LINEARITY OF RESEARCH DESIGN IN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDIES OF SPEAKING

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"Linearity" in the design and conduct of research refers to the specification, in advance of data collection, of both a purpose for research and of the steps to be taken to serve the purpose. The requirements of naturalistic inquiry can make it difficult to design and conduct research according to the standards of linearity which are implicitly or explicitly reflected in scientific inquiry in speech communication. Ethnographies of speaking, one variety of naturalistic inquiry, are exemplary of this difficulty, but a consideration of how ethnographers can and do follow a standard of linearity in research design and conduct suggests that the difficulty is surmountable.

In J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye there is a poignant passage in which Holden Caulfield reports his frustration in attending his high school public speaking class. Caulfield was frustrated by his teacher's practice of shouting "digression" whenever a student speaker strayed from the announced speech topic. To Caulfield's dismay, the passages which prompted the criticism were the very ones which aroused his interest in the speeches, and he was frustrated by classroom experiences in which his interest was aroused but not fully served. In his ideal academy, no doubt, flights of verbal fancy would be encouraged, creative expression would be unconstrained by narrow conceptions of purpose.

There are those who view naturalistic inquiry into communication as the kind that Holden Caulfield would have preferred had he continued his communication studies into graduate or postgraduate communication research. From this view, naturalistic inquiry, as one of many approaches to communication research, falls at the extreme end of a continuum that can be labeled "linearity of research design." That phrase refers here to the specification, in advance of data collection, of both a purpose for research and the steps to be taken to serve the purpose. And from this view, naturalistic inquiry is characterized by a weak commitment to make such advance

specifications and, having made them, to follow the plans as drawn.

It is not hard to construct a view of the naturalistic inquirer as theoretically aimless and methodologically shifty. One has only to read some statements by field workers about their methods, as several such statements illustrate:

> Some research operations occur in linear, progressive fashion; many occur simultaneously; while others occur "regressively" as when someone towards the end of his study discovers his "true" problem and its associated hypotheses. This may not be how methodology is taught or written about, but *it is how original non-replicative research takes place.*[1]

> What I did was decided very largely by the Lugbara themselves; another people might have led me to do a different kind of research.[2]

> [The field researcher] finds or constructs his method as required by the peculiarities of his specific inquiry, and the conditions of the research field.[3]

> He must have no hypotheses to direct him as to what he should find in his investigation. The investigator goes into the situation to be studied with a totally open mind — open, in fact, in depth to all the stimuli that impinge upon his consciousness.[4]

[1]Leonard Schatzman and Anseim L. Strauss, *Field Research: Strategies for a Natural Sociology* (Englewood Cliffs, N.H.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 144.

[2]John Middleton, *The Study of the Lugbara: Expectation and Paradox in Anthropological Research* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1970), p. 1.

[3]Schatzman and Strauss, p. 143.

[4]Severyn T. Bruyn, *The Human Perspective in Sociology: The Methodology of Participant Observation* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 272.

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We need to caution the reader against his own expectation that he may learn from us standard procedures for handling this task of analysis. Qualitative analysts do not often enjoy the operational advantages of their quantitative cousins in being able to predict their own analytic processes; consequently, they cannot refine and order their raw data by operations built initially into the design of the research.[5]

Other statements can be found which reflect the seeming nonlinearity of naturalistic inquiry, but those quoted are sufficiently representative and from sufficiently distinguished authors to demonstrate that there is good evidence in the field work literature to support a view of naturalistic inquiry as nonlinear in its approach and execution.

It would, however, be a mistake to infer from the array of passages quoted that naturalistic inquiry proceeds without purpose or plan. That inference would not be true, and a reading of the entire work from which each passage is taken would reveal that. Nonetheless, the presentation of these passages is not mere editorial deception on my part, the selective use of quotation and ellipsis to achieve some dramatic but false effect; each statement refers to a practice which departs from canons of linearity as they are conventionally invoked in speech communication research. What, then, is to be made of the statements? That they should be included at all in their respective works is worthy of remark. They reflect that their authors consider the rationale of linearity to carry weight in decisions about method, but that in naturalistic inquiry there are circumstances which prevent one from taking the course of action which would otherwise be desired. For these authors, the ideal of linearity is an important consideration in the design, conduct, and evaluation of naturalistic inquiries, no less than in others, but in naturalistic inquiries the realization of the ideal is always problematic because of the nature and purposes of such studies. It seems appropriate therefore to talk about the problem of linearity in naturalistic inquiry, a problem which must be resolved in each particular study, and it is the purpose of this essay to suggest general considerations as to how that problem should be resolved in naturalistic studies in speech communication.

"Naturalistic inquiry" is itself not an unproblematic term. The genus naturalistic inquiry includes many species, some of which are very different from each other although they share essential features of the class. Ethology and participant observation provide an illustrative comparison and contrast, for both employ the direct observation of people, in the social settings which are a part of their normal life activity, without the manipulation by the investigator of the antecedent conditions of behavior. And both have as their aims to describe the behavioral achievements people make when left to their own resources, the distribution of phenomena in nature, and the behavioral repertoire of a person or group. But the differences are sharp. Human ethology is an objective, quantitative, and descriptive science of behavior which seeks to produce a record of strictly observable behaviors. Participant observation is both objective and subjective, primarily but not necessarily qualitative, both descriptive and theoretical in intent, and it seeks to describe and explain not only public, behaviorally observable behaviors but also the covert, private features which are the counterpart to public acts.[6]

Because there are significant differences among modes of naturalistic inquiry, I shall particularize this discussion to one, the ethnography of speaking. This enables me to present a methodological case study in how the problems and opportunities in attaining the ideal of linearity are present in one mode of naturalistic inquiry which has great potential relevance to speech communication. Three topics are treated: the nature and purpose of the ethnography of speaking, the special problems which the ethnography of speaking creates in terms of linearity of research design, and a proposed approach to a resolution of the problems. Although the scope of the essay is limited to the ethnography of speaking, it is hoped that the general features of the analysis and the resolution presented will have general application to the use of naturalistic methods in speech communication.

[5]Schatzman and Strauss, p. 108.

[6]For treatments of naturalistic inquiry in general, human ethology, and participant observation, see Edwin P. Willems and Harold L. Rausch, eds., *Naturalistic Viewpoints in Psychological Research* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1969); S.J. Hutt and Corrine Hutt, *Direct Observation and Measurement of Behavior* (Springfield, Illinois: Thomas, 1970); and Bruyn. Also see Norman K. Denzin for a treatment of "The Logic of Naturalistic Inquiry," *Social Forces*, 50(1971), 166-182.

The ethnographer of speaking studies the means of speech and their meanings, as these are found in a particular community or human group.[7] In every community there is one (or more) linguistic code and varieties of its use, a characteristic way of using language and speech in general and of that community's particular ways of speaking. Code, varieties, pattern of use, and shared outlook — all of these are suitable topics for an ethnographer of speaking to investigate in any community.

A fundamental working hypothesis which informs the ethnography of speaking is that of cross-cultural variability in the organization and use of language. Communities differ as to what linguistic resources are available to their members, how their linguistic resources are patterned in use, the functions that are served by language, and the valuation of language as an instrument of action in social life. Because they are variable, these resources, patterns, functions, and values must be discovered in each case.

Thus the substantive task of the ethnographer of speaking is in any given case to formulate a descriptive theory of speaking as a cultural system or as part of a cultural system.[8] He must explicate the culturally distinctive "common knowledge" which one must share in order to use language appropriately in any role in any scene staged in a particular community. [9] Obviously, this is a rather large task of description, and no one has yet done it for any society, although some have specified part of what must be known to do such things as ask for a drink in Subanun and speak "like a man" in Teamsterville.[10] Such studies do not aim at writing a good etiquette book. Indeed they do not produce a rule for every occasion, a fitting remark for every social exigence; rather they aim to produce a finite set of premises by which a potentially infinite number of speech acts can be judged by native persons as appropriate or inappropriate in a particular situation. The ethnographer of speaking discovers and describes the deep meaning structure which underlies appropriate language use in a particular community.[11]

The substantive problem of an ethnography of speaking converges in interesting ways with the theoretical and methodological problems of the ethnography of speaking. As a field of inquiry, the ethnography of speaking addresses the theoretical problem of how to discover and describe the resources available for communication in a particular place and time, and how to understand the meaning of those resources to those who use them. Part of a solution to this problem is a descriptive model which guides inquiry into various communities, and which integrates the results of such inquiries in a descriptive-theoretical framework. But the construction of such a framework or statement requires the comparative analysis of empirical materials, the gathering of which is dependent at least in part upon a working solution to the theoretical problem itself. Ethnographic studies suitable for eventual comparative analysis require for their conduct at least a working version of the descriptive framework to which they contribute. This interrelation of substantive, theoretical, and methodological concerns is reflected in a series of descriptive frameworks for the ethnography of speaking, each of which was initially proposed for its heuristic value and later was refined in the light of empirical work.[12]

A descriptive-theoretical framework is a formal, general set of categories which guides

[7]Dell Hymes, "Editorial Introduction to Language in Society," Language in Society 1(1972), 2.

[8]Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, "The Ethnography of Speaking," Annual Review of Anthropology, 4(1975), 95-119.

[9]C.O. Frake, "How to Ask for a Drink in Subanun," American Anthropologist 66, Pt. II(1964), 127-132.

[10]Gerry Philipsen, "Speaking 'Like a Man' in Teamsterville: Culture Patterns of Role Enactment in an Urban Neighborhood," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 61(1975), 13-22.

[11]Gerry Philipsen, "Speaking as a Cultural Resource," paper presented at the annual convention of the Speech Communication Association, Houston, 1975.

[12]These frameworks are presented in a series of papers by Dell Hymes: "Functions of Speech: The Evolutionary Approach," in Anthropology and Education, ed., F.C. Gruber (Philiadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961),pp.55-83; "The Ethnography of Speaking," in Anthropology and Human Behavior, eds., T. Gladwin and W. Sturtevant (Washington, D.C.: Anthropological Society of Washington, 1962), pp. 15-53; "Introduction: Toward Ethnographies of Communication," in American Anthropologist 66, Pt. II(1964), 1-34; "Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Setting," Journal of Social Issues, 23(1967), 8-28; Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Life," in Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication, eds., John J. Gumperz and Dell Hymes (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1972), pp. 35-71; Regna Darnell and Joel Sherzer."A Field Guide to the Study of Speech Use," in Gumperz and Hymes, pp. 548-554.

discovery and provides a format for descriptive statement in any particular ethnography of speaking. Such a framework would consist of those descriptive units, and relationships among them, which are necessary and sufficient for description in any particular case. Each new ethnographic datum potentially contributes to the modification of the descriptive framework; that is, descriptive studies improve the tool for conducting descriptive studies. Of course, that alone is insufficient justification for the work, except in those disciplines where there is an interest in producing a record of human experiences and ways of life for its own sake. But in the case of the ethnography of speaking, an improved descriptive framework reflects a refinement in understanding of the subject of theoretical interest: to know more fully and more generally how to discover and describe a given community's ways of speaking. Such a refinement constitutes a theoretical advance.

The theoretical, methodological, and substantive goals of the ethnography of speaking determine how an investigator resolves the problem of linearity in his empirical work. At the outset of any given inquiry the ethnographer does not know how to produce actions which are interpreted as he intends them to be taken (such as a request for information) and how to interpret the actions of others (such things are cross-culturally variable and their discovery is the purpose, not the prerequisite, of empirical work), therefore he must discover in the field *how to conduct this particular study*. Furthermore, he does not know whether his pre-conceived descriptive framework is an adequate tool for discovery and description of that which is important in an alien community (the adequacy of the framework is itself being tested); therefore, *what to study* as part of speech behavior must be made a matter of inquiry in a particular study. [13] From this view, the ethnographer of speaking must allow for, indeed should exploit, non-linearity in research design.

But at the outset the ethnographer intends that his study be used in comparative analysis. That is the purpose of producing several studies. Therefore he must record his observations so that they can be communicated in some standardized mode of statement. And he intends that his findings will

have some implication for evaluation of a descriptive framework; therefore, he must begin with something the adequacy of which can be tested in light of field work. [14] These considerations suggest the importance of linearity to the ethnographer of speaking.

The problem of linearity of research design in an ethnography of speaking is to resolve the apparently conflicting demands which the goals of the undertaking seem to impose. A proposed solution is that the ethnographer find a middle way between rigid linearity and deliberate non-linearity. Specifically, the ethnographer should, in advance of his field work, specify as explicitly as possible, (1) the phenomenon to be described, (2) conceptual linkages of that phenomenon to the process of communication, and (3) the descriptive framework he will use to study the phenomenon selected. He should leave unspecified, as objects of exploratory inquiry, (4) the particularities of the phenomenon in a given social field, and (5) the adequacies of the descriptive framework used. The separate points of this proposal will now be developed.

Prior to collecting his data, the investigator should specify a concept, category, or process which is to be his object of inquiry. Of course at some point in the study he may discard as inappropriate some of that which he initially chose or discover other concepts which are generated in and through his inquiry, and which ultimately might receive a great deal of attention in a given study. Nevertheless the ethnographer's initial task is to formulate explicitly the subject he intends to study.

To require a participant observer or ethnographer to formulate explicitly his conceptual concerns does not guarantee that his research will proceed in a linear fashion as does that of the experimenter. The latter ordinarily predicts, prior to collecting data, what will happen when he performs specified operations, and this the ethnographer cannot do. But an explicit conceptual statement introduces rigor in three ways. First, it provides a criterion for assessing both the pre-field work design and the completed report. Second, it permits the writer and reader to discern the relevant from the irrelevant in a finished re-

[13]The import of this point is developed in Hymes, "Introduction: Toward Ethnographies of Communication."

[14]For an example of a "linear" study which contributes to the refinement of the general descriptive model of the ethnography of speaking, see Paul Friedrich, "Social Context and Semantic Feature: The Russian Pronominal Usage," in Gumperz and Hymes, pp. 270-300.

port. Most good field reports tell an interesting story; they put people, events, and places before the reader's eyes. Sometimes the telling can obscure for both writer and reader precisely why it is being told. Explicit statement of conceptual concern can aid the researcher in focusing his and the reader's attention to what is central to the report. Finally, it directs the investigators to *develop* their concepts in more than one study. ~~One would like to see the same conceptual concern addressed in several different studies, conducted in several different contexts, and to see the development of the same concept in those several studies.~~

It should not be hard to find conceptual concerns which can be studied ethnographically by those whose theoretical interest is communication; here I am thinking of studies which are more limited and narrow in scope than the general task of doing an ethnography of speaking but which nonetheless can be subsumed under the programmatic rationale of that enterprise. ~~Processes~~ (such as self disclosure, impression management, conflict management), ~~effects~~ (such as attitude change, the formation of interpersonal relationships, levels of consensus attained), and *events and* ~~situations~~ (such as public address, group discussion, oral interpretation, viewing television) are some candidates. It is perhaps more difficult to show how the study of such concepts will contribute to the development of communication theory and, more specifically, to show precisely how ethnographic data pertinent to a conceptual concern will be useful to the development of communication theory. But these are tasks the ethnographer (and other researchers, naturalistic and otherwise) can and must perform, and he should do them in advance of fieldwork.

This does not mean that a subject's full relevance to communication theory cannot and will not be *discovered* through the process of field work, or that the original rationale for studying a subject will not be discarded and a new one discovered and substituted as the result of empirical work. It only requires that the field worker show that the phenomenon he will study shows promise of paying a return in terms of a yield for communication theory. Relating conceptual interest to the process of communication introduces rigor to field research for the same reasons mentioned in the first point of this proposal. Futhermore, it increases the likelihood that the "news" of field work, the surprising and unexpected results, will be detected and, once detected, recognized as inexplicable from the perspective of existing theory. Recognition of data not only as surprising but as surprising in terms of extant theory makes possible the systematic refinement of current understandings, and thus makes the surprises all the more valuable.

Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to indicate comprehensively or definitively how ethnographic data might enter into the process of theory construction in communication, some examples can be given of potential contributions which such data might make to the disciplinary concerns of speech communication. ~~One fruit of ethnographic observation and comparative analysis could be a descriptive theory of speech acts.~~ The theory would both inventory and classify speech acts in terms of the major dimensions of judgment and discrimination which underlie their interpretation and use. Such a theory would be the descriptive basis for studies of situated communication. It could provide an investigator with an empirically grounded understanding of what to look for when he tries to identify acts of speech in a particular episode, setting, or community. In addition to its heuristic value, the theory would be an integrative statement of the results of empirical work. It would state the ways in which language serves the various ends of communication. We do not now have adequate data from which to construct such a descriptive theory of speech acts and dimensions, although there is useful programmatic work which could inform data collection and analysis, if only in a preliminary way.[15]

Scholars in speech communication could make a specialized contribution to a descriptive theory of speech acts by investigating, classifying, and analyzing the variety of ways in which people use language persuasively in face-to-face interaction (and by specifying the ways and places in which means other than language supplement or replace it as an instrument of persuasion). Recently within our discipline there has been considerable interest shown in forms of persuasion other than the formal public address, but there is little work devoted to constructing a descrip-

[15]John Searle, "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts," *Language in Society*, 5(1976), 1-23.

tive theory of the ways in which language is, or in specifiable ways is not, used with persuasive intent. As is the case for speech acts in general, the work of theory construction requires field materials. Field materials can be collected and analyzed with an eye on preliminary formulations, such as that by Abrahams,[16] but their purpose is to contribute to the development of new, empirically grounded formulations.

Just as there are few comparative data from which to construct a descriptive theory of the means of speech, so there are few descriptive studies which could enter into a comparative analysis of the meanings of speech as a medium of communication and form of social life. Elsewhere I have written:

> The significance of speaking as a domain within a culture varies across speech communities. Not only do bearers of different cultures speak differently one from another but they hold different assumptions about the value, purposes, and significance of speaking as a mode of human experience. Like religion, politics, and law, so speech, the principal medium of creating meanings in social interaction, itself holds different meanings for the various peoples whose views of the work afford it a place.[17]

At this time we do not have sufficient data to show whether and how speaking enters differentially into the lives and actions of people. Hymes, who first identified the need for such data, writes that:

> The place of speaking in human lives has hardly begun to be understood in the ways in which anthropologists would seek to understand the place of other aspects of life. With religion, kinship, and the like, one at least can argue in the light of data from many ethnographic accounts. For speaking, the ethnographic accounts are still mostly to come.[18]

Here again the needs of the discipline are complementary to the special interests and competencies of its members. Although most scholars in speech communication are not prepared to do work of a technical nature in linguistics, nor is that their goal, they could investigate, classify, and analyze some of the many varieties of human conceptions about speaking as a mode of communication and social life. Traditionally within our discipline there has been considerable interest devoted to attitudes, beliefs, and values about speakers and what they say, but there is little work directed to what people think and believe about the means of communication they use or do not use and to how, if at all, such metalinguistic views influence the conduct of communication.

The two potential contributions of ethnographic data to communication studies as outlined above are, of course, dependent upon descriptions and their comparative analysis. Both require a formulation to guide inquiry and provide a format for comparison. It should prove useful to formulate, and then to test the usefulness of, dimensions of contrast for discovery, description, and comparative analysis. In the process of descriptive work, tentative formulations can be experimented with and, depending upon the results of empirical work, discarded as not useful or retained for further testing or elaboration. As mentioned above, this has been the case in the ethnography of speaking. This is to be contrasted to the view that the field worker should approach his subject free from the constraints of conceptual or perceptual "baggage" that might prevent his reaching the goal of field work — which is, from this view, a description of human behavior unmediated by the distortions of human faculties.

It is possible to conduct a study without the conscious influence of a theory or descriptive framework, but it is impossible to know that one does not unwittingly use an implicit set of assumptions and categories which systematically influence observation and inference.[19] What is both possible and desirable is the systematic exposition of one's descriptive categories and practices. In addition to having the kinds of advantages claimed for the first two points, the specification of a descriptive framework permits the systematic detection and, perhaps, correction, of researcher bias and partiality; if there is to be partiality, and inevitably there will be, let it be deliberate and therefore detectable, rather than unwitting and therefore insidious and enigmatic.

In the course of field work the investigator will often be surprised about some par-

[16]Roger D. Abrahams, "Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore," *Journal of American Folklore*, 81(1968), 143-158.

[17]Gerry Philipsen, "Places for Speaking in Teamsterville," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62(1976), 17.

[18]Dell Hymes, "Social Anthropology, Sociolinguistics, and the Ethnography of Speaking," in *Foundations in Sociolinguistics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1974), p. 116.

[19]As Gregory Bateson has written, "In a strict sense, therefore, no data are truly 'raw', and every record has somehow been subjected to editing and transformation either by man or his instruments," in "Introduction: The Science of Mind and Order," *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (N.Y.: Ballantine Books, 1972), p. xviii.

ticularities of the phenomenon he has chosen to study. It will not look or sound quite the way he had imagined prior to his entering the field. The field worker may discover that what he set out to study is not a salient aspect of human experience in the social world in which he has located himself for research purposes, or that it enters into human experience there in ways and shapes not anticipated by him. In short, he can anticipate surprises.

It is because of the "anticipated surprises" of field work that the ethnographer should not specify, prior to his data collection, the particularities of the phenomenon of interest for a particular social world or setting. A case in point is Bauman's study of verbal art in a La Have Island community in Nova Scotia. He set out "to determine whether there is anything within the structuring of speech behavior by the La Have Islanders that might appropriately and productively be regarded as constituting verbal art."[20] On the basis of the literature on verbal art, Bauman could, prior to field work, specify four products which could be labeled an esthetic of speaking: "a set of esthetic norms attaching to the formal features of the language and governing their manipulation for their own sake," "the use of a particular symbolic attribute of verbal behavior to distinguish the esthetic from the nonesthetic," "a system of genres considered by the people to be artistic forms or subject to esthetic evaluation," and "an esthetic framed in behavioral, or performance, terms."[21] He found none of these, but did find that the La Have Islanders single out sessions at the general store in town and that they mark this *situation* with the esthetic function; he writes that "it is to the realm of situations that the esthetic of speaking applies."[22] This finding makes it possible to extend our typology of "folk esthetic organizing principles, which has heretofore included poetic language, special genres, and performance."[23] The received view of verbal art did not direct Bauman to examine an esthetic attached to a situation; he discovered that perspective by attending to the particularities of the phenomenon in a particular setting.

[20]Richard Bauman, "The La Have Island General Store: Sociability and Verbal Art in a Nova Scotia Community," *Journal of American Folklore*, 85(1972), 331.

[21]Bauman, p. 339.

[22]Bauman, p. 341.

[23]Bauman, p. 341.

Bauman's study of the La Have Island general store illustrates that one's phenomenon of interest might appear in unanticipated ways and shapes. It also illustrates that one's descriptive framework should itself become an object of study, and that is the fifth point of my proposal. The finding about verbal art in the La Have Islands prompted the revision of a descriptive framework for studies of verbal art. One kind of surprise, then, is that the ethnographer's categories or descriptive framework are inadequate to the task of describing the phenomenon which has been conceptualized for study. If one studies a process, such as impression management, he might discover that the traditional ways of describing that process must be changed or supplemented. A student of an effect, such as attitude change, might discover not only that the traditional dimensions for measuring such change are not relevant to his informants but that he does not even know what stimulus words to use to elicit responses from which to infer or construct relevant dimensions. The description and analysis of speaking events might itself require a discovery, for example, that some but not other configurations of setting, purpose, and persons make an occasion one in which talk is appropriately a focus of activity.[24]

A descriptive framework is used heuristically. One purpose of ethnographic study is to refine that framework. Although the field researcher should formulate his descriptive framework as explicitly as possible before entering the field, he should anticipate that at some point the framework will itself become the object of study.

Thus far I have proposed that ethnographers specify a phenomenon of interest, link that phenomenon conceptually to the process of communication, and specify a framework for describing that phenomenon in its particularity in any given social field, and that the descriptive framework itself be subject to revision contingent upon the results of field work.

Two questions might trouble the reader at this point. If the participant observer follows the steps outlined, is he not proceeding on a linear path to the results of inquiry? If so, how does the observer remain sensitive to the particularities of human experience which might be unnoticed because they have fil-

[24]Philipsen, "Places for Speaking in Teamsterville."

tered through the grid of his particular descriptive framework? That is, how does the ethnographer see beyond his categories and descriptive framework in ways that are essentially different from the ways of the careful laboratory experimenter? The vision of an experimenter who cannot detect the subtle but real ways in which his categories and measurement techniques obscure the nuances of human behavior surely is but a caricature of the good experimenter, who knows how to interrogate not only his subjects but also his data, and to correct his theories, hypotheses, and procedures when that is appropriate. These problems are taken up here in a discussion of some of the procedures by which an ethnographer can be confident that he has at least partially and temporarily perceived his object of description through some lens other than that with which he began his study.

One way is to work in a social world which is unfamiliar to the researcher. By so doing, the researcher places himself in a circumstance in which the appropriateness of his own behavior is problematic. The *faux pas* which he makes while participating in the round of activity can help to identify those points at which the researcher's unwitting assumptions pertain to a process, effect, or event. For example, in a study I conducted I used a verbal rather than a physical strategy to deal with unruly boys under my supervision; complimented a young woman on her intelligence; used a local slang expression; interviewed middle aged women in their homes. Some feature of my performance in each case was judged inappropriate to the occasion. That the appropriateness of my participation was problematic in these and other contexts provided a series of leads for investigation of the native point of view, and thereby facilitated my search for alternatives to my own categories or assumptions as ways of making sense of experiences in which I had participated.

Although the identification of differences as a method of seeing the native's perspective can prove useful, it can also introduce a special kind of bias into the study: the unfamiliar is defined in terms of its differences from what the investigator expected, not necessarily in terms of what is essential to the phenomenon described. A way to correct, at least partially, for this potential bias is explicitly to elicit the categories and assump-

tions of the native actor, and then use them. Although it is difficult to do this, I would suggest three tests of the adequacy of statements which purport to represent the native's view. First, does the report use the native's own terms or verbatim description? Second, and failing the first test, do the ethnographer's terms or descriptions refer to something which the native agrees is a recognizable feature of his social world, and if so, can the native person give it a name? Third, does the native person agree that the ethnographer's insight enables him (the native) better to understand his own social world?[25] Systematic use of the first strategy (the discovery and analysis of native terms and explanations) can help the ethnographer to discover aspects of the phenomenon studied to which his own categories might have blinded, or at least not directed, him. The second and third techniques provide tests of the validity of any given observation made by the ethnographer. The two suggestions mentioned, participation in an unfamiliar world and the systematic use of the terms, descriptions, and explanations of the native person, are but two of many ways the ethnographer can see what he studies from some novel perspective.[26]

In this essay on linearity of research design, I have shown, if in faint outline, that linearity

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[25]Schatzman and Strauss, p. 135.

[26]Some other ways are the use of interpretive procedures and the use of two ethnograpghers, one native to the culture studied, one alien to it. For a discussion of interpretive procedures see Stanley Deetz, "An Understanding of Science and a Hermeneutic Science of Understanding," *Journal of Communication*, 23(1973), 139-159. On the use of two ethnographers see Donald T. Campbell, "Distinguishing Differences of Perception from Failures of Communication in Cross-cultural Studies," in *Cross-cultural Understanding: Anthropology and Epistemology*, ed., F.S.C. Northrop and Helen H. Livingstone, (New York, Harper & Row, 1964), pp. 308-336. The problem of how to understand another society is, of course, much more complex than these few remarks might suggest. For an interesting discussion of the problem, see the following: Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958); "Understanding and Explanation in Sociology and Social Anthropology," I.C. Jarvie, in *Explanation in the Behavioural Sciences*, ed., Robert Borger and Frank Cioffi (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1970), pp. 231-248; see also the "Comment" by Peter Winch and the "Reply" by Jarvie in the same volume, pp. 249-270; Alisdair MacIntyre, "The Idea of a Social Science," in *The Philosophy of Social Explanation*, ed., Alan Ryan (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 15-32.

presents a problem, why that is so, and how it can be resolved, in ethnographic studies of speaking. The maneuver has, admittedly, been a narrow one, a discussion of one methodological issue as it pertains to one variety of naturalistic inquiry. It is hoped, however, that the case of the ethnography of speaking illumines the more general problem of linearity of research design in naturalistic studies of communication. The principles outlined here provide those who would conduct or evaluate such studies with criteria for assessing their design and execution. If nothing else, the maneuver should make it incumbent upon those who conduct naturalistic inquiries *as communication research* either to satisfy the criteria set forth or to demonstrate that and how they do not apply. Furthermore, these general principles, the lessons of a maneuver, lay the ground work for a positive research strategy which, if followed, will make naturalistic inquiries an indispensable resource in the work of developing an empirically grounded understanding of communication.