

## BOOK REVIEWS

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*Editor*

### EVERYDAY INTERACTION AND ITS PRACTICAL ACCOMPLISHMENT: PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN ETHNOMETHODOLOGICAL RESEARCH

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ETHNOMETHODOLOGICAL research displays a strong commitment to the study of social order within naturally occurring events. Particular attention is drawn to how everyday activities are routinely accomplished according to the rules, maxims, and strategies that practical reasoners use to organize communication. Stimulated by the 1967 publication of Harold Garfinkel's *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, this research orientation has sustained its momentum through a series of rather diverse yet integrated attempts to describe features of ordinary face-to-face interaction.<sup>1</sup>

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Frequently cited references would include: Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1967); Richard Hill and Kathleen Crittendon, eds., *Proceedings on the Purdue Symposium on Ethnomethodology* (Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue Research Foundation, 1968); Jack Douglas, ed., *Understanding Everyday Life* (Chicago: Aldine, 1970); Edward Tiryakian and John McKinney, eds., *Theoretical Sociology* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970); Paul Filmer, Michael Phillipson, David Silverman, and David Walsh, *New Directions in Sociological Theory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972); David

Three lines of empirical inquiry have emerged within ethnomethodology since Garfinkel's early work: formal ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, and cognitive sociology.<sup>2</sup> Each analytic orientation can be identified by the types of questions raised and the criteria employed for assessing meaningful "data." "Formal ethnomethodology," as represented by Garfinkel and his colleagues, has resulted in a series of single case

Sudnow, ed., *Studies in Social Interaction* (New York: Free Press, 1972); Roy Turner, ed., *Ethnomethodology* (London: Penguin Books, 1974); Mathew Speier, *How to Observe Face-to-Face Interaction: A Sociological Introduction* (Pacific Palisades, California: Goodyear Publishing, 1973); Hugh Mehan and Houston Wood, *The Reality of Ethnomethodology* (New York: Wiley, 1975); and Jim Schenkein, ed., *Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction* (New York: Academic Press, 1978).

<sup>2</sup>The major proponent of cognitive sociology, Aaron Cicourel, was extensively involved in early developments of ethnomethodological thinking. Although his research efforts are relied upon quite heavily by the authors discussed in this review, major works produced by Cicourel will not be examined in detail. Interested readers are referred to Aaron Cicourel, *Method and Measurement in Sociology* (New York: Free Press, 1964); Aaron Cicourel, *The Social Organization of Juvenile Justice* (New York: Wiley, 1968); Aaron Cicourel, *Cognitive Sociology* (London: Penguin Books, 1973); and Aaron Cicourel, *Theory and Method in a Study of Argentine Fertility* (New York: Wiley, 1974).

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studies focusing on the social construction of everyday events within a variety of settings.<sup>3</sup> Viewing interactants themselves as methodologists who common-sensically create a sense of social reality, these

scholars study the relationship between practical reasoning and social structure in specific communication contexts. How, it might be asked, do interactants rely upon background understandings and common knowledge in order to use and make sense of natural language? Similarly, how might interactants use contextual particulars to describe (and/ or nonverbally display) their sense of how given settings are organized (indexicality)? And what reciprocal relationships exist among the accounts being offered, the settings being elaborated, and the commonsense interpretations made by researchers as they attempt to understand how accounts and settings mutually influence one another (reflexivity)?

Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff, Gail Jefferson, and others have produced research exemplars of a different sort, commonly labeled "conversation analysis."<sup>4</sup> Conversation analytic goals are oriented toward an understanding of the sequential mechanisms of speech exchange, i.e. the ways in which ordinary conversations are "workably built and turn-organized" according to procedural rules. Utterances are considered sequentially ordered units, functionally depen-

<sup>3</sup>Within formal ethnomethodology, settings might best be described as "occasioned corpuses." The "texture" of any given context is reflected in the organized nature of interactional accomplishments, i.e., a "member's methods for displaying and detecting the setting's features." See Don Zimmerman and Melvin Pollner, "The Everyday World as a Phenomenon," in Douglas, ed., pp. 80-103.

<sup>4</sup>Conversation analytic research has been stimulated by Harvey Sacks's widely distributed, but largely unpublished, lecture notes. References to these lecture

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dent upon their temporal duration and sequential location within a series of ongoing turns. As speaker changes recur and turns are allocated and distributed among interactants, conversation analysts question the detailed and coordinated nature of practical reasoning devices and their particular relevance to *getting things done* conversationally. In short, the ways in which interactants orient to and construct sequential turn formats is of basic interest to these analysts of communicative behavior.

This review is an attempt to introduce and extend our interest in and working knowledge of formal ethnomethodology and conversation analytic approaches to social interaction. The seven books to be reviewed represent the most recent empirical applications, theoretical and philosophical position statements, and methodological considerations of ethnomethodology as a descriptive approach to everyday communication. These books might best be organized into four general categories: 1) a basic overview of ethnomethodological assumptions and research efforts (Leiter's *A Primer on Ethnomethodology*); 2) collections of conversation analytic and formal ethnomethodological studies and position statements (Psathas's *Everyday Language*, a special issue of *Sociological Inquiry*, entitled "Language and Social Interaction," co-edited by Don Zimmerman and Gandace West, and Psathas and Frankel's *Interactional Competence*); 3) a consideration of methodological strategies (Schwartz and Jacob's *Qualitative Sociology: A Method to the Madness*); and 4) inquiries into specific empirical issues within the ethnomethodological framework (Coulter's *The Social Construction of Mind*, and Wootton's *Dilemmas of Discourse: Controversies About the Sociological Interpretation of Language*).

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In their own way and for their specific purposes, these authors reflect ethnomethodological priorities that compliment and contradict current trends and problems in communication theory. In light of increasing references to and borrowings from ethnomethodological work by communication scholars,<sup>5</sup> there appears to be an interest in and need for convergence among ethnomethodology and communication research orientations.

For example, researchers involved in the study of *face-to-face interaction* will find that ethnomethodologists challenge traditional relationships among interpretations and understandings, cognitions and behaviors, rules and regularities (roles and norms), language and meaning, reality construction and social structure as they study the methods used by interactants to organize communicative situations. Those interested in the *philosophy of social science* will discover why and how ethnomethodologists have constructed an anti-positivistic position. By critically examining the presuppositional nature of accepted conceptualizations and the actual practices used by researchers as they impose scientific order upon the non-scientific social world, knowledge claims are routinely submitted to reflexive scrutiny.<sup>6</sup> This

<sup>5</sup>This influence was evident at the recent *First Annual Summer Conference on Conversational Interaction and Discourse Processes* (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1981). Recurrent citations of Garfinkel's text and other resources are increasingly common in theory texts, articles, book reviews, and unpublished manuscripts. More specific applications may be found in Robert E. Nofsinger, Jr., "On Answering Questions Indirectly: Some Rules in the Grammar of Doing Conversation," *Human Communication Research*, 2 (1976), 172-81; Leonard C. Hawes, "The Reflexivity of Communication Research," *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 42 (1978), 12-20; Daniel J. O'Keefe, "Ethnomethodology," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 9 (1979), 187-219; and Robert Hopper, "The Taken for Granted," *Human Communication Research*, 1 (1981), 195-211.

<sup>6</sup>This critical perspective is most clearly developed reflexive stance, however, has prompted numerous counter-typifications of ethnomethodological positions.<sup>7</sup> And finally, recent efforts directed toward the *philosophical status of communication research*\* have drawn particular attention to the relationship between ontology and epistemology, i.e., how philosophical elaborations and empirical endeavors are

commonsense grounding of methodological tools is necessary because there exists a "yawning chasm" between conventional theory and research. See Michael Phillip-son, "Theory, Methodology, and Conceptualization," p. 78.

<sup>7</sup>The ethnomethodological program has received considerable attention and has been criticized on various grounds. For example, arguments have been offered that ethnomethodology: "conducts its inquiries under the auspices of a concrete, positivistic conception of adequacy," see Alan F. Blum and Peter McHugh, "The Social Ascription of Motives," *American Sociological Review*, 36 (1971), p. 99; has not necessarily re-structured the foundations of sociological theory, see John H. Gold-thorpe, "A Revolution in Sociology?," *Sociology*, 7 (1973), 449-462; has uncritically assumed a phenome-nological connection with Husserl and is subject to many of the early "existentialist traps," see Z. Bauman, "On the Philosophical Status of Ethnomethodology," *The Sociological Review*, 21 (1973), 5-23; has extended role analysis by carefully considering the actor but does not adequately handle the "resistance" produced by others, see Stephen J. Pfohl, "Social Role Analysis: The Ethnomethodological Critique," *Sociology and Social Research*, 59 (1975), 243-265; has been critiqued (from a Marxist perspective) on its relationship between meaning in contexts and their political significance in everyday life, see Denis Gleeson and Michael Erben, "Meaning in Context: Notes Towards a Critique of Ethnomethodology," *British Journal of Sociology*, 27 (1976), 474-483; has developed a subjectivist and psychologically reductionist stance toward social structure, see Raymond Gordon, "Ethnomethodology: A Radical Critique," *Human Relations*, 29 (1976), 193-202; and has been inconsistent in its treatment of "sense-making practices" and is incapable of discovering "universally invariant properties," see James Heap, "What are Sense-Making Practices?," *Sociological Inquiry*, 46 (1976), 51-60.

<sup>8</sup>For example, see two recent lead book reviews in *QJS*: Richard L. Lanigan, "Contemporary Philosophy of Communication," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 64 (1978), 335-347; John Stewart, "Philosophy of Qualitative Inquiry: Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Communication Research," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 67 (1981), 109-121. See also Michael J. Hyde, "The Experience of Anxiety: A Phenomenological Investigation," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 66 (1980), 140-154.

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reflexively tied. Ethnomethodology offers a noteworthy example of a research orientation that has benefited from explicit linkages with philosophical roots, including the phenomenological influence of Husserl, Gurwitsch, and especially Schutz's writings on social reality and commonsense reasoning in everyday life, symbolic interactionism as espoused by Blumer and Mead, Wittgenstein's work in ordinary language and the philosophy of mind, and speech act theory as proposed by Austin and further refined by Searle and Grice.

Having provided a general overview of ethnomethodology and its relevance to communication inquiry, we now turn to specific considerations of seven current developments in ethnomethodological research.

#### A PRIMER ON ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

As an introduction and bridge between various texts and studies, Leiter's ethnomethodological primer is intended to "provide the reader with a scheme of interpretation that would explicitly link the perspective with the research." Since ethnomethodology is often viewed in a somewhat "mysterious" light, Leiter's concerns rest with *demystifying* the approach by offering a straightforward account of the assumptions, roots, and applications of the ethnomethodological perspective.

From the outset, Leiter acknowledges the phenomenological influence of Husserl and Schutz (Husserl's student). The book begins with three chapters devoted to an understanding of the fundamental properties of commonsense knowledge (the stock of knowledge at hand, the practices of commonsense reasoning, and the natural attitude toward everyday life), a rationale for why these properties are integral to the study of how interactants produce social order, and an over-

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view of ethnomethodology's intellectual roots (including the linguistic connection). Processes involved in the social construction of reality, including how interactants sustain a meaningful sense of

environments (objects and events), are viewed synonymously with common-sense knowledge-at-work. Social reality is considered a social product, grounded upon interactants' experiences of the same world that they actively structure. Leiter argues that the foremost concern of ethnomethodology rests in the methods used to produce the social world's factual character, rather than in the truth or falsity of multiple realities underlying concrete ("real") situations. Garfinkel's foremost contribution is portrayed as his ability to argue for the scientific (empirical) relevance of commonsense knowledge and practices. The routine use of commonsense properties does *not* imply an inferior empirical status. On the contrary, an understanding of the mundane character of everyday life requires us to study social meaning *as* commonsense, not as a residual category glossed by theoretician's arguments.

Leiter further explicates the presuppositional nature of social reality in the following two chapters, where he addresses "the sense of social structure" and the problem of how differing conceptions of reality influence (and are influenced by) two omnipresent features of everyday settings: indexicality and reflexivity. One of Leiter's strengths is his ability to integrate abstract concepts with specific studies and findings, and in these chapters, he demonstrates how ethnomethodological researchers confront the tension between "reality" and "setting." For example, he cites his own study on kindergarten teachers' placement practices and the structuring of classroom interaction, Zimmerman's observations about how case workers in a

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public welfare agency treat documents as "plain facts," Gicourel's analysis of how the "hard data" of survey research (in a study of Argentina fertility) are a product of a researcher's practical reasoning, and Wieder's research on rules of conduct (i.e., the convict code) among paroled narcotic addicts in a halfway house. Relying upon ethnographic research strategies, each of these studies focuses upon the mutual elaboration between accounts (verbal and/or nonverbal) and settings: "The setting gives meaning to talk and behavior within it, while at the same time, it exists in and through that very talk and behavior."

Within the ethnomethodological version of social order, accounts (i.e., how interactants go about "constantly describing and explaining to each other what they have done") might best be construed as *mini-ethnographies*: in and through "tellings," understandings of events and their features are communicated. Accounts and accounting practices are discussed in chapter six, as is the documentary method of interpretation: sets of appearance *document* (stand on behalf of) presupposed or underlying patterns. While appearances such as accounts occur frequently, it is often the case that interactants do not fully express intended meanings, talk in complete utterances, or simply "say what they mean." Thus, interpretive procedures such as the "et cetera principle" are enacted as interactants attempt to make sense of ordinary language use by "filling *in*" unspoken portions of utterances.

Questions of rule use and social interaction are central to the ethnomethodological approach and are stressed repeatedly throughout the last two chapters. Rules are not forces that "pull and push" and thus cause social behavior to occur in particular ways. Rather, within formal ethnomethodology, interactants make rules work through interpretive devices

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that render behaviors meaningful in specific contexts. Rules vary with the context of their usage, just as contexts influence the meaningful character of an interactant's sense of social structure. Thus, rules are considered schemes of interpretation ("aids to perception"), and the properties of their use are apparent in and through an interactant's talk. Ethnomethodologically, rules are sense-making devices allowing for the possibility of understanding in social interaction.

Leiter's primer is a valuable overview of ethnomethodological theory and research, although issues are sometimes discussed in a redundant fashion. His treatment is a superior alternative to an earlier introductory text in this area, Mehan and Wood's *The Reality of Ethnomethodology*. Ethnomethodology is clearly portrayed both as a critique of positivistic social science and as a set of investigative strategies for understanding the social world. While formal ethnomethodology and cognitive sociology are paid considerably more attention than conversation analytic research, readers can remedy this imbalance by turning to the following collection -of studies.

## STUDIES AND PERSPECTIVES ON NATURAL LANGUAGE USE

The three books below contain a total of thirty-four different essays. Readers will find conversation analytic studies drawn from such sources as telephone calls, family discussions, neighborhood rap sessions, therapy groups, medical interviews and practical reasoning in newspapers. Also included are examinations of nonverbal features complementing talk within social occasions, various studies of how identities, appearances, and social meanings are managed throughout everyday life, and elaborations of the broader issues involved in the detailed analysis of language and social interaction.

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(1) *Everyday Language*. Each of the eleven essays in Psathas's edited volume offers a descriptive account of the organizational features of natural language. Although diverse phenomena are examined, these studies share a commitment to "the serious quest of discovering the properties of repeatable and recurrent usages and working toward a formal descriptive-analytic account of these discovered properties. . . . The phenomena are first and foremost to be discovered and described." Strongly influenced by the work of Harold Garfinkel and Harvey Sacks (to whom the volume is dedicated), these commitments are basic to how ethnomethodologists attempt to render the everyday world as problematic. Whether observations are grounded upon carefully recorded and meticulously transcribed versions of natural conversation, and/or ethnographic observations of normal routines and settings, the overriding goal is to discover—in a rigorous and systematic manner— *how* spoken and written exchanges get done.

The lead essay by Harvey Sacks is actually an edited transcription of a 1966 lecture at the University of California, Irvine and sets the tone for the book. Sacks uses a single utterance to illustrate how members of a group employ particular categories (e.g., "teenagers," "ho-trodders") to classify themselves and others. Throughout his analysis, Sacks displays a unique flair for working out problems and asking insightful questions about the logic of ordinary discourse. His ability to illuminate the cultural presuppositions glossed by a single utterance and his dissection of the formal properties of natural language categories exemplify two of his many contributions to ethnomethodology. Perhaps Sacks's lecture was strategically included as a

model exercise in ethnomethodological thinking. His research practices, as sense-making strategies, illustrate how practical knowledge of the everyday world need not be sacrificed for the sake of scientific clarity.

The next five essays are strongly influenced by Sacks's mode of analysis.<sup>9</sup> Each study examines how members work their way through ordinary conversational sequences. Topics include forms and types of *recognitions* (e.g., names) and the search sequences occurring when doubt about recognition exists, how *sentences* and their social meanings are a result of the collaborative work of members as turn-taking is coordinated, and reflexive dimensions of *formulations* as members attempt to make sense of how they are making sense conversationally. Further, studies by Schegloff and Jefferson are particularly noteworthy. Schegloff offers an extended analysis of the mechanisms used (and resources relied upon) as members attempt to identify and recognize one another during conversational *openings* on the telephone. He characterizes these openings as "organizationally and inter-actionally very dense," and thus a great deal of work gets done in a very short period of conversational time. He then proceeds to detail the shapings of a variety of conversations "getting underway." Jefferson utilizes her own transcription and notation symbols to explicate regular features of conversational *laughter*. Although laughter is a sequentially significant phenomenon, it has typically been overlooked by natural language researchers. Jefferson, however, focuses specifically on how speakers can

<sup>9</sup>Undoubtedly the most commonly cited article by Sacks and colleagues is Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson, "A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation," *Language*, 50 (1974), 696-735.

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invite laughter through placement of a laugh upon completion of a prior utterance and how such moves are sequentially implicative as recipients accept or decline such laughter invitations.

Features of practical reasoning are central to the remaining five articles in *Everyday Language*, and rather diverse inquiries are offered. These essays should be attractive to students of spoken *and* written discourse, including those in mass communication and law. Coulter reformulates how *presuppositions* function as unspoken resources for both speakers and hearers; Schenkein analyzes methods of sense-making underlying the production and interpretation of *newspaper articles*; and Psathas studies the practical organization of *direction maps* and the puzzle-solving associated with their construction and use. Finally, *courtroom communication* is examined through Pollner's views on explicative transactions and Atkinson's analysis of how shared attentiveness is accomplished in court proceedings.

Readers will likely find *Everyday Language* a useful resource for understanding the variety of approaches available within the ethnomethodological framework. Studies in conversation analysis and formal ethnomethodology complement one another, even though language *per se* possesses a somewhat different empirical status in each orientation. While it would have been helpful for these similarities and differences to be explicitly noted by the editor, a concern with ordinary social activities binds these essays into a coherent package.

(2) *Sociological Inquiry*. What might "the rather time-worn observation that a fish would be the last one to discover water . . ." have to do with language and social interaction? Guest editors Don Zimmerman and Candice West suggest that most sociologists tend to neglect the empirical aspects of language-in-use.

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Although researchers themselves inevitably rely upon language to accomplish their lay and professional activities, very limited attention has been given to how language is used to construct the social fabric of everyday life. Ethnomethodologists agree that this omission creates a serious problem, and they have taken systematic steps to address language as a medium for creating everyday meanings and social realities.

Just as particular communication journals have been organized thematically (e.g., theory construction, relational communication), this 425 page double issue is designed to enhance our understanding of the role of language in the structuring of "normal" social activities. The fourteen articles are arranged into five sections: 1) basic philosophical and empirical issues, 2) conversation analytic studies, 3) inquiries into nonverbal-verbal interrelationships, 4) studies of how identities are managed in social settings, and 5) examinations of how meanings get encoded during interaction.

Researchers interested in the philosophy of communication, for example, will find that Aaron Cicourel provides a straightforward interpretation of the linkage between philosophical and scientific studies of natural language. His lead article, "Language and Social Interaction: Philosophical and Empirical Issues," offers a critique of philosophers' tendencies to support their positions on language only through intuitive hunches and contrived utterances, thereby ignoring the complexities of language use. He argues that sociologists have also done little to explore language as an empirical resource. To remedy this situation, Cicourel attempts to "build some partial connections" by suggesting that both philosophers and social scientists can benefit from each other's work. He turns directly to speech act theory (Wittgen-

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stein, Austin, Vendler, Searle, Grice) to display how ordinary people use and understand language.<sup>10</sup> Next, he discusses several shortcomings of speech act philosophy when applied to empirical studies of discourse, referring the reader to Labov and Fanshel's *Therapeutic Discourse* as a prime example of an approach that effectively confronts these problems.<sup>11</sup> (In the following article, Grimshaw applies speech act theory to the study of such "nonsuccesses" as mishearings and misunderstandings in talk.) This leads Cicourel to the conclusion that microscopic findings of discourse patterning must be integrated with macro-conceptions of social structure (e.g., institutional and cultural belief systems).

The empirical studies in this double issue are (on the whole) especially novel. They begin with Schegloff's analysis of *pre-pre's*, such as asking permission to ask a question and setting-up and pre-organizing turn-taking sequences.<sup>12</sup> Schiffrin's study on how *meta-talk* functions to organize and evaluate interaction is must reading for communication researchers influenced by Bateson's work on

metacommunication and the "Interactional View" in general. Nonverbal researchers interested in proxemics (e.g., *spatial arrangements* during conversations), eye-contact (e.g., *gazing* and *monitoring* during turn-coordination),

<sup>9</sup>For a philosophical treatment of the relationship between speech act theory and communication research, see Richard L. Lanigan, *Speech Act Phenomenology* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977).

<sup>10</sup>Labov and Fanshel also give acknowledgment to Sacks and Schegloff for their insights and systematic work on conversational organization. See William Labov and David Fanshel, *Therapeutic Discourse: Psychotherapy as Conversation* (New York: Academic Press, 1977).

<sup>12</sup>A review and empirical extension of pre-sequencing phenomena may be found in Wayne A. Beach and David (i. Dunning, "Pre-Indexing and Conversational

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and the overall nonverbal-verbal relationship (e.g., substituting, complimenting, regulating) will find these studies to be useful for their own research as well as for seminars. And of the remaining articles, an ethnography of male-to-female remarks on the street (as influenced by Goffman's *Behavior in Public Places*) and a case study of classroom socialization and interaction are fruitful resources for investigators interested in *public behavior* and *instructional communication*.

Several of the articles in *Sociological Inquiry* are excellent examples of how transcribed conversational fragments can be used *in text* to support arguments and illustrate the workings of ordinary language. The mechanics involved in displaying conversational data must be confronted by all language researchers, as well as by editors and manuscript referees involved in the task of conserving journal space. As increasing numbers of communication researchers engage in studies of natural language use, decisions regarding data displays become more important. *Sociological Inquiry* is helpful in this regard and is also an exceptional model for determining how a special journal issue might be organized for maximum impact on a wide variety of readers.

(3) *Interactional Competence*. Numerous conversational fragments are also presented in this final collection of studies that are similarly concerned with the micro-analysis of interaction. A number of these papers were initially presented at the 1979 Conference on Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis at Boston University.

I received a pre-publication copy of this anthology of nine original papers, scheduled to be published in 1982. Each of these papers demonstrates empirically how interactants display conversational competency through turn-taking mechanism

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While it is easily recognized that people know how to do things with language, these researchers systematically reveal the subtle nuances and complex procedures basic to the effective management of turn-organized activities. Upon reading these studies, it becomes clear that language competency is both rich in detail and broad in scope, even though interactants often take for granted the language they use.

The operations of numerous turn-taking devices are examined in light of how interactants deal with practical situations in the everyday world. Attention is given to preferences for *correcting* and *repairing* one's own utterances, the construction and use of *lists* during talk, the step-by-step accomplishment of conversational *closings*, and how the sequential appropriateness of *invitations*, *offers*, and *rejections* are routinely modified and assessed. Researchers studying naturalistic properties of *argument sequences* and *courtroom questioning procedures* will find two studies in this anthology particularly useful. And those associated with health communication will discover that considerable attention is being given to the conversational organization of *medical interviews* and other interactional phenomena in medical settings.

Although these studies are descriptive efforts to display how competency is accomplished, prescriptive implications can be gleaned from the empirical findings generated through conversation analytic techniques. For example, relying upon video, audio, and transcribed interactional materials, work is being done to counsel medical interns and doctors about their conversational styles and mannerisms during patient interviews.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Within the communication discipline, work is being done by Elaine Litton at the University of Utah Medical Center. Within ethnomethodology, Richard Frankel is using similar procedures at the Wayne State University School of Medicine.

The overriding goals are to enhance the interviewer's awareness of the basic importance of interaction and to improve abilities to create and sustain comfortable yet effective environments for administering patient care. Precise understandings of interactional quirks and problems are attainable through the micro-analysis of conversation. In short, most conversation analytic discoveries regarding the orderly workings of talk can be used pragmatically. Interactants' appreciation of communicative effectiveness and its defining properties can become heightened by transforming empirical findings into meaningful guidelines for everyday behavior.

Communication researchers can benefit greatly from these studies on interactional competency. The ethnomethodological goal of detailed description is collectively secured across these studies, and numerous possibilities exist for pragmatic application. The attainment of such interactional insights, however, requires methodological considerations (tools and strategies) and a way of looking at the social world and its constituent features. We now turn to a book explicitly written for readers who might be conceptually intrigued but methodologically skeptical about the scientific status of ethnomethodology.

### A METHOD TO THE MADNESS

Confusion often reigns when qualitative approaches are discussed and evaluated. This is especially the case when questions are raised about qualitative vs. quantitative commitments, about similarities and differences among "types" of qualitative work, and even about how qualitative concepts and procedures "count" as social science in the first place. Schwartz and Jacobs offer a truly unique and direct orientation to these problematic issues. Theirs is a text com-QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF SPEECH

prised of two related books. The first, entitled *The Reality Reconstruction Business*, is concerned primarily with the basic assumptions and methods of such approaches as labeling theory, analytic induction, grounded theory, basic ethnography, and symbolic interaction-ism. The influence of such scholars as Weber, Becker, Mead, Blumer, Cooley, Glaser, and Strauss is examined. The second book is entitled *Formal Sociology* and focuses upon ethnomethodology, phenomenology, and conversation analysis. The primarily theoretical work of Simmel is summarized, as are Goffman's attempts to operationalize many of Simmel's views on "forms of sociation." Further, Schutz's work on commonsense reasoning and Garfinkel's applications are capsulized. A useful contrast between Garfinkel's and Cicourel's orientations is also developed.

Each book is generally organized into four sections: What Is It? Why Do It? How To Do It? What's Wrong With It (Them)? and illustrative case studies of the perspectives elaborated. This common organizational format simplifies the reader's task of comparing the basic issues in each book. While at one point the authors note that their division of the qualitative approaches (symbolic interaction and formal sociology) is for organizational purposes only, a claim is also offered that they differ in two key aspects: what each considers to be a reasonable typification of everyday life and "how each goes about studying it—that is, the language each uses to describe it and the conceptual and methodological focus." In the end, however, readers are left hanging about this interrelationship.

Yet the significant contribution of this timely text is not grounded in territorial disputes among varying schools of thought. Rather, it rests with the "How To Do It?" sections as well as the strengths and weaknesses of each

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approach. To understand ethnomethodology ultimately requires *doing* ethnomethodology (p. 224), and certain obstacles must be confronted if such scientific inquiry is to be accomplished. Two such obstacles are: 1) How to render everyday occurrences, as taken-for-granted resources, into problematic topics subject to critical inspection—this is a more difficult task than simply rediscovering what we already know and putting labels on daily life as a "preanalyzed domain"; 2) recognizing that our identities as researchers and our orientations to the "scientific attitude" often delimit our ability to ask theoretically relevant and important questions about social interaction. Rather than typifying commonsense reasoning as detrimental to empirical science—as something that is subject to "error" and therefore in need of control and elimination—why not use commonsense knowledge to its maximum advantage when attempting to make everyday life visible?



In response to these two obstacles, the authors present numerous observational strategies and methods that can be used to "make a familiar world look strange." These methods are most useful for suspending our "natural attitude" toward everyday events on a continual basis. One goal is to create an approach where "the researcher can be both a stranger to the scene *and* enmeshed in it in practical ways." Another goal is to avoid "hit and run" ethnographies. Specifically, suggestions and guidelines are offered as to how one can become a "stranger" in a familiar environment (i.e., recreating cultural ignorance), how multiple observers can be used when analyzing an environment, how multiple realities can be studied through breaching and disrupting experiments (and the moral/ ethical implications of this work), how to engage in "conceptual mapmaking" during ethnographies, and how both conversation analytic and phenomenological methods can provide tools for transforming researchers into "anthropologically naive" interactants and observers.

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For too long ethnomethodology and related qualitative orientations have been without an integrative and down-to-earth methodological text. *A Method to the Madness* is a provocative response to this void. Although the "What's Wrong With It (Them)?" chapters have been overlooked in this review, I believe readers who critically examine them will come to a better understanding of what qualitative methods can and cannot reveal about everyday life.

Interestingly, as an apt conclusion to a fine effort, these authors cast doubt on whether this text will win many converts even though it might sway "new initiates" and those occupying "the uncommitted middle." "As for the other souls lost (if we may be allowed to mix a few metaphors and spin a few adages in their graves), it might be said: What shall it profit a man to preach? A word to anyone rarely suffices."

#### PROBLEMATIC ISSUES IN THE LANGUAGE-MEANING INTERFACE

One of the recurrent themes in ethnomethodology is how natural language and social meaning are inextricably woven, yet not exactly the same communicative phenomena. The following books by Coulter and Wootton treat the language-meaning relationship and address the problems and pitfalls researchers face in discovering what each has to do with the other.

(1) *The Social Construction of Mind*. Through an integration of ethnomethodology and linguistic philosophy, Coulter argues against the dualism of behaviorism and mentalism by defending the research value of an *anti-psycholo-gistic stance*. Following Wittgenstein's position that the "mind" is not a useful object for social scientific study, Coulter proceeds to show how subjective states and properties are relevant only as embedded within "communicative functions in various occasions of use." By working analytically with ordinary discourse, it can be shown that attitudes, intentions, motives, thoughts, and understandings are "social phenomena through and through." Thus, Coulter argues that attempts to assess these concepts as mentalistic events removes inquiry *away* from the problem areas and renders them as "logically inappropriate."

Using eight essays to clarify and support his stance, Coulter's treatment is one of the most rigorous and systematic challenges to social psychological perspectives currently available. The first chapter on the normative accountability of human action is intended as a "clearing of the ground" of traditional subjectivist arguments. Through selected examples he consistently focuses upon social actions as scenic (not necessarily private) practices, meaningful *because* of their observable achievement not because they reflect the "brain" and its repository of notions. In the following chapter Coulter draws heavily upon Ryle's *Concept of Mind* and Wittgenstein's later *Philosophical Investigations* to critique work in such areas as psycholinguistics and artificial intelligence. These and other empirical orientations are viewed as mentalistic reductions having little relevance to understanding situated usages of ordinary language. Later chapters attempt to locate such phenomena as pain, sounds, sights, appearances, and emotions into sequences of social activity. As he argues, the ultimate utility of these phenomena is grounded in their social display and employment, not in their phenomenological and metaphysical status. References to consciousness and

mental-predicates are, as Coulter concludes, neither appealing nor accessible to researchers theoretically committed to understanding social order and the machinery of its accomplishment.

As a refreshing alternative to traditional behavioristic and psycholinguistic literature, this book requires careful reading and ample time to "soak in." Yet the persistent will undoubtedly come away with a firmer grasp of the social status of subjectivity and its observable nature. Communication researchers interested in attitudinal, constructivist, and social cognition studies,<sup>14</sup> as well as philosophers of communication seeking phenomenological grounding for everyday activities, will find ample reasons for argument.

(2) *Dilemmas of Discourse*. Many similarities exist between Coulter's recent book and Wootton's approach to problems in transforming "what people say" into scientific data. This is due, at least in part, to an earlier collegial relationship between Coulter and Wootton. Both are concerned with sketching the intellectual developments in linguistics and ordinary language philosophy in order to isolate ethnomethodological positions more precisely.

Wootton's particular contribution is that he addresses important but often ignored research problems in handling talk. Communication researchers involved in generating and validating various coding systems, as well as discourse analysts deciphering the functional status of utterances, will find Wootton's arguments appealing for numerous reasons. He maintains that it is not fruitful

<sup>14</sup>For example, see two additional *QJS* reviews: Robert T. Craig, "Cognitive Science: A New Approach to Cognition, Language, and Communication," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 64 (1978), 439-450; David Seibold, "Recent Books in Social Cognition: The Mind/Society Circle," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 67 (1981), 416-428.

to employ fixed entities or to use fixed criteria when discovering the meanings of expressions. Sets of rules do not exist that specify the necessary and sufficient conditions for extracting standard meanings from words and utterances. The research goal should *not* be to provide unambiguous formulations of naturally occurring stretches of talk (i.e., "in corrigible readings"), but rather to *adequately* display how language and its social meaning is indexical and therefore context-bound. Language itself often possesses multiple meanings and is routinely ambiguous in everyday interaction. Consequently, the development of systematic procedures to study language use must take such ambiguity into account. Because everyday interaction does not possess strict rules of interpretation and rigid meanings associated with recurring utterances, it is paradoxical that scientific approaches to studying language are so "tight" and overly concerned with producing "correct" findings.

This paradox lies at the center of the controversy that follows from Garfinkel's argument that the substitution of objective for indexical expressions is *in all cases* problematic. The coding of utterances is inherently a scientific exercise intended to identify instances of codes and somehow make sense of their patterned nature. Wootton raises the general question of "what relationship there is between the analyst's hearing and machinery, and those of participants in the actual conversation being studied." Here it is seen that a researcher's interpretive devices—given his or her background knowledge of the social world and level of expertise in knowing how to code natural language—may radically differ from the meanings displayed conversationally by those being investigated. Understanding conversation as an ordered phenomenon thus

Questions about interactants' "describably elegant knowledge" and levels of communicative competency, the relationship between indexicality and reflexivity, the use of coding systems and analyses of transcribed conversational texts, and the overall epistemology/ontology relationship are probable topics. Throughout these dialogues, the goal of unanimous agreement will be replaced by a far more realistic and significant purpose: enhanced understanding of the methods used by interactants *and* researchers in their everyday social routines.

#### BOOKS REVIEWED

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MIND: STUDIES IN ETHNOMETHODOLOGY AND LINGUISTIC PHILOSOPHY. By

- Jeff Coulter. Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1979; pp. ix + 190. \$18.50.
- A PRIMER ON ETHNOMETHODOLOGY. By Kenneth Leiter. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980; pp. viii + 252. \$14.95, \$4.95 paper.
- EVERYDAY LANGUAGE: STUDIES IN ETHNOMETHODOLOGY. By George Psathas (ed.). New York: Irvington Publishers, 1979; pp. 294. \$18.50.
- INTERACTIONAL COMPETENCE. By George Psathas and Richard Frankel (eds.). (Forthcoming, New York: Irvington Publishers).
- QUALITATIVE SOCIOLOGY: A METHOD TO THE MADNESS. By Howard Schwartz and Jerry Jacobs. New York: Free Press, 1979; pp. xv + 458. \$16.96, \$9.95 paper.
- DILEMMAS OF DISCOURSE: CONTROVERSIES ABOUT THE SOCIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF LANGUAGE. By Anthony Wootton. New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1975; pp. 125. \$18.00, \$7.50 paper.
- LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL INTERACTION. By Don Zimmerman and Candice West, (eds.). Vol. 50, 1980, of *Sociological Inquiry*, pp. xx + 425. \$6.50 paper. (Copies may be obtained by writing Harry M. Johnson, Editor, *Sociological Inquiry*, 326 Lincoln Hall, University of Illinois. Urbana, IL 61801.)

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- SOCIAL BEING: A THEORY FOR SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY. By Rom Harre. Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980; pp. 438. \$25.00; paper \$9.95.

In *Social Being*, Rom Harre offers a comprehensive alternative foundation for social psychology. This "ethogenic" alternative, only sketched in Harre and Secord's earlier book, *The Explanation of Social Behavior*, is detailed here in seventeen challenging and tightly argued chapters. Those interested by the earlier book, but dissatisfied by its conceptual foundations, will appreciate Harre's more constructive theory building. The book should strongly appeal to anyone interested in the study of social interaction, especially those who find Erving Goffman's analyses of social life descriptively admirable, but lacking in explanatory depth. A warning: like Goffman's, this work casts a harsh light on human conduct, making much of it seem fruitless and despicable. Although this depiction may be welcomed as an antidote to unrealistic views of humans as extremely rational, caring social beings, it is an unkind portrayal, likely to discomfit the unwary.

The cornerstone of the approach lies in the distinction between two orders of social activity. Practical activity, the first type, relates to the solution of problems—mostly stemming from humankind's biological nature, but also including problems generated by failure to present one's self as fully competent. The practical order is structurally represented in conventions governing meaning and in act-action structures that describe appropriate sequences of actions in the performance of social acts and episodes. Expressive activity, the other type, involves dramatic display of individuals' entitlement to respect and is structurally based in hierarchies of respect and contempt. These hierarchies are institutionalized as "hazard systems," organized means of discriminating those worthy of respect from those who deserve contempt.

Harre believes that explanations in social psychology must include identification of generative mechanisms that could produce observed phenomena. These generative mechanisms must reference both the "templates" (e.g., the act-action structures used to replicate a given social practice) and the "agent" (i.e., the individual actor who considered various influences upon his/her conduct and who has at least tacit knowledge of the act-action structure). Explanations should accordingly take the following form: Individuals produce particular actions by accessing social knowledge (e.g., conventions governing meaning) and then by formulating intentions. By considering a theoretically limitless number of possible influences upon

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conduct, individuals, as "managing selves," select a course of action. The trick is to determine what the actor considered.

Because Harre believes that individuals access the same knowledge in accounting for their conduct as they do when actually comporting themselves, the analysis of their accounts forms the backbone of the ethogenic method. Harre feels it is mandatory for researchers to acquire and negotiate accounts (e.g., of intentions, plans, reasons, etc.) of those engaged in social activity. The complete ethogenic method includes detailed description of what happened (episode analysis) and complete formulation of generative mechanisms (discovered through account analysis). Given the concern with individuals' accounts, Harre argues that more social psychological research should be conducted in an idiographic (i.e., individual-centered) rather than ethnographic (i.e., community-centered) mode and that both of these are far superior to mainstream methods centering on experimentation, variable analysis, or survey research.

*Social Being* also covers an extensive field of traditional problems in sociology and psychology. Along the way other approaches are debunked, including sociobiology, socioecology, social Darwinism, Marxist socioeconomics, role theory, trait theory, and behaviorism. Harre's views about the following four problems should particularly interest communication scholars.

(1) The nature of individuals: Individuals are embodied entities that select what considerations are to be made about action. They are not autonomous—not free—because at any given time some considerations (e.g., rules) will impinge upon them. Principal among these considerations is the (expressive) attempt to present selves, through actions, as socially competent and worthy.

(2) The nature of collectivities: Collectivities house hazard systems and systems of practical activities. Over time, institutions evolve toward the expressive, so that in some, the sole practical activity is the operation of the hazard system. Of course, explanations of collective activity must focus on the activity of individuals, not upon some collective mental attributes.

(3) Social order and social change: Social order is maintained by individuals considering the propriety, intelligibility, and warrantability of their conduct before, during, and after acting. Social change is generated by dialectical tension between the

practical and expressive orders; mutant social practices either survive and are replicated or are ill-suited to prevalent social-environmental conditions and are extinguished.

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expressive, not the practical order. Rather than overthrowing elites, individuals should alter hierarchies of respect and contempt, in effect institutionalizing activities they deem praiseworthy, and should fail to honor those whose respectability is based upon obsolete values. To attempt to directly change the practical order is useless, because the practical order will automatically change to accommodate the expressive order, while the reverse is not true.

The book also offers numerous brief, excursive considerations, some of which are particularly stimulating. For example, Harre considers the expressive basis for why people develop careers in football, the Japanese cult of heroic failure, and the Kula trading circle. He reframes Milgram's "shocking" experiment as one about trust, not authority, elaborates Goffman's notion of the "moral career," and speculates upon the possible universals of social psychology. Two of the more unusual discussions concern when, for expressive purposes, death occurs, and the idea that humans resemble domesticated more than they do wild animals.

What can communication scholars make of all of this? Communication theorists should appreciate Harre's elaborate conception of the expressive side of social life, as this applies to individual conduct in interpersonal, group, and organizational settings. Behavior that seems enigmatic from an exclusively practical standpoint, as contemporary organization theorists know, is sensible as expressive reputation-building. Theorists might profit also from examining the workable, but occasionally strained, synthesis of linguistic philosophy, sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology, and structuralism that comprises Harre's dramaturgical standpoint on social life.

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SOCIAL EPISODES. By Joseph P. Forgas. New York: Academic Press, 1980; pp. xi + 324.  
\$47.50.

*Social Episodes* is an ambitious effort to bring the study of episodes under the researcher's control. The book can be divided into three main sections. The first is a review of social psychology literature leading to the current interest in and definition of social episode. In the second section, methods for studying episodes and a survey of research findings are presented. Part three is a discussion of practical applications and future implications of the research.