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ANALYTIC PERSPECTIVES

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In this chapter, we examine a number of related themes under the aegis of analysis. The analysis of data derived from qualitative research strategies is a potentially vast field. It is not our intention to generate a comprehensive review of the history of analysis (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003) or of all its current manifestations (Hardy & Bryman, 2004). There are entire books that go some way in that direction, and virtually no textbook or handbook achieves complete coverage. Rather, through a selective review, we highlight what we think are some key issues confronting the research community. We do not, therefore, offer a prescriptive view on how data should be analyzed. Textbooks on methods themselves are the appropriate place for such practical guidance (e.g., Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Silverman, 1997, 2004). Rather, we survey the methodological terrain selectively as we perceive it.

The extraordinary diffusion of qualitative research among the social and cultural disciplines is a welcome development, and it is one to which we have made modest contributions (Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2003; Delamont, 2002; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). We are personally and professionally committed to disseminating further qualitative research methods and the published work that derives from them. On the other hand, the very proliferation of qualitative research brings in its train some potential problems. The conduct of qualitative work has become fragmented. During an era of hyperspecialization in the academy and beyond, qualitative research has been subject to the same forces. The range of specialties and emphases can be gauged by inspecting, by way of example, the contents of recent and current edited collections (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2001; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002b; Seale, Silverman, Gubrium, & Gobo, 2004; Silverman, 2004). As qualitative research has become increasingly professionalized and increasingly subject to explicit codification and reflection, it seems to have become increasingly fragmented.

In the section that follows, we review that process of fragmentation, identify some of its contours and consequences, and suggest some more positive ways of thinking about the proper relations between different methods. In particular, we affirm the rather unfashionable position that there are kinds of social activity and representation that have their indigenous modes of organization. Language and discourse, narratives, visual styles, and semiotic and cultural codes are culturally relative and arbitrary, but they nevertheless display orderliness that is relatively stable and predictable, observable, and describable. Although

strongly determinist forms of structuralism or semiotics might not prove to be tenable, that is no excuse for abandoning altogether disciplined attention to such intrinsic ordering principles. Qualitative research needs to remain faithful to that indigenous organization.

We then turn our attention to a different but related issue, that is, the fragmentation of justifications for qualitative analysis and the interpretation of the social world. We contrast a centripetal tendency, a tradition that has tended toward a convergence or consensus within the field (especially in sociology), with a centrifugal tendency that has celebrated and promoted diversity among analytic strategies. The former represents a canonical tradition within the intellectual field, whereas the latter represents a more radical and sometimes transgressive mode. Recent accounts of the history of qualitative research and its practices, with which our own views diverge, tend to locate these differences within a developmental framework, tracing an intellectual history for qualitative research away from a positivist stance toward carnivalesque postmodern diversity (e.g., Lincoln & Denzin, 1994, 2001). Although we recognize that such accounts are partially correct in describing some changes in the most visible thinking, we differ in how best to capture the underlying differences (Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 1999, 2001, 2003). We recapitulate and explore some of these issues briefly. Our perspective is not, however, based on a rearguard appeal to earlier versions of ethnographic or qualitative research and a return to the earlier certainties associated with the "classics" of methodological literature (cf. Atkinson et al., 2003). Our critical stance is, therefore, very different from that articulated by commentators such as Brewer (2002), who seemed to assert a rather vulgar form of realist analysis in distancing himself from postmodernist analytic strategies. Our critical stance also differs from those that embrace and endorse the claims of postmodernism.

We go on to discuss another major axis of contestation within the qualitative tradition and its current manifestations. We suggest that there is a major line of cleavage that separates disciplines or subdisciplines and individual researchers from one another, although it is not always apparent to the main protagonists in the field. We suggest that this reflects differing emphases on experience and action. During recent years, a good deal of qualitative research has been justified, analyzed, and represented in terms of social actors' experiences of their own social worlds, that is, of changes over the life courses of biographical phenomena and disruptions such as mental and physical ill health (Ellis & Flaherty, 1992). In a parallel way, qualitative research has sometimes been transmuted from the biographical to the autobiographical and autoethnographic (Bochner & Ellis, 2001; Ellis, 2004; Reed-Danahay, 1997, 2001). We do not think, however, that this is derived from a self-evident reason for conducting qualitative research. The purpose of such research is not always to understand the world from the actor's or informant's own perspective or to gain access to his or her personal private realms of experience and feeling (Behar, 1996; Fernandez & Huber, 2001; Radstone, 2000). A great deal of the foundational work in ethnography and other qualitative research was concerned with the analysis of collective social action, that is, how members of society accomplish joint activity through language and other practical activities as well as how they align their activities through shared cultural resources. From this latter perspective, even motives, emotions, intentions, and the like are matters of collective action, expressed through the codes of shared idioms. These distinctions need to be made visible so that the analysis of ethnographic and other data does not become confused (Atkinson et al., 2003; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002a, 2002b).

We then consider another related but distinct issue, that is, the aestheticization of analysis and representation. As some analysts and commentators have moved toward various postmodernist positions, they have sought to free qualitative analysis from the conventions of academic textual writing (Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Goodall, 2000). We thoroughly endorse the principle of critical reflection on the conventions through which social worlds and social actions are reconstructed.

Just as we recommend paying attention to the conventional orders of culture and action, we also recommend paying attention to the conventions of textual production and reception. But we warn against the wholesale acceptance of aesthetic criteria in the reconstruction of social life. In many contexts, there is a danger of collapsing the various forms of social action into one aesthetic mode—that is, implicitly revalorizing the authorial voice of the social scientist—and of transforming socially shared and culturally shaped phenomena into the subject matter of an undifferentiated but esoteric literary genre. (For examples of work that we believe exemplify this trend, see Clough, 1998; Richardson, 1997, 2002.)

Finally, we consider the implications of our remarks for social critique. We suggest that an engaged social science should indeed remain faithful to the intrinsic order of social life. We need—more than ever before—principled, systematic, and disciplined ways of accounting *for* the social world and *to* the social world. We need to be able to produce accounts of the social that can recognize the conventions of: media representations, of fashion and consumer culture, of political and everyday discourse, of scientific knowledge, of cinematic and other visual codings. Accounts that reduce the social world to a domain of experience cannot generate faithful, let alone critical, analyses of culture and action.

Analytic Fragmentation

We have no quarrel with attempts to define and practice appropriate strategies for the analysis of particular kinds of data. Indeed, we want to insist on the proper disciplined approach to any and every type of data. In addition, we want data to be analyzed and not just reproduced and celebrated (as sometimes happens with life histories and visual materials). Our main message, however, is that the forms of data and analysis reflect the forms of culture and social action. For instance, we collect and analyze personal narratives and life histories because they are a collection of types or forms—spoken and written—through which various kinds of social activity are accomplished. They are themselves forms of social action in which identities, biographies, and various other kinds of work get done (Ochs & Capps, 2002; O'Dell, 2001; Patterson, 2002). Thus, we accord importance to narratives and narrative analysis because they address important kinds of social action (Atkinson, 1997; Bauman, 1986; Riessman, 2002). In the same spirit, we should pay serious attention to visual data insofar as culture and action have significant visual aspects that cannot be expressed and analyzed except by reference to visual materials. This is by no means equivalent to the assumption that ethnographic film or video constitutes an especially privileged approach to sociological or anthropological understanding (Ball & Smith, 2001; Banks & Morphy, 1997; Pink, 2001, 2004). The same can be said of other analytic approaches. Documentary analysis is significant insofar as a given social setting is self-documenting and important social actions are performed in that setting (Prior, 2003; Scott, 1990). Texts deserve attention because of their socially organized and conventional properties and because of the uses they are put to in their production, circulation, and consumption. The same is true of other material goods, artifacts, technologies, and so forth (Tilley, 1991, 1999, 2001). The analysis of dramaturgy, likewise, is important insofar as social actors and collectivities engage in significant performative activities (Denzin, 2003; Dyck & Archetti 2003; Gray & Sinding, 2002; Hughes-Freeland, 1998; Tulloch, 1999). But it should not be treated as a privileged way in which to approach all of social life.

We believe, therefore, that it is important to avoid reductionist views that treat one type of data or one approach to analysis as being the prime source of social and cultural interpretation. We should not, in other words, seek to render social life in terms of just one analytic strategy or just one cultural form. The forms of analysis should reflect the forms of social life, their diversity should mirror the diversity of cultural forms, and their significance should be in accordance with their social and cultural functions.

We identify these different analytic approaches not merely to celebrate diversity, that is, not to propose a vulgar version of "triangulation" through methodological pluralism and synthesis (Denzin, 1970; Janesick, 1994). Quite the reverse—we want to assert the importance of rendering the different facets of culture and social action and of reflecting their respective forms. We want, therefore, to affirm that aspects of culture and the mundane organization of social life have their intrinsic formal properties and that the analysis of social life should respect and explore those forms. In so doing, we react against some analytic tendencies that have undervalued anything that smacks of formal analysis. Such formalism seems to fly in the face of the most fashionable appeals to postmodernism. Yet discourse, narratives, performances, encounters, rhetoric, and poetics all have their intrinsic indigenous modes of organization. So too do visual, textual, material, and other cultural embodiments. It is not necessary to endorse a narrowly structuralist analytic perspective or endorse unduly restrictive analyses to recognize the formal properties of talk, the codes of cultural representation, the semiotic structures of visual materials, or the common properties of narratives and documents of life.

It is necessary, therefore, for ethnographers and other analysts of social life to pay attention to the analytic imperatives of such socially shared codes, conventions, and structures. The forms of social and cultural life call for equivalent analyses. These methodological principles give us a way of addressing some fundamental methodological precepts in a disciplined way. Herbert Blumer enunciated the principle that research should be "faithful" to the phenomena under investigation (Blumer, 1954; Hammersley, 1989). In its most general form, this methodological precept seems to beg all the important questions, seeming to imply that one can know the phenomena prior to their investigation. A naïvely naturalist interpretation is clearly inappropriate. Our formulation retrieves for Blumer's principle a more methodologically precise formulation—a more restricted but more fruitful approach. It implies that fidelity to the phenomena means paying attention to the forms and media through which social actions, events, and representations are enacted, encoded, or embodied. It also gives a particular rendering of the notion of "thick description" (Denzin, 1994; Geertz, 1973, 1983). Our approach can be extended to a commentary on versions of "grounded theory" and cognate strategies such as "analytic induction" (Atkinson et al., 2003; Znaniecki, 1934). Again, there are multiple versions of grounded theory, and they have been thoroughly documented (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001; Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We do not, incidentally, advocate that all ethnographies should deploy every conceivable analytic procedure and examine every possible data type in the interests of a spurious kind of comprehensiveness or "holism." On the other hand, our insistence on attention to the forms of culture and social action gives particular force to notions such as holism. In our version of research methodology, this can refer not to the doomed attempt to document "everything" but rather to a principled respect for the multiplicity of cultural forms. Thus, holistic analysis would refer to *preserving* those forms that are indigenous to the culture in question rather than collapsing them into an undifferentiated plenum.

In the following sections, we elaborate on these general remarks. Before doing so, we outline a number of key analytic areas that demonstrate the force of our general argument. These are among the analytic strategies that can and should contribute to the systematic analysis of social settings, action, and organization.

▣ Analytic Strategies

Narratives and Life Histories

We should not collect and document personal narratives because we believe them to have a privileged or special quality (Atkinson, 1997; Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Conle, 2003; Cortazzi, 1993, 2001). Narrative is not a unique mode of organizing or reporting experience. In addition, narrative is an important genre of

spoken action and representation in everyday life and in many specialized contexts (Czarniawska, 1997, 1998; Riessman, 1993, 2002). We should, therefore, be studying narrative insofar as it is a particular feature of a given cultural milieu (e.g., Caplan, 1997; Cortazzi, 1991; Gardner, 2002; Lara, 1998; Myerhoff, 1978; Voysey, 1975). Furthermore, narratives are not independent of cultural conventions and shared formats (Holstein, 2000). They are not uniquely biographical or autobiographical materials, and they certainly do not convey unmediated private "experience." Likewise, they do not convey "memory" as a psychological phenomenon. Experiences, memories, emotions, and other apparently personal or private states are constructed and enacted through culturally shared narrative types, formats, and genres (Humphrey, Miller, & Zdravomyslova, 2003; Olney, 1998; Plummer, 1995, 2000, 2001; Tota, 2001; Wagner-Pacifici, 1996). They are related to story types more generally (Fine, 2001). There are affinities with other kinds of stories—of history, mythology, the mass media, and so forth. We need, therefore, to *analyze* narratives and life materials so as to treat them as instances of social action, that is, as speech acts or events with common properties, recurrent structures, cultural conventions, and recognizable genres. Therefore, we treat them as social phenomena like any others. Indeed, we need to treat narratives as performative acts (May, 2001) and treat them as forms of social action like any others.

Visual Data

The collection and analysis of visual materials tends, unfortunately, to be treated as the preserve of a specialist domain. The production of ethnographic film has a long history, although it has often been oddly divorced from the mainstream textual practices of the ethnographic monograph (Ball & Smith, 1992, 2001; Banks & Morphy, 1997). The use of photography for ethnographic purposes has also been relegated to a somewhat specialist subfield when it has not been relegated to mere illustration of the written monograph (Loizos, 1993). During recent years, the development of small digital camcorders and the development of digital photography have created an enormous range of possibilities for ethnographers in the field. Consequently, visual anthropology and sociology should not be treated as separate genres or specialties. There are many aspects of culture that are intrinsically visual. Many cultural domains and artifacts can be grasped only through their visual representations and the structured properties of their visual codes (Ball & Smith, 2001).

There are many social phenomena that can and should be analyzed in terms of their appearances and performances that may be captured in visual terms. These are not, however, separable from the social settings in which such phenomena are generated and interpreted. They should not be explored purely as "visual" topics; rather, they should be explored as integral to a wide variety of ethnographic projects. Visual phenomena—the mundane as well as the self-consciously aesthetic—have their intrinsic modes of organization (Crouch & Lübbren, 2003). One does not need to endorse the most determinist versions of semiotics or structuralism to recognize that visual culture embodies conventions and codes of representation. There are culturally determined aesthetic and formal principles, and there are conventional forms of representation and expression.

Attention to visual culture also implies serious attention to the ethnoaesthetics of the producers, mediators, and consumers of visual materials. We need to not only "read" the visual but also understand ethnographically how it is read by members of the social world or culture in question (Grimshaw, 2001). In general terms, there has been insufficient attention to the aesthetic codes and judgments deployed by members of a given culture (Attfield, 2000). We know about specialized domains of aesthetic work such as the visual arts. We also know something about the aesthetics of everyday taste in clothes and fashion (Valis, 2003). In addition, there is research relating to the decoration and consumption of domestic spaces and objects (Henderson, 1998; Julier, 2000; Miller, 1987; Painter, 2002). In other contexts, there are studies of the visual cultures of advertising and other media of representation (Frosh, 2003).

However, there are still many cultural domains in which local aesthetic criteria are important, but their analysis remains poorly integrated within the general ethnographic tradition; for instance, see DeNora (2000, 2003) on music in everyday life as a topic for ethnographic investigation (cf. Bennett & Dawe, 2001; Whiteley, Bennett, & Hawkins, 2004).

Discourse and Spoken Action

The collection and analysis of spoken materials is one domain where overspecialization is a danger. The development of discourse analysis and conversation analysis has been one of the most egregiously successful domains of qualitative research. Its disciplinary bases have been varied, including linguistics, sociology, and psychology. The emergence of conversation analysis from the work of Harvey Sacks and other ethnomethodologists has been a remarkable contribution to the disciplined empirical study of social order and social action (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; Moerman, 1988; Sacks, 1992). In the past, there has been a distinct tendency for these approaches to spoken language to become narrowly restricted specialties. Conversation analysis has, in particular, been unduly bounded and self-referential in some cases. There is no need to restrict our analysis of social worlds exclusively to those phenomena that are susceptible to recording for conversation—or discourse—analysis. We need, in contrast, to ensure that the analysis of spoken language remains firmly embedded in studies of organizational context, processes of socialization, routines of work, personal transformation, people processing, and so forth. During recent years, fortunately, the analysis of spoken discourse has engaged more explicitly and systematically with more generic issues of sociological research (e.g., Atkinson, 1995; Sarangi & Roberts, 1999; Silverman, 1987). Spoken language has its own intrinsic forms of organization. Indeed, it demonstrates a densely structured organization at every level, including the most finely grained. It is important, however, that discourse analysis, conversation analysis, discursive psychology, and the like not be treated as analytic ends in their own right and not be intellectually divorced from other aspects of ethnographic inquiry. The expert knowledge required should not be regarded as a specialty in its own right and independent of wider sociological or anthropological competence. The conventions of language use need to be analyzed, therefore, in relation to more general issues of identity, the interaction order, moral work, and the organization of social encounters. In addition, it is important for analysts of spoken action to remain sensitive to wider issues of social analysis and critique and for practitioners of more general qualitative analysis to engage with and use the methods and findings of discourse and conversation analysis. Key discussions that identify the relationships between discourse/conversation analysis and central issues of social research include the accounts by Potter (1996, 2003), Hepburn and Potter (2004), and Potter and Wetherell (1987).

Material Assemblages and Technologies

The study of material goods and artifacts, technology, and other physical aspects of material culture deserves systematic attention in many ethnographic contexts (Tilley, 1991, 1999), but is too often relegated to specialized esoteric studies or to highly specific topics. The latter include studies of technology and inventions, of very particular kinds of physical display such as museums and art galleries, and of highly restricted kinds of artifacts such as religious, ritual, and artistic objects. But the detailed investigation of objects, assemblages, and inventions demands a place in the general ethnographic study of social and cultural forms (Appadurai, 1986; Bijker, 1995; Macdonald, 2002; Macdonald & Fyfe, 1996; Pinch & Trocco, 2002; Rabinow, 1996; Sandburg, 2003; Saunders, 2003).

It is vital that the study of physical objects, memorials, and technologies be thoroughly incorporated into more general field studies of work organizations, informal settings, cultural

production, domestic settings, and so forth (Tilley, 2001). Artifacts and technologies are themselves understood, used, and interpreted by everyday social actors. They are used to document and record the past—and indeed to construct the past—and there is much to be learned from the local situated "ethnoarchaeology" of the material past (Dicks, 2000; Edwards, 2001; Gosden & Knowles, 2001). This includes the "monumental past" of places and their ethnohistories (cf. Herzfeld, 1991; Sciama, 2003; Yalouri, 2001). Issues of practical utility and aesthetic value intersect. Ideas of authenticity may be brought to bear on artifacts and assemblages (Forty & Kuchler, 1999; Handler & Gable, 1997). They may be used to display and warrant individual and collective identities; for instance, the "collection" (whether personal or national) is expressive of taste, identity, commitment, and enthusiasm (Miller, 2001b; Painter, 2002; Quinn, 2002). The material goods of fashion and conspicuous consumption are likewise expressive of status and aspirations. The archaeology of the present, as it were, needs to be integrated with the ethnographic imagination and to enrich the ethnographic eye (cf. Attfield, 2000). Much contemporary ethnographic fieldwork is oddly lacking in material content and physical goods, whereas informants' "voices" are transcribed from an apparent physical void. Field research needs to pay systematic attention to the physical embodiments of cultural values and codings.

More generally, this leads to a consideration of material culture. The material embodiment of culture and the cultural connotations of things have become prominent in recent cultural anthropological analyses (English-Lueck, 2002; Finn, 2001; Lury, 1996). Recent examples have included examinations of: home computers (Lally, 2000), mobile communications (Katz & Aakhus, 2002), photographs (Frosh, 2003), cars (Miller, 2001a), and memorabilia (Kwint, Breward, & Aynsley, 1999). These accounts transcend and transform the mundane material world into domains of signification. We do not need to subscribe to unduly strict and rigid formalisms to recognize that such phenomena can be analyzed in terms of their semiotic codes and conventions.

Places and Spaces

Most ethnographic reportage seems oddly lacking in physical location. Many sociological and anthropological accounts, for instance, have but sketchy descriptions of the built environment within which social events and encounters take place. The treatment of space is too often restricted to aspects of human geography, urban studies, and architecture (Darby, 2000). It also needs to be integrated within more general ethnographic accounts. But ethnoarchitecture is—as we know from some anthropological accounts—significant in defining the spaces and styles of everyday living (Dodds & Taverner, 2001). Built spaces provide symbolic boundaries as well as physical boundaries (Borden, 2002; Butler, 2003; Crowley & Reid, 2002). They physically enshrine collective memories as well as more personal biographical and emotional work (Bender & Winer, 2001). Homes are endowed with emotional and cultural value through the expression of taste and cultural capital, the celebration of historical authenticity, or the observance of modern minimalism (Jackson, Lowe, Miller, & Mort, 2000). Public spaces also embody tacit cultural assumptions—about the classification and processing of people and things, about commercial and professional transactions, about political processes and citizenship (Benjamin, 1999; Möller & Pehkonen, 2003). The ethnographic exploration of places and spaces includes the commercial transformation of them through tourism and heritage work, the transmutation of downtown areas and waterfronts, the recreation of industrial pasts into leisure and entertainment, and the construction of replicas and spaces for "experience" (Dicks, 2000).

These brief and partial observations are not intended to map out a comprehensive view of the current research literatures or of the general possibilities that they open up for ethnographic and

other qualitative social research. More important, these observations are not intended to be a list of actual or potential domains of specialization. On the contrary, the thrust of our argument so far is that these various aspects of culture and the specialized coteries of researchers who document them should not exist in mutual isolation. The goal of ethnographic accounts of everyday life, particularly cultural and organizational milieux, should be to use such analytic perspectives and to analyze such materials in constructing multilayered accounts of the social world.

These observations are not intended to be a comprehensive listing of all relevant domains and strategies of inquiry. On the contrary, our remarks have been highly selective. We have deliberately offered some remarks on a few key fields of research to illustrate and develop our more general argument concerning the treatment of qualitative data in the analysis of social organization and action, social identities and biographies, social contexts and institutions.

▣ The Ordering of the Social World

It would be easy to misrepresent our remarks. We are not simply suggesting a promiscuous series of analytic perspectives and strategies. We are not advocating simply putting data types and analytic types together in the interests of an ill-defined holism. The holistic ideal has, from time to time, been proposed as the goal of ethnographic and other qualitative research, although few social scientists nowadays would recognize the existence of phenomena such as "communities" that can be described holistically anyway. Such an ideal implies a degree of temporal, spatial, and cultural closure that is a chimera. We do recommend systematic attention to these data types and analytic perspectives because they reflect certain principles of intrinsic organization.

It is not altogether fashionable to invoke notions such as intrinsic organization in the analysis of social life (cf. Atkinson & Delamont 2004). During the era of poststructuralism and postmodernism, there is widespread rejection of anything that suggests "structure" or stable patterning in social and cultural forms. We believe, on the other hand, that we should recognize that forms can be identified and that they can serve as the basis of an analytic approach to qualitative social and cultural data. Moreover, an approach such as this gives us principled ways of understanding data of different sorts as reflections of the codes of social order. It also gives us ways of reconciling a number of tensions within the current treatment of qualitative research.

It is not necessary to invoke completely determinate and invariant structures so as to identify indigenous principles of order in particular forms of social action. The most obvious starting point—and it is one where there is no room for dispute—lies in the organization of spoken discourse. Discourse analysis and conversation analysis are virtually interchangeable from this perspective, and the disciplinary differences between them are insignificant for our purposes. It is not necessary to recapitulate their major findings here. But the general principles need reaffirmation. From the current vantage point, it is perhaps hard to reconstruct the recentness of any attention to spoken discourse as an object of analysis (as opposed to hypothetical texts or written materials) and of any attention to utterances in their natural context (as opposed to decontextualized individual sentences). The recognition that there can be *order* beyond the syntax of the individual sentence or beyond the single utterance is a relatively recent one. It follows, to a considerable extent, the technology of permanent recording that has permitted the close scrutiny of such phenomena, transforming spoken discourse into an object of inquiry and transforming its features into a topic of sociological, psychological, and linguistic inquiry.

The emergence of discourse analysis has transformed our collective appreciation of the interaction order in ways foreshadowed by Goffman's pioneering remarks and the no less original observations by Sacks (Goffman, 1981; Sacks, 1992; Silverman, 1998). It establishes the fundamental and pervasive principles of order, not least at the micro level of organization. Order

in this sense displays itself through a remarkable array of socially shared devices, the operation of which produces and reproduces orderly conduct. The distinctive character of these devices is that they are used locally and recursively to generate strings of ordered interactions. The participants do not need to "know" the overall structure of the encounter to generate it in a predictable and stable way. They do not even need to be aware of the conventions they are using. Similar considerations apply to orderly conduct apart from spoken language. The recursive application of simple rules, in a practical way, generates orderly activity. To generate "structures" such as queues and turn-taking systems, for instance, each participant needs only to apply a simple chaining rule (i.e., "next participant follows the previous actor") and to know his or her relative position for the system to be self-replicating. Again, no actor needs to know the sequence of a complete queue for it to work smoothly, provided that each actor applies the same basic rule.

It is in this sense, therefore, that spoken and unspoken actions can display intrinsic orders that are in some sense independent of the actors' consciousness or intentions. In a similar vein, we can detect the interaction of physical and spoken actions. The capacity we now have to capture and inspect videotapes of human actions and processes of interaction already allows us to identify stable patterns of gesture in a way that was unavailable to earlier generations of observers. To this point, the social sciences have been relatively slow to fully explore the opportunities opened up by new digital technologies. We do know, however, that we can identify recurrent and interactionally functional patterns of movement and repertoires of gesture at a level of delicacy that only such permanent recordings render possible. As we have suggested, many of these analytic opportunities are dependent on contemporary recording technology. The important thing, however, is not the technology per se but rather the opportunity to pay close and systematic analytic attention to the *structures* of action. We can identify what Goffman (1983) referred to as an "interaction order" that displays ordering features that are relatively independent of the individual social actors who bring them into being. We know that social actors notice when the interaction order breaks down and that they share devices that repair mistakes and restore orderly functioning. But they do so as matters of preconscious action. Order is achieved and repaired through the application of recipes of action in a serial fashion. Complex structures and extended chains of action can be generated in a stable and smooth fashion through the local application of simple generative rules applied in a stepwise fashion.

We can identify recurrent ordering principles at a level of organization even greater than turn-by-turn discourse. The close analysis of narratives and similar spoken performances shows them to have recurrent structures. There have been various successful attempts to describe large-scale ordering principles for narrative events. Labov's pioneering work is one key example. Labov's groundbreaking work on language in society was innovative in various ways, with his work on spoken narratives being one example (Labov, 1972). Labov documented a number of basic structural elements that were part of the "grammar" of personal stories and accounts. Although not all of the structural elements were absolutely necessary for the production of a competent narrative, they recognizably generated stories that are sequentially coherent, deliver the story content competently, and are suitably "pointed" to make the story intelligible to speaker and hearer alike (Labov, 1972). We do not need to regard these as "deep structures," or as exerting mysterious powers over social actors, to acknowledge the recurrent patterning of narratives. A similar vein of analysis has been undertaken by Hymes (1996). Hymes's treatment, perhaps less well known than that of Labov, is more subtly grounded in an appreciation of *ethnopoetics*, that is, the culturally specific conventions of aesthetics and rhetoric that inform the competent performance and reception of oral performances. Hymes demonstrated principles that create distinctive internal structures within narratives and other oral performances. From his treatment of the materials, it appears that it is not necessary to reorder actors' own words into

"poetic" reconstructions rather than to uncover the ethnopoetic structures and aesthetic principles that are indigenous to many narratives and other accounts.

Forms and functions of narratives and accounts are also identifiable from many analyses of respondents' accounting devices. Among these are the rhetorical repertoires or registers employed by natural scientists to express and reconcile recurrent features of scientific work. Gilbert and Mulkay (1984) demonstrated that natural scientists deploy alternating repertoires to account for scientific discoveries. Scientists proffer explanations that reflect the contingencies of personal and local characteristics while simultaneously attributing scientific discovery to the inexorable and impersonal revelation of nature. They reconcile any discursive or cognitive discrepancies by appealing to the mediating device that "the truth will out" in any event (Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984). A similar analysis of experts' accounts can be found in a subsequent analysis of the rhetorical work of health economists, whereas Atkinson and his colleagues have developed a similar analysis of a research group's accounts of its own scientific breakthrough (Atkinson, Batchelor, & Parsons, 1998). Accounting devices or registers are relatively stable features of these and similar accounts.

In a similar fashion, we have a large number of analyses of professionals' accounts of their work, including the formulation of phenomena such as "cases" and "findings." Occupations such as medicine and social work have narratives and accounts included in their stock-in-trade (Atkinson, 1995; Hunter, 1991; Pithouse, 1987). Their practitioners' routine work is constructed through various kinds of spoken performance. Practitioners persuade one another concerning diagnoses and assessments through the construction of cases that are, in turn, dependent on narrative structures; they use rhetorical devices to invoke evidence in support of their arguments. These are characterized by recurrent rhetorical features of their professional talk. They use characteristic devices to encode issues of evidence, competence, and responsibility in the course of collegial talk. In a very similar vein, we can identify rhetorical features of legal discourse through which cases are constructed, evidence is assembled and presented, or judgments are justified. Again, the major issue here lies not in the local details of particular settings or occupational groups but rather in the presence of stable regular features of spoken actions that can be identified. They can, in turn, be examined in terms of the sort of *work* that they perform. In other words, analytic payoff resides not only in identifying the patterns, structures, and conventions that generate such activity but also in analyzing their moral and practical implications.

We can extend such analytic perspectives beyond the individual narrative. There are systems of *genre*. There are culturally defined and socially shared types of story formats. The existence of such generic types means that we should not regard narrative accounts as reflections of private and individual experiences. Although narratives and biographical accounts may be felt and expressed as if they were highly personal, they are constructed and received in terms of cultural idioms and formats. This is demonstrated well in Plummer's (1995) analysis of sexual stories. Although accounts of coming out or of being a rape victim might be thought of as extremely private—and indeed in one sense they are—Plummer's analysis showed that they are couched in terms of shared forms or genres. Culturally defined formats can be identified in many contexts of spoken and written performance. They prescribe the shape and content of many descriptions and accounts. Many of the forms with which we are entirely familiar, to the point of taking them for granted, are highly conventional—or even arbitrary—cultural impositions. The analyses of documentary types such as the scientific report demonstrate that there are historical and culturally prescribed conventions through which the "plain facts" of nature and its exploration are conveyed. The work of authors such as Myers (1990) is testimony to the significance of the genre of the scientific report.

If it is fairly self-evident that discourse, descriptions, and narratives display indigenous principles

of structure and order, we do not need to restrict such analyses to language. The general principles of semiotics can be applied to cultural systems of signification. Hence, visual and material data can be examined in terms of their intrinsic orders. The systems of fashion and clothing, for example, are not exhaustively defined in semiotic terms, but one can readily identify the basic structuring principles of such systems. The alternating and contrasting structuring principles that define the fashion system in recent Euro-American culture include the binary contrasts short/long, close/loose, structured/unstructured, full/narrow, colored/neutral, and plain/patterned. Although individual designers can develop their distinctive idiolects from within such systems, overall the semiotic principles help to define a "look" that is shared among many individual designers and houses in defining the distinctive style of a given season. In a similar vein, the "private" domain of fetishistic fantasy and pleasure is defined in terms of culturally defined, arbitrary features (e.g., leather, rubber, high heels, boots) that are themselves derivatives of and transform from the general system of clothing (Barthes, 1983; Hodkinson, 2002; Manning, 2001; Storr, 2003; Troy, 2002).

Visual styles of many sorts display basic semiotic principles. The visual "languages" of advertising, for instance, use recurrent coding principles that are grounded in representations of gender relations, sexual fantasy, exotic settings, domestic settings, and so forth, with the precise selection and combination of semiotic elements reflecting the product being advertised and the genre of advertisement itself. Goffman's (1979) analysis of gender relations in advertisements in print media is but one example of how advertising forms can be "decoded" from a sociological perspective. In a similar vein, one can identify semiotic principles of style and space in representations of the domestic sphere and its ideals. In the multiplicity of lifestyle magazines and television programs, statements about actual or desired status and identity can be constructed from color schemes, furnishings, and fittings. Styles can be identified through assemblages of materials and objects, for example, defining art nouveau, Bauhaus, art deco, or modernism. Such aesthetic principles may inhabit places of work as well as domestic environments. The visual and material language of the built environment is also susceptible to semiotic analysis. The use of space within and around buildings, the structures of buildings themselves, and the interior layouts of buildings simultaneously reflect the assemblage of cultural forms as well as the individual or corporate taste of the client and the aesthetic style of the architect.

Our general point here should not be lost in the various types and examples to which we have alluded. We are not trying to produce a comprehensive enumeration of all the cultural phenomena that can be analyzed. Rather, we are suggesting that whatever else these artifacts and activities might be, they display various arrays of structuring and semiotic principles. From the built environment, through domestic spaces, to individual self-presentations, biographies, narratives, and conversations, all of these social phenomena can be understood in terms of their intrinsic principles of structure and order. The collection of qualitative data certainly should not be confined to spoken materials, whether they are naturally occurring spoken interaction data or transcribed interview data. There are multiple media of inscription in which culture is enacted, and social action takes place through multiple embodiments.

Classic Principles

A systematic ethnography needs to take account of the intrinsic orderings through which social worlds are produced and reproduced. It is not necessary for any one ethnographic study to encompass systems of discourse, narrative, material culture, aesthetics, and performance to satisfy some notional criterion of completeness or adequacy. On the other hand, we should not ignore such structuring principles. There is no long-term benefit to the overall project of social research if styles of data collection and analysis remain fragmented. We certainly need some people to work on specialized technologies and techniques—digital

visualization, discourse structures, semiotic structures, and the like—but those analytic domains must not flourish only in mutual isolation. We do not want to see the social world represented as if it consisted only of transcribed talk, spoken narratives, visual artifacts, or material goods.

We have already referred to Blumer's (1954) recommendation that research should be "faithful to the phenomena." In various ways, adherence to that injunction can prove to be problematic. It is hard to know what should count as phenomena in the first place, and it seems dangerous to assume that they have an essence independent of the methods used to construe them. Clearly, perfect correspondence to an independently identifiable realm of social objects and actions is impossible. We cannot aspire to perfect or comprehensive fidelity or to capture all of the variations to be found among and between types of social actions and actors. But the upshot of our argument is that ethnographers should certainly be faithful to the *forms* of social phenomena. We should be attentive to the indigenous systems of action and representation. We should not think of ignoring the systems of, say, ethnoaesthetics more than we think of mangling the local language(s) of our chosen research setting. Fidelity to the social worlds in which we work requires a systematic analysis of the principles of order they display. At least to that extent, then, we can retain a sense of fidelity and representation that is firmly rooted in social forms and also retains a notion of rigor.

This is, moreover, a productive way of approaching some key implications of "thick description" (Geertz, 1973). Geertz's (1973) use of the term, derived from Gilbert Ryle's philosophy of mind, has been susceptible to many readings. The most vulgar of uses do little or no justice to Geertz's own inspiration. Thick description is too often used to convey the sense that ethnographic accounts are densely constructed with graphic and detailed cultural descriptions. Although this may be the case, it does not really capture the specific analytic force of Geertz's idea, which is clearly intended to capture the degree to which cultural matters are overdetermined in the sense that there are multiple codings that generate meaning. There are, Geertz stressed, multiple perspectives or interpretive frameworks, that is, multiple motivational frames that inform social events and actions. Our own insistence on the intrinsic forms of culture and action gives a particular force to the notions of thick description. From our point of view, whatever else it might mean or be taken to mean, it should include analytic attention to the multiple codings and structuring principles through which social life is enacted and represented.

In these two senses, therefore, we can bring into close conjunction Blumer's precept and Geertz's insight. Both can find analytic force in the ethnographic analysis that is faithful to the contours of culture and the structures of action. We are mindful at this point to invoke yet a third idea derived from classic accounts of ethnographic analysis, that is, the notion of "triangulation" (Denzin, 1970). Like the first pair of terms we invoked, triangulation has been subject to multiple renderings and misrepresentations. Here, we do not wish to suppress or supersede all other connotations of triangulation, the fruitfulness of which lies partly in the multiplicity of inspirations that researchers can draw from it. Although it is not fruitful to assume, as in oversimplified versions, that research methods or data types can be aggregated to generate a more rounded or complete picture of a social world than would be generated by a single method alone, it might be productive to approach it in a way that is more congruent with our own approach: that is, to recognize that there can be a mode of triangulation derived from an explicit recognition of multiple social orders and principles of structuring. Triangulation thought of in this way has a very specific, if restricted, subset of meanings within the overall analytic strategy. Again, it recognizes the multiplicity and simultaneity of cultural frames of reference—spoken, performed, semiotic, material, and so forth—through which social events and institutions are possible. Consequently, a triangulated account depends not only on an opportunistic combination of methods and sources but also on a principled array of methodological strategies that reflect the indigenous principles of order and action.

Finally, our own approach here gives us some productive ways of recuperating significant aspects of "grounded theory" (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We have already referred to the contested nature of this idea, or package of ideas, and we do not need to recapitulate the various definitions and applications of grounded theory. We simply reaffirm that grounded theory does not refer to some special order of theorizing per se. Rather, it seeks to capture some general principles of analysis, describing heuristic strategies that apply to any social inquiry independent of the particular kinds of data: indeed, it applies to the exploratory analysis of quantitative data as much as it does to qualitative inquiry. The idea derives directly from the pragmatist roots of interactionism. It captures the *abductive* logic through which analysts explore the social or natural world through practical engagements with it, derive working models and provisional understandings, and use such emergent ideas to guide further empirical explorations. It represents a compromise between the arid philosophy of purely deductive logic (which cannot account for the derivation of fruitful theories and hypotheses in the first place and admits of no place for *experience in the process of discovery*) and purely inductive logic (which never transcends the collection and aggregation of observations in generating generalizations). To a considerable extent, therefore, there is little to choose in practice between grounded theory and *analytic induction* as summary accounts of the practical work of social exploration and the derivation of ideas. Both formulations capture the need for systematic interactions between data and ideas as well as the emergent properties of research design and data analysis, which are in constant dialogue. Both formulations also emphasize the processual and iterative nature of the research process.

Too often, however, grounded theory is construed as a justification for the inductive retrospective inspection of volumes of field data, as if the research strategy were based on the accumulation of cases and the introspective derivation of categories—often through an inductive procedure of data "coding." Some of the descriptions of grounded theory by its own advocates have inadvertently contributed to this impression. But if we take seriously some of the things we have already outlined and claimed, we can discern some possible strategies that suggest principled relationships between data and analysis in a grounded theory manner. In other words, we recognize that culture and action are ordered. Consequently, the work of data collection is not devoted to the accumulation of isolated cases or fragmentary materials, and analysis is not just a matter of sorting and classifying those materials.

Finally, in considering our classic principles, we can sum up several of our themes so far with reference to Schutz's (1973) discussion of first- and second-order constructs. In his development of *verstehen* sociological principles beyond Dilthey or Weber through social phenomenology, Schutz suggested that analytic forms, such as ideal types, are not the sole preserve of the sociological observer. Everyday social actors are engaged in practical interpretations of their own social worlds. They use first-order constructs such as the method of practical reasoning that uses *typifications*. Sociological analysis, therefore, involves a (second-order) meta-analysis of the first-order, everyday analyses of practical social actors. In the same way, everyday social life displays principles of order that the analyst explicates and systematizes. The everyday actor has an implicit grasp of ordering rules and conventions, and it is the task of the analyst to explicate such tacit knowledge (cf. Maso, 2001).

We believe, therefore, that the social world displays various indigenous principles of organization. There are multiple ordering principles—discursive, spatial, semiotic, narrative, and so forth—to which the analysis of qualitative data needs to be attentive. The social analyst develops second-order models of these indigenous codes, conventions, and orders. There should, therefore, be principled relations between the first-order and second-order constructs. There should also be systematic relations between the different second-order analyses and models. Although this formulation might seem to be unduly formalistic,

we believe it to be a salutary corrective to the unduly experiential perspectives currently brought to bear on qualitative data analysis. In the following section, we turn our attention to a parallel set of analytic preoccupations concerned with representation and aesthetics.

Representation and Aesthetics

To this point, we have referred exclusively to the contours of culture, the semiotics of indigenous systems of representation, and the structures of social action. We now turn briefly to the analytic work of writing and other modes of ethnographic representation. We do not recapitulate the history of this particular domain, nor do we review all of the contributions that have been made to it. That work has been done elsewhere. Here, we note that there has been a marked tendency among the more innovative ethnographers to experiment with the textual conventions of ethnographic reportage (Faubion, 2001). The use of nontraditional literary forms or performance techniques has been well documented, and there is a growing corpus of published materials in those forms. Such experiments are usually represented as having radical connotations, and they are among the characteristics of ethnography associated with postmodernist ideas and with the most recent "moments" of Lincoln and Denzin's (1994, 2001) developmental model of qualitative research (for a critique of this particular formulation, see Delamont, Coffey, & Atkinson, 2000).

There is no doubt at all that writing ethnography is an important aspect of ethnographic analysis. The process of analysis stretches far beyond the mere manipulation of data and even of the work of grounded theorizing, thick description, and the like. It resides in the reconstruction of a given social world or some key features of it. Such reconstructions are rendered persuasive through the textual and other devices deployed by ethnographers in putting together the texts, films, and the like that constitute "the ethnography." In response to various interventions, all scholars recognize that this process is not innocent. There is no transparent medium through which a social world can be represented. Language is not a transparent medium. The textual conventions to which we have become accustomed are just that—conventions. Photography, film, and video are not merely passive recording media; rather, they actively shape our reception of social and cultural phenomena.

In the pursuit of the experimental turn in ethnographic representation, however, we believe that there have been exaggerated and extravagant moves. In bracketing and transgressing the conventions of realist representations and the textual formats of scientific writing, networks of authors have chosen to assimilate sociological representation to literary forms such as poetry and fiction. In this there lies a danger. The representation of social phenomena through poetry, for instance, inscribes some major assumptions (rarely explicated in the course of this ethnographic genre). First, the focus of attention is shifted radically from the culture and actions of social actors toward the representational work of ethnographers themselves. In sharp contrast to analyses of culture that decenter the "authors," much experimental writing places individual authors firmly—and sometimes exclusively—center stage. Literary work such as poetry here does not necessarily create the "open" or "messy" texts that some critics had sought. Rather, they create closure by creating a new basis for authorial privilege. Moreover, the ability to construct plausible, let alone meritorious, poetry or autobiographical writing appears to rest on personal authorial qualities. The social world is aestheticized in the process. What counts as a good ethnographic account is, therefore, in danger of resting primarily on aesthetic criteria.

Moreover, the assimilation of cultural and social phenomena to first-person-dominated texts, whether prose or poetry, can do violence to the phenomena themselves. We have already alluded to Blumer's (1954) aphorism concerning fidelity to the phenomena, and we invoke it once more here. We do not think that we are in any possible sense of the term *faithful* to the phenomena if we recast them into forms that derive from quite other cultural domains. We risk losing the

intrinsic aesthetic, and other formal characteristics of the original meanings, events, and actions. We have already referred to the principle of ethnopoetics in recognizing that there are indigenous canons of rhetoric and construction in cultural performances. Analysts distort or obliterate the cultures they seek to account for if they translate everything into their own culture-bound aesthetics. First-person autobiographical writing and experientially derived poetry do not enjoy universal value. They are, if anything, among the more culturally specific and limited of expressive forms. There is little or no warrant for elevating them to being the preferred vehicle for cross-cultural or culturally sensitive social research.

Similar reservations can be entertained concerning performance ethnography in general. It is now permissible in some academic contexts to use our ethnographic data and the insights gleaned from ethnographic fieldwork to create various types of performative and aesthetic texts or artifacts. Denzin's (2003) recent volume is a key exemplar and discussion of this perspective. Mienczakowski (2001) also provided an overview of performed ethnography and ethnodrama. We do not seek to detract from these approaches in general except perhaps to suggest that performance ethnographers might engage more fully and systematically with the now wide-ranging ethnographic study of performance (Atkinson, 2004). We do, however, wish to assert something more in keeping with the general thrust of this chapter, namely that we should be very careful indeed of imposing "our" performative and aesthetic criteria and competences in the representation of settings, cultures, and actors while neglecting the indigenous local forms of performance through which culture, organization, and action are actually maintained in everyday life.

Social Action, Social Organization

In framing our argument as such, we are clearly stressing one particular array of emphases and preferences. We do so partly to redress what we see as a misleading tendency within many contemporary versions of qualitative research. We believe that too much emphasis is currently placed on the identification and documentation of social actors' *experiences* or *perceptions* at the expense of *social action* and *social organization* (cf. Silverman, 2004).

In part, we recapitulate arguments to which we have contributed elsewhere, and here we seek to generalize them further. We stress that among the goals of ethnographic research is to analyze *social action, social order,* and *social organization* as well as to analyze the forms and contents of *culture.* We need to pay serious and systematic attention to the recurrent phenomena of anthropology, sociology, and cognate disciplines such as discursive psychology, linguistics, and semiotics. This means that ethnographic and other qualitative research is much more than the sympathetic description and reportage of informants' experiences. We have argued elsewhere to the effect that qualitative research needs to transcend the culturally pervasive influence of the interview and what Atkinson and Silverman (1997) called the "interview society." We do not subscribe to the view that qualitative research is justified primarily by representing social affairs from the point of view of individual social actors or even from the perspectives of social aggregates.

This does not imply a return to the old methodological contestation between the merits of observation and those of interviewing—between what people *do* and what people *say* (Atkinson et al., 2003). The reverse is true. Instead, we stress that what people say is itself a form of action. We need to analyze social actors' accounts or narratives as types of speech acts. Likewise, we need to recognize that even such "experiences" as memories or emotions are not merely psychological states but also are performed social enactments (cf. Tota, 2001; Wagner-Pacifici, 1996). Moreover, in line with Mills (1940), we need to see motives as socially shared, culturally defined frames of justification or rationalization (Atkinson & Coffey, 2002). So, social action includes the work of representation. Likewise, social action includes the use and circulation of other modes of representation such as material goods and cultural artifacts (Vinck, 2003).

It follows, therefore, that we are recommending a particular approach to the analysis of social life under the aegis of ethnographic or qualitative research. We believe that there is a need for the reevaluation of analytic strategies that avoid the kind of fragmented reductionism to which we referred at the beginning of this chapter. We do not believe that it is productive for analysts to represent the social world primarily or exclusively through the lens of just one analytic strategy or data type. The different types of qualitative research—discourse analysis, visual analysis, narrative analysis, and the like—are not paradigms or disciplines in their own right; rather, they are analytic strategies that reflect and respect the intrinsic complexity of social organization, the forms of social action, and the conventions of social representation. This is not just a matter of juxtaposing different "methods," and it is not just an appeal to rather vague notions of "context" or "holistic" ethnography; rather, it means paying attention to the *systemic* relations among the interaction order, orders of talk, representational orders, and organized properties of material culture. In this way, our analytic perspectives can and should reaffirm certain kinds of rigor, some of which we believe have been lost to view in recent methodological writing. We stress, therefore, the disciplined approach to technical issues such as discourse analysis, narrative analysis, and semiotic analysis. We seek *principled* relationships between the various contributory disciplines and subdisciplines. The analysis of social phenomena is not well served by the kind of fragmentation that equates types of data (e.g., spoken, visual, textual, material) with disciplines or specialties working in relative isolation.

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