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Filling the Silences? Mass-Observation's Wartime Diaries, Interpretive Work and Indexicality

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Abstract

This article conceptualises the silences encountered when researching life writings and how these are filled in through analytical and interpretive activities. Using examples from my research on Mass-Observation's (M-O's) women's wartime diaries and framing the discussion around M-O's concept of its observers as 'subjective cameras', the paper explores three sets of issues. Firstly, it considers the use of part of a data source, such as one M-O diary or some entries from it, as a means of making sense of the source overall and silences within it. Secondly, it problematises the assumed closeness between life and text implicated in reading the M-O wartime diaries. Thirdly, it discusses how interpretive work on life writings is mediated and suggests that the ethnomethodological idea of indexicality helpfully characterises how I made sense of the M-O diaries as a whole from working on a number of them. I shall suggest that interpretive indexical work (between part and whole, and indeed between representation and life) is conditioned, if not determined, by the reading practices and activities used in research. This in turn points up the 'connecting theories' involved in piecing together indexical knowledges, which are framed according to and help elucidate the 'subjective lens' through which the researcher analyses and interprets the sources worked on.

Introduction: Life-Documents, Silences and 'Subjective Cameras'

The concept and practices of 'silence' can be used to shed light on the complications that researchers face in reading and interpreting life writings, such as diaries, letters, autobiographies and so on. It immediately raises questions such as, What is meant by 'silence' and how can this be conceptualised? How do researchers

deal with life writings that are perceived as ‘silent’, or which have been ‘silenced’ in some way? More broadly, how do researchers make sense of silent lives, silent people (Erben), silent times? My particular interest here is in how such silences are ‘filled in’ through the interpretive activities of the researcher, exploring this in relation to my research on a set of diaries written by women for the radical social research organisation Mass-Observation (M-O)¹ between 1939-1967. In doing so, I explore how such silences can be conceptualised and within what limits. I also flag some connections between my work and Halldórsdóttir’s (this issue) discussion of what can be known and understood about the Baldvin Einarsson / Krístrun Jónsdóttir correspondence as a whole, and about Jónsdóttir separately, but from the basis of *his* letters, the only side of the correspondence that still exists. And like Halldórsdóttir, I too draw on Liz Stanley’s *The Epistolarium* to consider how lost writing, silent writing, can be represented by reading what has been preserved, what has survived (219).

My research on the M-O women’s wartime diaries (Salter *Women’s Mass-Observation*; Salter *Engaging*) explores these diaries as a topic of investigation in their own right rather than using them as a resource to tell me about things outside the text, such as ‘the war’ or ‘the home front’. I also had access to a considerable amount of material written by M-O staff, both at the time and also in relation to M-O’s post-1981 activities.² Consequently although there were still ‘silences’ in the archive, I experienced these less acutely than Halldórsdóttir did regarding Jónsdóttir’s ‘silent’ because absent letters, because the total source material I had was enormous. However, the ‘silences’ I encountered fascinated me and became pertinent to understanding the interpretive work I carried out. Two broad sets of silences became apparent: those regarding connections between the different *parts* of the women’s

diaries I examined and the *whole* diaries from which these entries came; and those regarding connections between the *part* of the collection of M-O diaries I examined (from the wartime) and my emerging understanding of ‘M-O as an organisation’, as a *whole*.

Thinking about these silences propelled me to consider in depth how the M-O diarists wrote about their relationship with M-O, and how they constructed a picture of the ‘other side’ of the exchange when they were asked to write a wartime diary and then sent their monthly instalments to M-O headquarters. Of course the diarists knew about this at the time of them writing, but it represented a silence to me because the personal letters that were written by M-O staff to the diarists on receipt of the diary-entries, and which are occasionally referred to in their diary-entries, no longer exist because the diarists rarely sent these letters with their diary-entries to M-O. I was interested in this epistolary dimension to the relationship between the diarists and M-O staff, as part of comprehending M-O as an organisation, and the implied readers that the diary-entries implicitly or explicitly invoked.³ This required my using the selected wartime diaries and entries I worked on to understand the organisational whole, and it involved some considerable ‘filling in’ work, reading the sampled wartime diaries for mentions of M-O and the diarists’ exchanges with the organisation, building up an understanding by drawing together these often temporally-distant comments written by the different diarists.

In doing so, further silences became apparent. For instance, given the nearly 500 diaries which are stored in the M-O Archive from the 1939-1967 period, and with the time-frame of my research, I had to sample the diaries. I looked at around one-third of those written by women over time (n. 80 out of 237); and I did not examine the men’s diaries at all (n. 242). In addition, again due to time factors, I could not read the whole

of each diary I sampled, although I did read selections which I made systematically by using criteria applied across the whole set of sampled diaries. I did this across the women's diaries according to seven events occurring during or just after the Second World War,⁴ selecting diverse diarists according to age, location and class-background (roughly gauged by their occupations), as well as people at different stages in their M-O diary-writing lives, and with diary-writing lives of different lengths. I also selected diaries that were diverse in their format and visual aspects. In short, I strove for a diverse mixture of diaries as well as diarists. With regard to my detailed examination of one particular woman's M-O diary – Nella Last's – I started with the last entry of the diary (February 1966), and then moved sequentially 'backwards' through her years, months and weeks of writing (such as February 1966 'Week 4' then January 1965 'Week 3', December 1964 'Week 2', November 1963 'Week 1', October 1962 'Week 4' and so on), a working method I will return to later.

What this raises is how a set of diaries or an individual diary can be understood as a whole by looking at specific entries and not the totality. Recognising such self-made silences encouraged me to think about how to conceptualise the interpretive work I was doing and later I shall discuss this by exploring 'filling in' silences between part and whole and the indexical aspects of this. To do this, I draw on M-O's notion of its mass-observers as 'subjective cameras', exemplified in Jennings and Madge's *May the Twelfth* (see Madge and Harrison; also Calder and Sheridan; Highmore; Mercer; Sheridan *Mass-Observing*; and Stanley *Mass-Observation's Fieldwork*). Early M-O's overall position was that understanding social reality occurred only through subjective filtering lenses, the distinctive viewpoints of each observer, creating many (albeit overlapping) interpretations of the social world:

“Mass-Observation has always assumed that its untrained observers would be *subjective cameras*, each with his or her own distortion. They tell us not what society is like, but what it looks like to them.”

Madge and Harrison (66)

This concept of ‘subjective cameras’ begins to point up the complications and contingencies that frame the interpretive activities of *readers*, as well as observers. The silences I encountered in researching the M-O diaries were ‘filled in’ through ‘disciplined’ and ‘disciplining’ (Smith) lenses, that is, the particular viewpoint I brought to this activity. Consequently I use this concept to frame the discussion around three broad points. Firstly, I consider the use of part of a source, such as a M-O diary-entry or a set of entries, as a means of making sense of the rest of the diary and of silences within and across it. Secondly, I problematise the assumed closeness between life and text in my reading of the M-O wartime diaries, showing this to be a result of processes and practices ‘at the time’ and not available *post hoc*. Thirdly, I discuss how this interpretive work is mediated and suggest that the ethnomethodological concept of indexicality helpfully characterises the way I made sense of the M-O diaries as a whole from exploring selections from a number of them.

Filling the Silences?

My work on the M-O wartime diaries read them in their own right, and also as a means of interpreting the ‘silenced’ organisational side of the exchange. Among other things, I wanted to explore the letter-like dimensions of this exchange and what this might tell me about M-O as an organisation, and also the impact of these broadly epistolary activities on the form or structure of a M-O diary. I also read the wartime

diaries to address questions about the circumstances of the diarists' lives and, in the early stages of the work at least, to think about the diarists as (once) living people. In doing so, not surprisingly I ran into the question of how the relationship between a (once) living person and what is now a text or paper (Barthes 111) representation of that person can be conceptualised. Perhaps living people do leave a 'shadow', 'trace' or 'echo' in their writings and in other writings that concern them, as Halldórsdóttir suggests. But how can this shadow, trace or echo be conceptualised, and within what limits? Does the lack of one side of the correspondence mean that access to its writer is entirely lost? A related question is, does the fact that I read many of the M-O women wartime diarists' manuscripts mean that I was thereby closer to them as once living individuals? In short, should access to traces of the "I" be perceived as the 'most authentic' of all ontological positions (c. Duarte Esgalhado 241)?

Of course, many people before me have addressed such questions, with their ideas feeding into the wider contemporary concern with referentiality and representation.⁵ Among other things, this connects to considerations of time when researchers are engaging with texts which were authored at some temporal-remove, and it raises issues concerning what can be understood about the past and its people. Michael Erben suggests one response, that "while the past must of necessity be partly illusory, it is not lost" (19), citing Paul Ricoeur's conceptualisation of a trace (rather different from Derrida's) as taking the place of or standing for something once 'real'. This function is indirect, Erben writes, and only by recognising this indirectness can we understand such traces. He suggests that "complete knowledge of traces can be gathered but never of lives" (Erben 19), which, complex as they are, can never fully be grasped or stabilised in text and appreciating the partiality of all knowledge is clearly extremely important.

Stopping at this point, however, suggests a dead-end, while I think there is a route out. ‘Partial’ implies part of a whole that, if resources, documents etc were available and sufficiently accurate, could be reconstructed; and often, this whole is perceived to be recoverable from the remaining documents. This, in turn, implies that ‘traces’ or ‘shadows’ perceived to be *in* a text point towards something *outside* of it, which can be related to a perception of the assumed whole. But precisely *how* do readers ‘fill in the silence’ between representation and life, and indeed between part and whole? How do they work out from the writings that a person themselves penned? Why did I spend many months in the M-O Archive reading the original manuscripts written by women diarists when a number of edited and published M-O diaries exist and I could have read these?⁶ And if the “I” is *not* the most authentic of ontological positions then what is its status?

Examining original documents, holding their sheets of paper, turning their pages whilst reading, as the M-O diarists had themselves done whilst writing, certainly simulated a sense of closeness. But by reading these documents, I was not trying to somehow recover the diarists as once living people through their writings. In spite of this, initially I did find myself conflating, in Barthes’ words (111), “paper-beings” with “the (material) author of [the] narrative”. And at the beginning I took, for instance, the persona that Nella Last presented in her diary as a close representation of ‘living Nella’. This was partly because I began identifying with the diarists, and partly because the surface chronology of the diaries implied a continuity to their writing and hence a temporal contiguity between their writing and their everyday life experiences (Roos; Salter *Women’s Mass-Observation*; Stanley and Dampier). However, eventually I realised that writing a diary for M-O was a discontinuous practice, however frequently the diarists contributed an entry. Part of their lives was spent

writing for M-O, but there was more besides and much of which they did not write about. As a result, and as many people before me have done,⁷ I came to perceive important differences between the textual and the world of events, although of course appreciating the importance of the former as a medium of interaction in the latter. Succinctly, Paul John Eakin's argument that the relationship between life, self and text cannot be described as "a correspondence theory of reference" wherein a "faithful and unmediated reconstruction" is possible (687-688) holds ground. Despite the lure of apparent closeness and reconstruction, then, perceptions of a direct or unmediated 'recovery' are more than a little shaky.

Closeness and 'the Original'

Nevertheless, there *is* still a perceived intimacy or closeness between life and text implicated in reading 'the original' M-O wartime diaries. I still felt proximity to something (but what, exactly, I am unsure) when reading what the M-O women diarists' wrote 'at the time'. But this was not a nearness to a living self 'there in the text', and I recognise the artifices of the 'documents of life' genre in this respect (Erben 22; Bell and Yallom 2; and Fothergill 153). The closeness I felt was of a rather different kind. On one hand, it did encompass a literal proximity to the original documents, to their original words-on-the-page character. But on the other hand, it pertained much more to my readerly proximity to 'at the time' processes and practices of writing which, however partially, were 'absorbed' into and mark the text. This text / life link is one of the points at which history, biography and social structures meet, for Mills the central concern of sociology.

In discussing intertextuality, Linda Kauffman suggests that "two paths of narrative ... merge; the text is both an absorption of and a reply to another text" (18, 19). The

M-O wartime diaries have just this character, as they both absorb and reply to the silent (to me) personalised letters which the diarists received from M-O headquarters. The following comment from M-O diarist Olivia Cockett illustrates this point succinctly: “Thursday June 27 11.15am Thank you for the letter, T. H.: hope you’re right about the material being of some use: haven’t got a very strong missionising impulse, but should be heartened to think that someone, somewhere, would someday be helped somehow by something I’ve done ...” (D 5278, 27 June 1940).⁸ As this example suggests, the way the M-O diarists configured their texts and the language used therein does not express or echo their own, or indeed the M-O organisation’s, internal or private ideas,⁹ but rather their writing practices are importantly shaped by public and shared ideas about diaries, writing, the war, M-O and so on. And importantly, this configuring took place within the context of the broadly epistolary relationship that existed between M-O and its diarists, the ongoing exchanges of writings in a mutual reciprocal ‘dialogue’.

Kauffman’s comments about the role of texts as ‘replies’ or responses to other texts is important in understanding the workings of the dialogical relationship between M-O and its diarists. The M-O wartime diarists did not just write to M-O, they wrote *for* the organisation, whether explicitly addressed or not; and fulfilled their side of the epistolary bargain each time they posted their diary-entries to M-O headquarters. And the M-O staff were their intended initial readers, and the diaries indicate the diarists perceived them to react in particular ways to these diary writings. The broad epistolary character of the relationship between M-O and its diarists operated in space and time and was ‘disciplined’ and organised by then-current social codes about such things as writing practices, but also as these were mediated in the specific context of M-O. For instance, the women’s wartime diary-entries implicitly and sometimes

explicitly commented on how writing a diary for M-O *should* be practiced, an important part of which included how time should be spent and represented in so doing, as indicated in the following two extracts from the diaries of Clara Woodbury and Olivia Cockett:

“11.11.43

I am often ashamed of these badly written accounts often I fear badly spelt scrawls I send in, but I write them in all sorts of odd moments and have no time to consider what or how I am putting things. I just cannot devote a regular half hour of the day or night to writing this.”

D 5344, 11 November 1943

“If I don’t begin daily soon, it will never happen!”

D 5278, 6 June 1940

Interpretation and Indexicality

At this point I want to return to my research on these texts and how perceived silences were filled. The interpretive activities and practices that researchers use in interpreting such life-documents as diaries and letters are embedded in the detailed specifics of reading and analytically engaging with them. Reading practices centrally indicate the “acts of understanding”, and the methodological choices readers make in reading and analysing texts (Israel 13, Stanley *Moments* 62-64) are pivotal to how researchers interpret and emplot the texts worked on. Reading practices are central to perceiving and using traces as standing for a greater whole, and also mediate how the relationship between lived experience and textual representation is operationalised. Reading practices have been usefully conceptualised by Garfinkel’s

ethnomethodological concept of ‘indexicality’, discussed in detail in his *Studies*, and I shall explore it in relation to how I as a reader was able to interpret M-O’s ‘silent’ side of the exchange by using the diarists’ part of this.

When reading a particular diary-entry written by a M-O diarist, I began to make inferences about how it might relate to the letters sent to the diarists by M-O staff and which will have preceded it being written. Much like piecing a jigsaw puzzle together (Stanley and Wise 137-148), I built my preliminary interpretation of one diary-entry by reading the next one, then interpreted both in light of each other and used this to infer something about M-O letters to the diarist and, in turn, the exchange between them as a whole. For example, Olivia Cockett’s comments about letters from M-O in June 1940 note her pleasure in receiving them and their ‘spur’ to her diary-writing (D 5278, 16 June 1940; 23 June 1940). And in a letter prefacing her July diary-entries she explicitly refers to the content of a preceding ‘silent’ M-O letter, implying that the M-O letter includes comment which is personalised to the content of Cockett’s entries: “Dear Mr. Harrison, Thanks for the acknowledgement of the last bit of diary. You say you are interested in the points regarding morale and Government ...” (D 5278, 18 July 1940).

Of course, the serial character of diaries – one entry after another after another ... – means that probably there was a succession of diary entries sent off by the diarists before a letter was received from M-O staff, yet each weekly or monthly batch still assumed a reply. And, of course, this way of reading is not of the ‘real’ shape of the entire diary plus M-O’s responses, but the product of my procedures of examination and the interpretational work these set up. As Garfinkel’s ideas illuminate, each diary-entry and M-O letter is indexical to the context in which it was *read* in, as well as the context/s it was produced in. Gauging how a diary-entry fits into the temporally-

emergent overall shape of the exchange between the diarists and M-O required considerable interpretive work on my part. This involved an iterative, interpretive and cumulative set of activities, which rested on perceiving each diary-entry as an increment of 'indexical knowledge' that acted as an index to the exchange as a whole. In piecing together an overall impression of the exchange between M-O and its diarists, for instance, my initial interpretation that the diarists all welcomed receiving letters from M-O, as inferred by reading Olivia Cockett's aforementioned comments, was immediately halted when I incorporated another diarist's very different response into my emerging analysis: "PLEASE DO NOT ACKNOWLEDGE THIS DIARY" and "PLEASE DO NOT ACKNOWLEDGE" (D 5342, written at the bottom of several diary-entries between August 1939 and July 1943).

'Repairing' what are inevitably gaps in this indexical work necessitates making connections between part and (an emerging sense of) whole. It also involved consolidating my interpretations not only into a general impression of the entire exchange, but also an emerging argument about the meaning of this, what it added up to in an analytical sense. And because interpretation is ongoing, the shape of the exchange as whole was always a 'becoming', because it presented a field of interpretational potentialities, the actualising of which depended on myself as a reader, more particularly on the (developing) set of indexical knowledges gained from the M-O diaries and my attempts at comprehending the meaning of these parts and their relationship to its whole. Indeed, from these indexical practices emerged my understanding of the M-O wartime diaries as a 'form' that overlaps considerably with letters, including regarding their serial, sequential and temporal dimensions.

What is rendered 'missing' or 'silent', because M-O staff's letters are not available to the researcher, is the part that this organisational epistolarity played in the process:

I am unable to fully incorporate knowledge about this into my interpretation of the M-O wartime diary as a ‘form’. The to-ing and fro-ing of M-O staff’s interaction with the diarists, the timing and sequence of this, and thus the contextualised grounding of the ‘correspondence’ or exchanges between them, is lost to in-depth analysis. As a reader, however, I can consider how I made sense indexically of the emergent knowledges that I perceived the M-O diaries to provide, because this was contingent on the location and context of my reading the surviving materials – my reading was, after all, as much ‘occasioned’ as the M-O diarists’ writings, to use another ethnomethodological term. Of course, this does not ‘stand in for’ or replace the missing grounding that the now missing M-O staff letters would have provided. However, it does provide a set of markers that are pivotal to understanding the work of interpretation, a set of markers that would indeed still be important even if the M-O staff letters to the diarists *were* available.

My indexical piecing together of my interpretation of the broadly epistolary relationship between M-O and its diarists connects to a broader concern for how representations are accomplished. As Rosalind Coward suggests, feminist research must ask “how representations work ... how the text is constructed by writing practices and what ideologies are involved in it” (228-229) because this engages with how writers achieve their versions of reality.¹⁰ This can be broadened to stress the equal importance of reading practices in accomplishing ‘knowledge about ...’ and what underpins these practices.

Losing the Plot: ‘A Life’ and Its Shape

What this raises is the importance of ideologically-informed conventions that influence how researchers piece together indexical knowledges into a more general

understanding, for, as Dorothy Smith points out, ‘disciplining ideologies’ importantly inform the interpretive lenses which readers deploy in making sense of and ‘knowing’ texts. In pulling together the indexical knowledges I puzzled about and pieced together in conducting my research on the M-O women’s wartime diaries, in the early stages I made connections between textual representations and ‘life’, but subsequently I did so by relating parts to a conjectured and emergent whole. Part of the research involved exploring the temporal features of diary-writing for M-O over time, and for this purpose I concentrated on reading the very long diary written by Nella Last. An important point about this concerns the effects of how I sampled her diary-entries on the interpretations I made, and how, in turn, this underpinned how I pieced together my understanding of her diary as a whole.

The sampling frame I deployed involved reading chronologically, but in a reverse temporal order, through Last’s diary. Among other things, this had the effect of implying continuities across these entries, which encouraged me to perceive her writing as continuous and Last herself as a ‘plot-engineering’ writer. With hindsight, however, I realised that her writing was in fact discontinuous, and I had ‘read into’ the diary the presence of continuities and a plot, assuming they would be present even if I could not pinpoint them. This not only bracketed important differences between the life and its representations, it also assumed that a text is a ‘mirror’ to the diarist’s ‘voice’.¹¹ The structure of a life as a whole is seen in ‘conventional’ biography as a ‘connecting theory’ (Platt 64), informed by conventional views of what a life ‘should’ look like in textual form. Such background ideas are Smith’s ‘disciplining ideologies’ and they influence the ways in which parts of knowledges are joined into an emergent whole during interpretation, through readers’ interpretive activities and the reading practices they deploy. These activities and practices, then, are in fact ‘indexical’ to the

ideological and epistemological positions researchers take up, among other contextual and occasioned features. In a sense, researchers practice these ideologies: these disciplining or shaping forces impact on our interpretive, methodological and reading activities, so that the knowledge we produce is conditioned by them, too.

Conclusions: Silences, Indexical Knowledges & ‘Subjective Cameras’

This paper has been concerned with how researchers working on written documents of life fill in ‘silences’ between part and whole (and between representation and life) through their analytical and interpretive activities. Indexically piecing together an emergent understanding of the diaries and M-O as an organisation characterises the approach I took to doing so. How this ‘filling in’ occurred was conditioned, if not determined, by the way I designed my sampling frame, which in turn organised my reading practices. It also involved ‘connecting theories’ which informed how I made analytical sense of what I read and helped place this into an emerging argument about M-O and its diaries, an argument that used parts to understand a conjectured whole. My reading practices and the way in which I deployed (particular) ‘connecting theories’ was indexical to the emerging ideological and epistemological position I took up. My particular way of understanding the wartime diaries, then, points up the fact that I too am a ‘subjective camera’ gazing at the data through a subjective lens in carrying out my research, as indeed all researchers are. Making this as clear as possible shows the basis on which researchers form arguments and hence provides provenance to our interpretive and analytical assertions.

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Notes

¹ Mass-Observation began in early 1937, initiated by a letter from Geoffrey Pyke calling for an ‘anthropological study of our own situation of which we stand in such desperate need’ (Pyke; see Jeffery; Sheridan et al). Charles Madge, a journalist and

poet, responded to Pyke's idea and, with Humphrey Jennings and several others, gathered a group of volunteers who operated from his home in Blackheath, London. Tom Harrisson saw Madge's letter and a correspondence ensued, and at the end of January 1937 a letter from Harrisson, Jennings and Madge announced the formation of M-O (Harrisson et al). Initially, Harrisson worked in Bolton and Blackpool on an anthropological study of the working classes, whereas Madge and Jennings worked in Blackheath and, after securing volunteers, sent out calls for responses to 'Directives' (broad questions on specific topics inviting the respondents to put forward their views) and 'Day-Surveys' or 'Day-Diaries' (asking respondents to record their activities over a specific day), with those for 12 May 1937 edited and published (Jennings and Madge). Although Harrisson and Madge swapped organisational places in November 1938, Harrisson continued to employ diary methods, asking the organisation's 'National Panel of Volunteer Observers' to write 'Crisis Diaries' in August 1939, which were then converted to the Wartime Diaries once war broke out. All the material is archived in the Mass-Observation Archive (M-O A), University of Sussex.

² See Sheridan et al. For a comparison between the early and post-1981 M-O projects, see Sheridan *'Writing to the Archive'*.

³ See Sheridan et al. (196-197, 229-232) regarding different audiences for M-O material.

⁴ These were: The Declaration of War; Dunkirk & the Fall of France; D-Day; Hamburg, Dresden & Würzburg (Fire) Bombings; Victory in Europe (VE) Day; Hiroshima, Nagasaki & Victory in Japan (VJ) Day; Armistice Days.

⁵ See listed works by Lejeune; Stanley *The Auto/Biographical I*; Plummer (86); Marcus; Roos, for example.

⁶ See Broad and Fleming; Sheridan *'Among You Taking Notes'*; Malcolmson and Searby; Malcolmson and Cockett; Malcolmson and Malcolmson.

⁷ See listed works by Barthes (111), Roos, Eakin, Jay, for example.

⁸ D 5278 is the 'Diarist Number' ascribed to Olivia Cockett by the M-O Archive. Cockett's and Last's M-O diaries have (partly) been published (Malcolmson and Cockett; Broad and Fleming), and I am therefore able to use their real names. All other diarists mentioned have been given pseudonyms, however.

⁹ In relation to ethnomethodology, see Attewell (191-193).

¹⁰ See Greene (292).

¹¹ See McNeil (151) regarding the problems of trying to speak for others. See Buzard regarding 'giving voice' and examining situated knowledges, political locations or standpoint epistemologies as ideologically-disciplined lenses informing research in the critical humanities and social sciences.