

【Article】

The Use and Generalizability of Personal Experience in Ethnographic Research

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1. Introduction

The argument that qualitative research cannot be classified as a social science has been raised countless times over the course of many decades. A common criticism of qualitative research is that, due to the limited number of cases examined, it lacks generalizable properties. This criticism cannot be rebutted by simply adding more cases, as the representativeness of the cases is also in dispute. This is a challenge that the qualitative research community, particularly ethnographers, would do well to consider in their research designs. This article considers this recurring topic by examining the most extreme scenario in data collection: the researcher's own experience, in which the case is one. Is personal experience validly generalizable? Presumably, the difficulty lies in determining *what* to generalize.

I begin by examining several notable methods of generalization that qualitative researchers have discussed in the past. These are largely inherited by qualitative researchers of the present day; they cannot be deemed obsolete. Second, I will examine the validity of the generalizations that autoethnography, a qualitative research method and the result of turning self-reflection into research, has adopted. While autoethnography attempts to provide alternatives to conventional research methods, when it comes to generalization, it adheres to the conventional methods described previously. Then, I will discuss ethnomethodology and its alternative approach to generalization as well as its distinctively alternative position to the orthodoxies of social science. In the final section, I will demonstrate this ethnomethodological approach to generalization using slot car racing fieldwork and my personal experience as a slot car racer and underscore the significance of the generalizability of doings.

2. Empirical and theoretical generalizations

The early years of the Chicago School, which is widely recognized today as one of the essential origins of ethnography in sociology, paid little attention to generalization

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or other methodological problems that subsequent ethnographers were aware of. Quantitative research (such as statistics) and qualitative research (such as case studies) were both viewed as comparable to scientific endeavors during this era (Hammersley, 1989). As American sociology moved closer to logical positivism, a theoretical perspective that considers scientific knowledge to be the only source of factual knowledge and excludes metaphysical concepts, disagreements over the relative merits of quantitative and qualitative research methods, as well as the extrapolation of results from ethnographic studies, became more pronounced (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Due to its dependence on small-scale cases, it was inevitable that ethnography would be attacked for lacking scientific rigor and validity.

The majority of ethnographers today assert in their research designs that their data and findings drawn from the data are inductively generalizable in some capacity. Ethnographers have adopted empirical and theoretical generalization strategies as two of their primary strategies. In survey research, the most common method for improving empirical generalization is to examine the target population that has been properly sampled, in accordance with probability theory, from the entire population. In order to reveal otherwise obscure societal patterns that are statistically generalizable to the population as a whole, survey research examines correlations between quantitatively measured variables within the sample group. This provides the foundation for another generalization, a theoretical generalization, by making the claim for explaining underlying causal connections. Thus, the conclusion reached through the use of theoretical inference is that the data obtained from particular cases validates theory, which is a probabilistically derived induction. How do they operate in ethnography?

It is impossible to achieve such representativeness in ethnography due to the small number of research subjects and cases, or even a single case, and the nonprobability of the samples. Using a single case as a microcosm is one way to address generalization with a small number of cases. The Middletown study (Lynd and Lynd, 1929) is the classic illustration of claiming typicality in a manner that is not statistically supported. A city in Indiana is chosen as a representative sample of the United States at the time of the study during the research's design phase. The selection is not based on a random sample but rather on the researchers' evaluation of the typical conditions as derived from official statistical data. The authors hypothesize that the study's findings are applicable to the entirety of the United States because the way of life observed in Middletown is representative of the way of life of Americans at the time. The method of using official statistics to validate representativeness to the selection in qualitative

research design is barely convincing in the contemporary methodological debate, as concluded by Hammersley (1989: 89), “maybe better than nothing.” Furthermore, there is usually insufficient evidence to determine representativeness in ethnographic research designs (Gobo, 2008), given the exploratory nature of the vast majority of qualitative research.

Comparability and translatability are two methods for addressing the generalization of cases that are not representative (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). Instead of assuming representativeness by assuming they represent unsurveyed subjects, the objective is to compare the findings. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) contend that this comparison and translation is the generalization that experimental research employs and that it can also be applied to ethnography. Generalization by comparison and translation in research design involve multi-site studies in which multiple researchers conduct research in multiple fields and compare their findings across multiple fields. This, however, may not work in practice. As admitted by LeCompte and Goetz (1982), it is difficult to standardize fieldwork among researchers. It is difficult to reconcile the number of comparisons between sites with the depth of each individual site, as a significant number of multi-site studies have resulted in short-term visits to many sites (Herriott and Firestone, 1983). Under these conditions, it is unclear whether sufficient data can be collected to support generalizations in the first place (Schofield, 2000 [1990]).

Some scholars conclude that it is impossible for the researcher to guarantee the numerical validity of the generalization; however, the generalization can be used as a working hypothesis. Lincoln and Guba contend that “between the poles of the most *general* (nomothetic) and the most *specific* (idiographic) is a broad range of the *related*” (2000 [1979]: 38, emphasis original), which can be validated by “the degree of *transferability*” (2000 [1979]: 40, emphasis original). In accordance with this principle, researchers defer to the reader’s judgment regarding the applicability of their findings. The responsibility of the researcher is to provide a description that enables the reader to evaluate a similarity.

Now an inquirer cannot know all the contexts to which someone may wish to transfer working hypotheses; one cannot reasonably expect him or her to indicate the range of contexts to which there might be some transferability. But it is entirely reasonable to expect an inquirer to provide sufficient information about the context in which an inquiry is carried out so that *anyone else interested in transferability*

has a base of information appropriate to the judgement. (Lincoln and Guba, 2000 [1979]: 40, emphasis added)

This transferability is further developed with the relativist claim that the objective of research is not to find a single correct interpretation, which is impossible, but to provide the reader with a variety of interpretations (Donmeyer, 2000 [1990]). The shortcoming with transferability is that the researcher cannot determine what should be studied in the research design and also abandons the problem of generalization rather than providing a solution, inviting the criticism that the researcher is just making it easier (Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster, 2000).

The majority of ethnographers working in the field of sociology today argue more ardently for theoretical generalizations than empirical generalizations. It is congruent with the primary objective of social science, which is to generalize specific phenomena through the utilization of sociological theory, or, to put it another way, to explain specific phenomena through sociological theory and to identify relationships of causation. This generalization can also take into consideration the traditional dichotomy between the individual and society (or its modern version, agency and structure). Take edgework, for example. The activities of skydivers who voluntarily engage in high-risk activities are used to illustrate the issue of identity in contemporary society, specifically the emancipation of the self who is oppressed by modern capitalist society (Lyng, 1990). In order to address the explanation as to why some people decide to engage in edgework, edgework was initially associated with the social theories of Marx and Mead (Lyng, 1990), whereas second-generation edgework studies incorporated Beck's risk theory thesis (Mellor and Shilling, 2021).

There are at least two concerns with theoretical generalization in ethnographic research design. They will be explored in greater detail later in this paper, so I will keep this part brief. First, theoretical generalization eliminates a case's fine details and runs the risk of limiting the study's own capabilities. Given that theoretical generalization relies on theory as an explanation for why a case takes the form it does, the relevance of a description of a case would be limited to only those that can be explained by abstract theory, diminishing the significance of an in-depth quality that quantitative statistical surveys are incapable of capturing, a strength that ethnographers have proclaimed. The uniqueness of a situation and the manner in which people materialize that uniqueness are subdued by theoretically generated concepts, such as power, knowledge, identity, gender, inequality, modernization, urbanization,

risk society, edgework, etc., and are not studied in their own right. This is the problem of constructing “cultural dope” (Garfinkel, 1967:68). Second, there is a presumption in establishing theoretical generalizations that only ethnographers can identify the social order using sophisticated professional theories and methodologies. Prior to sociologists posing questions about social order, however, social order has already been established by society’s members, who themselves know how to establish social order. This brings us back to the earlier issue: theoretical generalization eliminates a case’s fine details.

3. Autoethnography

Autoethnography is likely the first method that comes to mind when it comes to using one’s personal experiences as a source of data for qualitative research, setting it apart from traditional ethnography. Once considered a fad (Gans, 1999) at the turn of the century, autoethnography is now a well-established qualitative research method and result. The increasing popularity of autoethnography may indicate that positivism is less influential than it once was. Prior to the rise of autoethnography, the researchers’ own existence did not play a role in the description of the phenomenon being studied. There were a few notable ethnographies in which the researcher recounted his or her own experiences in an autobiographical manner; however, the number of these ethnographies was limited. I will examine the generalization strategies adopted by each of the two autoethnography fields, evocative autoethnography and analytic autoethnography, in accordance with Anderson’s (2006) broad categories.

Autoethnography employs reflexivity as a means of reflecting on the researcher’s own subjectivity and incorporating the inevitability and subjectivity of the researcher’s existence into the research. This is a clear reversal of traditional, “realist” ethnography, which asserted the objectivity and neutrality of its observations by excluding the researcher from ethnographic writings, which, from an autoethnographic perspective, would be devious or dishonest. Despite autoethnography’s deliberate disregard for academic standards, the problem of generalization persists. Generalizations in autoethnography do not adhere to a positivist paradigm since there can be only one case: the researcher’s own experience. The strategy of evocative autoethnography is to leave it up to the reader to determine the generalizable relevance of the researcher’s subjectivity.

In autoethnography, the focus of generalizability moves from respondents to readers, and is always being tested by readers as they determine if a story speaks

to them about their experience or about the lives of others they know; it is determined by whether the (specific) autoethnographer is able to illuminate (general) unfamiliar cultural processes. (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011, para. 35)

Apparently, this is the contemporary version of the aforementioned transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 2000 [1979]; Donmeyer, 2000 [1990]) where the generalization is abandoned on the researcher's side. The reader now takes on the role of the generalizer, which was conventionally held by the researcher. This generalization puts autoethnography closer to literary works and provides a legitimate justification for the writers of autoethnographies to write in a range of formats that are sometimes uncommon in academic papers, such as diaries and poetry, the "graphy" of autoethnography (Adams, Jones and Ellis, 2021), though often unconvincing to those outside the autoethnography. More problematic is the unchallenged assumption that individual cases can be generalized. "Come and experience what it is like, and then examine how you feel about it...the examination part is important" (Campbell, 2017, para. 39). What is being abandoned is the question of intersubjectivity: how you are able to "feel" my experience. By adopting the strategy of passing on the validity of the generalization to the reader, the question of how an individual instance can be intersubjectively generalized is deemed a foregone conclusion and neglected. This generalization is also likely to prompt the objection that the subjectivities autoethnographers are attempting to evoke in the reader are only those accepted in academic circles (Delamont, 2013). Consequently, generalization by the reader's empathy may result in a mere generalization of the researcher's presentation of self as conscientious, sensitive, and moral.

Analytic ethnography offers another form of generalization. Analytic autoethnography is similar to evocative autoethnography in that the researcher's self is prominently featured (Anderson and Austin, 2012). However, whereas evocative autoethnography focuses primarily on "describing feelings," analytic autoethnography focuses more on "theoretical development" (Anderson and Austin, 2012: 133). Anderson (2006), who questions the status of contemporary autoethnography as research, argues that autoethnography should incorporate an analytical perspective, which he defines as "a broad set of data-transcending practices that are directed toward theoretical development, refinement, and extension" (Anderson, 2006: 387). Bakhsh's (2022) analysis of Goffman's identity management through the analytic autoethnography of male strippers is an illustration of the theoretical generalization. If Anderson's goals

are realized, analytical autoethnography will potentially make autoethnography more compatible with the social sciences¹). Consequently, it will inherit the problems with theoretical generalization that I have discussed in the previous section.

4. An ethnomethodological alternative

Ethnomethodology is the study of people's shared practices of establishing social order in their everyday affairs. Ethnomethodology is sociology in the same way that sociology is the study of things that people take for granted in social life. The difference, however, is in the attitude toward this taken-for-granted, commonsense version of social reality. Sociologists have been claiming that the common-sense version of social reality is either inaccurate or doubtful, and it is sociology that can provide the true version of social reality via sociological theories and methodologies. Berger (1963) succinctly expresses this orthodox view: "The first wisdom of sociology is this—things are not what they seem" (Berger, 1963: 23)²). Ethnomethodologists, on the other hand, argue that this epistemological stance creates the "missing what" in sociology.

Garfinkel frequently accompanies a story of the "Howard Becker phenomenon" (Button, Crabtree, Rouncefield, and Tolmie, 2015). Becker (1951) demonstrates the social construction of the self through the professional work of jazz musicians. Through their interactions with the audience, the musicians become aware of the disconnect between what they value about the genre of music and what the audience wants to hear. The musicians find themselves in a situation where they must play music they look down on for the sake of money. This induces the musicians to become more emotionally and behaviorally isolated and outside of the social norm, a process known as "self-segregation" (Becker, 1951: 141). What is yet missing from Becker's illustration of the professional lives of musicians is the very work of making music together, despite the fact that this is central to their jobs. Garfinkel goes on to argue that "a descriptive literature on occupational praxis is absent to the entire field of the sociology of occupations. It is nowhere to be found" (Garfinkel, unpub. cited in Button, Crabtree, Rouncefield, and Tolmie, 2015: 117), thus making it less personal as "missing what." It is not that sociologists have overlooked it; they have missed it. It is hard to imagine that Becker, who himself made his living playing jazz piano, overlooked the phenomenon of making music. Becker should have known it very well. Rather, missing is the consequence of asserting that professional sociological reasoning is more authoritative than that of competent practitioners (Button, Sharrock, and Lynch, 2022).

In ethnomethodology, sociological reasoning of any kind will be respecified in the ordinary course of action (Butt, 1991).

Ethnomethodological studies of work are an ambitious research program aimed at studying what conventional sociology has missed. Work in this context is used in the sense of achieving or accomplishing something that is required for, and involved in, any social activity, whether it is done professionally or for leisure (Butt, 2012). Consider work that involves multiple numbers of people?an obvious illustration. Whether it is a relatively simple and mundane activity such as walking together (Schenkein & Ryave, 1974), a physically demanding activity such as running together (Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2013), or a complex and professional task at a plumber's office (Sakai, Korenaga, Mizukawa, and Igarashi, 2014), no collaborative activity is possible without organization of the collaborative work of those involved in it. Solo activities are also made possible by work, e.g., birding by ear (Have, 2013), seeing fish (Lynch, 2013), recognizing a pickpocket (Carlin, 2003), playing the piano (Sudnow, 1978; Yoshikawa, 2018), working on a mathematical proof and jigsaw puzzle (Livingston, 2008), not to mention reading (Watson, 2009), the very activity that you, the reader, are currently engaged in. Even being an ordinary individual requires the work of doing the ordinary (Sacks, 1992, Spring 1970, Lecture 1). Ethnography becomes relevant to ethnomethodology in order to analyze how members hold themselves accountable for their work, a practice that members take for granted. "Accountable" means observable and reportable, and so intelligible to members. "Member" is another term in ethnomethodology with a specific meaning. Member does not relate to a demography but rather to a "mastery of natural language" (Garfinkel and Sacks, 1986 [1969]: 160), although it is clear from the preceding discussion that membership includes the ability to carry on a conversation in ordinary life as well as a mastery of shared knowledges and practices of work. Garfinkel proclaims that the principle of ethnomethodological study is to focus on "the activities whereby members produce and manage settings of organized everyday affairs are identical with members' procedures for making those settings 'account-able.'" (Garfinkel, 1967: 1). This is the ethnomethodological sense of "reflexivity," which has no bearing on the researcher's examination of the self in research. Ethnomethodological ethnography is distinguished from other ethnographies by the principle that its research design does not establish or demand a dualism of subjectivity and objectivity. Accountability is neither a subjective assumption nor something hidden until it is defined by an objective social scientific theory or method.

Accountability is intersubjective, “recognisable things that they are for ‘anyone around here’” (Crabtree, Rouncefield, and Tolmie, 2012: 28).

Given the above, ethnomethodological studies can choose to use the researcher’s own experience as data, but the result is not autoethnography³⁾. The idea of a member clearly indicates that the analytic (not a theoretical overtone that is present in analytic autoethnography) focus of ethnomethodology is not on the person but rather on the doing. Consider the turn-taking system in everyday conversation (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974) that constitutes the basic structure of everyday conversation. There is an order, and the rules constituting that order, that participants in the conversation utilize to organize the phenomenon of conversation. Consider the speaker change. The basic rule of the speaker change is that the next speaker is selected when an utterance in the calculation approaches a “transition-relevance place” (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974: 704). If the current speaker selects the next speaker, the selected individual has the right to speak. If the current speaker has not selected the next speaker, someone other than the current speaker may self-select to be the next speaker. If the current speaker does not select the next speaker and no one else self-selects to speak, the current speaker may continue speaking. This rule is well known and utilized by members who engage in everyday conversation. Because of these rules, departures from the rules are immediately identifiable. For instance, interruption occurs when a speaker who is not now speaking begins to talk before the transition-relevance place in the ongoing speech. A conversational turn-taking system is an orderly piece of “machinery” (Sacks, 1984) that participants in a given conversation utilize. This perspective of machinery contrasts with social science orthodoxies that “view a society as a piece of machinery with relatively few orderly products, where, then, much of what else takes place is more or less random” (Sacks, 1984: 21). The machinery has generalizable and reproducible qualities: it was used to have a conversation with someone yesterday; it is used to have a conversation with someone today; it will be used to have a conversation with someone tomorrow; and so on. Although each conversation has a one-time specificity, the participants will carry on their conversation as usual, utilizing the machinery of the turn-taking system. Neither empirical nor theoretical generalizations support the generalization of the turn-taking system, nor are the acts of the speakers explained by causation. The turn-taking system is based on a member’s regularity managed in each occasion of a conversation.

Consider another machinery, the membership categorization device. Consider the intelligibility of a children’s story: “The baby cried. The mommy picked it up” (Sacks,

1974). Even though it is not mentioned explicitly in the first sentence, we (at least for the readers who are now reading this paper that is written in English) should have no trouble inferring that the mother and baby have a parent-child relationship, which means that the baby is the mother's child and the mother is the baby's parent. This inference is achieved through the application of a consistency rule to categorize members of a particular population, that is, if "baby" is used to categorize the first person, then "the mother" can be categorized using the collection "family." Even a single instance suffices to generalize this machinery. As Crabtree, Tolmie, and Rouncefield (2013: 7, emphasis original) observe, "you only need one, and you only need one because *in ordering interaction*, the machinery provides for its *own generalisation*, including its reproducibility and prediction." In addition, this machinery's representativeness is not determined statistically but by its members. Categorization is the representativeness that members recognize because they perceive a particular individual to be a particular type of individual (Carlin, 2003). It is evident that the membership categorization device is not a sociological theory either. It is possible for the classification to be inaccurate. However, regardless of whether the result is accurate or inaccurate, it starts with the inference-making machinery.

To conduct ethnomethodology research, therefore, researchers must be competent members. Becoming a member is more challenging if the subject requires specialized knowledge, a high level of expertise, or is spoken in a foreign language than if the subject only requires the study of everyday conversation, which may be sufficient to attain fluency in the native language. Again, since members do not refer to individual people, this is not an endorsement of joining the research subject (though the researcher may end up being one) nor in order to obtain competence. Being a part of the research subject is not an essential issue.

In the section that follows, I will use my own experience driving a slot car to illustrate the member's generalizable regularities the embodied work of braking in slot car driving. Since November 2021, in the capacity of both a researcher and a racer, I have conducted extensive fieldwork at a slot car raceway to become a member.

5. Dexterous skills of slot car driving

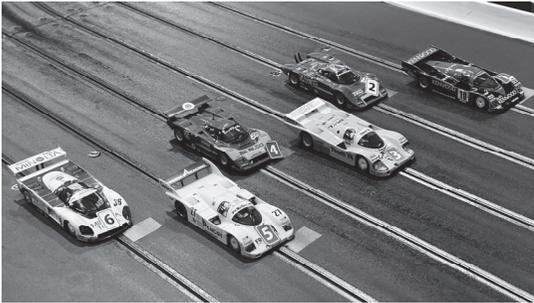


Figure 1. Slot cars



Figure 2. Slot car racing (photograph by the courtesy of Mitsuru Fukuda)

Slot car racing is a type of competitive hobby in which participants use motorized miniature cars to compete against one another on a race track, also called a circuit, that features a variety of turns and elevation changes to present the racers with a challenging environment in which to compete. Despite the growing popularity of video game racing simulators, there are still those who enjoy and participate in traditional hobby racing. Slot cars are controlled by a handheld controller? that allows for acceleration and deceleration. There is no mechanism for turning slot cars. The manner in which slot cars change direction is similar to that of trains (the very first slot cars originated from model railroading), although unlike trains, which are guided by elevated rails, slot cars are guided by grooves or slots, hence the name. Slot cars are directed by a flag that protrudes from the bottom of the vehicle and fits into the grooves on the track surface for each lane. These grooves are lined with two steel rails, and the vehicles draw the electricity through those steel rails using a set of metal braids that are constructed around the guide flag. Drivers accelerate or decelerate by pulling the trigger of a gun-like controller. The slot car's speed is determined by the trigger's depth based on the voltage it receives from the track lane on which it runs. Squeezing the trigger speeds up the slot car, while releasing it slows it down.

Due to the fact that the only maneuver required to operate a slot car is speed, slot cars are easy to start. Driving a slot car without de-slotting or falling off the track is challenging. De-slotting causes the car to leave its lane, sometimes becoming airborne or even flying completely off the track, because the guide flag is the only thing that keeps a slot car in its lane. In a competition where milliseconds matter, de-slotting is fatal. A de-slotted vehicle cannot rejoin the race until it is brought back by the turn marshal, which will take at least a few seconds, leaving the de-slotted vehicle significantly behind the other vehicles. The leading cause of de-slotting is excessive

speed. When a slot car enters a curve, the rear of the vehicle will swing toward the outside of the curve due to centrifugal force. As speed increases, the swing becomes more expansive, and when the swing becomes excessively expansive, the slot car will spin, causing the guide flag to be lifted from the groove and de-slotted. Therefore, the only way to prevent de-slotting is to slow down before entering a curve. Nevertheless, racing is a battle for speed. Competitors spend the majority of their practice time prior to a race focusing on speed control through a curve that serves as a bridge between the contradictory objectives of maintaining stability and pursuing speed. This is a practical problem that all slot car racing competitors must solve, and it is thus a research question for an ethnomethodological investigation: how is it accomplished?

When a slot car goes into a curve, the driver must apply braking by releasing the trigger. No speed adjustment is made when entering a turn. The vehicle will enter the corner with its own inertia. The speed adjustment is completed before entering the turn. Thus, *finding the braking point* has a practical importance. The “braking point” is the point at which a car that has applied its brakes can slow down sufficiently to a speed at which it will not run off the track when coasting into a corner. Ideally, the braking point should be reached just before the point where the car goes off course. This allows for both stability and speed. The problem is, how late can it be? During the practice session preceding the race, during which the drivers are permitted to run as many laps as time permits, the appropriate breaking point is determined by failure-based learning⁴. If braking at a particular spots results in a de-slot, the breaking point was set too late and thus inaccurate. This is obvious. The driver will attempt to position the brakes a little earlier on the following lap than they did on the one before it. If the slot car does not de-slot, the driver will attempt to move the braking point a little later. The driver makes trial-and-error attempts repeatedly in the practice session to identify the optimal braking point that is late but not too late to bring a slot car through a turn at a speed that is fast but not too fast without causing the slot car to de-slot. *Seeing fishtailing* is another essential practice to locate the optimal breaking point. The drivers pay attention to how the rear end of the car behaves at the curve. As previously stated, when the rear end slides out too much, a slot car spins out and de-slots. Fishtailing refers to a situation when the rear end of a slot car swings widely from one side to the other in the middle of the curve but stays on the track nonetheless. Fishtailing a noticeable indication that the slot car has hit of the limits, that is, on the verge of de-slotting. The drivers see fishtailing as a premonitory sign that points to the state that although the slot car has not yet de-slotted, it would be very likely to do so if the

breaking point went any later. Seeing the fishtail is also a practice to determine the next action, that is, how the breaking point should be approached in the subsequent lap.

Finding the breaking point and seeing fishtailing are constituents of *edge anticipation*. Here, the term “edge” refers to the very boundary between whether or not a slot car crosses the line to de-slot⁵). Edge anticipation and the set of practices can be replicated on other occasions. On the basis of these practices, the way the curve is turned is adjusted each time according to the shape of the individual curve and the speed leading up to it. Ultimately, the driver is expected to find the optimal braking point for every curve, and even more, it must be possible to achieve the same thing over many laps and to do the same thing in the actual race as it was done in practice⁶). When the slot car de-slots, the drivers nonetheless engage in edge anticipation; there was an inaccurate anticipation. Finding the breaking point and seeing fishtailing are both generalizable practices, not just for one driver but also for other drivers on the track, other drivers at other raceways, other drivers in foreign countries, for anybody who is involved in the work of driving a slot car to the limits. These are the members’ regularities that are locally operated in the occasional work of slot car driving. Of course, even when going around the same curves, contingent factors such as road conditions (for example, dust on the track that leads to less grip on the tires and a longer distance to stop under braking) and/or physical conditions of a driver (fatigueness, loss of concentration, poor eyesight) can cause a driver to go de-slot. It requires work to repeat the same thing over and over.

6. Concluding remarks

Generalizations in social sciences have been based on numbers or theory. Many researchers have attempted to contribute by developing their own generalizations that differ from positivism and qualitative research, particularly survey research that employs statistics, and have integrated them into research designs. However, these alternatives have not been sufficient, as they have either resulted in weak generalization claims or diminished the value of their own qualitative research. In these studies, generalization has been viewed as a researcher’s concern. This study has shifted the focus to generalization as a member’s concern and addresses an alternate approach to the problem of generalization with an ethnomethodological perspective. As Sharrock and Randall (2004) remind us, observable regularities in society are neither the result of external influences (in many cases) nor do they require the professional

or specialized thought of experts. I argued that doings are generalizable because they are generalized by members. Using my personal experience as a researcher and slot car racer, I have demonstrated that edge anticipation is a generalizable regularity that any slot car driver uses. This generalization is neither empirically nor theoretically validated, nor does it require such validation. I have no reason to abandon the validity and reliability of edge anticipation because this generalization is the member's generalization, which I have come to describe as research from an ethnomethodological perspective, as a member myself.

Returning to the question posed at the beginning of this paper, is personal experience validly generalizable? The answer is yes, and I have shown that one solid answer can be given by ethnomethodology by explicating the member's work. This, however, is neither a correction or a remedy for the conventional social scientific method of generalizability, as it respecifies generalizability as incommensurable to the orthodoxy.

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Notes

- 1) Bochner and Ellis (2016), who are attempting to depart from the conventional research framework with evocative autoethnography, disagree with this point and exclude analytic autoethnography from autoethnography for this reason.
- 2) The American Sociological Association uses this quote in their merchandise. It has been printed on one side of a tote bag.
- 3) The difference is clarified by the incommensurability of self-reflexivity (Francis and Hester, 2004). Compare Allen-Collinson and Hockey (2001) and Hockey and Allen-Collinson (2013).
- 4) While slot car racing has many similarities with real car racing, testing the limits by failures is perhaps stand out as the most particular practice in slot car racing to its counterpart. One obvious reason behind this difference is the extent of the damage caused by the crash.
- 5) I am situating the discussion against the theoretical backdrop of "edgework" (Lyng, 1990), the highly skillful voluntary risk-taking action "as a form of boundary negotiation" (Lyng, 2005:

4).

- 6) Due to time constraints, practice time is primarily allocated to places where the degree of difficulty is high, such as hairpin curves, which require the most detailed maneuvering, and entering a curve immediately after reaching maximum speed on a long straight, rather than low-speed curves, where the braking points are not required as severely and where there is a less chance of de-slot.

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