**Grounded Ethnomethodology (GEM): Application of the Method to a
Commissioned Report**

by

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A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Carleton University
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Abstract

This study examines a commissioned report on the knowledge based economy and society (KBES). My reading of the report is informed by the conventions of ethnomethodology in order to produce an exposition of what the report *accomplishes* as opposed to a critique of the contents of the report. Additionally, I argue for, and incorporate, the combined methods of grounded theory and ethnomethodology. On the surface, grounded theory and ethnomethodology are incompatible methodologies because grounded theory seeks to generate theory while ethnomethodology aims at description of social practices. In addition, grounded theory avoids preconceptions of reality, while ethnomethodology works from preconceptions of the social order. Grounded ethnomethodology (GEM) is not only useful for doing textual analyses, but also has wide-ranging applicability to social phenomena and theoretical orientations. As a research method, GEM represents an explicit, rigorous, and empirical methodology with the added versatility of generating theory, providing description, or both.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The recourse to written texts plays a crucial yet taken-for-granted role in sociological investigations. While human behavior can be studied through interviews, participant observation, or the study of artifacts, the research process is inevitably mediated by written texts in the form of a literature review, field notes, or a construction of findings from the researcher.

As Dorothy Smith has noted, whether we produce printed or written traces or work from them, sociologists have rarely attended to the documentary or textual process as an object of inquiry (1984:59). In other words, the study of texts for what they *are* as opposed to what they *talk about* (Green, 1983:2) is rarely investigated, and she credits ethnomethodology for the discovery of the document as a significant constituent of social relations (Smith, 1984:59).

To explore the constitutive nature of language and discourse, I examine a 1997 government-commissioned report on the knowledge based economy and society (KBES). My reading of the text is informed by the conventions of ethnomethodology in order to produce an exposition of what the report *accomplishes* as opposed to a critique of the contents of the report. Additionally, I argue for, and incorporate, the combined methods of grounded theory and ethnomethodology. On the surface, grounded theory and ethnomethodology are incompatible methodologies because grounded theory seeks to generate theory while ethnomethodology aims at description of social practices. In addition, grounded theory avoids preconceptions of reality, while ethnomethodology works from preconceptions of the social order.

Grounded ethnomethodology is not only useful for doing textual analyses, but also has wide-ranging applicability to social phenomena and theoretical orientations.

This investigation is timely and valuable because as individuals, organizations, and governments are debating the so-called *knowledge based economy and society*--and generating reports of their visions--it is important not only to evaluate such reports based on their explicit claims, but also to understand how such reports reflect socially organized artful practices which constitute ongoing, practical accomplishments.

Garfinkel's Ethnomethodology

Ethnomethodology is a theory of social action influenced, in part, by the work of Talcott Parsons. According to Parsons's theory of action (1937; 1951), institutionalized systems of norms, rules, and values are internalized by individuals, making social order possible (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:40). Garfinkel (1967) rejected this approach, which portrayed social actors as *judgmental dopes*,¹ responding to external social forces (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:40). Instead, Garfinkel was more interested in how members *do* social order, than how they are animated by it (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:40, emphasis in original). As an alternative, he offered a model of social order grounded in contingent, embodied, ongoing interpretive work (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:40). Garfinkel believed that the objective reality of social facts are an ongoing accomplishment of the concerted activities of daily life, with the ordinary, artful ways of that accomplishment being known, used, and taken for granted by members (1967:vii). For Garfinkel,

¹ See Garfinkel's discussion in *Studies* (1967:67-75).

ethnomethodology needed to examine the social order as built from within the building of it (Livingston, 1987:58). He recommended that social settings be viewed as self-organizing, whereby practical actions and practical activities are coordinated to depict evidences-of-a-social-order (1967:33). How the social order is locally produced and locally exhibited is the fundamental question for ethnomethodology. For practitioners of the method, every inquiry claims their interest as socially organized artful practices (Garfinkel, 1967:32-34).

Locating the Study

This investigation draws heavily from the work of Garfinkel. In *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967), Garfinkel outlined his vision of the method with applications to situated interactions, conversations, and written documents (institutional records). Because *Studies* is most attentive to the programmatic nature of the method, it received more attention than subsequent works which were informed by *Studies* or directed towards conversation analysis.

Because ethnomethodology is concerned with description rather than argumentation, no hypotheses have been formulated for testing or verification. Instead, the investigation is guided by programmatic procedures which are applied to the commissioned report.

Theoretical Traditions

There are three broad traditions for doing textual analyses: one is using a constructivist approach, another is critical theory (Marxist, Feminist, Foucauldian), and a third is ethnomethodology. These traditions overlap in practice but are treated as theoretically distinct.

Constructivist theory refers to the analysis of text in order to achieve understanding. What is relevant is not so much the veracity of asserted claims, but establishing intersubjectivity between the reader and the writer. A constructivist would read the literature on the knowledge society to understand how the knowledge society is defined, understood, operationalized, or constructed. This type of analysis is less reliant on explicit method, since it aims at understanding through interpretation and description, rather than verification and prediction. Constructivists implicitly rely on the interplay of subjectivity and objectivity and deconstruction and reconstruction.

Critical theory, in comparison, seeks to uncover *structuring effects* (Smith, 1974:261) which serve to maintain hierarchical divisions in society. Such theorists typically work from a Marxist, Feminist, or Foucauldian perspective where the goal is to seek out in text or discourse the nature of ideological productions and reproductions. Such theorists would read the literature on the knowledge society as a form of social control, particularly from those who rule the world, than from those who are ruled (Smith, 1974:267). Critical theory is less reliant on explicit method, although it is dialectic in nature. Thematic concerns are structure, agency, power and oppression.

Ethnomethodology seeks to describe those socially organized artful practices (Garfinkel, 1967:32). One policy is to describe phenomena without criticizing or arguing correctives (Garfinkel, 1967:viii; Holstein and Gubrium, 1994:264). A second policy prescribes the use of analytic bracketing. Analytic bracketing requires the analyst to shift between constitutive activity (the *hows* of reality production) and

substantive resources (the *whats* of local culture) to discuss production programs, accounting practices, and accomplishments. An ethnomethodologist would read the literature on the knowledge society to describe how members² create, sustain, and manage a *sense* of social structure (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:44).

Substantive Research

The commissioned report represents one of many studies³ on the knowledge economy and society. Substantively, these studies are not of interest to the investigation. These inquiries typically rely on commonsense knowledge as the starting point for analysis (Garfinkel, 1967:36). They operate within the confines of projected structures, rather than investigating the interplay between language and social reality. In response to this practice, ethnomethodologists *bracket* what is stated in conventional studies in order to focus on the use of language in sustaining the social order. To read studies any other way would compromise the distance required to adequately describe those socially organized artful practices (Garfinkel, 1967:32). What follows, then, is an overview of ethnomethodological inquiries of written documents, rather than substantive findings on the knowledge economy and society.

Ethnomethodological Practices

Ethnomethodology is a flexible research method for investigating social phenomena. These phenomena are generally unlimited for practitioners, comprising

²A key term in ethnomethodology that refers to people in general and to one who has mastery of the natural language of a setting or community. To be a member is to display the commonsense or mundane reasoning that defines a linguistic community (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:216).

³See Machlup, 1962; Porat, 1977; Science Council of Canada, 1982; Rubin and Huber, 1986; Economic Council of Canada, 1987a, 1987b, 1990, 1991; Baumol et al., 1989; Osberg et al., 1989; Castells and Aoyama, 1994.

social interactions, transcribed interviews, historical and institutional documents. Additionally, ethnomethodology has expanded to include other persuasions, most notably conversation analysis. While these developments represent legitimate ethnomethodological practices, I am partial to classical ethnomethodology (e.g., Garfinkel, 1967) and, for the purposes of this investigation, applications to written documents. The following overview is intended to illustrate some of the practices of ethnomethodology and to help locate the study among the wider landscape of research.

One study (Chua, 1979) investigates a commissioned report concerning language and culture in Canada. The author explains that ethnomethodology is used as an analytic and empirical tool to support a Marxist theoretical framework (1979:541). This approach takes ethnomethodology to a whole new level from being typically neutral and distant, to more radical possibilities by pairing it with Marxist theory. Chua concludes that the report ultimately accomplishes the perception of the state as democratic, through recontextualization of supportive opinions and management of negative opinions:

Within this conventional conception, the Commissioners had acted in the most democratic fashion possible. They provided equal opportunities for anyone who wished to give opinions and briefs; they listened to all sides, including dissenting views. ...One of the achievements of the Commissioners is to display once again that democracy reigns, consequently helping to seal the ideological boundaries of conventional wisdom in the society. This achievement is all the more remarkable and significant when one considers that it is not even among the explicit aims and mandate of the Commission (Chua, 1979:547-48).

Despite Chua's practice of ethnomethodology, the emphasis on *achievements* is consistent with Garfinkel's program, as Garfinkel believed that all socially organized practices reflect ongoing practical accomplishments (1967:32-34).

Chua's study can be contrasted with another investigation of a commissioned report. Green's (1983) analysis is based on three texts concerning the treatment of the poor in England and Wales spanning the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The author's use of ethnomethodology is qualified by its specific application to text rather than situated interaction and speech. His inquiry is also preoccupied with the grainy details of specific materials rather than its escape into conceptual pyrotechnics (Green, 1983:ix). Green's overall interest in the study is driven by a developing body of sociological work concerned with knowledge and reality as social phenomena, and specifically how knowledge and reality are constituted in the course of specific communicative practices (1983:ix).

The Poor Law Reports are governed by three readings: reading the reports as evidential inquiries; reading the reports as events in historical narratives, and reading the reports as expressive indicators of authorial consciousness or an embracing socio-cultural pattern (Green, 1983:37). These readings are intended to resist *capture* by going beyond a literal reading of the Reports. His method also entails a discussion of the *reality* and *knowledge effects* of the Poor Law Reports, effects which are the very accomplishments of the Reports.

In summary, it is worthwhile noting how two ethnomethodological studies of commissioned reports can be very different. Chua's study is linked to political practice, while Green's is related to conventions of knowing.

Another study worthy of comparison is Hak's (1992) examination of psychiatric records. Hak rejects a medical and critical approach to the study of records in favour of an ethnomethodological one. The failure of the two approaches

resides in the medical model ignoring the study of psychiatric practice, while critical sociology merely criticizes psychiatric labelling. Ethnomethodology resolves these issues by seeing the records neither as reflecting real mental conditions nor as distortions by psychiatry, but as part of psychiatric practice (Hak, 1992:139).

Hak's interest is in capturing the textual transformation process from initial contact with a mental patient (transcribed interviews) to a formal psychiatric report, based on previous meetings with the patient, the family, and staff and colleagues at the hospital and crisis intervention centre. Hak warns that there is no reality against which psychiatric records can be compared (1992:139). A psychiatrist cannot observe a patient's *voices*; he or she simply takes the report as raw material for diagnosis (Hak, 1992:146). Furthermore, in institutional settings, experts rarely deal with the *original* accounts as provided by initial observers, including patients. Instead, they deal with materials already professionally interpreted, materials that can be read, reread, and added to, during the course of institutional work.

For these reasons, Hak argues that any interpretation of a problem (i.e., psychiatric records) can be represented as a transformational link in a genealogical chain, without a beginning and without an end (1992:147). Using fragments from various texts, Hak is able to illustrate the transformation process by comparing formulations and reformulations. These transformations, moreover, are influenced by everyday and professional *background expectancies*. In the end, the accomplishment of psychiatric practice can be described as the transformation of both *original* and *secondhand* accounts into a competent interpretation (Hak, 1992:153).

One study that contrasts with Hak's is a lay account of mental illness as studied by Dorothy Smith (1978). Whereas Hak focused on a psychiatric record in an institutional setting, Smith examined a lay account of mental illness as told secondhand by an undergraduate student. The accuracy of the report is not as important as the account itself as an object of inquiry. As such, the resources Smith calls upon to interpret the text are contextual features inherent to the undergraduate assignment (interview and write-up). Examples include the teller of the tale (respondent) as a reliable witness, who establishes the standard against which the mentally-ill person is compared; *contrast structures* which serve to influence the interpretation of text in a given way; and *the social organization* which refers to individuals, family, and friends of the mentally ill who go through a series of processes before believing someone to be mentally ill. Smith applies these resources to maximum effect and concludes that the social organization of the account plays a crucial part in the construction of mental illness.

Of all these inquiries, Hak's is representative of classical ethnomethodology. He does not use ethnomethodology for radical purposes or for permissive discussions of theory. Rather, his study of psychiatric records is rooted in discovering those formal properties within psychiatric practice where competent interpretation is the very accomplishment of psychiatric practice. In my own investigation, I also adopt an approach consistent with the classical practitioners.

Sources of Information

The literature that informs this investigation is quite diverse, but is limited to the practices of ethnomethodology and grounded theory, and more generally qualitative research.

Harold Garfinkel's *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967) is a classic work that is often cited by other ethnomethodologists. It is a valuable resource because it illustrates how the practice is conducted (by Garfinkel himself or in collaboration with others) in a variety of contexts such as situated interactions, conversations, and written documents. His anthology encompasses classic themes pertaining to social action, the nature of intersubjectivity, and the social constitution of knowledge. The ideas of Alfred Schutz are particularly relevant to Garfinkel's work. As a result, Schutz's studies (1944, 1951, 1952, 1953) have been consulted for their theoretical insights.

Another source that has been immensely useful is Gubrium and Holstein's *The New Language of Qualitative Method* (1997). This methods text likens qualitative research to a language containing idiomatic expressions of the various practices. Ethnomethodology responds to the *whats* and the *hows*, with the *whats* representing literal description of events within settings (i.e., substantive resources), and the *hows* representing the description of properties within settings (i.e., constitutive activity). The *whats* and the *hows* reflect the tension in ethnomethodology by the procedure of analytic bracketing.

Gubrium and Holstein examine numerous studies to reflect the variety of the qualitative method. They provide explicit instructions for doing ethnomethodology,

with examples of resources to call upon such as contrast structures and metaphors to fulfill the artful side of interpretive practice. While Garfinkel offers some resources, Gubrium and Holstein are a further source of inspiration.

In addition to these two seminal books which are instructive of the method, other ethnomethodological studies are consulted for their illustration of the practice. These include Chua (1976, 1979); Garfinkel, Lynch & Livingston (1981); Green (1983); Hak (1992); Latour & Woolgar (1979); Lynch & Bogen (1996); McHoul (1982); Morrison (1976); Smith (1974, 1978, 1984); Watson & Seiler (1992); Wieder (1974); and Zimmerman (1969).

In the area of grounded theory, Ian Dey's *Grounding Grounded Theory* (1999) presents some of the most pressing issues facing the methodology, yet raises more questions than it answers. The book is valuable because it illustrates various practices of grounded theory and furnishes justifications for using the method as a data reduction strategy. In addition, the classic work by Glaser and Strauss *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967) provides the standard against which other versions of grounded theory are compared.

And finally, Denzin and Lincoln's *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (1994, 2000) constitutes the authoritative source on qualitative methods. The articles in these volumes offer a variety of perspectives with detailed bibliographies for further reading. Many preliminary readings were undertaken from the *Handbook* including Charmaz (2000); Hodder (1994); Holstein and Gubrium (1994); Strauss and Corbin (1994), among others.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Two methods are applied in this study: grounded theory and ethnomethodology. Given the length of the commissioned report, grounded theory is used to manage the volume of information in the document.

Grounded theory refers to a data reduction strategy, through the process of coding. In qualitative research, coding is usually applied to textual information in order to highlight themes, events, or patterns in the data. Computer software for qualitative research is used to perform the coding. Coding provides a heuristic function, as well as managing and organizing information.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Methods

The use of grounded theory as a data reduction method may be open to criticism from classical practitioners. Traditionally, grounded theory is intended to generate theory from the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). However, contemporary practitioners do not always go beyond preliminary coding, or even try to generate theory (Dey, 1999:14-16). Despite the contested nature of the method, Glaser and Strauss did acknowledge the flexible uses of grounded theory. In *Theoretical Sensitivity* (Glaser, 1978:164), Glaser noted that new uses and directions of grounded theory were just beginning to be proliferated. Later on, Strauss and Corbin (1994: 276) explained that one of the methodology's central features is its practitioners can respond to and change with the times.

As a data reduction strategy, grounded theory organizes large volumes of qualitative data into manageable categories for interpretation and analysis. Without

this preliminary reduction strategy, it would be time consuming to locate specific events in the data.

Coding is also a flexible procedure which can be performed systematically or on an ad hoc basis. One criticism of coding, however, is that it fractures the data, and separates the experience from the experiencing subject, the meaning from the story, and the viewer from the viewed (Charmaz, 2000:521). While this is true, grounded theorists can incorporate vignettes of lived experience in the presentation of their findings.

Ethnomethodology, on the other hand, is a method of analysis and interpretation according to programmatic rules. It strives for objectivity by adopting a naïveté⁴ about the everyday world in order to examine members' practical procedures for creating, sustaining, and managing a sense of objective reality (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:40). Ethnomethodologists rely on a number of resources for depicting social phenomena, such as background expectancies, social affects, and the documentary method of interpretation.

In sociological inquiries, ethnomethodology remains an uncommon research practice. One weakness is the methodology's peculiar vocabulary. This feature is especially noteworthy in Garfinkel's early work (e.g., 1967). Fortunately, however, ethnomethodology has evolved since 1967, and has attracted various practitioners who have succeeded in demystifying the methodology (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997; Livingston, 1987). The linguistic features of ethnomethodology derive from

⁴ Naïveté is synonymous with *analytic bracketing* or *ethnomethodological indifference*, whereby analysts suspend all commitments to *a priori* or privileged versions of social structures to provide objective renditions of members' sense-making activities (Holstein and Gubrium, 1994:264).

Garfinkel's sociological stance. Many of his contemporaries understood structures as objective phenomena while Garfinkel saw structures as products of language. The term *member* is used by Garfinkel to reflect the importance of language in construction practices. A *member* is not merely an individual, but one who has mastery of the natural language of a setting or community (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:216). To be a member is to display the commonsense reasoning that defines a linguistic community (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:216). With the notion of membership, sociologists do not need structure to account for social constraint (Hilbert, 1992:194). Rather, members orient to a pre-supposed social-structural order, reifying and reproducing it in the course of their activity and imposing its reality on each other as they go (Hilbert, 1992:194).

Ethnomethodology can sometimes find itself in a paradoxical relationship with members (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:44). In the same way that ethnomethodologists try to avoid arguing with members, ethnomethodologists can inadvertently contradict members by reducing what members *say* and *do* to a congeries of practices (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:44). Furthermore, when members read accounts of their own production practices, they are likely to experience an ironic debunking of sorts (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:44) which is an unintended consequence of ethnomethodology. Given this tendency, ethnomethodologists are not likely to obtain validation of their findings from members.

A further criticism of ethnomethodology concerns the use of analytic bracketing. It is not, as some might assume, an ontological challenge that

fundamentally questions the empirical status of everyday life (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:119). Rather, it is a means of temporarily suspending belief in the substantial (the whats) in order to better view the process (the hows) by which substantiality is produced (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:119). Analytic bracketing mirrors the interplay between artfulness and substantive resources that characterizes interpretive practice (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:119).

Another ethnomethodological procedure that is open to criticism is the breaching exercise. This technique is designed to disrupt members' commonsense assumptions to understand how structures are routinely produced and maintained (Garfinkel, 1967:37-38). In Garfinkel's breaching experiments (1967), some of the participants experienced discomfort. This consequence has led some to question the ethical nature of breaching activities.

The practical import of breaching experiments is not to be underestimated. Through these exercises, Garfinkel discovered important aspects of human conduct. Instead of seeing people as judgemental dopes, who respond in a standardized fashion to external social forces, Garfinkel viewed conduct as an expression of inner directives. Individuals can do as they please, but they will be held accountable for their actions (Silverman, 1998:35). This *discovery* undoubtedly contributed to Garfinkel's insistence on the *production* aspects of the social order.

Ethnomethodology's perspective of the social order, and the procedures used to describe it, are also open to criticism. One criticism is that ethnomethodology deals with the small-scale and the trivial, and has little to say about the big concerns of sociology, namely, power and social conflict (Collins, 1992:xiv). This criticism,

however, overlooks existing theoretical frameworks. Critical theory and Marxism, for example, are commonly used to examine issues of power and oppression. Additionally, as the social sciences have expanded, it is quite legitimate for researchers to focus on different slices of social reality (Silverman, 1998:68).

For ethnomethodologists, the production of the social order is unavoidable and local (Livingston, 1987:57). There is no relief from it or disengaged place to observe it from (Livingston, 1987:57). The idea of speaking about practical action and practical reasoning is that they are the work of producing social objects (Livingston, 1987:56). They are practical in the sense that they are the things we do to get the job done, to build the observable and observed orderlinesses of the social world (Livingston, 1987:56). Because there is no Archimedean position for the observer or analyst (Livingston, 1987:57), it is said that Garfinkel invited us to embark on a boat without a bottom (Silverman, 1998:183, quoting Lynch and Bogen). For some who see this as a weakness, ethnomethodologists are nonetheless pragmatic about their work. They realize the practical limitations of their endeavours and are prepared to bracket their own talk and production practices for all intents and purposes (Livingston, 1987:57).

Glossary of Terms

Account--this refers literally to an utterance, verbal or written, but can also mean a justification or rationalization. The meaning of *account* is dependent upon the context in which it is used.

Accountable--phenomena that are observable and reportable, but are also assumed to be ongoing accomplishments; phenomena which occur in the same settings to which they are constitutive (Garfinkel, 1967:1-2).

Accounting practices--the act of making or describing accounts (*see* account and accountable).

Analytic bracketing--the shift between topic and resource or constitutive activity (hows) and substantive resources (whats) (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:121).

Analytic bracketing is synonymous with ethnomethodological indifference.

Artful practices--the practical means by which members create a *sense* of social order and are motivated to comply with it (Garfinkel, 1967:30-34). These activities are *artful* considering that the *real* or *hidden* order of the social world is simply inaccessible (Livingston, 1987:58).

Background expectancies--seen but unnoticed features of everyday scenes which provide schemes of interpretation to members (Garfinkel, 1967:36-37).

Ethnomethodological indifference-- the process whereby analysts suspend all commitments to *a priori* or privileged versions of social structures to provide objective renditions of members' sense-making activities (Holstein and Gubrium, 1994:264). This activity is synonymous with analytic bracketing.

Indexical expressions and actions--refer to the context in which utterances are spoken or words are written such as time, place, circumstances, etc., (Garfinkel, 1967:4-7).

Local--refers to the social context in which human behaviour is implicated. As an interpretive resource, *local* refers to recognizable categories, familiar vocabularies, organizational mandates, personal and professional orientations, group perspectives, and other similarly delimited frameworks for organizing meaning (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:172). *Local* is equivalent to Garfinkel's term *organizationally situated conduct* (1967:11).

Member(s)--a key term in ethnomethodology that refers to people in general and to one who has mastery of the natural language of a setting or community. To be a member is to display the commonsense or mundane reasoning that defines a linguistic community (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:216).

Production programs--synonymous with accounting practices.

(Formal) Properties--observable or identifiable features of settings or conduct.

According to Garfinkel, one goal of ethnomethodological investigations is to discover the formal properties of commonplace, practical commonsense actions, "from within" actual settings, as ongoing accomplishments of those settings (1967:viii, quotes in original).

Reflexivity--refers to interpretive activities which are simultaneously *in* and *about* the settings to which they orient and that they describe (Garfinkel, 1967:7-9; Holstein and Gubrium, 1994:265).

Chapter 3: Grounded Ethnomethodology

This chapter explores further the methods of grounded theory and ethnomethodology. Each method is described in terms of its assumptions, procedures, and practices and then contrasted to highlight similarities and differences. One study which attempted to merge grounded theory and ethnomethodology is examined and contrasted to this investigation. I then outline how ethnomethodology can benefit from grounded theory using this investigation as a case study.

Grounded Theory

In the classical sense of the term, grounded theory is concerned with the discovery of theory from data, with an emphasis on generating theory rather than verifying it (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:1-2). This methodology was formulated by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967). In this influential treatise, the authors outline explicit procedures for the legitimate practice of the method.

Glaser and Strauss were much opposed to the opportunistic use of logico-deductive theory. Logico-deductive theory consists of tacked-on explanations at the conclusion of a study, which are intended to give the data a more general sociological meaning (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:4). The problem with logico-deductive theorizing is that interpretations may be spurious, since they are not generated from the data in a rigorous and transparent way. In comparison, grounded theory entails labour-intensive work to generate theory from the data, rather than borrowing theory from external sources. As the authors explain,

Generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research. *Generating a theory involves a process of research* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:6, emphases in original).

The authors proceed to clarify this research process, which is principally inductive, through the constant comparative method. The constant comparative method refers to the dynamic process of data collection, coding, and hypothesizing. The *groundedness* of this exercise is evident in the researcher working back and forth between previously collected and newly collected data to inform their hypotheses (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:101-102).

Two other practices are integral to grounded theory: comparative analyses and theoretical sampling. Comparative analyses are performed mainly to generate theory than to verify it. These analyses are undertaken to ensure accurate evidence, empirical generalizations, specification of concepts, verification of theory, and generation of theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:22-31).

The second practice is theoretical sampling. This technique is subsumed in the constant comparative method and aims to discover categories and their properties and their relationships to theory. The adequate theoretical sample is judged on the breadth and depth in which groups are chosen for saturating categories for a given theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:63). The more data sources an analyst uses, the more beneficial this is, since these provide more information on categories than any one mode of knowing (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:66).

In the conclusion of their treatise, Glaser and Strauss discuss applications of grounded theory to quantitative data and library materials. For quantitative data,

they suggest Lazarsfeld's elaboration analysis of survey data to generate theory, while library materials are considered a legitimate way of doing field research.

Since the publication of *Discovery* in 1967, Glaser and Strauss have continued their writings on grounded theory in an attempt to refine and clarify this methodology. Along the way, advances in technology also influenced grounded theory, most notably in the case of computer software for qualitative research. The advent of computer software had a remarkable impact on qualitative research. Not only could these programs skillfully manage the complexity of qualitative research, but they also provided a sense of rigour and visibility to the research process.

Over the years, Glaser and Strauss were criticized for not being sufficiently concrete in their illustrations of grounded theory. One criticism of Strauss and Corbin is that they failed to clearly define the relations between categories, properties, and dimensions (Lonkila, 1995:44). A second criticism concerns the terms *coding* and *code* which are only vaguely defined in grounded theory (Lonkila, 1995:42). As Lonkila (1995:42-43) states, definitions include *the process of analyzing data* (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), *the term for any product of this analysis* (Strauss, 1987), and a *conceptual label of a category* (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Despite these ambiguities, Lonkila realized that coding referred to more than just attaching words to text segments.

A third criticism against Strauss, in particular, concerns his use of examples. While there are generous references to other studies, such references rarely succeed in illustrating much of the "dirty work" of qualitative data analysis techniques (Lonkila, 1995:45, quotes in original). As Lonkila (1995:45) argues,

One does find passages about the underlining of keywords in the data and writing comments in brackets ([Strauss]1987:60), writing the names of categories in the text margins ([Strauss]1987:27), sorting memos (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:199-200) or heading the code items for sorting (Strauss, 1987:68), but not much about the technical and methodological problems associated with the practical implementation of these operations; for example managing and sorting the possibly large systems of codes and their inter-relations. Did Strauss use index cards to store the codes? Did he use Boolean searches...? How could he technically manage the huge amount of cross-references between different instances of the data, between data and concepts, and between concepts themselves? How could he ever be sure he did not miss anything because of the sheer quantity of these connections? One is almost tempted to claim that it is next to impossible to conduct grounded theory research without computers.

Based on these practical concerns of grounded theory, it may be said that the early versions of grounded theory were more rhetorical than illustrative. The lack of visual aids may have contributed to the ready acceptance of qualitative software among researchers. With programs⁵ designed to perform procedures of grounded theory such as coding and memoing, such software rendered some of the ambiguities of grounded theory more visible and understandable.

In any event, the development of computer software for qualitative research has no doubt had a great influence on grounded theory. Before the arrival of qualitative software, grounded theory was understood as a methodology of doing research based on explicit procedures by Glaser and Strauss. With the advent of qualitative software, grounded theory came to be associated with certain software programs which, in effect, represented a break from the original assumptions of Glaser and Strauss.

⁵ Lonkila (1995:46) identifies such software as ATLAS/ti, NUD.IST, Kwalitan, HyperRESEARCH, and HyperQual.

This break can be understood, in part, by Kelle's insights on the attraction of grounded theory to computer software developers and researchers. According to Kelle, computer developers often look for a methodological underpinning for rather mundane techniques of data management and draw on grounded theory as an established "brand name" in qualitative research (1997:6.1, quotes in original). Kelle also believes that proponents of the grounded theory approach belong to those very few authors who try to describe in detail many of the folklore techniques widely applied in different qualitative approaches (1997:6.1). Consequently, indexing and comparing text segments can be and has been applied not only in projects with a grounded theory background, but also by researchers who employ methods of discourse analysis or critical ethnography (Kelle, 1997:6.1, quotes in original).

What is apparent in Kelle's assertions is the fact that grounded theory is not always used to generate theory per se, but is used in relation to only some of its procedures, such as the exercise of coding text. Furthermore, while computer developers have designed software with grounded theory in mind, researchers equally associate the software with grounded theory. While the relationship between grounded theory and qualitative software is still being debated, it is evident that early conceptions of grounded theory have been challenged by the development of qualitative software.

Ethnomethodology

In the same year that Glaser and Strauss published *Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967), Harold Garfinkel produced *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967).

Garfinkel's program was a response to the dominant sociological paradigm of the day, as articulated by Talcott Parsons (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:40, quoting Heritage). Garfinkel was more interested in how members *do* social order, rather than how they are animated by it (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:40, emphasis in original).

Ethnomethodology was founded in part upon the work of Alfred Schutz, a noted phenomenologist and philosopher. Schutz introduced phenomenology to sociology, pointing out the constitutive nature of consciousness and interaction (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:39). He believed the social sciences should focus on the ways that the life world is produced and experienced by members (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:39). This idea is further corroborated by Garfinkel in his treatise on ethnomethodology.

In order to discover how members *do* social order, Garfinkel outlined a number of procedures to guide sociologists. One policy is that any occasion whatsoever be examined for its socially organized artful practices (1967:32). A second is that members to an organized arrangement are continually engaged in having to decide, recognize, persuade, or make evident, the rational character of that setting (1967:32). And a third is that ethnomethodologists refuse the temptation to argue, quarrel, or correct practical reasoning (1967:viii). These policies require the researcher to see beyond the surface level of words and actions to understand how members accomplish, manage, and reproduce a sense of social structure (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:44). These procedures are also dependent upon analytic

bracketing, a technique which strives for an objective rendition of members' sense-making activities.

Garfinkel also identified three features of the research process (1967:4). These are the desire to distinguish between objective (i.e., context-free) and indexical expressions (i.e., related to the setting); that accounts and practical actions are reflexive or indicative of the occasions of their use; and that all accounts and actions are practical accomplishments. These features, in turn, serve as vocabularies and resources in ethnomethodological investigations.

Throughout *Studies* (1967), Garfinkel identifies a number of interpretive resources for professional sociologists. One resource is the use of background expectancies. Background expectancies are *seen but unnoticed* (1967:36-37) features of everyday scenes which people actively orient toward, even though they are unable to identify them when prompted. To identify these background expectancies, ethnomethodologists either distance themselves from the familiar and routine nature of everyday life or, in situated interactions, start with familiar scenes and ask what can be done to make trouble (1967:37). In the latter case, breaching experiments are used to disrupt the taken-for-granted assumptions of the everyday world.

Another interpretive resource is the documentary method of interpretation. This expression, borrowed from Mannheim, consists of treating an actual appearance as "the document of," "as pointing to," "as standing on behalf of" a presupposed underlying pattern (1967:78, quotes in original). According to Garfinkel, the documentary method of interpretation is common to both qualitative and quantitative

research when investigators often use some observed feature of the thing they are referring to as a characterizing indicator of the intended matter (1967:95). Correct correspondence is based on the reciprocity of perspectives among members.

Since the 1960s, ethnomethodology has evolved from its popular application to situated interactions to include written texts.⁶ This evolution is not surprising considering that Garfinkel acknowledged that all phenomena, whether water witching or sociology, are open to inquiry as socially organized artful practices (1967:32). The trend towards textual analysis, however, has provoked methodological concerns. The relationship of ethnomethodology to conversation analysis, discourse analysis, and language-oriented social constructivism continues to be debated (Watson and Seiler, 1992:xvii). While these debates are likely to continue, ethnomethodology remains a flexible methodology for investigating phenomena.

Grounded Theory and Ethnomethodology Contrasted

Grounded theory and ethnomethodology are generally regarded as distinct research methods which, if combined, would be incompatible with one another. This incompatibility becomes apparent if both methods are interpreted in their most classical senses.⁷

Despite some similarities, they fundamentally differ in terms of the research questions they seek to answer. On the level of similarities, both work from an inductive approach where findings are generated *from within* social settings or from

⁶ See Chua 1976, 1979; Green 1983; McHoul 1982; Morrison 1976; Smith 1978, 1984; and Watson & Seiler 1992.

⁷ By *classical senses*, I am referring to Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Garfinkel (1967).

the data at hand. Both generally refrain from a reliance on extra-textual realities to interpret social phenomena.

A second commonality is the rigour of the research methods. The use of explicit procedures, in addition to a *grounded* approach, add an element of objectivity to the research process and, by extension, credibility to the findings. The constant comparative method in grounded theory, and the use of analytic bracketing in ethnomethodology, are specific procedures reflective of rigour and objectivity. However, these processes differ since comparative analyses lead to verification of hypotheses, whereas discoveries from analytic bracketing can never be verified by members being investigated.

A further similarity between grounded theory and ethnomethodology concerns the use of examples for illustration. In grounded theory, illustrations may be based on excerpts from interviews, transcripts, or coded information in support of theory. In ethnomethodology, the documentary method of interpretation is a method of illustration which involves references to phenomena that reflect an underlying pattern.

Despite these similarities, grounded theory and ethnomethodology are fundamentally different based on their research goals. Grounded theory aims at generating formal or substantive theory, while ethnomethodology aims at discovering formal properties of commonplace, practical commonsense actions as ongoing accomplishments of those settings. In grounded theory, the generation of theory is dependent on a number of procedures including comparative analyses, theoretical sampling, hypothesis testing, coding, memo writing, developing

concepts, and categorizing data. To discover those formal properties in ethnomethodology requires ethnomethodological indifference or analytic bracketing without arguing or formulating correctives. Because of these different approaches in research, grounded theory and ethnomethodology appear to be distinct methods which do not shade into one another.

Combining Grounded Theory and Ethnomethodology

While grounded theory and ethnomethodology have been paired with other theoretical frameworks, they have rarely been considered as compatible approaches to the investigation of phenomena. In the classical interpretation of grounded theory, the principle of generating theory is not compatible with ethnomethodology's preconception that all practical, commonsense actions are ongoing accomplishments. Because grounded theory stays away from preconceptions, while ethnomethodology works from preconceptions of social action, is it possible to generate theory from a preconceptual framework? What about comparative analyses? Comparative analyses in grounded theory help uncover similarities and differences which are worked out to formulate theory. In ethnomethodology, comparative analyses lead to the same conclusion about social interactions, which is the ongoing accomplishment of accountability. What saves ethnomethodology, however, is the uniqueness of each setting which is described by the ethnomethodologist.

It appears, then, in the pairing of grounded theory and ethnomethodology, that it would be impossible to satisfy the goals of each method without compromises. Such compromises would entail a relaxation of the assumptions and procedures of

one or both methods. This practice⁸ is common among social science researchers since it affords meaningful insights into social phenomena and expands the range of methodologies for doing research.

Examination of a Previous Study

The attempt to combine grounded theory and ethnomethodology is not an original endeavour. Lester and Hadden (1980) undertook this task with questionable implications. The main concern behind Lester and Hadden's proposal is that all sociological inquiry should generate formal theory. Grounded theory has succeeded in meeting this criterion, but ethnomethodology is a theoretical perspective in search of a method for developing formal theory of constructing practices (Lester and Hadden, 1980:3-4).

Lester and Hadden question the credibility of ethnomethodology as a research method. Many of Garfinkel's procedures, which prescribe ways of observing social phenomena, are considered programmatic statements which do not constitute a method. As the authors explain:

This practice [programmatic statements] greatly retards progress in theory development by focusing on "meta-ethnomethodology"--continually defining, criticizing, and redefining the parameters of the perspective rather than generating conceptualization and elaborating them in an empirically grounded manner (Lester and Hadden, 1980:5, quotes in original).

A second criticism is that ethnomethodologists generally fail to explain their data collection, analysis, and theory-building work. In light of these two weaknesses--programmatic statements and covert methods--grounded theory is called upon to compensate for these pitfalls.

⁸ See Charmaz (2000); Denzin (1970); and Lester and Hadden (1980).

Lester and Hadden suggest that the constant comparative method and theoretical sampling could assist in the generation of formal theory for ethnomethodology. As an example, they consider what Wieder's study (1974) on rule use would look like had he used grounded theory methodology:

He might have gathered an initial set of data in the halfway house much as he did. Upon careful coding of the substantive matter...he might have discovered that rule use as a reality-constructing practice was crucial for explaining much of the interaction. Wieder would then have asked some further questions about this core process: What are the properties of the overall process? Under what conditions does "talking rules" occur or take different forms? What are its consequences? What strategies are involved in rule use, and what are *their* properties? (Lester and Hadden, 1980:13-14, emphases in original).

After discussing the hypothetical possibilities of Wieder's study, the authors suggest further improvements to ethnomethodology. One improvement concerns the use of coding and memoing from grounded theory. According to the authors, since coding is a normative element in the research process, there is every reason to introduce systematic, explicit coding into ethnomethodological research. This practice would render the program more explicit and visible.

Overall, Lester and Hadden's proposed methodology is problematic. The authors claim that the link between the two methods extends beyond mere compatibility, to the advancement of ethnomethodological programs of research and theory development. What the authors have unwittingly accomplished, though, is neither a new research method or amalgamation of the two methods. Rather, they have re-introduced grounded theory under the guise of a renewed ethnomethodological framework. This assessment can be justified by examining some of their assumptions.

From the very beginning, Lester and Hadden's research goals are consistent with those of grounded theory: that all analyses of generic social processes should be elevated to the status of formal theory (1980:3; Glaser and Strauss, 1967:viii). Rather than illustrating how ethnomethodological studies could be used by grounded theorists, the authors essentially deconstruct ethnomethodology and reconstruct it as grounded theory.

The deconstruction starts with the methods of ethnomethodology. According to the authors, ethnomethodology is pure theory in search of a method. Garfinkel's procedures for doing ethnomethodology are relegated to the status of programmatic statements which do not qualify as a method. By programmatic statements, the authors mean "statements that *assert* paradigmatic boundaries for a set of problems" (Lester and Hadden, 1980:4, emphasis in original). This assumption is surprising since research methods are essentially statements that assert paradigmatic boundaries. Glaser and Strauss (1967) are equally culpable of programmatic statements in their treatise on grounded theory. What differentiates ethnomethodology from discourse analysis or conversation analysis are programmatic statements. Such statements are essential for delineating various disciplinary and methodological boundaries.

Lester and Hadden further criticize programmatic statements as open to interpretation. They claim that sociologists have produced their own programmatic statements, apart from empirical research, and entered the fray to define their own boundaries (1980:5). Used in this manner, programmatic statements take on a life of their own, and are then treated as theory to be tested (Lester and Hadden, 1980:5).

Lester and Hadden appear to be criticizing mainstream sociological research. Hypotheses are, no doubt, programmatic statements which may be derived from theory. These statements are based on assumptions and procedures which need to be articulated before their formal application to phenomena. In this sense, ethnomethodologists are no different from other analysts who make statements about the social world and attempt to discover findings or social processes based on empirical research. Unfortunately, Lester and Hadden assume that sociologists have formulated programmatic statements apart from empirical research (1980:5). By empirical research, the authors may be referring to a superficial distinction between artificial and naturally-occurring phenomena. Whether sociologists interview people, observe individuals, read literature, or analyze survey data, all of these activities constitute empirical research. As Garfinkel explained, the documentary method of interpretation is common to both qualitative and quantitative research when sociologists use what they have actually observed to document an underlying pattern (1967:95). Thus, even in the case of rigorous methods, if a researcher is to recommend, and the reader is to appreciate, published findings as members of the corpus of sociological fact, the work of the documentary method is employed (Garfinkel, 1967:96). In this sense, all researchers employ the documentary method of interpretation. This method is also empirical because it is based on observation, whether first-person or through secondary sources (e.g., surveys and archives).

Lester and Hadden's biggest oversight is the immense flexibility of grounded theory in accommodating a variety of research methods. In *The Discovery of*

Grounded Theory (1967), Glaser and Strauss emphasized the value of library materials for generating theory. As the authors explain:

Sociologists need to be skilled and ingenious in using documentary materials as in doing field work. These materials are as potentially valuable for generating theory as our observations and interviews. We need to be as effective as historians in the library, but with inquiry directed to our own purposes (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:163).

Using the constant comparative method, a researcher can consult a variety of literature to generate substantive or formal theory. The literature can include letters, diaries, newspaper accounts, novels, and miscellaneous non-fiction. Glaser and Strauss detail explicit procedures for generating theory as one would in the field.

Given this flexibility of grounded theory, Lester and Hadden should have recognized the value of ethnomethodological work. Wieder's (1974) study need not have been oriented to grounded theory, but could have been--and can be--consulted in its original form for generating formal theory about rule-oriented behaviour. Additionally, if all sociological research adopted a grounded theory approach, how could the constant comparative method ever be conducted using library materials? Furthermore, why should sociology be limited to a single research method?

The methodology proposed by Lester and Hadden has not reformed ethnomethodology. By denying the legitimacy of ethnomethodology, and then reconstructing it as grounded theory, the authors have promoted grounded theory as a *superior* research strategy to ethnomethodology.

Where the authors could have contributed to ethnomethodology is in rendering some of the methodological work more explicit and visible. As Lester and Hadden explain:

Ethnomethodologists' analyses of others' methodologies offer some understanding, but do not justify the failure to explain *their* data collection, analysis, and theory-building work (1980:9, emphasis in original).

Given this tendency among ethnomethodologists, Lester and Hadden suggest the use of constant comparisons, theoretical sampling, coding, and memoing in ethnomethodological research. Had they limited their suggestions to systematic coding, they would have succeeded in amalgamating grounded theory and ethnomethodology. In fairness to Lester and Hadden, however, they did introduce coding to ethnomethodology, and it is this element of grounded theory which is incorporated in my own study.

Grounded Ethnomethodology: A Case Study

The phenomenon under investigation is a commissioned report, at over 100 pages long. Given the length and volume of the report, I decided to code the document for ease in interpretation and analysis. The research process entailed two stages: coding the commissioned report (grounded theory) and interpreting the coded report (ethnomethodology).

Coding the Report

The report was coded using computer software for qualitative research. The program, QSR NUD*IST Vivo (NVivo), represents the latest version of an evolving software which is associated and compatible with grounded theory.

NVivo is designed to code information, write memos, search text, create concepts, and link concepts in a graphical way.

To begin coding, the first step involved importing the document into NVivo. The commissioned report was available in its entirety on the Internet, so all that was

required was to import each chapter into the software program. Each chapter was first saved in *rich text format* in Microsoft Word and then imported directly into NVivo.

Once the report was imported into NVivo, the actual coding could begin. Coding was performed using substantive codes and *in vivo* codes. Substantive codes are labels which reflect the empirical substance of the research area (Glaser, 1978:55), while *in vivo* codes are labels that are identical to actual words or phrases in the text (Kelle, 1997:5.3). In this study, the substantive area is the knowledge economy and society.

As illustrated in Figure 1, "New Age" represents a substantive code since it is synonymous with the knowledge society. The first node, "New Age," is also an *in vivo* code since the term *new age* is mentioned in the passage. "Effects ICTs," which stands for *effects of information and communications technologies*, reflects a substantive code indicative of the knowledge society. The label "Effects ICTs" is derived from an earlier code originating in the Preface of the report. One *effect* of ICTs is "the pace of change has accelerated." While the decision to code text under certain nodes seems arbitrary, this exercise provides a degree of objectivity by imposing order and logic on the research process. Additionally, while many of the codes could have been merged under one label indicative of the knowledge economy, I decided to err on the side of detail rather than brevity.

In total, 45 codes (Table 1) were created to reflect the contents (the whats) of the report.

Figure 1: Illustration of NVivo Codes and Ethnomethodological Analysis

Chapter 1 TOWARD A SOCIETY BUILT ON KNOWLEDGE	<u>Codes</u>	<u>Ethnomethodological Analysis</u>
A social, economic and cultural revolution is now transforming the world. A new game is starting, and the older rules no longer apply. It is imperative that Canada move quickly to meet the challenge and seize the opportunities of this new age.	New Age	Social structures include: cultural revolution, world, Canada, new age, Council, Canadians, governments, industry, and individuals.
If anything, the pace of change has accelerated since the Information Highway Advisory Council began its work three years ago. Since that time, much has been accomplished by Canadian governments, industry and individuals. Much remains to be done, however, and our sense of urgency has not abated.	Effects ICTs	
What is this revolution? What challenges does it pose? What opportunities does it present? How can Canadians take advantage of this profound shift in social and economic paradigms? Our answers to these questions are the subject of this report.	New Age	Questions determine content. Use of "our" linked to social structure.

Table 1: Listing of Nodes in NVivo

Number of Nodes:	45
1	Canada's Position
2	Collaboration
3	Competition
4	Performance Indicators
5	(1) /Infrastructure
6	(1 1) /Infrastructure/Communications Infrastructure
7	(1 2) /Infrastructure/Information Infrastructure
8	(1 3) /Infrastructure/Information Highway
9	(2) /Society Economy
10	(2 1) /Society Economy/GIS ⁹
11	(2 2) /Society Economy/New Age
12	(2 3) /Society Economy/KBES
13	(3) /Technology
14	(3 1) /Technology/Broadcast Telcom
15	(3 2) /Technology/ICT
16	(3 2 1) /Technology/ICT/Effects ICTs ¹⁰
17	(3 3) /Technology/Internet
18	(3 3 1) /Technology/Internet/Benefits Internet
19	(3 3 2) /Technology/Internet/Internet Challenges
20	(3 3 3) /Technology/Internet/Internet History
21	(3 3 4) /Technology/Internet/General Internet
22	(4) /Policy
23	(4 1) /Policy/Internet
24	(4 2) /Policy/Access
25	(4 3) /Policy/Cdn Content
26	(4 4) /Policy/Econ Growth
27	(4 4 1) /Policy/Econ Growth/Jobs
28	(4 4 2) /Policy/Econ Growth/Employment
29	(4 4 3) /Policy/Econ Growth/Training
30	(4 4 4) /Policy/Econ Growth/SMEs ¹¹
31	(4 4 5) /Policy/Econ Growth/Electronic Commerce
32	(4 4 6) /Policy/Econ Growth/Economy
33	(4 5) /Policy/Learning
34	(4 5 1) /Policy/Learning/Technology assisted
35	(4 5 2) /Policy/Learning/Lifelong learning
36	(4 5 3) /Policy/Learning/Skills
37	(4 6) /Policy/Workplace
38	(4 7) /Policy/Government Role
39	(5) /IHAC
40	(5 1) /IHAC/IHAC history
41	(5 2) /IHAC/IHAC mandate
42	(5 3) /IHAC/IHAC acknowledge
43	(5 4) /IHAC/IHAC advice
44	(5 5) /IHAC/IHAC initiatives
45	(5 6) /IHAC/IHAC members

⁹ GIS refers to Global Information Society.

¹⁰ ICTs refer to Information and Communications Technologies.

¹¹ SMEs refer to Small to Medium Sized Enterprises.

In Table 1, each node is numbered on the left with its corresponding address in brackets and the label. The first four nodes represent *free nodes* which are stand-alone labels not rooted in a hierarchy. The remaining nodes represent *tree nodes* which, as the term suggests, are organized into a hierarchy. The decision to group some nodes into hierarchies was based on the desire to structure the information in a logical way. The codes were further organized graphically using the Modeler function in NVivo.

As illustrated in Figure 2, one cluster of tree nodes appears at the top of the diagram which has been organized under the label "Society Economy(2)." Below, two other clusters represent an outgrowth of "Society Economy(2)." These are "Infrastructure(1)" and "Technology(3)." A further cluster of nodes under "Policy(4)" incorporates a wide range of issues including those identified in the above clusters. As the diagram shows, the four free nodes "Competition," "Performance Indicators," "Collaboration," and "Canada's Position" are linked to the policy node of "Econ Growth(4 4)." And finally, the last cluster of nodes under "IHAC(5)" represents the source from which all the other nodes originate. This exercise proved useful given the nature of the investigation. Considering the length of the commissioned report, the process of coding presented another opportunity to familiarize myself with the contents. Additionally, the nodes corresponded to ethnomethodology's socially organized artful practices. And finally, when evidence or illustration was needed, the codes furnished information in a quick and easy manner.

Figure 2: Visual Presentation of Nodes

Ethnomethodological Analysis

Once the report was coded, each chapter and the accompanying codes were printed to commence the second stage of research. The second stage involved an ethnomethodological reading of the report to answer the *how* questions. The ethnomethodological analysis was guided by the assumptions and procedures of Garfinkel (1967) to describe how members create a *sense* of social structure, how background expectancies motivate conduct, and what is accomplished in the process of talk or discourse.

This stage incurred multiple readings and further interpretation of the report. The ethnomethodological analysis reflected a *grounded* exercise because new insights were being generated from the data, and coded information provided evidence and illustration in the write-up. Some of the insights which arose through the research process are identified in Figure 1 under the heading "Ethnomethodological Analysis." These insights include a number of items which reflect social structures. Examples include cultural revolution, world, Canada, new age, Council, Canadians, governments, industry, and individuals. Further reflection was needed to determine how these structures are produced and sustained in the report. One means is through the use of questions and, another, the use of possessives.

The Relevance of Coding to Ethnomethodology

The act of coding proved to be a worthwhile endeavour in this investigation. By organizing the report into manageable categories, these categories contained information which could be used to furnish evidence consistent with the

documentary method of interpretation. Furthermore, many of the codes were indicative of members' practical procedures for creating, sustaining, and managing a sense of social structure. The codes "New Age(2 2)," "KBES(2 3)," "Information Highway(1 3)," and "Effects ICTs(3 2 1)" contain passages which contribute to a sense of the knowledge society as an independent entity. Ethnomethodologically, most of the codes represent indexical features of the knowledge economy and society.

Implications of Grounded Ethnomethodology

Grounded ethnomethodology represents a hybrid program comprising grounded theory and ethnomethodology. The use of grounded theory as a data reduction strategy provides many benefits. Coding organizes large volumes of information into manageable categories for interpretation and analysis. Without this preliminary reduction strategy, it would be time consuming to locate specific events in the data. In addition, many of the codes represent indexical expressions of the knowledge society which are indicative of members' production practices.

For purists, grounded ethnomethodology may represent a deviation from Garfinkel's program. In response, grounded theory is limited to an organizational function, instead of a theoretical one. Additionally, the process of coding assisted in the documentary method of interpretation, by furnishing text which *points to* a presupposed underlying pattern. In this investigation, grounded theory supported an ethnomethodological analysis, rather than hindered it.

And finally, in the interests of methodology, this study has expanded the practice of ethnomethodology in relation to commissioned reports. The originality

of this study rests on the pairing of grounded theory and ethnomethodology. As a result, grounded ethnomethodology remains a viable procedure for investigating written documents.

Chapter 4: An Overview of the Commissioned Report

The report under investigation is the product of a council that was appointed in 1994 by Industry Minister, John Manley, to advise the federal government on the Information Highway, and more generally, on the transition to the knowledge based economy and society.

The appointed members, known as the Information Highway Advisory Council (IHAC), were selected for a three-year term commencing in 1994. The membership represented a range of interests comprising telecommunications, broadcasting and information technology; artistic, creative, and educational communities; and consumer and labour organizations.

The report addresses five specific issues of the knowledge society: economic growth; the Internet; accessibility; Canadian content; and learning and the workplace. The report contains nine chapters, supplemented by annexes, figures, and tables.

Brief History

In 1994, the government sought advice from IHAC on a range of issues covering economic, social, and cultural questions surrounding the Information Highway. The government established three objectives to guide IHAC in its consultations:

- Creating employment opportunities;
- Protecting Canadian sovereignty and cultural identity; and
- Ensuring universal access at reasonable cost.

In addition to these objectives, five principles were also adopted by IHAC in carrying out its required task:

- An interconnected network of networks;
- Collaborative development;
- Privacy protection and network security;
- Competition in facilities, products and services; and
- Lifelong learning as a key component of Canada's Information Highway.

These objectives and principles culminated in a 1995 report *Connection Community Content* which contained 300 recommendations for action by governments, the private sector and individual communities.

In May 1996, the federal government published *Building the Information Society: Moving Canada into the 21st Century* which responded to two-thirds of IHAC's recommendations.

In June 1996, the Council was encouraged to continue action on their recommendations and, during this second phase, concentrated on two tasks:

- Advising the government on outstanding issues related to the Information Highway; and
- Reporting on Canada's progress towards a knowledge economy and society.

In 1997, the Council formally disbanded. The current report, *Preparing Canada for a Digital World* (IHAC, 1997), is the final report of the Council, and is therefore informed by previous initiatives and activities of its members over 1994-1997.

How the Report is Read

In accordance with ethnomethodological procedures, the report is read with an attitude of indifference. This attitude is necessary in order to comprehend and illustrate some of the artful social practices in the report. These artful practices serve to produce and sustain a sense of social structure and constitute practical accomplishments.

Using the vocabulary of ethnomethodology, the term *members* is used in relation to production practices in the report. *Members* refers to people in general and to those who have mastery of the natural language of a setting or community (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:216). In this sense, the author of the report is not linked to any particular individual or group. Furthermore, given the collaborative nature of commissioned inquiries, the number of people involved in the production of official documents leaves the question of authorship open to interpretation. Even though the report is published under the auspices of the federal government, Industry Canada, and the Information Highway Advisory Council, no correspondence should be made between *members* and these particular bodies. The term *members* is generalizable to people who have mastery of the natural language of a setting or community.

Chapter 5: Description of Practices: Social Structures, Background Expectancies, and Practical Accomplishments

Social Structures

In ethnomethodological inquiries, social structures are not independent entities in their own right, but are actively produced and sustained by members in everyday affairs. Somehow, decisions of meaning, facts, method, and causal texture are made (Garfinkel, 1967:78). For ethnomethodologists, the task is to treat these activities as a topic in its own right in order to capture and document the production of social structures. Even within a commissioned report, these activities can be detected by adopting a naiveté about official inquiries in order to discover the sense of social structure with which members operate.

One routine feature of everyday interaction is the use of language. Language is a resource members rely upon to sustain a sense of order. As Garfinkel acknowledges, talk is a constituent feature of the setting it is used to talk about (1974:17). Institutions and organizations are physically inaccessible, but they are made accessible through the medium of language.

In the report, names or categorization devices are the building blocks of structure. Labelling provides a scheme of interpretation to the contents of the report. The labels attributed to some members (e.g., Advisory Council) vis-à-vis others (individual Canadians) represent categories which are either elaborated upon (i.e., Advisory Council) or assumed to be *what everyone knows* (i.e., Canadians). In the Preface of the report, members are informed that:

...IHAC's work had begun more than three years ago as a result of a commitment in the Throne Speech of January 1994 to develop a Canadian strategy for the Information Highway...In March 1994, Minister Manley established the Information Highway Advisory Council to provide advice on major issues related to

that strategy. The membership of the Council represents a diverse range of interests. Members come from the telecommunications, broadcasting and information technology industries and institutions, from the artistic, creative and educational communities, and from consumer and labour organizations (IHAC, 1997:ix-x). [Excerpt coded under *IHAC history* (5 1), *IHAC mandate* (5 2), and *IHAC members* (5 6)]

In this excerpt, the Advisory Council is elaborated upon in terms of its origin, goals, and membership, while *Canadian* is not defined. More subtly, it is understood that the Advisory Council represents "a Canadian strategy" for the Information Highway and, more explicitly, the Council is expected to provide advice on major issues related to that strategy. As social structures, *Advisory Council* and *Canadian* are created and sustained through the use of language and labelling practices. How these phenomena are summoned and described determines how they are interpreted and understood by members. In the particular excerpt, the Advisory Council is depicted as an advisory body representative of Canada and Canadians.

As a social structure, the Advisory Council is sustained by the addition of a spokesperson in the Preface of the report. The Preface concludes with an autograph of the spokesperson who is identified as the Chair [of the Council]. In his message, the Chair advises that:

This report is the fruit of our labours. We are especially grateful to Minister Manley and his Cabinet colleagues for giving us this opportunity to provide our advice to Canadians. Our message is simple. We live in a remarkable period of history in an extraordinarily blessed nation. *Carpe Diem*. Let us seize the day (IHAC, 1997:xii). [Excerpt coded under *IHAC initiatives* (5 5), *IHAC acknowledge* (5 3), and *IHAC advice* (5 4)]

By dissociating with the Minister and his colleagues, the Advisory Council maintains the status of an independent entity. The Minister and his colleagues are thanked for permitting the Council to give advice to Canadians. Thanking the

Minister suggests a differentiation of structure between the Council and the federal government. Additionally, the use of "our" in "our message is simple" reflects authorial ownership to the contents of the report, as well as an implied correspondence between the Chair and members of the Council.

Throughout the report, there is a sustained effort to link what is stated in the report to the projected structure of the Council. This is evident in passages where the Council is viewed as the narrator of the report:

The Advisory Council remains convinced that the issues surrounding development of the Information Highway are so far-reaching that neither government nor industry nor individual Canadians can hope to tackle them alone (IHAC, 1997:6).
[Excerpt coded under *Information Highway* (1 3)]

Once again, the Advisory Council is independent of government, industry, and individual Canadians. This distinctiveness from other structures suggests a division of roles in relation to the report. The Council as an entity constitutes the producer of the report under the stated assumption of advising Canadians. In this capacity, all other structures alluded to such as governments, industry, and Canadians can be seen as recipients of the report.

Other structures are equally produced in the report, whose meanings become understandable as objective entities. *Digital world* and *knowledge society* achieve facticity through the use of language. These phenomena are first named and then elaborated upon to embody given meanings such as *infrastructure* or *intangibles*. As social structures, they are essentially talked into existence.

The social construction of the knowledge society reflects a work in progress in the report. A series of passages serve to demonstrate how language shapes social

reality. Early in the report, the knowledge society is introduced as an object of inquiry and the subject of the report:

At the outset of this new mandate, the Council identified a major thematic concern: the power of communications has destroyed distance and is injecting global realities into our living rooms, our workplaces--indeed, the entire realm of Canadian social, economic and cultural relations. Canadians now live in a world without borders. Our purpose in writing this report is to prepare Canada for this new digital world (IHAC, 1997:xii). [Excerpt coded under *KBES* (2 3) and *Effects ICTs* (3 2 1)]

Although the knowledge society is not specifically mentioned in this passage, members come to understand that the "new digital world" and *knowledge society* are interchangeable. The knowledge society represents a common narrative¹² in the unfolding of the report. Two ways in which the knowledge society is described and understood are as intangibles and an infrastructure. As intangibles, members are informed that:

These powerful new technologies are becoming the infrastructure for a new 21st-century society, which is based on the exchange of intangibles--ideas, information, knowledge and intelligence...The creation, manipulation and sharing of information and knowledge will become an overriding human imperative (IHAC, 1997:2). [Excerpt coded under *New Age* (2 2), *Effects ICTs* (3 2 1), and *KBES* (2 3)]

Intangibles refer to ideas, information, knowledge and intelligence. The infrastructure, in contrast, is defined in more concrete terms and is interconnected with the exchange of intangibles:

...we emphasize communications infrastructure broadly defined as the networks, systems and other hardware and software of telecommunications, broadcasting and computer communications, which are the three key technologies now converging to form the Information Highway (IHAC:1997:10). [Excerpt coded under *Communications Infrastructure* (1 1) and *Information Highway* (1 3)]

¹² A narrative can be understood as an account that offers some scheme, either implicitly or explicitly, for organizing and understanding the relation of objects and events described. Narratives need not be full-blown stories with requisite internal structures, but may be short accounts that emerge within or across turns at ordinary conversation, in interviews or interrogations, in public documents, or in organizational records (Riessman quoted in Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:147).

In both extracts, the knowledge society is talked into existence. This digital world is described as an infrastructure based on the exchange of intangibles, where such exchange is partly supported through communications technology known as the Information Highway. More importantly, the knowledge society becomes more knowable as the report unfolds since this society encompasses many dimensions. As explained in the report:

Though we focus now on communications infrastructure, the other main elements of the Information Highway addressed later--access, content, human resources, to mention only a few--are equally strategic to building a knowledge society (IHAC:1997:10). [Excerpt coded under *Information Highway* (1 3) and *Communications Infrastructure* (1 1)]

In other words, the knowledge society is a work in progress. It cannot be understood in its entirety before the conclusion of the report. In everyday life, members rely upon language to sustain a sense of structure. Within the commissioned report, the knowledge society is equally envisioned and objectified through the use of language.

Just as language is available to members as a resource for their use, language is also something that they gloss (Garfinkel, 1974:17). They ignore certain features of what they are saying; they do not want to elaborate on them. Early in the report, members are informed of the various ways of coming to terms with the larger social world:

There are many terms for this new world--'information society,' 'knowledge-based economy,' 'digital economy,' 'post-industrial society' (IHAC, 1997:2). [Excerpt coded under *New Age* (2 2), *Effects ICTs* (3 2 1), and *KBES* (2 3)]

While it is acknowledged that the new world has alternative labels, at the most basic level, *society* and *economy* are glossed based on the tacit understanding that these are

what everyone knows. To elaborate on these taken-for-granted terms would be contrary to social expectations. In everyday affairs, glossing practices are normative and integral to the stability of the social order. To get bogged down in the details of language use is counter-productive to social interaction and commonsense reasoning.

Background Expectancies

Commonsense reasoning is a familiar term to ethnomethodologists.

Members are generally understood to share and orient to a corpus of knowledge.

Garfinkel (1967:36) describes this phenomenon as *the common sense world of everyday life*. This body of knowledge has its origins in human activity which motivates members to comply with, and to reproduce aspects of the corpus in their everyday affairs. The term *background expectancies* refers to this knowledge base which members use as a scheme of interpretation (Garfinkel, 1967:36). Since this corpus is a thing of logic, it remains a *seen but unnoticed* background feature of everyday scenes (Garfinkel, 1967:36, emphasis in original).

Alfred Schutz, a phenomenologist who inspired Garfinkel, produced a series of studies describing these seen but unnoticed background expectancies. Schutz referred to these expectancies as *the attitude of daily life* (Garfinkel, 1967:37, emphasis in original). As Garfinkel notes, Schutz's fundamental work makes it possible to pursue further the tasks of clarifying their nature and operation, of relating them to the processes of concerted actions, and assigning them their place in an empirically imaginable society (1967:37).

Within the commissioned report, even though members gloss the terms *society* and *economy*, how is it that these structures are summoned in the first place,

and why are these concepts glossed unlike other terminology? Schutz proposed that for the conduct of their everyday affairs, members assume, assume other persons assume as well, and assume that as they assume the same of other people, other people assume the same of them; that a relationship of undoubted correspondence is the sanctioned relationship between the actual appearances of an object and the intended object that appears in a particular way (quoted in Garfinkel, 1967:50). In this sense, members who compiled the report assume that what is generally true for them is also true for other members. To the extent that *society* and *economy* are understood by members who compiled the report, this understanding is also assumed on the part of members reading the report.

The terms *society* and *economy*, while glossed, are nonetheless tacitly understood by members who constitute part of the in-group or cultural group. Since the corpus of knowledge is socially derived, handed down by friends, parents, and teachers (Schutz, 1953:9-10), among others, members simultaneously construct, rely upon and are motivated to comply with this corpus of knowledge. Such compliance accounts for the stability and order of the social world.

In the report, one socially-derived resource for describing the environment is *economy*. This term is featured throughout the document, providing an interpretive schema:

As the economy becomes more knowledge-based, Canadians will rely more and more on the potential enabling effects of the Information Highway to succeed economically and remain competitive. Rural and remote areas in particular will experience economic renewal as the Highway overcomes the barriers of distance and difficult terrain. Access to the powerful new learning opportunities provided on the Information Highway will be crucial to the development of the skilled, flexible labour force needed in a modern economy (IHAC, 1997:41). [Excerpt coded under *Econ Growth* (4 4), *Competition* (free node), *Benefits Internet* (3 3 1), and *Access* (4 2)]

The reference to the economy can be explained in Schutzian terms, by a desire for consistency with the system of relevances. This system includes ways of life, how to come to terms with the environment, and efficient recipes for the use of typical means for bringing about typical ends in typical situations (Schutz, 1953:10). To the extent that the Advisory Council has been appointed to provide advice to the government and Canadians on the knowledge society, the economic attitude reflects both a readily available resource that has been socially derived, as well as a sense of social structure with which members operate.

The structure *economy* is achieved in the report through the vocabulary of language. By associating *economy* with *knowledge*, the *Information Highway*, *learning opportunities*, and a *skilled labour force*, the economy comes to be seen and understood in the very same way in which is it described. This is the essential reflexivity of settings. Interpretive activities are simultaneously *in* and *about* the settings to which they orient and that they describe (Holstein and Gubrium, 1994:265, emphases in original). Members who compiled the report relied upon sedimented knowledge to achieve certain knowledge effects, such as "knowledge economy." Another way of stating this is that socially accomplished realities are reflexive: descriptive accounts of settings [or structures] give shape to those settings while simultaneously being shaped by the settings they constitute (Holstein and Gubrium, 1994:265). In this sense, conventional understandings of the economy are used as a starting point for further elaboration and construction. As a social structure, *knowledge economy* is locally produced to represent an objective entity independent of the reportage.

For ethnomethodologists, *settings* also refer to institutions and organizations. A sense of institution and organization is sustained by identifying certain bodies as the Advisory Council, governments, and the private sector. These bodies are then made relevant to the activities in the report. For these institutions, the economic attitude is an appropriate resource for interpreting the environment. At the same time, members orient toward the economic attitude as a normal, natural practice of organizations.

G.H. Mead, a social psychologist and philosopher, was acutely aware of the influence of attitudes, especially the economic one. According to Mead:

When such an immediate attitude of exchange becomes a principle of social conduct, it carries with it a process of social development in the way of production, of transportation, and of all the media involved in the economic process, that sets up something of the very universal society that this attitude carries with it as a possibility...It is a slow process of the integration of a society which binds people more and more closely together...Such an attitude in society does tend to build up the structure of a universal social organism (1934:291-292).

Mead alludes to the institutionalization of knowledge. Ways of seeing and understanding the environment come to be associated with settings, objects, and practices. Once knowledge becomes embedded in certain phenomena, members come to associate things of logic with the logic of things. The stability of social structures is sustained by members' motivated compliance with the social order.

The Knowledge Economy as Facticity

Language and background expectancies are two resources members rely upon to produce social reality. Other methods are equally available to members which are linked to the setting. As Garfinkel noted, members' accounts are reflexively and essentially tied to the socially organized occasions of their use (1967:4). To the extent that an *official inquiry* is the *occasion* of the report, the

report is a feature of this socially organized occasion. In other words, if activities of inquiries are subject to documentation and publication, then the report is an embodiment of these social practices.

Even before the drafting of the report, practical activities of official inquiries inform production practices. As Garfinkel explains,

It frequently happens that in order for the investigator to decide what he is now looking at he must wait for future developments, only to find that these futures in turn are informed by *their* history and future. By waiting to see what will have happened he learns what it was that he previously saw. Either that, or he takes imputed history and prospects for granted. Motivated actions, for example, have exactly these troublesome properties (1967:77, emphasis in original).

What Garfinkel is alluding to is that social practices have a retrospective-prospective relationship (1967:41). Even though the knowledge economy is actively produced in the report, social action prior to the written account is integral to the facticity of the knowledge economy. In this sense, the appointment of Council members, the formation of steering committees, the execution of surveys and opinion polls are practices which inform accounts of the knowledge economy. These activities represent organizational practices which members rely upon to produce social reality.

If one views the actual report as a *setting*, and *brackets* much of *what* is said in favour of *how* information is presented, then one can equally capture and document members' practices which have "an accomplished sense, an accomplished facticity, an accomplished objectivity, an accomplished familiarity, [and] an accomplished accountability" (Garfinkel, 1967:10).

Since the knowledge economy is the subject of the report, it is necessary to describe how this structure achieves facticity, an accomplishment in itself. One way

the knowledge economy becomes identifiable is by problematizing this construct as worthy of investigation. Early in the report, members pose questions related to the knowledge economy whose answers are the very subject of the report:

What is this revolution? What challenges does it pose? What opportunities does it present? How can Canadians take advantage of this profound shift in social and economic paradigms? Our answers to these questions are the subject of this report (IHAC, 1997:1). [Excerpt coded under *New Age* (2 2)]

The *answers* in turn constitute *real* features of the knowledge economy.

Additionally, if one takes into account the actual layout of the report, which is subdivided into chapters, each chapter serves as a stepping stone to how the knowledge economy is ultimately understood.

Another way the knowledge economy becomes factual is by associating it with technology, in particular, the Internet and personal computers. Since computers are socially-derived artifacts, this association renders the knowledge economy more tangible to members. Furthermore, by using tangible sources as indicators or referents of the knowledge economy, these tangible sources provide evidence of the knowledge economy.

Throughout the report, figures are employed to reflect such phenomena as "fixed network digitization" (IHAC, 1997:4), "spending on research and development" (IHAC, 1997:14), "global Internet growth" (IHAC, 1997:25), and "Canadian household computer and modem ownership" (IHAC, 1997:28). The reliance on figures not only constitutes hard evidence, but also achieves facticity: social phenomena are transformed into graphs rendering them empirical and factual.

Practical Accomplishments

The achieved facticity of the knowledge economy is a practical and organizational accomplishment. According to Garfinkel,

all "logical" and "methodological" properties of action, every feature of an activity's sense, facticity, objectivity, accountability, communality is to be treated as a contingent accomplishment of socially organized common practices (1967:33, emphases in original).

While the report is an accomplishment of accountability, this accomplishment is dependent upon related achievements in the report. These achievements are legitimation and rationality.

The achievement of legitimation is produced by the identification of various agents to the setting. These agents are the Advisory Council, governments, and the private sector. The Advisory Council, in particular, takes on increasing social value by virtue of its prescribed role. The Council has been appointed by the federal government for a three-year term in an advisory capacity. By virtue of this social function, the accounts achieve legitimation based on the assumed expertise of Council members.

The second achievement, rationality, is an observable feature in the report. Empirically, the report is detailed, coherent, informative, and organized. The incorporation of explicit objectives, tables and figures, and recommendations are all features of scientific and professional practices.

Additionally, the report achieves rationality via the activities employed to produce it. The appointment of Council members, the formation of steering committees, the reliance on surveys and opinion polls, and the documentation of

findings all constitute planful, methodical, organized activities which reflect rational action and behaviour.

As Garfinkel maintained, every kind of inquiry without exception consists of organized artful practices. These practices encompass rational properties which are demonstrated and made evident. Every setting organizes its activities to make its properties detectable, countable, recordable, reportable, tell-a-story-aboutable, analyzable--in short, *accountable* (Garfinkel, 1967:33, emphasis in original). For ethnomethodologists, their role is to treat practical activities and practical reasoning as topics of empirical study (Garfinkel, 1967:1). By paying extraordinary attention to the most commonplace activities of daily life, ethnomethodologists can learn about them as phenomena in their own right (Garfinkel, 1967:1).

Chapter 6: Discussion

The description of practices in the foregoing chapter represents one of many possibilities for doing ethnomethodology. The phenomena to be investigated, and the ways of describing them, are far from limited. Two competing traditions exist for investigating social practices: participant observation and conversation analysis.

Much of Garfinkel's work involved participant observation. This practice entails situated interactions or observed social activity. The advantage of this method is that it is highly empirical. All the nuances of social comportment are observable to the researcher. Words and actions can be witnessed under the occasions of their use.

While fundamentally empirical, this method is not without its weaknesses. Participant observers have an unfair advantage in social encounters. Their research claims cannot be verified by members who are absent from the encounter. Unless videotaped, a social encounter is temporally inaccessible to non-participants. Additionally, the validity of the researcher's accounts are compromised by the lack of verification from the observed. Although ethnomethodology's policy discourages verification from members, a measure of validity can be acquired through the documentary method of interpretation. To the extent that participant observers provide ethnographic accounts or video recordings of these encounters, only then can non-participants evaluate the researcher's descriptions.

Conversation analysis (CA), on the other hand, has distinct advantages. One advantage is the phenomena under investigation, usually transcribed discourse, are observable and verifiable. Like participant observation, conversation analysis is a highly empirical endeavour. The reported phenomena are "inspectably the case" (Garfinkel, 1988:108) rendering descriptions *verifiable* by other researchers. Additionally, this technique may designate context-free analysis (Hilbert, 1992:9) since theories of structure are subordinated to an interest in conversational sequencing.

The focus on the "technology of conversation" (Silverman, 1998:65), however, has invited criticisms to conversation analysis. CA has been described as mechanistic and deterministic (Silverman, 1998:65). Because of the detail involved in transcribing phenomena, these transcripts can be difficult to read fluently (Hilbert, 1992:197). To the inexperienced, such detail seems disembodied from whatever else is relevant to naturally recognizable conversation (Hilbert, 1992:197).

Despite these criticisms, conversation analysis remains a favoured technique among ethnomethodologists. Given the centrality of conversation as a medium of interaction, this feature explains its continued relevance for inquiry (Silverman, 1998:68). More importantly, ethnomethodologists need not master CA to employ it in their work.

Another technique that may be combined with, or subsumed under, the above methods is interviews. Interviewing can sometimes present difficulties for the researcher. Because interviewing can inadvertently alter the natural comportment of the interviewee, ethnomethodologists prefer to study other people's interviews

(Silverman, 1985:157). These interviews are then studied linguistically through conversation analysis, or as practical accomplishments.

In light of the various ways this study could have been done, the commissioned report is a legitimate method and object of inquiry. As Garfinkel maintained, no inquiries can be excluded to claim our interest as practical accomplishments (1967:32-33). Even though it is disengaged from the temporally lived setting, the report embodies socially organized artful practices.

The report, however, may be viewed by some as constitutive of artificial data. This assumption is based on the superficial opposition between artificial and naturally-occurring data (Silverman, 1985:156). Neither kind of data are intrinsically better than the other; everything depends on the method of analysis (Silverman, 1985:156). Within the boundaries of ethnomethodology, the commissioned report is analyzed in accordance with ethnomethodological procedures. These procedures reflect certain assumptions about the life world: 1) that objective structures are rooted in social practices, 2) that social conduct is responsive to background expectancies, and 3) that social activities are practical accomplishments. The report is discussed in accordance with these assumptions.

One drawback, though, of applying ethnomethodology to text concerns the lack of observation by the researcher to the *lived* processes of social activity. The commissioned report is an end-product of a lengthy ongoing social process. Without witnessing firsthand some of the social dynamics of a commissioned inquiry, the researcher's depiction of social practices may be inconsistent with the *lived* practices of the inquiry. For this reason, the documentary method of interpretation plays a

crucial role in textual exegesis since evidence is furnished inductively to point to a presupposed underlying pattern.

Some may question the decision to use ethnomethodology in comparison to other frameworks for interpreting written documents. Alternatively, a framework concerned with a theory of interests could have been applied to the commissioned report. While a theory of interests may be appealing in its potential for debunking sociological assumptions, any specific theory of interests is not superior to a theory of social action (Wieder, 1974b:169). As Garfinkel maintained, every social activity is a practical accomplishment; this includes professional sociological reasoning (Garfinkel, 1967:32). As a result, personal preference is the major criterion for choosing among the various theoretical frameworks. In principle, there is no strong, empirically based choice for adopting any one of them, even though each is demonstrable-for-all-practical purposes (Wieder, 1974b:170). In this sense, ethnomethodology is equally valid as any other interpretive framework.

Having conducted a study using ethnomethodology as an interpretive framework, I can attest to the validity of the method's assumptions. The notion that members are continually engaged in making their affairs accountable-matters-for-all-practical-purposes (Garfinkel, 1967:34) became evident while producing this report. I became acutely aware that I was caught up in the very production practices I was trying to describe. The desire for an explicit and rigorous methodology served to demonstrate the rational features of scientific research and to demonstrate my membership in a community of sociologists. Additionally, the method of grounded ethnomethodology came to fruition only after completing a draft of the report. This

sequence of events validates the assumption that social activity has a retrospective-prospective relationship (Garfinkel, 1967:41). By working inductively through coding and interpretation, I later realized that I had paved the way for grounded ethnomethodology. Although I did not originally intend to develop a new research method, this was an unintended consequence of the investigation. And finally, the idea that there is no privileged viewpoint for observing practical conduct became obvious in my attempts at objectivity. The exercise of coding represented an attempt to impose order and logic on the research process, even though no two researchers are likely to arrive at the same codes for the same phenomenon. Hence researchers, like everyday folk, are doomed to production practices of the social order. Although ethnomethodology has been criticized for being programmatic and non-empirical, my experience attests to the validity of ethnomethodology as a sound theory of social action.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

As a research method, ethnomethodology remains a valuable framework for investigating social phenomena. Given the assumptions of ethnomethodology, any process, site, or product is open to examination. These phenomena are scrutinized to capture their socially organized artful practices. Descriptions of these practices tend to remind us of things we know, and can also enhance our understanding of everyday situations (Silverman, 1998:24,31).

The focus on the mundane aspects of social practices is not irrelevant to social change. In fact, many ethnomethodological studies have examined organizational practices (Garfinkel, 1967), including those of scientists and mathematicians (Garfinkel et al., 1981). As one scientist noted,

What Professor Garfinkel's implicit challenge seems to be is this: our whole network of ideas on how science works is really useless if we don't get the description of the basic work-done-on-a-given-night right in the first place (Holton, 1981:161).

By examining members' production practices, members in turn come to realize and appreciate the implications of their activities. In this capacity, ethnomethodology is a catalyst for social change.

Ethnomethodology is equally relevant to social policy. Other practitioners have used ethnomethodology for more radical approaches to social phenomena. Dorothy Smith (1974) and Beng-Huat Chua (1979), for example, pair ethnomethodology with Marxist theory, in order to bring interests, power, and ideology to the forefront.

Lastly, ethnomethodology is not merely a programmatic framework without a method or empirical basis. Ethnomethodology is informed by a theory of social

action, whose method of bracketing or indifference is applied to social phenomena. Observation and the documentary method of interpretation reflect the empirical nature of ethnomethodology.

Implications of the Study

In addition to the practical value of ethnomethodology, this study has implications for social policy and the corpus of sociological knowledge. One reason for selecting the report for inquiry is that it is state-commissioned and can therefore be compared to other studies of commissioned reports. A second reason is the opportunity it provides to expand the practice of ethnomethodology as applied to commissioned reports. This study provides insight into construction practices of the knowledge economy, an area largely unexplored by traditional policy research. Additionally, the inquiry is informed by a theory of social action and grounded theory, whereas comparable inquiries have been linked to political practice (Chua, 1979) and the sociology of knowledge (Green, 1983).

As a new research method, grounded ethnomethodology (GEM) represents a promising and innovative strategy that is applicable to a wide range of phenomena. Given the flexibility of grounded theory and ethnomethodology, elements of both can be combined with an emphasis on either generating theory or satisfying some of the policies of ethnomethodology. For the particular investigation at hand, it seemed reasonable to focus more on an ethnomethodological reading of the report, rather than generating theory about the knowledge society. To generate theory would have entailed a different approach, such as consulting a number of library materials for comparative analysis, with the option of doing interviews with a range

of individuals. While this approach was not adopted, the study could have been conducted to generate theory about the knowledge society. As a point of illustration, the study could have been limited to library materials. These materials could have included the following: 1) government reports 2) computer magazines 3) novels 4) books 5) journal articles selected by gender, nationality and discipline 6) audiovisual material, and 7) clippings from newspapers. Once these sources were gathered, I could have scanned information where applicable into NVivo and created a file for each source. Each file could have been coded to generate useful concepts and themes. Ethnomethodological codes could have been created under the headings of *background expectancies*, *social affects* and, in accordance with conversation analysis, *(membership) categorization devices*. In terms of generating theory, I might have discovered that the knowledge society is viewed as a stage in the process of human development and, among social affects, governments appear to have a strong influence on social values.

Given the various practices of grounded theory and ethnomethodology, GEM can incorporate classical and contemporary approaches from both camps. As a guide to future research, I outline some of the wide-ranging applications of grounded ethnomethodology to social phenomena.

Suggestions for Future Research

As Table 2 illustrates, GEM is a hybrid research strategy which combines practices from grounded theory and ethnomethodology. The researcher can choose any combination of policies from both frameworks with the understanding that

Table 2: Applications of Grounded Ethnomethodology (GEM)

	Grounded Theory	Ethnomethodology
Goals:	to generate theory	to describe production practices of the social order
Policies:	coding concept development categorizations theoretical sampling comparative analyses testing and verification of hypotheses generation of theory	analytic bracketing discussion of social affects, background expectancies, and artful practices actions in context as practical accomplishments how a sense of social structure is actively produced and sustained
Convergences:	inductive process, qualitative method	
Divergences:	goal to develop theory avoids preconceptions of reality	goal to describe production practices of the social order works from preconceptions of the social order
<hr/> Grounded Ethnomethodology <hr/>		
Goal:	to generate theory, describe phenomena, or both, using a combination of policies from the two paradigms	
Application:	Text: historical documents institutional records transcribed interviews policy reports, etc.	Social Interactions: public activities participant observation interviews documentaries of social encounters, etc.
Theoretical Approaches:	possible to integrate various theoretical frameworks in GEM. In ethnomethodology, practitioners have used Marxist (Chua, 1979), Feminist (Smith, 1974), Sociology of Knowledge (Green, 1983) orientations, plus Conversation Analysis (Smith, 1978; Garfinkel et al., 1981). Ethnomethodology is also influenced by Phenomenology (Schutz) and compatible with Symbolic Interactionism (Denzin, 1970). Since grounded theory strives to generate theory, it can be useful for an ethnomethodological orientation and description.	

absolute conformity to each method is secondary to establishing a fine balance between the two paradigms. In my own investigation, I combined the elements of coding, concept development, and categorizations from grounded theory with many ethnomethodological policies to describe artful practices of the social order. This process was an inductive one, working mainly from the commissioned report to generate codes for analysis and description consistent with the documentary method of interpretation. Other combinations and approaches are attainable reflecting the flexibility of GEM.

As Table 2 suggests, grounded ethnomethodology is applicable to both social interactions and text. The researcher can opt to generate theory, describe phenomena, or both. Since grounded theory strives to generate theory, it can be useful for an ethnomethodological orientation and description. Additionally, practitioners of ethnomethodology have integrated diverse theoretical frameworks into their research. Examples include Marxism (Chua, 1979), Feminism (Smith, 1974), sociology of knowledge (Green, 1983), and conversation analysis (Smith, 1978; Garfinkel et al., 1981). Other possibilities include phenomenology (Schutz) and symbolic interactionism.¹³ Table 2 illustrates the flexibility and wide-ranging applications of GEM.

¹³ Refer to Denzin's article (1970) where he argues for the combined methods of symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology.

Applications of GEM

To Generate Theory

In Chapter 3, I had inquired whether it was possible to generate theory from a preconceptual framework. I do believe this is possible. One option is to work from ethnomethodology's theory of social action. This theory posits that individuals actively produce, sustain, and orient towards a sense of social structure and their actions in context reflect practical accomplishments. Understanding how these processes unfold among individuals and groups in various social contexts can be investigated under a grounded theory orientation. Asking questions of the data, and verifying hypotheses through further research, can contribute to formal and substantive theory on members' production practices.

Another option for generating theory is using the practices of conversation analysis to advance theory on the systematic practices used to achieve social order. Grounded theory presents an ideal way for practitioners to ask questions of the data, create concepts for categorizations and comparisons, and verify hypotheses through further collection and analysis. Theoretically, conversation analysis and ethnomethodology are compatible since both view the social order as being methodically produced by members (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997:55-56).

Generating Theory and Ethnomethodological Description

One could simultaneously generate theory and provide ethnomethodological description using GEM. A researcher could seek to generate theory and describe production practices of, say, individual identity. The researcher could use a grounded theory approach in selecting people for interviews (social interaction),

based on concepts and hypotheses originating from the data. Once theory is generated (grounded theory), the researcher could then examine transcribed interviews to describe those artful social practices (ethnomethodology) which sustain a sense of identity.

Concrete Examples

Whether the goal of research is to generate theory, provide description, or both, there are many ways of investigating social phenomena using GEM. As an example, a researcher studying "individual or group identity" could approach this topic as follows:

Scenario 1

Goal: To describe the constitutive nature of government policies on individual citizens.

Application: Text: policy reports and surveys.

Method: Coding of text to identify concepts, categories, themes, and ideological practices. Ethnomethodological reading of the text.

Theory: Ethnomethodology with a Marxist orientation (Chua, 1979). Grounded theory without generating theory.

Scenario 2

Goal: To generate theory on identity construction and the interactional nature of the social order.

Application: Social interaction: interviews.

Method: Coding of transcribed interviews to create concepts, categories, themes, and narratives. Ethnomethodological reading and conversation analysis.

Theory: Ethnomethodology with a symbolic interactionist (Denzin, 1970) orientation. Conversation analysis. Grounded theory.

Scenario 3

Goal: To describe how individuals define and experience their own identities.

Application: Social interaction: interviews.

Method: Coding of transcribed interviews to create concepts, categories, themes and narratives. Ethnomethodological reading of the text.

Theory: Ethnomethodology with a Phenomenological (Schutzian) orientation. Grounded theory without generating theory.

These scenarios illustrate some of the applications of grounded ethnomethodology. Other possibilities are equally imaginable. It is safe to conclude that grounded ethnomethodology is a promising new research method that has much to contribute to the corpus of knowledge. As a research method, GEM represents an explicit, rigorous, and empirical methodology with the added versatility of generating theory, providing description, or both.

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APPENDIX A

Passages Contained Under the Node *Society Economy/GIS* (2 1):

Document 'IHAC-B-Chapter 1', 3 passages, 1005 characters.

Section 0, Paragraph 21, 418 characters.

The increasing attention to the global information society within international organizations such as the Group of Seven (G-7), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reflects countries' growing awareness that issues in the digital world possess transnational implications.

Section 0, Paragraph 22, 166 characters.

Canada, in keeping with its national traditions, should also continue its work to involve the developing world as a full participant in the global information society

Section 0, Paragraph 24, 421 characters.

Communications infrastructures carrying information-based services will gain in importance at the expense of transportation infrastructures. In a global economy based on exploiting information, the capacity to innovate will be an essential source of comparative advantage. Prosperity will depend on a country's ability to apply technology creatively in devising new and consumer-valued information products and services.

Document 'IHAC-C-Chapter 2', 1 passages, 182 characters.

Section 0, Paragraph 47, 182 characters.

We believe the GATS agreement on telecommunications provides a sound foundation for building the global information infrastructure that will benefit all countries, including Canada.

Document 'IHAC-J-Chapter 9', 1 passages, 261 characters.

Section 0, Paragraph 24, 261 characters.

Now that a fully competitive environment is almost in place, both government and private sector must commit themselves to building the high-quality, affordable information infrastructure needed to strengthen Canada's position in the global information economy.

APPENDIX B

Chapter 1

TOWARD A SOCIETY BUILT ON KNOWLEDGE

A social, economic and cultural revolution is now transforming the world. A new game is starting, and the older rules no longer apply. It is imperative that Canada move quickly to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of this new age.

If anything, the pace of change has accelerated since the Information Highway Advisory Council began its work three years ago. Since that time, much has been accomplished by Canadian governments, industry and individuals. Much remains to be done, however, and our sense of urgency has not abated.

What is this revolution? What challenges does it pose? What opportunities does it present? How can Canadians take advantage of this profound shift in social and economic paradigms?

Our answers to these questions are the subject of this report.

THE NEW RULES OF THE GAME

Most observers see information and communications technologies as key agents in the far-reaching changes that are overtaking every society on earth as the world enters the new millennium. They predict that the augmented power of these technologies is now carrying everyone toward a society that is very much different from the industrial one that has prevailed in the developed world for most of the past two centuries, which was based on the exchange of tangible goods and services.

These powerful new technologies are becoming the infrastructure for a new 21st-century society, which is based on the exchange of intangibles: ideas, information, knowledge and intelligence. There are many terms for this new world: "information society," "knowledge-based economy," "digital economy," "post-industrial society."

Whatever name applies, the defining features of this new era are always the same. Physical distance will disappear as a factor in human relations, and consequently the world will become a much smaller place. The creation, manipulation and sharing of information and knowledge will become an overriding human imperative.

The promise of these changes is readily apparent.

• No longer will distance pose an obstacle to economic development, social intercourse, learning, voluntary action, adequate health care, business success or full participation in society and Canada's national cultural dialogue.

• Knowledge will become increasingly available to everyone, allowing us all to make wiser decisions in all aspects of our lives: from business to government to health care to education to work to our everyday existence.

• Everyone will be not only a consumer of knowledge and content, but also a creator. Canada's national cultural dialogue and political discussion will take on a liveliness and depth that will strengthen national, regional and local communities.

The list of possibilities is long, and the promise is real provided that everyone can respond wisely and quickly to the new realities. The social, economic and cultural transformation to be faced is fundamental. And if its promise is dramatic, so too are the challenges it creates. Some must be met at the international level through governments working cooperatively. Others must be confronted here at home through people joining together.

THE GLOBAL CHALLENGE

With technologies that increasingly destroy distance, the challenge of seizing the opportunities of the new age is not merely national, but global in nature. The new technologies are truly creating an arena independent of jurisdictions and boundaries. With this new reality comes an ever more pressing need to align national strategies with the worldwide movement toward a global information society.

The increasing attention to the global information society within international organizations such as the Group of Seven (G-7), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reflects countries' growing awareness that issues in the digital world possess transnational implications. The Council strongly supports Canada's leadership role in G-7 pilot projects, the economic policy work of the OECD and other fora. We encourage continued active involvement.

Canada, in keeping with its national traditions, should also continue its work to involve the developing world as a full participant in the global information society through fora such as the May 1996 Information Society and Development Conference in South Africa and the Knowledge for Development in the Information Age Conference in Toronto in June 1997.

The Council advises the federal government, particularly Canadian development agencies such as the Canadian International Development Agency and the International Development Research Centre, to continue placing high priority on helping to strengthen the information infrastructures of developing countries.

Canada must also not forget its own interests in this new global arena. Communications infrastructures carrying information-based services will gain in importance at the expense of transportation infrastructures. In a global economy based on exploiting information, the capacity to innovate will be an essential source of comparative advantage. Prosperity will depend on a country's ability to apply technology creatively in devising new and consumer-valued information products and services.

Canada must keep abreast with, if not ahead of, its major trading partners in efforts to create this new kind of economy and society. Part of our second phase of work has been to assess initiatives to create wealth and jobs in a knowledge-based economy. We also asked how effectively Canada, as a knowledge society, has employed technology to meet its social and cultural goals. In both cases, our assessment benchmarks Canada's progress against other nations' achievements (Figure 1-1).

The Council reviewed data collected from many sources to compare Canada's progress with other countries (see Annex B). A range of social and economic criteria are used to measure development of the information infrastructure, defined broadly to capture basic indicators of the knowledge economy and society. By this standard, Canada is a world leader on the Information Highway: a result confirmed by two major cross-national studies performed independently by recognized

international consulting firms (see IDC/World Times, Information Imperative Index: Toward the Third Revolution, 1996; and Spectrum Strategy Consultants, Development of the Information Society: An International Analysis, Norwich, U.K., United Kingdom Department of Trade and Industry, 1996).

The research also demonstrates, however, that our major trading partners are challenging Canada's long-standing leadership in communications. In areas such as investment in network modernization and research, Canada could soon be overtaken without renewed efforts to maintain our international position. The data also suggest that some countries are more aggressive in exploiting the social and cultural advantages of the Information Highway.

In Connection Community Content, the Council sounded a note of urgency about the need for action to drive Canada forward on the Information Highway. While this report acknowledges the many significant achievements recorded by government and the private sector, we believe the need for rapid action persists. The importance of maintaining the momentum created by the first Council report and by the federal government's action plan for the Information Highway, Building the Information Society: Moving Canada into the 21st Century, is a recurrent theme throughout this report.

Information and its manipulation through communications networks and computers is becoming a key strategic resource that determines the competitiveness of firms and nations. Countries that succeed in this environment will require very different strengths from those needed only a few short years ago.

Measuring the comparative success of countries in making this transition is still in its early stages. Despite the clear indications of Canada's pre-eminence in information technology so far, cross-national comparisons in this area are an undeveloped science. Because many of the performance indicators now used are quite crude, it is too soon to say for certain how secure Canada's international ranking in this field is. Nor is it reassuring that many observers point to serious deficiencies in our ability to track exactly what is happening during this transition from an industrial to a knowledge-based economy.

Reliable performance indicators are critical both as a means of gauging Canada's progress and as an indispensable tool for effective economic policy. Both the federal government and industry must equip themselves with some means of assessing Canada's progress toward a knowledge-based economy and our competitive success in the global knowledge economy.

1.10 Industry Canada and other federal departments should work closely with Statistics Canada and within international organizations such as the OECD to continue and complete their efforts to develop reliable measurement instruments appropriate to a knowledge-based economy. This could take the form of a system of "accounts" for the Information Highway, based on key economic and social indicators relating to infrastructure investment, employment and technology diffusion. Such indicators data should also measure the degree of access Canadians have to the Information Highway, as well as provide information on the availability and consumption of Canadian content. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with the access and content issues, respectively. Data should also be collected relevant to the employment and lifelong learning issues discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. Recommendations 4.4, 5.4 and 7.8 specifically address these information needs.

A NATIONAL EFFORT

The Advisory Council remains convinced that the issues surrounding development of the Information Highway are so far-reaching that neither government nor industry nor individual Canadians can hope to tackle them alone. Since the release of our earlier report, Connection Community Content, we have been delighted by the energetic response of industry, individuals and community groups across the country to the imperative of developing Canada's Information Highway and using it effectively to meet Canadian needs.

Governments also have met this challenge with a spirit of commitment and cooperation. Because no single tier of government can hope to meet this challenge alone, our first report contained no fewer than 40 recommendations calling for cooperation, coordination and joint action by federal, provincial and territorial governments. In response, building the Information Highway has become the agenda of governments across the country. In the past three years, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia have created Information Highway advisory groups. Several provinces are now discussing partnerships with the federal government to promote access to the Information Highway or to collaborate on pilot projects to deliver government services electronically to the public.

The Council welcomes particularly the meeting in September 1996 of federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for the Information Highway. All provinces and territories took part, and ministers agreed to work toward a common approach in areas of importance to Canadians such as promoting access to the Information Highway, expediting the joint electronic delivery of government services and developing a "critical mass of French-language products and services" for the Internet and other new media. The ministers are expected to consider specific proposals to address these and other issues when they meet later in 1997. The Council strongly supports concerted action of this kind and encourages ministers to cooperate in pressing forward measures that address the many matters of common concern to all Canadian governments.

THE WORK AHEAD

The Council also intends to do its part in helping strengthen the momentum of these efforts to ensure Canada's successful transition to a knowledge society and economy. Our vehicle will be this report, which offers advice on major areas of "unfinished business" that remain for governments, the private sector and individuals.

This report also reflects a shift in emphasis from our September 1995 report, Connection Community Content. While we tended earlier to treat the economic, social and cultural dimensions of this transition separately, we are now struck by their seamless interdependence. In the 21st century, a healthy society and a vital culture will be critical to a vigorous economy by providing the skilled people, inspiration and community cohesiveness that provides a nurturing framework for economic activity, jobs and wealth. Conversely, unless the economy flourishes and unless wealth and jobs are created, our society will fray and our culture

Canada's Position, Competition,

ICT, Competition,

Performance Indicators, Canada's Position,

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators, Canada's Position,

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators

Information Highway

Information Highway

Information Highway

Information Highway

Information Highway

Collaboration

Information Highway

Collaboration

KBES

Economy

will languish. The challenge, as always, lies in achieving a harmony among these elements of success. Our first report focussed in large degree on the technology and the information infrastructure that will be the central nervous system of the new economy and society. Here we place at least equal priority on the measures needed to ensure that Canadians can use these new technologies to meet their individual and collective goals whether these be economic, social or cultural. We have always recognized that technology is not an end in itself, but only a means to realize traditional Canadian goals and values.

The continued rapid development of the information infrastructure nevertheless remains urgent. Chapter 2 addresses the key economic and technological issues related to building this infrastructure for the new economy. In the past three years, the Internet has emerged as a key component of that infrastructure and a model for what the Information Highway may become. Chapter 3 focusses on the Internet's new importance and examines what governments and the private sector should do to ensure that its potential commercial, social and cultural benefits are fully realized by all Canadians.

If Canadians are to receive those benefits, they obviously must have access to the Internet and this evolving information infrastructure. Chapter 4 examines the measures needed to ensure that Canadians retain access to basic telecommunications and broadcasting services, promote access to Information Highway services such as the Internet, and define universal access in a knowledge society. Resolution of these access issues is a critical precondition for Canada's future as a knowledge society and its success as a knowledge economy.

This new level of use should ensure access to ever more Canadian content. But in a global competitive environment, this may be easier said than done. Chapter 5 looks at ways to ensure that the Information Highway makes room for Canada's cultural distinctiveness and linguistic duality. To this end, we examine the best means of supporting the production, distribution and promotion of Canadian content products and services in a global competitive environment, both as a source of jobs and way to strengthen our national, regional and local communities.

As well as providing a favourable environment for Canadian content, the new infrastructure and technologies must help the Canadian economy to flourish. Chapter 6 examines how to ensure that the Information Highway contributes fully to job creation and economic growth. To this end, we look less at technology than its economic impacts particularly on employment and specific sectors and the measures needed to ensure that Canadians can take full economic advantage of the technology. A key requirement here is a solid foundation for electronic commerce and an environment for creating the new content and information services that will be the lifeblood of the knowledge economy.

The present technological revolution is affecting both the nature of employment and the workplace. Chapter 7 focusses on these issues and the need to modernize labour standards. It also looks at how the new technology is creating opportunities for lifelong learning that will be critical both to workers and industry, given that skills will need to be constantly updated in a knowledge economy.

Chapter 8 examines how government must move quickly and aggressively to become a model user of information technology and not simply as a matter of effectiveness and efficiency. What is at stake here is the continued relevance and legitimacy of government in a fast-moving knowledge society and economy.

Chapter 9 summarizes the Council's major conclusions after three years of examining Canada's strategy for the Information Highway. It also highlights critical future priorities for Canada's Information Highway and explores the need for an ongoing focus on Information Highway developments.