Casing A Promised Land: The Autobiography of an Organizational Detective as Cultural Ethnographer
H.L. Goodall
Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989, pp. xxv, 171.

The author is an interpretive cultural ethnographer engaged upon an investigation of what the symbols spawned by high-tech consumer capitalism do to us. He investigates the interaction of culture, symbolism and technology. He's a post-modernist deconstructivist, writing in a "subversive style". His specialty is organizational communication and his metaphor for his mode of operation is that of an 'organizational detective'. This entails a 'show' rather than 'tell' approach to making sense of a situation. It also allows for sudden twists in the unfolding of his understanding of that situation, while keeping his focus on the actors therein. And it requires him to account for his involvement.

The book explores five 'mysteries'. Chapter 1 sets the background, explaining how Goodall became an organizational detective, by recounting his struggles at meaning-making after becoming suddenly immersed in a different universe of discourse on taking up an academic position in Huntsville, Alabama. The 'mysteries' are explored in chapters 2-6. The first mystery involves the re-enculturation of a software company. It's an exploration of how everyday experiences within an organization come to make a culture out of shared symbols. This piece probably best exemplifies Goodall's ability at the 'reading' of signs and nonverbals, and well illustrates his contention that, in ethnography, "everything counts": his pieces owe much of their credibility and impact to structural corroboration. He gradually constructs a big picture from many small constituent elements, which, as they develop, deepen the overall significance of that big picture—which in turn adds new meaning to these constituents, while accommodating new data, or flexibly accommodating to account for seeming anomalies.

In his second piece of organizational detective work, investigating the culture of the Star Wars command centre, Goodall penetrated the Star Wars command office in Huntsville. His account makes sobering reading. A snippet from one conversation inside the office: "Right now, in Langley, your entire life is being reviewed. We do that for most of our visitors. If something shows up, one of the guards will, depending on how bad it is, either arrest you for questioning or shoot you on the spot". In his third piece, investigating the symbolism of adult space camp, Goodall depicts its PR attempts to win support for further appropriations. This provides more sobering reading. The fourth investigation, of the culture of a shopping mall, is another interpretivist *tour de force*. You'll see your local shopping mall in a new light after reading it. The final exploration, of a rite of passage—the presenting of a critically important academic paper (Goodall's)—shows impressive insight, sensitivity and honesty.

This book comes as a welcome relief, after approaches to/theories about organizational communication such as Situational Leadership. Maybe our sub-field is maturing. Certainly Goodall is helping redefine its subject matter and how to write about it. His book reflects some of the ambiguities in, shifting values of, and views about, organizations: he shows the reality, not the official line. There's an unpretentious honesty about the writer and his writing: read his autobiography. And he really can write. One of his other reviewers describes this book as "a good read"—an understatement of monumental proportions.

His introduction (styled "What I Do and Why I Do It: Reading Myself into the Stories of Others"), combined with his first chapter (on why he became an organizational detective), and his concluding "Notes on Method" (written under duress) give a good idea of his methods of operation. He's very open about his motives and methods. It isn't easy to describe the latter briefly and analytically, but the following is an attempt.

Goodall strongly holds the views that *how* you represent a reality is as important as the reality that you construct, and that reality is revealed to the researcher through the process of writing about it. Such writing takes time and effort. The narrative has to be situated and contextualized: the particulars are as important as the generalities. In particular, single-snapshot versions of any 'reality' are unlikely to be dependable. You may not initially fully realize the implications and deeper meanings of your reading of the situation and write-up of your notes. So re-writing is critically important: it's a discipline which surfaces deeper understanding and insight. Hence the importance of interpretive iteration in writing up, as well as in reading, the signs.

Goodall puts showing (revealing things descriptively) before telling (analyzing via concepts). The concepts of the analytical elaborated codes direct attention within, and implicitly explain, what a researcher is trying to understand. Only narrative allows a deep rich sense of context, appraisable by the reader. It's *episodes* which, over time, reveal the meaning of what's going on. Understanding of an organization's culture comes through understanding its stories: texts, sub-texts, contexts, pre-texts.... True to his principles, Goodall's work is refreshingly easy to read, and, with a little reflection (its meanings are often multi-layered), to understand.

Truth is partial, twisted by the language that you struggle to express it with—this while the situation itself is undergoing continuous change. You may be able to make a *statement* that's true of person A, at time point B, in situation X (for instance, that, as of this reading, Goodall is no hardcore numerologist). But *Truth* is an interpretation, and therefore variously arguable; and it decays over time. Thus no claims for generalizability, replicability and infallibility are possible with this method.

So Goodall has to face the question: What *use* is such a 'method'? His reply is that, if a study informs and moves you, it has value, but that value depends on what you do with it. Applying his criteria, I found that his book is indeed moving as well as readable—not a common reaction to pieces of organizational communication 'literature', at least in my experience. And his thesis 'Let's not worry about what we're doing to

the symbols, let's see what the symbols are doing to us' kept running through my mind. So, for 'symbol' I read 'organizational communication genres', and investigated what it does if one represents oneself and constructs one's official being in terms of a portfolio rather than a résumé, or decides to construct one's public addresses via the new computerized 'presentation' genre rather than the traditional rhetorical public speaking one. Major insights resulted. Within a week of reading it, this book brought about changes in my understanding of myself and my practice of various methods that I use and teach. There aren't too many books of which I can say that. So, for me, this book has very good value. But that's my experience. Why not see for yourself how *you* read it?

Tom Carney
University of Windsor

Language, Communication and Culture: Current Directions
TING-TOOMEY, S. and KORZENNY, F. (eds)
(International and Intercultural Communication Annual Vol. XIII) 1989 London: Sage. 271 pp.

Following an introduction paper by S. Ting-Toomey entitled "Language, Communication and Culture" there are eleven papers, six of which cover language and cross-cultural studies (interactional), three treat intergroup communication (social psychological), one on language acquisition and one on linguistic relativity (developmental).

B. Haslett writes an overview of language acquisition and provides a useful synthesis of the literature. She argues that "culture is always an issue". If scholars ignore culture in language acquisition only the form of communication is analyzed, while its function remains obscure.

T. Steinfatt provides a masterful analysis of the literature on linguistic relativity which he divides into three hypotheses: logical operations, general cognitive structure, and cognitive areas. The areas of research discussed by Steinfatt are language learning, language differences (interlanguage, intralanguage bilingualism, aphasics and the deaf). He concludes that the case for linguistic relativity and logical operations is weak; that evidence from the deaf refutes the hypothesis of language determining a general cognitive structure; and claims that as for cognitive areas there is a weak effect creating meaning shifts in translating ideas from one language to another.

G. Philipsen argues that speech binds communities together but that speech is used in different ways. He draws on four speech communities as evidence. D. Carbaugh uses eleven societies to isolate the act (individual speech), the event (two or more speakers) and style (ways of speaking) and function (outcome of speech). Then he follows mode, structuring tone and efficacy of communication. The article continues to elaborate more taxonomies with their various applications.