

Cycling tipping points

08227

April 2009

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Introduction to the research

Background



- We carried out a recent piece of work with the ‘near market’ of cyclists, which showed that there are actually lots of tiers or degrees of cycling considerers. While most simply understand that cycling will be beneficial to them, very few of these are actually viably contemplating becoming cyclists and are willing to do something about it
- Essentially, a complex pool of barriers are thrown up by these cycling considerers, which act as excuses for not cycling
- This new piece of research was undertaken amongst people who have recently become cyclists (in the past 12 months or so), as a follow up stage to the previous research, in order to really understand the actual journey into cycling – what are the triggers and how and where these barriers were actually overcome.

Methodology and Sample

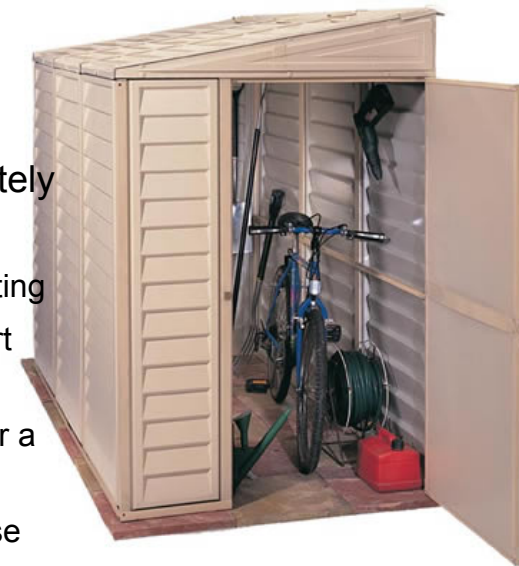
- 16 x 1 ½ hour depth interviews with a range of people who have taken up cycling in the past 12 months. Broken down as follows;-

	Age and life stage	Sex	Purpose of cycling	Frequency
1	Young adults; 16-19 years	Male	Utility journeys	Regular
2	Young adults; 16-19 years	Female	Utility journeys	Regular
3	Young adults; 16-19 years	Male	Utility journeys	Occasional
4	Young adults; 16-19 years	Female	Leisure cycle	Occasional
5	Pre-family; 20-30 years	Male	Leisure cycle	Regular
6	Pre-family; 20-30 years	Female	Utility journeys	Regular
7	Pre-family; 20-30 years	Male	Utility journeys	Occasional
8	Pre-family; 20-30 years	Female	Utility journeys	Regular
9	Pre-family; 20-30 years	Male	Utility journeys	Regular
10	Pre-family; 20-30 years	Female	Utility journeys	Occasional
11	Family; 31-44 years	Male	Utility journeys	Occasional
12	Family; 31-44 years	Female	Utility journeys	Regular
13	Family; 31-44 years	Male	Utility journeys	Regular
14	Family; 31-44 years	Female	Leisure cycle	Occasional
15	Family; 31-44 years	Male	Leisure cycle	Occasional
16	Family; 31-44 years	Female	Leisure cycle	Regular

Brief context

There appear to be very few 'true' new cyclists

- Recruiting new cyclists by our definition 'those who have taken up cycling (in any form) in the past 12 months ...after having not cycled for a few years' proved to be much harder than anticipated
 - But this fits with previous research, which suggests that there are few new cyclists
- Many of those who describe themselves as 'new cyclists', have in fact been riding a bike recently
 - In recruitment we had to turn away many people who thought they were completely new cyclists even though...
 - Some had occasionally borrowed others' (partner's, friends', parent's) bikes prior to starting
 - Others who owned a bike had occasionally (almost subconsciously) used it for very short journeys
 - Others were starting cycling for a few months in the summer and stopping completely for a longer period throughout the winter
 - Others were stopping for extended periods because of a breakdown, rather than because they wanted to...



People can 'subconsciously' lapse in and out of cycling

Lots of very personal experiences/stories inform take up of cycling

"My boyfriend is a triathlete so he nagged me about it all the time"

"I just don't enjoy being cooped up on the tube... I get quite claustrophobic with all those people round me"

"I've been putting on a bit of weight over the past year or so... I hate the gym, so cycling seemed like the best option..."

A wide range of past and present personal (EMOTIONAL, BEHAVIOURAL, MOTIVATIONAL) catalysts that trigger one to become a cyclist...

"I moved house so it made me re-asses my journey to work"

"My mum wouldn't allow me to cycle when I was a kid because she thought it was too dangerous... I regretted this and it actually made me want to enjoy cycling with my kids when they were the right age"

"I remembered cycling when I was at University and it was quite fun"

"I'm in-between jobs so I'm really skint at the moment..."

Starting cycling is a very personal experience, where no one size fits all!

Our (small) sample of interviewees fell into various broad types of new cyclists...

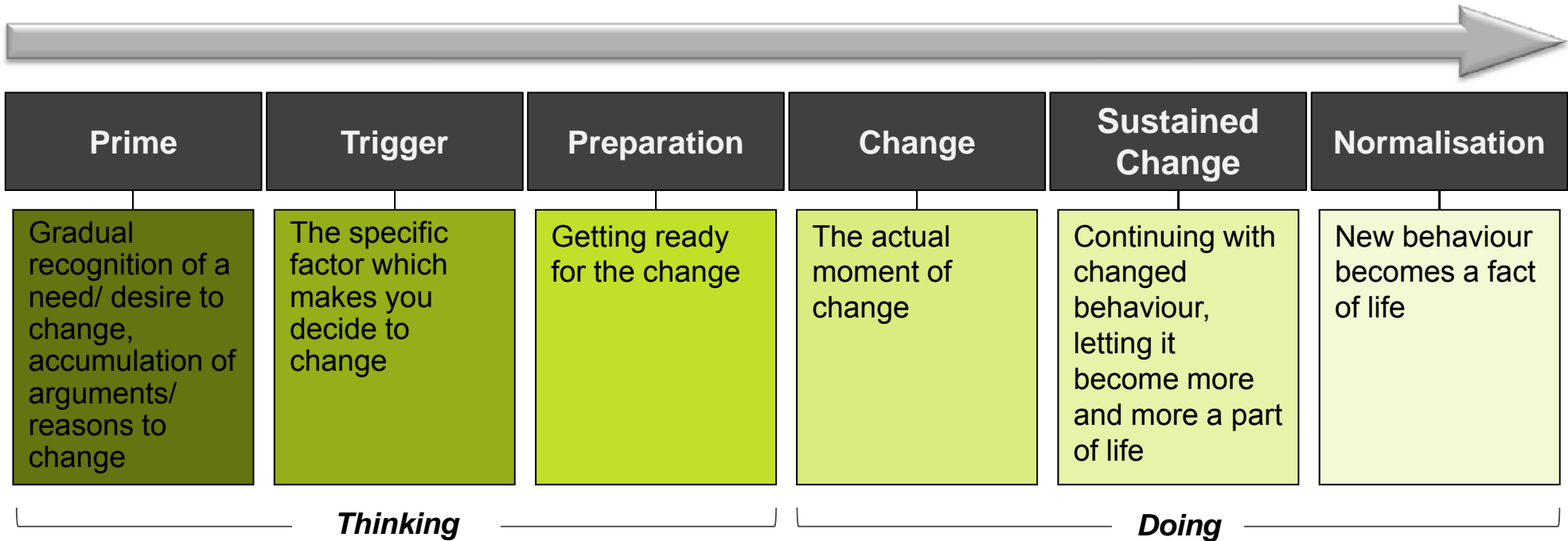
Everyday commuter	→	Cycling to work is a functional, regular habit, which they also enjoy
Reluctant functionalist	→	Cycling as the 'least worst' option (esp. for commuting) – don't enjoy it, but it allows them to save money and/or time
Local cycle obsessive	→	Love cycling everywhere in local area (friends, shopping, work, pub, etc.) for the emotional (speed, challenge, trendiness) as much as the practical benefits
Fashion rider	→	Cycling as a fashion trend - bike is a fashion accessory. May have got into it with others who share similar fashion ideals
Fitness freak	→	Cycling provides perfect outlet for their fitness motivations (both for regular, often longer commutes and leisure rides)
Leisure Family bonder	→	Cycling as a great means of bonding with kids (esp. dads with sons)
Utilitarian Family Bonder	→	Cycling for enjoyment; very nostalgic experience triggered by watching children learning to ride a bike

Meeting some new cyclists: Case studies

(Based around Behaviour Change Journey)

A re-cap of behaviour change journey (from PLEDGE research)

- The first stage of research found a multi-stage journey to behaviour change:



- At any point in this journey, people can lapse or regress, mental engagement and motivation is critical for success

New cyclist case studies

Reluctant functionalist – Katy, 20, Outer London



Who is she?

- Lives with parents and 2 older brothers in Kenley (nr. Croydon)
- Lived at home for the past 8 months, between dance school and enrolling on costume design course in London
- In the meantime, she is working at a pub a few miles away about three times per week, in order to save some money
- Very active – doing lots of dancing, going to the gym

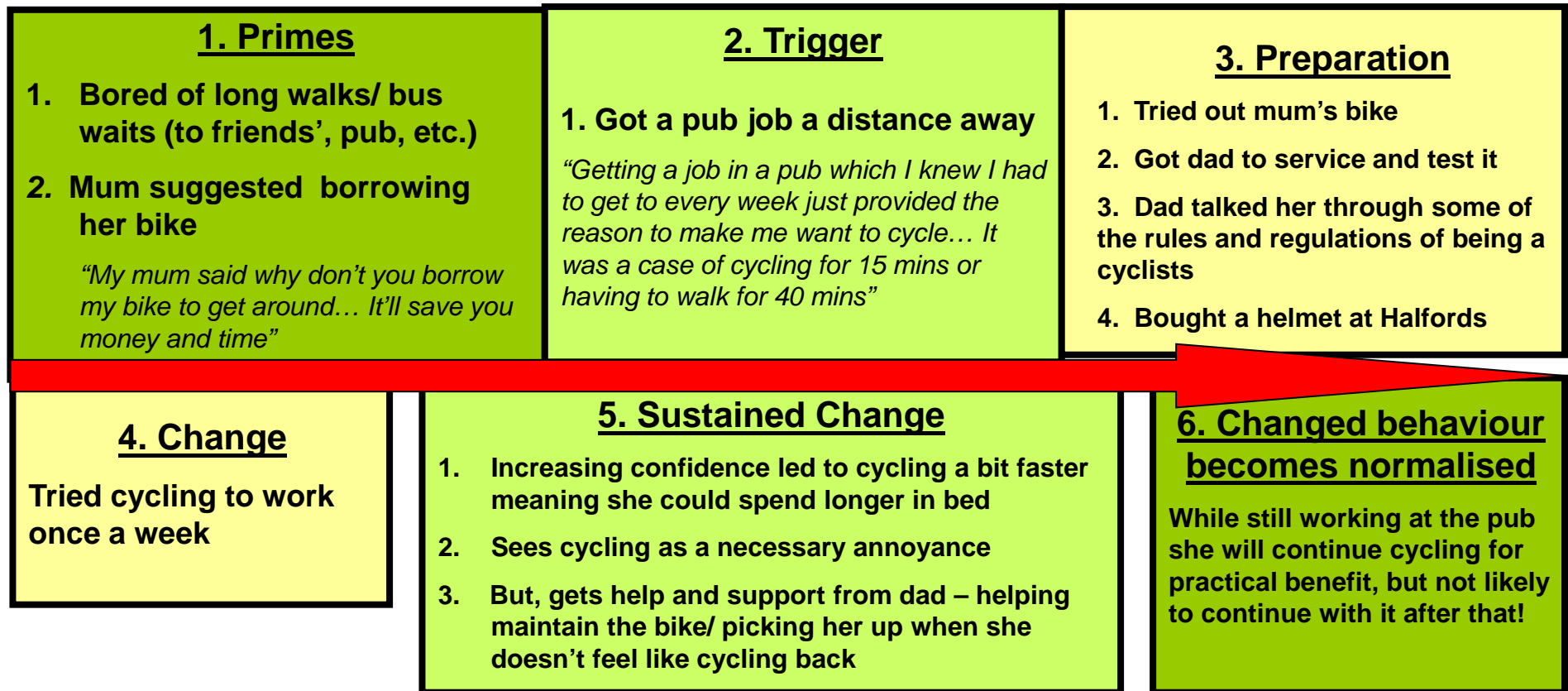
Cycling habit and route

- Cycles to pub job once/twice a week, when her dad can't drive her there
- It's all down hill and there is little traffic. But...the uphill journey back is too strenuous, so *"I tend to get a lift back from my dad when I finish my shift"*.
- Cycling is seen purely as a means of transport – *"It's not enjoyable like the gym or dancing."*
- Also occasionally cycles round to her friend's house



Reluctant functionalist – Katy, 20, Outer London

Journey into cycling...



Cycling is a purely functional means of getting from A to B; with little or no pleasure

Local Cycle Obsessive - Philip, 19, Inner London



Who is he?

- Lives with his parents in Hammersmith
- Has a very active social life in and around his local area – plays rugby, goes out to pubs and bars at least 2-3 times per week
- Has just dropped out of his university course at LSE and is working in a green-grocers in Chiswick while he decides what to do with his life



How cycling fits into his life

- Both his working and social life are local, so for him cycling is *the* means for all his local trips (work, shops, friends' houses, pub, etc.)
- Enjoys the feeling of freedom and control from cycling (esp. compared to other transport)
- Never wears a helmet or any obvious cycling clothes. *"This was one of the things that put me off cycling before I started"*
- Bought a folding bike (under dad's advise – *"less likely to get stolen... as it can be taken into people's house"*), which he hates. Now wants to get a more fun and less functional hybrid racing/road bike.

Local Cycle Obsessive - Philip, 19, Inner London

Journey into cycling

1. Primes

1. Bored of walk to college
2. Saw others enjoyably cruising past on their bikes
3. Missing buses a lot
4. Cost of public transport

2. Trigger

Not having money for the bus on night, and consequently having to walk a long way home

"I once had to walk for 4 hours from Whitton to Shepherd's Bush after a big night out. Every bike I saw a bike on the way back made me wish I had one... I started saving for one the next day"

3. Preparation

1. Spoke to dad, who agreed to help him buy a bike
2. Began to save money himself
3. Researched which bike he'd like by speaking to some friends and his dad

4. Change

1. Jumped on his bike to work as soon as he got it
2. Increased frequency of cycling - now cycles at least 4 times a week.

5. Sustained Change

1. Music adds to the enjoyment
2. Very aware of money being saved
3. Sets himself challenges to overcome – i.e. beating his previous time, racing with others, cycling part of the way without hands...



6. Changed behaviour becomes normalised

Cycles to work most of the time, and cycles for leisure and to see friends

Cycling was taken up as a functional tool, but came to be seen as a very enjoyable activity

Everyday commuter - Anna, 30, Inner London



Who is she?

- Anna lives in Blackheath with her fiancé, who is a triathlete
- She works as a PA in Canary Wharf
- She has quite an active social life, going out about twice a week with friends or work colleagues
- She is very sporty – *“I go to the gym as often as I can.”*

When and where she cycles

- Started cycling for leisure at weekends with her boyfriend a year and a half ago
- About 8-10 months ago started cycling to work, which takes her about 25 mins – she rides through parks and main roads
- She is very cautious- *“I always wear a helmet and fluorescent jacket with flashing light and only ride on routes I’ve tested with my boyfriend.”*
- Cycles as often as possible, apart from the days she goes out after work, which requires her to carefully plan her weeks



Everyday commuter - Anna, 30, Inner London

Journey into cycling...

1. Prime

1. In the back of her mind for some time but winter was a barrier
2. Noticed her boyfriend's improved physical shape from cycling and wondered what cycling would do for her
3. Dissatisfied with overly-convoluted commute on PT – *"My route takes ages on trains... I just realised it would be quicker by bike"*

2. Trigger

1. Her boyfriend first convinced her to cycle to Greenwich with him at weekends
3. Her boyfriend and best friend convinced her to start cycling to work

3. Preparation

1. Already had an old bike (which she picked up from her parents' house)
2. Cycled the route to work with her boyfriend first
3. Bought a bright jacket with built in flashlight

4. Change

1. Began by cycling with her boyfriend as a weekend leisurely activity
2. Once more confident- started to cycle to work

5. Sustained Change

1. Realised she has more energy
2. Saves considerable time
3. Enjoys cycling as a part of exercise routine – *"I can see visible results and so have less need to go to gym!"*

6. Changed behaviour becomes normalised

Her routes are still prescribed by doing them with her boyfriend first, but she is becoming more confident and hopes to find new routes

Moved from leisure cycling to commuter cycling by recruiting the help of her boyfriend to improve her confidence

Fashion Rider - Juliet, 26, Inner London



Who is she?

- She lives with her boyfriend and her sister in South Ken
- Works as a photography assistant in Camden, working strange hours
- Spare time is very work orientated - going round London taking photos, photo exhibitions, museums, etc.
- She is an avid follower of fashion and cultural trends
- Very active social life



When and where she cycles

- Cycles short journeys in her local area - tube station for work, museums, friends' houses, pubs, supermarket
- Finds cycling round London quite unpleasant because of the traffic and fumes, so won't cycle far- *"I'd never cycle for long, the fumes mean London cycling is disgusting!"*
- Will cycle anytime of the day, because her job involves being all over the place at any time as no set times.

Fashion Rider - Juliet, 26, Inner London

Journey into cycling...

1. Prime

1. Her busy life means she is looking into ways to save time – *“plus I had friends cycling to work and getting there quicker than me!”*
2. Cash was tight after getting a new job, so saw cycling as a potential money saver
3. Cycling would also help current health kick

2. Trigger

1. Moved to a new home where she could actually keep a bike.
 2. Wanted a fashionable Pashley bike, but it was too expensive- *“I wasn’t willing to compromise on style and get an ugly bike!”*
- Researching bikes for her boyfriend’s birthday and discovered a cheap, fake version of the Pashley.

3. Preparation

1. Practised a little bit on boyfriend’s bike
2. But basically just jumped on and went. *“I didn’t really do anything to prepare, it was easy!”*

4. Change

Her bike came through and she immediately replaced a walking journey to the pub

5. Sustained Change

1. Recognition that she was saving money
2. However cycling frequency has reduced due to winter and from noticing the fumes/ dangerous drivers more since she started

6. Changed behaviour normalised

1. Automatically takes bike when running out on quick errands
2. However, won’t go far as she finds cycling around London too congested/dirty

Cycling supports a busy and social life while still allowing her to stay ‘in fashion’

Fitness freak - Dwayne, 28, Outer London



Who is he?

- Lives in South Norwood with his girlfriend.
- Has lived in the same house all his life; all his friends are local.
- Very active – plays a lot of football and loves keeping fit
- Started a new fitness routine recently, which he is very committed to

When and where he cycles

- Main cycle is around the track of his local country park; after work 2-3 x week
- Occasionally cycles to friends' houses, as they all live locally.
- Started both leisure and utility cycling at the same time, once he had the bike for cycling felt he '*may as well*' use it for short journeys.
- But, for him "*cycling is first and foremost is another means of helping him stay fit*".



Fitness freak - Dwayne, 28, Outer London

Journey into cycling...

1. Primes

1. Saw it as a means of getting fitter.
2. Disgruntled at paying expensive gym membership

2. Trigger

Tried jogging but disliked it. In his mind cycling was the only other option- *"Needed to work my legs, hate jogging so had to cycle"*

3. Preparation

Went into Halfords - got a basic bike, without any form of research

4. Change

1. First journey was to the cycle track
2. As he has a bike now occasionally uses it to visit friends
"I sometimes see it lying round and think I may as well use it to cycle to my mates"

5. Sustained Change

1. Brought new more specialised bike for exercise.
2. Has upped his fitness routine by doing more track work and tries to beat his times
3. Likes the exercise *'buzz'* he gets from cycling- *"I wouldn't be able to stop without compromising my fitness"*

6. Normalisation

1. Would, in future, like to cycle into the office to replace the track (*'It would kill two birds with one stone'*) but there are no showers/ facilities.
2. Is also interested in training for cycle races and events

Cycling is used to improve health and to support a recent fitness drive

Utilitarian Family Bonder - Carolyn, 38, Outer London



Who is she?

- Carolyn is an receptionist at a church and lives with her two children (6+10) and husband in Eastcote.
- Enjoys swimming, horse riding, walking with the kids. They are quite an active family but prefer to stay in local area to save money.
- They tend to do a lot of things as a family although Carolyn also enjoys going out and having fun with her friends.

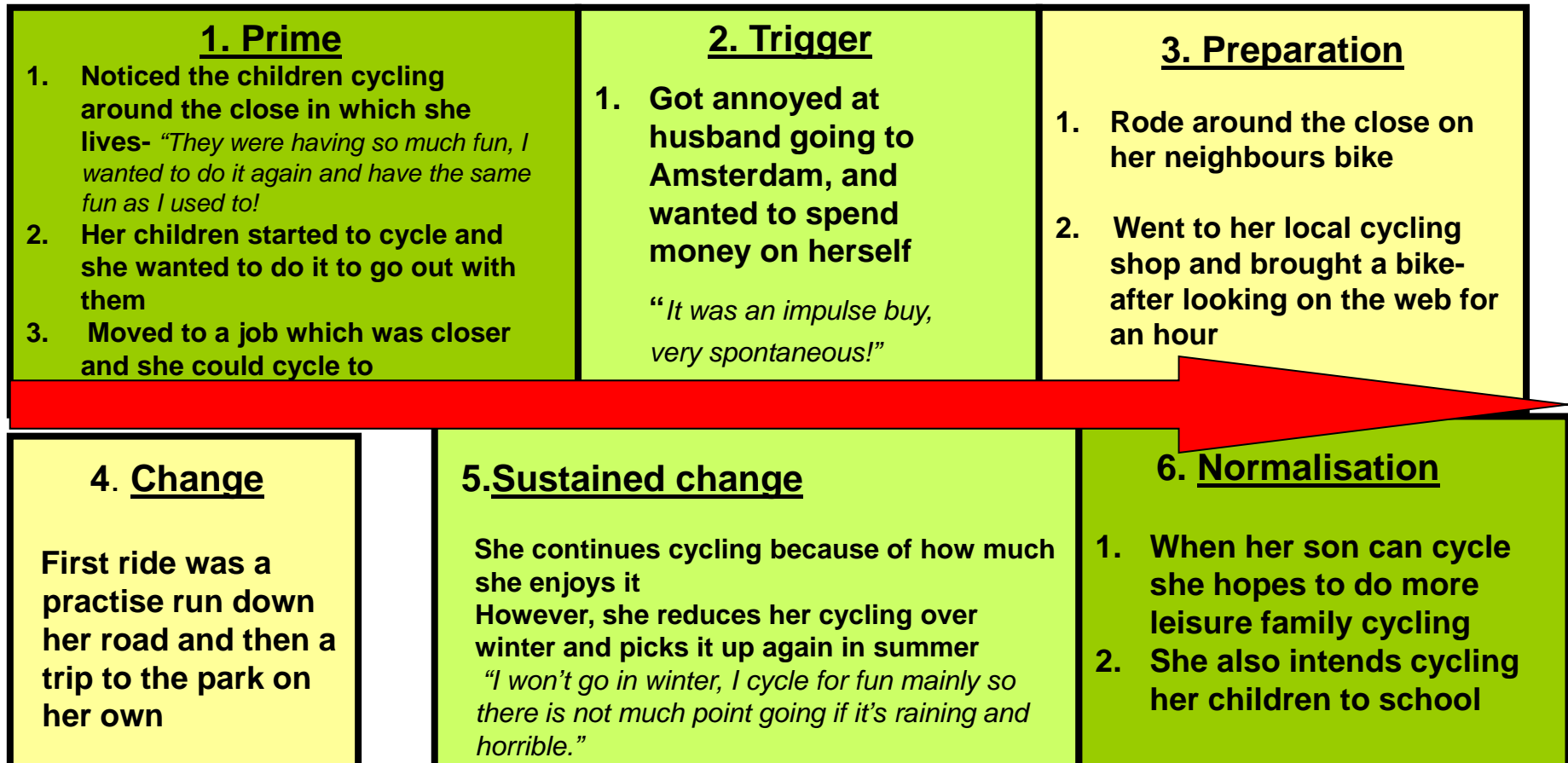
When and where she cycles

- Cycles to shops at top of road, and to work in summer. She will also only go around the local area and prefers parks and small roads, as *“these are the nicest places to cycle!”*
- Cycles with the daughter a lot to the park – *“we like to have fun ‘girly time’ together”*.
- Intends to cycle her kids to school when her son can ride properly - sees the other mums doing this and wants to do the same.
- Also looking forward to leisure cycling with the whole family in Summer.



Utilitarian Family Bonder - Carolyn, 38, Outer London

Journey into cycling...



A wish to re-live the fun had as cycling in her youth was brought to the fore when her children began to cycle

Leisure Family Bonder - Hugh, 37, Inner London



Who is he?

- Unemployed. Lives with 10 year old son in council flat in Notting Hill.
- Both him and his son are diabetic and under doctor's orders to keep active
- Hardly ventures out of West London as he has everything he needs there
- His life is dependent on what son wants to do

When and where he cycles

- Doesn't enjoy cycling alone as he "*finds it a chore*"; he will only go out when his son asks him to.
- Cycling is a social, father-son bonding activity- "*We play around on our bikes doing wheelies and and chat about our days!*"
- They mainly cycle around local parks
- Refuses to cycle in winter; feels he does not like cycling enough to justify going out in the cold.



Leisure Family Bonder - Hugh, 37, Inner London

Journey into cycling...



1. Prime

1. Son started to cycle and was asking him if they could go out together. *"My son did his proficiency and was then always bugging me to go cycling with him"*
2. Moved to a nicer area so was keener to let son cycle.

2. Trigger

1. Moved to new flat where the landlord had a spare bike to give him.
2. Once he had a bike his son felt there was no excuse for them not to be cycling together.

3. Preparation

Didn't do anything. Just got on an old bike and followed his son.

4. Change

1. First trip was a cycle around a park with his son in the summer.
2. Found initially the 'newness' of cycling excited him but this soon wore off.

5. Sustained change

1. Keeps cycling with his son as he feels it is something he *should* do as a parent- *'I wish my dad had cycled with me'*.
2. As his son grows up he wants to keep a common interest between them. – *"I want to have something we do as father and son"*

6. Normalisation

As he cycles mainly to spend 'quality time' with his son; there is little inclination to continue for himself

Cycles for his son's enjoyment and his own wish to get involved in his son's favourite hobby

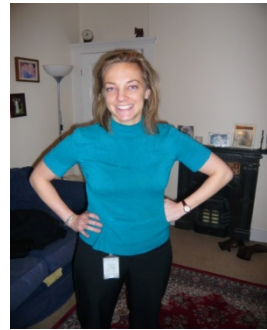
In summary, cycling can fulfil many needs for different people, from purely functional to more emotional...



Reluctant Functionalist
Cycling is the 'least worst option'



Fitness Freak
Cycling is a means of keeping healthy



Everyday Commuter
Cycling is a functional habit they enjoy



Fashion Rider
Cycling as a fashion trend



Local Cycling Obsessive
Cycling is very enjoyable and also useful



Utilitarian family bonder
Cycling is fun; especially when with family

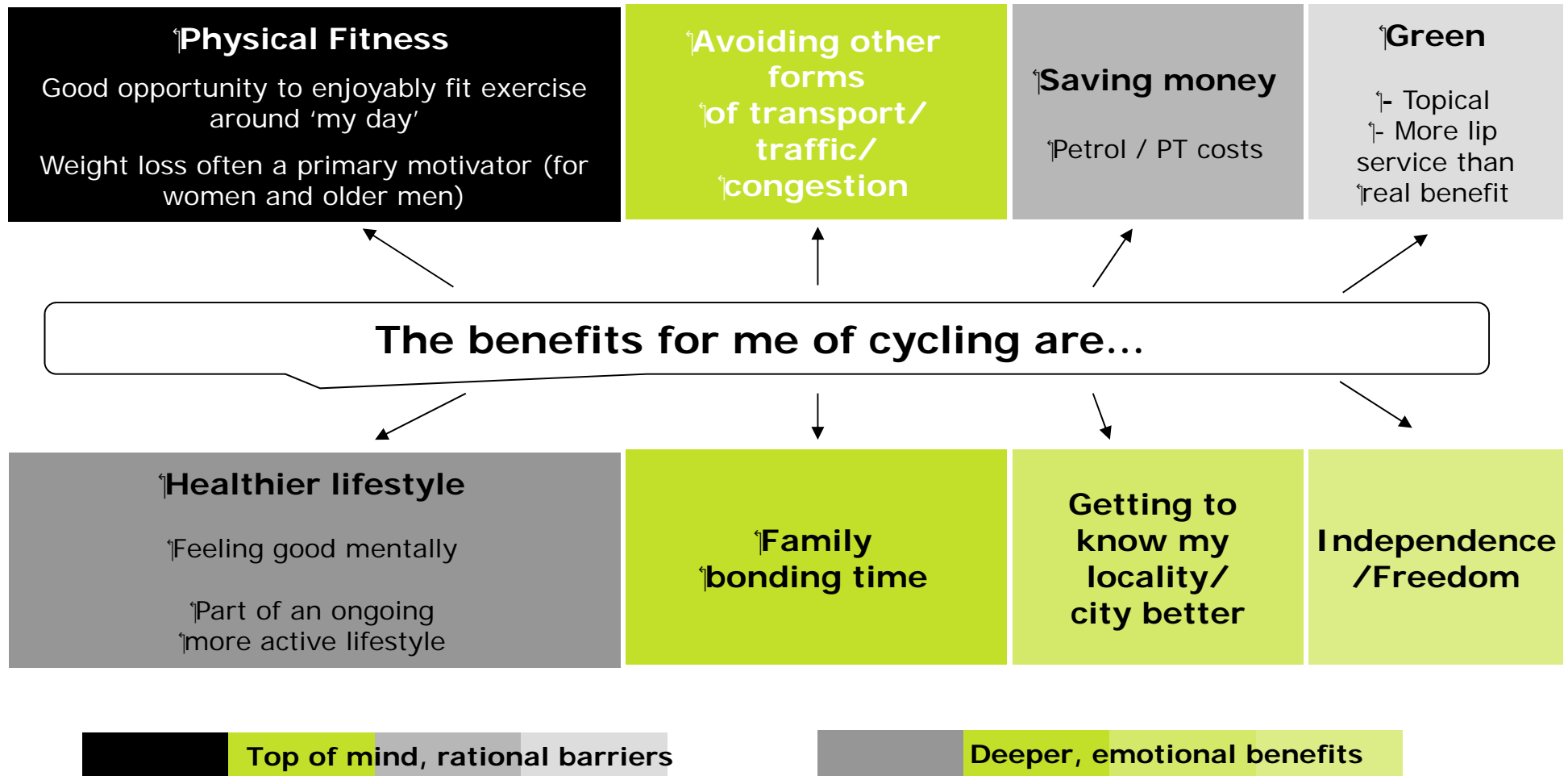


Leisure Family Bonder
Cycling as a means of bonding with children



Primes and triggers to becoming a cyclist

As found in near market cycling project, “soft” primes towards cycling are quite consistent – and easy to cite when not yet ready to adopt them



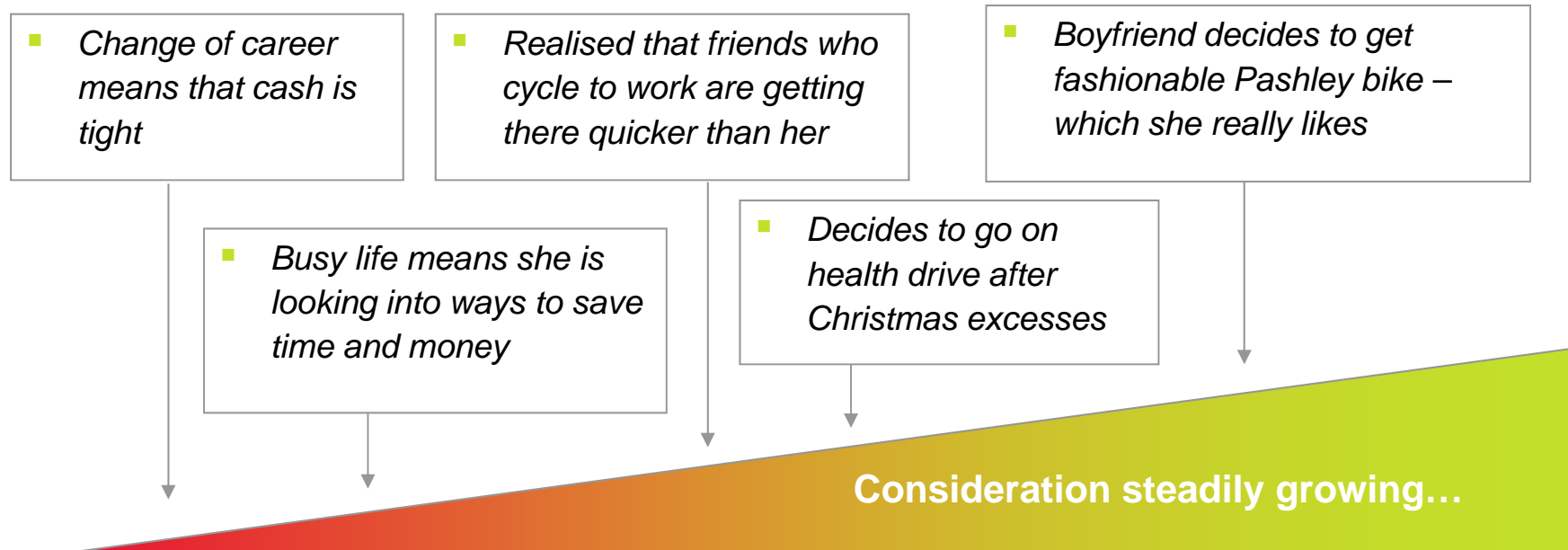
Individual 'softer' primes are often counteracted by barriers...

- In consideration process, cycling considerers look at both sides of the argument – esp. given the many barriers (as found in previous 'near market' research)
- So, pull factors often bring up counter-arguments
 - Wanting to save money → *"I knew that the short term, buying myself a bike would be expensive..."*
 - Wanting to gain freedom/
independence from other modes of transport → *"... but being lumbered with a bike isn't great, I'd worry about not being able to park it anywhere safe"*
 - Wanting to save time (esp. vs. walking) → *"Cycling isn't faster than other forms of transport is it?"*
 - Noticing more people at work cycling → *"The more you notice others cycling the more you start hearing about accidents"*

Referencing these specific primes solely in comms could also lead to powerful barriers surfacing

But consideration intensifies through the accumulation of primes

- As seen in PLEDGE research, the priming process is the accumulation of personal arguments that eventually build up a strong case to change behaviour
 - For example, as in the case of Juliet, 26 (the fashion cyclist)...



This personal nature of the priming process means that it varies in time-span and number of primes from one person to the next

Types of primes tend to vary by life stage

Younger



- Parents often a driving influence
- Looking for freedom/independence (financially, mentally, emotionally) from parents
- Money saving is big consideration
- Looking to save time vs. walking

Pre-family



- Greater health-focus – wanting to stay in shape
- May be noticing more people doing it due to busy, out and about lifestyle
- May be looking to save money/time vs. public transport
- More influenced by environment – although not a key driver

Family



- Often driven by kids starting/wanting to cycle
 - Primarily as a means of bonding with kids
 - Further brings out nostalgia of cycling
- Health coming to the fore as a consequence of age
- Attempt to find new activities/hobbies at weekend for quality family time

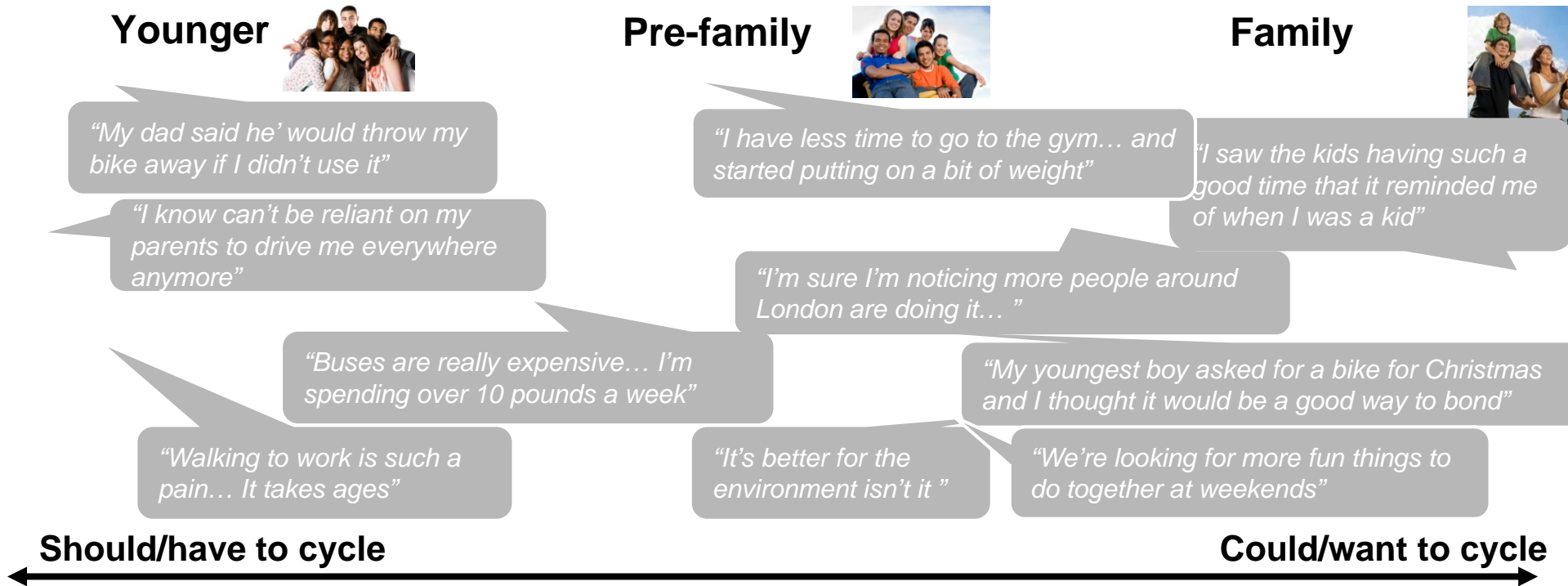
← Generally more rational

Often more emotional →

Primes for younger tend to be more rational, whereas older (esp. family people) tend to have more emotional primes

Types of primes tend to vary by life stage

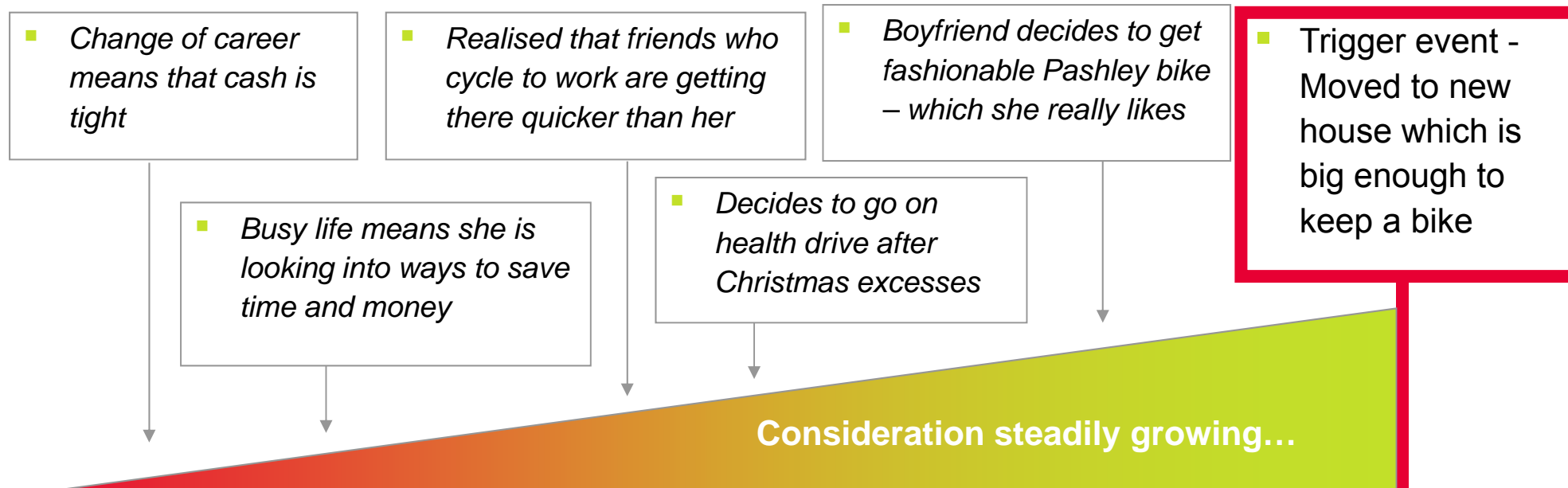
- The younger have more negative associations attached to cycling not being cool (or seen amongst their teen peers). The older have stronger, more positive emotional nostalgic feelings around it...



For the younger cycling is more something they feel the have to/should do, whereas for the older it is more something they could/want to do

The moment you decide to change tends to be very personal...

- At the end of this stage, one specific event, or atom of persuasion (argument, fact, experience) can be the straw that breaks the camel's back and leads to a decision to change.
 - For example, as in the case of Juliet, 26 (the fashion cyclist)



Sometimes personal, sometimes external, Primes need to be accepted and internalised in order to become the trigger to behaviour change

Triggers are usually external factors

- Mostly, it appears that external factors tend to have the greatest effect at ‘pushing’ people into cycling
 - As found in the previous ‘near market’ research, a sense of ‘apathy’ tends to hold people back from actually starting to cycle – suggesting an active ‘push’ is needed more often than not

■ Moving house

- Tends to be a very emotional experience – a fresh start with endless possibilities
- Often leading to re-assessment of travel/journey

■ Starting a new job

- New sense of responsibility for oneself
- Having to find a new route to work

The real trigger to start cycling is...

■ Shifting life-stage

- E.g. becoming financially independent in late teens leading to re-assessment of travel choices
- E.g. attempting to keep the family together just before teen angst starts

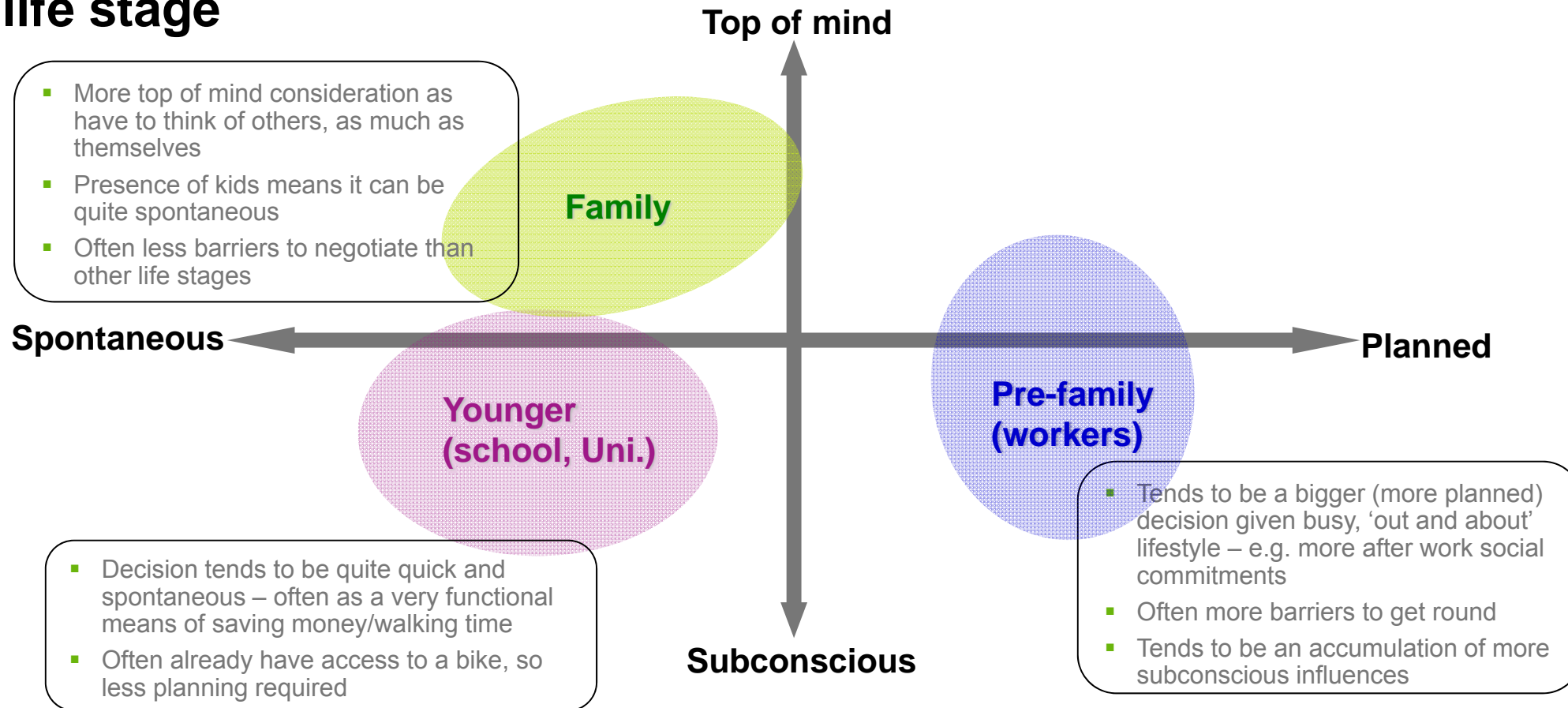
■ Peer pressure

- E.g. parents whose young kids start asking for a bike
- E.g. Influence from partner who is really into cycling



Much of the time, an active push is needed as the final trigger, no matter how many primes there are prior to this

In summary, cycling consideration process can largely vary by life stage



Lifestyle (e.g. presence of children/going out after work) can largely affect how planned and involved the cycling consideration process is

**Preparing oneself and breaking down
the barriers to cycling**

Actual preparation phase tends to be quite quick and unplanned

- Physical/practical preparation steps that happen between *deciding* to become a cyclist and *actually* starting cycling are often relatively unplanned and are kept to a minimum
- For example,
 - Only a few are looking into routes

"I just started cycling my normal bus route to work"

- Buying the bike is generally surprisingly unemotional (except for one or two of the more fashion involved) – even it may take a little while to save up for it...

"I actually spent longer buying my last pair of jeans"

"I just went into Evans and forty five minutes later I was walking out with a bicycle"

- A quick practice session of two (or trying out the route) appear to be the norm – either by oneself or with close family member

"I just went out for a quick spin round the block to see if I could still remember how to cycle"

Little knowledge of where to get cycling information...

- People at cycling tipping point often rely on close family/friends for advise about cycling
 - For information on etiquette – where to cycle and how to cycle
 - For information on maintenance of bike and/or what bike to buy
- Common complaint that there is no bicycle equivalent of multitude of car information/sources
 - And some are even using car sources. E.g. *“using AA website for planning my cycle routes”*

“When learning to drive there are loads of sources... The DVLA obviously, but also the AA, the RAC and loads of books and websites out there... There is nothing I can think of for cyclists... apart from the proficiency test for kids”



- No/very little knowledge of TfL’s involvement in cycling
 - Even those who are regularly using Journey Planner are not aware TfL also promote cycling

Potentially much scope for (an interest in) TfL becoming ‘the’ cycling resource for considering/new cyclists in London...

BUT preparation tends to be more mental and often starts well before the actual trigger for behaviour change occurs

- Preparation tends to be more about ‘gearing up’ mentally than physical preparation
 - Reassuring oneself ...*that you’ll remember how to cycle... that you’ll know where to go... that you won’t look silly... that you’ll enjoy it... that you’ll lose weight doing it... etc.*
 - Close friends/family play a huge role here
 - Personal nature of cycling means that those who know you are most (and often, the only) trusted ports of call
- This type of ‘mental preparation’ often happens during the priming process
 - Each prime can mentally prepare you for cycling

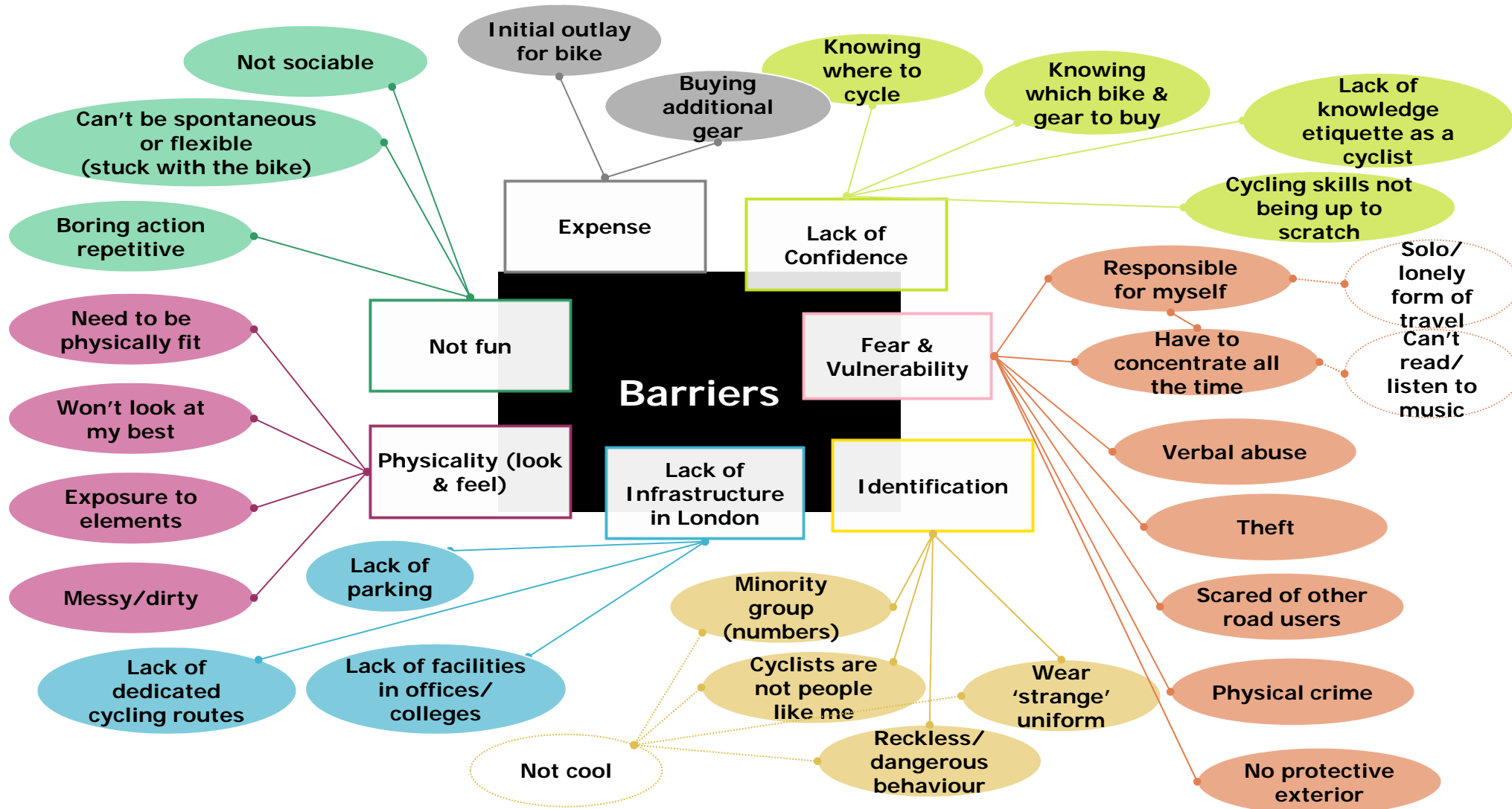
The priming process often starts to address some of the barriers

Breaking down the barriers around cycling mainly happens through the actual act of cycling

- Although barriers may start to be addressed through priming and preparation, many people start cycling before barriers are broken down
 - Often trying out cycling uncommittedly (especially those with a bike)
 - ...even if there is a sense that barriers may be somewhat ‘out of your control’ – at the mercy of outside factors, e.g. other drivers, crime, weather, etc.
 - And for some, *“accidents and injury are never miles away”*
- Barriers only tend to break down fully through the act of cycling

Encouraging people to try out cycling uncommittedly (as in the ‘catch up with the Bicycle’ campaign) can be more powerful than trying to overtly tackle barriers

Let's re-cap the barriers (as found in near market study)



New cyclists find their own personal ways to break down the barriers...

■ Dealing with 'lack of confidence'

- Most firstly trying out cycling in the local area
- Many only cycling around their local area – which they are more familiar with



"It just feels a lot safer as I know what is round the next corner"

- A few of the women esp. tend to cycle a route with others (first)

"Before I cycled to work the first time, I got my boyfriend, Dave, to cycle it with me a couple of times to give me confidence"

- Getting training from those around them

- Although no one had gone on a formal training programme, a few (of the women esp.) had had both practical and theoretical training from partner or father

"My dad drove me around a few times giving me tips ... things like how to deal with roundabouts and which arm signals to make to turn"

New cyclists find their own personal ways to break down the barriers...

■ Dealing with 'un-cool image of cycling'

- Technical clothing (es. Lycra) tends to be avoided by first timers

"Lycra is a complete no go... It's for the real cycle freaks, not for normal cyclists like me"

- A few of the younger were buying fashionable bikes and/or accessories that allow them to express their personality

"I have these cool wi-fi headphones for my iPod"

"Pash are like the Ferrari of the bike world... It makes the bike like a beautiful accessory that I can express my personality with more"

- Helmets can still be seen as the domain of the geeky by many
 - Many of the younger and some of the women simply refused to wear a helmet

"If I had to wear a helmet I wouldn't cycle"



New cyclists find their own personal ways to break down the barriers...

■ Dealing with 'physicality of cycling'

- Cycling frequency decreased (and for some stopped altogether) in the winter
- Building in plenty of time and taking it easy
- Only cycling easiest routes

"I know how to pace myself so as not to get sweaty"

"I only cycle downhill so I don't knacker myself out before work"



■ Dealing with the 'initial expense'

- Looking for deals online, although most are going into the physical shops, as relying on advice from sales staff
- Younger often helped financially by parents
- One or two taking advantage of the cycle to work scheme, although not many were aware of this

"Once I looked around it was actually cheaper than I thought"

"I asked my dad for a bike for Christmas"



New cyclists find their own personal ways to break down the barriers...

■ Dealing with perceived 'lack of fun'

- A few of the younger listening to music to make cycle ride a little more fun
- A few also challenging themselves through cycling quickly, or even without hands



"I try to get there a little quicker than the last time"

"I sometimes ride without hands some of the way"

**Being a new cyclist:
Sustaining and normalising cycling**

New cyclists still do not see themselves as 'cyclists'

- Most of the new cyclists we spoke to do not like to describe themselves as 'cyclists'
 - Apart from a couple of most serious cyclists, who are cycling almost every day
 - And there is a fear of being seen as too 'geeky' if described as a cyclist
- There is a feeling by many of the newer occasional cyclists that they have not yet *graduated* to becoming a cyclist
 - A sense that they do not yet have enough knowledge of cycling or use their bikes frequently enough
 - Unlike driving a car, there is no official test you must to pass that qualifies you as a cyclist (apart from proficiency test for kids)

"I'd say a cyclist is someone who cycles to work every day, without relying on any form of transport"

"There is no certificate or license like there is with driving, where you can say look I'm a driver"

New cyclists still do not see themselves as 'cyclists'

- The word 'cyclist' also has pretty negative connotations for most new (esp. less regular) cyclists
 - Still seen as the domain of the serious 'racing types' or more reckless 'courier-types'
 - Implies a world of 'techno-speak' and strange 'lycra' clothes, which they do not want to be part of
 - None in our sample were willing to try out lycra (yet)
- And while 'cycling' often becomes more normalised ('for me') on the one hand, more 'bad' behaviour of other cyclists is noticed on the other hand



"Now that I'm cycling, I'm more aware of other cyclists... there are so many idiots out there!"

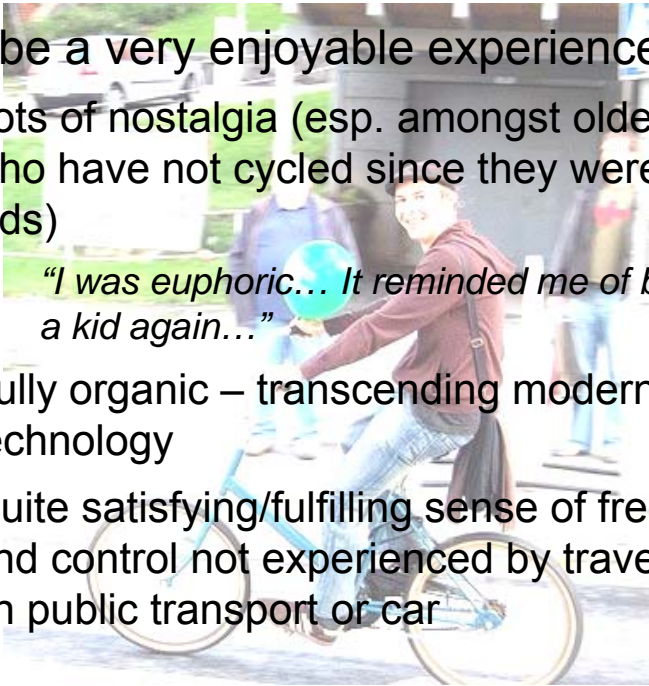
Referencing 'cyclists' overtly in comms could be polarising

Starting cycling is a conflicting experience

- At the point of starting to cycle there is a heightened sensory experience, which often leads to a somewhat paradoxical experience...

- Can be a very enjoyable experience...

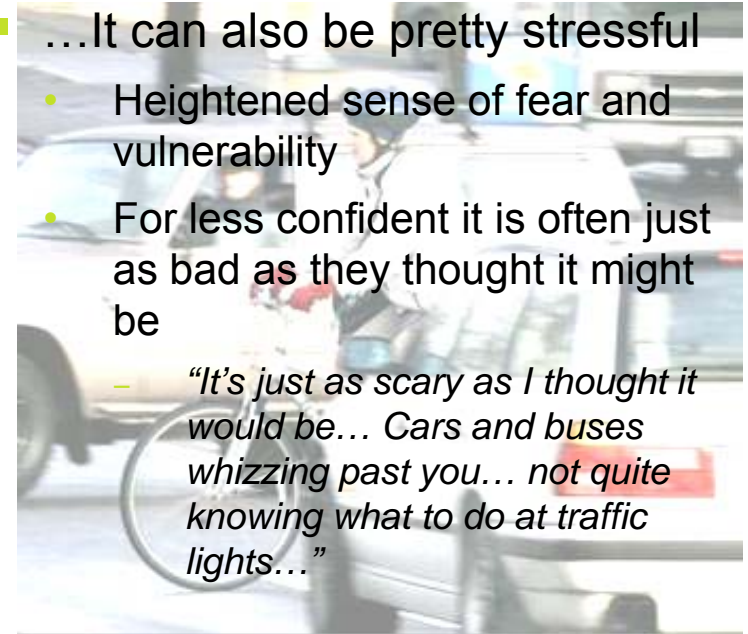
- Lots of nostalgia (esp. amongst older, who have not cycled since they were kids)
 - *"I was euphoric... It reminded me of being a kid again..."*
- Fully organic – transcending modern day technology
- Quite satisfying/fulfilling sense of freedom and control not experienced by travelling on public transport or car



BUT...

- ...It can also be pretty stressful

- Heightened sense of fear and vulnerability
- For less confident it is often just as bad as they thought it might be
 - *"It's just as scary as I thought it would be... Cars and buses whizzing past you... not quite knowing what to do at traffic lights..."*



While there often tend to be lots of very positively emotional feelings about cycling, negative feelings are never too far away (ready to surface)

Sustaining cycling is often about ‘controlling fear’

- Sustaining the new cycling behaviour can sometimes be as big a challenge as actually starting it in the first place
 - Especially given many of the barriers that are still present and will only disappear with experience
- In fact, sense of ‘vulnerability’ may become even more noticeable once you start cycling
 - Learning the ‘real’ dangers of the road, as opposed to just the perceptual fears

“I look out for the white van men, who have little respect for cyclists...”

“Until I started cycling I hadn’t thought of the potholes that I sometimes pass... I wouldn’t even notice it in the car but on the bike it can be lethal”

- But, learning to deal with the feeling of vulnerability is in fact a big part of normalising cycling
 - Fear becomes ‘controlled fear’
 - You learn how to deal with the dangers pertaining to your own routes

TfL’s infrastructural initiatives (esp. cycle highways and greenways) should help address some of this vulnerability

Sustaining cycling takes on many forms

- New cyclists discuss a number of different measures for supporting and sustaining their cycling
 - Metrics
 - Keeping count of the no. of days per week they cycle
 - Tracking weight and body changes
 - Repercussions – emotional and practical negative implications of not cycling
 - Noticing how they have more energy on days they cycle vs. days they don't
 - Or how it takes longer to get to work by public transport
 - Cost implications of not using bike
 - Emotional support
 - Friends and family offering continued interest and praise

"I definitely noticed my legs and bum becoming toned... What better incentive does a woman need!"

"My uncle who used to cycle a lot, gives me praise all the time and tells me how great it is that I cycle... It kind of spurs me on, even though I don't really enjoy cycling"

Milestones, a sense of achievement and support help sustain change

Sustaining cycling takes on many forms

- Respondents discussed a number of different measures for supporting and sustaining their cycling
 - Increased confidence on the road
 - Maybe riding faster, riding on busier roads
 - And some of more fearless are taking more risks (jumping red lights, cycling without hands, etc.)
 - Feeling of being part of a ‘club’
 - For more regular cyclists – there’s a feeling of unity
 - A shared feeling of one-upmanship over other forms of transport amongst cyclists...
 - Reinforcing how bicycle is quicker, healthier, greener than other transport

“You pass the same people on a daily basis... there’s the odd knowing wink at the traffic lights”

“It feels so good when you pass other traffic, and you think ah, you’re stuck in that horrendous traffic and I’m not”

Milestones, a sense of achievement and support help sustain change

Summary and recommendations

Summary and recommendations

- Cycling is a very personal process, so there is no one solution that applies to all those considering (or on the tipping point of) cycling
- Cycling consideration intensifies through the accumulation of various primes (the nature and length of which varies by individual)
- Individual primes are often counteracted by some powerful barriers during consideration process, so referencing specific drivers in isolation in comms could also lead to barriers surfacing
- Triggers for actually becoming a cyclist are often external environmental factors, such as moving house, changing job, shifting life stage, and especially peer pressure by close family/friends
 - TfL could tap into some of these key events (which can be quite common in Londoners' lives)

Summary and recommendations

- People tend to find their own ways to break down the barriers to cycling, often by the act of cycling
 - Encouraging people to simply give it a go could be as/more powerful than trying to break down all the barriers

- New cyclists still have many negative perceptions of other ‘typical cyclists’ – seen as geeky, reckless, lycra-clad, etc.
 - Avoid talking about ‘cyclists’ too overtly in comms - using words such as *cycling* and *bicycle* better though

- Sustaining and normalising cycling can be as hard as actually taking up cycle in the first place – cyclists can often lapse in and out of cycling
 - TfL’s initiatives should provide much of the glue for helping cycling become normalised amongst new cyclists more quickly