

Master's Series on Field Research

A series of interviews with major figures in field research conducted in the early 1980s
by Peter Blanck

Transcript of an interview with George Homans



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Peter Blanck: The first question, which is your definition of field research?

George Homans: Well I think field research is any kind of study of human beings that involves either direct observation of them or direct talking to them, both, but without using any formal instrument, though they may come in, that's not essential to field research. This may be done either under the auspices of some outside body or the company if that's industrial, or you may do it by, what we call, participation. Participant observation, that is just going in on your own.

Peter Blanck: How have you decided to do a field research project in the past? What made it interesting for you to start a project and when did you feel it was appropriate to pursue a problem that interested you, a theoretical problem in the field?

George Homans: Nuts to the theoretical problem, it's purely an empirical problem. After the war I -- previous to that I'd done a lot of research -- but after the war, for instance, I thought it was time to do some research on clerical workers, simply because nobody had done any research on clerical workers.

Peter Blanck: And what -- in your first times you went into the field, what were some of the typical problems you faced, typical learning experiences, the critical issues whether they were ethical, were there types of skills you had to develop in the field?

George Homans: Actually, the first -- if you take the first field research that I was responsible for was a study of steel workers out in New Castle, Pennsylvania who were unemployed. The problem I ran into was not talking to the steel workers, we'd gotten an introduction to their leaders from the steel worker's union, but the fact that, stupidly, I had said that I was -- which I was -- from the Harvard Business school and there was something called the Greater New Castle Association which is the Chamber of Commerce that said, "what is this character doing here from the Harvard Business School", and went back to the Harvard Business School to find out if I was legit.

Peter Blanck: What did they find out?

George Homans: They found out I was legit. In the meanwhile, they thought that I was a spy of some kind. New Castle was in bad shape at that time.

Peter Blanck: What about your early experiences with Elton Mayo in the Boston VA, was it?

George Homans: No, it was the then called the Boston Dispensary, it's now, I guess the New England Medical Center down on Washington Street in what is now the combat zone. He'd gotten permission from a guy called Doctor Joe Platt who was high in the organization, I don't know if he was head of it or not, who would run something called a thought control clinic. There were always a large number of people that come in to a hospital that would have nothing wrong with them that the doctors can find and it must be, they though, psychological. Pratt's, not Platt's, thought control clinic got them in and

they discussed their common problems. It went on from that to -- Pratt, who was a friend of Mayo's saying, we will pick out people that our doctors say have no medical troubles and your students can interview them in the dispensary wearing white coats and so on, looking like doctors but not saying we were doctors. Our only instructions, we'd already read a lot of Freudian and other psychology, was to ask the patients to talk about anything they wanted but basically, we would ask them to try and talk about their own lives, particularly their early lives.

Peter Blanck: What did you do specifically in that setting? What did you learn from that setting?

George Homans: I learned to carry out what we'd been taught by god knows enough reading and discussion, how to carry out a version of what's called nondirective interviewing.

Peter Blanck: Can you explain what nondirective interviewing is?

George Homans: Nondirective interviewing is all explained in a chapter of Roethlisberger & Dickson called Management and the Worker. I don't think I could do it better than that, and that is that you essentially leave the patient to say what he wants, you don't interfere, you don't try to tell him what to say but simply follow up and back him up on what he or she wants to talk about.

Peter Blanck: What kind of teacher was Mayo? What kind of person was he to work with and how did he shape the type of research and your ideas about field research?

George Homans: He was a devotee of field research in the sense that he was a -- it's a very special kind, I suppose, field research-- he was a psychiatrist. He had known, in Brisbane, Australia, at least two famous field researchers in anthropology who must have talked to him about field research. One of them was Bronislaw Malinowski and the other one was Arthur Radcliffe Brown.

Peter Blanck: Roethlisberger and Dickson, did they all work closely together in the years that you were there, what kind of... [inaudible]

George Homans: The Western Electric research was in the main lines of it, not the company's own later research program, but the Harvard directed part of it was coming to an end when I first knew Mayo, though I did go out a couple of times to Hawthorne. I never did any work there.

Peter Blanck: How did they get in touch and decide to do the actual Hawthorne work? Do you know any of the history behind that?

George Homans: I don't know, but it began as somebody else's work, I've forgotten just who it was, it's written up in Roethlisberger and Dickson's -- in Roethlisberger's

autobiography. Mayo, when he came to Harvard, took it over, more or less. I don't know what the reason for the shift was.

Peter Blanck: You had done the Boston Edison Study many years later in the fifties, is that right?

George Homans: Oh much later, yes, that was after World War two.

Peter Blanck: What had you been doing meanwhile with regard to field research?

George Homans: I'd been at sea for five years.

Peter Blanck: In the war?

George Homans: Yes. Commanding ships.

Peter Blanck: And you came back and you started doing field research again, it was the Boston Edison Study...

[both talking at once, inaudible]

George Homans: Yes, well, almost right away. I couldn't do it immediately but I did it - I think I got back in forty six, I was kept on longer than I should have been by the Navy because I was considered a military necessity, which I've never fully understood, but is really flattering. I didn't get back till forty six and I didn't get rolling on field work, really --though I did some work on wild cat strikes, out in Detroit-- I didn't really get going on my own field research until 1950.

Peter Blanck: Can you describe your Boston Edison study, some of the things you learned from that?

George Homans: I learned two main things, one of them was a very very obvious thing, strangely enough, and that was that, which we knew already, there were certain groups were more productive than others and we had data on this. Social life seemed to be connected, to some extent, with productivity. I think the greatest discovery I made at the Boston Edison Company was that the more you talk, the more productive you were. The company had a rule that the girls shouldn't talk while they were doing this particular job, but they all did and nobody tried to stop them, and I counted the number of times they talked, that is, I took a sample of the number of times they talked and I found the number of times they talked correlated very highly with their production of whatever they were doing, which was in fact what they call pulling cash, which meant that they were taking the stubs of bills and matching them up with a billing card so that the -- under that current system a customer wouldn't be billed twice. It showed that he paid his bill for the last month.

Peter Blanck: You had mentioned an interesting story, how you were woven into the social network of that company, you mentioned being master of ceremonies, given the [interrupted by answer].

George Homans: Yeah, I was -- without being -- trying to do it at all. All I'd done was sit in the back of the room and watch, occasionally wander around and talk to people and learning all the different kinds of jobs and also observing interactions between workers and -- most of the time when I regularly interviewed everyone. It was a rule, it seems hard to believe, in the Boston Edison in those days that if you got married you had to leave. It was a very catholic company. Girls, these pretty young women, were always leaving and we put on a -- decorated their little desk and gave them presents and flowers and so on. They didn't want to ask the bosses and I was available so they asked me to present presents, and worst of all, to pin a flower on the heaving breasts of these young women, and that was -- I didn't try to do this, this was their idea.

Peter Blanck: So you got the title of master of ceremonies?

George Homans: I became the master of ceremonies, I wasn't ever labeled that, but that's what I was.

Peter Blanck: You had mentioned you had interviewed someone from Boston Edison and then you went back to talk with them a second time and they had no memory of you?

George Homans: Yes, there was of them -- mostly women that worked in -- this was the customer's accounting division, so called -- there were some men that worked in the division and one of them was an older man who'd been there for a long time. I asked everyone whether they were willing to be interviewed, it was on company time, they varied very much in length from about an hour or about three hours. This particular man had agreed to be interviewed and I interviewed him, seemed like a perfectly reasonable standard interview. I always started off with what's your job like and then went on a nondirective fashion. After it was over, he went to see the local medical people, they had some in the company, and said he had completely forgotten what he'd said to me; and he had, though I couldn't figure out what I'd said or he had said that was threatening in any way, if that was reason.

Peter Blanck: You had done some work at the Ford Motor Company also?

George Homans: Yes, this was slightly before the Boston Edison Company.

Peter Blanck: What did you do at Ford?

George Homans: We were interested in the wild cat strikes, there was an epidemic of them right after the end of World War Two in 47 and 48 and two of us were sent out by Mayo to see what we could find out. We didn't find out very much because we always -- wild cat strike, you don't know when it's going to start, and so we usually showed up after it was well under way, whereas we'd have liked to see the conditions under which we

started. One of the people I interviewed was a foreman in the Ford River Rouge Plant and I interviewed him at home. He was -- perfectly good interview, very nice fellow, had a good time with him except that he had a most outlandish pet, which was in fact a snapping turtle. A snapping turtle is the most dangerous animal in eastern North America. It has a long neck that can extend and take a real big bite out of you. He had this animal wandering around the floor while, in his living room, while I was interviewing him. I pulled up a chair, and even though that wouldn't have saved me from the snapping turtle if it had been mad, I put my feet up on it while the snapping turtle wandered around the floor. I wasn't bitten, no harm done, it was a nice snapping turtle.

Peter Blanck: So in a sense, some of the skills you developed through your years is defensive skills, how to protect yourself from attack by pets, while doing interviews?

George Homans: I don't know about attack from pets, that's the only pet I remember being scared of. I was terrified of it, but I went through my interview. I used to be entertained by other kinds of stories. One of the groups I was interested in the Boston Edison Company were the meter readers. They were, whereas most of the other clerks were women, they were men. They used to show, more or less as signs of, marks of distinction or wound stripes or whatever you want to call them, the fact that they'd been bitten all up and down their legs by dogs. Meter reading is a dangerous profession.

Peter Blanck: What was your style of keeping notes and at least quantifying the data at the end of the day?

George Homans: In those days, there were recording machines but you'd be surprised how much advance we've made since then. I decided, and many other people decided, that they would make people nervous if we had them in interviews, so I had no, took no notes or had any piece of paper or pencil before me, no recorder, but immediately after the interview I typed as rapidly as I could what I remembered of the interview. You could remember a great deal if you tried. Whether it was accurate or not, of course you can't be sure.

Peter Blanck: How did you generally enter an organization? You mentioned you entered the top...

George Homans: I always entered as near the top as I could. I couldn't always enter at the top but, for instance, in New Castle, Pennsylvania we started with Phil Murray who was head of the steel workers union and in the same way when we worked in the Boston Edison Company we started with the vice president in charge of public relations, or no, something like that to whom we'd been introduced by the business school and gradually worked down to where we were going to talk to people, explaining at every level what we were trying to do. This'd be true of the union. I started, possible, if they had a union, as near to the top and sometimes really at the top, as I could.

Peter Blanck: You had suggested when we talked last about how important it is to use a combination of different methods, the interview with the survey method, the observation

with the interview, and you'd mentioned Seashore had done a large work along those lines...

George Homans: Seashore, I forgot the title of his book, did a big survey of plant -- plant, I'd did my regular survey methods, which I don't consider field work methods. In a steel company that had about some two thousand workers, and you obviously couldn't make a field study of all of them, but all they did was to make a survey and they got some findings that were interesting. One of them was that the larger the number of inter-group choices there were, the more likely the group was to show, what I thought, was some sign of group control of output. Maybe you can explain that without having gone to see the group, but I think it would it have helped a lot if, together with the survey research they'd also taken a couple three four groups and made intensive field studies of them so we'd really know what some of these findings meant. One of the findings was that the higher the status of a group, as far as pay and so on are concerned, the more likely they were to exercise control over output and just why these should be connected, I'd think we'd have learned a lot more about it if we'd done some field studies.

Peter Blanck: You think some of Skinner's work, for instance his writing in *Walden Two*, is reflective of his...

George Homans: He's not a field worker.

Peter Blanck: Have people been employing his...

George Homans: And *Walden Two* wouldn't work as it did, as he said it would. Fred is an old friend of mine and I've always told him that if he ever set up a *Walden Two*, I'd like to come along as a field observer because I knew it wouldn't work the way he said it would.

Peter Blanck: Why do you think it wouldn't work?

George Homans: Because there are a whole lot of things that he'd paid no attention to. As a result of having done field work, I knew about it. He apparently didn't see how important they were. One of them was how you handle status, and he assumed that in this society everybody was going to be equal in spite of the fact that there were big differences in responsibility in *Walden Two*. In fact, no alleged *Walden Two* has ever worked the way Fred Skinner said it would. It's one of his worst books, entertaining, but bunk.

Peter Blanck: Have any of his ideas been used in field research?

George Homans: You can hardly help using them in field research, that is to say, you find people behaving according to the law of effect, that is, if you send a man to a foreman training school and tell him to behave in a certain very nice way towards workers, and then put him back into the company and no change has been made in the old situation, he will revert to his behavior as it was before he'd been trained, because that's

more rewarding. That's perfectly good Skinner. I'm not saying Skinner's always wrong, far from it, but *Walden Two* is for the birds. I used to make my students in a class I gave for years, write papers on *Walden Two* explaining why it would or would not work. My belief is, it wouldn't work. I don't think any of these experiments that claim to be Skinnerian, that are social experiments, have worked. He's a good experimental psychologist, but not a very good social psychologist.

Peter Blanck: What kind of training skills did you emphasize when you were teaching young researchers how to do field research?

George Homans: Basically, I taught them to go in there and keep their mouths shut. That's my doctrine. That's what nondirective interviewing is. You go in and, first of all, there is some obvious things you've got to do, you've got to explain, unless you're doing one of these studies where you just go in as a worker yourself and write down what you remember, you have to be very careful to explain to them what you're going to do and why you're going to do it. If they don't go along with your plan you'd better stop there because they'll stop you anyhow. The next thing you do is to assure them that nothing will be published unless they consent, which in my case, I've always done, and people will be disguised. The next thing you do, strangely enough, is not to start toying to people, but to learn all of the operations, not so you can do them as well as the workers can but at least know what they're doing and what the system is for the actual -- what department or other is supposed to do with what machinery and so on, and learn the operations so you know what they're about at least. Then, what I always did was spend part of my time in -- I liked to have a room where I could see what was going on all over it, that was one of the reasons for choosing a place, so it wasn't broken up by walls and so on. I spent part of my time observing what went on and part of my time wandering around and talking to people, parsing the time of day, not trying to push myself into any apparently private conversations or to bring up matters that they didn't want to bring up and then finally, conducting formal interviews but not with a schedule, but nondirective.

Peter Blanck: It must be difficult to develop the line between trust and intrusiveness, how do you -- you just have to develop a sense for when you're intruding too much and when you should back off?

George Homans: You usually can tell, from experience of ordinary life, when you're barging into a conversation or not.

Peter Blanck: You had compared the field research almost to a natural historian, if you could talk about that...

George Homans: In the sense that all of these sharpies around here used to talk about Thurstone methods of statistics and experimental methods and social psychology and so on. I was the only man who used to give a lecture on how the natural historian, who is watching a bird behaves, and there were some marvelous example of what can be done by this, by simple observation, and it's been done many times since but in those days the best example was, a fellow called Lack in England who wrote *A Life of the Robin*, which

was the social life of the robin, not our robin but the English robin, which is a different bird.

Peter Blanck: You devoted a whole lecture period to describing this novel and how that is an example...

George Homans: Wasn't a novel. It's a full book called *The Life of the Robin*.

Peter Blanck: What does he do in that book?

George Homans: Well he describes, for instance, how two robins work out territories, which has not become a common place, things like that, but he did it all with a pair of field glasses.

Peter Blanck: When was he doing his writing?

George Homans: This was in the fifties, I don't know whether I have it with me. David Lack, *The Life of the Robin*. Won him a fellowship of the English Royal Academy of Science.

Peter Blanck: What do you find most satisfying about doing field research, personally satisfying?

George Homans: I liked associating with people under these circumstances and they've usually been very very nice to me, and it's been good fun talking to them and most of them have been willing to talk. In fact, one of the things I discover is that a lot of people have had no attention at all ever paid to them as if they were counted for damn. I sat down with them for two or three hours, now that's quite an experience. I enjoyed -- finally after I became accepted, which I usually did, after awhile, I enjoyed the pure social life and the gossip that went on, entirely apart from the more formal things that I was doing.

Peter Blanck: Did you know Bill White, when he was in...

George Homans: Sure, he was great friend of mine.

Peter Blanck: What did you think of the work he was doing at the time?

George Homans: He was doing field work before I was, because I got involved in medieval history, which is a very different kind of thing while he was interviewing men in the north end.

Peter Blanck: Did you talk to him about the development -- did you know him when he was just starting to go into the north end?

George Homans: Sure.

Peter Blanck: What sort of problems was he facing? How did that study evolve, if you know that?

George Homans: I don't know, but he has an extra chapter on the end of one of his editions that describes this, so you can find out, but I've forgotten. The trouble always is, comes at the very beginning. Get people to know you. In New Castle, Pennsylvania it was quite easy because my method of sampling, if that's what it was, was to -- we were working through the steel workers union, the union would tell us an unemployed worker that might be a likely person to talk to, so I'd go and talk to him and then would ask, who would you suggest I go and see?

Peter Blanck: It seemed like, after White's book came out, Peter Blau then came out with the next major...

George Homans: Well Blau was a long time after, because Peter Blau is just a very good piece of field work. It didn't come out till 1950's sometime, I think.

Peter Blanck: That seemed to represent a whole new way of looking at field research, more scientific, more quantitatively oriented. What are your feelings on that?

George Homans: I don't think there's, to put it that way, more quantitatively or any -- I don't think the quantitative part of Peter Blau's book really made any difference.

Peter Blanck: What do you think...

George Homans: I'd done some quantitative work in my study of Boston Edison which was before, but maybe contemporary with Peter, but I did some minor quantitative work there counting interactions.

Peter Blanck: There are many field research studies done in that time period, what really differentiated Blau's and White's work from the rest of the pack? Those are the two that you really hear about, those are the prototypical examples that are given in sociology classes.

George Homans: Well those are the ones that are seen, at least to me, because I have used both of them to get at possible generalizations that interested me.

Peter Blanck: Which were? What would be an example of that?

George Homans: Well, you know, the relationship -- Bill White's book between the social rank of the individuals and things like the way they scored at, what was it? Bowling. The relation being social organization and other things. And in Blau's book, the interest was in the fact that -- how you got status in the group, which is, of course, a very important thing in any small group.

Peter Blanck: What's your opinion of the field research that's coming out today and the future of field research? It seems that people are -- with the onset of the computer age and with people just sending out more and more questionnaires and coming back and raking through the data without doing much observation. What is your feelings on...

George Homans: I don't think they're doing any field research, with the possible exception of some of the anthropologists. I haven't run into, though maybe simply because I'm getting old and don't read as many books as I used to. I haven't run into any piece of field research that I consider really terribly exciting.

Peter Blanck: What would -- if you could imagine, what would be an exciting piece of field research for you, what would be an example of that? Not a particular book, but what would strike you, something new or something that you haven't thought about before? What would be interesting...

George Homans: That's an obvious question. Go for the kinds of places in American or other life that haven't been studied. I want to know how a computer organization or design or construction and both, works.

Peter Blanck: Even more, to the moment, take an example of Reagan's differing attitude towards the rich and poor.

George Homans: The rich and the poor, his differing attitudes... well since they're obviously equivalent to my differing attitudes I'm not particularly interested in them. I think I know differences between the rich and the poor. The rich and the poor are much more alike than they seem except for money, which is often been said. Including Hemmingway.

Peter Blanck: Are there any other anecdotal stories that you'd like to mention. I had gone through most of the things we had talked about. Your feelings on the future of field research and the social sciences...

George Homans: All I can say is I wish more people would do it. Some of my students have done it but it hasn't been published. I had a student who studied a very interesting kind of thing. His idea was to look at organizations that are run by the workers themselves instead of by bosses, and one of the interesting cases is the garbage collectors in a number of places in this country. He really went out with the garbage haulers and it was a very good piece of field work, I thought, but he never -- hasn't yet published it and then back many years ago there's a lot of very good unpublished field work. I had a student who made studies simply by going and getting a job there of an agricultural machinery operation, one department of a big plant. Never been published, it's too bad.

Peter Blanck: And what about a film like this? You think it's a waste of time? We should be really -- if we're interested in field research just get out in the field and do it or do you think this could be useful to help people, at least make them more aware of the types of issues that field researchers are facing?

George Homans: You can't tell until -- if you wanted to make a test try somebody in the field who's been exposed to this and somebody who hasn't. That's the only way I guess you can have of telling, and maybe that wouldn't tell you. But I don't think it'll do them any harm, put it that way. I certainly learned from the basic rules of nondirective interviewing, which is certainly part of field research, or reading after all, which is not field research itself.

Peter Blanck: But there are no longer the great mentors around anymore that are doing field research to teach the younger...

George Homans: I know, and that's bad. We have that problem in other areas. Latin is no longer taught and therefore medieval history's going to disappear.

Peter Blanck: I think I covered..

George Homans: If you care about that... I do.

Unidentified camera operator: Is field research going to disappear...

George Homans: No no no. I think people will continue to do field research. It's very rewarding, I think, in its own right. The trouble is that it's expensive, takes a lot of time for what you get and there's always the question that bothers the statisticians, but doesn't bother me, is whether you're getting something very atypical or not. I think that anything you get about the behavior of people is interesting whether it's typical or not. As the great Lord Nelson said, this is a metaphor, when he was going into battle at Trafalgar, he said to his ship captains, "No one can go far wrong who lays his ship along side one of the enemies." That's my view about field research except they're not enemies.

Peter Blanck: You had mentioned that you were in the Navy for six years. You were captain of a ship?

George Homans: I was captain of three different ships. My rank wasn't captain, but captain is the title you have if you're in fact in command.

Peter Blanck: Did you learn anything from that experience? Obviously, there were a lot of things going on but...

George Homans: I certainly did and one thing I learned was, which of course you don't learn from ordinary field research, and that is the isolation, the social isolation of a commanding officer. People are scared of you. Perhaps they shouldn't have been, but -- in one of our convoy runs, which was from Trinidad down to a place called Recife in Brazil, all the ship captains and their squad group, we were escorting a group of merchant ships... we'd get together at the local bar and everybody would say, "no body loves me on my ship, George," and I would say, "how true." Again, you did learn some things

which are very much like field research, and that is, for god's sake don't do things in a hurry. Wait. I got into more trouble by deciding like that than by doing anything else.

Unidentified camera operator: Did you ever use this personal experience in the Navy to apply to its research...

George Homans: I wrote a book, a little paper called Small Warship, which is a bloody good study.

Peter Blanck: What did you talk about in that study?

George Homans: You look at it and read it, why should I have to tell you? I don't remember what I said.

Unidentified camera operator: I was thinking about applying your personal experiences towards studying top executives, let's say, because there is a lot of...

George Homans: Oh yeah, I haven't done that. But what I really learned was the same thing that nondirective interview teaches you but you always find it hard to carry out, and especially hard to carry out when you're carrying a responsibility, which you're not of course, when you're doing ordinary field work. I've made several snap judgments and they backfired on me. In fact, I -- the whole engine room crew once asked me for an interview which I held with them and they had a grievance, which was a legitimate grievance in a way. Any how, had something important to it and I'd made a decision about that was the wrong decision and then they came to me and then they and I talked it over and we reached a compromise, but I never should have made a snap decision in the first place. Of course, you have to make some snap decisions, but they're not necessarily snap decisions about people. You have to make snap decisions about which side of the buoy you're going to go on or whatever, maybe, but not about people.

Peter Blanck: Were you ever in battle, in these situations?

George Homans: That is the interesting thing. I never even heard a shot fired in anger. We were an anti-submarine convoy but largely in the South Pacific area, which wasn't exactly an active area for submarines, although there were some around. We never happened to run into any of them, so I never had to try to sink a submarine. I tried to sink what I thought was a submarine, but it turned out to be a reef over which a current was flowing, which makes sounds on the gear just like a moving submarine. I dropped god knows how many hundred thousand dollars worth of U.S. depth bombs on that reef before we had sense enough to look at the chart and see where we were which showed the reef. My crew used to refer to that as Homans' folly. On the other hand, my little paper on the small warship, I got a letter of commendation from James Forester, then Secretary of Defense.

Peter Blanck: What did you --in the last 10 years or so, have you been doing any field research or writing in the area of field research?

George Homans: I've been writing in the area of field research because a lot of my books are based on field research. Not always entirely on field research, but a lot of them.

Peter Blanck: On any particular subject in the last 10 years?

George Homans: One of the things I've been working on, particularly, which came out of my field research is the topic I call, distributive justice. That is, how do people feel about things like wage differentials. That's -- I call it distributive justice because that's what Aristotle called it and it was a big issue in the Boston Edison Company, in my department at least, between two different groups. It was brought to my attention and I've written a lot about that. It's amazing, that until I got going on this, how little attention the social psychologists had paid to this obviously, terribly important problem. It's always coming up, can't avoid it.

Peter Blanck: I'm trying to remember now, is that in relation to social exchange theory also?

George Homans: Oh, it's related to social exchange theory, yeah.

Peter Blanck: You have written on that. How is that...

George Homans: That came out originally in my book called, not book, paper called, "Social Behaviors Exchange" in 1958, and then it came out again in my bigger book called, "Social Behavior" in '61, and then second edition in '74. Until I began talking about this, the social psychologists, who aren't field workers, they're experimenters, so they don't find out what's important. That's one of the troubles with experiment, purely experimental work, whereas you've got your nose rubbed in it in, as soon as you're in industry. Is my pay fair compared to X's pay? One of the first things you hear people talk about. Not only absolutely, high enough, but whether it's high enough compared to somebody else's. These experimentalists, since they hadn't been out in the real world and discovered what people are really worried about had never done any work on distributive justice, which they now call equity, though that's a very bad word for it. Now there are thousands of papers coming out on what's called, equity theory. Most of them very bad because they're very artificial, experimental studies. Some very good ones though.

Peter Blanck: I think that covered everything I wanted to talk about, is there anything else that you'd like to talk about?

George Homans: Well the great message of course is to watch and keep your mouth shut. You've got to do a certain amount of talking to keep, help other people talk, but basically, don't try to barge in with your own ideas.

Peter Blanck: And certainly don't bring a filming crew in.

[laughter]

Peter Blanck: Well thank you. That was very interesting