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Civility and mobility: drivers (and passengers) appreciating the actions of other drivers

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Abstract

My analysis centres on a dominant aspect of civility between vehicles: appreciation. I examine the inter-vehicular interaction that precedes and accompanies the ‘hand-up’, before then widening the analysis to consider the ‘thank you’ and its role in the intra-vehicular activities of driver and passenger. I differentiate between the weaker expectations of appreciation when vehicles are passing by one another and the stronger expectation involved in ‘letting in’ or ‘letting out’. In considering how rights of way are waived by drivers, I make a contrast with a cost-benefit analysis of request and offers. The article draws upon video recordings of car journeys made by families, friends and commuters.

Keywords: mobility, thanking, appreciation, civility, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis

1. Introduction: Automobility and civility

The driver cocooned in their car, indifferent to others, is emblematic of the rise of incivility in public spaces that have been transformed by the dominance of automobility. The often cited features of the driver are the quick judgement of the actions of others, displayed in the reprimands of horns, insulting gestures through windows and the spectacle of shouting matches. The vehicular shell and constant movement of traffic seem to create abiding problems for drivers in discerning the subtleties of other driver’s actions on the road, and vice versa (Deppermann, this issue; Goffman, 1963). In encounters on the road, the judgement of others amounts instead to ‘a flash of metal, a gesture and bodily attribute’ (Swanton, 2010, p. 461). Compared to the unenclosed pedestrian or cyclist, vehicle drivers and passengers struggle to perceive talk and gesture. Nor does the unyielding metal and glass shell seem to allow drivers and passengers to show sensitivity to, and recognition of, the other’s passage in crossing, merging and squeezing past one another.

One of the foremost theorists of automobility, John Urry (2006, p. 24) argued that ‘we might indeed re-conceptualize civil society as a civil society of quasi-objects, or “car-drivers” and “car-passengers”’ and the consequences of our hybridisation with vehicles has been the destruction of public spaces. In his work on the futures of automobility, Urry maintained the hope that technological developments will bring with them enriched possibilities for communication between drivers and their others (see also Thrift, 2004). In his significant work on the sociology of the emotions Katz (2001) draws an even starker and darker picture of drivers in conflict with one another on the congested highways of LA. In the social sciences, then, there has been a generally bleak portrayal of the public life of the road, however my ambition in this article is to recover the under-appreciated civility of drivers toward one another and consider how it is accomplished by drivers (and passengers) from within their automobile shells.

In a major survey of what the public consider incivility to be, it is, in fact, predominantly associated with situations of mobility above all others. In particular incivility is associated with mobile interactions where parties try to move faster or push through others already in movement (Smith, P., Phillips, and King, 2010). What the survey study, based on accounts of incivility, alerts us to is that mobile encounters, be they pedestrian or vehicular, are central to our shared sense of, and concern with, civility. What is at stake in civility in public spaces is different mobile actors’ sense of who has the right of way and the acknowledgment of others in the face of that right (Lieberman, 2013; Smith R. J., 2017). Notionally, having that right allows one (or more) vehicles to proceed while others will then wait and proceed once the way is clear of those with that right. Yet establishing which party has the right of way requires analysis of the unfolding event in order to establish whether one party has a clear right of way,

or both parties have competing rights of way, or whether there are further qualities of the vehicle that need to be taken into account. Moreover, in road traffic, the local management of rights of way has to be settled rapidly, because the participating parties are relatedly under pressure not to delay the right of progress of other mobile parties, by their further contemplation.

Civility is itself lodged in not just the establishment of which party has that right but in the potential to register, and actual waiving of, such a claim. Civility lies in the acknowledgement of the particular needs of differentiated others, where those others may require help or simply benefit from one's minor generosity (McIlvenny, this issue; Raffel, 2001). Thankings and other appreciations mark the acknowledgment by the driver or passenger of a vehicle being allowed, offered or otherwise getting to proceed on their way where the other party's rights of way are not clearly subordinate to theirs. Building on studies of the mobile local accomplishment of offers and their acceptances, in this article I will consider the embodied production and recognition of thankings between the occupants of vehicles. In doing so I will dig a little deeper into the significance and insignificance of acknowledgement and civility between drivers.

2. Giving away the right of way

In the everyday civility of sharing the road, drivers have the possibility of giving way to others and they routinely *do* give away their right to progress to help others. Haddington and Rauniomaa (2014) show the mundane mobile methods by which offers are made at junctions where there is a party waiting at a marked 'give way'. Making such an offer, when one has the right of way, or, of course, when quite who has the right of way is yet to be established (and might not be resolvable in the short term) is part of the orientation toward and maintenance of civility on the roads. As I noted briefly earlier, the idea that we should not dawdle in order to discuss who could be established to have the over-riding right of way, is part of the rights of mobile others not to be un-necessarily delayed. The blaring of horns from delayed vehicles marking the assertion of those rights. Given the particular communicational architecture of vehicles on roads with markings of rights of way (e.g. double dashes to mark the road with lesser rights), Haddington and Rauniomaa examined the preliminary work required to establish a temporary formation in traffic in order to coordinate manoeuvring past one another.

Road users can offer space by taking certain positions in the flow of traffic. This is communicated, made recognizable, and carried out through such mobile actions as slowing down, pulling over, and bringing the vehicle to a halt at relevant places with reference to other road users. Space-offering may also be accomplished with means more readily recognized as part of face-to-face interaction, including gaze, gestures, and even talk.
(Haddington and Rauniomaa, 2014, p. 178)

'Giving way' is a shorthand for a form of 'responsive-anticipatory in vehicle encounters, where a sequence of responsive actions by each vehicle successfully interlock adaptation' (Deppermann, this issue). As a device it is used to settle who will progress, in what order, where each party's progress has the potential to compete, interfere or conflict with another's. The primal orientation around which party ought to give way and which party will give way is foregrounded in 'shared spaces' without road markings where, at first blush, all parties have equal rights (Smith R. J., 2017). Shared spaces provide a locally organised mobile setting that contrasts with the dominant organisational technologies of traffic management from the humble 'give way' (or North American 'yield') road markings and signs, to traffic lights, lane markings, roundabouts, gesturing traffic police and so on. There are many local and national variations in moral orders of traffic around how giving way is done, who gives way at marked 'zebra crossings', how giving way is done at traffic-light-controlled junctions, how pedestrians and other parties are given way to (or not - see McIlvenny, this issue). For instance, in the face of a given layout of a road junction in the USA, Liberman (2013) documents in detail how pedestrians built their own culture of crossing the road.

Goffman (1963) in describing encounters on the move, uses the term 'shell', in passing, to describe, initially the closed shells of cars and ships, before then extending it to bicycles and skateboards and then finally arguing that it applies also to pedestrians themselves. In his over-extension of the

concept of the shell we see Goffman's concept of the self writ large, which misses the distinctiveness of the qualities of the car as a shell within which its occupants sit. Not least, the distinctive qualities that it is a shell within which multiple parties are present and that it is assumed to have a driver that is primarily accountable for its movements on the road. A further quality of the shell of the car is that members of traffic formulate who they are dealing with as either the car (e.g. 'what is that Ford doing?') or the driver 'what is that guy doing?'). In writing this article I then found myself switching between those two formulations without a strong sense of whether the participants were formulating the parties as either vehicle or driver in the same fashion. My solution has been to tend toward referring to the agent as 'the driver' to avoid appearing to show a distinction being made by the participants at that point. Yet, as we shall see later, 'driver' has its problems too because front-seat passengers are often involved, inside the shell, as witnesses to the civility of their driver and other drivers. They themselves usually carry a lesser accountability for the conduct of the vehicle of which they are, not the co-pilot, but the front seat passenger (on the involvements of passenger see (Laurier et al., 2008)). Under particular travelling arrangements passengers can carry much greater accountability, not least in the case of driving lessons, where the instructor retains, of course a high degree of involvement and accountability which can range from giving instructions verbally (De Stefani and Gazin, this issue), formulating other drivers intentions (Broth et al, this issue), to grabbing the wheel (Cromdal, forthcoming).

3. "Thanks": strangers, acceptances and appreciations

In considering requests and offers as part of civility on the road, my focus in this article is specifically on thanking and related acknowledgements of the actions of other drivers. Haddington and Rauniomaa (2014) make brief mention of drivers thanking when they have benefited from an offer, and as part of closing encounters between members of the highway. Previous work in conversation analysis work makes similarly brief mention of thanking when the focus is on requesting, offering, supportive actions and helping (Curl and Drew, 2008; Kendrick and Drew, 2016). Harvey Sacks (1992) looked at 'thankings' as part of a collection of actions that have a strong expectation of being exchanged (e.g. greetings, 'I love you's'). When these exchanged items are not exchanged, or are exchanged in delay, then it is likely to mark more or less substantial problems. In ongoing studies of payment at the close of service encounters, that I have been involved with, as part of their closing, delays in thanking are monitored for as preliminaries to raising concerns or complaints about customer experience, while thanks' in service encounters are also routinely exchanged or minimised with 'it was nothing', 'no problems etc.' (Traverso, 2006). The continuing and sometimes rapid mobility of road vehicles closes encounters without further need nor, often, possibility of further appreciations or other acknowledgements.

Thanking features in Pomerantz's (1978) seminal study of the acceptance of compliments, where she demonstrates how complex responding to compliments is. A thanking is one straightforward way of both accepting a compliment and agreeing with it. Though Pomerantz notes that, by thanking, the person complimented not only agrees with the compliment, but they find the compliment to be of a type that ought to be accepted. For cars there will also be problems around both accepting or declining offers, the onward march of mobility limits how elaborate that will become. In extending conversation analytic studies of first actions from epistemics to 'benefactives', Clayman and Heritage (2014) provide a fleeting examination of thankings. It is their work on thankings as explicit appreciations of offers that most closely resemble driver's acknowledgements of other driver's actions. The sequential pairing of offers and appreciations is illustrated in their study where one party (Emma) is offered a paper by another (Glad):

(13) [NB IV:5]

1 Glad: =An' now I've got (.) tuh wash my hair en get the
2 ↑goop out 'v it'n evrything?.hh 'n ah have the
3 ↑paper here I thought chu might li:ke tih ↓have it.
4 ↓.hhhh[h
5 Emma: -> [Tha:nk you.]

Transcript 1 conversational thanking (from Clayman and Heritage, 2014, p. 63)

A 'thank you' as an explicit appreciation is produced immediately after an offer, thereby showing recognition of the offer *as* offer, acceptance of the offer and, of course, appreciation of the offer. It is beyond the sequential environment that Clayman and Heritage are examining but the appreciation itself can then be registered (e.g. 'uh huh'), accepted or registered when missing (e.g. 'you're welcome') or the offer itself downplayed (e.g. 'it was nothing').

A thanking can also appreciate compliance with a request. In a later example from Clayman and Heritage's article, a parent asks a child to take a shower, the child shows willing and the mum then thanks the child:

(24) [Stew dinner: Mother to child, after dinner]

1 Mom: -> Okay, why don't you hop yourself in the shower and then
2 we'll read
3 (0.4) ((Child starts to respond))
4 Mom: Thank you.

Transcript 2 conversational thanking (from Clayman and Heritage, 2014, p. 68)

Recent studies of requests by Kendrick and Drew has shifted perspective toward less direct ways, captured neatly by the term 'recruitment', in which offering assistance to others becomes relevant (Kendrick and Drew, 2016). By their measure, driving in traffic, with its absence of verbal communication, is a 'display' of potentially needing help, rather than a verbal and then usually direct request for help. A display of the vehicle's situation leaves it open to the other party on seeing a member of traffic displaying 'difficulty, trouble or need' (Kendrick and Drew, 2016, p. 11) to then initiate a course of action.

Requests and acceptances, offers and appreciations sit within a fine mesh of moral considerations around cooperation, where one party is briefly 'cast as the benefactor and the other the beneficiary' (Clayman and Heritage, 2014, p. 59). Quite which party is which and whether both parties agree on what the benefit is, is part of their status and displays of stance on each occasion, and of their assessing of relative gains and sacrifices. Indeed Clayman and Heritage borrow the classic 'cost-benefit' terminology of economics, a feature which underlines for me, rather than the reduction of members to economists's rational actors, that an ordinary economics and related division of labour plays out amongst members. While they do not take the consequence that far, their work has the potential to re-specify economics in a setting without expected features such as wage, price or market. Clayman and Heritage show that, in the nuanced and sensitive work that considerations of who is benefitting from offers, thankings are part of a family of appreciations, where, beyond offering a simple thanking, a recipient of an offer, can provide an assessment (e.g. on being offered flowers, 'how lovely').

Appreciations on the road have a different character. The appreciations made between vehicles are predominantly non-verbal, they are gestural via the hand-up or mediated via the car's lights (through flashing them) and so do not become as embroiled in the elaborate expressions of politeness, burdens, benefits and strategy in the verbal play of Clayman and Heritage's conversationalists. As I have argued earlier and will move on to show, in the brief encounters in the mobile publics that are drivers in road traffic, it is civility, recognition and rights that are at stake. It may also be that Clayman and Heritage's

metric, which is also the classic concern of transport research costs and benefits, is oriented toward on occasion. The concern with rights is made spectacularly apparent when drivers become enraged rather than calculative in the face of other drivers' perceived transgressions of the moral order of road traffic e.g. pushing-in, disrupting their driving or tailgating them (Katz, 2001).

Driving in traffic is a setting where, then, its members have expectations of civility and those expectations will make incivility apparent. Rights to progress intersect with problems of progression as to who goes first, who goes through, ahead, around etc. made apparent in shifting mobile formations organised through and around speed, trajectory, and categories of vehicles (Lee and Watson, 1993; Smith R. J., 2013; Watson, 2009). Before I begin then to give the impression that appreciations amongst members of traffic happen without the use of talk, driver's thankings, despite being un-hearable by the occupants of the other vehicles, are often verbalised, even though these appreciations go unheard by other drivers. Pedestrians' verbal initiations (e.g. 'excuse me' or simply exhaling loudly) of getting past one another where there is some form of problem of passage tend to be used when visual access is compromised and/or accompany sequential organisation of trajectory, gesture and passing-relevant features of the route to manage passing one another (Goffman, 1963; Weilenmann, Normark, and Laurier, 2014). Equally, pedestrians utilise facial expressions (e.g. smiling), gestures (e.g. nods) and comportment (e.g. body torque) to show their appreciation of being given the right of way. Verbal, if brief appreciations (e.g. 'ta', 'thanks' etc) are also common. The intriguing question then is around what driver's spoken thankings are doing given that they go unheard by other vehicles. The answer begins to become apparent when we consider that driving-in-traffic can be a multiparty setting where alongside other drivers, passengers are one of the parties to what happens. As we shall witness, verbal thankings make available, for the passengers, the driver's ongoing moral conduct toward and assessment of other members of the road. Appreciations are second actions, providing resources for passengers to inspect recent events on the road for one that was thank-able. Yet as second actions notionally directed at other drivers they are also hearable by the passenger as not necessarily requiring their response.

4. Brief methodological description: data source and the perspectival qualities of video

The video data used in this article is part of the Habitable Cars corpus, generated by an ESRC funded project on car travel. 12 vehicles' occupants filmed their typical journeys over a 2 to 4 week period generating 240 hours of video recordings. The vehicles were selected to provide a variety of types (e.g. small and large vehicles), social groups (e.g. families, commuters, friends) and journeys (e.g. commuting, school runs, shopping trips). Each car had 2 cameras which were set-up inside the vehicle to produce a view of the road ahead and a view of the occupants of the car. There were 22 instances of thanking identified in the corpus. These were then narrowed down to concentrate on vehicle-to-vehicle interaction, with an array of orientations, there is thus further work to be done on pedestrian-vehicle negotiation (see Merlino and Mondada, this issue).

As a site for video recording, cars' perspectival properties help remind us that the analyst of the inter-vehicle qualities discussed above: we find ourselves looking from either a thanking driver's perspective at events or a potential recipient of thanks. The latter were harder to identify because of the lack of acceptance markers from the driver, apart from in the final encounter described below where the absence of a thanking is commented on by a driver. One of the features of overhearing phonecalls and many other seemingly de-spatialised settings of talk, is the apparent absence of perspective from the recording (though see Mondada, 2008). The de-spatialised audio allows for a poly-perspectival analysis where the analyst usually overhears as a party nearby. The videos that follow, by comparison, serve as a useful reminder of driving as involving seeing from a perspective, even as it is one that members of traffic expect that they and others make the same 'determinations' of should their perspectives be swapped (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 56). A reminder that is all the more pertinent in vehicular traffic where shared determinations are expected and yet determinations can be harder to pursue than they are for pedestrians, given the restrictions of the acoustic and visual ecologies of vehicles on roads.

5. Producing, recognising and maintaining civility between drivers

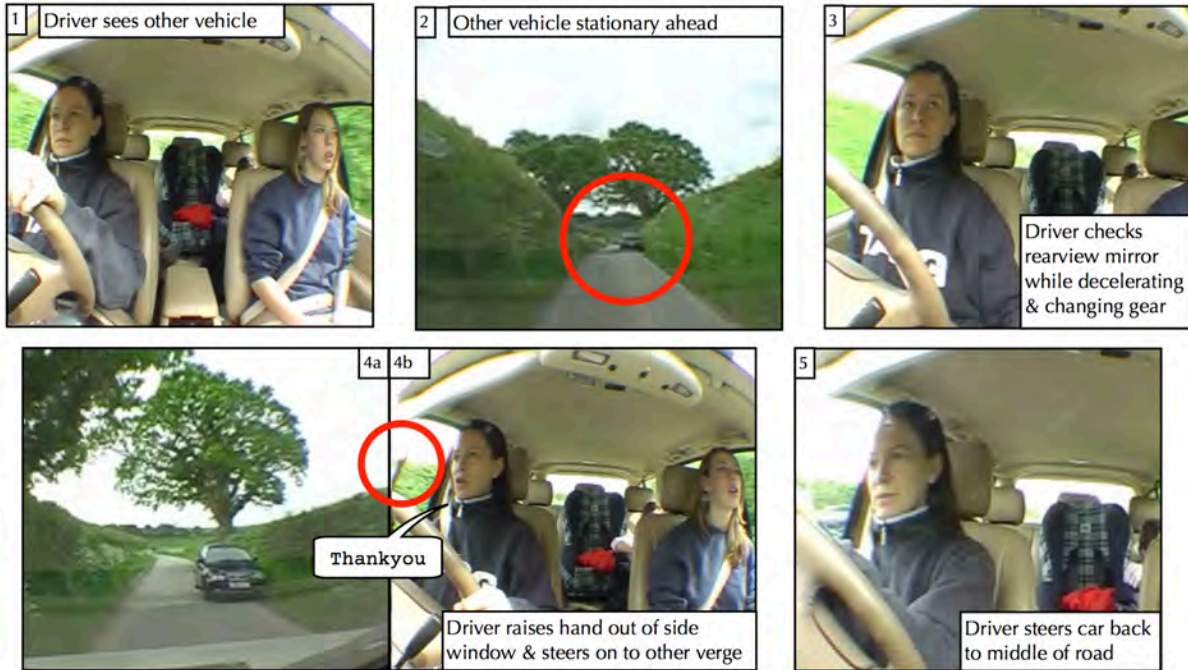
Should one vehicle waive their rights to progress and/or undertake actions that involve some level of inconvenience, disruption or sacrifice of their progression on their journey, then a hand-up or a flash of the hazard lights¹ marks the recognition of their civility, as well as in itself being the continuation of civility. However it would appear that thanking is variable and has inter-vehicular and intra-vehicular recipients. I will try and help us understand the variability by considering, in the light of the recordings of vehicle-to-vehicle encounters on the road, how appreciations vary in response to different actions that can be seen as ‘appreciables’. In the first half of the empirical material I will consider how drivers appreciate passing-by one another, where doing ‘letting pass’, in its details, is the appreciable and is something quite different from the studies of passing-by where there is no problem with logistics of getting past one another (e.g. (González-Martinez, Bangerter, and Lê Van, 2017; Mondada, 2009)). I will examine the hand-up and its sequential placement in the sequence of driving-actions and the changing spatial visibility arrangements of the vehicles. In the second half of the analysis I will consider, doing ‘let in’ or ‘let out’ is the appreciable. At the same time I will shift my consideration to the verbal ‘thanks’ and the purposes it might serve in intra-vehicular organisation of multiple activities and moral arbitration.

6. Hand-up - appreciations for passing

Drivers are primarily accountable for the operation of the car and its actions which, in what follows, is the production of offers+appreciations and requests+offers+appreciations as paired actions. As I have noted earlier, the enclosed shell of the road vehicle combined with its movement usually blocks out inter-vehicular talk. What we will examine in this sections is then the raised hand or ‘hand-up’, the iconic gesture of appreciation in relation to the unfolding spatial and sequential organisation of passing by one another.

The first encounter is in a simple and time-hallowed road ecology: a narrow country road without any markings, traffic lights or signs, where cars and similar vehicles can only drive past one another with difficulty (see transcript 3). Our driver encounters another car ahead that has already pulled into the side of the road and come to a halt, thereby producing an ‘offer’ to pass. The initial road situation out of which the offer emerges, appears relatively equal given that there is no obvious right of way for either party. Our driver raises her hand for the other driver to show her appreciation for their having pulled aside and stopped.

¹ While I have cases of hazard light flashes, there is not the space to present them here. Hazard lights appear to be used when the driver is distant or the visual ecology of the car obscures their gestures.

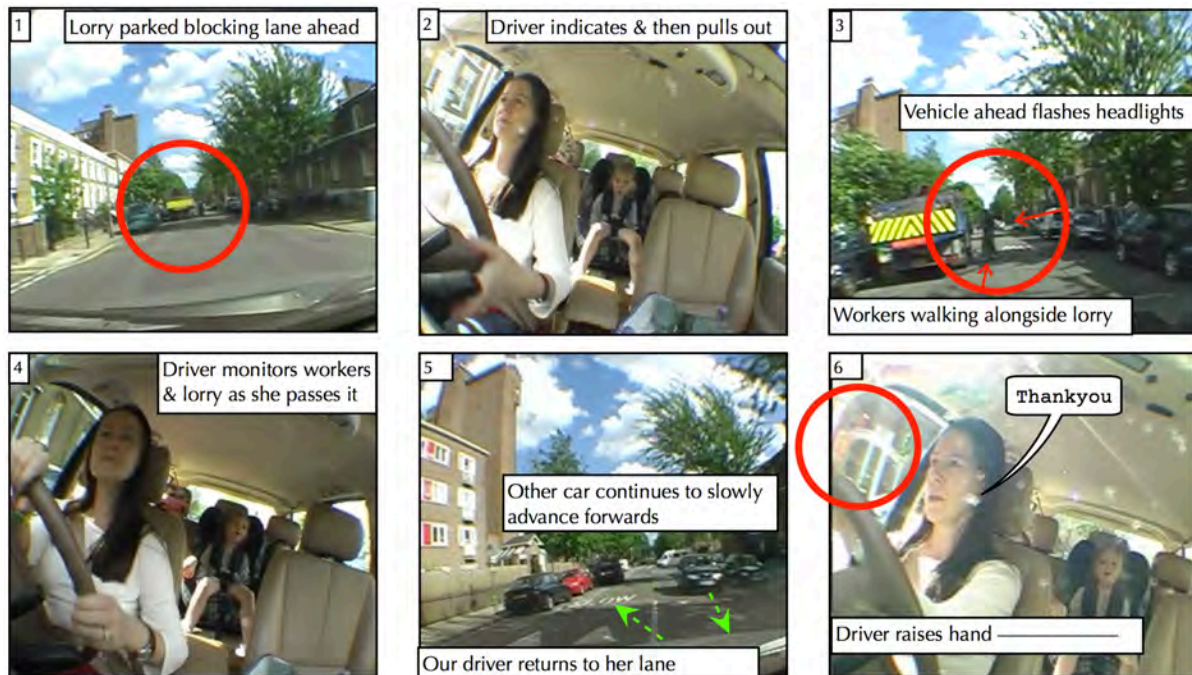


Transcript 3 - Thanking while passing on a narrow country road

Our driver, in order to produce her hand-up appreciation, that will be seen by the other, analyses the distance at which her face and hand movement will be visible. Proximity for visibility is either combined with visual monitoring of the other's visual monitoring (i.e. when that other driver is themselves looking toward the oncoming car) and/or extending the duration of the gesture in order for it to be visible within an expected temporality of inter-vehicular monitoring (Deppermann, de Stefani, Cromdal and Broth, this issue; Sudnow, 1972). It also appears to be commonly produced on the side of the vehicle which fits to the perspective of the oncoming driver, here on the driver's right side (transcript 3, panel 4b). As we will see later, other formations of driver actions in traffic, will involve thanking with the car placed nose-to-tail rather than nose-to-nose where the other hand is raised in the space between the driver and passenger where it will be visible from the rear, framed between the front seats.

Having first formulated the other car's stationary presence ahead, analytic caution may be required around whether we have an offer+acceptance action pair here or a driving practice could be glossed as 'squeezing past one another'. Whichever better describes the practical organisation of this encounter, it also occasions a verbal thanking as an appreciation by our driver (panel 4b). By halting one vehicle has made a minor, yet mutually recognisable, sacrifice of their progress while the other has been able to continue on their way. By stopping and pulling over to 'their' side of the road early they then avoid an intersubjective negotiation of which party should progress (see Deppermann, this issue). They thereby also surrender their right of way pre-emptively.

In the next fragment, we shift to an urban setting with road markings, two lanes and multiple entities potentially involved, not that all of these features are relevant in the encounter between the vehicles that occasions an appreciation from one. Our driver is making their way along a city road with ample space for contraflow traffic, however there is a lorry ahead blocking the lane that will require moving into the opposing lane for passing the lorry. Once in the opposing lane, an oncoming vehicle is visible and it lets them pass. On encountering the car on the far side of the roadworks our driver then thanks them.



Transcript 4: Thanking while passing an obstacle on a city road

At first glance the appreciation (transcript 4, panel 6) appears to be similar to the cars passing on the country road. An offer to let our driver pass has been made by the other driver, in this case, by the other driver flashing their lights (panel 3), rather than pulling over to one side and stopping. However, in this case, our driver's lane is blocked, thereby putting her in a position where, to get around the obstacle, she will have to move to the opposing traffic's lane which she has lesser rights to drive in than cars driving in its intended-direction.

Given that our driver can be seen to need a minor amount of help in order to get past the obstacle, her mobile situation is one where other drivers can offer help without a direct request (Kendrick and Drew, 2016). In terms of this encounter's emergence, the offer of help is somewhat compromised because our driver is already driving on the wrong side of the road (panel 2).

Our driver is only able to see that there is an oncoming car with a right of way, once she has pulled out. The lorry is not only an obstacle, it is also blocking our driver's lines of sight down the road. Although it is underway, traversing an obstacle is an action that can be abandoned by our driver, though not without some additional effort, in order to wait for the other car to pass. Why she does not do so appears to turn on, firstly the relative distance of both parties in relation to the obstacle, the other vehicle is quite distant and, secondly, the other vehicle flashing their lights. While, in a de-contextualised sense, the flash of car lights appears to be open to multiple interpretation (e.g. the same flash can be a warning or a reprimand) it is made sense of through a gestalt consisting of, firstly, the use of the lights to mark a 'go-ahead' (and not a 'get out of the way') is a norm in UK road traffic (see also the analysis of Transcript 6 below), secondly, it is from a recognisably distant position (rather than proximate with an immediate risk of collision), thirdly it is not extended (which would be a way of marking it as distinct from the relatively brief 'go-ahead') and fourthly, it is accompanied by deceleration. The situation is, in short, not ambiguous requiring the mutual responsive-anticipatory adaptation documented by Deppermann (this issue), but the other driver helps in securing that lack of ambiguity by showing that they are yielding their right of way as our car comes into their perspective.

We can have a sense of the ambiguity which leads to an absence of appreciation in the next fragment. There are cars parked on both sides of the road, leaving only room for one vehicle to pass down the middle. There are, however, many spaces in-between the parked cars providing potential passing places. Our car driver sees a car in the distance and initially shifts toward a space on her left to provide room. As they continue to converge the other driver pulls into a space to offer our driver a way past. Our driver offers no visible or audible thanking of the other driver.



Transcript 5: passing without thanking

The absence of appreciation emerges out of a course of action which lacks one vehicle having sacrificed a right or help which would have clearly made it, by comparison, the appreciable party. There is ambiguity in the other car perhaps giving up its right of way by pulling to one side, in a similar fashion to the first fragment on the country road, however this waiver was preceded by our car, on seeing the other car, visibly depart from the middle of the road thereby also showing willing to give up its position (transcript 5, panel 2). In parallel, the other driver was also moving out of the middle of the road to allow our driver to pass. In short, both cars begin to give up their right of way. It is the vehicular equivalent of a parallel arrival and offer to pass through a door: “A: After you, B: No, after you”.

In these three brief encounters, as instances of passing-by, the drivers continue their onward movement as the ‘acceptance’ of the waiving of the rights of the other. In the first two cases the drivers do not prefigure their acceptance by responsive-anticipatory adaptation, in third case they do, through decelerating in sync with the opposing car, or steering toward their side as a pre-offer. In all cases there is a vehicle that either slows and/or stops and/or steers off the road to their side to waive their right of way. In Clayman and Heritage’s (2014) terms, it is the latter that would be the ‘benefactor’ and the other that continues on their way, a ‘beneficiary’. However, as argued earlier, I see one party waiving their rights, rather than a calculus of benefit between the drivers and, in the first two encounters, an appreciation of having gained rights without ‘negotiation’ to pass by. Given the problem of passing has been solved by, one party should appreciate the good in other’s abnegation of their right of way. To pass by without acknowledgment of the other avoids recognising their sacrifice of the other’s progression. It is in this sense that thanking and related forms of acknowledgement of minor generosity are in the territories of civility (and incivility) on the road or indeed generosity (Raffel, 2001). While examining the particulars that can account for the presence or absence of thanking in these particular encounter, from the larger corpus and my ethnographic experience of UK driving practices, the absence of thanking between drivers where one party has ceded their right of way is common, though not without complaint. However there are situations where there is a far stronger expectation of appreciation and it is to those that I will now turn.

7. Appreciations after ‘letting in’; the passenger as adjudicator

Appreciations are actions that may form second parts after an offer or finish a three-part sequence of request+offer+appreciation. Their occurrence is expected and they are morally oriented

toward a previous mobile action that is an appreciable. In this section I will turn to a set of first actions which take us into the relinquishment of a right of way that is referred to, amongst other formulations, as ‘letting in’ and ‘letting out’. Appreciations are keenly expected in these traffic situations where the party with lesser rights recognises that they have nevertheless been given an opportunity to progress. Common situations of lesser right are, for example, entering from a minor road into a major road or in a parallel lane with no gap to transfer into the other parallel lane. The ‘letting in’ and ‘letting out’ from one driver may be prefigured by requests from other (e.g. indicating or putting the nose of the car further out from a junction) or arise more spontaneously from the generosity of the driver on seeing a car whose position projects help as a relevant response (Kendrick and Drew, 2016). In considering these thankings I will also touch on the driver’s skilled manipulation/appropriation of the shell of the vehicle.

While the previous section concentrated solely on the inter-vehicle aspects of appreciation, in this section I will also widen the focus to encompass to the intra-vehicle hearable ‘thanks’. While driver’s talk is hearably directed at other cars, its recipients are the occupants of the vehicle and, in particular, front-seat passengers. For those parties, they provide a resource in making sense of the driver switching their attention between driving and the other activities they undertake with passengers (Mondada, 2012). ‘Thank you’ as well as alerting passengers to a switch in attention also then potentially brings their attention and judgement to bear on the other members of traffic, though also upon the driver. As a number of previous studies of mobility have shown (McIlvenny, Broth, and Haddington, 2014; Ryave and Schenkein, 1974), members move as a ‘together’ with concomitant collective accountability as a mobile unit. The accountability for a road vehicle is not just the driver’s alone, it is distributed amongst its members. In the final fragment in this section, where a driver mistakenly reprimands another for their lack of gratitude, the passenger’s moral arbitration is made all the more apparent. Before that more unusual example I will examine two encounters where our car is ‘let in’ (or ‘let out’) by another vehicle.

The first encounter takes place in a nose-to-tail arrangement on a multi-lane highway in congested commuting traffic. After our driver has moved into a gap in the faster lane to her right, she says ‘thankyou’ and raises her hand in the gap between the seats.



Transcript 6: Thanking while changing lanes on a multilane highway

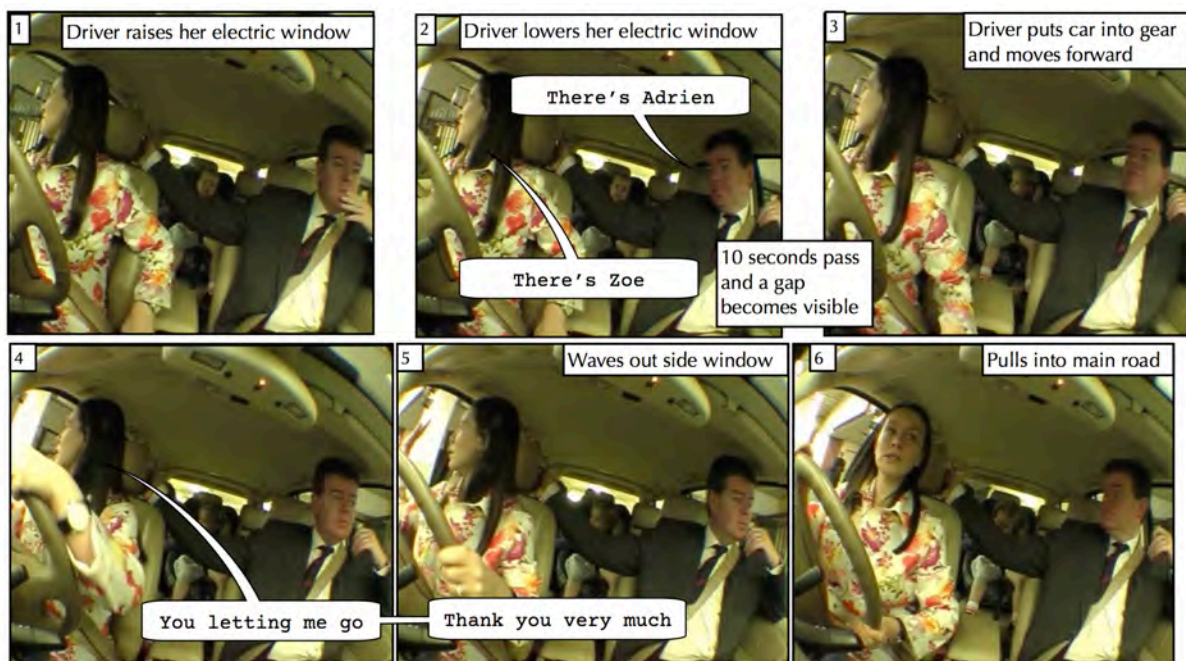
The shift between lanes is prepared for through the driver making a request by activating her indicator, which is available to both the intended cohort of vehicles that could let her in and the passenger. Preceding and succeeding the indicator, the driver makes a series of looks into the side mirror (transcript 6, panels 2 and 4) in order to closely monitor the queue of vehicles in her target lane, actions

which are available to the passenger (though not usually to other drivers). Accompanying the driver's preparations for a lane change is a slightly oddly phrased noticing 'we're not fast going', about their speed. A noticing which also serves to account for changing lanes into the faster lane. For the passenger, the lack of speed then makes a relevant an aligned noticing on the crowded motorway around them (panel 3). However alongside the noticing, the passenger also glances to the fast lane following the driver's activation of the indicator (panel 2). She is then maintaining a shared awareness of the lane that the driver is now targeting.

The first car that passes (panel 2) does not slow to offer the driver a gap. Ahead of the next car, a gap is offered (panel 4) and our driver steers immediately into it. The hand-up appreciation is produced only once the car is located ahead of the car behind, in time with a close inspection of the rear-view mirror for its acceptance by the rear car. The extended duration of the hand-up is common across the collection of both nose-to-nose (see transcript 3) and rearward waves. By monitoring the driver in the car behind, through the use of the rear view mirror, the driver is able to produce a thanking at a point in the sequential-spatial organisation where by their relative alignment and proximity, the driver's vehicle's seat gap will make a raised hand visible (transcript 6, panel 6).

As noted earlier, the rearward orientation precludes the visibility of the unheard but spoken 'thankyou'. 'Thankyou' is then, in this fragment, not something that the other driver can receive. There is, as I have noted earlier, an in-car recipient in this encounter: the passenger. In this fragment we have a fellow driver, sitting in the front, that has just been showing her orientation to circumstances which could make changing lane relevant (e.g. the passenger noticing 'it's quite congested this morning' in panel 3). The spoken 'thank you' is produced ahead of the hand-up, at the point when the driver is having to be attentive to the lane-changing and thus unavailable for the passenger. It is then timed in relation to our driver and passenger's participation and not the other vehicle's.

In the next fragment we will shift vehicle orientation from front-to-front, or rear-to-front, to orthogonal. I will also continue to examine the passenger's monitoring of the driver's appreciations. On this occasion our driver is seeking to pull out into a main road from a minor road, which is an exit from an underground school car park. The vehicles on the main road have the right of way. Attempting to enter into busy traffic from a side road with occluded lines of sight is also a setting which makes relevant the assistance of the passenger in helping monitor movements from their side or indeed from the driver's side. The driver waits while several cars go past, until a vehicle then lets them out, which the driver acknowledges with a verbal thanking and wave out of her side window. While they are waiting, the passenger and driver offer noticings of people that they know from the school.



Transcript 7: Thanking while taking a slot on a main road from a minor road

In this encounter, the manipulation of the car’s windows is undertaken as part of preparing two courses of action that orient toward the collective civility of the traffic: *appealing to be let out of the car park* and *thanking the driver (and potentially passenger) that responds to the plea*. The window is completely down when the driver arrives at the junction, presumably from an earlier activity related to the school drop-off that they have undertaken previously. The driver closes the window completely (transcript 7, panel 1) only to start sliding it down again until it reaches a certain level (panel 2) – most likely the driver is trying to deal with the difficulties of using buttons to control electric windows². The height appears to be adjusted to sit in line with the driver’s chin – thereby neatly framing her entire face for approaching vehicles. The manipulation of the car window makes the driver’s face not simply more visible, it is, like having sunglasses on and then being able to take them off, forming a resource for doing contrasts hiding a face or revealing a face (Raffel, 2001). By moving the glass of the window out of the way, the driver appears more visible and also perhaps vulnerable, by comparison with the protected or hidden face behind the glass. Lowering the window is part, then, of an increasing level of pursuit of civility from one of the members of the oncoming traffic (Kendrick and Drew, 2016).

Our driver in this example, although beginning to move forward (see transcript 5, line 12) to take what appears to be an offer from another driver, remains uncertain about the actions of that other driver.

```

12   DRI   #(1.1)#      $(0.3)^ (0.1)^      >*(you) @letting me go@<
     dri   #puts into gear#
     dri   $drives forward----->>
     dri   >>-----look ahead^ ^look right-----
     dri   * . . . . .
     pas   >>-----looks left @ahead@

13   DRI   @>Thankyou ^ very much<* (0.2)@
     dri   raised hand-----|. . .*
     dri   -----^look ahead----->>
     pas   @rapidly looks left-----@

```

Transcript 7b: Passenger investigating driver’s uncertainty (DRI/dri = driver, PAS/pas = passenger)

Just after the driver’s formulation ‘you letting me go’, which marks the uncertainty of the other vehicle’s action, the passenger in response to the driver’s uncertainty, looks across to investigate the approaching car (see Transcript 5b, line 13). In terms of the passenger’s participation in this multiparty action, he then becomes a participant in watching the traffic for a gap that will allow them to enter the main road and/or a future judgement from them of either their driver, or the other driver’s conduct, in obtaining a place in the traffic flow. Interestingly this passenger, and other passengers in our collection of recordings, look in the opposite direction to the driver. They are, then, already distributing the monitoring work for the driver by checking the direction that the driver cannot at the moment monitor. On the basis of looking the other way they are then able to offer assistance in the form of ‘you’re clear on my side’, ‘watch out pedestrian’ etc.

In this case, when at line 13 it becomes clear that a gap has been offered, our driver says ‘thankyou very much’ where the modifier ‘very much’ marks a greater favour being made by the other party and appears all the more relevant in offering definiteness where there has been delay and ambiguity in settling what is happening. Had our driver not thanked the other driver, it is common enough for passengers to then raise a hand in the gap between the seats, as a thanking for them as a ‘together’ encapsulated within the shell of the car. And, of course, the upgraded “thank you” is not hearable anyway by the other driver but by the passenger. It is clear that the passenger is then sensitive both to where their assistance might be needed but also then aware that thanking was done for their vehicle.

In the situation above, the right of way of the drivers on the main road is complicated by the fact that the main road has steady traffic on it. The very uninterruptedness of the traffic creates a situation where drivers in that constant flow, with an orientation to civility, can see another vehicle as

² One of the things that handle winders allow is setting the exact aperture of the car window with ease.

‘trapped’ in the minor road. The next encounter brings us into the driver and passengers’ perspective in just such a situation. The significance of civility manifest in the accountability surrounding rights of way in traffic is also more obvious in this next case because it appears to be violated by the recipient of assistance. In the fragment, there is further orientation to the sacrifice of rights in that the driver downplays the generosity of her act, before then complaining when it appears that the other driver has failed to show an appreciation of her generosity.



Transcript 8: Offering a gap and missing an acknowledgement

Our driver spots the stuck car from a distance (transcript 8, panel 1), brakes and reaches for her headlight control to flash her lights, thereby projecting her upcoming offer of a gap (panel 3). She then slows further, thereby creating a decent gap for the driver of the stuck car to make use of (panel 4a and 4b). Consequently, the driver’s actions produce a seemingly unambiguous offer of a gap ahead. When the other car shows no uptake by e.g. rolling forward into the nearer lane, our driver harries the other car,

‘c’mon I can’t go anywhere...’, which is unheard by the other car, of course. Her harrying does draw the attention of the passenger toward what the other car is doing.

Meantime, the seeming sacrifice of her right to progress has its benefit to our driver. She has been waiting to light a cigarette, making-an-offer provides the opportunity to do so (panel 5). While our driver is lighting her cigarette, the other car pulls out, gesturing their appreciation through their window (panel 6). The gesture is missed because our driver is distracted, yet, it is also the case that the driver of the other car is waving thanks from behind the glass of a partially open window. As we observed earlier (transcript 5), where the glass of the window was lowered to expose the driver, here, the raised glass partially obscures the gestures of the driver. Not having noticed the gesture, our driver then complains via an ironic ‘s’alright you’re welcome’ which is, of course, unheard by the other driver and is instead highlighting the absence of the thank-you for the passenger (panel 7).

Closing acceptances of appreciations (e.g. ‘you’re welcome’) are absent in the corpus apart from in marking the absence of appreciations by other drivers. Indeed, their use *sotto voce* is common in marking the absence of appreciations elsewhere where civility is expected. The driver’s ironic acceptance then allows the passenger to become aware that the driver did not see the other driver’s hand-up appreciation. We have a sense then that the front seat passenger becoming an arbiter of events on the road, through her emphatic: ‘he did say thankyou’ (panel 8), defending the other party. Indeed, the passenger’s access to the morality of the unfolding events is further shaped by being within the shell of the vehicle. Within the shell she is witness to our driver’s side activity, an activity which is hidden from the other driver. In correcting the driver’s misperception of the other driver she then also provides an account which is morally relevant to a driver and attends to the kind of concerns around benefactive stance and status, in relation offers, that interested Clayman and Heritage (2014).

In this second half of the analysis of vehicular appreciations I have, then, examined the sequential and mobile spatial organisation of actions where thanking between drivers of vehicles is keenly expected and its absence is telling. I have begun also to make clear the elegant way in which a hand-up, accompanied by a verbal thankyou, deals with the multiple parties outside the shell of the vehicle and inside the shell of the vehicle. For the latter it assists in making other members of the ‘together’ within the vehicle aware of help being offered by, or to, other drivers. In doing so it makes the passengers accountable as members of the vehicle, shifting them into becoming arbiters of the actions that driver undertakes with the vehicle that they are part of. A distinction much more marked in driving lessons where the passenger ongoingly monitors and assesses the actions of the person driving a car that is not yet fully competent and/or certified as a driver of themselves and others (Broth et al., this issue; De Stefani, this issue; De Stefani and Gazin, 2014; Deppermann, this issue).

8. Conclusion: Civility amongst members of traffic

Traffic on the road system is classically pictured by transport planners as shaped by cost-benefit analysis in a thankless struggle of minimisation and maximisation of relative costs and benefits (Lyons and Urry, 2005). There is an echo of the cost-benefit analysis of transport planners, in the strand in conversation analysis that also lodges requests, offers and appreciations in an economic calculus of benefit (Clayman and Heritage, 2014). It might then seem that in examining the sequences of inter-vehicular action we would find benefactive logics at work and the return of a kind of calculus of the status of each driver, but one that arises in relation to which party offers what. In the light of the recordings and their analysis, there is instead an organisation of traffic by rights and, more specifically, the familiar, if culturally and geographically variable, criteria and manifestations of rights of way. Drivers and passengers examine the situation for which party has the right of way and their civility arises in honouring and waiving those rights, while correspondingly their incivility arises in ignoring or grabbing them. Even though the right of way might seem to simplify mobile matters, complexity returns in the intersubjective coordination on each and every occasion under local contingencies of manoeuvres, traffic codes, traffic signs, type of vehicle etc. who has the right of way and then whether it will given away or retained where civility ought to inform that discretion and for the other member of traffic, their appreciation of being allowed or helped to progress (Deppermann, this issue).

In the analysis of the article, by concentrating on when thanking appeared to be due and done, and when it was left more at the discretion of the driver, I distinguished between first situations where

initial rights were less clear and those where they were apparent. For the former this was the case when both drivers were faced with a problem of how to pass-by one another by and for the latter this was where one driver, with rights to progress, made civility highly relevant by letting the other in or out. In all cases, the hand-up was produced with a sequential orientation, following on from an acceptance generated by the movement of the accepting vehicle. The hand-up's precise timing was then judged for nose-to-nose vehicles by a point of proximity where gestures through the windscreen or out of the side-window would be visible and expected. For orthogonally positioned vehicles the hand-up, following the acceptance by forward motion of the vehicle, is immediately visible for the vehicle that 'lets them out'. For nose-to-tail vehicles, the hand-up is produced as the vehicle taking a 'gap' ahead of the other vehicle spatially aligns with the vehicle that that 'let them in'. Thankings between vehicles show, then a temporal sensitivity and spatial awareness of the monitoring practices of their recipient (for an example of this in a public transport setting see Heath et al., 2002)

As became clear in the second half of my analysis, the driver's appreciations are situated within a multiparty situation which is itself acoustically unevenly distributed between vehicles and within vehicles. In the encounters I have described, the car then is not so much Urry's (2006) cocoon as a safety-glassed room shared with family, friends and/or fellow commuters. The audible 'thank you' while notionally directed at the other vehicle is only heard within the same vehicle by the passenger (predominantly the front-seat passenger) and assists them in the local organisation of activities within the car. The audible 'thank you' (or its absence) also potentially then enrolls them in the accountable actions of the vehicle that they are a subsidiary member of as a passenger. Thanking, or reprimands of other vehicles (e.g. the 'you're welcome') for failing to appreciate offers, alerts the passenger to unfolding events where they might assist the driver by mutually monitoring the moral scene (it has similarities with the more formal awareness work between pilots and co-pilots in aircraft; Nevile, 2004). Consideration of the collective accountability of the driver and passenger in the front seat further helps us to understand how thanking said aloud is for the front seat passenger's benefit, making available that this car, of which the passenger is a member, is 'doing being civil' toward other drivers and that equally the wider society of traffic is found to be more or less civil.

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