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Micro-Sociological Theory
Perspectives on Sociological Theory
Volume 2

Edited by
H.J. Helle and S.N. Eisenstadt

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Goffman's frame analysis and modern micro-sociological paradigms*

Jef Verhoeven

Few contemporary sociologists are as creative as Erving Goffman. One product of this creativity is frame analysis (Goffman, 1974), a method that is both admired and neglected. Comparing Goffman's approach to other paradigms seems not only to be a negation of the creativity of this writer, but is strongly disliked by Goffman (1981b) when such comparisons have nothing but labelling as their purpose. It is not the function of this paper to place frame analysis in one or another theoretical pigeon-hole. Frame analysis is a sociological approach in its own right. Nevertheless, Goffman accepts different standpoints of symbolic interaction (G.H. Mead), ethnomethodology and phenomenological sociology (A. Schutz) even when he denies others. I intend here to present the differences and similarities between Goffman's frame analysis on the one hand, and Blumer's symbolic interaction, Schutz's phenomenological sociology, and Garfinkel's ethnomethodology on the other hand in function of three questions. (1) What are the presuppositions in relation to reality, knowledge, man and society used in the four paradigms? (2) What is the object of sociology? (3) What are the methodological principles? Moreover, I want to show that in spite of different accents, the frame-analysis approach can already be found in the earlier work of Goffman.

Something must be said about why these four micro-sociological paradigms have been selected. First, Goffman, although sometimes ~~leaning toward the ideas of Schutz, Mead and Garfinkel, presents~~ his work as different from theirs. Instead of using Mead's work in this paper, I will use Blumer's (1969a) seminal book, because of its major influence on symbolic interactionism.¹ Second, they try to give an analysis of the 'ongoing activity' as it appears 'here and now' and are interested in the interpretation of reality. Third, although three of them do not limit their interest to the study of micro-structures, all start by studying face-to-face relations. Fourth, there is a relationship between Goffman's frame as 'the organization of experience', 'the definition of the situation' as used in symbolic

interactionism, the phenomenological 'meaning contexts' and ethnomethodological 'indexicality' and 'reflexivity'. Fifth, frame analysis is considered to be a formal sociology (Jameson, 1976), a symbolic interactionist approach (Littlejohn, 1977; Glaser, 1976), ethnomethodological and semiotic (Jameson, 1976) and structuralist (Gonos, 1977). Here, frame analysis will be considered as a special approach and cannot be forced into one of these categories.

Frame analysis in the other works of Goffman

Let us first examine the extent to which the frame analysis approach is present in Goffman's other works. Although he denotes a great deal of attention to a sociopsychological problem formulation, the structures within which the actors move and via which they approach reality form a substantial portion of his earlier work. Where does one find evidence for this thesis?

Already in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Goffman wonders what techniques actors use to give others a specific impression of themselves or of a situation. Instead of 'techniques', one could just as well use the term 'frame' here ('framework of appearances', Goffman, 1959: 242). These frameworks are outlined in detail in this book and concur with those of *Frame Analysis*. However, Goffman still talks in this first book about the dramaturgic presentation of an activity. Used in this approach (Goffman, 1959: 8, 17, 107, 112, 70, 175, 176, 141) are terms such as 'concealment, discovery', 'performance', 'front region', 'backstage', 'fabricators', 'staging talk', 'team collusion' and 'secrets'.

The anthology, *Interaction Ritual* (1967), four articles of which had originally appeared before 1959, also deals with similar problems. Goffman bases himself here on the study of the social 'gathering', a collection of people who meet each other superficially at the same place and shortly thereafter leave that place. At the moment, the members of this gathering try to disclose their appearance in a particular way, the facial expression being an important instrument. Goffman (1967: 77) studies how one can hide or betray one's facial expression, what ritual is used, and what attitude is adopted or how we behave in order to lead or mislead the other. The offering of a chair to a visitor, for example, is an expression of deference. Its meaning can be changed, however, should one do it brusquely ('demeanour') (Goffman, 1967: 81).

Further, he studies within what frames 'embarrassment' occurs among the actors and what forms of alienation of a situation can be distinguished (Goffman, 1967: 97ff., 117ff.). In the longest article, 'Where the Action Is', finally, a keen analysis is given of the 'action'

that can be found in the world of gambling, card playing and sports. This is a particular form of action: the actor takes risks which flow from the situation but which actually can be avoided. Goffman studies here the structures within which the 'action' takes place.

Encounters (1961a) gives the structure in which table games take form ('Fun in Games'), and how individuals can distance themselves from the roles they have to play ('Role distance'). Here, too, the theme of the first book recurs, namely, what individuals want to manifest of themselves to the other. Much attention is devoted to the frames which make this possible and which will refer to his description in *Frame Analysis*.

This problem can also be found in *Asylums* (1961b) and *Stigma* (1963a): what frames are used there to evaluate the behaviour of patients in a psychiatric hospital and of people who are stigmatized? Goffman (1961b: 283, 331) describes how the structure within which the psychiatric patient and the stigmatized individual act provides the frames in order to see the social reality in a well-determined manner.

In *Behavior in Public Places* (1963b), the face-to-face behaviour of people in the daily circumstances of the gathering is again central. This behaviour must be seen within the situation where the gathering takes place. This means that the actor takes account of the spatial environment into which he or she steps in order to become part of a gathering (Goffman, 1963b: 18). The typical characteristics of these situations impose differing norms on the actors: for example, how one has to manifest one's familiarity or unfamiliarity with someone and where the limits of this behaviour lie (Goffman, 1963b: 112ff.). A number of frames of *Frame Analysis* are also found here already, such as 'talking to oneself', 'delusionary states', 'open regions', 'concealment' and 'boundary collusion' (Goffman, 1963b: 72, 75, 132, 176, 181).

Strategic Interaction (1969) consists of two important essays. The first is entitled 'Expression Games', and Goffman here searches for the conditions under which an individual receives, gives or hides information. For in the encounter with the other, there is always doubt about what the other really means; it is a kind of game situation in which one tries to find out what the other really wants to express. The standpoint is formed by the simple moves of the other that one tries to understand (Goffman, 1969: 11), for they are applied by the other to present the reality in a particular manner. Frames as concealment and fabrication form essential components of these expression games (Goffman, 1969: 28, 58, 80). The same can be said about the second essay, which bears the same title as the book: 'Strategic Interaction'. Here, too, 'keying' (Goffman, 1969:

115, 116, 140), 'frame analysis', 'concealment' and the like are mentioned. These frames are used by Goffman to apply a game theory analysis to the study of strategic interaction. In a strategic interaction, two parties meet each other in a well-structured situation. Each party tries to find out what the other party thinks about him or her. In this way, one tries to foresee what movement the other party will make in order to adapt one's own movements. Goffman studies further what frames are used to make possible and to hinder this strategic interaction.

Finally, frame analysis is not absent from *Relations in Public* (1971). The object of the research is the face-to-face behaviour in daily life: Goffman wants to give a picture of the ground rules and the behavioural patterns of public life. Via the study of these ground rules, he again arrives at the frames which help the actors to read the reality. The manner in which an individual appears in the world and the territory of the self become comprehensible only through the frames used. Thus, for example, one uses signs to define one's territory (Goffman, 1971: 41), but one's territory can also be removed when one fouls it oneself or when others succeed in penetrating it (Goffman, 1971: 52, 57). Brief encounters between people consist of a 'supportive' and 'remedial interchange'. This exchange is a kind of ritual that confirms the relations between the actors or reroutes on a good path those that threaten to become conflictual. Ritual also plays an important role in the signs that are used to clarify our bond with others. All these elements allow the reality to be read as normal or abnormal. The entire series of frames from *Frame Analysis* is already provided in *Relations in Public* (1971: 113, 140, 211, 269, 284, 314, etc.).

In *Gender Advertisements* (1976) and *Forms of Talk* (1981a), Goffman very definitely applies the frame analysis approach. These two works were, in fact, published after *Frame Analysis*. The first work concerns the manner in which people manifest their sexual identity to others and how this is used in the world of advertising. Goffman does this by means of a long series of advertising photographs, and explains what frames we use to interpret them (Goffman, 1976: 10-23). The second work deals with linguistic usage and consists of articles that were written between 1974 and 1980. The frame analysis approach is here applied to the very simple forms of discussion, response cries, and also to ways of speaking, lectures and radio talk. Part of this problem has already been discussed in *Frame Analysis* (1974: 496-559).

In conclusion, one may state that the frame analysis problem formulation is a constant motif throughout all of Goffman's work. Of course, it is not so significant in his earlier work as in *Frame*

Analysis and in his later work. Nevertheless, in one way or another, Goffman is always looking for the frames that we use in order to answer the question, 'what is it that is going on here?' The result is an unmasking of a socially concealed world. But, in addition, a world becomes visible that is established in its smallest details. This will now be examined further.

The world picture

Research cannot be understood apart from the world picture of the researcher (Strasser, 1973; Radnitzky, 1970). This world picture is crucial and gives the researcher a particular image of man and society and the relation between both. The researcher will choose a particular research programme in function of this view. So the social world can be considered as a material reality in which different impersonal powers react upon the material components. There are also sociologists who consider the social world as peopled by individuals creating meaning and reacting upon each other. Both exemplar points of view are applied in sociology and are considered useful for the understanding of social reality in function of the world picture practised by the sociologists. World pictures are thus presuppositions about physical reality, man and society (Radnitzky, 1970: xxviii). Although these hypothesis are of a metaphysical order, they have a major influence on the research and methods of sociologists.

What are the world pictures of frame analysis, symbolic interactionism, phenomenological sociology and ethnomethodology?

Reality

Goffman (1974: 10) uses a rather ambiguous concept of reality. This is clear in his definition of the term 'strip':

The term 'strip' will be used to refer to any arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity, including here sequences of happenings, real or fictive, as seen from the perspective of those subjectively involved in sustaining an interest in them.

Three points must be considered. In the first place, Goffman speaks of 'real or fictive sequences of happening', but both can be real. 'Actions framed entirely in terms of a primary framework are said to be real or actual, to be really or actually or literally occurring.' (Goffman, 1974: 47.) But even when these actions are keyed, i.e. transposed into another frame, it does not mean that these actions are not real. Indeed, the keying actually occurs. What is considered as real depends on the perspective, either primary or transformed, from which actions are considered by the actor.

Reality always appears to the actor from a particular perspective. This perspective is given by the frames we use, which frames are seen as particular organizations of experience. In a certain sense, we can put that reality into a construction by the actors, taking into account framing, keying and fabrication (i.e. the creation of a 'false belief about what it is that is going on'). But Goffman stresses that it would be ridiculous to say that reality is totally created by the actors: reality is also pre-given. It is not sufficient to define something as a parking place if there is no place at all.

This position is not a break with Goffman's position in his earlier books. Although he gives a very important place to the idea of the 'definition of the situation', an idealistic stance towards reality, he is aware of the fact that reality is outside the individual's mind. In view of the description of encounters, this idea becomes clear (Goffman, 1961a: 27-8). Encounters characteristically produce direct interaction between the participants of the encounters. This does not imply that these participants create the total reality. Indeed, interactions take place in a particular historical sequence, which means that there is already a meaning given to this reality. Moreover, there are unintended acts that are part of the encounter without constituting the main parts of the encounter, e.g. coughing and sniffing. However unimportant they seem to be, they are part of reality, which is out there.

Third, this perspective on activity is formulated by the individuals who are interested in what is happening. Reality is thus also something defined by the actor, which forms the bulk of Goffman's book, *Frame Analysis*. Actually, this book is not about the core concerns of sociology, i.e. social organization and social structure, but about the 'organization of experience - something that an individual actor can take into this mind' (Goffman, 1974: 13). Every individual faces the problem of 'what is it that is going on?' To answer this question people apply frameworks. Applying these frameworks can make experience vulnerable. Indeed, it is possible that an actor can misframe events.

Reality is thus an outer happening independent of the individual actor, but it also gets its meaning from the involved individuals, although they are using pre-given frameworks, keyings, etc., to look at it.

While Goffman takes reality as it is given to him, Alfred Schutz starts from the experience that we are put into the world and that we are intentionally directed towards the world. We are aware of the 'world around us. We fear for, hope and we long for something. This way we meet our world and realize that it is a pre-given, organized and intersubjective reality. But as a thinking subject we are aware

of the act of thinking and consider the 'purified sphere of conscious life'. Therefore, Schutz applies phenomenological reduction to the objects of thinking, i.e., he puts the existence of the outer world between brackets. He abstracts from the possibility that the world could be otherwise than as it appears to us. Schutz is not interested in the objects as such, but in the objects as they appear to him (Schutz, 1967: 99-117), so he does not deny the existence of the world. His interest is rather in the meaning of the world.

Schutz adapts a point of view totally different from Goffman's in these matters. If Goffman's (1981b: 69) admission that he himself is moving towards positivism can be considered to be the correct formulation of what he wants to say, then he does not bracket the existence of reality. Schutz, on the contrary, sees reality as it appears to him.

According to Schutz (1967: 208-29, 3-34), as scientists we have to go back to the pre-scientific reality i.e., the reality that seems self-evident to people remaining within the natural attitude. For Schutz this is the reality of the everyday life-world, i.e., 'that province of reality which the wide-awake and normal adult simply takes for granted in the attitude of common sense' (Schutz and Luckmann, 1974: 3).

As wide-awake adults we experience this world as pre-given, intersubjective, and not created by ourselves, except for a small part. This life-world is not considered to be composed of merely material objects, but also of 'meaning strata which transform natural things into cultural objects'.

This everyday life-world is nevertheless more than the sensibly perceivable world, which was designated by William James as the paramount reality. This life-world also embraces my fantasies and dreams, so it is more than the physical world. Reality is thus constituted by the meaning of our experience rather than by the ontological structures of objects. We have different finite provinces of meaning: that of the everyday life-world, of the world of dreams, of the world of science, etc., which worlds are not necessarily consistent. Each of these provinces is part of a specific style of lived experience, i.e., a cognitive style. In the same day, we can change from one province of meaning to the other. But for Schutz, the everyday life-world or 'the world of working' is the paramount reality from which we start to come to scientific knowledge. In this world, purposes-at-hand determine the relevancy of the reality under consideration: it is in this way that we build up a particular province of meaning. According to Schutz we approach reality by looking at it from different 'frames'.

Like Schutz, Garfinkel (1967: 35) stresses reality as a social

reality. In his view, people treat 'the natural facts of life' as 'a real world and as a product of activities in a real world'. This starting point for the analysis of social reality is the analysis of the attitude of daily life as described by Schutz. Thus he agrees with Schutz's presupposition that for the actor 'the objects of the world are what they appear to be' (Garfinkel, 1963: 210-14). But this social reality is not just out there. Indeed, the characteristics of the real society are to a certain extent produced by the persons. Meaning is furnished by creative actors (Garfinkel, 1963: 214-15; 1967: 122, 53-6). For the ethnomethodologist this is a paradox, but it does not raise special problems. He should be indifferent towards the problem of choosing between reality as out there or in people's mind. Indeed, Leiter (1980: 20-1) contends that ethnomethodology brackets the existence of the outerworld, as Schutz does.

Contrary to Schutz and Garfinkel, Blumer's (1969a: 21-3) position does not rely on the intentionality of our thinking. For him, the exterior world of gestures and acts is reality. We see people indicating things and we understand the meaning of those gestures. Perception is a necessary condition of finding meaning in the world, and this perception is not just a product of a single actor but is an interplay between the individual and social environment.

Blumer takes an empirical standpoint: reality exists only in the empirical world. For this reason, he rejects traditional idealism and realism and cannot accept that reality exists just in human pictures or conceptions of it. The empirical world can talk back; it is not just something living in our minds. Nor does this obdurate quality of reality produce an extreme realism. This is impossible because the reality - and for Blumer this is social reality - cannot be fixed or immutable and so it is not to be studied as 'would the advanced physical sciences.

In conclusion, it can be said that Goffman defends a positivistic position: reality is there for him as researcher. And he accepts that every actor acts as if there were a correspondence between his perception and the organization of what is perceived (Goffman, 1974: 26). Instead of using the label 'positivism', as Goffman does, it is perhaps better to speak of naive realism. Blumer (1969a: 68-9) on the other hand, although speaking of an obdurate reality, states that objects are real in the sense that people have given meaning to them. Schutz does not deny reality but puts it between brackets. This means that because of phenomenological reduction, actors look for the images they have in their minds. But there too, Schutz produces a special *epoché*: a bracketing of the natural attitude. Actors bracket the fact that the real world is different from the way

it appears to them (Schutz, 1967: 229; Schutz and Luckmann, 1974: 27). Garfinkel's standpoint can be considered to be the same as that of Schutz. Although the four paradigms propose a different position in relation to reality, none of them holds that reality is totally created by people: it is pre-given.

If reality is seen from different standpoints, the ways to be followed to attain knowledge are different as well. What different options are taken?

Since Goffman (1974:10) sees his task as describing the 'frameworks of understanding available in our society for making sense out of events' and 'the special vulnerabilities to which those frames of reference are subject', he is convinced that, as a researcher, he can unveil the concealed reality. Let us take 'fabrication' (Goffman, 1974: 83-113). One of the parties involved in a fabrication is brought to a false belief about what is going on. The fabricating party knows that it is a fabrication. What is hidden for the deceived party is not only perceivable for the fabricators but also for the researcher. But is it not possible that the total act of the two parties is a benign fabrication for the researcher? This may be, but ultimately the sociologist will see it. Goffman seems to defend the classic positivistic stance: 'What I see, I see.' A researcher considers himself the ultimate judge, able to catch social reality. Just as Goffman supposes that there is a correspondence between the perception of an individual and the organization of what is perceived, he holds that a researcher can perceive reality the way it is.

Blumer, on the other hand, puts himself somewhere between an extreme idealism and a realism that has its roots in physical science. Thus, experience is the ultimate criterion of knowledge because of the obdurate character of reality. A sociologist must perceive social and material reality freed from all theoretical presupposition, and his starting point must be perception of outer reality. Even if this perception is a social act, which means that it is a concatenation of defining processes made by different actors, Blumer holds that the actor as well as the researcher has come to the knowledge of the same reality.

The option taken by Schutz to attain knowledge differs from those of Goffman and Blumer. Schutz brackets the possibility of experiencing the world. His starting point is the everyday life-world of the situated person, who meets that world as organized and intersubjective. In this everyday life-world, we act and meet the other in face-to-face relations. That is the place where I meet my fellow-men ('*Mitmensch*'). But in many situations, I meet only a 'world of contemporaries' ('*Mitwelt*'). The only way to grasp this '*Mitwelt*' is to use typifications of interactions and motives that are

built up by using 'in-order-to' and 'because' motives, which are reciprocal between the actor and the partner.

Like a partner, a scientific observer does not experience the other as an actor does in his everyday life-world: he is a disinterested observer (Schutz, 1967: 245 - 59). As an observer, he does not live in a we-relation and cannot immediately grasp this life-world. To bridge this gap, the observer builds types, puppets, that are compatible with the experience of the everyday life-world. He builds ideal types that have meaning adequacy and causal adequacy (Schutz, 1932: 260-61). To accomplish this, Schutz applies the postulate of subjective interpretation, the postulate of consistency and compatibility of all propositions, the postulate that all scientific thought has to be based on tested observation, the postulate of clarity and distinctness of all terms, the postulate of adequacy, and several others.

Garfinkel on the other hand takes most of his inspiration from Schutz's work, so he disagrees with Goffman and Blumer as well in relation to the question of how to attain knowledge of social reality. The experience of daily life of the actor is the main starting point for Garfinkel as for Schutz. The actor behaves in the world as if he grasps it immediately and as 'known in common with others'. To attain this common sense knowledge, the actor uses several presuppositions (Garfinkel, 1963: 210-15), i.e. the reality of the world as it appears to be, the practical interest of the actor, the time perspective of daily life, the et cetera assumption, the continuity of appearances, the commonly entertained scheme of communication, the reciprocity of perspectives and the form of sociality. And Garfinkel continues by defining eleven determinations to see an event as placed in a common-sense environment. Nevertheless, actors have not to be conscious of these determinants. Indeed, the more an event is institutionalized the more the actor takes the act for granted.

According to Garfinkel (1963: 76-103) this common-sense knowledge is also a substantial part of sociological research. He contends that the sociologist doing research relies on and cannot decide about meaning or facts other than by using common-sense knowledge of social structures. On the other hand, scientific knowledge does not suffice for action in everyday life, because scientific theorizing develops according to other principles (Garfinkel, 1963: 283).

Conception of man and society

Another part of the world picture dealt with by sociologists and other social scientists is the conception they have about man and

society. Depending on the vision they have of man as, for example, a bunch of nerves or as meaning-creating actor or of society as a unity in its own right or a collection of individuals, different methodological approaches are developed in sociology.

Man is considered by Goffman to be a personal ongoing identity, consisting of flesh, blood, etc. (i.e. animal nature). Thus, man is a human actor, who stores information in his skull. But this does not mean that he is just a black box (Goffman, 1974: 524, 513-14). Placed into time development, he is the self-same object that has a memory and a biography (Goffman, 1974: 128). As a person, he fulfils many functions or capacities, i.e. roles. Indeed, Goffman differentiates between the person (individual, player) and the role (capacity, function). Although a person's acts are partly a product of the self - and we can find something of the self behind the roles - this does not mean that a person has no freedom. The individual can choose between the total range of actions that are available in fulfilling his role. Moreover, the claims of the role can be forgotten by the individual actor, e.g., when a person leaves a conversation to answer the telephone, or when one is sniffing, coughing, etc., which is not really a part of one's role in a conversation (Goffman, 1974: 273). In this sense, there is never complete freedom nor complete constraint between the individual and his role. The individual acting upon and in the world becomes part of the ongoing world and cannot be studied independently of that social world. A reduction of social reality to its component parts is, therefore, unacceptable.

Society, although consisting of intelligent actors able to act upon the world, must be seen as situated in a natural order. There are natural constraints within which an actor has to behave in society, e.g., we need a voice to speak and a body to make gestures. Goffman's assumption is 'that, although natural events occur without intelligent intervention, intelligent doing cannot be accomplished effectively without entrance into the natural order' (Goffman, 1974: 23). Consequently, the actor needs two kinds of understanding: (1) the understanding of the natural world by which he is encompassed; and (2) the understanding of the special worlds. For this understanding, actors use primary frameworks, both natural and social. This does not simply mean that individuals are merely passive users of the given frameworks. They also can act upon the world. But they act within a world that is framed, keyed or fabricated. 'Framed' means that there happens to be an 'organization of experience' that is given to us. By keying or fabricating, the original framework is transposed or transformed. For example, when two people play checkers, they have to follow the rules of the

game that are pre-given. The same happens when these frameworks are keyed or fabricated. For example, contests are a kind of keying of social reality. Wrestling seems to be fighting, but the rules of the sport of wrestling put limits on the aggressive acts. Although keying and fabrication mean a change of the meaning of particular frameworks as seen by the participants, they are given structure to the keying or fabricating actors. Here, Goffman describes emerging realities that differ from the individual construction of reality. These structures are independent of the participants, but, nevertheless, it must be stressed that the participants are aware of the alteration of meaning.

From Goffman's earlier work, it can be confirmed that he considers man and society as real. Since *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), he has adopted both sociological nominalism and sociological realism. The analysis of man, although using different concepts, consolidate this opinion. He speaks about 'human' and 'socialized' selves (Goffman, 1959: 56), about 'fabricator' and 'character' (Goffman, 1959: 251-54; 1967: 31), each being an active and passive part of the individual.

This individual must be studied as part of society, meeting in social encounters, social gatherings, social situations and social occasions (Goffman, 1967: 44, 144; 1961a: 9; 1963b: 248). All these factors are strong socialization instruments. They are so important that Goffman (1963b: 248) concludes at the end of *Behavior in Public Places* that: 'More than to any family or club, more than to any class or sex, more than to any nation, the individual belongs to gatherings, and he had best show that he is a good member in good standing.'

For this reason, the interpretation by Helle (1977: 165) of Goffman's work as an 'anaskopic' approach cannot be accepted, although it can perhaps be defended for the earlier work of Goffman, in which the definition of the situation takes an important place. It certainly is no longer the standpoint of Goffman when he analyses the organization of social reality. Sociological realism and sociological nominalism are methodologically translated into an 'anaskopic' and 'kataskopic' approach.

Discussing the methodological consequences of the conception of reality, I stressed above that, in phenomenological sociology, the main experience we have as actors is the intentionality of the individual actor. We do not ask for evidence about the fact that we are placed in an organized, intersubjective everyday life-world. We have knowledge-at-hand of this life-world. My fellow-men are immediately given in my work and communication in the world. Through our communication, we not only become conscious of the

other, but also of our own characteristics. To reach others in face-to-face relations, a stock of knowledge is given, and, to the extent we are remote from others, we use a stock of knowledge equipped with idealizations, i.e., types of what the others want to do. These are expressed in linguistic typifications and recipes for behaviour that are given to us by our predecessors. The others, like the actor, are purpose-directed individuals who can act upon the world.

As an individual I am aware of the social dimension of my life-world, i.e., a society that transcends myself. This is the basis of an 'objective' order, an order that is given to me. To this objective order belongs my subjective 'meaning-context' as well as 'my subjectively experienced adumbrations and modes of apprehension' (Schutz and Luckmann, 1974: 18).

It is in this social world that a personal self is developed. This happens when a child gets a personal self. Since a child is situated in a social life-world, he comes to an 'intersubjective mirroring'. He meets a world-structure that is pre-given and not invented by the child and that appears to him as institutionalized and encompassed in a meaning-context. This meaning-context is objectivized in speech and institutions, which are the instruments by which a child can become a fellow-man. There is an historical and social structure that is met by this child 'here and now' (Schutz and Luckmann, 1974: 295, 244). Institutions (e.g. language, meaning-context) are an important part of the social world and provide knowledge about social reality that transcends the possibilities of individual experience.

None the less, society is composed of individuals who experience society as a pre-given structure. Society must be conceived as a priori to the individual. Like Goffman, the individual recognizes the emergent character of the world structure. Nevertheless, Schutz does not agree that it is methodologically possible to know social reality without taking into account individual intentionality.

Garfinkel speaks about man and society in almost the same way Schutz does. A person is a motivational type, equipped with a body, which is used to designate meaning to the environment and also to draw meaning from others (Garfinkel, 1956: 420-21; 1967: 104-85). As a human actor with a biography he is intentionally directed to the world. He uses 'seen but unnoticed background expectancies' as a scheme of interpretation of the social world that is given to him as a social system (Garfinkel, 1963, 1967). The individual has an intersubjective orientation toward this social world which is an organized reality, a system of rule-governed activities. These social structures of everyday activities become observable through the

study of common-sense knowledge and common-sense activities (Garfinkel, 1967: 35-75). Doing this kind of research, Garfinkel, like Schutz, opts for an approach from the individual. Most of the experiments presented in his main work describe how persons handle common-sense knowledge. Even if this common-sense knowledge is known by the researcher through the individuals, it is not considered to be merely a product of the individual but an emergent reality. Structure is also part of Garfinkel's (1963: 188) analysis to the extent that it is a perceived normal environment, which is a condition for understanding accounts and at the same time it is defined by the attitude of daily life.

Man, according to Blumer, is a human organism having a self. And this self is not a structure but a process. By this point of view Blumer (1969a: 62-4, 78-89) follows Mead's conception of man, and he also agrees with Mead's social behaviouristic approach to man. An individual can make gestures, external acts, that acquire a meaning in the interaction with him or herself and the other individuals. The first thing a self does is designate objects and acts; he gives them a meaning and judges if these objects and acts are suitable for his subsequent actions. Having made the judgement, he decides how to act. Because the individual can indicate something to himself, he has the possibility of interpreting the characteristics of the situation in which he acts. The individual becomes a very active unity, and not just a bunch of reactions. Consequently, it makes no sense for Blumer to look for environmental pressures, stimuli, motives, etc., that precede the act as an explanation for the act. What is important is to know that the individual constructs reality in a process of symbolic interaction and that the individual forms interpretations and acts in relation to others.

This interacting self is the kernel of all ongoing activity. An individual meeting another individual in social interaction is the most fundamental form of human association. Human groups consist of interacting human beings. As a matter of fact, these interacting human beings are not interacting 'roles', but interacting 'people'. Society is thus nothing but a collection of interacting individuals.

In spite of the stress on the individual as the composing factor of society, Blumer does not deny the existence of a social structure in human society. There are social roles, positions, rank order, bureaucratic organizations, social codes, norms etc. Their function is to help the interpretation and definition of the situations that are at the base of 'joint actions'. If people do not take into account these structures, then the ongoing activity has no meaning at all. But even these social structures have no life apart from the definition given by the individuals, even in 'joint actions'.

Society can be characterized as follows: (1) it is an 'ongoing process of action - not ... a posited structure of relations'; (2) actions must be seen as joint interactions, not as separate actions of the participants; (3) actions have a career or history; (4) the common definition of the joint action by the participants keeps this career fixed; (5) but this does not mean that this career has no uncertainties and possibilities.

Blumer clearly presents a nominalistic interpretation of society. Although he recognizes the existence of a social structure, his emphasis is on the paramount meaning of the individual. Take, for example, 'joint interactions' such as a marriage ceremony or a family dinner. It is not considered to be possible to achieve joint interaction without the interpretation given by the individuals of a way they fit together.

The four paradigms stress the process character of man and society. None the less, they assign different places to man and society in the social reality and, as will be shown later, this will have different consequences for their methodological principles. Although none of them denies the existence of social structures, Goffman's frame analysis delivers the most structuralist approach of the three. Structure and society are more than the mere sum of the individuals. Schutz and Garfinkel also recognize this standpoint, but methodologically they turn back to the individual, as does Blumer.

The subject matter of sociology

Sociologists confine the subject matter of research within their frames of the conceptions about reality, man and society. In general, it is shown that the interest of the four has been in the ongoing social reality and the meaningful character of this reality. Thus, it could be expected that the definition of sociology would present, to a certain extent, the same characteristics. Goffman (1974: 564) states that: 'The first object of social analysis ought ... to be ordinary actual behaviour - its structure and its organization.' Schutz (1976: 248) puts it this way: 'The primary task of this science [interpretive sociology] is to describe the processes of meaning establishment and meaning interpretation as these are carried out by individuals living in the social world.'

It must be stressed that Schutz (1967: 226) considers the 'world of working' as the paramount reality. Action is thus part of it. Garfinkel (1967: 11), although speaking about ethnomethodology, makes a similar point: ethnomethodology is 'the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishment of organized artful practices of everyday life'. Blumer (1969a: 55) moreover, gives a similar description: 'In a valid sense social action is the primary

subject matter of social science. Hence, an accurate picture and understanding of social action is of crucial importance.'

Taking into account what has been said about the visions of reality, man and society, it is normal that the three paradigms would try to grasp daily social action. But the option of Goffman is, nevertheless, different: for him, the main task of sociology is to study the social structure and social organization of actual behaviour. None the less, frame analysis is not about social organization, but rather about the structure of experience. Even if Goffman (1974: 13) puts society first, he is concerned about the individual's current involvement'. But frame analysis also has something to say about the structure of social action. With regard to three or four performing individuals, frame analysis can show (1) 'the tracks or channels of activity', (2) 'the laminations' and (3) 'the participation status' (Goffman, 1974: 564-5). So the focus is on social structure (Goffman, 1974: 247).

Emphasizing the organization of ordinary actual behaviour as the subject matter of sociology is not new for Goffman. Even when in his earlier work he gives much attention to social psychology, there is always an important part devoted to the organizational approach of social action (e.g. Goffman, 1967: 2; 1961a, b; 1963b: 156, 193, 231; 1971: x, 63, 138, 362; 1981a: 84). For this reason, a formal sociological approach in the footsteps of Simmel is not unusual (Goffman, 1959: 15; 1967: 16, 63, 65).

However, in *Frame Analysis*, Goffman's main concern is not the structure of social life, but the structure of experience. The problem which he wants to solve is what happens when an individual wonders what is going on. To solve this problem, our perception is focused by the different frames, keys and fabrications. The actor thus interprets the world using pre-given frames such as postulates, rules, lores of understanding and approaches (Goffman, 1974: 21). This can be seen as the basis for a sociology of knowledge.

From this point of view there is a parallel between Goffman's paradigms and the three others. The study of knowledge is also a central point in Schutz's, Garfinkel's and Blumer's work. The former two are interested in the processes of meaning establishment and interpretation, while the latter is involved in objects, social action and joint interaction as defined by the actors.

The main part of Schutz's work (1932, 1967, 1964, 1975, 1974) is devoted to the phenomenological analysis of the life-world with much attention being given to the knowledge of the life-world and society. It is to be noted that this is not the same as an empirical sociology of knowledge (Schutz and Luckmann, 1974: 317-18), but 'the formal types of the social distribution of knowledge can even

have a certain heuristic value for the empirical sociology of knowledge'. As pointed out above, the life-world stock of knowledge, the social stock of knowledge and scientific knowledge meet each other through the postulate of adequacy (Schutz, 1967: 44). Schutz considers this as a guarantee for the consistency of the constructs of the sociologist with common-sense knowledge.²

Garfinkel's ethnomethodology can also be typified as a sociology of common-sense knowledge. Although he takes Schutz's opinion as a starting point, he changes the methods of research by using experiments. In this way, he shows that sociologists as well as lay people use common-sense knowledge to explain social reality (Garfinkel, 1967: 31, 66-103). He points out that scientific rationalities cannot replace common-sense knowledge; they can even hinder social interaction (Garfinkel, 1967: 277-83). Ethnomethodology can help in this way to expose the common-sense reasoning in sociological research.

Blumer (1969a: 55-6), finally, although he is interested in social action as constructed by the participants, looks for processes of knowledge:

In this situation, he [the actor] notes, interprets and assesses things with which he has to deal in order to act. The collectivity is in the same position as the individual in having to cope with a situation, in having to interpret and analyse the situation, and in having to construct a line of action. Basically put, it means that in order to treat and analyse social action one has to observe the process by which it is constructed.

One last comment is related to the general label 'micro-sociological paradigms'. Only Garfinkel's work is confined to the study of face-to-face relations or small groups, which is the core subject of micro-sociology. Goffman speaks about such things as riots, colleges, passengers and structures; Schutz about social collectives and artifacts; and Blumer about social structures and joint action. Why are these four paradigms then considered to be micro-sociological? A common characteristic of the four is that in each the analysis of social action starts with the interpreting individuals acting in relation to each other in small units. Because of this starting point, these approaches can be considered micro-sociological.

Methodological principles

Speaking about reality and the subject matter, I argued that the four paradigms are keenly interested in daily knowledge. In all of them, individuals are considered to be meaning-endowed entities. As a consequence, it could be expected that they would apply an interpretive sociology to a certain extent, i.e., they would look for

the aims, motives, or plans of the actors as the means of understanding social action.

It is accepted by the four paradigms that acting individuals have life plans, expectations, wishes, etc. Explaining social reality consequently supposes an interpretive approach. This is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. While Schutz (1932: 247-85), Garfinkel (1967) and Blumer (1969a: 60, 40, 58) reduce the methods of sociology to an understanding of the acting individuals within a social setting, Goffman (1974: 10-11) does not consider this approach as sufficient: 'I assume that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events - at least social ones - and our subjective involvement in them.'

Frames, keys and fabrications organize our experience in a particular way. They are given to the actors, who do not even have to be aware of the primary frameworks they use. Although they may use them improperly, they can apply them effectively. Primary frameworks are, indeed, the central part of the culture of the group. In this respect, frameworks enable the actor to understand his world (Goffman, 1974: 21-7). Goffman stresses a situational '*verstehen*'.

Indeed, in his earlier work the idea of 'definition of the situation' takes a central position. Nevertheless, already in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959: 254-5) he denies that social reality is just a construction by individuals. Even if an individual wants to present an untrue picture of himself, he is using *real* techniques. Consequently, it would be wrong to confine the explanation of social reality to the individual definition of the situation. For that reason, contrary to the classical pragmatic standpoint, Goffman stresses that 'the meaning of an object, no doubt, is generated through its use, as pragmatists say, but ordinarily not by particular users' (Goffman, 1974: 39), a remarkably different standpoint from those of Schutz and Blumer.

What are the consequences of these points of view for methodological research principles?

Scientific reasoning

Philosophy of science has designed the different patterns of reasoning that are followed or have to be followed in scientific research. Most researchers follow these patterns, although the importance of imagination in finding new ways is often stressed. The four paradigms, although not abandoning all the generally recognized scientific principles, give proof of and demand an important place for imagination. Schutz proposes that creativity build up ideal types, while Blumer asks for a creative approach to

overcome the limited possibilities of traditional research patterns. Garfinkel uses very original experiments in which he asks the experimenters to handle or think in deviation from the background expectancies. Goffman's work is an overwhelmingly creative presentation of frames, keys and fabrications drawing on the most unusual sources of research, like comic strips, novels, cartoons, biographies and the cinema. His originality does not lie in the fact that these sources are used, but in the way he uses them.

The paradigms are different, too, as far as the general pattern of scientific reasoning is concerned.

In general Goffman works very impressionistically. He follows no strict pattern to collect facts; he does not worry about the representativity of the facts; he neglects serious quantitative argumentation to make general statements. The overall pattern is inductive, but he gathers facts rather to illustrate than to prove a generalization. There is no systematic falsification or verification; it is more free-wheeling. The standpoint of Goffman (1981b: 65) - 'I would have thought it moves me farther and farther (even further and further) in positivism' - cannot be considered to be an option for the systematic reasoning of the positivistic researcher.

Frame Analysis consists of a long list of frames used by people experiencing social reality. The explanation pattern used most often is explanation-by-concept (Hempel, 1965: 453-7). In the strict sense, this is not considered an explanation, but rather a description of the different characteristics of a phenomenon. These are seen as the constituent elements of a phenomenon and, in this sense, a kind of condition. For example, let us consider keying. A key is,

the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary frameworks, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else. The process of transcription can be called keying. (Goffman, 1974: 43-4)

This definition is preceded by a description of the fighting of animals, which can be done playfully. A much longer description is then given to what keying is. It is a list of conjunctions of symptoms, that need to be present to have a keying. One of these characteristics is: 'Participants in the activity are meant to know and to openly acknowledge that a systematic alteration is involved, one that will radically reconstitute what it is for them that is going on.' (Goffman, 1974: 45) It does not seem to me that these participants are considered to be the causes of the keying. This is only a description of how people are supposed to look at reality when they are keying.

The rest of the chapter, 'Keys and Keying', is spent on the definitions of the different keys and on illustrating them by very

disparate examples. Even when this list seems to provide an amazing amount of facts to support a particular key, it must not be forgotten that Goffman (1974: 15) does not consider them as proof or evidence, but merely as simple illustrations.

Goffman also uses other explanation patterns, one of them being based on the dispositions of the acting individuals when they construct fabrications (1974: 87ff.). For example, 'playful deceit', 'benign fabrication', is possible because the victim accepts in good sport to be deceived for a short time.

Nevertheless, the interest of frame analysis is mostly in the questions of 'how' and 'what' and less in the question of 'why'. This is not a very unusual practice for the author, as John Lofland (1980: 31-7) has shown in analysing the earlier work of Goffman.

The standpoint of phenomenological sociology is different. This sociological paradigm wants to observe and understand the life-world. It explicitly chooses a subjective interpretation. This means that the explanation must take account of the actor, not as seen by the researcher, but by the actor himself (postulate of subjective interpretation). As I mentioned above, the sociologist, being an objective observer, has to build ideal types. By these ideal types, the act of the actor can be understood by the researcher. It can also be understood by the actor and his fellows since the act occurs in their life-world (postulate of adequacy). An ideal type must be constructed like the typifications used in the everyday life-world. Moreover, an ideal type, as Weber has put it, must be both causal and meaning-adequate. So it is not sufficient that the motives have some meaning for the realization of the typical act, there must also be some evidence that a meaning-adequate type has some chance of occurring, as experience shows (Schutz, 1932: 247-85). Empirical observation is consequently the basis for verification.

Garfinkel (1967: 77-9) also stresses observation, but uses interpretation or the documentary methods (Mannheim) and experiments. This documentary method takes an 'actual appearance as "the document of", as "pointing to", as "standing on behalf of" a presupposed underlying pattern'. This actual appearance is interpreted within the common-sense knowledge of social structures. Indeed, social facts, which the researcher gets within accounts or ethnographies, are indexical and reflexive. These two characteristics are conditions for interpretation. Garfinkel goes even further. He uses the documentary method to find how understanding happens in daily events. Therefore he uses experiments. Most of the experiments start with a stable system and Garfinkel (1963; 1967: 36-8) tries then to create trouble by asking experimenters to act deviantly. The aim is to show how persons interpret the new deviant

situation in order to learn what they consider to be the normal structure. Garfinkel is firmly convinced that these are not proper experiments, but a kind of documentary method to aid his imagination. They are seen more as a source of illustration than as a proof for a thesis. Causality is not the main concern of Garfinkel; he is more interested in how meaning is given to social reality.

On the other hand, symbolic interactionism explicitly takes an inductive stance. The classic patterns of research, the traditional testing of hypotheses, and the confinement to operational procedures are rejected because of their stereotyped structures. A researcher has to return to the empirical social world, i.e., 'the actual group life of human beings' (Blumer, 1969a: 35). Hence the researcher must bridge the distance between his life-world and that of the studied group. Therefore, it would be best for the researcher to become a participant of the group. Doing research means that two steps are taken. In the first place, there is 'exploration', which means that the researcher adapts questions and methods to the interpretation made by the life-group. In the second place, there is 'inspection': the task of scrutinizing the relationship between analytical elements (i.e. general or categorical items) and empirical reality. This method, as formulated by Blumer (1969a: 21-47), forms an inductive sociology using facts to build up theoretical propositions. For Blumer (1969a: 30), this includes confirmation as well as falsification.

I have contended that the paradigms take different methodological stances according to their ontological options, and I suggested that scientific reasoning would follow these differences.

Goffman's frame analysis has a peculiar position in relation to this problem. If we agree that he is moving closer to positivism (Goffman, 1981b: 65), it could be expected he would pay more attention to inductive thinking. And, in a certain sense, he does, but the main thrust of his argument is an enumeration of concepts and illustrations that can be used to recognize structures.

Theory

Theory is a very ambiguous concept in methodology. It can be considered as a universal proposition explaining facts, or as a law, an hypothesis or something in between. The function of theory is also variously defined. This makes it difficult to give an assessment of whether frame analysis, symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology or phenomenological sociology have attained theory status. Here I would ask only: what is theory according to the three paradigms?

If more attention in *Frame Analysis* is paid to explanations-by-

concept, it might be expected that little would be said of laws and theories. None the less, Goffman (1974: 14) wants 'to construct general statements', which was not his aim in *Relations in Public* (1971: xiv). Here he does not want to produce absolute or statistical generalizations. He prefers to speak about practices occurring 'routinely', 'often' or 'on occasion'. Moreover, he is aware that his analysis is confined to Western society, and more particularly to Anglo-American society, in which he pays more attention to middle-class behaviour (Goffman, 1961b: 182; 1963b: 5; 1971: xiv, 40, 75, 382; 1974: 521-2) than to any other category. He does not deny class differences (Goffman, 1961a: 50; 1963b: 206), but it is not his primary intention to contribute to class analysis (Goffman, 1974: 14).

Relying on a vast number of illustrations and his creative analytical power, he makes many general statements in *Frame Analysis*. For example:

When the individual in our Western society recognizes a particular event, he tends, whatever else he does, to imply in this response (and in effect employ) one or more frameworks or schemata of interpretation of a kind that can be called primary ...

When no keying is involved, when, that is, only primary perspectives apply, response in frame terms is not likely unless doubt needs combating, as in the reply: 'No, they're not merely playing; it's a real fight' ...

The more vulnerable the dominant participant to deviant subordinate response, the more selection apparently there is in regard to subordinates ...

When more generalizations have accumulated concerning face-to-face interaction, there will be greater resources to draw upon for intentionally unhinging the frame of ordinary events. (Goffman, 1974: 21, 46, 429, 495.)

Statements of this kind are numerous, also in the earlier work (Lofland, 1980: 33-4), but they are rarely the product of a systematic collection of corroborating facts.

As a totality, however, frame analysis seems to make the general statement that, as a rule, individuals use a mixture of classified frames. Even though the list of frames is not exhaustive, we all use them when answering the question of what it is that is going on.

According to phenomenological sociology, theory is one of the main concerns of a sociologist. Theory means, 'the explicit formulation of determinate relations between a set of variables in terms of which a fairly extensive class of empirically ascertainable regularities can be explained' (Schutz, 1967: 52).

The universality and the predictive value of these theories is rather restricted. But even **though these generalizations have their**

limitations, they do have a certain nomothetic value. Ideal types are, indeed, constructed in perfect anonymity and, in this way, tell how this typical actor acts in general.

Because the scientifically ideal types must be built in conformity with an everyday and social stock of knowledge, Schutz (1967: 59) considers it necessary to detect the general principles by which an actor grasps his everyday life-world. For this reason, all the general statements made in relation to the knowledge of the life-world and society are of importance for constructing a sociological theory (Schutz and Luckmann, 1974).

Symbolic interactionism is as outspoken as phenomenological sociology. Blumer (1969a: 140) sees the purpose of theory as the development of analytical schemes of the empirical world. But theory has too long been considered to be a result of empirical research with no notice being given to the way empirical facts are approached in enquiry. It must be seen as a result of a dialectical process: 'Theory, inquiry and empirical fact are interwoven in a texture of operations with theory guiding inquiry, inquiry seeking and isolating facts, and facts affecting theory.' (Blumer, 1969a: 141.)

For this reason the empirical reality must be stressed and concepts must be reconsidered in close relation with reality: 'sensitizing' concepts have to be used.

Garfinkel approaches classical sociological theory as critically as does Blumer. He borrows from Schutz for his analysis, but expands the methods. He refuses to accept that common-sense knowledge and activities are just assumed, but makes it an issue of inquiry. He shows that a sociological researcher or theorist assumes common-sense knowledge and presuppositions to explain social phenomena, to interpret answers of questionnaires, biographies, folders, and so on.

Concepts

Frame analysis, phenomenological sociology and symbolic interaction speak about concepts as the sacred instruments for research. The nature of these concepts differs in all three paradigms, and so their functions differ.

Like Goffman's earlier work, *Frame Analysis* is a brilliant construct of concepts concerning the structure of experience, but it is more a taxonomy than a theory. As typifications of what is going on in daily life, these concepts are closely related to everyday language, and most of his definitions are illustrated by large numbers of examples.

For many concepts he relies on the definitions given by other authors, without always taking into account their methodological options. For example, 'social selves' of W. James (Goffman, 1959: 48), 'rules of irrelevance' of H. Garfinkel, 'frame' of G. Bateson, 'sociability' of G. Simmel, 'bureaucracy' of M. Weber and T. Parsons, 'role-set' of Merton, 'role-sectors' of N. Gross and others, 'profane' and 'sacred' of Durkheim (Goffman, 1961a: 19, 21, 22, 87, 152), 'eye-to-eye looks' of Simmel (Goffman, 1963b: 93), 'inter-change' of E.D. Chapple, 'ideal sphere' and 'adventure' of Simmel (Goffman, 1967: 19, 62, 162), 'strategic interaction' of T.C. Schelling (Goffman, 1969: 100), 'interaction synchrony' of W.S. Condon, 'prestation' of M. Maus, 'round' and 'exchange' of H. Sacks (Goffman, 1971: 52, 62, 119).

Rarely does he make a comparative analysis of the concepts before proposing a new construct, like he does in the chapter 'Role Distance', in his book, *Encounters* (1961a). These concepts have the form of Weberian ideal types. Some of these stress the motivational aspect. This is the case for make-believe, experiments, fabrications and benign fabrications, to cite only a few (Goffman, 1974: 48, 73, 83, 87). Other concepts concern how something is seen by the actors, e.g., keying, performance, cosmological interest, fortuitousness and demonstration (Goffman, 1974: 43-4, 124, 30, 33, 66). As a totality, they delineate the different perspectives from which social reality is met by actors in the world and describe a pre-given structure of the experience of daily life.

Often these concepts are part of typologies, as can be seen when frames, keys and fabrications were presented. Goffman does not consider these typologies as an exhaustive description of the phenomena, but as a result of 'a caricature of systematic sampling'. Moreover, these types seem to be postulates and not assertions to be proven or tested (Lofland, 1980: 30).

The conceptualization in phenomenological sociology develops directly along the line of Weberian ideal types. I have had occasion to mention this above with regard to scientific reasoning and theory. While the homunculi (= ideal types) must be built adequate to everyday knowledge and to the social stock of knowledge, the significance of pre-scientific knowledge for sociology has to be stressed. Schutz and Luckmann (1974: 306-31) give a good example of this in relation to the study of professionalization. The types, i.e. the layman, the well-informed and the expert, form an interesting starting point for further research.

Few sociologists have so forcefully drawn attention to the mistakes made in the construction and application of concepts as Blumer (1969a: 153-82). In his opinion, traditional empirical

sociology uses concepts erroneously. Scientific concepts need a particular degree of abstraction, but they must be meticulously scrutinized in close relation to social life. For Blumer (1969a: 147-8), scientific concepts are 'sensitizing' and not 'definitive', only providing general orientations for the researcher. In this respect, they make possible new orientations and new experiences in social research.

Like Blumer, Garfinkel stresses that concepts, sentences, utterances, etc., must be considered in close connection with the setting in which they are used. The meaning of concepts is consequently not fixed, but depends on the context in which they are employed. Each account must be interpreted taking into account the indexicality of the expressions. In addition he employs ideal types as does Schutz (Garfinkel, 1967: 106, 263). But here again, their meaning is determined by the context in which they are placed. Concepts are thus not just research instruments but are to be scrutinized.

Methods

In view of the different methodological standpoints of the four paradigms, it could be expected that their research methods would differ. Although, in principle, most of the usual research techniques are considered to be useful, there is much criticism of the conventional survey and experimental methods. None of the four sociologists uses the conventional methods in the traditional way.

If Goffman's option for positivism is taken seriously, *Frame Analysis* involves a very unorthodox approach. He ignores systematic gathering of data to verify hypotheses and build theories. Moreover, the facts used in *Frame Analysis* differ considerably from traditional sociological data. Field-work, as such, is not used, although some of Goffman's examples come from participant observation. Instead, Goffman (1974: 15; 1971: xiv; 1976: 24) works with illustrations found in popular books, newspapers, novels, the cinema, comics and theatres etc., and he admits that it is 'a caricature of systematic sampling'. For this reason, it does not matter whether his stories are reliable or not. This point of view is acceptable if the aim is to give a limited description of the structure of experience. If not, the selection of the examples would limit the capacity of frame analysis to find all the possible structures.

Goffman sees himself as an 'ethnographer of small entities'. Being a student of Lloyd Warner and E.C. Hughes, he was trained to do this kind of work. But the major part of his work, and certainly *Frame Analysis*, is not a product of direct observation. He performed field work only three times: a study of a small community on the Shetland Islands (*Communication Conduct in an*

Island Community, 1953), a study of a mental health hospital (*Asylums*, 1961b) and an unpublished study about behaviour in casinos. Like *Frame Analysis*, most of his work relies on illustrations, gathered from personal experience, and the haphazardly collected strips of reality presented in true or fictitious stories of novels, films, research reports etc. The selection of this material happened 'over the years on a hit-or-miss basis using principles of selection mysterious to me' (Goffman, 1974: 15). Sometimes he does have a pattern to collect facts, like the ethology in *Relations in Public* (1971) or game theory in *Strategic Interaction* (1969).

The use of ideal types in phenomenological sociology demands a study of the everyday life-world as it appears to the actor, and the main method in Schutz's work is phenomenological analysis of the life-world of the actor. Good examples of this are found in his papers 'The Homecomer' and 'The Stranger' (Schutz, 1964: 91-119). The attempt to imagine what life in the everyday life-world is like seems to be the main research technique, and it must be augmented by empirical observation.

Garfinkel has a similar position, i.e. ethnography and accounts are the main methods of data collection in ethnomethodology. These phenomena are approached interpretatively as seen by the members of society. To facilitate this approach, Garfinkel uses experiments, but in a way totally different from that of the main tradition. In these experiments, the experimenters are mostly students who are not chosen in function of a representative picture of the problem. Very often they are not trained for the experiment and are given no clear rules to write the accounts. The experimenters also use interviewing, but their objectives are different from the conventional interview techniques. Even when Garfinkel counts the distribution of the phenomena, they can be considered only as illustrations for a particular interpretation of social reality; he is not concerned about the representativity of his material. Like Goffman, Garfinkel uses also ethnography, but, because of his typical ethnomethodological standpoint, the points of interest are completely different.

The ongoing social life, according to the symbolic interactionist, cannot be grasped by classic scientific procedures, which destroy the possibility of getting valid information about the empirical world. The researcher has to come as close as possible to the object. This can be done by becoming an observant participant who explores and inspects. For exploration all kinds of techniques are allowed, such as direct observation, interviews, listening to conversations, life histories, letters and diaries and group discussion. The particular method to be used cannot be determined in advance but has to be adapted in the course of the project.

Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter is not to evaluate the four paradigms. To do this properly the explanatory power of each approach to particular problems would have to be evaluated. But the works of the four authors are too divergent to do this. Whether the frames analysed in *Frame Analysis* give an adequate picture of the structures of experience can be answered only empirically. But this was not the aim of this chapter.

In spite of the specificity of the paradigms, it is obvious that 'the basic frameworks of understanding available in our society for making sense out of events' (Goffman, 1974: 10) are embryonically recognizable in Schutz's social stock of knowledge and Garfinkel's common-sense knowledge of social structures. The epistemological base is, of course, different, but the study of structural phenomena is clearly part of phenomenological sociology and ethnomethodology.

I have suggested that differences in the world pictures would reveal different methodological options. Frame analysis appears as a positivistically inspired reaction against the solipsism of other micro-sociological paradigms. Reality does not live just in the minds of the knowing individuals. Reality is a given and can be recognized as such. Although phenomenological sociology, ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism try hard to escape the label of solipsism, the knowing subject is undeniably the central source of knowledge for these paradigms.

From an ontological perspective, Goffman stresses the emergent character of society and the ongoing identity of man. Society and the individual are also assigned an important place in the sociology of Schutz and Garfinkel, although they bracket the existence of the world, while Blumer reduces social life to the joint interaction of individuals. Thus, the structural approach is of central concern for both frame analysis and phenomenological sociology, as well as for ethnomethodology.

In spite of these differences the programmes of the four paradigms are similar: they all want to study 'ongoing social action'; they all start from face-to-face interactions, but they do not confine the study to small groups, with the exception of Garfinkel; and they develop a base for a sociology of everyday knowledge.

From the methodological standpoint, there are big differences between frame analysis, phenomenological sociology, ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism. Frame analysis can be characterized as an approach that is more interested in answering the questions of 'how' and 'what', rather than 'why'. Theory is reduced to generalizations that are formulated on the basis of a selection of illustrations. For the description of the different frames, a vast list of

concepts is created, in which very often the personal motivation of the actor is considered. The fact-gathering is haphazard, which is justified by the structural interest.

Taking into account the ontological perspectives, it is shown that a subjective interpretation from the standpoint of the actor is the concern of the three other paradigms. All three stress observation, but are highly critical of the conventional survey and experimental methods, although the arguments are different. There is no concern for representative observation; collected facts are rather illustrations. Using this kind of experience, Schutz and Garfinkel show the meaning of common-sense knowledge for scientific reasoning, Blumer is more interested in interacting individuals. Concepts are used differently. Schutz and Garfinkel apply ideal types, Blumer 'sensitive' concepts, and Garfinkel pays much attention to the meaning of concepts in relation to the social setting.

Whatever the epistemological standpoint of the critic may be, it cannot be denied that frame analysis delivers a brilliant description of the structure of our experience. This structural approach was already present in Goffman's earlier works, although less pronounced. None of the three other paradigms has produced anything similar, although there is a basis for this structural approach in Schutz's analysis of the social stock of knowledge and Garfinkel's work. This approach is important because it puts structural analysis back into the study of small groups, and creates interest for frames, structures and organizations, rather than for interaction.

Notes

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1. We do not consider here the symbolic interactionism of Manford Kuhn, which takes different stances on various points.

2. The postulate of adequacy is actually *a deus ex machina*. Indeed, how is it possible, that a sociologist who approaches society as a 'world of mere contemporaries' and never as a world of 'fellow-men' can ever get a picture of his fellow-men? For Schutz, the solution is to be found in the ideal types.

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Out of ethnomethodology

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It is eighteen years since the publication of Garfinkel's *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. One understanding of this passage of time is that ethnomethodology (written hereafter as EM) has developed from being an unruly child (duly chastized by such elders as James Coleman and Lewis Coser) to being a middle-aged bore, about whom Sherri Cavan asked, in the title of a session at the 1983 Pacific Sociological Association meetings, 'Where have all the ethnomethodologists gone?'

The issue is not, to put it properly, something called EM, but rather the activity of a group of practitioners who identify their practice as EM. In response to Cavan's question, I know colleagues who have, to various extents, identified themselves as ethnomethodologists who are getting out of EM in terms of self-identification, but at the same time they are doing work which takes its auspice from ideas formulated in the activity of EM. My title is designed to suggest both the need for a movement of sociological thought out of (away from) EM, and also the persistence in future sociological work of ideas in some sense out of (derivative from) EM.

EM at eighteen, to use that metaphor a little longer, is most appropriately understood as in an adolescent separation crisis: going 'out of' (or, in EM terms, 'doing "out of"') is a complicated process. The complication, in the case of EM practitioners as in that of many adolescents, revolves round the conflict between the feeling that it is time to move on and, opposed to this, a sense of debt to what is being left and a need to acknowledge that debt. To reflect on and thus facilitate the going 'out of' process, this paper begins with an acknowledgement of what EM has been and then uses EM to introduce a yet more unruly infant, the 'deconstruction' of Jacques Derrida. A deconstructionist critique of EM suggests both why it is time to get out, as well as why future work will always be, in some sense, ethnomethodological.

Acknowledging ethnomethodology

At this point in the paper, some readers might expect me to define, or at least circumscribe, EM and to do this by listing certain of its