoke to my experience of walking in groups. The contrasts Ingold describes between ethnographic and social anthropological participant observer orientations were very significant in helping me to make the decision to discard elements of my planned methodological process.

My positioning as a researcher changed dramatically over the research project. I began by being positioned as an ethnographer keen to gather and document experience. By the end of the research my way of working was as a participant observer within a community, alert and attentive and primed to absorb instances of correspondence as they emerged. As such I participated in a learning process, whilst taking part in mobile literacy practices I was transformed as were those around me. The conception of participant observation as practised within social anthropology focussed on correspondence as a way of working helped to vindicate my sense that the real stuff of my research occurred in emerging moments of participation and shared transformations. The methodology of the research therefore was scaffolded by understandings drawn from Law (2004a) and Ingold (2014) whilst still retaining an orientation drawn from Pink’s (2012) sensory ethnography. I was left however, having made the decision to do my thinking in the world, with the conundrum of how to document and represent my findings.

**4.7 Outline of the research process**

The research took place in two distinct sections. Between May and September 2016, I completed 9 walks with a group of older Muslim women on a Health Walk co organised by the charity Age UK and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council. These walks all started and finished at Barton St Community Centre, Blackburn. The walks were about 2 miles in length and took place between 10 and 12 on Wednesday mornings.

Between September and December, I completed 8 walks with a mixed group of men and women who met at various locations, in the vicinity of Darwen, to walk circular routes of about 5 miles in length. There were many similarities in the way the research proceeded with these two groups but also some differences. In the following sections I will consider the Blackburn and Darwen groups separately when outlining recruitment and ethical considerations and consider them together when detailing data collection, analysis and representation.

**4.71 Recruitment of participants**

I use pseudonyms when describing all participants in the research.

Barton St

Initial contact was made with the group leader employed by Age UK through my personal contacts with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council. My husband, the co-ordinator for Health Walks across Blackburn with Darwen, emailed Shazia the walk organiser outlining my research and asking if I could meet to discuss it further. E mail conversations ensued between me and Shazia in which I explained my intentions, what would be involved, timescales, ethical procedures and outcomes. We also discussed the make- up of the group, the walks, routes and times, issues regarding breaking for Ramadan and the fact that different walk leaders would be involved at different times over the summer.

Shazia highlighted how within the group the women had varying degrees of ability and confidence in speaking English and that overall women had less confidence with reading and writing English. Shazia also expressed concerns about ensuring that the participants were fully aware of issues of confidentiality and how their data would be used. We agreed that Shazia would act as a translator for the initial information session and that she would also act as gatekeeper with regard to the final say in terms of using data to ensure participants understood and were genuinely happy to participate and share and not agreeing to please me. We arranged for an initial talk and translation at registration time of the first session and that I would distribute information sheets and consent forms at this point.

The initial session took place in the youth club room at Barton St Community Centre. I arrived early and waited in the room with Shazia for the women to arrive. When twelve women had arrived, Shazia introduced me and I distributed the information sheet (see Appendix 13) and spoke for a few minutes about the aims of the research and my interest in the women’s reasons for walking and the impact it has on them. I tried to emphasise non- health related impacts and also talked about what ‘doing research’ means and what I would actually do, that is take part in walks, interview and record responses. I asked the women what they thought about their motivations for walking, if they had any ideas about how to collect information and also discussed confidentiality and anonymity. Throughout this process Shazia interjected to summarise my points in Urdu, women responded, and asked questions in English and Urdu.

As the session drew to a close, and registration and other administration took place, I was left with an uneasy sense that the session had been too vague, the women asked questions like ‘What do you want to know?’ and ‘What do you want us to do?’ to which my response had to be, ‘I’m not sure,’ and ‘I don’t want you to do anything in particular.’ I later wrote in my field notes that I felt I had confused and bewildered the group. I also noted that Sharifa, a woman who became a key participant said, ‘When you come with us you will know what it’s like.’ This simple observation proved to be remarkably prescient.

All the women present took an information sheet, of twelve attending seven asked to participate and signed consent forms. Shazia confirmed understanding with these women in English and Urdu depending on their language confidence and preference. Three women took consent forms home, of which two returned and took part the following week and one declined to take part. Over the following walks, new women attended, and whenever possible I explained my research on the move and had information sheets with me; generally people knew what I was doing anyway as news had spread through the local community.

My field notes attest that I felt there was always an assumption in the Blackburn group that as I was one of two white women attending, that I was there in some official capacity. The women who took part also knew my husband in his capacity as a council employee and in some instances, had taken part in trips to the Lake District he had organised or been trained by him to be volunteer walk leaders.

Consequently, in discussion about my research and my role, there were often assumptions made that I was working on behalf of the council or that there might be funding consequences if the research was successful. I was also careful to squash any such rumours but did feel that these ideas and associations coloured the recruitment of participants in this group.

Three more women agreed to take part over subsequent weeks, otherwise I was careful to not record or photograph those not consenting. Of the twelve participating women in the group there were five consistently attending and eager participants, Sharifa, Catija, Zahida, Zubiya and Bushra. Volunteer walk leaders, Maria, Yasmeen and Asma also consented and took part. Therefore, overall, I collected data from fifteen individuals in this section of the research

Darwen

Again, for the Darwen walks, initial contact was made with walk leaders through my husband. The walk leaders for this walk are a married couple in their seventies who have been involved as participants and volunteers with the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council walks for several years. They have therefore been known to me through my husband for over 10 years.

I agreed to attend the Friday morning walks from September to December. Again, I discussed aims and methods on the phone with the leaders prior to our first meeting. At the first meeting 56 walkers attended. This walk differed from the Barton St walk as meeting places varied depending on where the walk was going to take place. Meeting places were generally car parks or significant local locations and were always outside. Therefore, all administration and information given concerning the walks and the research took place outside and on the move.

At this first meeting I gave a brief overview, in the car park, of my area of interest and what I would be doing. I distributed a lot of information leaflets and consent forms. Given the large numbers attending these walks and the fluid nature of the group, I felt immediate concerns about how to keep track of participants. There were frequent new arrivals over the period of the research, so again I continued to distribute information and consent leaflets personally as I met and spoke to people. Again, I was careful to ensure I had written and verbal consent when recording and later when I attempted to collect written data.

As with the Barton St group a core group of ten frequent attenders and interested participants developed, this core group contained a sub group of Hong Kong Chinese Cantonese speaking women who attended together as well as other local women and men. The Cantonese speaking walkers had generally high levels of speaking and listening comprehension in English, apart from one woman for whom the group translated. This woman chose not to participate in the research and therefore I did not make adaptations for language in the recruitment of participants from the Friday group.

Because of its size, there will have been times in this group when I was involved in conversations and experiences with people who were not aware of my role and assumed me to be just another walker, these experiences were written up in field notes. As with the Barton St walk the walk leaders also participated in the research.

**4.72 Ethical considerations**

In conducting the research, I approached ethical considerations from two viewpoints. First, I ensured procedural requirements were adhered to. Secondly, I was cognisant of having to make decisions in practice which were based on guiding ethical principles.

In terms of procedure, consent was sought from Sheffield University’s ethics committee concerning the focus and methods of the research. Attention was paid to ensure all those participating in the research were fully aware of what was happening and that clear and valid consent was given to take part and use data obtained. I adopted an ethical approach common to this kind of work. To the best of my intention I ensured that all participants, regardless of language status gave informed consent to participate. I aimed to ensure that they clearly understood what the research was about, how their information would be used, what participating in the research would involve and that they had the right to withdraw at any point. I clarified how data would be handled and ensured participants understood how their contribution would be handled, and the procedures in place to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

This information was contained in initial information and consent sheets (Appendix 13 and 14) and discussion surrounding these. In the Barton St group, this was underlined by using a translator to ensure language was not a barrier to informed consent. All participants described in the research have been anonymised and all participants were shown the final documents where they and events involving them were described, where transcriptions of talk or photographs were used. Whilst recording in transit I always ensured the participant was aware recording was taking place and that they had given verbal consent at that point.

Being present as participant/researcher in fieldwork throws up certain sets of ethical questions. Guillemin and Gilliam (2004) describe ethically important moments as those unexpected situations where ethical principles and frameworks come to be tested. This conception resonates with my experience in the field.

A significant proportion of the conversation and talk I recorded and took part in during the research involved intimate, personal and potentially sensitive issues. I aimed during all these encounters to be mindful of my basic obligation to interact in a caring, non-exploitative way.

There were two particular concerns that I had about these sensitive conversations. Firstly, I was aware that on occasion there was the possibility that participants may leave our conversations in an emotionally vulnerable state having discussed upsetting and difficult life events. I was very careful not to lead participants into revealing information they may on reflection have preferred not to. I never asked directly about events and aimed to respond neutrally and with open questions, my aim was always to allow participants to lead the conversation and to share as much or as little as they felt comfortable with.

I noticed that the fluidity of a mobile conversation allowed participants to stop, move away or move on in a way that is not possible in a static seated interview. I aimed as much as possible to let participants come to me and initiate conversation and was surprised to find that this approach led to a steady stream of people wanting to talk. I was party to many very personal and revealing stories and was fully aware throughout, of my responsibility to the participant, I tried to continually consider the participant’s current emotional state and account of their current sense of well-being when being involved in these accounts.

My second concern about sensitive conversations was the loose acquaintance I had with some participants through my husband’s work. Whilst I did not know any of the participants well some had volunteered or walked with my husband in his professional role for up to ten years and consequently whilst they had some knowledge of my life situation, I too was aware of key aspects of their lives. My worry here was that this could prove concerning in terms of participants sharing sensitive personal information that would confuse the social links already in place. In these circumstances, I aimed to underline the anonymity and confidentiality agreements in place, whilst also being sensitive to individuals’ situations.

I go on to describe two ethically important moments, Guillemin and Gilliam (2004). These were both situations where I felt concerns about being involved in potentially exploitative scenarios. In both cases I felt it necessary to reflect on the ethical principles at the foundation of the research to inform my next actions. All participants read and consented to publication of the following outlines.

Hajira

On the 18th May we began a walk from Barton St, we planned to walk a circular route on the local streets, it was a cold and wet morning. I was walking at the back of the group with Hajira. Hajira struggles with several chronic health conditions. Hajira was feeling weak and in pain on this morning and when the walk passed in front of her house she said she was going to go home. Other walkers were also suggesting that the walk was cut short as the weather was deteriorating and the walk leader agreed to return to the community centre.

Hajira asked me if I would like to visit her house for a cup of tea. I agreed and I entered her home and sat on the sofa in her back room whilst she prepared a drink and food in the kitchen. I stayed with Hajira for about an hour and a half. During this time, we watched Sky News and Hajira spoke about her health conditions. She explained that she often felt very low and sad. We discussed walking and she talked about how the Wednesday morning walk was one of the few times she left the house and that she found it physically hard but also felt mentally better when she had been out. I asked to record Hajira talking about her experiences of walking and she agreed.

During this continuing conversation Hajira hinted that her husband disapproved of her taking part in the walks and that she sometimes went out without his knowledge. I realised towards the end of the morning that Hajira’s husband was in the house. She became suddenly alert when she heard movement and coughing and went upstairs. She came down and asked me to leave quietly.

This encounter made me feel uneasy. Whilst I did not have a full and clear picture of Hajira’s home life and mental health I came away feeling concerned for her. Ethically I felt it would be exploitative and potentially dangerous to use the recordings I had made during the morning so I made the decision to erase the file. I mentioned the encounter and my concerns about Hajira’s safety and mental health confidentially with the Age UK walk organiser the following week. I continued to walk with Hajira when she attended and incorporated her comments and insights to my field notes.

Doreen

Doreen attended the Friday morning walks with her husband. They both had many friends in the group and tended not to walk together. Both participated in the research. Whilst Doreen’s husband talked to me about his memories and positive feelings about walking, Doreen spoke to me in increasing detail over several weeks about their adult son’s recent suicide.

I recorded her speech several times as she described how taking part in the walks had provided the family with some structure in some very difficult times. She talked about how she and her husband had formally spoken to the walkers as a group during one walk soon after her son’s funeral to thank them for their support. She spoke at length about how she and her husband found it easier to share their grief and pain and receive support whilst walking than in more formal therapeutic situations.

The first anniversary of her son’s death occurred during the period of the research. During one walk Doreen disclosed that her husband was finding the anniversary very difficult to cope with. She explained that he was becoming increasingly distraught, was unable to sleep and that she had called an ambulance for him as he had a dramatic panic attack one evening. She was explaining how important it was that her husband was able to continue walking and that he was continuing to find it a ‘lifeline.’

I was concerned that Doreen was disclosing personal information about her husband and that I was recording this information. I knew from our previous encounters that he would probably choose not to discuss the information with me. I spoke to Doreen about my concerns about using the information. I agreed to type out a transcript of all the recordings regarding their son and hand them a copy. I explained to her husband what I was doing and why and asked him to sign the copy if he was happy for me to use the transcript whilst also emphasising that it was fine for him to choose to not give permission. He signed the transcript and continued to choose not to discuss the situation with me.

**4.73 Data collection**

Empirical data took the form of field notes and transcribed speech, photographs were also taken and occasionally I used a recording device to record the sound environment. I made attempts to collect written accounts of walking experiences which ultimately proved to be of limited success. Details of this process and some analysis of its success and failure continue below. As I used the same methodology in both parts of the research I consider them together.

**4.74 Interviews**

I am hesitant to use the word interview to describe the interactions in which I was involved. The interactions were hardly even semi -structured. Due to initial information sessions and the information sheet participants were aware that I was interested in their experiences relating to the impact of walking on their everyday lives.

As I walked with the same groups for a long time, members generally knew who I was and why I was there and those who had chosen to be involved would approach me to discuss experiences, often carrying on narratives and ideas from previous weeks. I did not approach people and did not initiate topics of conversation although within conversation I would develop certain topics about group sociality, relation to and feelings about place and perception of feelings about walking. I generally mainly listened but tried to tease out ideas about impacts and embodied emplaced reactions to walking.

As I will go on to outline, it is hard to draw a line between the participant observation section of research and the interviewing as what I was observing and participating in was the experience of walking and talking together. A line can be drawn in so far as whilst I was often walking and talking and would record aspects of this in observational field notes I would also at times request that specific conversations continued and were recapped and recorded. I did this when I felt that talk was particularly pertinent to my interests.

At first, I had expected to conduct formal recorded interviews separately from the walk either at the community centre or at a central Darwen location. However, it became clear that this was not going to happen, participants did not have the time or inclination to take part in this option when I raised it as a possibility.

I was concerned at first that recording during the walk would be invasive or disruptive but it quickly became clear that the structure of the walk would allow discrete recording to happen and allow participants the opportunity to control pace and duration. Temporary couplings occurred as the walks proceeded and at natural breaks these would converge and diverge. This allowed for both the opportunity to conduct discrete recording and ensured privacy. I used a digital Dictaphone to complete recordings, this clipped onto the strap of my rucksack and could be quickly set to record and therefore did not hamper the flow of the walk. I did not continuously record the walk. Rather I chose to record as storytelling events occurred. Sometimes these storytelling events were directed specifically at me as the listener, at other times the storytelling occurred with multiple participants within a smaller group or was performed to a larger group. Depending on the unfolding situation I either requested permission to record as the listener began to speak or I chose to begin to record and alerted the speakers afterwards with the understanding that I would delete the recording if requested. This approach relied on decisions being made regarding the significance of talk as it occurred and inevitably some instances of mobile literacies will have been lost and some talk was recorded that did not take the form of a storytelling event. Occasionally I asked speakers to recap the beginning of their talk as I interrupted them to request permission and began to record.

I realised as I continued to use this technique that recording as the talk took place, allowed for the participants to draw on their immediate experience and discuss what was happening as it was happening. As I will go on to discuss in my discussion of written data and representations of data we all found it hard to convey and describe the experience of walking when we were not walking. The embodied and emplaced nature of the experience I was trying to research is best examined in the moment. When recording, I noted the area that the speech was uttered. This became more important than I realised, at the analysis and representation stage.

**4.75 Participant observation**

I took down field notes based on my own observations immediately after each walk before I travelled away from the site. These notes detailed route, conditions and participants, any significant incidents, the behaviour and movement of the group, the nature of the place, significant talk and any recording completed as well as an auto ethnographic account of my experience of the walk. These notes were scaffolded by scribbled notes written during the walk and occasional audio notes made to remind myself of detail as well as viewing any photographs taken.

**4.76 Photographs**

I took some photographs using a mobile phone during fieldwork. This was not a primary method of collecting data and was done more as a form of visual field notes and memory aid. They were not used for analytical purposes and are not representative of the full range of settings and participants that constituted the research data. I include some photographs in the final thesis as illustrative of settings or incidents.

**4.77 Written response**

Barton St

During the first few walks with the Bangor St group I was plagued with a sense that I was not really collecting data and needed to do something more concrete than write field notes and occasionally record speech as we walked. I raised this concern with the walkers as we walked on 27 July and suggested that I may meet some of them individually outside the time of the walk to complete more structured interviews. This suggestion was not met with enthusiasm; the women explained that they did not have time to do this and would say whatever they had to say during the main walks. As we were having this conversation we walked past the gates of Corporation Park and I asked what it was like in the park. As Catija and Sharifa described the ornamental lake and the picnic tables at the summit of the hill Catija suggested we visit on the next walk, bring a picnic and ‘you can do your research then.’ I agreed and as we continued the walk there was much discussion of who would bring what food.

At this point in the research I was still struggling with the sense that the movement of the walk was hindering data collection, a viewpoint that I later realised was misguided. I decided to create a document in the form of a worksheet with spaces to record observations and feelings about the walk to help capture the women’s experiences (appendix 16). The design of the document aimed to encourage the participants to think in terms of external sensory experience and internal processes. It suggested this way of structuring experience in simple graphic terms and offered a blank space to record thoughts in writing or pictures.

On the day of this special data collection session, I arrived with documents and pens and felt tips. It was pouring. We met in the kitchen area of the community centre and women arrived with quantities of food in Tupperware. We agreed to complete a short walk in surrounding streets in the rain and eat at the community centre rather than have a picnic.

On returning to the kitchen women began preparing and warming up food and drink and distributing paper plates. I re- capped the aims of the session, and distributed the sheets and left writing materials in the centre of the communal table. Two women spent a long time writing and drawing on the sheets, some asked for help or asked a walk leader to write as they dictated. One woman wrote in Urdu. A number of women made attempts to complete a sheet, overall, I recorded that I was asked the question ‘What do you want me to say?’ and ‘Is this what you want?’ a lot. I frequently explained that any contribution was valuable but by the end of the session I felt that a lack of clarity in aims and purpose of this session had made it ultimately unsuccessful. I felt that the women were completing sheets to please me and I felt myself behaving like a teacher in such a way as to hamper the process.

In my fieldnotes I likened the experience to struggling through a poorly planned lesson with eager but bewildered students and the added benefit of food. The food became the centre of the occasion, women had taken a lot of time and effort to cook a large variety of dishes and each dish was introduced to the group as it was ready and we all smelt, tasted and savoured it. In retrospect, I concluded that the reason this session was unsuccessful was because the stuff of the research was the embodied and emplaced experience of walking and any attempt to consider the experience when not walking flattens out its vital elements.

I analysed this data along with field notes and interview transcripts and incorporated them into the mobile story maps I went on to create. However, the embodied and emplaced experience of eating home cooked food in a group dominated the session, that was what was happening, that is what we did.

Darwen

Despite the limited success of the written response collection with the Barton St walk I was keen to try something similar with the Darwen walkers. My aim was to collect written reflections of experiences of walking, both the Friday morning routes and other walks completed. I felt that these walkers were more likely to complete written responses in their own time so I devised walking journals which I distributed to anyone interested.

The walking journals were empty notebooks with a front section detailing possible things to think about under the headings, ‘general information’, ‘social experiences’, ‘sensory experiences’, ‘place’, ‘personal experiences’, and ‘bringing it all together.’ I discussed these journals in one to one conversations over a couple of weeks and then arrived at a walk with a bag full to distribute. I distributed them all and left with a waiting list of people wanting one. Overall, I distributed 43 journals and 23 were returned over December 2016 and January 2017. The journals were used in a variety of ways. Some wrote logs of routes, weather and distance walked. Some were more reflective about particular experiences. I analysed this data along with field notes and interview transcripts and incorporated them into the mobile story maps I went on to create.

**4.78 Recording and analysis of data**

Field notes were written up and interview transcripts and journal extracts were transcribed in to word documents. These documents were then coded according to common themes. Once overarching themes had been identified all documents were re-read and colour coded. The written data was collected, read and coded in the light of these overarching themes. Much analysis occurred during decisions and experiments about how to represent the data.

**4.79 Representation of data**

Earlier in the chapter I discussed how continually revisiting and revising data is a key aspect of ethnographic method. I have described how my focus and research questions were brought into relief by my less successful attempts at data collection and how I truly recognised the vital force of the experience of emplacement when I turned to activity that did not focus on emplacement. Similarly, I found that my difficulties with analysis and representation of data and the recursive journey I took between these two activities eventually proved to elevate the key findings of the research.

Once I had coded field notes and interview transcripts and began to think about how to represent the data I found it extremely hard to produce something that I felt truly represented the experience. I began by writing narrative accounts of the walks, writing the walk as a story and including the stories told, as the walk developed. However, I found these accounts to be inauthentic and self-indulgent and centred on my perspective in a way that I felt did not truly represent the experience. Whilst I am fully aware that ultimately the whole research endeavour is my perspective, the research was not auto- ethnographic, I did as far as possible want to foreground participants’ experiences and felt that my whole approach, in walking and listening and allowing the experiences to happen around me contested to that. I also felt that these narrative accounts, maybe because of my own writing style and limitations, did not portray the embodied and emplaced nature of the research. Writing about walking flattened out the experience in a similar way to how written data lost key elements.

I went on to experiment with more graphic representations of data and in this sense, I was inspired by my long-time fascination with maps, map making and artists’ maps. I was inspired by a book called ‘You are Here: Personal Geographies and Other Maps of the Imagination’ (Harmon 2004). The book is an idiosyncratic selection of maps that transcend the norm. There are maps of the body, maps of internal states and processes, of life trajectories and life stories. There are maps of the memories of local places and maps of fantasy worlds. In all, the map makers’ ingenuity, humour and personal viewpoint shine through. In the introduction to the book Harmon states, ‘These are maps of the imagination, as all maps are, only more so’ (2004 p.11). Freed from the restrictions of the need for cartographic accuracy these maps explicate relationships between bodies, minds and places.

There is a suggestion made in ‘You are Here’, that the creation of such maps is an impulse towards orientation. In his contribution to the book Hall (2004 p.15) describes orientation as the continual human impulse to define and re- define ourselves in relation to others and to place and to our own past selves. To orientate is to continually scan landscape and time, geography and emotion, knowledge and behaviour. Hall (2004) draws parallels between the associative natures of memory and geography. An embodied and affectual response to place draws forth memories and these memories extend and multiply in association with a movement through place. Map making in this book is a way of representing this process.

The concept of orientation and its relation to memory as catalysts for the creation of maps is a potent idea, that feeds into my understanding of the walking experience and helps to clarify how literacy is involved. I suggest that we all carry maps of the imagination with us, maps drawn from our embodied and emplaced experiences. The walking experience both draws on and re-draws these maps.

I started by drawing trail maps of the walks. These trail maps conveyed a sense of the route and elements of place as well as specific objects and people encountered. I annotated the trail maps with some transcribed speech in the rough area of the route on the trail on which the speech was uttered. I began to feel this method of representation more closely represented the experience of the walks but still had reservations. Specifically, the trail maps were not cartographically accurate in any way. The trails represent the shape of the walk and distances are stretched and condensed to ensure the graphic whole.

Again, I felt that in drawing representations and recreating the trail I was intruding with my perspective to a degree that felt uncomfortable. In the process of creating I also was frequently frustrated by not being able to fit in the speech transcripts that I felt were significant and struggled to represent the link between the language use and materiality of place which I increasingly felt was key to understanding the whole experience.

My solution to these dissatisfactions was to source ordnance survey maps of the walk areas, plot the walk routes and transcribe speech onto the maps in a more detailed and place specific way. In experimenting with representing transcripts in this way I found that I could foreground what became important, that is overall conclusions about how language use when walking is tightly embedded in place and the body and how the narrative trails created on the walk mirrored the landscape and engendered communal trails that then wound around each other to create mobile literacy practice.

These mobile story maps became a heuristic device by which I came to focus in on storytelling in place and in movement as the key impacting element of the walking experience. From a hunch regarding what felt right in terms of representing the data I could take the reflexive turn to reconsider the data as well as reconsider the theory from different vantage points. I found links between corresponding field notes and recordings that occurred in specific areas as I revisited them whilst looking at a map and as I began to transcribe on to the maps I found myself creating knots of language that drew me to re - think Ingold’s (2007) conceptions of how lines of being mesh and knot in the continual recreation of place.

**4.8 Reflexivity and my role as researcher**

In my initial exposition of my methodological choices, I considered how the methodology is an ongoing reflexive conversation. I described how my experience of the research process was one of continual tension between what I observed, what I theorised and my overarching curiosities. I considered how I not only observed and recorded experiences but co- created them as a participant and I recognised how the research evolved in design and focus in response to the flux and flow of these experiences, a process that continued as I wrote.

My aim here was to describe how understanding of my role and aims as a researcher gradually developed through continual exposure to the field and to theory and how my methods, processes and thinking were shaped by continual returning to, and reconsidering of, all elements of the process. The journey of the research was not a linear process but rather comprised a circular route, itself made up of smaller circular processes and some dead ends. In many respects, I finished where I started, my initial hunches remained but were bolstered by a transformed understanding of what occurred in the process of the journey.

As a researcher, I was clear that in entering the field I was going to be focussing on sensory experience as a vital element of the process of walking and I aimed to follow Pink (2012) in attending to my own sensory experiences as they were produced through the research encounter, in an attempt to assist me in understanding those of others. Being a walker in a group made it easy for me to be similarly situated to my fellow walkers, we experienced uneven ground, breathlessness, cold, rain, falling leaves, traffic fumes, the taste of blackberries together. The embodied and emplaced experience of walking could not but take precedence at every point of the walk, we were always in motion, our eyes were always focussed on the direction of travel.

Over the period of research analysis and writing I came to recognise the absolute and overwhelming precedence of this sensory engagement as being the stuff of the research. This realisation was bought about not least by my frequent mistaken attempts to turn away from sensory engagement and the struggles I encountered in attempting to analyse and represent my data.

Pink (2012) highlights the importance of rejecting the misconception that research and analysis are separate processes. She states that research is a way of knowing, engaged in by the researcher during the research as well as later, away from the field. Significantly Pink states that in analysis:

a sensory ethnography approach explicitly seeks to maintain (or construct) connections between materials and ways of knowing associated with their means of production. Therefore, the analysis itself should be situated in relation to the phenomenological context of the production of materials. (2012 p.121)

It was this realisation, as I revisited theoretical frameworks that provoked me to use annotated maps as a heuristic device to analyse and represent data. It also provoked me to re- immerse myself in the sensory experience of the walk by revisiting and walking the routes alone.

As I returned to the places and walked the routes alone, the recursive nature of the whole research process was embodied. Re engaging with the landscape and the objects of particular routes allowed for a cyclical process of remembering, reimagining and re - experiencing that deepened and extended my understanding of the original fieldwork. Just as I theorised that walking is a way of generating meaning and recalibrating identity in the field, so walking became a means of analysis in my research.

**4.9 Serendipity and epiphany**

I have described my research route as circular and including dead ends. To extend the metaphor of research as route walking, it is fair to say that I found much of the journey, particularly that involving the actual walking in the field as intensely uncomfortable and confusing.

In my actual walks, I could stride ahead, confident that a leader understood our direction and destination and all I had to do was take in the experience as it unfolded. However, in fieldwork I felt continuously anxious that I did not understand my purpose or direction. In reaction to this I would occasionally attempt to take control, generally by introducing new methods of data collection that would lead to a dead end that would further induce my anxiety.

Despite an intellectual understanding of the reflexive nature of the process and a commitment to undertaking sensory ethnography I found it hard to accommodate the messiness and need for multiple viewpoints the research required. I spent much of the earlier part of the fieldwork time suppressing feelings of despair and confusion but found that occasionally a small epiphany would occur, a ray of sunlight that would generate fresh confidence in the research. In retrospect, I attribute these moments as being what Pink describes as instances of the ‘serendipitous sensory learning of being there’ (2012 p.65) or alternatively as instances of what Ingold (2014) would call knowing from the inside.

Pink explains that sensory learning does not often occur in a planned and structured way as a research question is pursued in a linear direction. Rather, she describes ‘often unplanned instances whereby the researcher arrives at an understanding of other people’s memories and meanings through their own embodied experiences and/or attending to other people’s practices, subjectivities and explanations’ (2012 p.65). I most fully understood the powerful, embodied, emplaced practice of telling stories as we walked when I listened to stories being told as we walked and I experienced the stories interweaving with the landscape, with objects and my own memories and imagination in that place, at that time. As soon as I attempted to partition or remove aspects of the experience its essence evaporated.

Pink (2012 p.67) also describes epiphanies as a researcher’s sudden intuitive realisation that she is approaching research, observing and asking questions in a different way because she is attending to her senses in the field and cites Edvardsson and Street (2007) as an example of research where this occurred. Again, I recognise this impulse in retrospect as a dynamic that occurred about half way through the research process. Heath and Street warn that:

Every ethnographer must always be on guard against letting one’s own beliefs about what ‘should be’ overcome the accuracy of detailing what is. (2008 p.37)

I recognise a tension in the research process, from a distance, as I gradually and painfully let go of how I imagined the research process should be. As the field research progressed I made a conscious decision to, as detailed in my field notes, ‘stop trying.’ I recognised that in my attempts to persuade participants to detail their experience I was creating a barrier to recognising their experience. Whilst at the time the decision felt like a surrender of sorts I can, in the light of Pink’s (2012) discussion of epiphany, see it as a reorientation of my research towards the sensory, towards an attendance to emerging resonances (Law 2004a) and towards an ontological commitment to know from the inside (Ingold 2014). In doing less, I was able to open up to engagement on a sensory level and through ‘being there’ and knowing from the inside, gather and record more of the ‘serendipitous sensory learning’ (Pink 2012 p.65) that forms the basis of my findings.

**4.10 Conclusion**

On reflecting on the research process, I concluded that its strengths and weaknesses are linked. Much of what I considered to be successful came from dealing with elements that did not work.

I believe the research benefitted from the richness of the field. The initial conception of the research questions allowed me to pursue, and to a degree capture, an elusive dynamic. As my conclusions came to be about the entanglement of body, place and language in movement, so anthropological participant observation with a sensory ethnographic perspective proved to be the right methodological approach to capture this entanglement, although I didn’t realise its significance until later, and did not always apply it consistently. The decision to create annotated maps as a heuristic to allow for the analysing and representing of something that is hard to express, has proved to be fruitful.

Weaknesses of the research centred specifically around managing my role as researcher. My concerns about my perceived role with the Barton St group, specifically my associations with my husband and the council made for a difficult dynamic that I am not sure I was able to completely overcome. I am also aware that with the Barton St group my role and stance in relation to the participants sometimes began to morph into a teacher/student relationship. My professional experience in adult education lent me certain ways of speaking and behaving with people speaking English as a second language that was not always conducive to the relationship I was trying to achieve as a participant observer researcher.

I also feel that I may not have recorded the role of multi - literate language use during the Barton St walks sufficiently. I did not record switches in language use in detail, partly this was disregarded as I felt it was not my focus and if I had regarded these occurrences, I would have been working on a very different research project. I made the decision that despite the ethnic and cultural differences between the Barton St and Darwen groups, my focus was on behaviour and experiences that were fundamentally shared by the two groups. I did not want to approach the groups as culturally very different but also was keen not to disregard differences between them. I am not sure if I got the balance right. Findings from the two groups in many ways were similar and in some ways, were different. Whereas I don’t want to play down how cultural difference accounted for those differences again in terms of the research questions, it was the similarities that were more interesting.

My attempts to introduce participatory methodologies to garner written responses ultimately failed as a data collection device. However, these failed attempts were important in re- orientating the research and helping me to recognise what it was I was looking at. I would also, in retrospect, have liked to have paid more attention to sensory response and experience in my field notes. Again, whereas I knew what I was trying to do, I also wasn’t always confident about doing it, or convinced about its centrality. I felt it but did not always record it effectively.

I have found that in analysing and representing the data, particularly in the creation of the mobile story maps, (see Chapter 5), that I have a clearer insight into the core of the research questions. Whilst this insight has clearly come about because of my time in the field in retrospect I wish that the research had been designed in such a way as to make it possible for me to re -visit the field and continue collaborative fieldwork once the insight had been gained. I would have liked to have been able to collaboratively develop more maps in the field as a further data collection exercise. I feel there are options for further meaningful exploration of walking experiences here.

Ultimately the research approach became less and less formal and more open as it continued. This development occurred as I became more confident in the primacy of embodiment and emplacement as key areas of interest with regard to the research questions. As such I recognised the necessity of ‘being there’, that is of keeping mobile and engaged at a sensorial level, to keeping orientated towards the ‘stuff’ of the research. This overall change of approach was evidenced by the developing primacy of an anthropological participant observation approach (Ingold 2014) combined with a sensory ethnographic perspective (Pink 2012). A similar re orientation towards embodiment and emplacement was evident in my move towards representing data graphically.

Chapter 5 – Findings and analysis

**5.1 Introduction to findings**

My findings comprised data collected from seventeen walks, with twenty-seven key participants, (see tables in appendices 1, 2 and 3). The walks were undertaken between May and December 2016. Data took the form of field notes, interview transcripts, walk descriptions, route maps, annotated maps and walkers’ written contributions, (see table in appendix 3). I have focussed on six walks in undertaking analysis, three from each group. They are street circular, canal circular 1, canal circular 2, Bold Venture Park, Hoddlesden Houses and Pleasington. I feel that my findings are best explicated through the totality of the experience of a whole walk rather than aspects of many walks. Important characteristics of mobile literacies are identified through considering the entirety of the collective experience. I chose the specific six walks as they incorporate a breadth of participants and environments whilst also foregrounding defining characteristics of mobile literacies. Participating in these walks felt like a form of analysis, as I moved through the landscape and listened to stories I was aware of a surge of cognition. These were walks that were foundational to formulation of my conclusions. During the street circular walk I became aware of walking as a social practice. The canal walks focussed my attention on how affective response to place impacted on language use. The Hoddlesden Houses walk was an extraordinary experience dominated and moulded by the material aspects of the environment. During the Bold Venture Park and Pleasington walks my attention focussed on the collective experience. Whilst elements of these ideas were present throughout the fieldwork these six walks offered particularly stark and clear data. I present some data from three of these walks, canal circular 2, Bold Venture Park and Hoddlesden Houses within this chapter. Data from the other three walks, interview transcripts from all six walks and examples of field notes and walkers written contributions are contained in the appendices.

**5.11 Canal circular 2**

It took a long time for the group to leave. We congregated in the corridor but then some people drifted off to the toilets and did not return for a while and nobody knew where they were. There was a new elderly woman using two sticks, Iffat and Shazia stayed with her she walked very slowly. The rest of the group, seven of us went forward.

We headed quickly towards the canal. There was talk of the baby moorhen and the blackberries we had seen last week. We hurried through the streets and behind the disused mill and warehouses to get to the canal, there was a sense in which we were pre-occupied and rushing. Before we arrived at the canal we passed a group of five smartly dressed men and women with briefcases and clipboards in a low rise social club car park. They appeared out of place and Iffat exclaimed loudly, ‘It’s Jack Straw.’ We all turned to look and confirm it was Jack Straw. There was a spike of chatter as people wondered why Jack Straw was in the car park.

It was a warm day. When we passed through the gap onto the canal towpath there was a new coolness and a slight breeze. Facing down the canal sightlines are extended, a sense of opening out, the sound of traffic recedes and there are faint sounds of water and birds. This change in environment provokes a change in the way we walk. Up to this point we had walked quite fast and purposefully in twos. Now the group extends and surges forwards and back, different combinations of people emerge and change. We walk slowly, saunter, there is more talk and it is more reflective and abstract. Everything changes about our experience when we reach the canal. Sharifa points to the dirty water and oil. She says to me, ’Why, why is it like this?’ She says, it is sad for the animals and wildlife and birds. She begins to ask me ‘How do you say in your language?’ She tries to explain a concept to me, the concept is to do with how we should look after our environment to benefit everyone, caring for the environment creates harmony she said, ‘god gives you this and you must take care of it.’

Catija was looking for the baby moorhens, we saw two that had grown bigger since we were last there, probably the same ones we saw, and a very young chick that scuttled across the surface of the water. Everybody stopped to watch the chick. Zahida said ‘It will be autumn soon the chicks will grow, everything will be different here soon.’

We stopped a little way along the canal to rest at some benches. There were two young lads sitting on the benches, one was slumped unconscious against the other, they both had sores on their faces. I assumed they had recently taken drugs. The conscious lad asked what we were doing and Maria said we’re going for a walk. Catija needed to sit and sat down next to him, he pointed out a weeping sore on his forehead to her, she said ‘What’s wrong with you, what is it?’ We were interrupted by about 20 ducks flying in, swooping down to land near us in the expectation of food. The ducks were swooping towards us and fighting and pecking. Maria threw some broken biscuits on the ground and more ducks swooped in. Those of us near the benches all focussed on the ducks, we were laughing and commenting on them. The conscious lad told us how once they’d drained the canal and found three motorbikes. He said his friend had put one of the motorbikes back together and he would ride it. Zahida and Sharifa said I wonder what is under the water, ‘Maybe some suitcases with forgotten things in.’ I did not record conversation at this point but made notes.

We moved away from the benches, Catija said goodbye to the lads. Further along the path we saw tall blackberry bushes, there were a lot of fruit in reach and the bushes extended higher than any of us could reach. We crowded around the bushes and paused, picking fruit for about fifteen minutes. We were waiting for the slower walkers to come around the corner into view. Women cupped fruit in their hands, pressed it into water bottles and made bags from scarves to hold it. Everybody chattered and exclaimed as they tasted the fruit and were showing each other large berries. Rabiya was reaching up and pointing to clusters of very ripe fruit we couldn’t reach. Hands and faces were getting stained with purple juice, some women discussed how they were going to cook or preserve the fruit when they got home. Zahida described how to make a fruit pie. The two lads from the bench walked along the path towards us and stopped with us for a moment, they picked some fruit and ate it with us. Over the time we paused at the blackberry bushes I recorded several snippets of talk.

We paused near a bridge, throughout the time we were fruit picking a man was hunched over a mobile phone in the shadow of the bridge and he was watching us. As the elderly walkers came into view Rabiya and others raised their arms and shouted and pointed to the track we were to take off the canal. As we moved towards the track off the towpath, the man under the bridge moved towards the bushes where we had been. As we walked away from the canal another man ran towards us and past us, holding cash and shouting into a phone. There was a series of movements and events initiated by the gesture that we were moving away from the bushes. After the excitement and chatter of the fruit picking, we were silent as this happened. Moving away from the canal was marked by a change of atmosphere. It was warmer and dustier back on the streets, we walked in single file on the pavement and there was noise of traffic. Some women said they were going shopping now, or going home. As we approached the first big main road some turned left towards town and some right towards the estate. Maria and I climbed the hill back to the community centre.



Fig 1

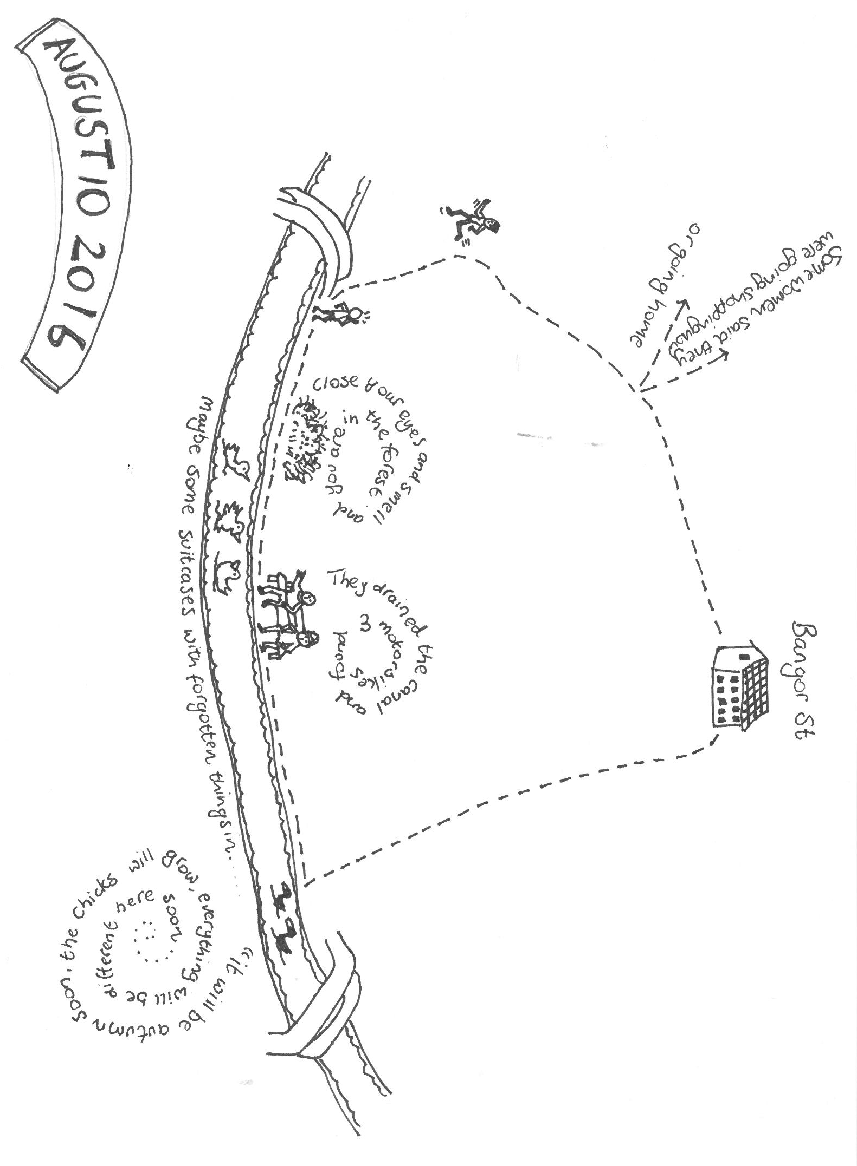


Fig 2

**5.12 Photographs**

Fig 3

Street circular

Picking blackberries

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**5.13 Hoddlesden Houses**

Canal Circular

Darwen Moors

We met in a village called Hoddlesden, near the war memorial. About 55 people arrived, we caused quite a commotion in the village as more and more cars arrived and parked along the main road into the village. I had never been here before despite it being quite close to Darwen. There was a war memorial, pub and a few shops straggling along a road. Rows and rows of terraced houses and some old mill buildings beside a stream and mill pond.

Elaine said to me ‘We’re in Gobbin land now’, people from Darwen called people from Hoddlesden, Gobbiners. Gobbiners are considered backward and rural in the same way as Darwiners are considered by Blackburn people. We congregated in the centre of the village, there weren’t many other people around but the occasional local emerging from the shop looked at us with interest.

The village is set in a valley. On the opposite side of the valley, a very large newly built house loomed. There were construction vehicles parked near it and skips. It was built on three levels with the lower level consisting of two wide garage doors, there was a balcony above this and then another floor with protruding gable windows. As we waited for everyone to arrive, Elaine worked her way through the crowd checking her registers. I could hear group members noticing and commenting on the house. Various people were saying it had been built by the ‘Dixon’s man’. I asked about him, he is apparently a very wealthy metal merchant, a working- class man from Darwen who has made millions and is well known locally.

We walked through and out of the village, to the bottom of the valley, across the stream and then began to climb the opposite side. We were trailing in a thin line across fields on narrow tracks. There were frequent styles at the field boundaries which caused the lines of walkers to slow and bunch together, then elongate across the next field. I found myself walking across the field with one or two others, then queueing at the styles in a crowd. This impacted on the nature of the talking that happened, each field contained a single interaction and as it emerged, a single story, then at the field boundaries there were group interactions. We were walking pretty much directly towards the big house and as we climbed the side of the valley the house dominated the talk I heard and recorded. This single theme of conversation was strengthened as we passed an old stone built ornate farm house hidden behind high hedges. Through a gap in the hedge somebody pointed out the tail of a red helicopter.

Apparently, this was the current house of the Dixon’s man. As walkers passed the gap in the hedge they stopped and pointed and exclaimed. Those of us towards the back of the walk could tell something important was coming up as we saw others stopping. A story began filtering from the front of the group to the back, shared as we congregated at styles then expanded on in small groups as we walked across the fields. The story was that the Dixon’s man’s wife was refusing to move from the current stone farmhouse to the new build mansion higher on the hill. I recorded talk about this situation as group members discussed the woman’s motives.

We then began an approach directly towards the house, a footpath led towards it and then veered to the right, skirting around the walled garden boundaries. The footpath first crossed a fenced boundary with a small kissing gate set into the fence. Next to the kissing gate a new gravelled drive had been constructed and giant ornate metal gates with a key pad and intercom sat next to the kissing gate. Again, as we passed these gates I could hear small groups and pairings up and down the straggling group comment and ask why there was so much security when we could easily gain access through the small gate. Again, I recorded talk about this.

We arrived at the house and skirted round the edges and congregated behind it, high up now and looking across the valley to Hoddlesden on the other side of the valley. We were sharing the dominant and elevated perspective of the house itself and could gain a sense of what it would be like to live there, the views and exposed position.

Close up, we could also see that it was not yet inhabited, there were partly plastered walls, guttering and metal pipes leaning against the back walls, window frames with company names still attached, bags of cement and machinery in the large paved area at the back. It seemed dusty and uninviting, the air was hazy with dust, it also seemed enormous. The valley, mill ponds and village beyond are small and enclosed, and the house felt uncomfortably out of perspective in its surroundings. As we stood behind the house, all talk was dominated by it. Some people were trying to work out the number of rooms and how big it really was. Others were commenting on whether they liked it, whether they would live there, what it would be like to live there and how it compared to their homes and other homes they had lived in. The general tone of the conversations was determinedly unimpressed, the house was described as a monstrosity, ugly, ‘not a home.’ I recorded some talk at this point.

We walked along a ridge behind the house and then began to drop back down into the valley. We followed a steep sided cleft with a small stream running through it. The path was precariously set into the side of the cleft, it was narrow and rocky and we had to walk single file to negotiate it.

As we turned a corner we came suddenly upon a small run-down cottage set into the hillside. We walked right behind its back window and looked in to see a kettle on an old gas stove. At the front, there was a lower floor that opened onto a rocky promontory into the stream. Dirty white paint was peeling on the walls, the window frames were flaking and the black back door was swollen and cracked. There were ducks nestled up against the side wall and there was smoke curling from the chimney. Coming upon the house unexpectedly, its hidden location and its remoteness gave it a slightly magical air. Elaine said she knew the old woman who lived there alone, she was very old, in her late eighties. This only added to its fairy-tale qualities. This house also provoked lots of talk, some of which I recorded and much of which was framed by comparison with the Dixon man’s house.

We then dropped down on to an open path and with the village in our sights. Esther approached me and said ‘I wanted to tell you my story’, we had chatted at length before and she requested that I recorded what she said. I was struck by her use of the word ‘story’ and recognised at this point that the word had been used several times to me during this walk and in other walks. It was during this walk that I began to think about walks as structuring story telling opportunities.

I recorded Esther’s story as we skirted the mill ponds. Her story was to do with moving home and becoming well. There were men with fishing rods sitting alone at regular intervals along the side of the ponds. They sat still and in silence. The walking group had stretched out and as Esther and I walked along the far side of the mill pond we could see and hear walkers approaching the pond on the other side and walking along its opposite side. I became aware at this point how noisy we were. There was a continual murmur of chatter hovering over us. I was aware partly because of the quiet surroundings and the silent still figures of the fishermen we passed, who I sensed were annoyed by the noise. I began to think about the fishermen’s motivation for sitting quietly alone in the landscape, and how their experience of the countryside would differ from ours.

The village was busier as we returned. A man coming out of the shop asked us who we were and what we were doing, Elaine gave him a leaflet.



Fig 4

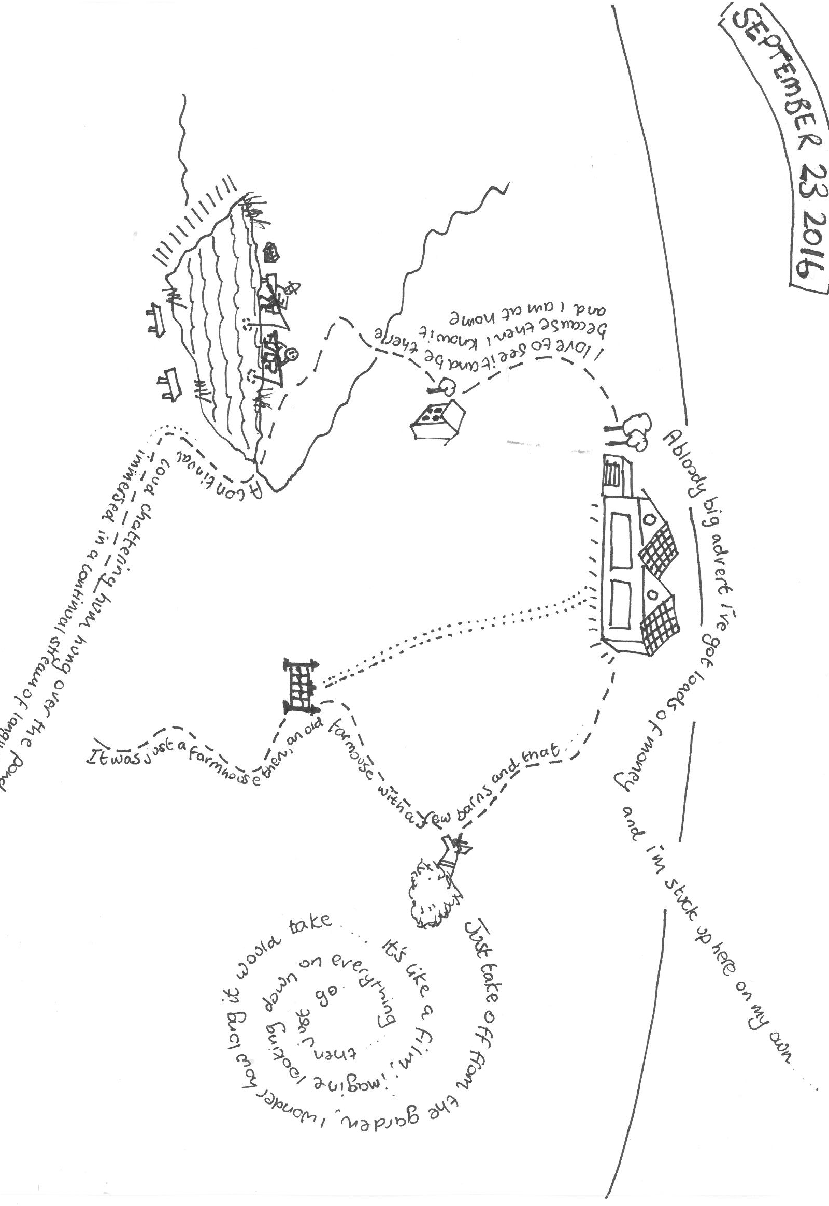


Fig 5

**5.14 Darwen Moors**

We met on the road bordering Bold Venture Park in Darwen. It was cool and autumnal but dry. There were 42 people including a new woman who had joined from Bolton. People were asking why she had travelled so far and whether there were groups closer to her home and she said she wanted to walk where she had grown up. People were asking her where she had lived and finding people they had in common.

Before we began the walk, Elaine announced that Margaret had died. Margaret was an elderly woman who had been part of the group for several years. She was the oldest in the group, in her mid-eighties and had only stopped attending the walks about two months previously as she was beginning to find it too physically demanding. She had died in her sleep. Her death was unexpected, she had not been ill. She was known by most of the group and some had already heard the news. For others, it was a shock and some walkers were clearly upset by the news. Keith explained when the funeral was and said we would hold a minute’s silence further into the walk.

We set off through the park, it is ornate and Victorian. There was an ornamental pond set in with a rockery and fountain and behind it a relief sculpture called ‘Who pays the Quarryman?’ it shows a man in work clothes lying prone and a small dog tugging at his sleeve. I photographed it and looked it up later, it is a reference to the many fatal accidents befalling the original quarry men who worked in the area around the park. It references ideas about Charon in ancient Greek mythology who took the dead across the Styx to the afterlife, money would be placed in the mouths of the deceased to pay the ferryman. The sculpture highlights the lack of recompense for the lives of late Victorian quarrymen and the contrast between these men’s lives and the vast wealth of the mill owners and quarry owners who lived close by. The group I was walking with stopped to look at the sculpture and one man pointed out where the quarry works had been.

This walk was framed by reminiscences about Margaret and the minute’s silence. Various people spoke to me about illness and death and there was a strong strand of looking back, remembering and taking stock of the stories told and experience of the walk. This overall sense was underscored by the weather, it was the first walk where it felt that autumn was turning to winter. There was a feeling of change, a bitterness in the air and a few leaves still clinging to the branches as we walked up through the woods.

There was a quiet and subdued mood as we walked up through the woods. It was muddy and quite gloomy with a steep incline and the narrow path made it harder to talk. A few people were crying and supporting each other in remembering Margaret. There was a strong contrast as we emerged into sunlight at the top of the woods, onto the moors, an open vista and even ground. The change was startling and immediately a buzz of chatter and animation. Suddenly we could see into the distance, there was light and a sharp cool breeze. We congregated on the brow of a hill and Keith spoke to the group about Margaret, he said she was a ‘good friend’ and we observed a minute’s silence. We stayed on the brow for a few moments after the silence, people chatted quietly and were looking into the distance. We then walked away from the brow and the dark woods behind us onto open moorland in the sunlight. I had the real sense that we were physically moving away from the initial shock and upset of the announcement of her death, there was a lighter, calmer and more reflective mood.

Most of the rest of the walk before the descent back to the cars meandered on high open moorland. There were views across distant moors, down on to Darwen and the valleys and plains beyond. We skirted the base of the final incline towards Darwen tower. I recorded several sections of talk with different participants. There was a definite sense of reflection on this walk. Several of the exchanges I went on to record began with comments about Margaret and her unexpected death. This reflection continued with considerations of the speaker’s own health or illness, thoughts about decline and death and memories of lives lived. These exchanges were structured and lent meaning by the landscapes through which we passed and the mercurial weather. It was bitingly cold and windy, nearly all the leaves had fallen and there was a sense that winter was close.

David spoke about an industrial accident that could have taken his life as a young man and the unexpected death of another victim of the accident in a later traffic incident. Sue spoke about returning to her childhood home to care for elderly parents and the regrets and memories she was contending with. She spoke about how place was conjuring a past for her that was uncomfortable. Pauline talked about the sense of freedom she felt being high up and looking down on her home town and how this freedom was being curtailed by her new caring responsibilities. Keith and Elaine both told stories about the past linked to landmarks we passed on the way.

There was an odd cold bright light on the tops and the wind blustered. As we dropped down back through woods, in shelter it was quieter, darker and as we approached the road rain started to fall. Beginning the walk with sadness and moving through and up into light, remembrance, and reflection and then back down into a mundane cold and wet morning there was a sense of an emotional process having been completed.



Fig 6

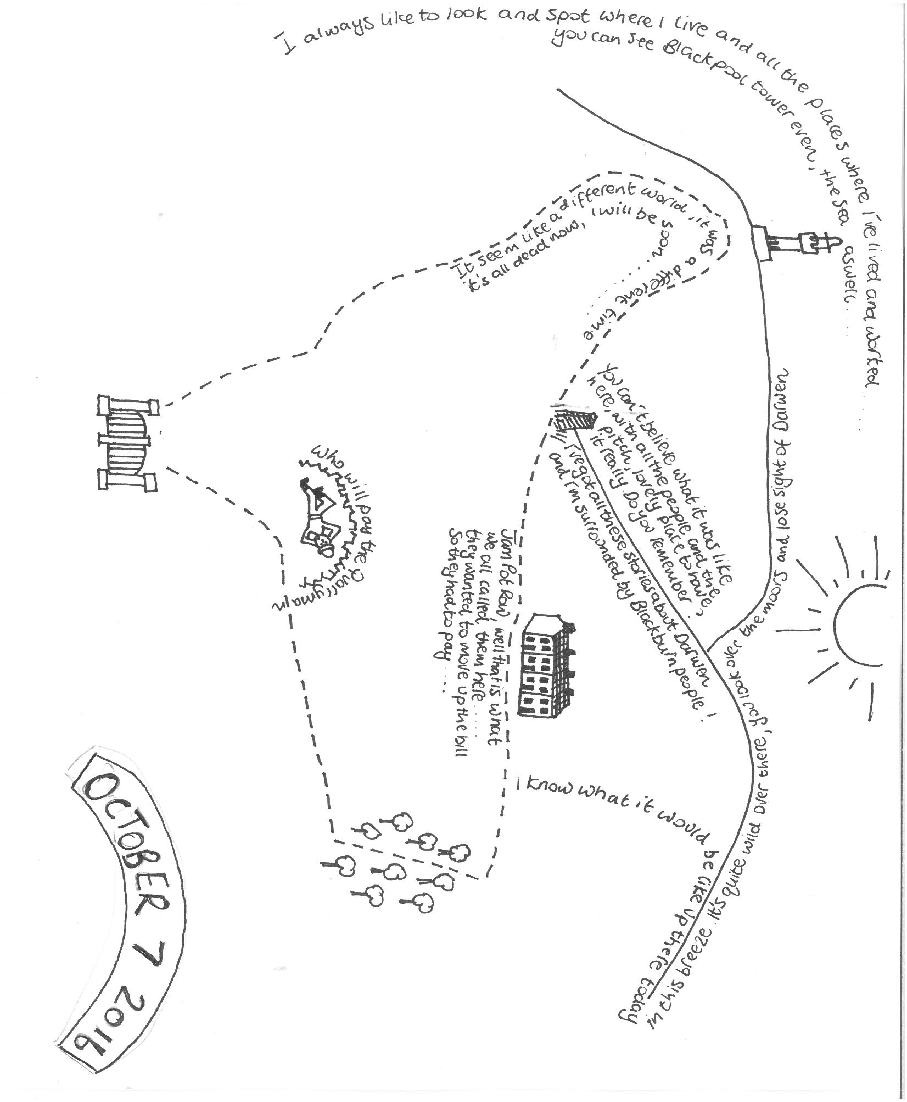


Fig 7

**5.2 Introduction to analysis**

The following analysis drew on consideration of all data collected between May and December 2016. As detailed in the tables of walks and data collected in appendices I completed seventeen walks in this time and collected and represented data in various forms. I drew on field notes, walk descriptions, route maps, annotated maps, interview transcripts and walkers’ written reflections to support my observations and conclusions. This data was analysed and coded in an attempt to reveal and characterise a specific practice at the heart of the Health Walk experience.

My research questions were:

* How was literacy and language involved in the practice of taking part in led group walks?
* What part did literacy and language play in supporting the impacts of taking part in Health Walks?

My conclusion was that the literacy practices that I term mobile literacies are at the heart of the experience of taking part in Health Walks. I termed the practices I identified as mobile literacies rather than mobile literacy because whereas they shared overall characteristics as I will go on to describe, they emerged and were expressed in different ways. Ultimately mobile literacies are a storytelling practice generated by moving through landscape. In asserting this definition, I draw on Johnson Thiel’s (2015) proposal that bodily engagement with the material can be read as a literacy practice. My conjecture is that participation in mobile literacies allows for the narrative of the self (Giddens 2004) to be extended and recalibrated. The structure of the walk offers opportunities to express resistance to prevailing forces as well as to adopt transient identities (Merchant 2005). Finally, involvement in mobile literacies offers opportunities to participate in collaborative acts of generation and transformation. I suggest that the experience of taking part in mobile literacies supports beneficial impacts in terms of strengthening self- identity and sense of belonging as well as allowing for the therapeutic sharing of constraints and difficulties.

In this chapter I aimed to reveal and characterise mobile literacies. I begin by considering the walking and storytelling elements of the experience separately before describing how the two came together to unique effect. I do this by drawing on my experiences in the field and relating these to the theories I discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. I offer extended vignettes describing specific incidents or extracts of interview transcripts to illustrate points made.

**5.21 Walking as a social practice**

The epistemological grounding of the research relies on an understanding of walking as an everyday social practice (Ingold and Vergunst 2008). I note in my field notes how as we met to begin a walk we coalesced as a social group. Walkers greeted and introduced each other, absences were noted and enquired after. There was an intense initial period before we began to move, of sharing news about immediate events; we shared in order to coalesce and belong as a group. As we began to move I noted how these social relations were extended towards the people and places we pass. On the Street Circular walk everyone waved and shouted out to an elderly lady sitting in her doorway. We waved to children in a playground and later stopped to help a delivery man find an address. In Pleasington, the site of a bonfire being built led to invitations being given for a bonfire party in Darwen.

Solitary walking was also a social practice. I recorded in field notes a conversation with Bushra. She was recently widowed and living alone. She said walking was important to her and she walked every day. She says she was bored and there was nothing at home. She said she had to get out and walks, ‘Into town and back and around the streets, I can’t be in the house all the time, I don’t have anywhere to go I am in the house alone……. I just go and look at things and I see people.’ Ingold and Vergunst maintain that social relations are not enacted in situ but ‘paced out along the ground’ (2008 p.158). Bushra in her solitary walking could immerse herself in a social flow, her urge to get out and walk was an urge to express her social self.

**5.22 Recreational walking**

However, the walks I engaged with in the research were collective practices that drew on the discourse of the everyday practice of recreational walking and rambling Edensor (2000). These discourses informed our walking choices and behaviours and there were considerable differences between the Barton St and Darwen groups in terms of notions and conventions about appropriate walking conduct.

Most of the women in the Barton St group had been involved in recreational walking activities through Health Walks initiatives for many years and had developed recreational walking practices through this contact. I noted in my field notes how a new attender is advised to ‘buy some trainers for next week’ by Rindu. She suggested a good local shop and offered to go with her to get the shoes. Women often compared shoes and waterproofs at the beginning of walks. A recurring theme with this group is how what they do now is not real walking because it is in the local area, we walked from the community centre, on the streets, the canal or the park. I noted how women often remembered trips arranged by the council or Age Concern to rural areas with fondness and expressed dissatisfaction with the experience of walking the local streets and tow paths.

In other ways, the women did not adhere to the norms of recreational walking. Generally, as a group we avoided strenuous activity. The group decided on the morning of the walk where to go, the choices were the streets, the park or the canal and often we visited the canal as it involved a downhill approach. Many of the women had mobility and health restrictions, we walked slowly and paused frequently. Most of the walkers tended to drift towards their homes, the centre of town or a bus stop before the end of the walk. No importance was placed on completing the route. I noted how Maria, a walk volunteer, often expressed dissatisfaction with the groups’ regulatory codes. At various points, she commented to me about unsuitable clothing, slow walking, lack of exertion and not completing the route. These differences in approach culminated in a disagreement about an organised trip to the Lake District. I noted how Maria insisted that ‘If you are going to the Lake District you go there to walk,’ whereas Sharifa explained she didn’t want to go for a walk she wanted to go on a boat trip.

The experience of walking with the Darwen group was significantly different in a number of ways. There were many more people walking, up to fifty on occasion, we walked longer distances and took more time. We walked in a variety of rural locations and so our initial meeting place would be a car park or street. The walkers were generally over fifty, physically fitter, and from groups that would regard walking as a leisure activity. They were well versed in the standard regulatory practices of recreational walking, they arrived in boots and waterproofs, sometimes with sticks and maps. Routes and itinerary were formally set out and publicised in leaflets. These variations inevitably led to differences in the data collected. Overall more data was collected, we walked for longer periods of time and therefore I had more time with walkers. The routes were more challenging. We walked footpaths, climbed hills and styles, and therefore I tended to be with individuals for longer, with more opportunities for longer episodes of talk to be recorded. The walks were more varied, landscapes and environment changed more dramatically and in some ways, this led to more varied and complex stories being told.

Differences in approach to recreational walking between the groups were mirrored by differences in access to a variety of walking landscapes. As I have described the Barton St group, were dissatisfied with the limits of where they could walk. I go on to describe how this led to expressions of desire for escape and freedom. In considering theorizations of mobility in Chapter 3 I noted how Wolf (1992 p.54) critiques the nomadic metaphor by highlighting that a suggestion of free and equal mobility is a deception. The Barton St group were physically constrained in some ways by social and cultural understandings of what recreational walking was, who could take part in it and where. However, the notion of a gendered constraint permeated many of the mobile literacy practices in which the women participated. Their mobilities were liberating but also served to draw attention to limits. Sharifa both enjoyed observing the wildlife on the canal and remembered the intense peace she experienced on a Welsh mountainside. Rindu gestured to moors on the horizon and says, ‘then I would go everywhere alone or with friends…. see things.’ Elaine fondly remembered walks to Darwen tower and reflected on the fact that her husband’s illness meant she could no longer be out of the house or away from him for long. Sue retraced paths she walked as a child and reflected on her feelings of entrapment on having returned to the same landscape to care for elderly parents.

**5.23 Walking as performance**

In doing recreational walking group members performed their walking identities. I often recorded in my field notes how onlookers reacted with interest or annoyance to our groups as we passed. Walking in a group involved a degree of visibility not shared by the solitary walker. As we processed through an environment we were clearly identifiable as doing walking and this conferred a separateness to our activity. In the Darwen group we were identifiable by our clothing and our choice of route. In the Barton St group, we were identifiable by our leaders and volunteers in bright yellow vests with ‘Walk This Way’ written on them. Walking was an iterative act in and of itself. The separateness that doing walking conferred on our activity gave us the opportunity to experience everyday life differently.

*Reflection – Street Circular walk*

*The experience of walking along London Rd and Whalley Rd with the group was intense and unusual. I felt as if we were in a procession, it was as if we emerged out of the mist and people were waiting for us. The streets were busy and we stood out as a group and with the High Vis vests. It felt as if lots of people were watching us. Rabiya, at the head of the procession, shouted out across the road to people she knew. Someone explained to me that an old woman sitting in her doorway couldn’t see us, but she could hear us, she was waving. Children in a playground ran to the railings to watch. Shopkeepers greeted us from doorways, shoppers had to make way on the pavement for us to pass. We visited an everyday place as walkers and this seemed to confer a heightened quality to the place. We viewed everyday life from a different, longer perspective, with no intention other than to move through. Sharifa said to me ‘I’ve been here for shopping and now I’m here for walking.’ Being on these streets just for walking highlighted for me the performative aspect of walking and the opportunity walking offers to engage with place and in social activity in a very different way.*

My research foregrounded walking as a social practice and as a practice bounded by discursive norms and regularities that served to highlight inequalities of access for some participants. I recognised performative aspects of walking but most insistently, what I noticed was the importance of talk to the Health Walks experience.

This recognition of the dominance of talk was highlighted near the end of the walk at Hoddlesden. I was near the front of the group and as we skirted a large mill pond I was at once within the group and able to observe it from across the pond as walkers descended the hill onto the mill pond path. What struck me was the noise made by the group, a continual loud chattering hum hung over the pond. Taking part in these walks, I realised, involves being immersed in a continual stream of language. The opportunity to observe and hear this from across the pond clarified to me the dominance of talk as part of the walking experience.

**5.24 A continual stream of language**

My primary conclusion involved the observation that walkers took part in mobile storytelling practices as they walked. I go on to outline how these stories were intimately bound up in and generated by mobility but I begin by considering storytelling as an everyday practice and the instances of it that I observed. I consider four stories, of redemption, escape, reflection and imagination, and consider their characteristics, purposes and impacts in the light of theories around narrative (Langellier and Peterson 2011), identity, (Giddens 1991) and big and small stories (Bamberg 2007, Georgakopoulou 2007).

**5.25 A story of redemption**

**Esther**

***So, we talked before and you said you wanted to tell me your story about walking***

*Esther - Yes because you said you wanted to know how walking changes things and coming to these walks really really has changed my life……. really*

***How long have you been coming here?***

*Esther - Well we’ve been in Britain for 5 years, and we’ve been coming here for about three years, Jane told us to come, well me really because I was very depressed, I was at home all the time and I really didn’t want to be here I wanted to come home*

***Why did you come to Britain?***

*Esther - My husband, he loves it here, he wanted to retire here because he loves the countryside and he is very happy just going out and walking every day, he really loves it, the green and everything, because we are in Hong Kong and it is very different*

***I can imagine it’s really different…..***

*Esther - Really and we were working and everything I was a music teacher, but my daughter is here you know in Manchester doing fashion, so we came to see her and then my husband said we must come here….but we were ill, both of us I told you and then coming here saved our lives*

***Really what happened?***

*Esther - Really, we would be dead, because my husband had a check with his GP and he has cancer and he didn’t even know but it’s early, you know and he has treatment and he’s ok, it was so frightening but he’s ok, it’s amazing. And I was ill I told you….*

***You told me about your depression***

*Esther - Well I have bi polar, you know it?*

***(yes)***

*Esther - And my brother did too and he committed suicide when he was 32, really I miss him so much, and I was very depressed when I came here and the doctors said I was on the drug too long, I had been for about 15 years and they said no more than 5 years, so they told me I had to come off and try something else and I did but I was scared and I do feel better, not so much side effects you know I am more awake and not so tired. I still have it you know I can’t get better but I am better. So, Britain saved our lives…*

***So, tell me more about the walking***

*Esther - Well yes and walking saved our lives. Because it makes me happy, I like to see people and talk to them and I love the air, you know breathing, good fresh air and when you finish you feel warm and tired and you just feel good. And seeing all the different places, I love to see it and be there, because then I know it and I am at home.*

***Do you feel at home now?***

*Esther - Well I do because I have walked lots of places so I know it really well, I know more than some people who were born here, I’ve been more places and I know how it is linked together. I saw a lake, like a reservoir from the train and I was saying I’ve walked round there and my friend she couldn’t believe it, that I had been down there. And I have friends here, that I have met them through this group really even though some of them don’t come here now. I still talk to them and I see them and my daughter is here of course….*

*Reflection*

*Esther’s request that she tell me her story towards the end of the walk solidified a train of thought. Her use of the word ‘story’ at the beginning of the encounter clarified that what we were engaged in as we walked was storytelling. Her story was one of walking as redemption, a theme that I recorded frequently in field notes. She describes becoming well through walking and I recorded in my field notes that over several weeks Esther repeated this process in a continual re-enactment and re telling of getting well. In Esther’s continually re- told story she placed walking as a transformative life changing event. Her story always started with ill health, crisis and despair then a slow movement towards a fitter and happier self. This transformation came about through walking, in my field notes I noted how Esther and others often talked about the transformative aspects of walking in terms of fresh air and breathing. For Esther, it was also about her relocation from Hong Kong to East Lancashire and coming to know a new place.*

Langellier and Peterson (2011) recognise storytelling performance as embedded in daily life and fulfilling sense-making and identity construction functions. Esther’s telling and retelling of her story of moving home and regaining health as she walked allowed her to embody and situate her well self. Esther’s story had a clear trajectory, from Hong Kong to Lancashire, from ill- health to wellness. She performs a structured narrative that was subsumed in reflection. Freeman (2007) defends reflection in narration as potentially restorative. Similarly, Charon (2007) describes how reflecting through narration on experiences of ill health can have clinical benefits. Esther asked to tell ‘My Story’ and told a story that served to strengthen her identity as well and settled.

**5.26 A story of reflection**

*So, you talked about John*

*Yes, because nobody made me and I didn’t have to it was just easier, and some people knew him like and they know us and they just listen a bit and then I can stop if I want to and talk about other things and look at things you know. But, because I didn’t have to, we talked about memories about him first really and then I talked a lot about what actually happened, you know, trying to work it out. Like every week I’d have a little talk about it and then not really talk about it the rest of the week…….it did really help me…because he isn’t going to talk to me, he can’t really, it’s not is way. He has been really bad but he’s helped by the walking as well, by just being with his mates isn’t it and not talking! But he really needed exercise you know, he loves walking. You know that he’s always been a walker*

*I know*

*Reflection*

*Doreen tells a story about telling stories. She explains how over the year following her son’s suicide she would come to walk on Friday mornings with her husband. Whilst she would talk about her son and gain comfort from this she describes how her husband would choose not to talk and gain comfort from walking silently in company. During my time attending the Friday morning walks I spoke with Doreen every week about John. Sometimes she would recount the events that led to his death, sometimes she would tell stories about his life and sometimes she would talk about what had happened to her family as they grieved.*

Giddens (2004a) frames self- identity as an ongoing narrative project. Doreen’s narrative of self- identity had been exploded by trauma. I suggest that in her continual revisiting of stories about John she was re- entwining the strands of her narrative. Langellier and Peterson (2011) highlight that the performativity of storytelling predicates its reflexivity and that reflexivity allows for recalibration and renewal. There is productive potential in the retelling of stories. As Esther retells her story to underline her identity as well, so Doreen re tells stories of her trauma to develop a personal narrative of recovery. She described how the situational and material conditions of the walk afforded her the necessary conditions to undertake this task.

**5.27 Stories of escape**

***You were telling me you would like to drive***

*Yes I said I wish I could drive…..then I would go everywhere alone or with friends….see things*

***Explore?***

*Yes explore, not even have any plan just go anywhere, I would go right over there (gestures to the moors on the horizon)*

*Yes, I could hear them and the rivers, ssssh ssssh (gesturing) seeing the views it is very different in Wales, the whole atmosphere is different yes, and the atmosphere in you is different*

*Reflection*

*I often noticed and noted the women in Blackburn gesture towards the horizon with longing. They talked incidentally but in embodied detail about other places. Occasionally these places were gardens or streets of childhood in Pakistan or India but usually they described rural areas of Lancashire the North West or North Wales they had visited. In my field notes I list places mentioned that include, the prom at St Ann’s on Sea, Sunnyhurst Woods in Darwen, Windermere in the Lake District and The Great Orme at Llandudno. As I have described we were constrained in our options for walking in Blackburn and mention of these other places was usually framed within expressions of dissatisfaction with our immediate surroundings.*

Georgakopoulou (2007) describes small stories as fragmented and partly withheld. I suggest that the fragments above, and others recorded on a similar theme can be characterised as small stories scaffolding an untold narrative to do with entrapment and dissatisfaction.

Georgakopoulou (2007) suggests that the telling of small stories is a social practice that is not to do with reflection but with the narrator positioning herself in relation to the immediate context. In choosing to gesture to the horizon, or describe the embodied experience of being in rural Wales, Sharifa brought her memories and thoughts into the immediate moment. It was a form of action that had currency and productive potential in the current social world. Georgakopoulou describes small stories as ‘vital social practices for rehearsing, exploring and negotiating the gap between actual and possible, reality and imagination’ (2007 p.152). I suggest that the Blackburn women’s frequent allusions to distant horizons and other places were social actions that commented on and challenged their immediate context. The walk experience opened up opportunities to express and share imaginative negotiations about how things are and how they could be. These small stories were doing stuff in the present. Unlike the reflective coherence of Esther’s and Doreen’s tales, Sharifa and Rindu’s stories were active fragments. However, I do also believe they incorporated elements of identity work.

Merchant (2005) describes how certain contexts and practices allow for the temporary adoption of alternative transient identities. The context of the Health Walk and engagement with the practice of telling small stories allowed Sharifa, Rindu and the other women from Blackburn to adopt a transient identity concerned with travel, escape and being alone in a peaceful, rural environment. In so doing, in the telling of these stories, they critiqued the relations of power that contained them. Langellier and Peterson (2011) consider how it is necessary to consider the conditions of discourse that allow for or limit narrative practices. I suggest that the context of the Health Walk destabilised powerful conditions of discourse and allowed for a performative and reflexive narrative to emerge and challenge the material conditions and bodily practices in which it was embedded.

**5.28 Stories of memory and imagination**

*Well I was telling you that this was a cricket pitch, right up here, you can just see the gatepost I think where we would go in, and when Keith was in the mill, all the mills had different cricket teams and they would come up here on Saturday afternoon and play cricket tournaments, all day and into the evening it would go on forever because there was loads of them, maybe 15 mills and a team for each one. There would be maybe over 100 people up here, all walking up and the families and that would have food and come for the afternoon. He’d be working in the morning mind and then here in the afternoon and sometimes I’d bring the kids if I could. But it was a long walk and he did in the end say he wasn’t going to do it anymore, because it wasn’t fair to leave me with the kids all the day, you know on a Saturday as well, because he only had Sunday off. You can’t believe it now what it was like here, with all the people and the pitch, lovely place to have it really. Do you remember? Don’t you? I’ve got all these stories about Darwen and I’m surrounded by Blackburn people. Who am I going to tell all this to?*

*Reflection*

*As a group of us listened to Elaine as she gestured across the field and described a scene where several cricket matches were taking place and there were up to 100 spectators gathered on the field boundaries, children played and picnics were laid out. Describing the scene in the location lent it a powerful resonance; Elaine pointed out submerged field boundaries and touched a broken-down gate post as she talked. Being able to scan, see and touch the remnants of the scene, lent it a vividness and allowed a degree of bodily participation in her narration of a typical Saturday match. The place becomes a place of imagination, in listening to Elaine the place is transformed in our eyes.*

Memory and imagination infused the mobile literacies I recorded. Edensor (2010 p.70) describes how the rhythms generated by walking generate an experiential flow comprised of successive moments of ‘detachment and attachment, physical immersion and mental wandering, memory, recognition and strangeness…..’ The act of walking impacts on cognition in such a way that memory and imagination are amplified and I would suggest that stories told are often expressions of this amplification.

In standing by the stump of a gate post and describing her memory of inter- mill cricket tournaments Elaine imported a memory of an emplaced past into our present experience. Serematakis (1994) describes how the landscape and objects within it are sedimented with historical and emotional content that can ‘ignite gestures, discourses and acts’ (1994 p.7). Here, a particular area of ground, sunken field boundaries and the remnants of a gate post ignited Elaine’s story and in her telling, our collective imaginative responses transformed the immediate experience. Those of us caught up in the performance of this story were caught up in moments of ‘mental wandering, memory, recognition and strangeness’ (Edensor 2010 p.70). Pink (2012) places imagination as central to our everyday ways of being in the world. Walking, I suggest, amplified memory and imagination, and storytelling whilst walking allowed for the expression and sharing of imaginative ways of being in, and making sense of, the world.

**5.3 Walking and talking – Mobile literacies**

The initial curiosities that led me to the research area were to do with the interrelationships between language, place, objects and movement and how these catalysed impacts for those taking part in Health Walks.

My conclusion was that a mobile literacy practice occured on group walks and that this mobile literacy practice took the form of storytelling which was intimately bound up with place and objects and generated by mobility. Mobile literacies do not incorporate text. They are meaning making practices generated by the entanglement of bodies and landscape. I have considered aspects of the walking experience as observed over the period of the research and I have considered elements of the storytelling events recorded. I have detailed how stories involved amplifications of memory and imagination, how they served to perform anchored and more transient identities. I have described how the stories I have collected could be both coherent and relatively structured (big stories) but could also be fragmentary and brief (small stories) (Georgakopoulou 2007). I have considered how mobile storytelling was a reflexive project and how stories were told and re told in the recalibrating of past events and I have considered how the reflective and destabilising impacts of mobile literacies could be observed to serve health and well-being.

However, my ultimate contention is that mobile literacy practices are storytelling practices of a particular nature. It was the totality of the experience of moving through a place and the embodied response to landscape and its materiality that informed the nature of mobile literacies and their impacts. In this assertion, I draw on Ingold’s conception of wayfaring as the ‘most fundamental mode by which living beings both human and non-human inhabit the earth’ (2007 p.81). I recognise Ingold’s (2007) emphasis on the generative nature of this mode of being and how in moving through the world and responding affectively to the experience we contribute to its nature. Ingold (2007) then, recognises mobility as a primary way of knowing and being, and a fundamental way in which we make sense of ourselves and the world. Ingold presents knowledge generated this way as alongly integrated’ ‘inhabitant knowledge’ (2007 p.89). I suggest that it is the inhabitant knowledge drawn upon and generated along the paths of our walks that informed the literacies that played out along the paths of our walks. Knowledge that is alongly integrated can be expressed in the alongly integrated forms of mobile literacies.

I go on to draw on data to consider the embodied, emplaced and material aspects that constitute the experience of taking part in mobile literacy practices and conclude with an examination of two walks that describe a communal generation of knowledge through mobile literacies.

**5.31 An emplaced practice**

*Canal Circular 2 reflection*

*The canal towpath as a drugs area is transformed by the stories invoked by the canal waters, the birds and the blackberries. Taking part in the walk; the women extend these encounters by the stories they tell and are invigorated by them.*

*The place of the canal towpath is afforded a distinct value by the walkers in the way their movement and speech changes when they arrive from the streets. The women walk more slowly and in different configurations, they pause and look around. They notice detail in a different way. This group seem to find the difference of the canal environment compared to their local streets allows them to experience this different perspective and this change is reflected in an immediate change in language use. We talk less about immediate concerns, what we have done and need to do, what has happened in the week, women speak uninterrupted for longer, they reflect, reminisce and imagine. As the place impacts on the women, their presence and mobile literacies transform the place. It is not a place they would come to on their own but as a group, in their responses to the surroundings they transform the stretch of the canal from an area for drug taking and selling to a place invoking childhood gardens, reflections on our responsibilities to the environment and the changing of the seasons and imaginings of different lives. The place is transformed not just for us, but for those around us. The drug taking boys feed the ducks and taste blackberries with us, one of them tells a story about what may be under the canal waters.*

Here I describe how an affective response to place impacted on mobile literacies. Stepping from the streets on to the canal towpath involved moving quickly between very different environments, and so the impact that place had on practice is particularly marked. In Chapter 2 I described how Burnett and Merchant (2016) advocated utilising a baroque approach to help generate new ways of knowing, noticing and feeling what occurs. I would suggest that stepping onto the canal towpath appeared to inspire a baroque approach in the walkers. I describe differences in perception and orientation that ultimately led to mobile literacies. The sudden change in place is a particularly stark example of how place and our responses to place were a central characteristic of mobile literacies.

In considering space, place and landscape in Chapters 2 and 3, I focussed on theories around conceptions of place as a dynamic medium, co-constructed by people doings things within it (Cresswell 2004) and landscape as a tension between interiority and exteriority, perception and materiality (Wylie 2008). I also focussed on Ingold’s conception of environment as a ‘zone of entanglement’ (2008 p 86). My reflections on how place impacts on our experience of walking a small stretch of the Leeds/Liverpool canal incorporate elements of these conceptions.

I noted how our embodied reactions; our perceptions and behaviour transform the place. Although we all knew the area as a place where drugs are taken and sold, our focus on wildlife and blackberries and the sound of water refigured the place. The stories that emerged about gardens and plants and our actions in picking blackberries and feeding the ducks, transformed the place for us and those around us. The ‘zone of entanglement’ (Ingold 2008 p.86) incorporated the routes walked, the observations, actions and stories told by everybody on the tow path that Wednesday morning, both the Barton St walkers and those involved in drug selling and drug taking. I described how the drug taking boys sat on a bench with us and fed the ducks and later tasted wild blackberries. They shared the experience and offered a story about what may be under the water’s surface. Entangled together we were both transformed and transform the landscape. We were engaged in a communally creative act.

I consider in Chapter 2 how Lenters (2016) explored literacy practices from an assemblage perspective and claimed that development and creativity from an assemblage perspective require an individual to be continually involved in deterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari (2004). Reflecting on this particular morning on the canal, I was aware of the continual becomings that emerged as we moved through the changing assemblages of people and environments around us. I would suggest that the walk was the ultimate deterritorialising act, mobility challenged the structures of territorialisation. The transformation of place that occured as we walked the canal towpath could be viewed as due to the forces of deterritorialisation as our very presence challenged the strictures surrounding who dominated this place and what the place was for.

**5.32 An embodied practice**

*Darwen Moors reflection*

*On several walks with both the Darwen and Blackburn groups, I noted how being elevated and able to look down on well- known places or see beyond to unknown places provoked a tone of personal reflection. On this occasion, we walked on open moorland then skirted the edge of a final rise towards Darwen Tower. We looked down on the town but did not reach the ultimate summit which blocked our view of the moors beyond. Paula describes the elation she feels when she reaches the summit and how she is able to remember life events by locating streets and buildings below. She contrasts positive memories of elation and freedom walking at height with the sense of constriction her current circumstances engender. As we skirt the summit to Darwen tower but do not approach it, her frustration is palpable and mirrored in the landscape.*

*Sue describes an immersive embodied experience where walking a specific path uncovered a detailed memory of excitement and innocence as a young girl. Here again the shapes and textures of the land and her movement through it, mirror an internal process of remembering childhood and adolescence and her feelings about returning after an adult life spent elsewhere.*

*On Darwen Moor David began to tell me the story of his industrial accident and the later unexpected death of his colleague. As we walked together across the moor and he spoke, I began to notice the irregular rhythm of his stride, a faint echo of the limp caused by the accident he described. His story was partly told in the measure of his strides, he embodied both the narrator and the character of his story.*

Engagement with mobile literacy practices involved continuous acts of emergent meaning making that were filtered through bodily affect. The reflections outlined above are examples of how taking part in Health Walks involved walkers in emergent bodily cognition. Paula’s keenly felt sense of constriction and frustration was expressed in her reminiscences of reaching summits. The stories were told as we were in sight of but skirting beneath the summit of Darwen Tower. Paula’s embodied experience of being below the summit and moving away from it added a powerful dimension to her emplaced story.

Similarly, walking a particular path invoked an embodied response that led to intense recollection of a long- forgotten memory for Sue. She remembered walking the path as a child and the feelings of excitement she experienced regarding her plans to buy a dress that afternoon. It was her body that surged into cognition, it was her emplaced body that generated the literacy event and added poignant depth to the story.

My reflection on David’s story about his accident and my gradual noticing of his limp illuminated the powerful dynamic that required walkers engaged in mobile literacies to be both narrator and character in their stories. In this case David’s movements again added vital meaning to his story.

My research dealt not in the representational but in the felt. As such the words of the story were only a part of that which comprised a mobile literacy event. The mobile body was engaged in continual material and emotive responses, it was in continual experiential flow. This experiential flow, impacted by the affordances of the landscape, in itself impacted on an internal flow. The symbiosis between place and embodied response in movement to place was at the heart of what constituted mobile literacies.

However, I observed not only that affective response is an initiator of mobile literacies but that mobile literacies were partly expressed through the body. Mobile literacies were multimodal (Jewitt and Kress 2003, Kress 1997, Vasudevan 2010). The body multiplies and intensifies meanings and could impulsively and quickly express intense affect. Burnett, Merchant, Pahl and Rowsell (2014) in developing the lens of (im)materialities invoke a multiplicity of ways in which the material and immaterial are caught up with one another in the production of texts. In the reflections outlined above immaterial affectual responses were expressed through the body as well as, in parallel, being structured into narrative forms.

**5.33 A material practice**

*Darwen Moors reflection*

*In Sue’s story about remembering preparing to buy a dress, place the immaterial memory of the dress emerges through Sue’s affective responses to, and materialises in the story that she tells. In Paula’s story, the imposing stone structure of Darwen tower looming behind us becomes part of her story of entrapment. As Elaine describes the cricket match to a group of us gathered close by, we are all drawn to touch the stump of rotten wood she identifies as a gate post at the entrance to the cricket pitch. The row of terraced houses at the top of the hill are integral to the mobile literacy event that is the re telling of the story of Jam Pot Row. At the beginning of the walk some of us stop to look at the relief sculpture in the park and together identify landscape features that may have originally been quarry works, and together imagine the place as different. In all of these cases, objects combine with place and language to coalesce into mobile literacy events.*

*Hoddlesden Houses reflection*

*On this walk I was struck by how objects in the landscape could impact so strongly on stories told. The imposing presence of the big house on the hill as we moved towards it and away from it and the discovery of the little cottage by the stream, structured much of the talk I heard and recorded. The talk was about homes, knowing a place and feeling at home.*

Mobile literacies are meaning making practices that have a material aspect. (Burnett, Merchant, Pahl and Rowsell 2014) in challenging the binaries of material and immaterial offer a framework by which it is possible to consider how the material may evoke visceral reactions that then become embedded in literacy activity and texts, a process that can be traced in the vents outlined above. The summit of Darwen Tower behind us was one of the meaning making modes that combined in Paula’s story. Similarly, meaning is drawn from the broken gate post in Elaine’s cricket story. When Keith explained the story of Jam Pot Row, it was lent a depth and substance by the row of brick houses we stood behind and the steep track leading down to the rows of houses further down the hill.

As l go on to describe, two houses dominated our walk in Hoddlesden, their material presence interacted with the immaterial memories and feelings about homes and houses that were then materialised in shared storytelling events. Burnett et al (2014) explored the reflexive and recursive relationship between the material and the immaterial and describe how ‘the material conjures the immaterial which in turn relies on material experience for its salience’ (2014 p.93). The material impact of a particular stretch of track conjured for Sue the immaterial memory of a dress which then materialised in her story of a memory of a Saturday afternoon shopping.

Viewing objects as active participants in meaning making assemblages was a necessary lens for exploring mobile literacies. The experiences outlined above can all be viewed as instances of the spatial and material entanglement of bodies, things and discourses as they combined in meaning making events.

**5.34 A collective practice**

*Darwen Moors reflection*

*This walk structured an emotional process. There was a communal experience of shock, grief, remembrance and reminiscence that was mirrored and shaped by the landscape through which we moved. The initial stages of the walk, dominated by reactions to the news of Margaret’s death, involved climbing up the side of a wooded valley. It was damp and gloomy, the path was narrow, muddy and difficult to traverse and the walkers generally had to walk in single file and were breathing heavily to manage the climb. Therefore, talking was difficult. We emerged into pale sunlight on an open moor and were able to congregate into groups as the minute’s silence was held and after this we stayed gazing across the moors as people became more expansive about their memories of Margaret and their feelings of shock. The move from darkness into light, constriction into openness, impacted on how people were able to move together and how they were able to talk together. The embodied experience of the contrast in landscape helped I think, to structure and process the emotions of the morning. This sense was magnified as we moved away and across the moor. The tone of the talk as we walked across the uplands became more expansive and reflective; the landscape offered opportunities to explore and develop emotion.*

*Hoddlesden Houses reflection*

*The contrast between the two houses felt as if it structured the whole experience of the walk. In my field notes, I recorded that the walk was very strongly dominated by our responses to these two things. I also considered that if I had walked alone, I may have had some fleeting thoughts and feelings about the contrast between the two houses whereas it was the continual flow of streams of chatter focussed on the houses and the sharing of knowledge and gossip about the houses’ histories and occupants that turned the experience into such a highly - structured event. It was after this walk that I began to think about how a walk can take on the characteristics of a story, when stories are continually told on a walk. This walk had a narrative quality, a focus, a protagonist, a moral and a twist; the houses served as metaphors for wealth and poverty, worldliness and unworldliness. As a group, we improvised and performed this tale as we walked. This walk was unusual in its coherence and singularity of tone and focus. The remoteness and narrowness of the valley and the dominance and extravagance of the house focussed us as a group in such a way as to foreground the intertwining of movement, place, storytelling and objects unique to the experience of walking in groups. I also note how the shape of the land and the route taken, structures the language used. This walk was enclosed within a shallow valley and dominated by walking towards and away from the big house on the brow of the opposite side of the valley. No new vistas emerge and therefore the talk remains focussed on the house as a dominant feature. The movement of the first part of this walk was dictated by its route across fields. The group would spread in a thin line across fields then bunch at field boundaries as we queued to climb stiles. This in turn structures the talk in specific ways. I have recordings of a single story per field as I walked across with one person, and notes indicating that information is shared in larger groups at the field boundaries.*

I have described how the mobile literacies that took place on Health Walks were multimodal practices, they incorporated an embodied affective response to place and the materiality of the environment in narrative structures, the landscape and the stuff of the landscape were part of the meaning making apparatus. I conclude by highlighting how two final aspects of the mobile literacy event, communality and mobility, combined to thread together individual experiences and practices into a coherent whole.

I have primarily described individual instances of storytelling as they emerged. However, there were occasions where I completed a walk with the strong sense that I had taken part in a collective literacy experience. What I observed in my research was not simply a series of separate mobile tellings of stories but rather a meshwork of trails and tales that combined to form a collective experience. Collective generation was a vital igniter of this experience. As individual walkers, we all followed the same route and therefore had similar experiences of the landscape and its materiality. As stories were generated through affectual response, the stories become part of our environment, of our ‘zone of entanglement’ (Ingold 2008 p.86) and therefore generated further affectual responses and further stories. At times, there was a strong sense of a dominant theme or tone incorporating all the walkers, their responses and stories, the landscape and objects as they flowed along a route.

This sense of being swept into a current of mobile literacies was particularly prevalent on the two walks outlined above. Both walks were dominated by an event or object, On Darwen Moor, the group was dominated by news of Margaret’s death; at Hoddlesden we were dominated by the sight of the Dixon’s man’s new house.

On Darwen Moor I described how the embodied experience of the walk, how it started in darkness and constriction, emerged into sunlight and remembrance before striking out across an empty plane, helped to structure a communal response to the news of Margaret’s death. Our shared affectual experience of the difficult climb in darkness and emergence into light and expanse was felt as a narration of a process of grieving and remembrance and in turn generated individual narrations of mortality and circularity. These narrations fed back in to the communal experience, strengthening the sense that our movement through the landscape as a group in some ways narrated a collective response to death and mortality.

Similarly, in Hoddlesden, I noted how the enclosure of the valley and dominance of the new built house dominated our embodied experience of the walk and hence dominated the tone and theme of stories as they emerged. I noted how the walk became a collective narrative as we walked towards the house and expanded on its builder and owner, as we stood behind the house and commented on its size and emptiness and then as we turned away and happened upon a small hidden cottage by a stream. The sense in which we were drawn into a story the events of which unfurled beneath our feet was palpable on this walk. As we traversed the valley we co-created shared meanings specific to the time and place of our walk.

In considering the importance of collective meaning making to mobile literacies I refer to Ingold’s (2007, 2008) conceptions of how walking fulfils an urge to integrate knowledge along a path of travel and his conception of environment as ‘zone of entanglement’ (2008 p.86). I have suggested that taking part in mobile literacies was an expression of this urge to integrate knowledge and that the stories became part of the zone of entanglement that made up the environment of the walk. The stories that we told were paths traced through lived experience and become part of that shared lived experience. In this way, the telling and retelling of stories in a group was a collective act of generation and transformation. In telling and retelling stories as we walked we were re-calibrating our knowledge and changing our worlds. I would suggest that the transformational possibilities for change inherent in the storytelling experience were amplified when that storytelling experience became a collective endeavour. I conclude that the communal experience of becoming entangled in and co - creating a meshwork of meaning and mobility is what it meant to take part in mobile literacies and what delivered the intangible impacts of taking part in Health Walks.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

**6.1 Findings**

In commencing this research my research questions were:

* How was literacy and language involved in the practice of taking part in led group walks?
* What part did literacy and language play in supporting the impacts of taking part in Health Walks?

My primary conclusion in completing this research was that a particular literacy practice, a practice I have termed mobile literacies occurred when taking part in Health Walks. In drawing together, the disparate theoretical areas of literacy and walking I identified a new literacy practice. I extended conceptions of literacy as a social practice embedded in everyday life as framed by the foundational work of the New Literacy Studies and drew on theories around assemblage theory (Lenters) and New Materialism (Bennett, Johnson Thiell) to assert a definition of literacy that foregrounds bodily engagement with the material.

I characterised mobile literacies as emplaced, embodied, collective storytelling practices that were generated by affectual response to moving through landscape. Considering social anthropological understanding of walking as knowing (Ingold 2004) and narrative studies perspectives on storytelling (Bamberg 2007, Georgakopolou 2007, Langellier and Peterson 2011) from a New Literacy Studies perspective (Barton and Hamilton 1998) opened up new terrain in terms of considering everyday literacy practices.

I have described how the practice offered opportunities to interrogate, extend and recalibrate identities, express resistance and participate in collaborative acts of generation and transformation. It is in this way that mobile literacies supported the impacts of taking part in Health Walks.

**6.2 Contribution to knowledge**

My findings centred on untangling the totality of the experience of walking through landscape and considering the characteristics of the mobile literacies that ensued. I identified how walking in a group is a performative act, as a group we were clearly identifiable as ‘doing walking’, we performed our walking identities. I identified how moving through the landscape was accompanied by a continual stream of language. As I descended the hill and skirted the mill pond on the Hoddlesden Houses walk I noted how a continual loud chattering hung over the pond.

I noted how stories told often developed along similar themes. I outlined four key areas of narrative concentration, describing stories of redemption, escape, reflection, and imagination. I concluded that the situational and material conditions of the walks provide the necessary conditions to engage in extended narratives that allowed for active engagement in the current social world. I detailed how these stories involved amplification of memory and imagination and served to perform anchored and more transient identities.

I drew on data to consider the embodied, emplaced, material and collective aspects that constituted the experience of taking part in mobile literacy practices. I highlighted how embodied response to place was a central generator and characteristic of mobile literacies and how engagement in mobile literacies changed place. We both transformed and were transformed by the landscape.

I considered how mobile literacy practices involved continuous acts of emergent meaning making that were filtered through bodily affect. I described how the body was an element of the meaning making processes that occurred. As Paula told a story about how her current circumstances had constricted her freedoms we skirted the summit of Darwen Tower. Her story of frustration at not being able to reach the summit was mirrored in our movements. I recorded how the mobile body was engaged in continual material and emotive responses, it was in continual experiential flow. The symbiosis between place and embodied response to place was at the heart of what constituted mobile literacies.

I outlined how mobile literacies were meaning making practices that had a material aspect. I viewed objects as active participants in meaning making. A central element of Elaine’s story was the broken gate post we touched as we listened.

I concluded by highlighting how collective generation was a vital ignitor of mobile literacy practices. I describe how the Hoddlesden Houses and Bold Venture Park walks incorporated a dominant theme, encompassing all the walkers’ responses, their stories, the landscape and objects as they flowed along the route of the walk. I suggested that in these cases the telling and re - telling of stories in a group was a collective act of generation and transformation and that when mobile literacies became a collective endeavour it amplified their transformational possibilities for change.

**6.3 Contribution to practice**

I suggested that engagement in mobile literacies supported the beneficial impacts attributed to Health Walks including improved recovery from physical and mental health crisis, increased confidence and agency and increased involvement in local communities (Walking for Health 2014). The study points the way towards further research from a health perspective on the mechanisms by which engagement in mobile literacies support physical and mental health. I drew on narrative theory related to health practice (Ramirez – Esparza and Pennebaker 2007, Charon 2007) when considering how the telling of stories can help to confer form and opportunities for reflection on traumatic and chaotic experience. I suggest that the research provides a pathway towards a recognition of, and development of the storytelling aspect of the Health Walk experience. Walk leaders could be trained to recognise, facilitate or lead storytelling opportunities. Routes could be designed to generate particular, collective experiences and hence support particular collective mobile literacies. Activities could be organised to record and extend mobile literacies, stories could be recorded on route or walkers could be involved in transcribing stories, producing annotated guides, route maps or zines. All these activities could serve to further enhance the health - related impacts of taking part in Health Walks and foreground the importance of storytelling in the experience.

Similarly, I believe the study offers opportunities to consider how mobility and engagement with local landscapes can be garnered to develop language and literacy skills within the context of ALLN. I described in Chapter 1 how the opportunities for adults to pursue literacy and language education within traditional educational establishments have been decimated (Okolosie, L 2015). I described how the development of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills can only be pursued within a Functional Skills or GCSE curriculum and as a by – product of apprenticeship or traineeship programmes. A possible response to this state of affairs, and a way of bringing literacy and language education to those who require it, would be to recognise the uses of literacy and language in everyday life and build educational opportunities around everyday activities. Liaison between Health Walk providers and ALLN providers could be one such way in which ALLN education could be made accessible.

An example of how this approach could work is offered by SuperSlowWay (2016), an arts programme developing projects to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Leeds Liverpool canal. It is working with local, national and international artists and communities who live in neighbourhoods along the canal. One of the projects, Circle of Friends Go Walking (SuperSlowWay 2016) has involved a Blackburn based walking group working with Jean McEwan, a visual artist based in Bradford. Together they have completed a series of walks, collected objects, recorded sounds and taken photographs and have gone on to create zines as a way of recording their explorations. They describe the zines as alternative guides. This is an example of the kind of work that I believe could be developed with groups improving and developing their literacy and language skills. I have shown through the research how walking naturally engenders language use. I believe that capturing and extending mobile literacies to support educational ends is an area of work that merits further exploration.

**6.4 Contribution to research**

This research has extended definitions of literacy, it has offered and characterised a new literacy practice, mobile literacies. With the conception of mobile literacies in mind the research could be replicated and extended. The role of mobility in shaping narrative is an area that merits further investigation. Similarly, the opportunities to harness the transformational power of the practice to further enhance educational, personal and health related impacts could be explored and clarified.

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to take part in Health Walks in Blackburn and Darwen. I have enjoyed identifying that walking and talking helps make people feel better. The story of my research has involved a gradual recognition of the centrality of storytelling to the Health Walks experience, my contribution is to place mobile literacies firmly at the heart of the Health Walks initiative. In doing this I offer policy makers and practitioners an alternative lens by which to view how walkers experience their involvement and new tools by which to measure impact and design further initiatives. In terms of education I offer a glimpse of the affordances of walking and the local environment in developing strategies by which to involve learners in meaningful and creative language and literacy learning. As such I hope that the end of my story is the beginning of others, for ‘in the story as in life, there is always somewhere further one can go’ (Ingold 2007 p.93).

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Appendices

**Appendix 1**

**Table of Participants**

Bangor St

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sharifa | All participants were in the age range 51-68 except Zubiya who was 47. All but three were widowed and all but one were not in paid employment. All the widowed women lived alone but had family in Blackburn or the North West of England. All the women were Muslim and of Pakistani, Indian or East African heritage. All were born in India, Pakistan or Malawi and moved to England between the ages of 5 and 21, either with their families or to join new husbands already working in England. All but Shazia had lived in the Batley area of Blackburn for between 20 and 45 years. Nine of the women had been involved with Blackburn with Darwen Health Walks for over ten years, three of the women had joined recently.  Maria is originally from rural Scotland and is over 65. She volunteers for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Leisure Department full time. She lives in Darwen and is involved in Health Walks, community cycling, pilates and walking netball sessions. She is recovering from an operation to remove a brain tumour and sees volunteering as a way to help regain fitness whilst also giving back to Age Uk, a charity that supported her recovery. |  |
| Catija |  |
| Zahida |  |
| Rabia |  |
| Iffat |  |
| Shahida |  |
| Zubiya |  |
| Bushra |  |
| Rindu |  |
| Hajira |  |
| Maryam |  |
| Shazia | Walk leader |
| Yasmeen | Volunteer |
| Asma | Volunteer |
| Maria | Volunteer |

Darwen

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Janet | All of Hong Kong Chinese heritage and all working in the Chinese catering industry either owning takeaway businesses or working in restaurants. All know each other through this work connection. All between 51-59. All married, one attends the walk with her husband. All have been attending the walks for about two years. |
| Esther |
| Carol |
| David | All retired men between 66 and 78. Two widowed and two married. Two born and brought up in Darwen and two in Greater Manchester. All have been involved in these walks for over 5 years. All have experienced major health conditions in the past 10 years, 2 heart attacks, stroke and prostrate cancer and consider walking to be of significant benefit in recovery and maintaining current good health. |
| John |
| Al |
| Keith walk leader |
| Pauline | All retired women between 62 and 75. All born and brought up in the Darwen area. Three married , one divorced and one widowed. Of the married women one is caring for a husband with dementia and one is caring for a husband with cancer. All have been involved in these walks for over 5 years. |
| Doreen |
| Elaine walk leader |
| Sue |
| Maureen |

**Appendix 2**

**Table of walks**

Bangor Street

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 4 May 2016 | Canal |
| 11 May | Streets loop |
| 18 May | Streets (aborted due to weather) |
| 25 May | Streets |
| Ramadan | |
| 20 July | Canal |
| 27 July | Canal |
| 3 August | Street walk and meal |
| 10 August | Canal |
| 17 August | Corporation Park |

Darwen

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 9 September 2016 | Entwistle Reservoir |
| 16 September | Witton Park |
| 23 September | Hoddlesdon |
| 7 October | Darwen Moors |
| 28 October | Sunnyhurst Woods |
| 4 November | Pleasington |
| 11 November | Sunnyhurst Woods |
| 18 November | Great Harwood |

**Appendix 3**

**Table of data**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Walk | Data collected | Data presented |
| 4 May – Blackburn - Canal | Field notes |  |
| 11 May – Blackburn – streets loop | Field notes – interview transcripts | Walk description – interview transcripts - |
| 18 May – Blackburn – streets aborted | Field notes |  |
| 25 May – Blackburn - streets | Field notes |  |
| 20 July -Blackburn - canal | Field notes |  |
| 27 July – Blackburn - canal | Field notes – interview transcripts | Walk description – interview transcripts - |
| 3 August – Blackburn - Street walk and meal | Field notes – written responses from 8 participants | appendix |
| 10 August – Blackburn - Canal | Field notes – interview transcripts | Walk description – interview transcripts - route map – annotated map - |
| 17 August –Blackburn Corporation Park | Field notes |  |
| 9 September –Darwen Entwistle reservoir | Field notes |  |
| 16 September - Darwen -Witton park | Field notes – interview transcripts |  |
| 23 September -Darwen - Hoddlesdon | Field notes – interview transcripts | Walk description – interview transcripts - route map – annotated map - |
| 7 October – Darwen - Bold Venture Park | Field notes – interview transcripts | Walk description – interview transcripts - route map – annotated map - |
| 28 October – Darwen-Sunnyhurst Woods | Field notes |  |
| 4 November – Darwen-Pleasington | Field notes – interview transcripts | Walk description – interview transcripts - |
| 11 November – Darwen- Sunnyhurst woods | Field notes |  |
| 18 November –Darwen- Great Harwood | Field notes |  |
| Other data collected | Journal entries from 6 participants completed between 16 September 2016 and March 2017 |  |
|  |  |  |

**Appendix 4**

**Street Circular – Walk Description**

I was first to arrive and waited in the corridor until Yasmeen arrived and we went together to find the caretaker and the key to the room. We opened up and over 20 minutes seven women and two volunteers arrived. It was cool today and drizzly, as women arrived they were shaking out headscarves and brushing off their coats, several women were wearing floor length raincoats and others were admiring the coats and asking to see the lining, the pockets and the hoods. There was a lot more administration than usual to complete and Shazia was getting concerned that all the Age Uk survey forms were completed properly. As this was done women sat in pairs and small groups chatting, Zahida was asking for advice about her skin condition and some people were suggesting she use yoghurt on it, some women were discussing how various foods impact on their health.

At times during this period there was discussion about where to go, the women were generally unenthusiastic about going out in the rain, somebody joked that we could walk up and down the corridors in the community centre and Bushra said, ‘That’s not walking, you have to be outside.’

Catija suggested we do the street walk and everyone agreed quickly, a woman explained to me that this was the shortest walk in their repertoire. We climbed up from the Community Centre car park and turned right on to London Rd. I walked at the back of the group with Sharifa and Zahida. It was drizzling persistently and chilly, we were holding our coats around us, I didn’t have a waterproof coat and was getting wet. We passed rows of terraced houses, it was gloomy and quiet. There were sheets of mist hanging over the town below us and the moors on the horizon were an indistinct line of grey in the distance. As we walked towards the part of London Rd where there are shops and businesses the walkers became more animated. There were more people on the street here and we were being greeted and watched. We look quite unusual in an everyday street, we have leaders in yellow High Vis jackets with Walk this Way written on it, at the front middle and rear of the group, we straggle along the pavement like a procession and invite quite a lot of attention. We come to a halt as Iffat is talking animatedly to a man sitting in a car at the side of the road. He has the window down and is sitting in the passenger seat, he is looking ahead but responding to her admonishments with grunts and short phrases. They are talking in Urdu and I ask Sharifa what’s happening. She is asking him why he lied about the gate I am told. I later find out that he is a councillor and that Iffat has been involved in a dispute about trying to stop access to the alley at the back of her house where she says drug taking and dealing is happening. Because we are all sticking together the councillor has to suffer all of us congregating by his car whilst he listens to Iffat. He appears to be waiting for the driver of the car to return and looks quite trapped and uncomfortable. We eventually move on and spread out again. There are some raised terraced houses to our right that are accessed by steep stone steps and a raised flag pavement with metal railings. An elderly asian woman is sitting on a dining room chair outside on the flags, she has a purple veil over her head and part of her face and bare feet, she is holding a sports bag on her lap. Shazia shouts out towards her loudly and she raises her hand in our direction, all the other walkers shout across the road to her as we pass and she raises her hand to us. Sharifa tells me the woman is blind and lives alone. We approach a children’s pre- school on our side of the road. It is an old Victorian institutional building with an old- fashioned yard at the side, there are coloured painted games on the tarmac and some hoops and balls scattered around. The children look to be 2 or 3 years old. The nursery workers are all young Asian women wearing the same pale coloured uniform and red headscarf. Again Shazia shouts across to the children and nursery workers as we approach and the children gather towards the railings next to the pavement and shout and wave as we pass, again we all shout greetings and wave. Some of the women near me exclaim at the children, how they are cute and look so small, a general discussion reminiscing about what their children were like as toddlers carries on, one woman takes a photo of her granddaughter from her bag and shows it to me.

We turn right downhill off London Rd and right again on to Whalley Range. This road is the main street of the area it is busier and noisier, cars are splashing through rain in the gutters and we move closer towards the shops to avoid the splashes. Again I sense that we are very noticeable as we process down the street, people are looking at and greeting us. There is a smell of spices and cooking in the air and grocery shops with fruit and vegetables laid out on tables on the pavement. Several conversations about food spring up, some women talk about what they are going to buy and cook that day, I am walking with Sharifa, and she remembers meals she has eaten, inspired by what she can smell. She tells me that her son has visited India and he says that India smells different to Blackburn. I record her and she mentions her love of fish and chips in newspaper and how she bought it close to here as a child. We stop near a warehouse type building as the other walkers have stopped. Zahida is holding a clipboard and banging on various featureless doors set into the side of the warehouse. Again I ask what is happening but my companion doesn’t know. A delivery man appears and it seems he has asked for help in finding an address. Nobody appears at any of the doors and we move on.

As the walk is coming to a close I ask Rindu if she has enjoyed herself. She shrugs and smiles ruefully and gestures at the sky then makes a sweeping gesture across the street. She says ‘I wish I could drive….’ and I ask if I can record her. She talks about how she would like to escape and about her excitement and worries about visiting the Lake District on an Age Uk coach trip next week. After I have made this recording Maria says to me that she thinks the women going on the trip should go for a walk. Maria is helping on the trip. She says she will be walking round Windermere but most of the women are reluctant to go with her. Maria is disappointed about this, she says what’s the point of going to the Lake District if you’re not going to walk. Sharifa overhears this conversation and tells me she wants to go on a boat, Rindu also mentions this in the recording.

As we move towards the end of Whalley Range several women drift away towards their houses or the shops. Four of us are walking back to the community centre. Zahida suddenly remembers that she needs to check a wedding outfit in the dry cleaners we are passing. We wait outside as she talks to the dry cleaner but it is pouring by now so we eventually all huddle into the drycleaners shop. We look at some outfits on display and Zahida gets her outfit from the back of the shop to show us. It is blue with gold and green embroidery, she tells us about how her sister made the outfit and that materials were sent from relatives in northern India.

**Appendix 5**

**Street Circular – Interview Transcripts**

**We’ve been talking about food**

Sharifa - Yes I always thinking about food here, all you can smell is the food cooking……. I’m always thinking about food but always on this road.

**What can you smell?**

Sharifa - Well it’s the spices isn’t it and the frying. You can buy all food here, cooked and uncooked.

**Do you shop on here?**

Sharifa - Well yes I get rice and chilli flakes in here, it’s near for me but sometimes my son will take me to Tesco. It makes me hungry coming here. I used to have chips near here when I was little, I loved chips when I was little, in newspaper you know, I loved them. Hmmmm, I would like to eat them now.

**Did you live here as a child, were you born in Blackburn ?**

Sharifa - No I was born in India, I went Nuneaton with my family when I was three and then to Blackburn. I’ve been here a long time, just on these streets.

**Are your family here as well?**

Sharifa - My son is close by and my daughter is in London with her family.

**What about your husband**?

Sharifa - He’s dead now.

**Did he grow up in Blackburn?**

No he came here to marry me, came from India when he was 22. He worked in the factory here, they all did.

**What did he think of Blackburn when he arrived?**

Sharifa - I don’t know, I don’t ask questions like that.

**You were telling me about what you are cooking for tonight…**

Sharifa - I’m marinating the chicken already, I came to these shops this morning for shopping and now I’m coming here again but for just walking…… so we won’t go inside. Everyone knows we’re here for walking now.

**Do you know a lot of people on these roads?**

Yasmeen - Yes I know everyone, everyone knows we’re here for walking.

**Tell me about who you’ve seen today on our walk**

Yasmeen - Well we saw Mr Khan, you saw him, waiting in his car and she was asking him why did you promise about the gate

**Who is Mr Khan?**

Yasmeen - He’s the council isn’t he, on the council and she was saying you said you would help with the gate on the alleyway where they want it to stop the drugs, you know where the boys go at the back of the houses, to stop them , it is bad really…….. look at this the streets are really dirty now, I was talking to Tracy at the centre and she was working for people to clean the streets but they really are dirty again now, it’s disgusting, look at these boxes and rubbish here…….

**Do you like walking on these streets ?**

Maryam - Well I would like to be somewhere else, I am here all the time for shopping and seeing people, it is not very beautiful, and the traffic, it’s noisy. We went to Darwen one time in the woods…..

**Sunnyhurst woods?**

Maryam - Yes Sunnyhurst woods, it was really well it was really beautiful and peaceful, no traffic, very very quiet…it was very peaceful, I would like to go there, here there are people all over….

**You saw some other people you knew today…**

Maryam - I’m not sure, maybe Mrs Shah, she can’t see us, Rabiya was shouting for her, she’s blind now she can’t even go from her house, we sometimes take her her food or someone else does. She is living near the nursery, did you see all those children waving for us, it’s nice there, nice for the children, it wasn’t there for my children but it reminds me of my children, I remember them waving when they were in the school and I was going past. I would go and look for them sometime to wave for them in the lunchtime and just pretend I was going somewhere but I wasn’t really I was just seeing them to check them you know, check on them

**You were telling me you would like to drive**

Rindu - Yes I said I wish I could drive…..then I would go everywhere alone or with friends….see things

**Explore ?**

Rindu - Yes explore, not even have any plan just go anywhere, I would go right over there ( gestures to the moors on the horizon)

**That’s not too far away, have you ever been on those hills ?**

Rindu - No I don’t think so……. I am going to the Lake District with everyone next week, I hope I don’t get lost, I will have to have someone with me

**What will you do at the Lake District ?**

Rindu - Go on a boat, I hope, on a lake……. At the Lake District. It will be good, I am nervous to get lost…..

**We’re nearly back, have you enjoyed the walk today ?**

Rindu - It’s too wet isn’t it, too cold. I have to go shopping now.

**Appendix 6**

**Walk description- Canal Circular 1**

July 20th

There were storms overnight and when I arrived at Barton St there was a bank of grey cloud over the moors on the horizon opposite, I parked on a residential cul de sac street close to the community centre. A woman was squatting outside one of the houses pulling weeds from cracks in the pavement. There were three chickens pecking seed off the road. Despite the storm it felt oppressively warm and muggy.

There was nobody at the community centre when I arrived and I sat in the waiting area until Shazia arrived. She and I went to the kitchen room, she was feeling upset and too hot. She believed that she was about to lose her job after 11 years of working for Age Uk in the community. She felt she was being pushed out, that her performance was being called into question and that she was going to be asked to do the same work on an insecure contract for less money. She talked about being unvalued, that she had done some good work and lots of people locally depended on her but that this was not recognised by people higher up.

As women arrived to begin the walk Shazia was crying and women were holding her hand and hugging her Catija asked is the walking going to be cancelled. There was a discussion amongst the whole group about how the walking group had changed over the years. They explained to me what it used to be like. They talked about how it used to be a mixed group led by male council employees and there was discussion about whether anyone knew what had happened to two elderly white men who used to attend. They also talked about how they used to have access to a minibus and that they would be taken to led walks out of the immediate area in more rural locations. They also talked about visits to Wales and the Lake District where they stayed in Youth Hostels.

The overall consensus was that the provision had deteriorated and did not provide the same kind of experience it once had. There was also a general conclusion that this was something to do with cuts and in this way linked in with Shazia’s current situation. Following this conversation there was a general sense of despondency in the group today.

Only five women attended. Both Maria and Yasmeen were away and of the walk volunteers who were present none of them wanted to take responsibility for the session. I joked to Asma, ’You’re in charge now’ and she shrugged and stayed sitting down. Eventually she was persuaded to take the walk and she decided we would go to the canal.

We had visited the canal once before, the first time I walked with this group. We took the same route downhill through residential streets, across a main road and then between and behind warehouses and disused mill buildings. It was uncomfortably hot, dusty and sweaty. Sharifa told us to stop at one point quite close to the canal, she dipped into a pathway leading to her house in a modern mews in the shade of a group of tower blocks. She went into a house and returned with bottles of water for everyone from her fridge. As we approached the canal we stopped to look at a signposted guidance map. It showed the meandering of the Leeds Liverpool canal through the city centre and where we were. Asma pointed to where we were and where we were going.

As we stepped onto the canal path there was a palpable sense of relief and a change of mood. It felt cooler, there was a slight breeze, the air felt fresher and less dusty. The sound of traffic and machinery in the warehouses and mills receded and there was a closer sound of rippling water and birds. I asked the whole group if I could record as we walked along the stretch of canal path and they agreed. Catija said she wanted to jump into the canal. As the group was small we walked together closely and talked together for the canal section rather than in pairs or smaller groups.

This section of the walk felt very different to the walk down and the walk through the streets back to the community centre. There were clear qualitative differences, it was cooler and quieter. We walked more slowly and noticed and pointed out blackberries beginning to ripen and a moorhen chick. Almost immediately a different kind of talk emerged, over a time of about 20 minutes we reflected as a group on how the area had change since most of the women had arrived in the 60s and 70s, and how it felt to be off the streets and in a more natural environment. Again, a longing to be away from Blackburn dominated.

This reflective and imaginative turn closed down as we turned off the canal path. With a less experienced walk leader we were discussing where we would be when we came off the canal. It was almost as if we’d been underground or in another place. As we re- emerged on the streets the group split up and the pace fastened and talking subsided to immediate concerns about who was going to complete the walk and who was going back to their houses.

**Appendix 7**

**Interview Transcripts – Canal Circular 1**

Catija - I would go in there

**In the canal ?**

Catija - Yes it looks cool…………………. Oh look at him, look do you see him, he’s a little one

**Is it a duck?**

No it’s a……..I don’t know but I do know it………

**Is it a moorhen***?*

Yes maybe, they are on the lake at the park, that’s a very young one

It’s better here

We should just stay here it’s nice, not go back, shall I phone and say were not going back

Laughter

**You all like it here?**

Bushra- Yes I like it here but we only come here with walking not when I’m alone

**Do you go walking alone?**

Bushra - Yes every day I leave the house and I go and walk everyday

**Where do you go?**

Bushra - Into town and back and around the streets, I can’t be in the house all the time, I don’t have anywhere to go I am in the house alone……. I just go and look at things and I see people

**Why don’t you come to the canal?**

Bushra - No people, it’s not safe

Sharifa - No not safe don’t come here alone, you shouldn’t come here Claire

Pause

Asma - I am too tired today

Sharifa - She’s been doing lots of walking

**Where have you been walking?**

Sharifa - She’s been to pilgrimage to Saudi

**Oh……. I didn’t realise, when did you return?**

Sharifa - She came back two days ago, I told you this, but she has been sleeping, she is really very tired, she has been walking and walking and walking, much hotter than here, lots of people

Sharifa (pointing to moorhens) Look he’s back he’s back, its swimming

**Do you often go to pilgrimage in Saudi?**

Asma - Not so much now, I am too old, I go with my sons

**Are they in Blackburn?**

Asma - Yes all in Blackburn I told them don’t move far away stay close

**Did you bring them up in Blackburn?**

Asma - Yes they were all born here, all in England

**When did you come here ……..**

Asma - 1966, my father sent me to join my brother.

**Where did you come from***?*

Asma - Malawi, then my brother was there, you see where that mosque Is now, there was the factory where my brother was working. Lots of people my father knew came to this factory and after I came my two sisters came as well. We were all living together with my brother, just up there.

**Is it different now?**

Asma - It was more dirty, more factories, but we knew a lot of people then more of them have gone now. It was very dirty here, not pretty like this now, gesturing

**It is nice here today**

Sharifa - It is nice when you are not near the cars, always hearing the traffic here always noisy noisy. When I was in Wales it was very quiet

**Did you visit Wales?**

Sharifa - Yes Llandudno, with the coach you know we all did. I could hear the animals eating,

**Really,**

Sharifa - Yes I could hear them and the rivers, ssssh ssssh ( gesturing) seeing the views it is very different in Wales, the whole atmosphere is different yes, and the atmosphere in you is different

**It sounds lovely, you liked it**

Sharifa - Yes the whole atmosphere is different, I feel very positive and, people who have depression they feel better there, and they do because of the quiet. I would like to go there again…….It was lovely, very big, we could see a long way……….We saw some clouds on the mountains it was really long way away and you could see it and the clouds moving, everybody likes it, we will maybe go again but it is hard for us because you have to pay now.

**Appendix 8**

**Canal Circular 2 – Interview Transcripts**

**There’s lots here**

Rabiya - Lots yes. So many more than last week. Those at the top look. I need those ones.

**What are you going to do with them all?**

Rabiya - Eat them! (laughing). Eat eat! (she passes blackberries around in her cupped hands) you need a tissue……she wipes a woman’s mouth where blackberry juice has stained her skin.

**That’s a good idea** (Zahida has pressed blackberries into her water bottle)

Zahida - I’m making a drink, black berry juice! It smells can you smell? it smells like the forest….it’s like being in the forest here

**It is**

Zahida - Close your eyes and smell and you are in the forest here, and taste some…… oh how do you do that?

(another woman has taken the end of a headscarf and is using it as a bag with a bulge of blackberries at the bottom and a gathered tied end.)

*The woman takes …….. scarf and gathers and ties it, Sharifa begin to place blackberries through the space in the top*

*Can you help you are* *taller* a woman hands me her walking stick end up and waving it at the bushes. I climb onto a bench and use the stick to draw down bushes that are laden with ripe fruit and too high to reach. Women shout out ‘G*et me some*.’

**Have you enjoyed today’s walk?**

Bushra - Well I love this it’s like being away, there’s nowhere you can do this in Blackburn just here. I think about being a child and picking the berries with my parents.

**Where was that ?**

Bushra - In my garden , we had a big garden, lots of flowers and fruit and my father had vegetables, everybody had gardens where we were, and the scents you know, it does make me think of that….

**What will you do with the berries?**

Bushra - I don’t know, maybe a pie, Zahida says she knows how to make a pie I might ask her. Or in bottles you know, like jam you can boil it up…….or maybe just eat it!.......oh look they are coming back

The two young men from earlier approach us and ask what we are doing, my recorder is still running, Catija says ‘*Look at the berries, have some’* and offers a cupped hand. One of the young men takes a berry tentatively and says *‘Are you sure you can eat it?*’ various women say *‘yes yes’*, he eats it and nods his head and there are murmurs of approval.

**Appendix 9**

**Interview transcripts - Darwen Moor**

**You were telling me about working for Margaret’s husband**

David - Yes he had the mill, India Mill, I was there for 12 years after school, before the accident then I went to BT, well it closed down anyway

**So did you go there straight from school in Darwen ?**

David - Yes it was down there, he owned it like. They were a wealthy family, she was always in fancy clothes and, well you remember her. He was a good chap though David, he died a long time ago. I think she was on her own for a long time……………. She was walking until about a month ago you know, it’s a shame, really, it’s a shock.

**You mentioned an accident**

David - Yes you know about that

**I don’t !**

David - You don’t know, I thought you knew that’s why I started walking, to get my fitness back in my leg .

**What happened ?**

David - There were three of us. Working in the yard and some metal fell from a pile and onto us, one guy was really bad with his legs crushed, and I was crushed I couldn’t move but just one leg. They had to cut us out and it was about a year before I could walk right and they thought I might not. The other guy he really was bad and he was never right, always limped after but he could walk a bit. But here’s the thing, the other guy he was hardly touched but you know, he moved to Spain and he was dead in a year, in a motorbike accident.

**Oh my goodness !**

David - I know, he was dead although he was the one that survived the accident. So I started walking because of my leg, the doctor said to help with the muscles and getting fit. And I just loved it, I’d never done it as a child, well we ran up to the moors sometimes but I really took to it and I’ve really walked long distances. I’ve walked a lot of long distance routes…… a lot of it on my own like or with a friend. I don’t do the distances now but it really is important to me, I love it up there and I’m glad I can get there………. It makes you think though……

**You were telling me about other routes you can see.**

Sue - Well I was just looking over there really, at the other side, can you see the path on that ridge?

**Yes I see it.**

Sue - I walk all round here a lot, I walk over there, up and along then drop down, I might come back through the woods if I have time.

**You were saying although you’re walking here you are imagining the walk over there.**

Sue - Well I just know it all so well, the land, I know what it would be like up there today in this breeze. It’s quite wild over there, you look over the moors and lose sight of Darwen. It feels different, more wild, like remote…….and the wind really whips you. I do really love it. It’s higher as well.

**So you walk round here a lot ?**

Sue - Well yes now I’m back. It’s strange really to be back because last time I as here was in my early twenties.

**So you grew up here then went away?**

Sue - I went to work down south and got married and everything. I got divorced though and now my parents are ill and seeing as I’m the one alone I’ve come back to them. So it’s like being a kid again ! ………a strange feeling really.

**I can imagine……….**

Sue - Can you see the shadows on there? I always did go out on the moors alone a lot when I was young and now I’m doing it again it brings it all back, I keep remembering things I haven’t thought about for years, since I left really…….and I go back to the same place and then I remember….how I felt then, what was going on…………

**Yes I know that feeling, I get that back home….**

Sue - One time I just remembered I was getting a dress, when I was young I mean I suddenly remembered being excited about going to Blackburn to get this dress, and what it felt like and everything, and about the dress………. I really wanted to get away then, I used to come up here and dream about getting away and now I’m back, it’s like it never happened even though it’s been my whole life really, away.

**It sounds like you have mixed feeling about being here**

Sue - *It’s not what I expected. I do love the hills, I’ve always loved being out, but it’s all full of the past for me I’m not sure where I’m going. I’d rather be walking somewhere new, you know……*

**New horizons**

Laughter

Sue - Yes exactly that. I know every path, every wall here and in some ways it’s not even changed that much in all this time…well there’s nothing to change is there. Well you know there was a landslide down there don’t you

**I didn’t**

Sue – That’s why we’re coming this way all those paths are shut, I don’t know what they’re doing about it they’ve been down there for weeks, I keep going to check, you know there’s diggers and stuff, you can’t get up there but from some points you can see.

**Is it still shut?**

Sue - Yes they’re saying weeks yet, it’s not safe…….. walks away to start conversation about landslide.

To the crowd

Keith - So some of you will know this is jam pot row*.*

*Laughter aye, yes, chatter.*

**I don’t know Keith what are you talking about ?**

Keith - Jam pot row, these houses. Well that is what we all called them here. When these were built they were right fancy. You can see big houses, nice windows and gardens, not like down the hill. So the people who bought these houses, they wanted to move up the hill so they had to pay. And they had to pay so much they didn’t have anything left. We used to think they were full of themselves like, wanting to be better, up the hill. And the bin men said when they came for the bins it was all jam pots, because they could only eat jam butties see, because they had no money left after getting these houses.

**So you were telling me about going up to the tower**

Pauline - I was just saying I would love to go there now but I know we can’t.

**What’s it like up there?**

Pauline - Oh just so beautiful, what I like is being above, above everything you know and looking down. You can look at the whole of town you can see it all for up there. I always like to look and spot where I live and all the places where I’ve lived and worked, it’s like looking at your whole life really and then you can see it all and look away, you know to the country round it, you know you can see Blackpool tower even, the sea as well.

**Yes I’ve seen Blackpool from up here, so when do you go to the tower**

Pauline - Well I really can’t anymore because of John, I can’t leave him, you know about John now don’t you?

**Yes I know he has dementia**

Pauline - Yes and it’s just me really and I can’t leave him for long, he gets fretting really, or I have to leave him with someone but there is no one so I’m a bit trapped really and I can’t get anywhere.

**That sounds hard**

Pauline - It is really. I’m going to the Lakes and I was visiting my cousin and I was going to leave John with her and go walking you know, not too high but maybe Loughrigg or something, or Orrest but she’s died.

**Your cousin? Oh I’m sorry**

Pauline - Yes she’s died and he would have stayed with her I’ll go anyway and see her children and that but I can’t leave John with them so I won’t go far, just down by the lake in Windermere. That’s why I can’t come on these walks very much anymore, unless I can get someone to watch him, or I leave him at the café in Witton because he knows Nick, I know he won’t go far then. It’s rubbish really……

**So tell me about this field then**

Elaine - Well I was telling you that this was a cricket pitch, right up here, you can just see the gatepost I think where we would go in. and when Keith was in the mill all the mills had different cricket teams and they would come up here on Saturday afternoon and play cricket tournaments, all day and into the evening it would go on forever because there was loads of them maybe 15 mills and a team for each one. There would be maybe over 100 people up here, all walking up and the families and they would have food and come for the afternoon. He’d be working in the morning mind and then here in the afternoon and sometimes I’d bring the kids if I could. But it was a long walk and he did in the end say he wasn’t going to do it anymore because it wasn’t fair to leave me with the kids all the day you know on a Saturday as well because he only had Sunday off. You can’t believe it now what it was like here, with all the people and the pitch, lovely place to have it really. Do you remember? Don’t you? I’ve got all these stories about Darwen and I’m surrounded by Blackburn people, who am I going to tell all this to?

**I’m interested**

Elaine - I know laughs it seems like a different world, well it was a different time, it’s all dead now, I will be soon

**Elaine!**

Elaine - Well I will, I said to Keith what if I go first what will you do? Do you know about Barbara ?

**No, who ?**

Elaine - Barbara Potts, (others laugh oh yes we know Barbara.) Well I really don’t like her, I mean I like everyone but not Barbara, she’s always hanging around at bowls, and she’s looking right, because her husband is gone. And last year she was like this (reaches out to my head) to Keith and was saying ‘oooh you’ve got lovely hair.’ So I said to Keith when I go if I go first I want you to be happy, you can be with someone else if you want, the girls won’t mind, but make sure it’s not Barbara Potts. (Laughter))

**What did Keith say ?**

Elaine - Well he said don’t be daft like I’m not going off with anyone else anyway he said I’ll probably just get a dog (more laughter.)

**Appendix 10**

**Interview Transcripts – Hoddlesden Houses**

**So what were you saying ?**

Al - Just that I remember what was there before, there was a house, an old un. I think he might have been a vicar, the old man there when I was a lad.

**Was it different then?**

Al -Well yes of course, it were just a farmhouse then, an old farmhouse with a few barns and that. I think other farmers used the land when the vicar was there.

**Did you come here as a boy then ?**

Al - Yes my nan was close by and we played round here, the mills were still on then, it was pretty busy really. We set traps up here for rabbits, just played you know, chasing about…….

**You were talking about that house**

John - I was just saying it’s really big and you just wonder what it would be like in there on your own, lonely I reckon. There’s only him and his wife you know, I think they had kids that are grown. And I think he will be away all the time……………. Imagine up here all alone, that’s not a home is it…….. I wouldn’t like it…..i wouldn’t be here…….alone.

**What’s happening here? Oh look, it’s a helicopter…..so this is the other house**

John - It looks quite small for a helicopter, I thought it would be bigger than that, goodness just in the garden, look at that

**Well you said he’d be away alot I guess he’s not getting a bus to Darwen train station**

Laughter

Doreen - Just take off from the garden, I wonder, how long would it take, I bet you could be in Manchester really fast. It’s like a film…….imagine looking down on everything, you could see your house and all the countryside and then just…….go

**You see all sorts on these walks don’t you**

Maureen - Yes you really do. You see all sorts you wouldn’t expect really and you learn about things….from a different angle really because all the other people they know all sorts about the places, history and stories and that, and then you learn them and you can tell other people.

**Do you tell other people?**

Maureen - Yes I do…I do the walks again quite often when I know them, like I like to have a leader first and then when I know them I bring my grandchildren and then I can say I’ll tell you about this…I’ll definitely bring them here if they might see a helicopter, the youngest he’d love that…..it makes you know things differently doesn’t it………I’ve been a lot of places I didn’t know even though I’ve been here a long time, I didn’t even now it was here, but some places I do know but I see it differently, from a different angle isn’t it.

**So we’re nearly there, what were you saying**

Al - Yep, I was just saying what Elaine was saying about the wife not going there. You can see why can’t you look at it for goodness sake. A bloody big advert I’ve got loads of money and I’m stuck up here on my own…..awful. It’s ugly

**They probably have good security**

Al - Well even so I don’t think it’s safe, or comfortable. You have to feel safe and comfortable don’t you, in your own home, that’s what a home is……it’s not finished is it, you can tell, look at those windows. I wonder how he got planning permission to be honest, it’s far too big for up here…..bribed them probably.

**What are you saying?**

John - It reminds me of when I lived in Todber, I had a view like this right across the valley.

**Did you live in a mansion then ?**

John - No I did not, it was about a quarter of the size, nicer though !

**You wander what they’d do with all that rooms, what goes in it**

Carol - They might have cinema room and a gym and that

John - Don’t think he’ll have a gym have you seen him? Laughter anyway you can just go to the gym can’t you, or the cinema, or just watch a video, there’s no need for all this, and it ruins the view from the other side.

Elaine - Yes think of all those gobbiners, what have they got to look at all day

**You like this house then Esther**

Esther - Oh I do I do, how sweet, it’s just like I imagined in England you know, very mythical, and suprising.

**We’ve seen a lot on this walk have you enjoyed it?**

Esther - I always always enjoy it, it’s the best day of the week for me, I look forward so much and I feel so good afterwards, and I remember where we’ve been and I think about it, I always take photos so I can look and remember.

**Do you and your husband walk at other time of the week?**

Esther - We do but he likes to walk a really really long way and sometimes that’s too much for me so I don’t go but then I wish I had gone because I will be at home alone.

**So we talked before and you said you wanted to tell me your story about walking**

Esther - Yes because you said you wanted to know how walking changes things and coming to these walks really really has changed my life……. Really

**How long have you been coming here?**

Esther - Well we’ve been in Britain for 5 years, and we’ve been coming here for about three years, Jane told us to come, well me really because I was very depressed, I was at home all the time and I really didn’t want to be here I wanted to come home

**Why did you come to Britain ?**

Esther - My husband, he loves it here, he wanted to retire here because he loves the countryside and he is very happy just going out and walking every day, he really loves it, the green and everything, because we are in Hong Kong and it is very different

**I can imagine it’s really different…..**

Esther - Really and we were working and everything I was a music teacher, but my daughter is here you know in Manchester doing fashion, so we came to see her and then my husband said we must come here….but we were ill, both of us I told you and then coming here saved our lives

**Really what happened ?**

Esther - Really, we would be dead, because my husband had a check with his GP and he has cancer and he didn’t even know but its early, you know and he has treatment and he’s ok, it was so frightening but he’s ok, it’s amazing. And I was ill I told you…..

**You told me about your depression**

Esther - Well I have bi polar, you know it ?

**(yes)**

Esther - And my brother did too and he committed suicide when he was 32, really I miss him so much, and I was very depressed when I came here and the doctors said I was on the drug too long, I had been for about 15 years and they said no more than 5 years, so they told me I had to come off and try something else and I did but I was scared and I do feel better, not so much side effects you know I am more awake and not so tired. I still have it you know I can’t get better but I am better. So Britain saved our lives…

**So tell me more about the walking**

Esther - Well yes and walking saved our lives. Because it makes me happy, I like to see people and talk to them and I love the air, you know breathing, good fresh air and when you finish you feel warm and tired and you just feel good. And seeing all the different places, I love to see it and be there, because then I know it and I am at home.

**Do you feel at home now?**

Esther - Well I do because I have walked lots of places so I know it really well, I know more than some people who were born here, I’ve been more places and I know how it is linked together. I saw a lake, like a reservoir from the train and I was saying I’ve walked round there and my friend she couldn’t believe it, that I had been down there. And I have friends here, that I have met them through this group really even though some of them don’t come here now I still talk to them and I see them and my daughter is here of course….

**Appendix 11**

**Pleasington – Walk description**

We met opposite the church at Pleasington village. This is a village on the outskirts of Blackburn, it’s a small, semi rural village consisting of substantial detached houses with gardens clustered around a church and a pub. It was a smaller group than usual, about thirty attended. It was a cold and wintry morning, where we met there were damp piles of leaves that had fallen from the beech trees in the church yard. It was blustery and grey, there were showers throughout the morning. I was cold and wished I had bought gloves with me.

We set off walking out of the village crossed a river and turned right to follow the road out of Blackburn towards Chorley before crossing and skirting a vast area of derelict cleared land and then climbing up through some woods and emerging on a canal tow path. The derelict land was the former site of two paper mills, Sun Mill and Star Mill. I recorded talk about the mills and memories of what the area had been like when it was a major site of work. Talk about the mills continued as we walked along the canal. I generally stayed at the back of the walk, the canal path was narrow. Alan and Dave talked about the canals and how they’d been used for the mills and they talked about canal boat holidays they’d taken. There were some boats on the canal they did not seem to be inhabited. The men began to talk more generally about their family histories, prompted by discussion of holidays as children, I recorded some of this talk. We began to compare each other’s family histories and make links to places we had in common through different generations.

We left the canal and walked through a residential area before emerging in Witton Country Park. Whilst walking through the residential area Pauline joined in the conversation about family history and pointed out where her mother had lived, we walked past the house, someone else was living there now. Pauline pointed to the window of her childhood bedroom. The house was a red brick semi- detached house with white window frames and potted plants on the doorstep. We could see a man watching television inside, somebody said that’s what we should all be doing, it was raining at this point and the sky was darkening.

For much of the final part of the walk it rained heavily. We walked through some woodland. Pauline began to talk about her son who had recently committed suicide. She was talking about this trauma from the perspective of attending the Friday walks and how they had helped her manage her grief. I was unsure whether to ask to record as the conversation was charged and raw but I did as I felt the focus was clearly on how walking had impacted on the experience. Paula went on to disclose information about her husband which I discuss in the ethically important moments section of the methodology chapter. The conversation about Paula’s son ended as we emerged from the woods, it seemed as if Paula took a cue from emerging into open land to leave that experience behind. She moved away from me and asked Elaine in front of us to recount an anecdote about Keith having to rescue a cow from a stream. As Elaine told the story other women congregated around her and they all began to laugh and joke. They clearly all knew the story already and were adding to it as it was told.

We approached the end of the walk from behind the church. The rain stopped and rays of sunlight lit the path. Behind me someone mentioned this path is very straight and someone else said it will be the coffin path. Alan explained to a group of people that this would have been the path that coffins would have been carried on from outlying villages to the church. It was a narrow straight path with high wet hedges on each side. We trudged up it in single file and in unusual silence and emerged though a gap in the wall in the graveyard behind Pleasington church.

**Appendix 12**

**Pleasington – Interview transcripts**

**So, you were telling me about these mills**

Al - The sun mill and star mill, I think there was moon mill and eclipse mill as well.

**Why were they called that? I like those names.**

All - I really don’t know, it’s unusual isn’t it.

**And they were paper mills**

Al - Yes, only closed about maybe 15 years ago or something, so a lot of people worked here, they were really massive, well you can see, look at all that land, imagine all that filled up and really big chimneys….

**Do you remember it ?**

Al - Oh yes, I remember people working here, I didn’t but there’s be crowds and crowds of people coming out of here.

**We’re going up here**

John - So the canal’s up here and this is where they got the materials and where they transported stuff from and where they sent it – using the canals even late on …..it all shut down though and went down near the Thames, Essex I think and Sweden, in places better for shipping you know, near docks and that…….so all those people lost jobs……I don’t know where they all went……there’s not so much work here now is there?

**So it’s the Leeds Liverpool canal this isn’t it**

John - Yes

**And you were telling me about your memories of canals**

John -Yes just walking here reminds me, we took the kids on a boat holiday, up in wales, Llangollen you know. Just seeing that boat there reminded me, trying to drive that bloody boat and all those locks……oh god……the kids loved it…..i did too really when I’d got the hang of it!

David - We went in Shropshire

**Did you do one of those holidays Dave**

David - Yes, I’ve got photos. I liked it because it was really slow you can take it all in, like walking

Al - You know my grandad worked on the canals down there I think, in Shropshire, something to do with coal I think

David - Really your grandad?

Al - Yes I think so. We were a Manchester family like but I think he went down there and up and down to Manchester on the canals. My uncles did but my dad couldn’t because of his leg, he worked in the market.

**What about his leg?**

He lost a leg in the first world war.

**The first world war, your dad ?**

Al - Yes, I’m old you know, I was born the day after Dunkirk, I was a bit of a surprise I think my mum was over 40 then

**Wow that’s unusual. My grandparents were younger than your mum then**

Al - I Know I know. So I was the youngest by a long way so they’re all dead now. But my dad had a wooden leg so he got a job with my mum’s dad in the market at Newton…..

John - Oh are you round there, I had uncles in newton.

Al - They probably were in the pub together…

John - Yes, and now look at us here together…..old men!

**So you were telling me about coming to the walks and how it’s helped you.**

Pauline - Yes well after John died, you know we just didn’t come for a bit we just couldn’t of course we couldn’t hardly leave the house…….but Katie

**Your daughter**

Pauline - Yes she was saying mum you really need to try and do something and you have to get dad to do something …..and coming here was the only thing we really felt we could do like…most people here knew anyway so it was more comfortable……

**So you started walking again ?**

Pauline - Yes, that is all we did, and usually we really didn’t want to, I said to …..we have to do this come on we have to…… and then when we get back home it would feel better you know, not so heavy and a bit more relaxed like, and we both said we can sleep a bit more if we’ve been walking

**So it did you good physically**

Pauline - Oh yes, having fresh air and getting your heart going…..and it’s just being with people and seeing the world going by, like normal things, cos nothing was normal for the rest of our life for ages everything was just strange …….

**So it helped you mentally aswell**

Pauline - Yes, we did have to go for counselling, to see this woman you know from the NHS but I just couldn’t cope with it at all and ….just wasn’t going to talk he hated it and I just felt dreadful and it made it worse, I couldn’t bear it because they were telling me to do things and I just thought you have no idea what I feel, you can’t tell me anything….so actually I said to ……it was here on the walks that I began to get better and I did talk about it here

**So you talked about John**

Pauline - Yes, because nobody made me and I didn’t have to it was just easier, and some people knew him like and they know us and they just listen a bit and then I can stop if I want to and talk about other things and look at things you know. But actually because I didn’t have to we talked about memories about him first really and then I talked a lot about what actually happened, you know, trying to work it out. Like every week I’d have a little talk about it and then not really talk about it the rest of the week…….it did really help me…because he…..isn’t going to talk to me, he can’t really it’s not is way. He has been really bad but he’s helped by the walking as well by just being with his mates isn’t it and not talking ! but he really needed exercise you know, he loves walking you know that he’s always been a walker

**I know**

Pauline - He’s been bad though he’s not been for a few weeks he was just not coming I was coming on my own…..since the anniversary you know, of it happening, coming up to that he was really bad, he couldn’t sleep at all and then we were having dinner and he said I’m having a heart attack… I had to get an ambulance but it was panic attack, I couldn’t believe it because I thought he was going to die, I was thinking oh god what now!

**….. that sounds scary**

Pauline - Really and then he thought his cancer was back but it isn’t it’s like he’s worried about everything and that he’s going to leave me but he’s just starting to come back to a bit more normal, look you can see that he’s alright now, chatting. He didn’t want to come this morning because it was so cold but I told him to try because he likes it round Pleasington, and it’s nice in the cold, I like it…..

**I like it here too, its wintry today isn’t it**

Pauline - Yes, bonfire night, I love all that but it’s hard at the moment all that stuff, because of the memories and everything

**It must be very hard**

Pauline - But yes these walks have saved us really, we actually spoke to the whole group and said thank you, because people came to the funeral, nick came didn’t he, and sent flowers and everything, and I’ve just done more talking and thinking here, and its more easy, freer, I don’t feel so upset talking about it when I’m walking, I don’t know why really, it’s less intense, not everyone watching you and being uncomfortable…. and John used to walk with us sometimes and I like to think of those times, even some of the places we go and I can remember him then……

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**Appendix 13**

**Information Sheet**

**Research Information Sheet**

**What is this about?** 

This is to invite you to take part in some research for a course I am doing at Sheffield University.

**What is the aim of the research?** 

I want to find out about why you take part in Health Walks and what impact walking has on you.

I am interested in your thoughts and feeling about the effects that walking has on your life. I am particularly interested in how walking changes how you feel about yourself and your relationship with the local area.

I want to find out what part language and literacy plays in your experience of walking in Blackburn..

**What might be the benefits of taking part?**

Hopefully by taking part in this research you will enjoy finding out more about how walking changes how you think and feel. You will be able to share your experiences with other walkers and people thinking of joining a Health Walks group.



**Will my contribution be confidential?** 

I will not use your name when I write about the research. Nobody else will be able to identify you from what I write. I will show you everything I write that is directly about you and you can change it or tell me not to use it.

**What will happen to recordings of me?**



The audio recordings from interview will be used for analysis only. No other use of them will be made without your written permission. I will destroy the recordings at the end of the research time

**Do I have to take part?** 

It is up to you whether or not you take part. If you do decide to take part you can still change your mind at any time and you do not have to give a reason why.

**Can I find out more?**

The results of the research will be published in 2017. You will be able to contact me to see a copy of the published research.

**This project has been ethically approved via the Education Department’s ethics review procedure at the University of Sheffield.**

You can talk to me or contact me at clairelapington@hotmail.com or on 07857083945 if you want to find out more or ask me any questions about this research

**Appendix 14**

**Consent form**

Participant number\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Put your initials in the box when you have read and understood the points. Speak to Claire or Shazia if you need help.

* I have read the information sheet.
* I understand what the research is about.
* I have spoken to Claire about the research.
* I know I can decide if I want to take part.
* I know I can stop taking part if I want to.
* I know I don’t have to answer all the questions if I don’t want to.
* I will let Claire use my answers in her research when she has checked with me.
* I understand that Claire will not use my real name when she writes about the research.
* I understand that no one will be able to tell that the research is about me.
* I agree that the information can be used in future research.
* I agree to take part in the research project.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of participant date Signature

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of person taking consent date Signature

To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.

**Appendix 15**

**Example of field notes**

September 9th

Friday morning group, Nick drove me in – back way to Entwistle – sunny – after 9 quiet roads –sense of elation to be out and not in 9-5 grind of work – car park – people putting on boots – backs of cars – mainly retired – men and women – generally not in couples – group of Chinese women – started with two have drawn others in – I quickly realised was going to be easier to gather info – I knew Kevin and Lillian – friends through nicks walk – Kevin’s story of health scare – they were around at wedding, birth of kids – given chance to speak at beginning – gave out info sheets – at beginning of walk was immediately approached by Esme – clasped my hand – ‘I have so much to share with you’ – this walking has changed my life –intensely for 15/20 minutes told me her life story – Cantonese Hong king – linguist/musician – Tokyo university – 2 children – visited daughter in Accrington – husband decided to retire to near Preston – he doesn’t speak much English – he was there – moving to England – burnt bridges – husband loves walking - the greener – cycling – she got very depressed - was a language and music tutor – no purpose – recommended to come by another Chinese lady- she talks – has made friends – got language students – when in England husband bowel screened – early stage cancer – and her lithium for bipolar – changed prescription – trying to stop the blank feelings – shouldn’t have been on it for so long – brother committed suicide –Esme wanted to know the name of a stream – we walked around the reservoir cut up through pine forest to Srawbury Duck down past a few houses and over dam

Next mike – it saved my life – 5 hear attacks – couldn’t get up the stairs – after a couple of years doctors asked him to do a talk – widowed – now wanting to out something back – was euphonium player and brass band leader – have started choir of walkers – doing rehearsals and concerts – invited me to go along – we talked about similarities – communal/social – with others talked about how talking whilst walking was different – can move in and out fragmented yet continuous – carol talked about her husband dying – she used to come walking with him and now she comes without him – sort of sense of being enclosed and cushioned by the group – at 3 points in the walk Kevin stopped we all grouped – Esme took a photo of me and her – Kevin gave news of others walkers at one stop mike gave news of choir performance – Lillian started singing and others joined in – laughing – last stop now before the end – des anyone want to say anything – he said he’d got a letter from someone they used to walk with and said a bi about what was in the letter and she asks to be remembered – then Alan jokingly said to me wait till you hear my story – I’ll tell you next week – it’s tragic – them more seriously no really it is – depression it saved my life

It was mild autumn like – real sense of wanting to be involved and it was all to do with I’ll tell you my story and walking was a way of cohering a narrative the stops were like punctuation fragments of other stories coming through but it reminded me of Chaucer I walked around a reservoir and I was told two stories

**Appendix 16**

**Example walker contribution – Blackburn**

