

ACADEMIA

Accelerating the world's research.

The Body, Culture, and Society

Philip Hancock

**Want more papers like
this?**

[Download a PDF Pack of
related papers](#)

[Search Academia's catalog of
22 million free papers](#)

The body, culture and society

AN INTRODUCTION

PHILIP HANCOCK
BILL HUGHES
ELIZABETH JAGGER
KEVIN PATERSON
RACHEL RUSSELL
EMMANUELLE TULLE-WINTON
MELISSA TYLER

Open University Press
Buckingham · Philadelphia

Open University Press
Celtic Court
22 Ballmoor
Buckingham
MK18 1XW

email: enquiries@openup.co.uk
world wide web: www.openup.co.uk

and
325 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106, USA

First Published 2000

Copyright © Philip Hancock; Bill Hughes; Elizabeth Jagger; Kevin Paterson;
Rachel Russell; Emmanuelle Tulle-Winton; Melissa Tyler, 2000.

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purpose of criticism and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence from the Copyright Licensing Agency Limited. Details of such licences (for reprographic reproduction) may be obtained from the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd of 90 Tottenham Court Road, London, W1P 9HE.

A catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 0 335 20413 9 (pb) 0 335 20414 7 (hb)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The body, culture, and society: an introduction / Philip Hancock . . . [et al].
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-335-20414-7 — ISBN 0-335-20413-9 (pbk.)

1. Body, Human—Social aspects. 2. Body image. 3. Sociology of disability. 4. Aging. 5. Social ethics. 6. Medical ethics. I. Hancock, Philip, 1965– .

HM636.B6 2000
306.4—dc21

00-037446

Typeset by Graphicraft Limited, Hong Kong
Printed in Great Britain by Biddles Ltd, Guildford and King's Lynn

Contents

	<i>Notes on contributing authors</i>	ix
	<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
	Introduction	1
C H A P T E R 1	Medicalized bodies BILL HUGHES	12
C H A P T E R 2	Disabled bodies KEVIN PATERSON AND BILL HUGHES	29
C H A P T E R 3	Consumer bodies ELIZABETH JAGGER	45
C H A P T E R 4	Old bodies EMMANUELLE TULLE-WINTON	64
C H A P T E R 5	Working bodies PHILIP HANCOCK AND MELISSA TYLER	84
C H A P T E R 6	Ethical bodies RACHEL RUSSELL	101
	Conclusion	117
	<i>References</i>	123
	<i>Index</i>	137

Notes on contributing authors

Philip Hancock has taught the sociology of work and organizations at several UK universities. He is a member of the Caledonian University Body and Social Theory research group and an associate member of the Centre for Social Theory and Technology at Keele University. He has published in a number of edited collections, as well as in journals such as *Organization* and *The Journal of Management Studies*.

Bill Hughes is Head of Division of Sociology at Glasgow Caledonian University. His teaching responsibilities are concentrated primarily in the areas of the body, health and social theory. He is a member of the Caledonian University Body and Social Theory research group and his current research focuses on the application of contemporary sociological theory to impairment and disability. He has published in *Body & Society* and *Disability & Society*.

Elizabeth Jagger is a lecturer in sociology at Glasgow Caledonian University and Chair of the Body and Social Theory research group. Her teaching and research interests are the body, consumption and mass media and popular culture. She has published on professional and governmental responses to glue-sniffing in several leading policy journals and, more recently, work from her ongoing research into dating has appeared in *Sociology*.

Kevin Paterson is a research student in the School of Social Sciences at Glasgow Caledonian University. His research and teaching focuses on disability studies and the body. He is interested in the development of a sociology of impairment and has had several articles published on this subject in edited collections and the journal *Disability & Society*.

Rachel Russell lectures in philosophy and the sociology of culture at Glasgow Caledonian University. Her research and publishing activities have recently focused on the interface between ethics and aesthetic experience, and its implication for social theory. She is a member of the Caledonian University Body and Social Theory research group and is Coordinator of the Division of Sociology Research Seminar Series.

Emmanuelle Tulle-Winton teaches in the field of old age and health at Glasgow Caledonian University and is a member of the Caledonian University Body and Social Theory research group. She has conducted research and published in a number of edited collections and journals on issues around the government of old age and old bodies as well as the organizational features of mental health services.

Melissa Tyler teaches gender and feminist theory, work and organization studies and mass media and popular culture at Glasgow Caledonian University. She is a member of the Caledonian University Body and Social Theory research group and has published in various edited collections and journals on issues of gender, aesthetics, organization and the body.

Introduction

By the close of the twentieth century the body had become a key site of political, social, cultural and economic intervention in relation, for example, to medicine, disability, work, consumption, old age and ethics. In short, the body has come to be recognized as a contested terrain on which struggles over control and resistance are fought out in contemporary societies. That the body has emerged in recent years as a key problematic in the social sciences is indicated, for instance, by the proliferation of books and journals, conferences and other media dedicated to a sociological analysis of the body. Similarly, courses on the body and related issues feature increasingly in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. In contemporary societies body issues are everywhere. For example, new social movements struggle for citizenship and emancipation in the name of excluded bodies (Nicholson and Seidman 1995). There has been a radical shift in the understanding of disability and old age from a medical and welfare perspective to a focus on embodiment as a human rights issue. Ethics are fought out at the level of aesthetics and relations between bodies. Projects of self-enhancement and bodily transformation are the focus of embodiment as a consumer lifestyle. Medicine is shifting its focus from diseased to healthy bodies. Transnational capitalism demands flexible bodies for flexible accumulation and the organization of the body on an unprecedented scale.

These particular developments, which spell out the presence of the body in social, moral and political life, have had a profound impact on sociology and social theory and for this reason form the basic themes of this book. The assumption of classical positivist sociology, that bodies belong primarily to biology, has collapsed and the meaning of the

body has become a problem for linguistic, cultural and social analysis. This inclusion of the body in sociological inquiry can be regarded as a critical and reflective response to the social changes which have brought the body to the forefront of contemporary struggle and debate. Its intellectual roots are diverse, although poststructuralism and feminism can claim to be at its core; and Nietzsche and the critique of Cartesian dualism, important in phenomenological thought, are its most notable theoretical ancestors. Like the world it seeks to describe and explain, the sociology of the body is a place of twists and turns, uncertainties and ambiguities, a place where the long, unchallenged reign of reason is in dispute. In epistemology, sociological inquiry into the body tends to opt for pragmatism; in methodology it embraces pluralism; in ontology it tends to try to escape the traps of essentialism and foundationalism. Debates in feminism and the 'philosophy of difference' have been key players in shaping the intellectual hue of the sociology of the body. Yet the arrival of this new subdiscipline in sociology is not simply a response to the theoretical pluralism and the cross-fertilization of disciplines that have collapsed the boundaries between the human sciences in the contemporary world. We feel that it is necessary to say a little about the social and cultural events that have provoked the claim that we live in a 'somatic society' (Turner 1996: 1) – that is, a society 'within which major political and personal problems are both problematized within the body and expressed through it'.

Flexible bodies

In summing up *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* and exposing the key value of modernity, Horkheimer and Adorno wrote: 'What men want to learn from nature is how to use it in order to wholly dominate it and other men. That is the only aim' (1973: 28). Although one might contest this singular and absolute account of modern times, it does suggest a re-ordering of the relationship between culture and nature in which the former acquires a privileged status. Nature, including the body, has become something to be commanded and disciplined. Over the past 300 years the planetary body has been subjected to human exploitation on a massive scale, and human embodiment, emotions and desires have been 'civilized' by the coincidental rise of the modern state and the proliferation of formal modes of conduct (Elias 1978). For Foucault (1971: 153) the body is moulded by 'a great many distinct regimes'. It is an outcome of the play of power, and power 'reaches itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives' (Foucault 1978: 39). The heady combination of feminism and poststructuralism has produced the claim that not only gender but sex is a social construction (see, for example, Butler 1993), and Haraway (1990) has argued that the ubiquitous couplings

of flesh and machine that we witness in contemporary times are evidence of the rise of cyborg culture.

Underpinning this widespread cultural agenda of the body at the end of the twentieth century is a powerful emphasis on its malleability. 'We have become responsible for the design of our own bodies' (Giddens 1991: 102). No longer is the body conceived as a fixed essence. The changes that it undergoes are no longer regarded as wholly dependent on natural physiological processes. As the celebrity Cher once put it: 'Nature isn't always the best. I have the money to improve on nature and I don't see why I shouldn't' (*Glasgow Evening Times*, 24 April 1992). The boundaries between culture and nature have collapsed and the body has become flexible: 'Flexibility is an object of desire for nearly everyone's personality, body and organisation' (Martin 1994: xvii). The body has become plastic, a lifestyle accessory, a thing to be sculpted, shaped and 'stylized' (Featherstone 1991a). It has been transformed from a biological fact into a 'project' (Giddens 1991) and a 'performance' (Goffman 1971b). Contemporary culture is marked by a quest for physiognomical and physical regimes of embodiment that are based on the assumption that the surface and the interior of the body are amenable to reconstruction or re-incorporation. As Anthony Giddens (1991: 7–8) has argued: 'The reflexivity of self in conjunction with abstract systems pervasively affects the body [. . .] The body is less and less an extrinsic given functioning outside the internally referential systems of modernity, but becomes itself reflexively mobilised.'

These claims, which transform our ideas about the body from obdurate matter to flexible performance, have powerful empirical points of reference in popular culture and new technologies. The organ transplant trade raises questions not only about the ownership of the body but also about its boundaries (Elshtian and Cloyd 1995). The notion that nature constitutes an absolute limitation is an idea in decline. The body conceived as a project opens up possibilities for its re-formation and modification. 'Body work' is no longer simply a question of mechanical maintenance but one of lifestyle choice and identity. Shaping the body through diet, exercise and cosmetic surgery is a fleshy testimonial to the aestheticization of everyday life (Featherstone 1992; Welsch 1996), a fascination with appearance and, some argue, the narcissism of contemporary culture (Lasch 1980).

The fitness, health and dieting booms of the 1970s and 1980s supported the marketing of all sorts of commodities and techniques for bodily enhancement. For a significant number of women dieting can take on vocational proportions and one study claims that only 10 per cent of women have never dieted (Ogden 1992). Health farms and fat farms sell dreams of the body beautiful and offer a range of techniques and therapies for shaping body and soul. In the USA Weight Watchers claims a membership of eight million whereas those who want to go it alone can choose from hundreds of best-selling slimming books, exercise videos, machines or classes or can pick up any popular

magazine and read about the thousands of food items, concoctions, exercise regimes, body-building programmes and pharmaceuticals that claim to help in the battle against the unfashionable body. For those who can afford it, there is the option of the surgeon's knife, used widely in the West to combat the ageing process, to eliminate unwanted physical features (K. Davis 1995) or even as a means of mobilizing the body as an artistic canvas (K. Davis 1997b).

The possibilities for self-transformation have extended to sexual identity. Once regarded as fixed and impervious to modification, sexual identity has been relocated from the kingdom of necessity to the land of choice. Today, 'normal sexuality is simply one type of lifestyle choice among others' (Giddens 1992: 179). In light of the growth and recognition of 'diverse sexual proclivities' the discourse of perversion has collapsed (Giddens 1992: 179). With improvements in reproductive and 'sex change' technology and the arrival of artificially produced conception, 'sexuality is at last fully autonomous' (Giddens 1992: 27) and sexuality has become 'plastic'. The proliferation of projects of self-identity that involve new ways of being in the body and expressing its sexuality mean that in the age of 'plastic sexuality' gender identity is no longer embedded in a fixed biological foundation. Anything goes: sex too is a reflexive project.

Sociological bodies

Now that the body itself is mobilized in the name of a host of practices and projects of self-transformation, there has been a simultaneous proliferation of sociological bodies. These bodies have been predominantly a) theoretical, b) historical or c) analytical – or, more accurately, theory, history or heuristic devices, including matrixes and taxonomies, have been used as the basis for distinguishing between types of body and embodiment.

- (a) The highly contested domain of sociological theory provides an interesting playground in which perspectives tussle with one another over which is the more efficacious in relation to interpreting and understanding embodiment. Chris Shilling (1993) provides an excellent guide to social and sociological theories of the body and Bryan S. Turner (1996) weaves insightful essays on bodies by pragmatically threading together a variety of theories, most notably poststructuralism (especially the work of Michel Foucault), phenomenology and feminism.
- (b) Feher, Naddaff and Tazi (1989) have argued that across time, the cultural nuances of embodiment can be traced in terms of a continuum between the deified, godlike body on the one hand, and the body conceived as machine or animal on the other. In their engaging study of the relationship between community and

embodiment, in which the ambiguity of the corporeal is a consequence of its struggle between sensuality and rationality, Mellor and Shilling (1997) refer to medieval, protestant modern and baroque bodies.

- (c) Of the various attempts to develop an analytical framework for the sociology of the body, the two most celebrated and coherent are associated with the work of Turner (1996) and Frank (1991). Turner focuses on the tasks that society sets itself in relation to the 'government of the body'. These tasks are reproduction, restraint, regulation and representation. Individual bodies (internally and externally) and populations (across space and time) are regulated in terms of these basic tasks, which every society must confront. The form of government of the body can vary depending on the institutional means used to implement the tasks. Asceticism, patriarchy, panopticism and commodification constitute the range of possible means. Frank's typology of sociological bodies is derived partly from a critical reflection on Turner's work. He displaces the functionalist flavour of Turner's typology with a framework that is indebted to the North American tradition of 'symbolic interactionism', where the emphasis is on agency and active bodies rather than bodies which are heavily informed by institutional and structural constraints. Frank offers a 'typology of body use in action' in which disciplined, dominating, mirroring and communicative bodies are the key terms in the analytical framework (Frank 1991: 54).

These two analytical approaches produce body types that are theoretically grounded and synthetic. This text is not so bold. Our ambition is accessibility and to this end we aim to provide a prequel to the complexities of theoretical and analytical synthesis and a salient review of some of the literature that opens up and smooths over the gap between the sociology of the body and (some) other sociological subdisciplines. Our typology is, therefore, nearer to the one offered by Frank in a review essay of 1990, in which he divided his material into medicalized, sexual, disciplined and talking bodies. We too have adopted substantive categories which are not dependent on or constrained by fidelity to a single theoretical framework. In so doing we have followed our own interests and specialisms in old age, ethics, organization, disability, medicine and consumption. All of these fields of investigation can be regarded (arguably) as sociological subdisciplines and we have attempted to trace the impact of the sociology of the body in these specific domains. Our terrain, therefore, is an intellectually fertile one in which new ideas and perspectives have helped to revivify more established bodies of knowledge. We do not claim to have left no stone unturned. There are other bodies – religious, sporting, sexual, emotional, knowing, for example – that are equally amenable to this treatment, but these are beyond the scope of this book.

The bodies that we have selected for discussion arise in the domain of contested modernity in which the case for pleasure, desire, sensuality

and emotion challenges the rather jaded Enlightenment values of reason, truth and progress. It is this broad context which forces embodiment on to the sociological agenda. Whatever prefix we use to describe modernity, it is not what it used to be, and debates about old age, ethics, organization, disability, medicine and consumption are all embedded in and reflect the precariousness of the times in which we live. We live in an 'age of anxiety' in which existential and ontological insecurity is rife (Giddens 1991), and where our faith in the grand thoughts and designs of the past has weakened (Lyotard 1984). Our time is one of irony and nihilism, fundamentalism and anti-foundationalism, globalization and localization, geopolitical realignment and ecological crisis, postcolonialism and the decline of the nation-state, new nationalisms and the unimpeded expansion of transnational corporations. We live – we hear – in interesting times, perhaps even apocalyptic ones, in which the values of the past seem both remote and ripe for review. The body and embodiment have figured strongly in this ongoing re-evaluation of values, largely because reason has come to be regarded as a false god. Modernity in its aged and uncertain state has become nostalgic for the mythical, baroque, fleshy energy of its youth.

Modern bodies

The dominant representation of the body in modernity has been provided by the biomedical discourse which became, in the nineteenth century, a science of universal bodily processes. However, in Chapter 1 – 'Medicalized bodies' – Bill Hughes argues that biomedicine now seems to be in a crisis of legitimization, and alternative, more holistic concepts of medicine and embodiment are challenging its hegemony. Biomedicine has come under fire from epidemiologists, social scientists, feminists, gay and disabled people, theologians and – most tellingly – lay persons. In an attempt to incorporate these critiques and to respond to changes in the nature of disease as well as the economic imperatives of neoliberalism, medicine is repositioning itself as a biopsychosocial practice (Armstrong 1987) in which health maintenance – rather than disease (and its) elimination – is becoming the locus for health-care organization and intervention. The chapter focuses on the ways in which medicine is transforming its conception of the body from a passive receptacle of disease to a responsible and active agent of self-care. Contemporary medicine prescribes and dispenses not only pharmaceuticals, but also information and advice about how to live, and its notion of what constitutes health work has expanded beyond clinical action to include lay vigilance in relation to behaviour, lifestyle, patterns of consumption and the organization of social space.

The medicalization of disability in the nineteenth century marked the 'scientific' exclusion of disabled people from the mainstream of

social life. It is only since the emergence of the Disability Movement – sometimes described as ‘the last civil rights movement’ – that the experience of disability has been evaluated from a non-medical perspective. Ironically, to date, disability studies and the sociology of the body have not provided a great deal of intellectual nourishment for one another. However, disabled activists have challenged the medical model in which disability is viewed as a bodily limitation, and replaced it with a social model in which disability is defined as a situation produced by a socio-spatial environment that fails to acknowledge the needs and rights of people with impairments. This model is rooted predominantly in a structural analysis (Finkelstein 1980; Abberley 1987; Oliver 1990). It made good political sense, initially, for disability activists (like feminists) to marginalize embodied experience because biological arguments had been used historically to legitimate social exclusion. In Chapter 2 – ‘Disabled bodies’ – Kevin Paterson and Bill Hughes argue that a disembodied view of disability is no longer tenable. They reflect on changes in disability studies which seek an embodied view of disability and develop what has been called a social model or sociology of impairment. The chapter traces the ways in which ‘the body’ and ‘the social’ compete in the constitution of the meaning of disability.

In Chapter 3 – ‘Consumer bodies’ – Liz Jagger outlines the view that some of the major social transformations of modernity – including changes in work organization and techniques, the decline of heavy industry, the increasing importance of the service and leisure industries and the rise of the media and advertising – established the foundations of a consumer culture (Featherstone 1991a) and brought questions of ‘self’ to the front of the political, social and economic stage. Self-identity is now derived not from work and production, but from consumption (Tomlinson 1990). Moreover, with the decline of religious authority and a loss of faith in grand political narratives – two of the key markers of postmodernity – the physical body seems to provide a locus and a focus for the affirmation of identity. It provides the medium through which messages about self-identity are transmitted and is a key site for the marking of difference (Shilling 1993, 1997). The chapter explores the connections between consumption, identity and the body, drawing on the work of writers who, in diverse ways, have addressed these links. For Bourdieu (1984) consumer choices are inscribed on the body and therefore make it a site of social and especially class differences. Thus, we consume according to who we are. By contrast, for some so-called postmodern theorists we become what we consume. The body is saturated with cultural signs with no fixed referents and, as a consequence, produces multiple, shifting identities (Jameson 1985; Baudrillard 1988b). However, given that access to cultural resources for identity construction is not equally available to men and women in consumer society, reflexive self-fashioning (Giddens 1991) is more problematic for women (Lury 1997). To exemplify the contingent and uncertain nature of feminine subjectivity, Chapter 3

concludes with a discussion of a specific bodily practice that is no longer a prerogative of masculine embodiment, namely body building.

The body – built firm and strong – has become, in modernity, a sign of moral worth, and the worship of youth and beauty has made ‘strangers’ of older people. The moral alterity of older people is compounded by economic arguments which classify the growing elderly population as fiscal muggers who can neither produce nor reproduce. Ageism is rife and older people are regarded as the embodiment of deterioration and decay. In Chapter 4 – ‘Old bodies’ – Emmanuelle Tulle-Winton discusses the body as a contested site for the constitution of old age and old people. The emergence of old age as the object of professional study and practice in the late eighteenth century gave rise to a range of possible narratives about the experience of being old. The variable emphasis on and explanatory power given to the bodily manifestations of becoming and being old, and their potential for liberation, define these narratives. Chapter 4 charts these narratives, starting with the problematization of old age as a primarily medical event where the body takes centre stage. This gives rise to the modernist discourse of old age – as biological decline, physiological and mental decrepitude and loss. The constitution of old age as a biological event overdetermining the actual experience of later life was reinforced by the emergence of gerontology, the study of old age, which reflected, justified and constructed the cultural, economic and symbolic obsolescence of old people (Lynott and Lynott 1996). Its aim was to construct strategies of adaptation to loss.

There have been two principal challenges to the medicalization of old age. The first focused on the structural determinants of old age and embodied the argument that economic exclusion and discriminatory welfare practices were constitutive of the othering of old people and marked an obsession with the corporeality of the ageing body. The second was based on the cultural problematization of old bodies as posing a threat to the norm of identity which was calibrated against the valorization of youthfulness. This perspective proposed ways to manage (away) the old body and, thus, enable old people to maintain intact the integrity of their personal identity. There was, however, a cost attached to this. On the one hand, it led to the rehabilitation of successful agers, through the extension of middle age and the encouragement to keep a close check on bodily deterioration through a range of techniques of the self. On the other hand, it exacerbated the marginalization of those who could not escape old age; especially very old people or ill old people. The chapter concludes that, despite efforts to do so, old bodies cannot be abrogated and that there may be a case for attempting to recover the fleshiness of the old body without losing sight of the social and cultural processes that contribute to the marginalization of old people.

Although the bodies of post-productive people have been made anthropologically strange by the narrow moralities and economic necessities of modernity, working bodies face the disciplinarity and

demands of flexibility which pervade organizations in late capitalist society. Contemporary sociological accounts of the relationship between work, its organization and the human body have been shaped by a number of recent developments both in sociology and in the world of work itself. These include, for example, shifting philosophical perspectives on the body, changes in working patterns and an increased academic and managerial concern with organizational culture. The impact of such developments has been further exacerbated by the rise of post-Fordist modes of production and exchange and the demands of an expanding tertiary sector, which has resulted in even greater attention being paid to issues of image and appearance by organizations concerned with maintaining global competitiveness. Integral to this has been the substantial increase in the proportion of jobs in which people are employed, specifically in front-line 'customer facing' service providers. It is their bodies that become the carriers of the aesthetic concerns of contemporary organization(s).

In Chapter 5 – 'Working bodies' – Philip Hancock and Melissa Tyler open with a brief discussion of these developments and their implications for the management of the body at work. They adopt a broadly historical perspective on the management and rationalization of the working body, with particular reference to the development of wage labour in western capitalist societies. Commencing with a review of these managerial systems, developed largely in the early twentieth century, which were concerned with the efficient use of the body's capacity to labour, the authors chart the refinement of various technologies of rationalization and their eventual impact on the body in contemporary work organizations. This prefigures a consideration of the significant contribution that feminist sociology has made to the understanding of the role played by the body in the management of gender differences in the workplace. The chapter ends by shifting attention away from the formal domain of paid work to focus on what Shilling (1993) has called 'body work'. This refers to the time, effort and resources dedicated to maintaining a particular state of embodiment in everyday life. The conclusion suggests that this concept offers a potentially useful way of understanding the relationship between work and the human body, one that rejects an artificial distinction between work and consumption.

If reflection on contemporary organization suggests a problem with the distinction between work and consumption, contemporary work on ethics suggests that the distinction between ethics and aesthetics is also difficult to sustain. The body is a key player in the deconstruction of this distinction. The rationale for an embodied ethics arises out of the convergence of two dominant sociological trends: the re-emergence of the moral *and* the new prominence of the body as the ethical subject in sociology. In Chapter 6 – 'Ethical bodies' – Rachel Russell discusses general processes of contemporary moralization and examines the conceptualization of the body as a site for the embodiment of ethics in two ways. First, she explores 'aesthetic ethics' and considers

the historical origins of the notion that 'you are what you look like' (Synnott 1993). Second, by way of a critical consideration of the emergence of ethical subjects in the realm of consumption and new social movements, she examines the ideas of Foucault (1997) and Maffesoli (1996). The emphasis on the rational and visual in these approaches (Jay 1994) is contrasted with those that privilege the emotional and sensual dimensions of embodied ethics (Levinas 1981; Bauman 1993; Irigaray 1993; Maffesoli 1996; Smart 1996). The distinction between the rational and the emotional, and the visual and the sensual is illustrated by a consideration of the way in which ethical bodies are understood in contemporary society and social theory. A comparison of these two approaches to embodied ethics suggests that alternative sociological approaches to ethical bodies can be identified. Perspectives that transcend ontological duality and allow for an understanding of the ethical subject as emerging from embodied interaction are beginning to provide the focus for scholarship and action in this area.

Concluding remarks: the somatic turn

Sociology is a subject that embraces trends. Other disciplines have rare and fundamental 'paradigm shifts' but the contested nature of sociology and its imperative to engage with social change gives its content a flexible character and a rather charming instability. In the past two decades, the sociology of the body has become fashionable. Once the sole domain of the biological sciences, bodies and embodiment have become focal points for discussions for a whole range of sociological issues, including – to name but a few – identity, social movements, consumer culture, ethics and even social theory and philosophy. Indeed, the social processes that underpin these issues have themselves been important in generating sociological debate about the body. It is a commonplace of contemporary social science discourse to speak of the linguistic and cultural turns. One might also speak of a somatic turn. Once social scientists became uncomfortable with the distinction between nature and culture, the idea of the body as a pre-social object became difficult to sustain. The impact of post-Cartesian philosophy – particularly in its phenomenological and poststructuralist guises – was such that sociologists felt compelled to interrogate the place of embodiment in social life, and a world disgruntled by rationality went in search of sensuality, pleasure and desire. Meanwhile, the body was making itself ever-present in social and political life, be it in the shape of a battered woman, a terminated fetus, a victim of torture or televised war, a proud celebration of womanhood, disability, colour or homosexuality, an organ in transit for transplantation, a human-machine stepping on the moon, a sample of DNA under the microscope, a man who was a woman or vice versa, a body transformed by diet, exercise

or the surgeon's knife, a homeless person camped on the streets of the world's richest nation, a mass grave, or another world record smashed.

To engage with the somatic turn this book focuses on a series of 'typical' bodies that correspond to those substantive subject areas in which the meaning of the contemporary body (arguably) is most vigorously contested. In this respect, we have three principal objectives: first, to introduce sociological perspectives on the body, outlining and evaluating their contribution to contemporary sociology; second, to outline the various ways in which 'the body' is conceptualized in sociology and the relative importance accorded to the body in understanding society and social relations; and third, to identify key themes in theoretically distinct perspectives on the body through an examination of various substantive bodies, including medical bodies, disabled bodies, working bodies, consuming bodies, old bodies and ethical bodies. We hope that readers use the book to pitch themselves into the somatic turn and join with us in exploring its fascinating legacy.

In contemporary societies body issues are everywhere. For example, new social movements struggle for citizenship and emancipation in the name of excluded bodies (Nicholson and Seidman 1995). There has been a radical shift in the understanding of disability and old age from a medical and welfare perspective to a focus on embodiment as a human rights issue. The boundaries between culture and nature have collapsed and the body has become flexible: "Flexibility is an object of desire for nearly everyone's personality, body and organisation" (Martin 1994: xvii). The body has become plastic, a lifestyle accessory, a thing to be sculpted, shaped and "stylized" (Featherstone 1991a). Different cultures make up a society. For society to exist, there must be a set of cultures. Definitions. Culture is the term used to describe people's way of life. It is a set of beliefs and behaviors learned by a group of people. When people have a common set of beliefs, ideals, and attitudes, they belong to the same cultural people group. Culture can also be seen in the way people write, dress, cook, and act. It's what makes countries unique. For instance, Japanese people take off their shoes when they get inside homes and they prefer wearing socks. Simply put, culture is a collective body of knowledge, such as in values and norms, while society is the resultant behavior of the individuals who practice that body of knowledge. Did this article help you? Yes. Queer Theory Social Construction. Perspectives on the AIDS Epidemic: Culture and Society. The Plague of Our Time: Societal Responses to AIDS. Nearly every major infectious disease has created not one but two epidemics: the illness itself and society's reaction to it. Following initial denial there is hysteria and a search for a scapegoat. The fear of infection and the ignorance of its cause have often led to uncaring and even barbaric practices. The Black Death of the Middle Ages killed more than 500 people per day at its peak. The central concern of many at that time was not to provide care. Theory, Culture & Society Theory, Culture & Society caters for the resurgence of interest in culture within contemporary social science and the humanities. Building on the heritage of classical social theory, the book series examines ways in which this tradition has been reshaped by a new generation of theorists. Page 1. 1 Introduction Social theories of the body have exerted an enormous influence on the social sciences and humanities in the past two decades. From being a subject of marginal academic interest, the intellectual significance of the body is now such that no study can lay claim to being comprehensive unless it takes at least some account of the embodied preconditions of agency and the physical effects of social structures.

In contemporary societies body issues are everywhere. For example, new social movements struggle for citizenship and emancipation in the name of excluded bodies (Nicholson and Seidman 1995). There has been a radical shift in the understanding of disability and old age from a medical and welfare perspective to a focus on embodiment as a human rights issue. The boundaries between culture and nature have collapsed and the body has become flexible: "Flexibility is an object of desire for nearly everyone's personality, body and organisation" (Martin 1994: xvii). The body has become plastic, a lifestyle accessory, a thing to be sculpted, shaped and "stylized" (Featherstone 1991a). *Body, Culture and Society: An Introduction*. Melissa Tyler Hancock, Philip, Bill Hughes, Elizabeth Jagger, Kevin Patterson, Rachel Russell and Emmanuelle Tulle-Winton Open University Press: Buckingham 2000 0335204139 (pb) £14.99 (pb) x + 146. Order this book? The body is central to many contemporary political projects, and this book is an excellent introduction to theories of the body in a wide range of areas, including medical sociology, disability, consumption, ethics and ageing. It draws on a wide range of critical cultural perspectives, including feminism, critical theory, postmodernism and social gerontology. Chapter One, "Medicalized bodies" by Bill Hughes is a fascinating discussion of individual and collective responsibilities for healthy bodies. This article discusses the Jakarta urban women body in Indonesian consumer culture as reflected in *Miss Jinjing Belanja Sampai Mati* (2008) by Amelia Masniari. Within consumer culture, consuming commodities is seen as a natural. However, it is the impact of the power (dominant ideologies) that present in that culture. The body now plays a significant role in our understanding of society and social relations, and ongoing attention has been focused at the Venn where body, power, and society intersect. In contemporary scholarship, the body is seen as a primary site where social relations of power are reproduced (Hancock, et al. 2000) and scholars have asserted that "bodies have all the explanatory of minds" (Grosz 1994, vii).