

MODES OF MOBILITY:  
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY SEARCH FOR MOBILE BODIES

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ABSTRACT

*The promotion of access and inclusion through transportation mobility privileges the independent movement of the mobile body. To examine the centrality of the mobile body, this paper takes a micro-social approach to the experience of mobility constituting mobility as a mode of being and of access to the interaction space. It starts with social interactionism, with its roots in British social anthropology and the Chicago School sociology. It then explores the anthropological interest in body techniques, sensory movements and the tacit perception of motion in cultural practices. It ends with observations about experiences of mobility for those with silent presence and dependent, motionless bodies and questions the ability of normative able-bodied researchers to reach new understandings of modes of mobility that are embodied in anomalous, but not immobile, bodies.*

INTRODUCTION

Within the growing mobilities literature, mobility appears in similar ways to the body in social theory: as a means of theorising and representing travel, transport, trade, people, information and data flows, systems of communication and networks of connection with less attention to how mobilities, and bodies, are accessed, practised and lived in human and material ways. Where mobility is a material practice, it is the quality of making essential 'small world connections' with others and moving in and out of contemporary social and cultural life (Hannam, Sheller, & Urry, 2006; see also Salazar, 2010). Material mobilities generate the socioeconomic effects that give social life momentum, but are constituted by the physical, that is, human and technological, movements that make up the infinite ways in which people come closer together and move further apart to do so. However, the critique has been made that such theoretical 'discussions...fail to provide any real sense that it is breathing,

sweating, talking, *embodied* subjects who engage in these movements' (Shilling, 2008: 85; emphasis in original). Therefore elaborating representational theory requires investigations of empirical experiences of moving, that is, the living bodies that emerge in the processes and relations of embodied action and interaction. Such processes and relations of the embodiment of movement in social and cultural life are modes of mobility.

Too frequently embodied subjects are normatively able-bodied in order to access 'these movements'. When the politics of access promotes greater mobility for those excluded by dominant systems of design and technologies of distribution, such as public transport, for example, it accepts uncritically the contexts of disability and impairment (Gleeson, 1999; Imrie, 2000). The 'mobility impaired' are already excluded from normative modes of individual, physical mobility on the basis of sensory and motor impairment (Douglas, Pavey, Corcoran, & Clements, 2011). The moral value given to accessing transit services presumes that access unlocks the means to become, potentially, more mobile. A closer analysis of mobility depicts the changing 'means, resources, space and time' comprising access that are all needed for participation in social life (Cass, Shove, & Urry, 2005). Yet mobility impairment is still marginalised. Inclusive modes of mobility require closer consideration. Such an analysis particularly contests the idea of 'disability as just another hindrance to social mobility' (Breckenridge & Vogler, 2001: 349) by considering how disability might be understood as 'just another' mode of mobility. Not only are mobilities experienced in diverse ways, but importantly the effects of modes of mobility embody moving bodies differently, in turn changing the terms of their representation (Siebers, 2001). Just as transportation accessibility may not, on its own, improve mobility, those with bodily impairments may not experience mobility impairment. The paradox of access is that it is constituted by 'the hegemony of the mobile body' which itself is disembodied to privilege 'independent movement' (Imrie, 2000: 1643–1644).

In representations of mobility as accessing freedom, opportunity and choice, the independently mobile social actor is in effect disembodied; human embodiment in its materiality more often represents constraint rather than freedom. This dominant view of mobility disregards persons with — relatively — immobile bodies; their very embodiment of dependence is seen to pre-empt experiences of mobility. As an example, Cresswell's (2006: 6) interpretive framework for analysing how 'movement becomes mobility' through the many ways that a person shifts, displaces and re-locates themselves through space and time appears to foreclose any person who does not move their own body to do so.

Yet, in a Niger desert village of Azawagh Arab people, a cultural practice of fattening girls by force-feeding them to immobility yields an important set of material relations in that patriarchal society (Popenoe, 2004, 2005). The women the girls become can command large families and run the household workers 'from a seated position,' and some may never lift their own large bodies to stand or walk (Popenoe, 2004: 42). On the rare occasions that a woman is lifted, or lifts herself, to go anywhere, usually to visit with other women, she is taught to move with slow, 'demure comportment'. The Western ethnographer's view of this as a 'sedentarising society' is contested by the tribal women in the study, for whom fatness signifies readiness to marry and start a family, thus ensuring their livelihood and social mobility. Popenoe's immersion in the lives of the adult tribal women draws attention to the mobility of a sedentary physicality. Western social definitions of the persistently immobile as less able social subject (Csordas, 1994) are challenged with counterhegemonic movement in the lived spaces of social interaction.

This exploration arose out of an interest in those 'breathing, sweating...embodied subjects' (Shilling, 2008: 85) who are *not* walking and those who are *not* talking. The purpose of the paper is to engage with the meanings of lived movement contexts by delving more closely into theories of embodied movement and action in 'some of the long-established divisions and crossings of sociology and anthropology' (Clifford, 1997b: 61)<sup>1</sup>. The search for ideas about mobile bodies starts with interactionist sociology, tracing its roots in social anthropological ideas and methods. It moves to cultural anthropological writing on body practices that enable both conformist and creative sensibilities. It follows the emphasis on movement and awareness to early ideas of symbolic interactionism, with its roots in phenomenological philosophy and social psychology. It then turns to the argument that bodies in social action rely on mediated modes of awareness and experience. It examines making contact as underpinning micro relations of mobility. The paralytic 'body silent' of anthropological concern then leads to a consideration of the awareness elicited in less mobile bodies of the privilege of mobile embodiment. The paper concludes with questions about assumptions of access, experience and im/mobility.

#### SOCIOLOGICAL TRADITIONS

Within interactionist sociology, mobility defines social experience. To Erving Goffman, the situational self is the social identity that is made in each social setting. The self is shaped in the 'drama' of the setting, with stages, props, roles, scripts and gestures. Socialised in each situation, the self is liable to the constraints of entries and exits to access interactions (Cahill, 2007; Goffman, 1959).

To explain the micro-level constitution in the interaction settings of macro-level categories of identity that structure relations of power, the interactionist framework directs attention to the space between individuals. In this space, 'actors' express a situated self, not as an extension of an inherent identity, but as an impression about the self expected and anticipated by others present. Identity is enacted by giving expression, that is, communicating, and by giving off expressions, thereby showing the 'capacity to give impressions' (Goffman, 1959:14). Identity is acquired in its situatedness, in the context of putting on an appearance and acting for others in socially constructed ways. The situational self is thus actively imposing a form of control over the space of social context by 'establishing meaning in relation to...utterances and social interactions' (Hancock & Garner, 2009). The situational self takes action, not of itself or toward other persons, but to establish meanings and interpretations in the space between self and other. Access to this space is a precondition to social identity and enables active participation in constructions of the social world.

The space between people had been defined as experience by an early group of philosophers of social action influenced by Dewey and the pragmatists. Pragmatism thought of experience as the substance of social life which demands practical engagement with and accommodation of the lives of others. The consequences of experience position social actors to reflect and react (Dewey, 1916, 1938). Learning from experience is one moral guide to practice which ensures that social conduct is both normative and responsive (Cufari, 2011). Encountering a moving experience and moving through experience are also ways of representing the contingent and open-ended moment that gives experience the potential for 'a practical attitude', growth and new knowledge (Dewey, 1916: 225). While experience cannot be predetermined, it can be patterned through collective construction of social meanings mapped onto expected situations. The American sociological tradition that grew out of pragmatism through the social psychological thinking of James, Mead and Cooley, all connected with the University of Chicago, initially theorised the space as a communicative space created by language and its symbols. Symbolic interactionism was further developed by Blumer, Becker and Hughes, but then reworked by Goffman, who shifted the focus to the conditions of social interaction. Social interactionism defines this space as territories of a sort of distributed embodiment of self in the 'immediate presence' of others (Goffman, 1971b, 1977, 1983). In this view, the practices constituting interaction spaces are embodying practices that condition social impressions in particular situations. It is, however, not yet clear how 'experience' and 'interaction' are accomplished in, and enable, mobility.

Goffman's work suggests that every person is impelled to control the conduct of those around them. It depicts the way anyone in a particular category of individual tries to define situational environments through conduct as 'mobilising his activity so that it will convey an impression to others that it is in his [or her] interests to convey' (Goffman, 1959:16). Individuals do so with the knowledge that others know of, and participate in, this intent. Goffman theorises that it is through acts that a person influences the consensual definition of the situation (such as how a person enters the water at the beach). He refers to 'expressing', 'impressing', 'projecting' and 'piercing' others' definitions of the situation, for example. He depicts expressive idioms, repetitive gestures, aesthetic looks, obtrusive invasions and visual disattention to imputed stigma. Each involves related actions in response. Within a social occasion, for example, 'moving, mingling and the circulation of response' facilitate 'a contour of involvement' (Goffman, 1983:7). Each singular, repetitive or customised move is part of a negotiated meaning, itself less about the particular expression than about its appropriateness in the shape of the situation.

To Goffman (1983), identity is not a collection of attributes and abilities, but more the meeting of an expected standard of categoric conduct which shows that a person conforms to and belongs with those who would be expected to give off expressions of such behaviour, comprised of appearance, tone of voice and identifying features that can be observed or heard. Assessments of character are made, especially by those without access to credentials, like children for example, in the face-to-face presence of others to see 'how people act' (Davies, 2012:15). Without defining conduct specifically as physical action, Goffman observes that individuals 'glide' in and out of social performances through moving convincingly as would be expected in such social encounters. Even in virtual social life online, an avatar employed by a user must move convincingly and chat with other avatars in a timely manner, just as in face-to-face conversation, to give other users confidence in the shared virtual encounter (Bates, Istance, & Vickers, 2008). Goffman does suggest that corporeal conduct is how each extends the territorial preserve of the self into social space as part of interaction. Particular kinds of individual in public places are best seen as vehicular entities or, more problematically, 'ambulatory units' (Goffman, 1983:6), moving through space. It is conceivable that the social self is thus 'situated' in 'categoric' modes of movement.

Goffman's interactionist sociology incorporates corporeal movement in two ways. First, it is a precondition to social conduct: 'it is plain that whenever encounters...performances or celebrative, social occasions occur, so does ambulatory movement and thus the units in which this movement is regulated'

(Goffman, 1983:7). Ambulatory movement here is not emergent in the social construction of conduct, but rather an ‘inevitable’ aspect of human biology; ‘emotion, mood, cognition, bodily orientation, and muscular effort are intrinsically involved, introducing an inevitable psychobiological element’ (Goffman, 1983: 3). Second, it is generated in social processes by ‘response presence’ which can include ‘bodily co-presence’, also called ‘physical presence’ (Goffman, 1983: 4–6). In this account, movement is emergent in the social construction of conduct. A relational ‘sociality...is...immanent in the way a person’s movements – his or her step, gait, direction and pace – are continually responsive to the movements of others in the immediate environment’ (Ingold, 2011: 43).

Movement is generalised to making ‘contact’ via conversation, correspondence or consciousness (Goffman, 1983: 6–7). Contact enables the awareness of mutual perception that a joint set of actions and reactions is being coordinated. If the social structure of society is ‘a system of active forces’, in Durkheim’s view (Blacking, 1977: 8), then contact with others always provides the rhythm of structural enforcement. The momentum keeping social life running smoothly is ongoing, not about continuity of self, as in self-consciousness, but constituted by ongoing situational presence, which is other-consciousness. The rhythm of structural enforcement is ‘the underlife’ of the situational interaction (Goffman, 1961: 157). The emphasis on ongoing social process echoes the pragmatist definition of experience as habitual and changeable through action across time and space. Experience and interaction are accomplished through the consensual awareness that contact is being coordinated and an impression is being made. It is this awareness which Goffman calls presence, depicting ambulatory movement as the particular mode of making contact in the presence of others.<sup>2</sup>

#### ANTHROPOLOGICAL ROOTS

Not a phenomenologist, Goffman had been trained in social anthropology. Among the students of anthropologist W. Lloyd Warner, he was encouraged to use the British model of social anthropology and conduct fieldwork (Scott Jones & Watt, 2010: 21). He travelled to the University of Edinburgh’s Social Science Research Centre to pursue doctoral research. He adopted his characteristically ‘nomothetic’ approach to studying social life built on the ideas of social anthropologist Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown (Ingold, 2011). Radcliffe-Brown had lectured at the University of Chicago in the 1930s while Goffman was a masters student, although the two had not actually met<sup>3</sup>. Radcliffe-Brown was involved in developing Durkheimian structural functionalism in Britain at the time (Becker, 2003; Cahill, 2007; Ingold, 2011). Years later as a professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, Goffman would be located in a

department of anthropology. In his ethnographic research, Goffman immersed himself in the culture of 'communicative conduct' in the remote, northernmost Scottish islands observing what he came to view as the management and 'presentation of self'. While Goffman notes in all of his studies detailed social rules of contextual etiquette, adjustments and attention through inattention, which he thought gave encounters their scripted, collaborative character, he also allows for the communicative dynamics of meaning making between people. He argues that ritualised observances of apparently superficial gestures allow people to protect others, to extend respect and privacy to others and thereby to imbue everyday habits with moral obligation toward others. The cultural meanings, both negative and positive, built and reinforced in everyday actions and interactions were the foundation of the wider social environment of his 'interaction order'. Following Radcliffe-Brown, he thought that functional interaction structured the moral order of society's inequalities (see especially Goffman, 1961: 124; Williams, 1986).

Goffman thought about the body in interaction in a way that the first generation of Chicago School theorists had not (Hancock & Garner, 2009); the influence of the pragmatists had waned before the 'Second Chicago School' interactionists produced new empirical studies in the late 1950s (Shilling, 2008: 41). Goffman considers the body as a socially constructed phenomenon in the many little ways that individuals use their bodies to present particular, categorical appearances to others in a range of institutional settings. He treats the body as a visible surface with recognisable physical attributes; skin colour and height, for example, are items of 'expressive equipment'. He effectively disengages embodiment in interaction from the reflexivity and intentionality of the pragmatists. Not only was 'the body [for Goffman] a symbolic system in face-work and stigma...his analysis of total institutions also required assumptions about real bodies and social process' (Turner, 2003: 274) in coercive systems. Symbolic and material, 'the body' is structured by social relations.

Even with immersion in environmental settings and interactions, Goffman does not go so far as to say how environments are made in the comparative meanings of movements within hierarchies of socially acceptable movements. Cultural anthropologist Marcel Mauss' (1973) cumulative reflection on cultural differences in 'techniques' of certain activities, however, accomplishes this. Goffman is characterised as working in the same way as Mauss, who was a student of Durkheim (also his uncle), at the turn of the twentieth century. Both Goffman and Mauss sought to understand structures by observing the actions of individuals in social and cultural situations and both incorporated the body as a sort of technical 'instrument' used universally by humans (Ellen,

1977; Williams, 1986) and therefore generalisable in theory.

Mauss' observations of the ways that individuals move differently within cultures, such as at different age stages or at different points over time, and between cultures demonstrate that particular movements acquire and express localised, collective meaning. Such meanings are taught and learned as well as being communicative. They are able to bring definition to one situation and they may impute a status to another. Movement, to Mauss, conveys moral attributes of character, such as generosity, service or nurturance as well as freedom of choice or strength of will. He suggests that it also expresses capability, technique and skill. The most often-used examples of movement are gait and swimming. Cultural meanings of the stride, for example, could be observed within cultural locations; it was American film actresses' techniques of walking acquired by Parisian women (observed by Mauss) that were recognisable only when he saw them again in his New York hospital (Mauss, 1973). In fact, changes to techniques are today reported with great interest, such as when a New Zealand woman without legs learning to swim with a synthetic fishtail commented that it 'required her to swim in a different way' (NZPA, 2009, 25 February) rather than just *to swim*. Indeed, local media could not conceive her movements as swimming and reported seeing her 'frolic' in the harbour (Calman, 2009, 2 March). Amongst the techniques of body use, in a list of whole body movements, Mauss includes swimming with other movements he deems part of vocations, such as holding, jumping, climbing and descending. His observations prompt him to think that such an 'ensemble' of physical movements produces a recognisable technique (the foundation for a lifelong career); the ensemble produces a body in action rather than a body in movement. Movement creates, sustains and transforms meaningful cultural actions that constitute localised appearances.

American anthropological interest in the body emerged in publications of the 1970s with an initial focus by Douglas and others on the gestures, products, classifications and symbols of human bodies (see, for example, Blacking, 1977). As a discipline, anthropology had accepted that the body was a natural ground to culture's inscription (Lock, 1993), much as Goffman accepted the biological body as the precondition to social conduct. In contrast, an understanding of the social body that generates its own meanings shaping both society, culture and bodies, also emerged (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987). In his concise overview of anthropological ideas about the body, Csordas (1994: 4) summarises a part of the literature as investigating the body as an object: 'a premise of much of this literature is what we might call an "analytic body" that invites a discrete focus on perception, practice, parts, processes and products.' Movement was

still not recognised as a force connecting each of these modes of analytic being. One of the earliest theorists believed that such awareness could only make the (thinking) body a psychological object:

if, as Mauss has remarked, Man's first and most natural instrument is his body, his first and most natural technical object and at the same time technical means, it is also his first and most natural classifier and source of symbols, means of verbal and non-verbal communication through its effusions, movements and spatial orientation... The organised experiences associated with the perception and assignation of meaning to one's own body and the idea that a person's body is a psychological object that intrudes into social relationships and cannot be escaped, is an inevitable accompaniment of awareness. (Ellen, 1977:356)

Despite echoes of Goffman, this analysis takes for granted that the communicative body expresses meaning through movement and instead focuses on meanings of morphology, structures of body parts and the symbolism of the labels and relationships for each.

Cultural anthropologists also interested in movement in cultural forms have studied genres of activity. Richly developed cultural ensembles are likely to be more constrained than less, and thus patterned while still recognisable across culture. Ritualised dance movements, for example, do not always adapt to changes within a culture and therefore retain a communicative structure. However, one contemporary analyst argues that searching for representation of a universal (dancing) body in a set of cultural movements is futile and it would be better to undertake multicultural analyses of bodies in action to build a 'systematic description of human movement' (Lewis, 1995: 221). The Western bias of many ethnographic depictions of dance as a genre exclude those that do not fit that representation. The performance of Brazilian *capoiera*, for example, involves aggression, force and contact elicited from martial arts and sport, while also incorporating song, play and trickery. Rather than contributing to the ethnology of dance, such cultural activity invites detailed cross-cultural comparison of bodily movements, argues Lewis (1995). Instead of building on the type of work suggested by Mauss, Lewis turns to non-continental phenomenology to search for modes of movement.

In doing so, Lewis takes up the work of another of the Chicago School theorists, Charles Peirce. While Peirce was concerned with meaning symbolised in language similar to Mead and the others, he also theorised meaning in experi-

ence, thus studied bodily action. Lewis uses Peircean phenomenology<sup>4</sup> to study intention and motion in the practitioners of *capoeira*, who belong to a world of ‘dancers, athletes and actors’, altogether ‘body practitioners’ (Lewis, 1995: 229). This group uses both instrumental movement and creative movement, thus mobilising a space between each to fuse both modes of movement. Lewis’ anthropological reflections call for a blurring of athletic and aesthetic ‘movement systems’ and, in each, to see instrumental movement directed not outward, but toward the body itself. Going further, Lewis (1995: 234) suggests that:

if this is accepted, it follows that both dancers and athletes are likely to experience kinds of diffuse, intermediate awareness, similar to that of players in the *capoeira* world, but rare for people who ordinarily have a much more indirect or tacit relation to embodiment.

While such instrumental actions could be analysed as ensembles of techniques, which Lewis warns risks the cultural bias and epistemological limitation of labelling a genre, in practice they incorporate improvisation and unexpected, even disorderly, movements, demanding a different analysis. The interaction situation involves bodily action towards another player’s movement, as well as towards the performer’s own body, while performers analyse the effects of the quality of movement and response. This evokes a particular mode of embodiment, an experience of the body in action that blends directed moves and the embodiment of movement. Experiential awareness of how the performance is progressing and the quality of play in the *capoeira* space is essential to the physical interaction, enabling an intermediate mode of movement that is always experiencing *and* acting. It is a mediated, responsive and mutual mode of movement.

Cultural anthropologists therefore extend the examination of everyday spaces of action and interaction to the cultural spaces of action and interaction. In drawing upon the earliest Chicago School theorist, Lewis’ work illustrates the interconnectedness of strands of sociological and anthropological thought. Importantly, it develops a hidden theoretical assumption underpinning Goffman’s interactionist sociology. The vehicular self is only able to create awareness of presence in others (making an impression, making contact) by experiencing awareness as well; that is, acting in such a mediated mode of movement. Social interaction can take place only when social action disembodies the phenomenal, experiencing self among others to protect the social order.

## SOCIAL ACTION AND SENSORY AFFECT

In fact, the first generation of Chicago School theorists had been just as concerned as the later symbolic interactionists with the situatedness of experience, but had concentrated on the environments of experience. Such environments involved people in groups, particularly in the city, where the urbanisation of America could be observed in the social life of Chicago itself (Connell, 1997). The Chicago School produced 'its own ethnographic traditions' (Clifford, 1997b: 61). However, the psychologists and philosophers who founded the School of Sociology, giving interactionist sociology its label of 'sociological social psychology', had also been occupied over a forty year period<sup>5</sup> with the effects of the social environment on the way that individuals embody action. By defining the environment as the social group and material structures in any setting, as well as the abilities of individuals to relate to the environment around them and act on it and in it, the pragmatists had developed a sociology of reciprocal social action.

Mead's (1934) concepts of 'taking the role of the other' and relating to 'the generalised other' in order to belong in any situation, predate Goffman's depiction of the scripted social setting. Each social actor had to occupy the external view of their experience. Dewey's (1938) concepts of an organic, sensing, bodily experience prior to reflection and direct contact with the empirical world also presage Goffman's ideas of bodily co-presence and making contact. Each social actor had to experience the internal view of their own bodily environment. Combined, the contribution of pragmatism is that 'it is the interaction between, as well as the existence of, the external and internal environment that is vital to [an] understanding of embodied action' (Shilling, 2008: 11). The sociology of embodied action's implicit attention to the body was used by the pragmatists to locate the intentionality of action and the potential in any situation for experience to make a 'positive' difference. Dewey and James both wrote of the senses as providing the means to gain information from the external environment and the means for the internal environment to reach beyond the bodily surface for connection with others (Shilling, 2008).

The body of sociology is, then, a surface, a symbol, a practical experience and an embodied relation, each organised through collective others to enforce social order with constraints on social expression. The sociology of the body as a more contemporary project has stretched across both structural analyses of society's treatment of bodies in the relations of production and reproduction (eg., Shilling, 1993; Turner, 1996) and phenomenological analyses of the lived experience of internalised structural forces and relations (eg., Crossley, 2004,

2006; Sobchack, 2010). At times arguments have been made for intercorporeality, that is, the way bodies situate each other in interaction (Crossley, 1995). At issue is the restraint and enablement of the embodied (that is, social) subject (Shilling, 2008). However, social action with its goal orientation is restrained as well by particular non-goal-oriented concerns arising with the presence of others. In order to explore this, interest in the effects of sensation, emotion and affect in mediating interaction spaces has engaged theorists.<sup>6</sup>

It is argued that the ability to sense human 'being,' through the bodies of others and embodiment of self, establishes the conditions for practical and creative action, reflective and critical cognition and evaluative and judgmental interpretations and meanings (Vannini & Waskul, 2006). The body in action is the body that senses the instrumentality of habit and senses the relevance of changing habits to replace old ways of 'being' with new ways of 'becoming' (Vannini & Waskul, 2006:190). Perceived bodily sensations can be thought to defy definition and thus shut down bodily action, yet may be shifted with alternative modes of movement that open the body (Bissell, 2009). This active, 'body sense' also shapes the perceived nature of the social and physical environment, the social setting, by incorporating the potential for possible action. Perceived objects can be thought to present themselves, invite sitting, eating or sleeping, offer their use and provide comfort (Bissell, 2008). Perceived environments can be thought to enfold and embody past knowledge, activities, impacts and obliterations (Parr, 2010). Importantly, 'the sensory world thus involves constant reference to our possibilities of active response' (Leder, 1990:18).

Not only does the sensory world arouse feelings about particular social and physical environments, but it becomes a framework for feelings associated with expectations, rituals and norms in a cultural environment. The feelings associated with motion, for example, influence the vocational socialisation of dancers (Potter, 2008). While Goffman's interaction order did emphasise the significance of ritual, senses and motion generated in ritual performances were not emphasised. Here the moving body itself provides a mode of encounter that shapes the social and cultural setting. Turning to more contemporary anthropological interest in the cultural 'sensorium', or available pattern of lived, sensory experience, Potter (2008) critiques the 'classical' understandings of the 'dominant five' senses of taste, touch, hearing, vision and smell, and points to ethnographies which have detailed the development of different sensory modes of perception, such as feeling pain. Her own autoethnography examines the experience of professional dance training to highlight the 'dynamic sense of constantly shifting one's body in space and time in order to achieve a desired

end' (Potter, 2008: 449). With thick description, she explores the contexts and related sensory modes elaborated within the kinaesthetic 'ability to feel motion' (Potter, 2008: 449).

One of the most productive research moments for Potter was doing improvisation involving bodily contact; it allowed her to experience another's sense of movement, full of the potentialities of movement and fully responsive to the moves of the partnered dancer, herself. Such anthropological knowledge of the ways bodies attend to movements is rare if the ethnographer relies on vision to observe the field (Potter, 2008). Cultural anthropologists who have taken up 'the "kinesthetic trajectory" in ethnographic dance studies' (Potter, 2008: 449) would therefore argue that it is not the embodiment of action that tells us about movement, but the embodiment of motion and motility, its possibilities. Such ethnography illustrates the premise of the pragmatists that 'movement does not just enable or constrain, but can alter the capacities and identities of individuals as well as the environment they inhabit' (Shilling, 2008: 86).

#### MOBILITIES

The recent 'mobilities turn' (Sheller & Urry, 2006) in the social sciences also argues that social life is based on continuous movement and predicated on the conditions that facilitate diverse modes of movement, focusing on diverse subjects, objects and commodities (Urry, 2000a). Mobility is defined as the physical movement of or transportation of people, objects and ideas, unruly movement(s) of a mob or crowd, geographical travel over territory and social movement across social levels (Urry, 2007). 'Physical movement' has been expanded into 'mobilities' to suggest co-ordinated 'mobility systems' constituted by corporeal, material, imaginative, communicative and virtual human travel as well as commodity travel (Elliott & Urry, 2010: 15–16). Mobile effects are also thought to adhere around the increasing embeddedness of new technologies in social life, such that social interaction is hybridised to include relations with objects and technologies (Elliott & Urry, 2010; Urry, 2000a). The mobilities paradigm elaborates the environments of social action to make claims about and critiques of mobile cultures and mobile histories (Salazar, 2010).

Extensive research into myriad global systems of interconnected mobile effects allows attention to the social life produced in mobilities and theorists draw on social theory to analyse the mobility of social relations and identities. How embodiment is accomplished in mobilities has spawned new thinking:

bodies perform themselves in between direct sensation of the 'other'

and various 'sensescapes'...bodies navigate backwards and forwards between directly sensing the external world as they move bodily in and through it and experiencing discursively mediated sensescapes that signify social taste and distinction, ideology and meaning. The body especially senses as it *moves*. (Elliott & Urry, 2010:16; emphasis in original)

Sensing movement in objects and technologies engages with the 'affordances' of the environment, that is, the capacity of the environmental conditions of possibility 'enabling and presupposing movement' (Elliott & Urry, 2010:14; see Hannam, *et al.*, 2006, for a discussion of affordances).

And yet such new thinking draws on Goffman's social order, that itself disregards the movements of mobile bodies. Aimed at introducing a sociological analysis of mobilities to the narrow economic rationales of transport researchers, for example, Urry (2003b) details the centrality of travel to face-to-face interaction in an increasingly dispersed social life, proposing the importance of even 'intermittent co-presence' to accomplish work and social activities. Rather than ubiquitous mobile communication becoming a substitute for going places, it comprises the actual basis for extensive movement and travel, the purpose of which is to ensure that a 'meeting' will take place. The mobilities approach allows the macro analysis of the massive increase in travel and transport-related activities as indications that life is being lived 'at a distance' from other social group members to intersect with a consideration of the micro conditions of more instantaneous interactions between agents, ideas, objects and data. The embodiment of interaction, to Urry (2003b:165), mediates the space between the co-present in any gathering by 'spacing', 'pacing' and sensing of 'mutual attentiveness'. Thus interactionist sociology produced the conditions for closer examination of the rise in lived, simulated and objectified mobilities effects. Such effects transform the traditional sociological objects, society, religion, work, family, peer groups and the media, into dispersed, transnational and 'networked sociality' to the extent that Urry (2000a, 2000b) argues for a disciplinary shift to a 'sociology beyond societies'. When these 'networks come together in specific occasioned encounters as a consequence of diverse and complex forms of travel...co-presence is the key to analysing such encounters' (Urry, 2003b:170). The mobilities paradigm exposes the social construction of mobility as a societal and collective form of social regulation by detailing interactive forces, such as spacing, pacing, attending and refracting, forces which speed or slow access to the interactive space.

## ACCESS TO MOBILITY

While interaction constitutes the situational space between individuals, *access* to such space is also ‘an interactional phenomenon’ (Williams, 1986: 360). In the interactionist view, power is exercised in the social relations of the interaction and particularly in the mobilisation of resources that define the conditions of the encounters of kinds of individual. ‘Normals’, to use Goffman’s term, use access and information, in particular, as the ‘key resources of middle-class society’ (Williams, 1986: 360). The ability to use their social resources to define the situation mobilises their influence over others, eliciting the conformity and deference of others. Access is a political resource that structures ‘the unequal distribution of opportunities for face-maintenance’, as well as for exerting influence and ‘pressures towards conformity’ (Williams, 1986: 360). This argument is reprised within the mobilities paradigm: ‘it is also essential that such opportunities are distributed fairly within current societies but also between current and future generations’ (Urry, 2003b: 172). Equality of access to mobility will enable inclusion and participation and reduce social exclusion (Cass *et al.*, 2005).

However, physical mobility is hierarchically structured to normalise ways of travelling physically, autonomously, efficiently and in a self-propelled vehicular way, denying its complex<sup>7</sup> nature. For example, travel in the constitutive ‘third spaces’ between offices or homes, such as ‘money-spaces’, ‘airspace’ or transport hubs is considered more absolutely necessary for the connections and meetings of social life than ‘marginal’ travel by bicycle or foot (Urry, 2003b: 172; fn 3). ‘Making trips’ from one destination to another by mobility taxi, for example, are mere simulations of mobility compared to spending the day out and about in town (Imrie, 2000: 1647). Additionally, corporeal mobility is hierarchically classified. The diagnosis of motor impairment signals that embodied movement is subject to the expectations of spacing and pacing that discredit particular modes of movement that disrupt the conversational flow or presentation of self. For example, vision-impaired people listen for space and hear it before it becomes accessible (Imrie, 2000: 1649). They feel the tactile paving before discerning a road crossing or a bicycle lane on the roadside. Such sensory modes of awareness elaborate accessibility to motion itself. The phenomenology of mobility, studied from within diverse modes of mobility, is clearly wide in scope.

‘Following paralysis, there is a radical break in how paraplegics experience their bodies...and in the ways in which their bodies are interpreted socially, assigned meanings and allocated space’, observes Sullivan (2005: 27), highlight-

ing ‘the politics of movement.’<sup>8</sup> Access to motion is not only anticipated in embodied mobilities, but also allocated. Thus access is not a neutral activity, but a strategy of governance, a resource allocated according to moral claims on need, such as ‘health need’ (Scheer, Kroll, Neri, & Beatty, 2003), on the basis of which people gain or lose social assistance. Mobilities researchers in the public transportation sector have begun to consider the wider implications of what could be called a mobility need, defining such a need as ‘the ability to negotiate space and time so as to accomplish practices and maintain relations that people take to be necessary for normal social participation’ (Cass *et al.*, 2005: 543). Access is not to services, but to ‘the components of social life’, that is, ‘the time and space patterns of people’s lives and what these mean for their membership or non-membership of certain categories’ (Cass *et al.*, 2005: 543). Within such a conception, to be motor impaired may mean neither mobility impairment nor membership in a categorical group stigmatised as ‘disabled’. Hence the need for improved accessibility for people with motor impairment does not automatically require public transport, but instead is related to a re-conceptualised ‘multi-dimensional nature of “access”’ (Cass *et al.*, 2005: 549). Going further, the challenge which exposes the instability of accessible transportation as the solution to inequality of access and exclusion is the context of bodily immobility.

#### IM/MOBILITY

With the emphasis on the vehicular capacity of ambulatory bodies in the interaction order to hide any visible sign that there is any alternate mode of sensory movement, the physically immobile are not considered to be effective carriers of symbolic meanings; normative corporeality is both medium and message in the context of ‘life on the move’ (Imrie, 2000). The wheelchair user does not always fall into this category, for once they become ‘enwheeled’ as an experience of re-embodiment (Papadimitriou, 2008), the presence of the wheelchair becomes part of the territoriality of the social self. However, the awareness of embodiment’s own rhythms and situatedness remains the basis on which mobility is *lived* as reciprocal social action.

Anthropologist Robert Murphy’s autoethnographic experiences led to field research into paralysis and the lived experience of quadriplegia. His account details the growth of a spinal tumor from the early 1970s that slowly blocked his capacity to stand and walk. Through gradual paralysis over a period of 14 years, all the while teaching and writing at Columbia University, he experienced the adjustment to not ‘knowing’ his feet, then becoming a wheelchair user and then becoming a non-driver, which he describes as a reluctant ‘retreat

from mobility' (Murphy, 1990/1987: 76). He feels quadriplegia stifling his body's

'silent language' in the expression of emotions or concepts too illusive for ordinary speech, for the delicate feedback loops between thought and movement have been broken. Proximity, gesture and body-set have been muted and the body's ability to articulate thought has been stilled. (Murphy, 1990/1987: 101)

While he knows that he is 'drifting toward motionless inertia' (Murphy, 1990/1987: 34), he becomes immobile in the interaction space: 'my identity had lost its stable moorings' (Murphy, 1990/1987: 105).

Murphy, however, reflects on his disabled body's ability to articulate its own mobility by considering a distinction between the person whose capacity to move is stilled and the person whose voluntary and autonomous movements persist but whose embodied capacity to 'know' their body as a mooring is gone. They have lost the sensory mode of proprioception and do not experience the moving body as their own (Sacks, 1987). That person loses access to their bodily memory, history and interactive response-presence. Murphy acknowledges to himself: 'I no longer know where my feet are, and without the low level pain I still feel, I would hardly know I had legs' (Murphy, 1990/1987: 100). However, he mobilises his consciousness of self to 'struggle for life,' for the recognition of life in the 'quality of movement' created by the motionless body that nevertheless moors his own history (Murphy, 1990/1987: 82; see also 222).

Belgian man, Rom Houbens, suffering a misdiagnosed Locked-in Syndrome, was also thought to be immobile, until he was recognised as being fully conscious with the miniscule movement of only one toe and then a finger (Cox, 2009, November 24). His journey 'back' from years of motionless inertia has been treated with suspicion for his awareness within a motionless body confirms a liminal state of identity (Murphy, 1990/1987; Mwaria, 1990) about which hegemonic explanations of independent movement know very little. Despite this, a twitch of a cheek muscle can communicate thinking on a theory of time and the physics of the cosmos, in the case of Stephen Hawking, living with motor neurone disease and now 70. A glance up or down can communicate the desire for sexual intimacy, in the case of Locked-in Syndrome sufferer, Glenda Hickey, whose unexpected pregnancy led to the birth of her third baby while paralysed yet fully conscious, feeling and sensing (Berczuk, 2007, 31 January). Each of these people is mobile; they are co-present with others in responsive interaction even without utterance. Their presence has enriched the social order.

Embodiment itself is a spatial relation in which individuals become 'a stance-taking entity', taking up and shifting positions according to the structures and presence of others in the interactive spaces (Goffman, 1961: 280). Where individuals resist the status attributed to them, they 'resist the pull' of the social situation. The motionless body has been categorised as liminal because it is immobile and therefore dependent on the 'petty contingencies' (Goffman, 1961: 7) of the access to interaction space afforded by mobile others. These brief examples support Salazar's (2011: 594) assertion that 'more fine-grained ethnographic research is needed to offer fresh perspectives on the relationality between mobility and immobility and to complicate the dominant assumptions about who is mobile and who is kept in place and why'. Further, differently mobile researchers themselves should be leading such research. For it is probable that Goffman's own role as an 'independently mobile' sociologist travelling to his take up residence in his various ethnographic 'fields', whether the Shetland Islands or Washington, DC, meant that he took the mobility of individuals in the interaction order for granted (see Clifford, 1997a, for how fieldwork could better be described as 'travel encounters').

#### CONCLUSION

'Movement makes connections' (Elliott & Urry, 2010: 9, 45) with others, with social technologies and cultural objects. An interactionist perspective shows that movement is about making complexes of newly accessible interactions and experiential spaces. Movement also makes space (Clifford, 1997b). Access to the social spaces that allow participation and collaboration in 'the components of social life' (Cass *et al.*, 2005: 539; Urry, 2007: 39) is always an interdependent relation, as Goffman's description of a generalised relational order shows. Social encounters involve the circulation of responses in moving and mingling, pacing and spacing, attending and disattending, each negotiated with others and institutions. Social interactionism overlooks the way movement informs the expression of identity in order to represent the social body's capacity to give off expressions, that is, its symbolic presentation of self in ambulation and comportment. Such representations of motility shift the locus of bodily movement from the individual to the situated self, such that they disembody the mobile self. Social interaction is itself dependent on co-presence, through which an impression can be interrupted and the self embodied and immobilised. For bodily presence must always be of one's own kinaesthetic capabilities, however anomalous, dependent or whimsical, to become mobility. When norms of mobility are challenged through different modes of corporeal, sensory and social action, definitions of im/mobility and dis/ability shift for able-bodied mobilities as well.

In this paper, I have traced the roots of social interactionism that combine anthropological fieldwork and structuralist sociology as well as the phenomenological pragmatism of the Chicago School. In one, interaction is the principle of social identity and in the other experience defines the mutual formation of identity. Goffman's depiction of the social construction of categoric selves in the presence of others as a spatial activity is a significant contribution to micro-relational analyses of social life – and of life made in mobilities. Social encounters comprise expected, rhythmic patterns, but, as he observed, always within a particular scale or 'contour of involvement' that shapes the collaborative nature of each 'meeting.' It is the study of social interaction for its mobilising practices that will enable new thinking about what occurs in such meetings.

For mobilities researchers, the mobile cultures and practices of those who share their experiences are as important as those travelling to the 'field' to explore diverse cultures. And the mobilities of the motionless, and all the ways that they make contact and sustain situational interaction, through consciousness, communication and collaborative gestures, must become part of what is known about increasingly visible, unexpectedly mobile lives in many communities. Interactionist sociology produced the conditions for closer examination of the rise in lived, simulated and globalised mobilities effects, particularly as lived by those with independent physical mobility. The mobilities paradigm in turn exposes the social construction of mobility as a societal and collective form of social regulation by detailing reciprocal social forces that are modes of movement which speed or slow access to the interaction space. By reviewing the sociological and anthropological roots of thinking about the centrality of action to maintaining orderly contact, the forces immobilising motionless, but not immobile, bodies can also be understood.

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NOTES

- 1 Despite the well-established literature on human movement and embodiment in geography, including Tuan (1977), Cresswell (2006, 2011) and Butler and Parr (1999), I will be focusing on selected sociology and anthropology accounts and the connections between them.
- 2 Such movement is best defined by phenomenologists as a social perception that constitutes embodied practices and embodying practice (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Others looking at the experience of movement as perception include Tuan (1977), Csordas (1994) and Ingold (2011).
- 3 As indicated in the dedication of *Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order* (Goffman, 1971a).
- 4 See Csordas (1994) for the role of semiotics and phenomenology in anthropology.
- 5 The forty year span includes Dewey's later career at Columbia University.
- 6 An engagement with affect in cultural geography comes from the work of Thrift (Bissell, 2009). The role of emotion in an anthropology of the body, and its ability to mediate the 'three bodies' of the individual, social symbol and governance system, is recognised by Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987).
- 7 Complexity is specifically defined in the mobility paradigm as patterned, but unpredictable, consequences and effects of social relations, unintended, non-linear, and, significantly, detached from their place and time of origin, which makes complex systems impossible to characterise as ordered and regulatory (Urry, 2000a: 195–199; 2003a).
- 8 Sullivan (2005) uses a Foucauldian analysis of disciplinary power producing the subject of movement; for a discourse analysis of movement see also Frello (2008).

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