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Book Review:

Playing With My Dog Katie. An Ethnomethodological Study of Dog –
Human Interaction.

by David Goode. Purdue University Press, 2007, pp. 228

The book by David Goode gives us a possibility to take an extraordinary excursion to unremarkable and inscrutable world, so common for us that we do not usually notice it, although we participate in it everyday. It is a reconstructed world that shows us methods that we use in mundane life to establish an order in it and to live with others going through concrete situations. Our live consists of just these situations that we live by (as playing with a dog, talking with others, lining up the store, etc.) and not of socio – demographic data from the end of sociological questionnaires and of many other abstractions used by sociologists. What is observable and analisable not always becomes a topic of the sociological research. Ethnomethodology, a perspective used in the book, wants just to go into details and to extract them to the surface. We should not rest our analysis on the “shadows” of reality, that are cast by still available and analyzable empirical phenomena, although difficult to analyze because of sociological methods and common sense perception used by sociologists.

Methodology

The author of the book based his analyses of play interactions on common observations, on ethnography of instances of play, on video recordings of concrete plays with his dog and sequences of captured video images. There are a lot of autoethnographical motifs in the research and consequently in written book. The author use them to analyze data gathered by using “methodic procedures”, that are a part of “Garfinkel’s Analytic Device” (see Fig. 1) and proposes presentation of data by using aforementioned procedures and scrupulous analysis of the data.

(Lived Order) (Lived orderliness)	Methodic procedure	Data/ rendering description	Scheme of Detail Techniques of analysis
(DPBWK)*1	Reflecting on play and writing about it as it is naturally available	Reflection style textual data (data type1)	Content analyze / use as grounds for examining analytic and methodological issues
(DPBWK)*	Ethnography of actual instances of play	Ethnographic data (data type2)	Same as above
(DPBWK)*	Videotaping actual play	Videotapes of actual play (data type 3)	Repeated viewing of tapes – examine types for examples textually defined phenomena Examine tapes for unnoticed aspects of play
(DPBWK)*	Capturing video image in computer to produce still video images and sequencing them	Image sequences (data type 4)	utilize images to illustrate textually defined phenomena

1 - (DPBWK)*, the nomenclature in the first column refers to David Playing Ball With Katie as lived order

Figure 1. Garfinkel's Analytic Device as Applied to the Current Analysis

Analytic procedures presented above do not predict transcription of videotaped scenes. Repeated viewings and images sequencing is an analysis, that does not need its previous descriptive text covering the actions and images (although I did not notice it). Describing is a way of analysis.

Garfinkel's devise shows that the data are constructed in any case and that lived orderliness is produced by details. There is no amorphic perspective, transcending here and now and giving the transcendental knowledge, according to Goode. We always have some perspectives and see/act the world through them. Author of the book tries to be sincere in his assumptions and also to use "ethnomethodological indifference policy", i.e. to avoid using theories from existing literature before finishing empirical study.

Visual sociology – methodology continued

What lesson we can learn from Goode's analysis for practicing empirical visual sociology?

Video recordings were the basic data in analysis of plays between animals and humans. The recordings give the possibility of repetition and multiple watching the records of the same situation. It gives the chance of exact and scrupulous analysis of gestures and vocalizations occurring in the gesture exchange. Visual data, however, should not be treated as isomorphic with events that they are referencing/referring to. Recordings are done with help of a particular technology (video camera) and they are reproduced with specific technology too. There was possible reproduction and sequencing of images only in one second intervals in Goode research, because of technological limitations of his equipment. This decided about details (and sequences) of interactions that could be analyzed. Camera situated in some place

and with some angle, and/or unmanned camera, can cause that some events are going on beyond the scope of camera and cannot be recorded. It happened in the research of Goode (see p. 155).

Zooming can influence upon the level of minuteness of analysis. These all elements decide about constructiveness of data, and they should be treated as such data with taking into account the critical moments of their construction. This gives evidence of methodological fairness. Video- graphic recordings should not be treated as a simple reflection of reality, according to Goode.

There is a similar situation with presentation of data, because the reception of reader is determined by earlier decisions of the researcher what to present and how minutely? (see p. 197) Data do not exist independently as reflections of reality. They have “documentary” character and are evidences of the phenomena described in the scientific texts, even in ethnomethodological text (see Garfinkel, 1967, chapter 3).

Ethnomethodological orientation.

The everyday live consists of, so called, “**lived orders**” (or lived orderlinesses). The author introduces this concept in **chapter one**, after H. Garfinkel (2002). The concept describes “concrete, actual, and observable events” such as conversation, lining up at the store, giving directions, dying in a hospital, taking a test in fourth grade, crossing the street, etc. Although we are socialized how to converse with others or cross the streets, however in every single situation we do it in concrete circumstances, with just these people, at this place, at just this time, with just these problems at hand. A member of a society plays (owner/guardian) with the just this dog, in the place and at just this time. Ethnomethodology wants to describe how people achieve these situations. The concept of lived order gives us suggestion about general dimension of the phenomenon and the particular one, too. The lived orders are only done in details, so they must be described and analyzed in their detailed existence (p. 10).

There are described the plays of author with the dog named Katie. The naming of the dog is an evidence of personification and anthropomorphisation of animals. The relations with the dog are determined by these facts. They are full of anthropomorphic statements and “behaviors” (gestures) that are actualized in every occasion of play.

Relations between humans and animals are analyzed by many researchers from different perspectives and orientations. Many researchers assume psychological and socio – psychological perspective. Ethnomethodology is concentrated more on the actual playing and concrete players who are producing the play, not on their motives and psychological projects that are “introduced” into the play situation, as it is assumed usually in symbolic interactionism or phenomenologically inspired research. The symbolic interactionism assumes that every order can be only explained by shared meanings which organize social interaction. Ethnomethodology does not explain the phenomena of order by using the assumption of necessity of understanding others “lively inner states”. Motives, meanings, intentions and emotions are understood praxiologically in the context when such situation of understanding is needed; otherwise it is not necessary to use such concepts. The play is going on without these concepts.

Goode analyzes play as a lived order. The majority of guardians play with their dogs. Goode supports this statement with statistical data (p. 19). The play events and what was going on there were “naturally available” to players, apparently and observably (p. 20).

Presentation of the book

After presentation of the theoretical, methodological orientation and subjects of the study in the first chapter (see description above) author starts his presentation of empirical findings. **Chapter two** is the most important in the book. It is a description of the author playing with the dog, based on “procedurally inductive” research. Author starts with describing the personal history of the relations with his dog and with the characteristics of breed before he has started analyzing the play with Katie. These elements could give some background for understanding interactions and plays. Also it is important for the author to describe the contexts of play (where does it usually take place, for instance).

The author describes kinds of plays in which he participated with his dog. One of the plays is “getting the ball past Katie”. The video – recordings are exemplars of the play. Katie observes the waist of David when he wants to pass the ball over Katie. Katie reacts to feints, however usually she is not fooled by them. Katie observes, catches the ball and brings it back to David, or as usually, keeps it for herself. Some plays remind soccer game and are associated with it by positions taken by players, such as goalie or field defender. Katie sometimes changes the role from one position to another.

The throwing of the ball changes the adjustments of gestures of players. When David throws the ball, Katie watches the hand, not the waist of the partner of the play. She knows praktognosically, according to Goode, what she must do in this form of the play (p. 34).¹ Changing the motifs of play requires cooperation with the other. Change from kicking to throwing needs other gestures and moves. Katie participates in the change following David, we can see it in the movie attached (Switching.avi; pp. 42- 43; CD attached to the book).

Katie is very engaged in the action when capturing the ball. She captures the ball in stride without hesitation and fumbling. When throwing and capturing are harmonized “they are events of *specific moral value* for both Katie and me. That is such events are appreciated by players as examples of ‘good’ throws and captures” (p. 36).²

There is a talk during the play (“Good catch”, or “What a fast dog”). Talking is an interlude during the play; however it is also a part of the play. The babyish vocalizations of David also had some function in the play. The expressed appreciation of Katie and estimation of her efforts act as supporting gestures, at least to Goode.

Another form of play is *simple throw and retrieve*. Also during this kind of play David is talking. It is connected with praising the dog combined with cuddling, patting

¹ I think, that there is too much interpretation by Goode. How he knows that she knows the positions? She can know only automatically that she must catch the ball kicked by David or follow him with his feints and sham attacks.

² There is once again too much interpretation by Goode. The “moral value” could be imposed linguistically on “the lived order” by David with the little justified confirmation by Katie. What she confirmed is the completion of the gesture after the first gesture that has been summon waiting for completion (summon – completion). If there is a moral value then it is rather theoretical origin than locally produced and visibly confirmed and announced by both interaction partners. The similar situation could be with so called “esthetic appreciation” of the players, which is an association of the researcher and his interpretation. If the researcher looks for the locally produced orders, it should be analyzed in terms of the local play, not external terms, that are introduced by Goode. It is paradoxically against his ethnomethodological assumptions about “ethnomethodological indifference” given in the introductory chapter of the book.

and verbal encouragements (as for example “go”). Sometimes Katie sits and keeps the ball in the mouth and does not release it. In the situation David calls her “give me the ball”, “Give poppy the bally”, “Do not you want to play with poppy?”

Katie sometimes changed the kind of play and she decided to play with a stick than with a ball. She even barked at David when he did not respond to her “proposal”. She controlled the play. Vocalizations were very important elements of the play. “Small sounds” were expression of concentration by Katie on the play and testimonies of her big effort given to the play.

Katie and David played also with a stick in a park. When David threw the stick backward, Katie refused to bring it sometimes, because it took more effort to bring it back. Then she expressed the displeasure by barking at David. The stick thrown forward was preferred by her, because of the distance that was shorter when David approached the direction of the thrown stick. Is it not intentional?

The author writes that sometimes the kick “is intersubjectively understood by us as a poor kick” (p. 39). How does he know that? There is a problem of participant and observer relations. Goode mixed two languages here: the language of participant and observer (I think about the term: “intersubjectively”). It is difficult to be outside of the situation when you do in it participate with such commitment and engagement. The local understanding of events by participant/member could be an inspiration to have theoretical interpretations, who is the participant in this situation however? Did he vanish when a theoretician was born?

Goode points out to the contingencies of each play (this play at the just that time), although they have some general features because they are lived orderliness and have some leading motifs. The contingencies influencing on the plays could be weather, availability of objects to play (e.g. sticks), snow, presence of wild animals, etc.

The partners display lively or less **lively inner states** during play with one another. This is for Katie for example the willingness to play with David when he is working around the house. Maybe she treats the play as a work, according to the author of the book. Katie likes to show off. She is very vigorous in front of others observing her, also in front of the persons from outside of the family. Katie is also reacting to the presence of camera. Setting the camera by David stops her eagerness to play immediately when she wants to do it. It happened also that Katie did not want to play during 10 days, probably having some depression or because of other reasons not recognized by the guardian/observer. Generally the inner states of participants could be observed during the locally evoked events.

The author shows the pictures of sequences of plays with Katie and the recording of some plays on CD (attached to the book). He shows the lived orderliness that is played methodically, not random. “The lived” aspect is connected with that it must be made to happen, with just these players, in that place, under just this conditions.

Chapter three is a discussion with Robert Mitchell’s videographic research about dog – human play. Mitchell and Thompson (1991) see the players in play as a goal directed agents that have idea of keeping the play going on. The actions of players are organized into projects which are sequences of actions that are coordinated by players. The actions became routines through reciprocity of players. Although routines are not fixed, they are changed and transformed during a play and over time. When the projects are incompatible, players want to entice others through self – handicapping, refusal to play, manipulative self handicapping, etc. Humans and dogs are intentional players. There is mutual dependency and reciprocity between

the players in any social play. They adjust their projects to each other. Moreover the play is made for amusement of the players. The quoted authors also mention about the talk during play. It was compared to the mothers talking to their infants. It appeared that it has some similarities. It is a *baby talk* that consists of: high pitch, low mean length of utterances, high frequencies of grammatically acceptable utterances, repetitiveness, attention getting devices, and present tense verbs. (p. 73)

Goode agrees with many aspects of analysis by Mitchell and Thompson, **however he criticizes the idea of intention possessed by animals during the play**. His observation of the plays does not give any arguments that animals have intentions. The projects are not introduced to the play. Humans and animals create the moves and the play during just this play in a concrete situation and concrete time. The animal does not have a goal going into a play. The animals play without any intention to improve a play or a sequence of gestures. They just play. The repetition of gestures and the moves of amusement and joy are only observable features of the play, however it does not imply any intent or any awareness.

In **chapter four** D. Goode analyses usage of language to describe dog- human interaction. This is an analysis of antropomorphisation done and sometimes analyzed by Ch. Darwin, E. Crist, D. Wieder, V. Hearne, Bruno Latour and R. Mitchell. Anthropomorphization is not an epistemological error. Darwin was criticized for it because he “saw human and animal subjectivity and expression as aspects or outcomes of the same evolutionary process” (p. 84). His language about behaviors of animals was rather descriptive not coming from any theory. The language does not create the phenomena, it is rather a part of it.

People even assuming behavioral rationale for describing animals’ behaviors, as scientists in biology, living together with animals must treat animals as individuals, and must treat their behaviors as meaningful and use anthropomorphic concepts to understand them on daily basis (see also my analysis of “Pets of Konrad Lorenz”, 2007). It is difficult to create “behavioral dope” from animals in everyday life, even if the guardian is Ch. Darwin or one of the founders of ethology, Konrad Lorenz. The mechanistic perspective of animal organism does not work. It is not possible to have “amorphic perspective” that is not rooted in some human base of knowledge. Anthropomorphic method is valuable form of scientific investigation, if we look at the behaviors and interactions of animals locally. Goode also used anthropomorphic terms in his plays with Katie and in his research explanations.

The concept of behaviorism or intersubjectivity is not needed to explain the interaction between humans and animals. No language is required to share the everyday life world, although it can be used on many occasions, it is not its necessary condition: “All subjectivities share this level of sensual intersubjectivity”. (p. 90). Some practices do not require any reflection or awareness; however they are done *in situ* praktognostically. The interactants and what they are doing is defined by the scenes and practices. The antropomorphization is a part of such practices. It is not an analogical thinking. According to R. Mitchell, it is a part of “appropriate use of language”. To say that somebody is “angry” does not mean any introspection of the other; it means simply understanding of the context and usage of some gestures in the context. Understanding other emotions is not projection of somebody state of minds to other either.

The researchers use often “anecdotes” to describe animals’ behaviors. Such description of interactions prompts perception of animals as intentional creatures. The scientific observation of animals, according to Goode, should be a long term

enterprise and we should analyze first rather syntax of their behavior (sequences of moves), than semantic dimension that consists of meanings that we are not sure.

In **chapter five** "At play and work..." author shows different kinds of dogs: working dogs, pets. He shows also that different kinds of dogs are politically constructed, by law and socially created discourse. Dogs could be treated as useless and effect of "emourgeoisment" of, for example, nineteenth – century France. Working dogs can be of different kinds: guide dogs, hearing dogs, rescue dogs, police dogs, herding dogs, etc. These kinds of dogs show different forms of lived orderliness that is constructed in interactions with humans. Dog – guide and trainer's dog are created by the interactions and practices used by interactants. The interactions are different because of different assumptions and practices of both relations and situations. Ethnomethodologists also create their own dog, ethnomethodological dog, that is constructed by detailed analysis of concrete situations and observations of details of locally achieved, indigenous order.

Chapter six is about Goode's findings in relation to findings of other researchers, especially coming from symbolic interactionism. Goode's response for a question "do dogs have minds" is "not necessarily". Data do not indicate anything that could be an interactionally achieved mind, as is maintained in symbolic interactionism. There are only moves in a play, good or bad, it is also possible to indicate "lively inner states", but it is not possible to observe and show minds playing together. Goode criticizes Arluke and Sanders (1996) analysis of the dogs minding and that these authors try to use the term associated with "intention and motivation", or "awareness", and say that minds are social accomplishments.

However, we can say, that the terms used by Goode "lived order/lived orderliness" are also concepts and that it is difficult to show them directly and without inferring from the data. We can show only behaviors referring to the concepts. The concepts come from a different level of reality than real and observable actions, gestures or moves. The participants of the play do not need the concept of "lived order" to play. There is a problem of course, how much the concepts are grounded in the empirical data, and how do they relate to the naturally happening and observed events?

Similarly Goode criticizes the utility of the symbol concept. According to him, symbolic interactionists exaggerate the importance of the language in social interaction. The shared symbols are, according to them, a necessary precondition for interaction. The data of Goode's research does not indicate such necessity. Understanding is achieved locally and practically by reading bodily positions and postures. Catching the stick does not need any symbol for understanding the act. Shared understanding is not necessary in conversation among humans too. The social orderliness is not based on symbols or conversations. This is the most important difference between ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism, according to Goode.

However I think that there is a shared understanding of the exchange of gestures, and it is necessary for participants to continue a play. The animal predicts what can happen after her gesture and "takes the role of other". "A" behaves in such way to evoke some expected gesture in "B". "B" adjusts the gesture to continue the play, if she has such intent to be still in play. Both partners exchange gestures based on the definition of meaning of the partner's gesture.

Using the concept of mind and symbol to understand empirical findings is not different from using documentary method of interpretation, according to Goode. Using theory one seeks for its empirical examples, and finding the examples one still

justifies the theory/pattern looking more for further examples to support theory. Even detailed video taped analysis of situation does not change this way of thinking by researchers. Moreover so called “intimate familiarity” that is an exact knowing of the situation of interaction with dogs (although it is necessary) does not change the pattern of interpretation and does not improve scientific validity, according to D. Goode. The author of the book criticizes researchers using the folk accounts (explanations of ethnologists, biologists, trainers, guardians) as scientifically adequate proves of some their thesis. The members of the “professions” may know much about the animals; however they know them from their own perspective.

We often meet empirical proofs that people treat animals as persons. And ethnographers show them as examples of “personification” of animals. Treating the dogs as persons, does not mean that they are persons, according to Goode. “My Roxy is just like my child” does not prove that Roxy is a person.

However if we look at the data of Goode, we can find that he treated dogs as persons, and reacted to them in the same way as to humans. Calling animals by names is only one aspect of treating them as persons. Using gestures, vocalizations and participating in exchange of gestures (as in a play) also can be a proof of treating animals as persons. Does it not mean that Katie was a “person” for him in the just this situation, just this time and by locally coproduced meanings of the person? Even, if David was not fully aware of it?

Symbolic interactionists put too much stress on the role of language in the social construction of dogs, according to Goode. Humans create identity of animals by talking, according to symbolic interaction concept. Moreover, animals are “linguistically disabled” creatures. However, dog can establish his identity to others by herself, e.g. jumping all over others in the park or playing with them without introduction by owner/guardian. It was the case of Katie in the described research. There is a bodily way of establishing of the identity in front of others. From ethnomethodological perspective there is too much theory in symbolic interactionist ethnography.

“Sharing perspective” is another weak point of SI and phenomenologically inspired approaches to investigate interactions of humans with animals. Taking the role of other, reciprocity perspectives have not been observed by Goode in his research. Gazing in one direction by human during a walk with dog, and following this gesture by dog, should be recognized each time for its specificity, because it may be done for many reasons and under different circumstances, without taking the role of other. Partners do not have access to subjective meanings of others: “Indexical meanings, as opposed to lexical meanings, are observable *in situ*.” (p. 138) Mutual understanding is achieved locally. Inborn characteristics of the animals and mind or symbols are not directly observable. We should make research on practices that are observable and researchable, according to D. Goode.

The last chapter of the book is called “What we have learned” and it is a summary of the research and critical estimation of other researches from the position of Goode’s investigations and findings. I will not repeat this summary in this review, however

I can answer what I have learned from the book as a researcher of human animals – not human animals interactions. I have learned that it is not possible to understand meanings or interactions without observing them as they are produced locally. I did many times, as other researchers inspired by symbolic interactionists, investigations on interactions using the interviews and participant observations. However it is not enough to be close to the situations of actions and even to achieve,

so highly valued by us, “intimate familiarity” that is, from ethnomethodological perspective, a naïve postulate. Situations of actions should be analyzed in details and observed together with recordable and presentable fashion. Visual records give us an advantage of being scrupulous and having access to, not always, remarkable habits.

I have learned also that intersubjective orderliness could be explained by other terms than mutually shared symbols, that is only by language as it is assumed in symbolic interactionism. The central role in understanding each other in play have **bodily gestures** and vocalizations that are produced by practices in locally organized way. I understand that all social events should be thought of as contextual productions and it is difficult to make an average approach to different forms of human – animals interactions. Using situational anthropomorphisations is justifiable way of “understanding of other” in just the context, in just this time and space. Understanding emotions of animals (e.g. that they are angry, happy) is possible because of the situational conventions associating some gestures with the inner psychic states (growling, barking and snarling with anger), that we were taught during a process of socialization. The biggest lesson for me is the one about social order, how it is understood in ethnomethodology that could be summarized in the sentence written by author: “If there is order ‘at all points’, then the study of any instance will reveal that order” (p. 156).

Purely ethnographically gathered data need careful elaboration and epistemological reflection. Goode does it in every moment of his analysis. He does not treat data as found and not constructed. (pp. 128, 154, 196 - 197). The camera was usually unmanned and this could have an influence on covering only some part of the play situations. The unmanned camera structured the play, because David was aware of it and sometimes behaved as an actor and he also chose some games to be recorded, and some of them preferably suited less to recording by Goode.

Critique

One of the inputs of the book to the scientific corpus of knowledge about human – animals interactions is: „making problematic the assumed and unrecognized epistemological commitments of previous research studies” (p. 16). It is not much, I would say. The reason is that many researchers have methodological and epistemological awareness about what they do and they show it in methodological chapters and sections of books and papers (Sanders 1999; K. Shapiro 1990; R.W. Mitchell and N.S Thompson 1991, and many others). Although we must say that Goode is very thorough in his examinations of the assumptions of the researches.

Goode tries to use a policy of being “ethnomethodological indifferent” as a researcher. The policy is connected with analyzing the incidents (play) in intrinsic terms to the play contexts and with trying not to use external theories to the actual analysis. It is a very similar position to grounded theory methodology that suggests not using *a priori* theories to explain phenomena observed and researched *in situ*, and not to take earlier assumptions associated with the phenomena (Glaser 1978; Strauss, Corbin 1990; Charmaz 2006). Goode makes no references to this tradition of methodology of social research, although methodically it is strikingly similar.

However it is difficult to have “clear minds” even if this is connected only with the subject of the study and not with epistemological assumptions. We know a lot about biology and psychology of animals from the primary or secondary school, from mass – media and from anywhere. We are not “empty minded” (even theoretically, often we know theory of evolution) before observation and description of the animals

behaviors. Ethnomethodological indifference seems to be the correct postulate, however it should be controlled and testified by showing the biographically achieved knowledge on the subject of study by the researcher. What we can control is only the literature that is located in scientific libraries that we do not read before finishing the study (as Goode did). However, a better solution would be to show the interaction of the read literature and the ideas included in it, during the research, and how the ideas were used in our empirical investigation and analysis. This interaction is shown in the post – research period of Goode’s analysis, during writing a report of research that became finally the book. When the research was finished, however the analysis could still be done during writing the book concerning what was read after the research. We see the interaction and the defending position taken by Goode, because it was impossible to change anything in the research project that had been finished before reading the literature on the investigated subject. Some books could inspire him to observe something different or analyze other aspects of play. Ethnomethodological indifference is a stipulation that inhibits the interaction with the cumulatively produced science before and during research, and this forces the researcher to defend position connected with gathered data and conclusions elaborated in singularly and personally produced research and data.

The animal that Goode is after is “the social order” that exists everywhere and is reconstructed by ethnomethodological investigations: “there is order at all points” (see p. 187). However I think, that we are also able to see that “disorder is at all points” and we should describe the disorder and search for the articulation process of producing order from disorder. First is disorder and discrepancies, later is a harmonizing process. If we look for order everywhere we will find it, even in play. If we are looking for disorders we find them too, even if we concentrate on haecceities - “just – thisness” of the events happening in concrete situations and with concrete people. The play could be looked at as “disorderly ordered” event, where some innovations are always possible and “processual ordering” is always going on.

I had a lot of reflections based on reading the book; it inspired me to think about my data more critically. I also found a lot of similarities with conclusions from my research on human – animals interactions, but also a lot of differences, especially of theoretical character, however not descriptive ones. The book by Goode is one of the most important books in the field of human – animals interaction I have ever read. Excellent in every dimension of the scientific analysis!

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