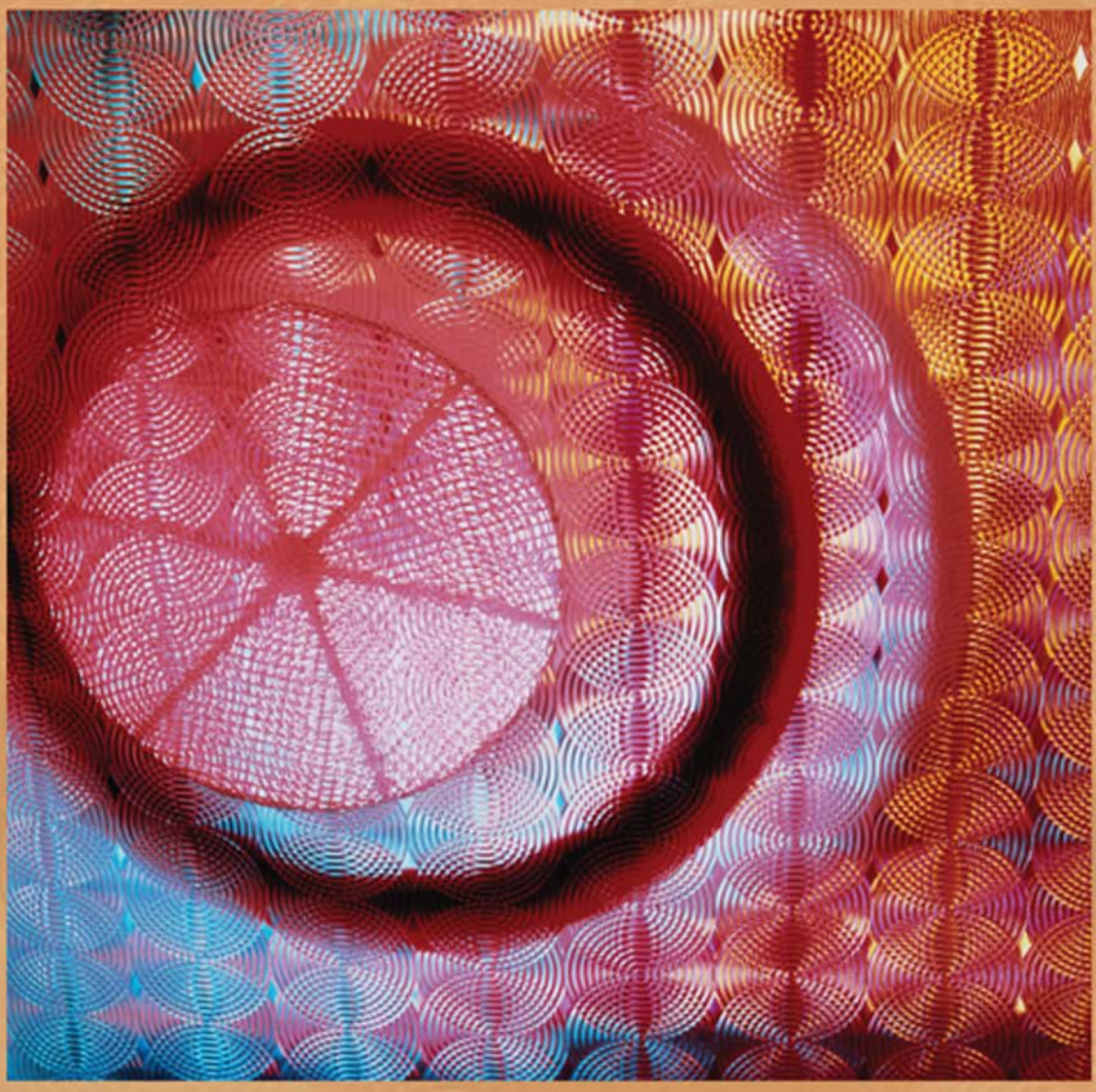
LISA M. GIVEN EDITOR

The SAGE Encyclopedia of QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS



VOLUMES 1&2

The SAGE Encyclopedia of QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Editorial Board

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LISA M. GIVEN EDITOR

University of Alberta

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Contents

Select a unit of analysis such as each article (this may change).
- List several items or categories (variables) to guide data collection and draft a protocol (data collection sheet).
- Test the protocol by collecting data from several documents.
- Revise the protocol and select several additional cases to further refine the protocol.

A dynamic use of ECA is that of "tracking discourse" or following certain issues, words, themes, and frames over a period of time, across different issues, and across different news media. Initial manifest coding incorporates emergent coding and theoretical sampling to monitor changes in coverage and emphasis over time and across topics. For example, in a study of fear, a protocol could obtain data about date, location, author, format, topic, sources, theme, emphasis, and grammatical use of *fear* (as a noun, a verb, an adverb, etc.). The contexts for using the word *fear* are clarified through theoretical sampling and constant comparison with delineate patterns and thematic emphases. Materials are enumerated, charted, and analyzed qualitatively, using a word processor and a qualitative data analysis program (e.g., NVivo), as well as quantitatively.

David L. Altheide

See also Content Analysis; Document Analysis; Ethnography

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Ethnography

Ethnography is the art and science of describing a group or culture. The ethnographer enters the field with an open mind, not with an empty head. Before asking the first question in the field, the ethnographer begins with a problem, a theory or model, a research design, specific data collection techniques, tools for analysis, and a specific writing style. A series of quality controls, such as triangulation, contextualization, and a nonjudgmental orientation, place a check on the negative influence of bias.

The ethnographer is interested in understanding and describing a social and cultural scene from the emic or insider's perspective. The ethnographer is both storyteller and scientist; the closer the readers of an ethnography come to understanding the native's point of view, the better the story and the better the science.

Fieldwork is the heart of the ethnographic research design. In the field, basic anthropological concepts, data collection methods and techniques, and analysis are the fundamental elements of "doing ethnography." Selection and use of various pieces of equipment—including the human instrument—facilitate the work. This process becomes product through analysis at various stages in ethnographic work—in fieldnotes, memoranda, and interim reports but most dramatically in the published report, article, or book.

Concepts

The most important concepts that guide ethnographers in their fieldwork include culture, a holistic perspective, contextualization, an emic perspective and multiple realities, an etic perspective, nonjudgmental orientation, inter- and intracultural diversity, and symbol and ritual.

Culture

Culture is the broadest ethnographic concept. The classic materialist interpretation of culture is the sum of a social group's observable patterns of behavior, customs, and way of life. According to the cognitive approach, culture includes the ideas, beliefs, and knowledge that characterize a particular group of people. Ethnographers need to know about both cultural behavior and cultural knowledge to describe a culture or subculture adequately.

Many anthropologists consider cultural interpretation to be ethnography's primary contribution. Cultural interpretation involves the researcher's ability to describe what he or she has heard and seen within the framework of the social group's view of reality. A classic example of the interpretive contribution involves the wink and the blink. A mechanical difference between the two behaviors might not be evident. However, the cultural context of each movement, the relationship between individuals that each behavior suggests, and the contexts surrounding the

two behaviors help to define and differentiate these two significantly different behaviors. Anyone who has ever mistaken a blink for a wink is fully aware of the significance of cultural interpretation.

Holistic Perspective and Contextualization

Ethnographers assume a holistic outlook in research to gain a comprehensive and complete picture of a social group. Ethnographers attempt to describe as much as possible about a culture or social group. This description might include the group's history, religion, politics, economy, and environment. No study can capture an entire culture or group. The holistic orientation forces fieldworkers to see beyond an immediate cultural scene or event in a classroom, hospital room, city street, or plush offices in Washington, D.C.

In a study about programs for dropouts, it was important to describe the inner-city environment in which the schools were located—an impoverished neighborhood in which pimping, prostitution, arson for hire, rape, and murder were commonplace. This helped policymakers to understand the lure of certain elements in the community that competed with the school for students' attention.

Emic and Etic Perspectives

The emic perspective—the insider's or native's perspective of reality—is at the heart of most ethnographic research. Native perceptions might not conform to an "objective" reality, but they help the fieldworker to understand why members of the social group do what they do. In contrast to a priori assumptions about how systems work from a simple, linear logical perspective—which might be completely off target—ethnography typically takes a phenomenologically oriented research approach.

An etic perspective is an external social scientific perspective on reality. Most ethnographers simply see emic and etic orientations as markers along a continuum of styles or different levels of analysis. Most ethnographers start collecting data from the emic perspective and then try to make sense of what they have collected in terms of both the natives' views and their own scientific analysis. Just as thorough fieldwork requires an insightful and sensitive cultural interpretation combined with rigorous data collection techniques, so too does good ethnography require both emic and etic perspectives.

Nonjudgmental Orientation and Inter- and Intracultural Diversity

A nonjudgmental orientation requires the ethnographer to suspend personal valuation of any given cultural practice. Maintaining a nonjudgmental orientation is similar to suspending disbelief while watching a movie or play or reading a book; one accepts what may be an obviously illogical or unbelievable set of circumstances to allow the author to unravel a riveting story.

Intercultural diversity refers to the differences between two cultures, whereas *intracultural diversity* refers to the differences between subcultures within a culture. Intercultural differences are reasonably easy to see. Compare the descriptions of two different cultures on a point-by-point basis—their political, religious, economic, kinship, and ecological systems as well as other pertinent dimensions. Intracultural differences, however, are more likely to go unnoticed.

Most of the houses in the inner-city neighborhood in the study of dropouts were in disrepair, many were marked by graffiti by local gangs, and entire blocks were in rubble. This was the "norm" concerning quality of housing in the neighborhood. However, there was intracultural diversity. There were families who were attempting to improve the quality of the neighborhood, and they "put their money where their mouths were" by painting and repairing their homes. They represented a special group with a symbolic message of hope in the community (Figure 1).

Symbols

Ethnographers look for symbols that help them to understand and describe a culture. Symbols are

Figure 1 Example of Intracultural Diversity in Terms of Housing in the Neighborhood

Source: Photo by David M. Fetterman.

Figure 2 Yeshiva in the Inner City With Graffiti

Source: Photo by David M. Fetterman.

condensed expressions of meaning that evoke powerful feelings and thoughts. A cross or menorah represents an entire religion. A swastika represents a movement, whether the original Nazi movement or one of the many neo-Nazi movements. A flag represents an entire country, evoking both patriotic fervor and epithets.

Symbols may signify historical influences in a community. For example, a Jewish star or Star of David on a building marred by graffiti and broken glass marks the historical presence of an orthodox Jewish community (Figure 2). This symbol of the past provides some insight into the roots of current tensions between young African Americans in the community and older Orthodox Jews.

Rituals are repeated patterns of symbolic behavior that play a part in both religious and secular lives. Ethnographers see symbols and rituals as forms of cultural shorthand. The next section details the ethnographic methods and techniques that grow out of these concepts and allow the researcher to carry out the work of ethnography.

Methods and Techniques

Fieldwork is the hallmark of research for both sociologists and anthropologists—working with people for long periods of time in their natural setting. The ethnographer conducts research in the native environment to see people and their behavior given all the real-world incentives and constraints. This naturalist approach avoids the artificial response typical of controlled or laboratory conditions.

One of the benefits of fieldwork is that it provides a commonsense perspective to data. For example, in a study of schools in the rural South, David Fetterman received boxes of records indicating very low academic performance and high school attendance. This was counterintuitive and contrary to his experience in working with schools in urban areas where students who received poor grades dropped out of school. However, traveling to the school while watching cotton, rice, and soy fields pass by, mile after mile, it became clear to him that the data made sense. There was nothing else to do but show up at school.

Participant Observation

Participant observation characterizes most ethnographic research. Participant observation is immersion in a culture. Ideally, the ethnographer lives and works in the community for 6 months to a year or longer, learning the language and seeing patterns of behavior over time. Long-term residence helps the researcher to internalize the basic beliefs, fears, hopes, and expectations of the people under study.

In applied settings, participant observation is often noncontinuous, spread out over an extended time. In these situations, the researcher can apply ethnographic techniques to the study but cannot conduct an ethnography.

Interviewing

The interview is the ethnographer's most important data-gathering technique. General interview types include structured, semi-structured, informal, and retrospective interviews.

Formally structured and semi-structured interviews are verbal approximations of a questionnaire with explicit research goals. These interviews generally serve comparative and representative purposes—comparing responses and putting them in the context of common group beliefs and themes. A structured or semi-structured interview is most valuable when the fieldworker comprehends the fundamentals of a community from the insider's perspective.

Informal interviews are the most common in ethnographic work. They seem to be casual conversations,

but where structured interviews have an explicit agenda, informal interviews have a specific but implicit research agenda. The researcher uses informal approaches to discover how the people conceptualize their culture and organize it into meaningful categories.

Retrospective interviews can be structured, semi-structured, or informal. The ethnographer uses retrospective interviews to reconstruct the past, asking informants to recall personal historical information. All interviews share some generic kinds of questions. The most common types are survey or grand tour, detail or specific, and open-ended or closed questions.

Key Actor or Informant Interviewing

Some people are more articulate and culturally sensitive than others. These individuals make excellent key actors or informants. Key actors become performers in the theater of ethnographic research. Key actors can provide detailed historical data, knowledge about contemporary interpersonal relationships (including conflicts), and a wealth of information about the nuances of everyday life. Anthropologists have traditionally relied most heavily on one or two individuals in a given group. Ethnographers establish long-term relationships with key actors who continually provide reliable and insightful information.

Questionnaires

Structured interviews are close approximations of questionnaires. Questionnaires represent perhaps the most formal and rigid form of exchange in the interviewing spectrum—the logical extension of an increasingly structured interview.

Online surveys and questionnaires provide an efficient way in which to document the views of large groups during a short period of time. The questions are posted on the web and include yes/no, all that apply, open-ended, and 5-point Likert-type scale questions. Respondents are notified about the location of the survey on the web (with a specific URL), enter their responses, and submit their surveys online. The results are calculated automatically. The responses are often visually represented in a bar chart or similar graphic display as soon as the data are entered.

Unobtrusive Measures

The ethnographer attempts to be as unobtrusive as possible to minimize effects on the participants' behavior. A variety of measures, however, do not require human interaction and can supplement interactive methods of data collection and analysis such as outcropping, and these unobtrusive measures allow the ethnographer to draw social and cultural inferences from physical evidence.

Outcropping is a geological term referring to a portion of the bedrock that is visible on the surface—in other words, something that sticks out. Outcroppings in inner-city ethnographic research include skyscrapers, burned-out buildings, graffiti, and syringes in the schoolyard. The researcher can quickly estimate the relative wealth or poverty of an area from these outcroppings.

Equipment

Notepads, computers, tape recorders, cameras—all the tools of ethnography—are merely extensions of the human instrument; that is, aids to memory and vision. Yet these useful devices can facilitate the ethnographic mission by capturing the rich detail and flavor of the ethnographic experience and then helping to organize and analyze these data. Ethnographic equipment ranges from simple paper and pen to high-tech laptop and mainframe computers, from tape recorders and cameras to digital camcorders. The proper equipment can make the ethnographer's sojourn in an alien culture more pleasant, safe, productive, and rewarding.

Analysis

Analysis is one of the most engaging features of ethnography. It begins the moment a fieldworker selects a problem to study and ends with the last word in the report or ethnography. Ethnography involves many levels of analysis. Some are simple and informal; others require some statistical sophistication. Ethnographic analysis is iterative, building on ideas throughout the study.

Triangulation is basic in ethnographic research. It is at the heart of ethnographic validity, testing one source of information against another to strip away alternative explanations and prove a hypothesis.

Ethnographers look for patterns of thought and behavior. Patterns are a form of ethnographic reliability. Ethnographers are more confident about the accuracy of their descriptions when they see patterns of thought and action repeat in various situations and among various players.

Writing

Ethnography requires good writing skills at every stage of the enterprise. Research proposals, fieldnotes,

memoranda, interim reports, final reports, articles, and books are the tangible products of ethnographic work. The ethnographer can share these written works with participants to verify their accuracy and with colleagues to review and consider them.

Performance writing often drives good ethnographic writing. It involves writing for an audience, caring about audience members, and hoping that one's work will make a difference to them. It is relational in that it treats the readers like a gyroscope or a compass whereby the writer's words revolve around them.

Writing is part of the analysis process as well as a means of communication. Writing clarifies thinking. In sitting down to put thoughts on paper, an individual must organize those thoughts and sort out specific ideas and relationships. Writing often reveals gaps in knowledge.

Ethics

Ethnographers subscribe to a code of ethics that preserves participants' rights, facilitates communication in the field, and leaves the door open for further research. This code specifies, first and foremost, that the ethnographer do no harm to the people or the community under study. In seeking a logical path through the cultural wilds, the ethnographer is careful not to trample the feelings of insiders or desecrate what the culture calls sacred. This respect for social environment ensures not only the rights of the people but also the integrity of the data and a productive enduring relationship between the people and the researcher. Professionalism and a delicate step demonstrate the ethnographer's deep respect, admiration, and appreciation for the people's way of life. Noninvasive ethnography not only is good ethics but also is good science.

Ethnographers must formally or informally seek informed consent to conduct their work. Ethnographers must be candid about their task, explaining what they plan to study and how they plan to study it.

Ethnographers need the trust of the people they work with to complete their task. Ethnographers who establish a bond of trust will learn about the many layers of meaning in any community or program under study.

David M. Fetterman

See also Emic/Etic Distinction; Fieldwork; Key Informant; Naturalistic Inquiry

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Ethnography (Journal)

Ethnography, published by Sage, was launched in 2000. The current editors are Loïc Wacquant (University of California, USA) and Paul Willis (University of Keele, UK). *Ethnography* has an international editorial board with representatives from the United States and the United Kingdom but also Brazil, Denmark, France, India, Korea, the Netherlands, and Sweden. The journal's website outlines its scope. However, this was also set out in the "Manifesto for *Ethnography*" published in the journal's first edition. Four distinguishing features of *Ethnography* are articulated. First, the journal seeks to promote "theoretical informed-ness" rather than the pursuit of increasingly self-referential "grand narratives" of the social sciences or, on the other hand, merely descriptive research. Second, *Ethnography* seeks to recognize the centrality of culture in the broadest sense rather than narrowly discursive sense. Third, the journal seeks a critical focus on research and writing. Fourth, *Ethnography* promotes an interest in cultural policy and politics.

Consistent with its interdisciplinary focus, *Ethnography* has produced several special issues focusing on topics of scholarly interest that invite participation from disparate disciplines: "Global Ethnography" (2001, Vol. 2, Issue 2), "Dissecting the Prison" (2002, Vols. 3 and 4), "Pierre Bourdieu in the Field' (2004,

Vol. 5, Issue 4), "Phenomenology in Ethnography" (2003, Vol. 4, Issue 3), "Grounds for a Spatial Ethnography of Labor" (2005, Vol. 6, Issue 3), and "Worlds of Journalism" (2006, Vol. 7, Issue 1).

In 2003, *Ethnography* and the Center for Urban Ethnography at the University of California, Berkeley, held a conference on "Ethnography for a New Century: Practice, Predicament, Promise." This brought together academics from anthropology and sociology, with one aim being to clarify the standards of the journal.

Ethnography does not appear in the *Journal Citation Reports* and, hence, has no impact factor. Its website does, however, usefully provide a monthly updated list of the 50 most frequently read articles (based on hits received by articles archived on the site) and a list of the 50 most frequently cited articles (based on citations from articles in HighWire-hosted journals). For example, for the month beginning November 1, 2006, the two most frequently cited articles were Michael Burawoy, Pavel Krotov, and Tatyana Lytkina's "Involution and Destitution in Capitalist Russia" and Burawoy's introduction to the special issue on global ethnography, "Manufacturing the Global."

Anna Madill

See also Ethnography; Publishing and Publication

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Websites

Ethnography: http://eth.sagepub.com

ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

Ethnomethodology is the somewhat confusing label for a specific "alternate" sociology developed during the 1960s by Harold Garfinkel. Its mission is to study the taken-for-granted "methods" used by members of collectivities to maintain a local sense of social order. It can be seen as a respecification of sociology as conceived by Talcott Parsons and as inspired by the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, Aron Gurwitsch, and Alfred Schutz. Ethnomethodological studies require a deep immersion into the details of members' practices in their local specifics through close observation ethnographically and/or by using audio- or video-recordings. At the same time, the researcher should "bracket" pregiven conceptions and evaluations of the character of the activities to be studied. Such studies cover an enormous variety of practical activities, ranging from ordinary conversation to highly specialized professional investigations. Ethnomethodology has been a major influence in the emergence of conversation analysis, whereas another offshoot, membership categorization analysis, is gaining more prominence. Because of its principled difference from other kinds of sociology, it offers a major challenge to social theory and sociological research practices.

Ethnomethodology's Interest

To understand ethnomethodological studies, one must realize their specific interest. This differs so much from the taken-for-granted interests in the other human sciences that reading such studies without understanding what drives them only leads to confusion. What is basically at stake is the local achievement of accountability. The general idea is that in anything they do, people (as members of society) design their actions in ways such that their meanings are made available to other members. The empirical interest, then, is to explicate how this is achieved—how the sense of actions, their accountability, is made observable in situ.

Consider a simple action such as greeting. There is an enormous range of activities, such as gestures and sayings, that can be done to "do a greeting." The way it is concretely done can be taken by recipients or others as somehow significant, say as warm or routine or reluctant. Timing in relation to other events and the fit in the situation will be essential. Any deviation from "greeting as usual" can be consequential for the relationship in which it occurs. For instance, a slow greeter can be held accountable: "Are you angry?" When less simple actions are studied, such as in the work of airline pilots to be considered later in this entry, similar interests will be pursued—the selection

of concrete modes of doing things, their fit in the local situation, their routine character or deviations from routines, timing, previous actions, later uptake, and so on.

For ethnomethodologists, specifying a culture's repertoire for doing particular actions is not enough. They want to know more about the circumstances and the concrete details of the local application of a culture's possibilities. Furthermore, they are not particularly interested in some of the aspects that many others in the social sciences want to know about, such as frequency distributions in terms of external variables, or various mental attributes, such as cognitions or attitudes that are often proposed to "underlie" specific actions.

In short, ethnomethodology asks "how" questions rather than "why" questions; its interest is procedural rather than explanatory.

Ethnomethodology's Methods

Ethnomethodology cannot be said to have one specific method. Instead, the methods that ethnomethodologists would use in a particular case should be adapted specifically to the character and circumstances of that case in the light of ethnomethodology's interest. Following from that interest, however, they do have certain (dis)preferences. The core data for ethnomethodological studies tend to be observations, either directly as ethnographic observations or indirectly by studying audio- or videorecordings. A major difference with most other qualitative researchers is that ethnomethodologists tend to avoid using interviews as their major data. In other research traditions, interviews are often used to gather self-reports, expressions of opinions and attitudes, and/or descriptions of scenes that the researcher has not observed directly. For an ethnomethodologist, these are "accounts" that for them can be interesting as such, as ways in which members bring off interview reports as situated actions, but not as a resource to study nonobserved events or "inner states." Only as aids to understanding particular specialized practices can interviews be useful.

The analytic process in ethnomethodology can be seen to occur in two steps. The ethnomethodologist first must understand the actions of the participants in a scene as they understand it. The second step is to analyze that understanding in procedural terms—how, by the use of which concrete methods, have the participants achieved the actions as understood? To be adequate in these two aspects of ethnomethodological research, the researcher must develop a double-sided competence. On the one hand, he or she must be competent in understanding or even acting adequately in terms of the local culture, which involves practical common sense in local terms. But the researcher must also be able to use that understanding in an analytic way to explicate the procedures used in the actions observed.

Studies of Work

Using one's commonsense competence to understand a greeting does not seem to be very problematic, at least for scenes that are not too much different from one's own experiences. For situations that are not familiar, however, understanding may require a rather extensive period of getting to know the local ways of doing things. Maurice Nevile, for instance, collected his core data by videotaping the activities of flight crews on scheduled flights by commercial airlines to study "talk-in-interaction in the airline cockpit." But before he even approached the airlines to ask for their cooperation, he prepared his research by extensively reading whatever he could find about the operation of commercial airlines, training and operations manuals, official accident reports, and so on. He also watched available information videos showing pilots at work, visited conferences, and talked to research psychologists working with flight crews and accident investigators. In this way, he developed what he called a "disciplinary competence" in his field of interest; without this, he would have understood hardly anything that was happening in the cockpit. This is in line with what Harold Garfinkel called the "unique adequacy requirement of methods," meaning that for any particular topic of ethnomethodological study, the researcher must be "vulgarly competent" in the local practices and adapt his or her approach to what turns out to be necessary in the situation at hand.

Nevile's research is an example of what has been called "ethnomethodological studies of work" or, more generally, "workplace studies." Such studies are often done by a combination of ethnographic field observation and the detailed analysis of videorecordings made during the fieldwork. The ethnographic phase of the research is used mainly to acquire the local competence necessary to understand the practices that constitute "work" in the setting, whereas the recordings are used for the actual ethnomethodological analysis of

those practices. Ethnomethodology's preference for recordings is related to its interest in the details of the local social orders as are actually realized in situ. Ethnomethodological studies of work show that although most specialized work activities are based on a pregiven plan, protocol, or set of instructions, actually working according to the plan involves more than is, or can be, specified in the plan. A plan or script may specify the steps to be taken to do some kind of work in general terms, but doing the work involves adapting the instructions to local circumstances and realizing the work by using one's voice, one's body, various material objects, and so on. Cooperation at work, especially, requires following the activities of co-workers and fitting one's own activities into the situation as it develops. This may involve following the direction of a co-worker's gaze to understand what he or she is attending (e.g., a computer display) or overhearing a telephone conversation and, on the basis of what one hears, taking a next step in a work sequence. Repeated viewing of a videotape shot in a work setting provides the researcher with access to the lived details of work that would not be available in a "one time through" ethnographic observation written down later in the day.

Ethnomethodological studies, then, require an intense immersion into the details of actual social settings. The results of such studies cannot be reported in generalized formal accounts. What is presented is rather the analytic description of one or more "cases," events, or practices. Such description can be read as instructions to see "more than the plan"—what is ignored or glossed over in any official rendering of the work. Official accounts are done "in terms of the plan" rather than as a concrete report of the work activities. This does not mean that the pregiven plan or the ultimate accounts in terms of it are themselves ignored in ethnomethodological studies; rather, it means that they are studied in the ways they are involved in the actual work of "following instructions" or "producing accounts."

Although ethnomethodologists will take the lived details of the actual practices very seriously, externally formulated official "versions" of that work tend to be held at a distance, so to speak. This is part of a strategy known as ethnomethodological indifference, which refers to a "bracketing" (to use an expression taken from phenomenology), or preconceived notions and evaluations about some activity, so as to be able to study it in its own terms as it is actually accomplished. Such pregiven notions and evaluations can stem from common sense, the social sciences, engineering, or managerial theories; whatever their origin, they are to be bracketed in favor of a close study of the phenomena at hand. This strategy, then, marks a fundamental difference between ethnomethodology and most other social sciences.

An Ethnomethodology Example: "Pilot-Speak"

In Maurice Nevile's book, *Beyond the Black Box: Talk-in-Interaction in the Airline Cockpit,* a major aspect of his analysis of pilots' talk is the use of pronouns. In fact, it takes him two chapters to report his findings on this aspect. The general issue is that by choosing a particular pronoun, such as "I," "you," or "we" (and its derivatives), a speaker relates the utterance in which it occurs to himself or herself to the addressee or to a locally relevant collective. In the case of cockpit talk, there are two pilots, a captain and a first officer, and for any flight there is a division of labor, where one is the "pilot flying" and the other is the "pilot-not-flying." For any action that is announced in speaking, it must be clear who is responsible for it. That is where the choice of pronouns comes in. The work of pilots is based on extremely detailed protocols, which may also prescribe particular pronouns to be used on particular occasions. Chapter 2 details the use of "prescribed pronominal forms," and Chapter 3 reports on "nonprescribed pronominal forms." Both function to help pilots make explicit the distribution of duties and responsibilities. "I" can be used to claim an action, whereas "you" assigns it to the other. "We," on the other hand, can be used to stress a team identity and, for instance, a team achievement. These functions are recognized by the airlines and, therefore, are prescribed for certain occasions. In their daily practice, however, pilots often add pronouns where they are not prescribed, and in so doing they personalize their exchanges and, thereby, their "actions-in-coordination." A captain who often uses "we" rather than "I" may be seen as fostering a sense of partnership between the pilots.

Source: For more information on this topic, see Nevile, M. (2004). *Beyond the black box: Talk-in-interaction in the airline cockpit.* Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.

Ethnomethodology's Mission

In workplace studies, as discussed in the previous section, the specific features of ethnomethodology—its interest and methods—can perhaps be seen most clearly. These include the requirements to attend to details, to immerse oneself into the local relevancies, and to acquire enough of the competencies to understand what is going on from the perspective of the workers while putting external conceptions and evaluations at a distance. Ethnomethodology in its current shape is not limited, however, to the study of specialized work settings. Similar requirements can, for instance, be formulated for the study of observable practices of severely handicapped persons, as David Goode's work makes clear. And although the study of less exceptional situations may make immersion and acquiring local competencies less spectacular, attending to details to understand "competencies in use" remains essential.

When the idea of ethnomethodology was being developed by Garfinkel, its topic—the seen but unnoticed features of ordinary action—was so hard to get in focus that he used very specific procedures, the so-called breaching experiments, to make them "visible." Although he continued to use some of these purposeful disturbances of ordinary situations as a pedagogy, they are no longer necessary as a general study policy today. Closely observing some utterly routine doings, such as greeting and (for pilots) arranging take-off, can provide a basis for understanding what goes wrong in exceptional situations, such as in "cold" encounters and airplane accidents, respectively. To maintain situations, whatever their kind, as in some way "orderly," work must be done systematically and routinely but adapted to local circumstances. Explicating that work is the task that ethnomethodology has set for itself.

Paul ten Have

See also Conversation Analysis; Membership Categorization Device Analysis (MCDA); Phenomenology; Videorecording

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Ethnopoetics

Dennis Tedlock defines ethnopoetics as the study of verbal arts in all languages and cultures, focusing in particular on the oral communication of proverbs, laments, prayers, praises, prophecies, curses, and riddles shaped by the spoken, chanted, or singing voice. Such studies aim at translating, transcribing, interpreting, and analyzing oral performances to make them cross-culturally accessible as works of art, hoping in the process to free all poetries from the constricting traditions of Western literature and thereby helping to transcend the artificial boundaries of language and culture that modern thinking harbors in separating itself from what it sees as the "others" of the world.

This effort was launched as a special genre of inquiry when Tedlock teamed up with Jerome Rothenberg to create the radical magazine *Alcheringa/Ethnopoetics* in 1970. Although similar work had been done piecemeal for several years, the magazine concentrated on ethnopoetics as a unifying theme. It was strongly committed to exploring new techniques of translating the poetries of tribal societies, especially the work of Indigenous verbal artists from Asia, Africa, Oceania, and the Americas. *Alcheringa/Ethnopoetics* is no longer published, but its goals and methodological experimentalism have continued to characterize the field since it began.

Narrative Verse

One important early development in this field was the recognition of narrative verse patterning—the idea