

# Ethnography in Public Space: Competence, Communication and the Research Process

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To behave as a 'speaker' or as a 'hearer' when the other is not observably available is to subject oneself to a review of one's competence and 'normality'. Speakers without hearers can be seen to be 'talking to themselves'. (Schegloff 1986, pp. 346-80)

In conversations it is usually the something called 'content of talk' that is treated in this way, not the manner of talk, and certainly not the bodily stagings and ecological arrangements within which the talk is carried on. However, it is not as if these other aspects of the situation play no role in the structuring of the interaction. Far from it. Their role is crucial to the whole way in which the event is organised. (Kendon 1988, pp. 14-40)

The purpose of this discussion is to consider specific analytical approaches to the study of how gaze, bodily, and spatial orientation is implicated in the organisation of social interaction. The paper discusses some of the findings from a three-month period of ethnographic research investigating the use of mobile phones (and other mobile devices) on train carriages.<sup>1</sup> The purpose behind the research was to attain a sense of the level of 'social acceptability' of mobile phone use within these settings. It is proposed that 'assessing the level of social acceptability' of mobile phone use in public can be informed by analysing patterns of social interaction with these

devices in public places. These patterns of social interaction depend on a mutual intelligibility that is produced, accomplished and displayed between participants within the setting. It is submitted that these factors are central to understanding how the 'rules' of mobile phone use are constituted as an ongoing practical concern. Moreover, the discussion will aim to highlight these non-verbal aspects of interaction as "invariantly relevant features of interactional settings" (Sudnow 1972, p. 263) where mobile phones are in use.

The discussion will begin by detailing the methodology involved in the research. It will then discuss the issue of the 'rules' of mobile phone use as an unwritten feature of patterns of usability. Following on from this the discussion will outline an analysis of the findings of phone use as it relates to non-verbal interaction. This will be directed toward some preliminary conclusions concerning the mutual intelligibility that is produced, accomplished and displayed through unfolding sequences of interaction. The final part of the paper will consider some of the ethnomethodologically informed concerns of the practical accomplishment of applied sociological research of this kind.

## Methodology

The research is based primarily on observational work with the aim of maintaining a minimalist approach to the ethnographic method. An ethnomethodological perspective informs the analytical orientation. As a

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<sup>1</sup> The findings are based on 32 hours of travelling time on trains. Overall 109 instances of phone use were observed. From this total there were 45 observed instances of calls initiated on the carriage and 37 instances of calls received.

consequence this paper will discuss how ordinary members of society “produce and manage settings of organised everyday affairs” (Garfinkel 1967, p. 1) amid mobile phone use within the spatial setting of the train carriage. In other words it will focus on the common sense reasoning procedures available to members to render behaviour with mobile phones within these settings intelligible and accountable.

### **The Rules of Mobile Phone Use**

To date it is not yet clear what constitutes the rules of appropriate use of mobile phones in particular settings. Apart from some settings where people are requested to switch their phones off, there are no explicit rules defining appropriate use.<sup>2</sup> These concerns withstanding, the focus of this discussion is on the situated accomplishment of rules as integral to the setting or context in which the action occurs. In this respect, determining a rule and the action that falls under it, is (in the classic ethnomethodological sense) a matter that has to be decided, judged and determined on occasions of its application.

The ambiguity surrounding the rules of mobile phone use on train carriages is particularly pertinent. Within this setting a considerable amount of phone use takes place on a daily basis. Moreover, at particular times of the day people are situated within close proximity of one another. Normally, people disattend the activities of others as they are preoccupied with their own concerns on which they focus their attention. Nevertheless, it is not long before the ethnographer begins to appreciate that

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<sup>2</sup> With some of the main UK train operators one can now book ‘quiet’ carriages where mobile phone use is prohibited.

this is achieved through an immense amount of “seen but unnoticed” non-vocal activity that is engaged in as a matter of routine. The discussion will focus on three aspects of this non-vocal activity i.e. gaze, bodily orientation and spatial orientation and it will consider their relationship to mobile phone use within these settings.

### **The Naturalistic Study of Non-vocal Action/Interaction: Gaze as a Particular Type of Social Interaction**

It was Simmel who argued that our involvement in social interaction is dependent on the sensory effect that we have on one another.<sup>3</sup> Of the sensory channels that we as humans possess the eye, he argues, is perhaps the most significant. The reason for this, according to Simmel, is that the look from one eye to another is “the most direct and purest interaction that exists.” (Frisby and Featherstone, 1997, p. 111). As early as 1910 Simmel made an observation that can still be found as the analytical baseline of much of the contemporary work into the study of gaze in interaction. Namely, that the eyes serve as information channels where in the act of looking one reveals information to and receives information about the other.

The look into the eyes of the other person not only helps me to know him or her, but also him or her to know me: along the line which connects both sets of eyes, one’s own personality, mood and impulse is carried to the other. (ibid, 1997: 112)

Elaborating on Simmel’s sociological investigation of the senses and space,

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<sup>3</sup> See David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (1997), (ed.), *Simmel on Culture*, Part III, Sage, London.

Goffman (1961) examines how (for example through eye contact) one manages interaction with others. He also notes how the level of eye contact is variable depending on the setting or the occasion. Utilising this approach, the research setting of the train carriage can be described as what Goffman (1961), in his discussion of social gatherings, refers to as an unfocussed occasion. For Goffman, unfocussed occasions are where people gather together in a setting where a state of joint attention or focus is avoided as people pursue their own activities. In other words, the occasion itself points to the kind of interaction deemed appropriate, in this case unfocussed. In relation to this Goffman refers to what he calls 'civil inattention', i.e. the practice of averting the gaze from others present so as not to draw particular attention to oneself. He identifies this as one of the rules that govern our behaviour in public places in the on going concern with the "observance of social propriety" (Burns 1992). In public settings, Goffman argues, a state of mutual gaze is avoided.

By contrast, however, Goffman also observes what he refers to as focussed interaction or focussed occasions. These are evidenced, he argues, when participants intentionally organise themselves so as to display attention to one another, e.g. a conversation with another, or a meeting. For Goffman, establishing mutual gaze is one of the principal ways with which to initiate focussed interaction or display interactional availability. Thus, it is not just the outcome of interaction that is of interest to Goffman but how it gets done, how it is organised, how it is possible at all.

### **Gaze and Co-Present Others**

Eye contact was regularly initiated

throughout the fieldwork the moment a mobile phone came into use. The ringing of a phone would often times generate a response from others, if only a glance, but afterwards the conversation is disattended to much like a face to face conversation between two fellow passengers. Nevertheless, if a Goffmanesque description is adopted phone use can be seen to initiate a shift from the unfocussed occasion to the focussed occasion of interaction.<sup>4</sup> When somebody makes or receives a call, those co-present immediately become party to the behaviour and conversation that follows. This shift from an unfocussed occasion to a focussed one also marks a shift in the social rules that come into play. How those rules are constituted is dependent on the situated responses made by mobile users and others co-present.

There were instances, however, where the initiated glance toward the ringing phone would turn to a gaze or a stare. Throughout the fieldwork a number of instances were observed where the ringing of the phone continued for a long period. This would generate two responses. Either those co-present would stare in the direction of the ringing, or they would check to see if it was their phone that they had left unattended. Whichever way, those co-present would respond. Their response is suggestive of a normal expectation or shared common understanding with regard to the ringing of the phone when others are in close proximity.

Schegloff has noted that the ringing of the phone can be seen as the summons part of a summons answer sequence (Schegloff, 1979). In this way adjacently paired utterances act as an interactional form of social control

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<sup>4</sup> I am very grateful to Rod Watson for drawing my attention to this.

and serve to solicit an expected response from another. On this view, it is suggested that the unanswered mobile phone is, by analogy, the summons part of a summons-answer sequence. That is to say, the ringing phone has sequential implications for the receiver to perform a next action, i.e. answer. The absence of that next action is an infraction of the “conditional relevance” of the initial summons through the ringing phone.

A mobile phone that goes unanswered in the train carriage is treated as what conversation analysts have referred to as noticeable absence. Throughout the fieldwork a number of instances were observed where the ringing of the phone continued for a long period. This would generate two responses. Either those co-present would stare in the direction of the ringing, or they would check to see if it was their phone that they had left unattended. Whichever way, those co-present would respond. Their response is suggestive of a normal expectation or shared common understanding with regard to the ringing of the phone when others are in close proximity.

The consequences of this absence are evidenced by the bodily orientation and the directions of gaze of others co-present. Further to this, Schegloff has observed that the ringing of the telephone is a “socially and interactionally shaped product” (1986, p. 118). He suggests that multiple rings are a source of inferential topicalisation as are very few rings. More importantly, he argues, members orient to a “proper number of rings – not too few, not too many” (1986: 120). Thus when co-present others stared in the direction of the unanswered phone, they can be seen to be orienting to the “proper number of rings – not too few, not too many”.

However, treating this finding as an orientation to a “proper number of

rings” only carries so much interpretational weight. The mobile phone is a device that can be switched on or off. The staring of others in the direction of the unanswered phone can also be seen as display of unease with the fact that someone has not shown the courtesy of switching their phone off in public where others are in close proximity. In this way mobile phone use is re-constituted from an absence of a “conditional relevance” to a matter of social etiquette. Ultimately, however, the unanswered phone may generate no response whatsoever.

### **Gaze and Mobile Phone Use**

Nevertheless, all of the instances observed throughout the research evidenced use of the eyes to accomplish phone use where others were in close proximity. Typically phone users would avert their eyes from the immediate surrounding environment to a neutral space or display a “middle distance orientation” (Heath, 1986, p. 110). Non users on the other hand would typically display the ‘civil inattention’ that Goffman describes, that is of course until a phone remained unanswered. The following instance has been selected for discussion primarily because it typifies the kind of behaviour phone users would engage in whilst on the phone.

On one occasion a woman boarded a train carriage that was almost full, whilst talking on the phone. She made no eye contact with others whilst boarding and once she sat down she directed her eyes downward towards the floor. The seat she took was the only one available, it was an aisle seat. Shortly afterwards her call finished, she raised her head and looked straight ahead. She then looked down and began to dial with the phone in her right hand. As soon as she lifted the

phone to her ear she assumed a downward directional gaze veering slightly toward the right into the aisle. Of particular interest is that whilst boarding the train she was holding the phone to her right ear. She was now holding the phone in her left hand up to her left ear. To her left side at the window seat was another passenger. As a typical example of phone use within close spatial proximity of others it is worth examining in closer detail.

As mentioned earlier, Goffman has noted how eye contact or the establishment of mutual gaze is one of the ways in which one can initiate openness to another's communication. For the woman in the example, initiating communication with another is not an option because she is on the phone. Nevertheless by averting her gaze, the woman in the example can, it could be argued, be seen to display this fact to others. Kendon (1967) in his pioneering study of gaze in social interaction identifies two functional aspects of gaze. Firstly, he suggests, gaze serves as a monitoring function where parties in interaction through gaze can monitor one another's behaviour. Indeed by looking or not looking one can control the degree of monitoring. Secondly, gaze serves a regulatory function enabling persons in interaction to regulate each other's behaviour. Analysis of gaze in interaction must, he argues, identify the distinction between these two functions when gaze is analysed in social interaction.

On this account the woman in the example (by averting her eyes) can be seen to regulate her openness to interaction with others. In this instance, it could be argued, the use of gaze acts as a control or check mechanism to forestall any potential interaction with others whilst engaging with phone use. In addition to the direction of gaze, her bodily orientation can be seen to mark

an interactional boundary between herself and the nearest person.

In relation to the actual activity of managing co-presence whilst interacting with another on the phone Goodwin (1981) provides a useful analytical point of departure. He examines how gaze is implicated to display speaker and hearer status in a conversation. He proposes a gaze-related rule that "A speaker should obtain the gaze of his recipient during the course of a turn at talk" (ibid. 57). This emerges from his investigations where, he suggests, there appears to be a preference for securing the recipients gaze, as against not securing it when speech exchange occurs. More importantly, Goodwin argues, this preference is consequential for the talk that is subsequently produced. His concern is with how gaze and bodily gesture enable participants to make visible the relevant statuses of speaker and hearer. Similarly to Goffman, Goodwin's concern is with the systematic procedures available to participants to order their interaction.

Returning to the example, the woman can be seen to determine the relevant status of the hearer within the carriage. She does this by averting her eyes away from those co-present to display the fact that the relevant hearer is not within the immediate spatial surrounds. Through her gaze direction she can be seen to display a distinction between those physically present and those relevantly present (Goodwin 1981).

### **Bodily and Spatial Orientation**

This next instance exemplified an ongoing concern for phone users i.e. the co ordination of phone use, bodily movement and eye contact, particularly when engaged in conversation with co-present others. A group of three men were observed reading their papers and

talking among themselves. One man sat in the middle seat opposite the other two who sat at a window seat and an aisle seat respectively. The man opposite started to make a call. As he did this the other two men gradually turned toward each other to continue the conversation. The man on the phone turned away and directed his gaze out of the window. When he finished the call he turned his head toward the other two (still engaged in conversation) and resumed eye contact. Then in turn the other two slowly started to turn toward the third man and resume eye contact with him as they continued their conversation. Towards the end of the journey the man on the aisle seat made a call. As he held the phone to his head, he looked toward the inside window (right side). The man on his right side asked him a question. He responded but does not make eye contact. He then turned his head and upper body and directed his gaze away from the other two toward the window on the other side.

In this example there are many non-vocal activities (gaze, head and upper body movement) designed to account for the use of the phone. In particular, the men in the example display an awareness of bodily and spatial orientation within the setting of the train carriage. In the first instance both phone user and non users almost simultaneously, through gaze and bodily movement, display a closing of the triadic interaction to allow for the call receiver's engagement with someone else. In the second instance as the caller holds the phone to his head, he is seen to be retaining an "openness to communication". When an other party initiates communication, a response is given but no eye contact is made. More importantly, for present purposes, the movement of the body can be seen as integral to the way in which the interaction is ordered. In

other words the rejection of the openness to communication is signalled not just by the aversion of gaze but also by the turning of the head and body away from the other.

Smith (1997, p. 3) points to the concept of "body techniques" as it is described in the writings of the French anthropologist Marcel Mauss. For Mauss, "bodily actions are historically and culturally variable, acquired capacities that speak to culturally specific memberships". (cited in Smith, 1997, p. 3) In this way Mauss departs from the idea of a universal patterning of bodily technique and emphasises the cultural specificity of this form of social interaction.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, Goffman (1963) has pointed out the importance of what he calls "body idiom". He uses this term to describe:

...dress, bearing, movements and position, sound level, physical gestures such as waving or saluting, facial decorations and broad emotional expressions" (1963, p. 33)

Goffman explains that gestures such as these are important in that they display to others the parameters of social encounters. They "broadcast" the message that the individual wants to send. He (1971) further elaborates the concept of "body idiom" with the concept of "body gloss". He explains that appearance and gestures are presented as a "gloss" to describe one's situation. A "body gloss" is something like a non-verbal explanation that is offered, by the individual, to account for his/her interactional positioning *vis a vis* others. Schefflen (1964) has argued that a change in the mode of participation

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<sup>5</sup> The cultural specificity of non-vocal communication has also been reiterated by one of the leading contemporary writers on the subject. (See Kendon, 1996, 1997)

status is usually accompanied by a change in posture to mark the boundary of this change (Reported in Kendon 1990). Head and upper body movements are routinely employed to organise social interaction.

Goodwin (1981) elaborates on this theme to examine how engagement/disengagement (or to use Goffman's terms focussed and unfocussed interaction) are organised and the consequences of this for the organisation of the participants' talk. Goodwin argues that the way in which we orient to or away from co-present others can be seen as, what he calls, 'engagement displays'. Thus the way in which participants display engagement is suggestive of the "participation status" (Goodwin '81: 96) of others co-present. Like gaze, engagement displays enable participants to mark boundaries between those physically present and those relevantly present. In other words co-participation in talk is continually subject to ongoing negotiation by participants as to the type of co participation the interaction event demands. In this way, he argues, mutual engagement/ disengagement are collaboratively achieved through bodily movement and the ongoing monitoring of others actions.

Subsequent investigators have continued this theme examining other aspects of gaze, bodily gesture and talk. Frankel (1983) suggests that other aspects of communication, such as gaze, will vary between different social contexts. Thus, the meaning of non-vocal interaction (e.g. gaze) is contingent upon background understandings that furnish "both a texture and rules for deciding the appropriateness of an action in any given situation" (Frankel 1983, p. 45).

Heath (1986) has examined how members determine the obligations co-interactants have with regard to a

speaker's verbal utterance through gaze and bodily gesture. Heath makes a distinction between displays of availability and displays of reciprocity. A display of availability, he argues, creates an environment of "undifferentiated opportunity" (Heath 1986: 33) in which action can be initiated. By contrast, a display of reciprocity specifies an interest in the receipt of a response and displays "location for the receipt of its occurrence" (ibid. 33).

Thus it might be argued that the participants in the given examples display an acute awareness of "body gloss" techniques (Goffman 1963) or "engagement displays" (Goodwin 1981) to mark out "boundaries" (Schefflen 1964) or change the "mode of participation status" (Schefflen 1964). These techniques are employed, it could be argued, to account for and manage phone use in co-presence with others. The examples discussed demonstrate how the participants display participation/non-participation status through bodily and spatial orientation. Moreover, they are indicative of how the rules of mobile phone use on train carriages are constituted as moment by moment emergent phenomenon.

### **Preliminary Conclusions**

This investigation started out as part of a research project examining the level of social acceptability of mobile phone use in public spaces, in particular train carriages. The rationale was that research setting itself, presented participants with particular spatial and ecological confines when using a mobile phone.

In just over 50 hours of ethnographic observation there were two instances of verbal responses to mobile phones. However, in both instances these responses were directed

to others, not the person using the phone. Given the evident absence of written rules of appropriate use, in these settings, the focus of investigation shifted toward the 'unwritten rules' of phone use. The paper suggests that the 'unwritten rules' manifest themselves through conventional patterns of non-vocal communication sensitive to these spatial surroundings.

Thus phone users on train carriages employed different types of non-vocal activities to disengage themselves from co-present others. By the same token, co-present others employed the same non-vocal activities to display, indifference, disapproval In/appropriate use etc. These conventional patterns of non-vocal communication depended on a mutual intelligibility that is produced, accomplished and displayed through unfolding sequences of interaction. It is submitted that these are central to understanding how the 'rules' of mobile phone use are constituted as a moment by moment emergent social phenomena.

### **Ethnomethodologically Informed Reflections: Doing Applied Research**

The exercise that has elicited the greatest response and produced the most interesting results has been the Walk Exercise. Basically it consists in taking a walk with the continuity and perceptions you encounter. The original version of the exercise was taught me by an old Mafia Don in Columbus, Ohio: seeing everyone on the street before he sees you ... if you see other people before they see you, they won't see you...Sooner or later, however, someone will see you. Try to guess why he saw you – what you were thinking when he saw your face. (Hobbs and May, 1993, p. 45)

The preceding discussion has attempted to highlight the analytical

utility of studies of non-vocal interaction when applied to the context of mobile phone use on train carriages. The remainder of the discussion will attempt to delineate some ethnomethodologically informed reflections on the research process itself. In so doing the attempt is made to bring to the fore the kinds of shared understandings necessary for the purposes of completing the ethnographic project. The aim is to highlight some of what Garfinkel (1967) refers to as the 'reflexive' and 'incarnate' character of accounting practices. In other words I want to shift the analysis toward a consideration of the very same practices this study so far has claimed to have captured (Goodwin, 1994).

### **Gaze**

It was previously suggested that patterns of non-vocal communication were practically accomplished by those present on train carriages. It goes without saying that this practical accomplishment necessitates a practical skill, i.e. knowledge of how to behave and interact in these settings. More importantly, these skills need to accommodate various disruptions to the ordered interaction e.g. phone use.

This skill and knowledge (evident in the responses made by the train passengers) was also a necessary requirement for doing the research itself and it is this feature that I wish to emphasise. One faced the practical problem of capturing the responses of others whilst simultaneously refraining from being seen as engaged in such an activity. The participants in the setting naturally deployed the patterns of gaze behaviour described above. Actually doing the research demanded that those same gaze patterns be seen to be naturally deployed. This was a practical concern on each an every



occasion within the research setting. For the purposes of the research I set myself the task of orienting to certain kinds of behaviour that would be seen but remain unnoticed blending in with the ordinary routine activities one can observe on train carriages. I was concerned to conceal my instantaneous recording of patterns of non-vocal behaviour. I relied heavily on culturally sanctioned knowledge of levels of gaze/mutual gaze when one is, for example:

- \* Making a 'to do list'
- \* Writing down points to raise at a meeting
- \* Revising an academic paper
- \* Making calculations
- \* Doing the Times' crossword
- \* Reading the newspaper

This list goes on and is contingent on other factors that do not include the resources at hand, the ecological arrangement and the physical proximity with others. Anything out of the ordinary, the mundane, the routine would be immediately available to other passengers and could present a potential detriment to the process of information capture.<sup>6</sup>

Civil inattention, participation status, engagement displays, the gaze and distance are features of public settings that members naturally orient

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<sup>6</sup> My intention is not to make any specific analytical distinctions as to what constitutes a 'glance', a 'gaze' or a 'stare'. I am relying on common understandings of the differences between these three non-verbal activities. David Sudnow's remarks on the glance are particularly pertinent. "Rather it is, for members of this society at least, a natural, non-incomplete, normatively governed unit of observation, often a maximally appropriate monitoring procedure known and known in advance to be sufficient and sufficient for 'anyman' for furnishing interactionally relevant information. The unit 'glance' then, is not an analytic unit but a member's one" (Sudnow, D. 1972, p. 261).

to. They are integral to the social organisation of interaction in the train carriage. Nevertheless, doing the research necessitated that I be seen as knowing what everyone else knows in these settings, under these kinds of circumstances, at these particular times with these kinds of contingent factors etc. The research demanded "passing management devices as attempts to come to terms with practical circumstances as a texture of relevances over the continuing occasions of interpersonal transactions." (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 175)

### **Spatial Orientation**

Spatial orientation on train carriages is an interesting topic. People are particularly sensitive toward their use of space and seating arrangements. Where a situation choice presents itself it is rare to find strangers sitting next to one another.<sup>7</sup> By contrast, in a full carriage one can observe people moving from a seat also occupied by others to a seat that becomes vacant.

Within the context of the research, one had to reflect on the routine mundane patterns of spatial orientation that one can regularly observe. The most problematic issue was movement through the train. If situated in a carriage for 10-15 minutes and there were no "research relevant activities", one considered moving on. On entry into another carriage one faced all the kinds of considerations ordinary members face when boarding a train, but with very different relevances and different purposes. My purpose was to situate myself in such a way as to attain a good line of sight for observations.<sup>8</sup> I had to make that instantaneous decision that members

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<sup>7</sup> This may, however, be culturally specific phenomenon.

<sup>8</sup> This had a lot to do with the ecological contingencies of various train carriages.

routinely make and be seen to do it as it is regularly routinely done.

Knowledge of these settings and the interactional behaviour that they demand was crucial. One useful way in which this was overcome was to remain standing in the middle of the aisle where one could view the whole carriage. However, this could only be achieved on a full or almost full carriage. Standing up in a carriage that isn't full may be called into question particularly if one doesn't alight shortly after boarding. Nevertheless one always faced the problem of the possibility of the simultaneous occurrence of analytically interesting events in separate carriages.

In his studies of death and dying in hospitals, Strauss conveys some similar practical concerns of field research.<sup>9</sup> He talks about developing relationships with staff on two or three wards. This allowed a research backdrop if nothing interesting was going on in the other wards. However, the priority decision of "where to observe next" pervaded the research. Moreover, the problem of analytically interesting events occurring simultaneously was something that "frequently confronted the fieldworker" (Strauss 1968, p. 263).

### **Who is the Mobile User?**

This is one of the questions that currently pervades much of the sociological literature on the emergence of mobile technologies particularly as it concerns social status and identity.<sup>10</sup> Yet as a research

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<sup>9</sup> Many thanks to Andrew Carlin for pointing this out to me.

<sup>10</sup> See for example, Frissen (1995) and Silverstone and Haddon (1996). These writers address the issue of diffusion of mobile technologies into the domestic sphere underlining the "gendered uses" of mobile communications and computing technologies.

question it translated into the practical concern of identifying mobile technology users, as they are experienced in everyday encounters. This demanded a heavy reliance on the shared common understandings of particular social types, in the first instance, mobile professionals. What do they look like? How can they be recognised? Where do they situate themselves on train carriages? At which train destinations are the majority of them likely to be found disembarking? One proceeded with the inferentially, publicly and culturally available answers to these questions that Schutz refers to as a "network of typifications" (Schutz 1970, p. 119). Doing the research meant that the question regarding the identity of the mobile user becomes a redundant one, until of course (as Schutz quite rightly points out) further notice.

Thus typifications on the common sense level – in contradistinction to typifications made by the scientist – emerge in the everyday experience of the world as taken for granted without any formulation of judgements of or neat propositions with logical subjects and predicates (Schutz 1970, p. 120).

The mobile 'user' in the abstract sense is (to borrow from Schutz) experienced in the research process in entirely different terms. The mobile user is experienced as different social types. Those types serve as a frame of reference to interpret the social world.

Doing the research and all it entailed necessitated, as Anderson and Lee (1982) point out a reliance on ordinary categorisation practices to identify and analyse the subjects of the research. It is in this sense that the entire study itself was premised, in the classic ethnomethodological sense, on what 'everybody knows' in relation to the setting, social behaviour and social types.

## Concluding Remarks

The conclusion is short but I hope, succinct. My aim here is not to engage in a debate concerning what constituted the real sociological research. Instead I have tried to convey a particularly striking feature of the research that constitutes a sociological irony in the classic ethnomethodological sense. That is to say, the research set out to capture information on patterns of non-vocal communication. These patterns are engaged with each and everyday by members often quite unreflectively. Ultimately the research demanded an understanding of the shared knowledge of those same patterns of non-vocal communication in order to complete the research task. In this particular instance, doing the research has become the topic of inquiry.

One faced the practical problem of appearing mundane, routine and ordinary whilst engaged in the research task. However, the point being that the research task was nigh on impossible without the culturally available common sense stock of knowledge that Garfinkel (and Goffman in a slightly different way) so eloquently points to as pertaining to these kinds of routine and ordinary activities. The physical engagement with doing the research demanded that those same non-vocal patterns of communication on train carriages be seen to be naturally deployed. This was a practical concern on each and every occasion within the research setting. The purpose of this discussion has been to shift the focus of concern toward the practicalities of doing the research. In a sentence, the paper has tried to show that doing the research demanded an intimate knowledge of the very same practices the study originally set out to capture.

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