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Manchester Bomb, 1996: Emergency Services, Evacuation & Ethno-Methods

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Abstract:

This paper is a single-case analysis of "doing security", using data transcribed from a corpus of tape-recorded interviews. On the twentieth anniversary of the Manchester City Centre bomb of June 15 1996, this paper presents a preliminary discussion of the work of the Emergency Services. At more than 3300lb of fertilizer packed into a lorry, the bomb was the largest terrorist device to explode in Great Britain. Many people's lives were changed with the explosion, as some suffered severe injuries or, with the extensive damage to buildings, had their livelihoods destroyed. This paper outlines some of the ethno-methods used by members of the police and fire services in the logistical work of searching for the bomb, and in the logistical work of evacuating more than 80,000 people from the vicinity of the device. As an initial move in the analysis of "doing security", this paper provides background and explication of Harold Garfinkel's "Documentary Method of Interpretation" in the contexts of receiving coded warnings of a bomb, and the search for the bomb, in Manchester.

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Introduction

The publication of this paper is remarkably timely: it is the twentieth anniversary of the specific incident upon which this discussion is based – the bombing of the city centre of Manchester, United Kingdom, in June 1996. Responsibility for the bomb was claimed by the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

The data resources for this discussion are excerpts from interview accounts between myself and interviewees who were affected by the explosion (Carlin 2006). The nature of their relation to the events of June 15 1996 varied: some were present in Manchester on the day of the bombing; some were not present in Manchester that day, but their routines were adversely affected by the damage caused; some were shopkeepers, who had to vacate their premises which had been destroyed by the explosion; and others, who shall be the focus of the present paper, were members of the emergency services who had been on duty. As it turned out, everyone had a story to tell.[1]

A corpus of material was assembled, a mixture of occasioned talk, street or opportunistic interviews that I was permitted to record for research purposes, and interviews by appointment. Most of these interviews were conducted during the month of August, 1997. The study was part of a larger project, which attempted to return to the pioneering ethnographic inquiries of "Larimer Street" in Denver, Colorado, by Edward Rose (1909-2002) and his research team. It coincided with the journal publication of the final report of the "Larimer Street" inquiries – *The Unattached Society* (Rose, 1997) – and sought methodological coincidence in terms of duration, perspective, and procedure.

The timing of the interviews, following the anniversary of the bombing, afforded the recounting of the events of the day using regularized story formats: what the City Centre had been like before the bomb, and how it had changed subsequent to the explosion. Many interviewees also organized their accounts in terms of where they had been at the time of the explosion, what they had been doing at the time, and how they had accounted for the sound of the explosion – "At first I thought ..." (Jefferson 2004) – frequently discounting "a bomb" as an explanation.

Elsewhere I have examined data from this project as instantiations of members' practical reasoning procedures as conjoint productions (Carlin 2006); and how stretches of ordinary talk about the explosion exhibited identifiable and recurrent practices (Carlin 2009). For instance, accounting and re-counting, attributing moral credit, normal appearances, dispreferred versions, contested versions, and common sense metrics, were found to be among the common organizational structures within people's talk in referring to the Manchester bomb.

The analytic resources for this discussion are ethnographic and, as well as building upon Edward Rose's "ethno-inquiries" (Carlin 2009), they derive from the sociological field of Ethnomethodology. Ethnomethodology was originally

introduced and developed by Harold Garfinkel (1917-2011), who spent much of his academic career at UCLA.

Ratified Information

1. AC: Now I presume you've had experiences of bomb alerts before
1. PC: Erm, all too often, erm. Generally speaking they are (.) hoaxes, erm but of course we have got a system of recognized code-words (.) something which has developed over a period of time and um if we do receive a message which contains a recognized code-word then obviously we have to take it very seriously and erm, react quickly
2. AC: Mm
3. PC: and erm so yeah there's, there's hundreds and thousands of hoax calls but every now and then you get a coded warning and then
4. AC: Mm
5. PC: you know you've got a problem[2]

Excerpt 1

One of the defining features of the Manchester bombing was the receipt of a warning. There are several aspects of this characteristic, one of which may seem axiomatic: the emergency services actually receive a warning. Regrettably, this is not always the case. Whilst changing "threat assessments" may indicate that there is an increased likelihood of attacks[3], the accuracy of information received by security services in making evaluations of a particular threat assessment level is, unfortunately, realized only on the commencement of an attack, e.g. the explosion of a device.

Second, warnings are subject to "authorization procedures". Authorization procedures alert the emergency services that the warning is genuine, rather than a hoax (Excerpt 1). As the Police Chief outlines above, the emergency services receive a large number of bomb hoaxes; authorization procedures, such as "recognized code-words", are developed and agreed with proscribed organizations and the provision of a recognized code-word enables the emergency services to identify matters of genuine concern from the malicious hoaxes. In effect, the "system of recognized code-words" (Excerpt 1) is a sorting procedure which provides an assurance that information is ratified by the organization delivering the warning.

The identification of matters of genuine concern requires the discernment of "patterns", which will be outlined in this paper. The hoax call/genuine call pairing (or, in the words of the Police Chief, the hoax call/coded warning pair) is amenable to conceptualization as a form of *gestalt contexture*, whereby features of genuine calls are brought into relief *in comparison with* hoax calls. Further, genuine calls – those containing recognized code-words – 'stand out' from the crowd of hoax calls *because* they contain recognized code-words.[4] In this paper, the gestalt contexture of genuine calls or "coded warnings" will be surfaced in terms of the "Documentary Method of Interpretation".

Third, information provided within genuine or "coded" warnings may be vague; even inaccurate. There are two aspects to this in the case of the Manchester bombing: the coded warning contained information that a bomb had been planted within the City Centre. As one of the largest cities in the UK, the warning that a bomb was planted in the City Centre, which is a very large area, could have been more specific. Furthermore, the warning contained information regarding the timing of the detonation, which suggested that the emergency services would have more time to find the device and to evacuate the City.[5]

Having been informed that a bomb had been placed in the city centre, the emergency services were faced with two logistical problems, one of which was contingent on the other. First, they had to locate the bomb. Secondly, they had to evacuate members of the public from the surrounding area; obviously they could not move people to (what was euphemistically called) a "safe distance" without precise knowledge of the whereabouts of the bomb.

This paper is concerned with "doing security": members' practical methods for maintaining the security of public space. The premises of the paper relate to what we may call the "primitive recognizability" of visual scenes, such as public spaces within urban environments. As such, this paper makes overlaps between people with reference to the use of various "ethno-methods": as analysts, specifically sociologists; as members of the emergency services; and as passers-by. The overlaps are provided by shared membership of a culture; and particularly, by the "attitude of daily life" as described by the philosopher Alfred Schutz.

Harold Garfinkel, who shall be discussed at greater length below, introduced the memorable phrase, "We must suppose that the attitude of daily life operates in the sociological inquiries not only of the members of a society but of professional sociologists as well. Just as sociological inquiries are not confined to professional sociologists, neither is the attitude of daily life confined to 'the man in the street'" (Garfinkel 1961: 55). This quotation is emblematic of this paper because it is my contention that the techniques of surveillance, for the practical purposes of doing security, are not confined to members of the emergency services but are available as methods of the attitude of daily life by sociologists, the emergency services, and the public. This is not to conceptualize the "sociologist as detective", to use William Sanders' (1974) phrase; nor to traduce the skill of members of the emergency services as work that anybody could do.[6]

As Harvey Sacks (1972) suggested, the police operate with different relevancies from members of the public. These relevancies are fostered through training and experience (Bayley & Bittner 1984) – a particular approach to people, to settings, to events, and to members' accounts of events (Sacks 1972, 1985). The relevancies of police work "[involve] the exercise of an intelligence that comes into its own in communication with the concrete and actual realities of its natural setting" (Bittner 1983: 253). Moreover, as we shall see with the specific case of the search for a bomb in Manchester

City Centre, there were a number of practical contingencies requiring highly trained personnel (such as the evacuation of a large volume of people, in a limited time; the provision of first aid to those who suffered blast injuries; and, as ambulances could not enter the vicinity, the appropriation of vehicles to transport casualties to Accident & Emergency departments of hospitals as quickly as possible).[7]

These caveats in place, this paper shows that the activities involved in "doing security" are not limited to the analysis of web traffic and information flows between networks, or the communications and movements of those identified as 'persons of note' (or 'watch lists'); nor are those activities of "doing security" reducible to theoreticized simulations or the visualizations afforded by CCTV technology (Murukami Wood et al. 2007). "Doing security" is not devolved to threat assessments, as while threat assessments may involve formalizations they are dependent on members' practical reasoning procedures.[8] Sometimes, as with the Manchester bomb, "doing security" consists in the attitude of daily life *as well as* the attitudes of emergency services work, in that it trades on practical reasoning of ordinary members in ordinary, and extraordinary, situations.

Categorization and the Provision of Political Background

The background to the bombing may be inferred as a warning to the British Government (at the time it was a Conservative administration, led by the Prime Minister, John Major) that the IRA had not been disbanded nor defeated, despite the nature of Anglo-Irish relations during that period following the signing of the "Downing Street Declaration" in 1993 by John Major and his Irish counterpart – the Taoiseach of the Republic of Ireland, Albert Reynolds. It may also have signalled that Sinn Féin, the political party which had, in the past, been affiliated with the IRA and maintained informal connections, was not necessarily an intermediary at the diplomatic negotiating table –whatever claims they made to have influence with the IRA, that influence did not extend to preventing members of the IRA planting such a large device in England. However, the roots of the conflict go much further back than this.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to offer a précis of the reasons why the IRA were at war with the UK. This is, in part, because it has been such a contentious issue for so long, for so many people, that any gloss risks causing offence to various 'sides'.

Moreover, as various authors have articulated, there is an recognizable imbalance in both media accounts of conflict situations, and narratives of nationhood, in the use of asymmetric terms from the "freedom fighter"/"terrorist" gestalt (Anderson & Sharrock, 1979; Sa'di 2007: 304). Lena Jayyusi made the categorial turn not just in relation to members' contrastive uses of the dichotomized category-pair "freedom fighter"/"terrorist" – what she (Jayyusi 1984: 123) refers to as "disjunctive category sets" – but elaborated this in terms of the categorial implications of the activities,

sites of activities, and moral attributions of such activities. Jayyusi (1984: 7) invites readers to consider the characterization of accounts:

> "Terrorists exploded a bomb at a military installation today" versus "Freedom fighters exploded a bomb at a military installation today".

Jayyusi then seeks to explicate the categorial profiles of these accounts:

> "In the first account there is an implied delegitimation of the actions of a group of persons; in the latter, implicatively, there is some form of justification (i.e. for the community of hearers who would avowedly take 'freedom' to be a right and 'terrorism' to be absolutely condemnable). In each case there is a different account being given of the same action/event (the explosion of a bomb). But further, the character of the location under attack, by implication, is different. In the first, the 'military installation' may be taken to be 'legitimate'; in the second, it could be taken to be intrusive and illegitimate, e.g. an outpost of an occupying power. And in each case the hearer is invited to seek a different explanation and to project an alternative trajectory of events and actions, both prospectively and retrospectively" (Jayyusi 1984: 8)

The categorial profile of accounts is complicated further by the introduction of the term "civilian" (Jayyusi 2015: 280), which implicates both oppositional categories and a "potential continuum" of category-pair parts[9]; or, as Jayyusi elaborates, "there is an embedded contrast with 'non-civilians' which may in situ implicate a number of possible further categories: 'combatants', 'soldiers', 'the military', 'terrorists' etc. In other words, two discourse frames – 'war/violence' and 'ordinary life' – are simultaneously involved. In this mapping, a variety of trajectories for the categorization and location of persons in this environment become available as morally implicative matters" (Jayyusi 2007a: 19).[10]

In the light of such concerns, and in accord with a methodological protocol dissuading me from 'framing' the conflict along such categorizational contours (the policy of "ethnomethodological indifference" – Garfinkel & Sacks 1970), the background that I provide above is minimal for the practical purposes of contextualization.[11]

Lessons from the Manchester Bombing

It should be noted that the "headlines" from the Manchester bombing – that it was the largest bomb exploded in a UK city; and, given the size of the explosion, that there were no fatalities – gloss over the immense changes brought about, suddenly, to many people's lives. While there had been no fatalities, there was a high number of casualties: many of these were caused by flying glass, and the scattering of debris, from the explosion. A large number of businesses were affected by the blast, as buildings were damaged. (Some small businesses were relocated into other parts of the city centre – though the new locations of displaced enterprises were not always favourable to the continued operation of shops.)

However, each of the emergency services was able to realize various changes to their current practices. Given the scale of

the major incident, the non-fatal nature of the event was a source of relief. However, there were casualties and, as such, the Manchester bomb occasioned a review of practices and procedures (Baccus 1986: 24). For example, the emergency response and medical attention to casualties fed into analyses and systematic reviews on the treatment of mass casualties in emergency situations (Arnold et al. 2003; Arnold et al. 2004; Lettieri et al. 2009). For example, and without compromising operational considerations, lessons from the Manchester bombing also included implications for despatching emergency vehicles when major incidents are ongoing, so that emergency personnel and vehicles are not being directed towards congested areas without communication of potential hazards.

One of the most significant lessons learned from the Manchester bombing was the guidance on evacuation and the notion of a "safe distance", which was problematized with the explosion. Whilst the emergency services moved people back beyond the perimeter designated as a safe distance in procedural manuals, the eventual cordon distance proved insufficient. The police cordon around the bomb was delineated by plastic traffic tape, stretched out at adult waist height, which was in practice seen by the public as a protective line not to be crossed, when of course it was just thin, plastic tape which afforded no protection from flying glass.

Furthermore, the sheer volume of glass-related injuries sustained in the blast informed recommendations on adequate areas to move evacuated crowds: the explosion was so forceful that it shattered the glass on ornamental canopies over the external concourse at Victoria Railway Station, where people had been standing when the bomb exploded; and brought down the heavy glass roof tiles inside Victoria Station, on top of those people who had been evacuated there.

The Manchester bomb was also instructive for crowd management and people management: not only were representatives of the emergency services faced with obstructions caused by an unwillingness to retreat to a safe distance; it turned out that not everyone who was supposed to have been evacuated from buildings had actually complied with instructions.[12] Of course, in one sense, the emergency services cannot anticipate activities such as persons deliberately evading evacuation orders, or the placement of explosive devices. In September 1999, a series of bombs in apartment blocks in Moscow caused widespread panic. On September 13, the city's mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, ordered all the residential blocks in the capital to be searched by security forces. Hours after a nine-storey residential apartment block was searched for explosives in the southern Russian town of Volgodonsk, near the borders with the Caucuses, a lorry-bomb was parked outside it.[13] Robust security measures may assist in these scenarios; however, in cases of complicity among security agencies, as suggested by Dunlop (2014), it seems uncertain how effective any security measures could become.

However, the evacuation phase prior to the detonation of the Manchester bomb was problematic. This was, in part, due to the context of that Saturday morning. It was a particularly hot day (which had implications later in the afternoon, due to the dehydration of members of the emergency services) and the crowds of shoppers had been swelled by it being the last Saturday before Father's Day. More significantly, the crowds were added to by football supporters, comprising a large volume of non-English speaking visitors. June 1996 marked the staging of the Euros, the UEFA international football competition, and many had journeyed into Manchester City Centre to watch screenings of the England versus Scotland match at Wembley, in London. Many more were in Manchester to see Germany versus Russia, at Old Trafford, on the Sunday.

The staging of the football competition meant that members of the Greater Manchester Police Force, *as a force*, were not as concentrated within the Greater Manchester area than usual. Accordingly, even though the police take *de facto* precedence among the emergency services, it was members of the fire service who assumed greater responsibility given the temporary dislocation of the GMP.

From discussions for the project reported in this paper, it was clear that organizational structures were already in place because of the larger number of visitors to Manchester that were anticipated. That is, while the numbers of police officers were limited as they were on duty elsewhere, the command and control structures were in a state of preparation and were activated with the commencement of the emergency procedure, following the determination of the telephoned warnings as genuine. So, ironically, the preparations for the increased numbers of visitors to the city actually helped to expedite the evacuation.

Whilst the command and control structures were in a state of readiness, the actualization of the evacuation was impeded. Not only were building evacuation procedures dependent upon universal compliance with evacuation orders, as mentioned above and detailed in the internal Fire Service report (Rigby et al. 1996), discussants – in particular, the Fire Chief and the Police Chief – were willing to set on record their dismay (Excerpt 2 and 3) at the public's reaction to orders, for their own safety, to clear the area:

> FC: So then there was a mammoth task of evacuating eighty thousand people from the city, a tremendous number of people, er from the city centre (.) and you know when people, you you you're doing cordons and then people doing limbo dances under the tape you know
>
> AC: Hm
>
> FC: to get in "I just want to change this" and "I won't be long" you know "I've just come from Northwich can I just change this" you know. I don't er, °you know° that's the psychology of people I, I, I, I can understand to a certain degree but erm (.) that was quite a mammoth task so ourselves in conjunction with the police embarked on the, the evacuation[14]

Excerpt 2

So the police and fire-fighters encountered a situation that was "non-

negotiably coercible", whereby "when a deputized police officer decides that force is necessary, then, within the boundaries of this situation, he is not accountable to anyone, nor is he required to brook the arguments or opposition of anyone who might object to it. We set this forth not as a legal but as a practical rule" (Bittner 1970: 41). As such, contingent upon locating the bomb was the evacuation of an unusually large number of people from the City Centre, which involved interactional work (Excerpt 3):

> PC: But um one of the biggest problems that we certainly had with the bombing last year (.) um and it's a social issue, really, and that's a matter of respect for authority. Um, I I've, I've used the expression before (.) many of my officers
>
> AC: Aha
>
> PC: used their full repertoire of social skills to try and get people to go because people don't believe anymore. They don't respect. So um, people were being asked to move, they were being told to move, they were being shouted at, and some of them were kicked down the road (.) because they wouldn't leave (.) until there was a very loud bang and then they left
>
> AC: Mm
>
> PC: But of course um it meant that some people could have been much further away um (.) but weren't and of course one of the big hazards with an explosion of that size is the amount of flying glass. And you know once you get that sort of glass flying then you get a lot of injuries[15]

Excerpt 3

A Version of Ethnomethodology's Program: The Documentary Method of Interpretation

Garfinkel's project was to explicate the practical reasoning procedures used by members of society in their ordinary activities. One of the ironies of sociology, for Garfinkel, was how these reasoning procedures were specifically theorized out of sociological accounts; yet sociological accounts were dependent on these ordinary reasoning procedures. As formulated by two of Garfinkel's students, sociology confused matters of topic and resource (Zimmerman & Pollner 1970). Sociology trades upon members' practical reasoning procedures as resources for sociological studies, when the description and analysis of members' practical reasoning procedures should be sociology's topic of study.

The ironicization of members' practical reasoning procedures inherent within sociological accounts is exhibited in a collection of conference papers from the International Sociological Association annual conference in Stresa, Italy, September 1959. Talcott Parsons, who had supervised Garfinkel's Ph.D. thesis at Harvard University, presented an overview of the Sociology of Knowledge (Parsons 1961), the problems it provided for society and social science, and how it could be elaborated by his own "Theory of Action" (Parsons & Shils 1951). Parsons sought to differentiate aspects of "ideology" within Mannheim's work (even re-wording aspects to gain analytic purchase on his differentiations).

In effect, Parsons accepted Mannheim's "terms and determinations", to use Egon Bittner's (2013) phrase, regarding the conceptualization of "ideology" as the core of the Sociology of Knowledge. In so doing, and in advocating the elaboration of Mannheim's conceptualization through his Theory of Action, Parsons ensured that ideology would remain "the sociologist's object", whereby members' reasoning was incidental to a convenient and analytically efficient theoretical schema.

The differentiations that Parsons advocated were cut through using Alfred Schutz's phenomenological distinction between the "natural attitude" and the "scientific attitude", rendering a typology of forms of ideology redundant. In contrast to his supervisor's presentation, Garfinkel (1961) borrows a phrase introduced by Mannheim (1953) in developing his Sociology of Knowledge – the "Documentary Method of Interpretation – but does not, unlike Parsons, accept the original terms and determinations of the concept. This was a feature of Garfinkel's work, to borrow a "slogan" (Garfinkel & Sacks 1970) but, instead of preserving the accepted terms of use as a slogan, as defined by sociology, he would redeploy the phrase for his own purposes. This both problematized sociology's use of such "slogans" and made available members' phenomena that had hitherto remained absent from sociological investigation. In later writings, Garfinkel (2002) would describe such procedures as "deliberate misreading".

One of the reasoning procedures (or "ethno-methods") that Garfinkel (1961) identified was the "Documentary Method of Interpretation".[16] In describing the documentary method as a member's practice, Garfinkel borrowed the phraseology of Karl Mannheim's development of the Sociology of Knowledge. However, he rejected its original terms of use in order to reveal activities that members ordinarily use in making sense of situations. Garfinkel's explication of the documentary method of interpretation provides a demonstration of what he meant by the term "reflexivity":

> "The method consists of treating an actual appearance as 'the document of', as 'pointing to', as 'standing on behalf of' a pre-supposed underlying pattern. Not only is the underlying pattern derived from its individual documentary evidences, but the individual documentary evidences, in their turn, are interpreted on the basis of 'what is known' about the underlying pattern. Each is used to elaborate the other" (Garfinkel 1967a: 78)

A practical, security related example is provided by the aforementioned report written by security consultants following the campus shooting at Virginia Tech, in 2007:

> "If you have concerns about a person or situation, even if you think it may be nothing, you are encouraged to share the information. The information you provide, no matter how trivial it may seem by itself, may be critical to understanding a broader range of problematic or threatening behavior" (Randazzo & Plummer 2009: 124)

This security advice is an activity that members do already, and at an accomplished level. However, the threat assessment model is advocating that a 'prospective' approach to

actions, whereby actions (or "appearances") could be seen as pointers towards a pattern of *threat*; in effect, to adopt and maintain an attitude that regards *threat* as a potential interpretation and that any actions may be indicative of *threat* to those who are competent to make such judgements. The difference in approach is to recommend that members become "intermediaries" – conduits of indexical particulars rather than "interpreters" of indexical particulars – discounting members' competences to recognize such indexical particulars of any particular underlying pattern.

The relevance of a family of members' practices that constitute the documentary method of interpretation is brought out in descriptions not only for pedagogic purposes[17] but also in ethnographic accounts of occupational practice:

> "SPC [Suicide Prevention Center] inquiries begin with a death that the coroner finds equivocal as to *mode* of death. They use the death as a precedent by means of which various ways of living in society that could have terminated with the death are searched for and read 'in the remains' – in the scraps of this and that, such as the body and its trappings, medicine bottles, notes, bits and pieces of clothing, memorabilia: anything that can be photographed, collected, and packaged. Other 'remains' are collected too: rumors, passing remarks, and stories – material in the 'repertoire' of whomever might be consulted through the common work of conversations. These 'whatsoever' bits and pieces that a story or a rule or a proverb might make intelligible are used to formulate a recognizably coherent, standard, typical, cogent, uniform, planful, i.e., a professionally defensible, and thereby for members, *recognizably* rational account of how the society worked to produce these remains" (Garfinkel 1967b: 176).

In later work, Garfinkel distanced himself from the documentary method of interpretation;[18] he argued that it was subject to being invoked without the provision of those concrete details of members' activities which demonstrate its operation:

> "The documentary method of interpretation is a convenient gloss for the work of local, retrospective-prospective, proactively evolving ordered phenomenal details of seriality, sequence, repetition, comparison, generality, and other structures. The gloss is convenient and somehow convincing. It is also very powerful in its coverage; too powerful. It gets everything in the world for practitioner/analysts. Its shortcomings are notorious: In any actual case it is undiscriminating; and just in any actual case it is absurdly wrong" (Garfinkel 2002: 113).

Within ethnomethodological studies, this does not mean that the documentary method of interpretation has been redacted. Indeed, it is arguable that Garfinkel's assertion (originally made in 1996) was not only premature but neglected the embedding of the documentary method of interpretation within members' work, that was occasioned in particular professional settings, and was described in meticulous detail in studies of their work, e.g. on radiographers' collaborative readings of mammograms (Slack et al. 2007); on librarians' classification of bibliographic materials (Watson & Carlin 2012; Ikeya

1997); on the interrogation of suspects by the police (Watson 1990).

That is to say, instead of characterizing such work as a "rehabilitation" of the documentary method of interpretation in specific settings rather than as a tool for generalized descriptions, as Garfinkel presaged, analyses of the documentary method of interpretation have always been, and still are, ongoing features of the ethnomethodological program. On top of these are Liberman's exquisite demonstrations of Garfinkel's commitments to phenomenological work (Liberman 2007) and how members use the documentary method of interpretation in and as of practical activities, e.g. playing board games, and coffee tasting (Liberman 2013).

Furthermore, Garfinkel failed to acknowledge the pioneering development and elaboration of the concept by Michael L. Williams, who disambiguated rival forms of the documentary method of interpretation in particular settings, in terms of the "discovery model" of the documentary method of interpretation; and the "creation model" of the documentary method of interpretation (Williams 1975). The purview of Williams' concerns addresses precisely the concerns that Garfinkel had expressed over its "undiscriminating" nature.

Williams suggests overlaps between practitioners (police officers) and analysts (sociologists and criminologists) not only in their use of the documentary method of interpretation, as members of society, but in their use of a particular version of the documentary method of interpretation – the "discovery model":

> "The "discovery model" reflects the perspective of the police. Police officers assume that there are persons labelled criminal, who commit acts forbidden by law, and that the location and circumstances of offenses make the collection of evidence a difficult task. Despite the enormous problems faced by the police they believe that if they maintain a systematic investigative attitude they can, in fact, discover evidence.
>
> Though researchers who rely on a "discovery model" certainly have different interests than the police, their basic assumption is remarkably similar to that of the police. The basic assumption of the "discovery model" is that evidence exists independently of the searching by the police officer. Though the officer may be extremely ingenious in locating evidence, "discovery" analysts and the police acknowledge that "it was there all the time." The implication of this assumption is that proper indicators can be prescribed which enable the officer to more efficiently discover evidence." (Williams 1975: 4-5)

For example, Tom Thurman describes how explosive devices on airliners are hidden within an everyday object, for example, a radio – known as the "internal container"; which is carried onto the plane within another object, often a suitcase – known as the "external container". Describing meticulous, forensic search of debris from the Lockerbie bombing in 1988, Thurman outlines how sufficient items were recovered in order to identify the materials used in the attack:

> "Following an intensive ground search for debris from the explosion, sufficient quantities of the suitcase containing the bomb were recovered to permit a

> conclusion that not only was the suitcase manufactured by Samsonite, but from the locking mechanism recovered, it was not manufactured for the U.S. market but the overseas market. But that is not all. A fragment of the internal container of the bomb was recovered to permit the unquestionable conclusion that the internal container was a Toshiba BomBeat radio, Model RT-SF 16. So, yes, materials can be found. The investigator must have the determination to find them." (Thurman 2006: 143)

One of the 'operative' facilities of the discovery model of the documentary method of interpretation, for Williams, is the nature of "evidence". In the discovery model, evidence is found through the application and diligence of police procedures. Yet it is this, the nature of "evidence" that, for Williams, magnifies a difference in members' ethno-methods, which he terms the "creation model" of the documentary method of interpretation:

> "In contrast to the "discovery model" the "creation model" assumes that evidence exists as evidence because of and through police "searches" for information. Thus, through their activity the police are viewed as creating the evidence they seek. From the perspective of the "creation model" the issue of whether objects or events exist prior to their "discovery" is not relevant, however. What is relevant is that the specific meaning of those objects or activities is created when they are perceived as signs representing underlying patterns of behavior. From the "creation" perspective meaning is continually accomplished through the employment of situated practices by members of society." (Williams 1975: 6; emphasis supplied)

Williams' advancement of the documentary method is highly significant for ethnomethodology, and for the study of members' practices vis-à-vis the practices of sociology; however, because it was never published it is rarely cited (*pace* Watson 1990) and its implicativeness for sociological description remains unacknowledged. In formulating the documentary method of interpretation as a unitary phenomenon rather than constituted by rival models, as used by members in situ and by sociologists in writing up sociological accounts, Garfinkel had provided for the very insufficiencies he later identified.

In Manchester, the coded warning received by the emergency services provides for an underlying pattern, that there is a bomb in the City Centre.

One of the interesting features of members' use of the documentary method of interpretation is how underlying patterns and indexical particulars are reciprocal and mutually elaborative. The coded warning received by the emergency services is also, then, treatable as an indexical particular and provides an underlying pattern. Among the volume of hoax calls, the coded warning is brought into sharp relief by the presence of a recognized code-word. Information provided in the coded warning is thus "authorized" as *credible* information; even if, as outlined earlier, the specificity of the information is not completely accurate. The coded warning, as an indexical particular, is thus *accountable* and *admissible* in that the instantiation of a coded warning is in and of itself justification for any actions taken by the emergency services subsequent to its

receipt. A warning that there was a bomb in the City Centre would not be justification for the evacuation of people from the buildings and pavements of the City Centre. A coded warning that there is a bomb in the City Centre, however, does justify the decision by the emergency services to evacuate the City Centre.

Indeed, as a chronology of events leading up to the explosion shows, this is precisely what happened. From 09.43 hours on Saturday 15 June 1996, warnings were received by institutions including North Manchester General Hospital, Manchester Evening News, and Granada Television Studios, that there was a bomb in the City Centre. This information was passed to the Police Service and the Fire Service and, according to an internal report (Rigby et al. 1996: 2), "[b]y 09.50 hours the Police were convinced this was a genuine call" and the emergency procedure was activated. As suggested above, while information within such warnings may not be entirely accurate, the information is treated as "good enough" information for the practical purposes of activating the emergency procedure. As such, while information may not be completely trustworthy, it is *trustworthy enough*; furthermore, in contrast to the foliage of hoaxes, information is coming from a trusted source.[19]

However, the justification to evacuate the City Centre is further predicated upon the identification of the lorry, parked on Corporation Street, as the external container of the bomb. Identifying the lorry as the bomb, and observing the appearances of the lorry, enables a common-sense estimation of the size of the bomb that it contains.[20]

Normal Appearances

In accounting for versions of "Ethnomethodology's Program", this paper moves from elucidation of the documentary method of interpretation to Harvey Sacks' (1972) notion of "normal appearances". In the case of the search for a bomb in the City Centre of Manchester, we may note that the "normal appearances" of the urban environment of Manchester was used in and as of the documentary method of interpretation. That is, the "normal appearances" of familiar objects and familiar settings (Driessen 1997) were recognized as indexical particulars of an underlying pattern – that there is a bomb in the City Centre. As such, this paper looks at members' practices (or "ethno-methods") not as discrete, analytically distinct entities but as reflexively constituted, mutually elaborating practices of sense-assembly.

As soon as Greater Manchester Police realized that the coded warnings were genuine, activating the emergency procedure, the search for the bomb in the City Centre began (Excerpt 4). The logistical problems facing members of the emergency services were, through and through, problems of competent membership. In locating the bomb they were trading upon the ordinary, everyday, recognition procedures not just of police work but of members' work.

> FC: at that juncture because they just said there was a bomb within the city now A we didn't know whether we've had smaller bombs we've had sent little incendiary devices we didn't know what we were looking for. Was it was it small was it large

AC: There've been bombs in litter bins haven't there?

FC: absolutely it could have been absolutely anywhere. So nobody really knew it was like looking for a needle in a haystack really[21]

Excerpt 4

In a subsequent conversation, another discussant told me about occasions in which they, similarly, were engaged in attending to the "normal appearances" of a setting (Victoria Railway Station in Manchester City Centre). An extended extract is reproduced (Excerpt 5): this procedure allows readers to adjudge whether "relevant" passages are only relevant through having been decontextualized, i.e. whether the provision of "sense" or interpretation is an analyst's achievement. Also, readers may adjudge whether, or indeed to what extent, the quoted remarks have been elicited.

1. AC: Can I just ask then has the place changed for you?
1. FRANK: Changed? Oh yeah it's changed. It's er, it's er I mean for a start er immediate change if you like is not being able to get your sandwiches like you used to do.

:

:

1. FRANK: It's it's (.) yeah, so there are changes. There are, there are changes that have taken place that you haven't really realised they've changed, but they have, they've been definite changes to the way we go about our working lives. And of course it meant changes within the station because our security awareness went up. Er, right up until the cease fire of the IRA recently
1. AC: Hmm
1. FRANK: er, whenever there was er er the security level went up, as advised by the [ ], we started doing er (.) hourly checks of the station. (.) We already check the station anyway but
1. AC: Hmm
1. FRANK: we went to hourly checks whereby we actually detach staff a member of staff to actually walk the station. And it's the car park, and round the building, round, round and round the building kind of thing just to look and see if there's anything suspicious. Packages (.) er, we have curtailed the parking of cars on the front, station front. All kinds of things. You know, it it it the these are changes that we never did before
1. AC: Hmm
1. FRANK: I mean, some of the initial changes with the (.) er the troubles with the IRA of course was the loss of er lost property offices in pl in major railway stations. Erm, (.) the lockers went because it's their favourite place to stick a bomb you know what I mean
1. AC: Hmm
1. FRANK: I mean you didn't all you'd need was a quid or something just stick in the thing, open it up shove it in (.) erm, but right to the point now we, we can have a security alert and the first you know about it is when you see all the BT police coming round to sweep the station
1. AC: °Hmm°
1. FRANK: And then you'll be instructed

then that there's that that staff-wise you've got to do your own sweeps, every hour twenty four hours of the day and night

1. AC: Mm
1. FRANK: And we've done about four of them, since the bomb
1. AC: Right
1. FRANK: We've actually been involved (.) when I say four (.) talking maybe, first one I think lasted about five weeks (.) where we actually combed the station day and night. We had members of staff going (.) just walking round
1. AC: °Hmm°
1. FRANK: To all intents and purposes it was just walking round but they were actually walking round to see that there was nothing suspicious, and that no, er, bags or whatever had been left lying about
1. AC: °Hmm°
1. FRANK: But I've been in, a couple of times there's been a few false alarms
1. AC: °Hmm°
1. FRANK: not where we've sent for the bomb squad but where we've (.) taken that taken the necessary action to sort it
1. AC: °Hmm°
1. FRANK: and then discovered it was nothing
1. AC: °Hmm°
1. FRANK: and then went back. (.) erm (.) the last one we did lasted about should have lasted a week went on for three. And then we had the ceasefire and we ceased to do it, we're not (.) we still check the station, don't don't get me wrong, it's erm, the [ ] on duty still has his daily he he he has a a check of the station, usually three times on his shift. He'll he'll check out the station anyway as a matter of course
1. AC: Right
1. FRANK: Er, we had er, all kinds of directives from the thing about advising the staff, that's train crew, drivers and everybody basically to be more alert to watch what's going on round about them. Er, those are still in force. There was there was a there was although I would be willing to say that people have since the ceasefire have eased off in that
1. AC: °Right°
1. FRANK: Erm, (.) yeah there, so there was a, there was quite a lot of changes
1. AC: Hmm
1. FRANK: to the, to the way we did things
1. AC: Right
1. FRANK: apart from physical changes to the nature of the surroundings round about. Oh yeah. (.) I would definitely say there was[22]

Excerpt 5

In Line 34, we see that – in Schutzian terms as outlined at the start of this paper – the relevancies or attitude is changed: "And of course it meant changes within the station because our security awareness went up". The subsequent passage then details how the new attitude towards "security awareness" implicates heightened attention to the "normal appearances" of familiar settings, in Frank's case, Victoria Railway Station.

Sacks' "normal appearances" are coherent with the documentary method of interpretation. For instance, at Line 40 – "Erm, (.) the lockers went because it's their favourite place to stick a bomb you know what I mean" – Frank produces an occasioned phrase reminiscent of Sacks' observation that "For the police, objects and places having routine uses are conceived in terms of favorite misuses. Garbage cans are places in which dead babies are thrown, schoolyards are places where molesters hang out, stores are places where shoplifters go, etc." (Sacks 1972: 292).

Furthermore, here we can see the ethnomethodological significance of Michael Williams' (1975) disambiguation between the use of discovery and creation models of the documentary method of interpretation. Recognizing "normal appearances" provides for the re-interpretation of indexical particulars in that members are competent to realize how ordinary settings and ordinary objects manifest incongruities; i.e. members are able to recognize "that looks normal" and, contrariwise, "that does not look normal". It is the recognition of incongruity which enables members to "see through appearances", to borrow Williams' phrase.

Conclusion

The evacuation of more than 80000 people from buildings, pavements, shops, and shopping centres, was not just a logistical feat, then. As both the Fire Chief and the Police Chief confirm, ensuring that people moved away from the lorry to what, from previous experience, had been deemed to be a "safe distance" from a bomb, involved interactional work (by individual fire fighters, police officers, and security guards).

This paper has outlined the development and enhancements of Harold Garfinkel's notion, the "documentary method of interpretation". It has formulated the documentary method of interpretation as one of a family of "ethno-methods" that are used in the activities of "doing security". These activities are routinely accomplished by members of the emergency services and members of the public – indeed, these activities are indices of competent society membership.

This paper has described how sequences of activities within emergency procedures – in this specific case, the identification of a bomb warning as a *ratified* bomb warning; and the subsequent search for an explosive device within the city – are available for analysis as aspects of the documentary method of interpretation. While the relevancies of emergency work cohere with the Schutzian attitude of daily life, they are not reducible to it. However, this paper also shows that Garfinkel's distancing from the documentary method of interpretation did not account for the versions of the documentary method of interpretation identified by Michael Williams. Moreover, both the discovery and creation models of the documentary method of interpretation are operative in the emergency procedures implicated in and triggered by a coded warning.

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NOTES

1 This is not 'reducible' to a Sacksian phenomenon regarding stories, where members designed stories to be relevant to a substantive topic, namely, the Manchester bomb. When reviewing the corpus of interview accounts it is notable how each member of the interview cohort was able to provide, in exquisite detail, precisely how their Saturday had been affected by the bomb; or, how they encountered the fact of the bomb even if they were not first-hand witnesses of the explosion; or, how their personal and/or professional lives were affected subsequent to the explosion.

2 Excerpt from interview, 10 September 1997. AC = Andrew Carlin; PC = Police Chief.

3 For a schematic of "threat assessment levels", see https://www.gov.uk/terrorism-national-emergency/terrorism-threat-levels

4 In Garfinkelian terms, a genuine warning thus appears as an "animal in the foliage" (Garfinkel 2002).

5 Whilst this discrepant timing may be attributed to the controlled explosion by the bomb squad, the inaccuracy of information within coded warnings was much more consequential two years later in the Omagh bombing of August 1998.

6 For example, I would not suggest that doing searching for lesions on mammograms, which involves recognizing and distinguishing masses as objects from masses as objects of concern, is anything but a highly technical, highly skilled activity (Slack et al. 2007); nor, that the operation and participation in teams of security personnel within "safety critical environments" (Bassetti et al. 2015) such as the airport security checkpoint (Bassetti 2014), searching for suspect materials prior to boarding planes, is available to everyone through the Schutzian attitude of daily life.

7 At this juncture, in contextualizing the activities of members of the public vis-à-vis trained personnel, it is worth quoting *The 9/11 Commission Report*, which found that whilst the immediate reaction to the events "was not conducted in accord with pre-existing training and protocols", this was not to be taken as evidence of a failing in military systems of the Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS): "It was improvised by civilians who had never handled a hijacked aircraft that attempted to disappear, and by a military unprepared for the transformation of commercial aircraft into weapons of mass destruction" (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 2004: 31).

8 For example, it is evident from materials drawn up for the purposes of conducting threat assessments (Randazzo & Plummer 2009) that "behaviors of concern" are used as indicators of, or pointers to, the possibilities of *threat*. While such materials have been produced by "security consultants", the practical operation of such guides are, through and through, matters of competent membership of society (Garfinkel 1967). (See below.)

9 Such a continuum was also operative in the rhetorical presentation by political parties opposed to Sinn Féin, who, rather than naming Sinn Féin, took to describing them as "Sinn Féin / IRA", to emphasize the connections between them and, importantly, as a concerted attempt to establish, in the eyes of the electorate, the inseparability of support for Sinn Féin from support for the IRA.

10 It is of note, also, that the "variety of trajectories for the categorization and location of persons ... become available as morally implicative matters" in instances of 'friendly fire' in conflict situations. A perspicuous case of this occurs with the consideration of a cockpit video and the accounting of actions within the video by expert witnesses at a coroner's inquest (Elsey et al. 2016; Mair et al. 2013).

11 There are topics that sociologists should resist temptation to enter, rather than providing partial and simplistic accounts of complex, contested and reticulated issues. There is scope for sociological analysis of the iterative properties of historical accounts, as demonstrated elsewhere (Boden 1994; Bogen & Lynch 1989; Lynch 2009). However, I leave the accounting for the context of the Manchester bomb to the field of Irish History.

12 These individuals were subsequently trapped by blast damage and in some cases suffered severe injuries (Rigby et al. 1996).

13 Although in the particular case of Moscow, it is instructive to compare accounts of internal security by John Dunlop, published before (Dunlop 1998) and written after (Dunlop 2014) the Moscow apartment bombings of 1999.

14 Excerpt from interview, 30 August 1997. AC = Andrew Carlin; FC = Fire Chief.

15 Excerpt from interview, 10 September 1997. AC = Andrew Carlin; PC = Police Chief.

16 An expanded version of this presentation was published the following year (Garfinkel 1962); and a slightly amended version of the 1962 publication is included in his collection of papers, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Garfinkel 1967a). The focus of his ISA presentation is the documentary method of interpretation as a member's method of practical reasoning. However, in *Studies in Ethnomethodology* Garfinkel also went on to outline a number of practical methods, such as "ad hoccery", that members use for dealing with ordinary and extraordinary occurrences.

17 Such as offering explananda regarding what the documentary method of interpretation is, and how it is seen to work: "The method is recognizable for the everyday necessities of recognizing what a person is 'talking about' given that he does not say exactly what he means, or in recognizing such common occurrences and objects as mailmen, friendly gestures, and promises" (Garfinkel 1967a: 78).

18 Garfinkel had already dropped the encapsulation, "The documentary method consists essentially in the retrospective-prospective reading of a present occurrence so as to maintain the constancy of the object as a sensible thing through temporal and circumstantial alterations in its actual appearances" (Garfinkel 1961: 64) from his subsequent iterations (Garfinkel 1962, 1967).

19 For considered extensions of Garfinkel's (1963) early treatments of trust, see Watson (2009).

20 CCTV footage was released via social media in February 2016, shows the lorry containing the bomb parked on Corporation Street, the moment of the explosion, and its aftermath: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_IuHA5DKGY&feature=youtu.be

21 Excerpt from interview, 30 August 1997. AC = Andrew Carlin; FC = Fire Chief.

22 Excerpt from interview, 19 August 1997. AC = Andrew Carlin; Frank = Railway station manager. Colons between Lines 2 and 3 indicate a long, missing block of talk.