

Acarón, T. (2016). Shape-in(g) space: Body, boundaries, and violence. *Space and Culture*, 19(2), 139-149.

### Synopsis

In this article, Acarón interrogated the relationship between the body and space, and how people perceive and make use of each. Drawing from various studies across multiple areas of discipline, Acarón framed her examination of this complex and ever-changing relationship through the categorization of ways in which the body relates to space. These categories – body centrality, portability, extensibility, social flexibility, and transversality – act as points of entry for the analysis of spatiality and its connection to lived experiences in what Acarón referred to as “embodied space” (p. 141). Of major focus in Acarón’s analysis was the concept of space as a site of difference. She explored several areas of agency considering both internal and external factors, and examined how the use of bodies and space determines power, as well as the violence that can occur as the result of certain assertions or denials of power. Central to Acarón’s argument was the notion that the body/space relationship is both symbiotic and grounded in social process, and that analysis of body movement within space can be a valuable contributor to the study of social theory.

### Key Concepts

- ***Kinesphere***: “A spherical surrounding of the body’s spatial reach; the spherical of space around your body, as big as arms and legs can reach (from any vantage point—sitting, standing, or lying down)” (p. 140).
- ***Embodied space***: “the location where human experience and consciousness take on material and spatial form” (p. 141).
- ***Extensibility***: “a characteristic of embodied space that relates to the notions of ‘levels of space’ radiating from the body to the outside world, which can be seen as a continuation of the body projected in space” (p. 143).

### Key Quotes

- “Space cannot be viewed as a static envelope or stage within which social life unfolds. Rather it is a dynamic entity constituted out of a shifting ensemble of meanings, practices, and interrelationships” (p. 140).
- “As body shapes space and space shapes bodies, particular bodies, especially those of women, people with disabilities, and older adults are affected when embodied space is limited, restricted by others or the environment” (p. 146).
- “The body is not in a vacuum, it coexists within embodied space with its surroundings, is conditioned by its history, culture, gender, race, age, and class. This is what makes the discourse around violence, body, and space so relevant” (p. 147).

### Essential Question

- Acarón wrote that portability is “linked to our sense of agency” (p. 142). How has new portable and mobile media affected bodily and spatial agency for different groups of people, like people with disabilities?