

Roberto Franzosi obtained a summa cum laude BA in Literature at the University of Genoa (Italy) (1975) and a PhD in Sociology at Johns Hopkins University (USA) (1981). After spending a year as a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Michigan, he taught for several years in the Sociology Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Between 1995 and 1999, Franzosi held a lectureship in Sociology at the University of Oxford, with an official fellowship at Trinity College. He came to the University of Reading in 1999 where he served as Head of Department till 2003. He currently holds a University of Reading five-year Senior Researcher Fellowship.

The study of social protest has been at the heart of Franzosi's research agenda. His work in the field started as a doctoral dissertation on Italian strikes in the postwar period on the basis of official government statistics and time series models (econometrics, ARIMA, spectral analysis). By the end of his dissertation work Franzosi had come to realize that one-hundred years of quantitative strike research had been very effective in one respect: forget the role of social actors in industrial conflict. What do workers, employers, and the state do? In search of an answer to that question, Franzosi took two different paths. He took one path in the book *The Puzzle of Strikes: Class and State Strategies in Postwar Italy* (1995, Cambridge University Press). The solution Franzosi adopts there to the challenge posed by the poverty of available strike data and of methods of analysis is very simple: use whatever evidence is at hand (and whatever method is most appropriate for that evidence) to address empirically central substantive issues—in particular, the role of such social actors as workers, employers and the state.

He has taken the other path in his projects of quantifying narrative information on historical events. After identifying newspapers and police reports as rich sources of data on conflict events (who does what), Franzosi rejected traditional content analysis as a way to go "from words to numbers." Instead, he developed a new linguistic and computer-based approach to narrative text for quantitative purposes. He has traced the methodological aspects of that approach in a series of articles and in the book *From Words to Numbers: Narrative, Data, and Social Science* (2004, Cambridge University Press). The book illustrates a set of tools (story grammars, relational database models, and network models) that can be profitably used for the collection, organization, and analysis of narrative data in socio-historical research. The analyses of data collected from 15,000 newspaper articles on the 1919-22 period of Italian history show that the technique is not just a toy with interesting properties. It works when applied to large bodies of data. More ambitiously, the book tackles the broad methodological and epistemological aspects of the technique.

Franzosi's involvement in linguistics has equipped him with tools of investigation that go far beyond "story grammars" or semantic roles. In linguistics Franzosi found stringent analyses of the nature of narrative (e.g., see his paper "Narrative Analysis," 1998, *Annual Review of Sociology*). More broadly, in linguistics (and the neighboring disciplines of literary criticism and semiotics) Franzosi found powerful tools for the analysis of text (e.g., "master" tropes, forms of emplotment, openness/closeness of text). From there, it is a short step to look even at our scientific texts in terms of their reliance on specific types of rhetorical devices. Whether there is or there isn't a "reality out there" whether science can or cannot attain an objective knowledge of that reality, science underscores its "noble dream" of objectivity via an array of specifically linguistic devices. Franzosi touches upon some of these themes in *From Words to Numbers: Narrative, Data, and Social Science*. But it is in another book, *A Trilogy of Rhetoric: The Rhetorical Foundations*

of *Social Science Quantitative Work* (forthcoming, Cambridge University Press), that he fully develops these themes on the rhetorical aspects of scientific work (see also his commentary "On ambiguity and rhetoric in (social) science," *Sociological Methodology*, 1997). In *A Trilogy of Rhetoric*, Franzosi takes three once-popular strands of social science quantitative literature—strike models, union growth models, and wage inflation models—and analyzes *both* the statistical and linguistic conventions behind the argumentation adopted. He re-analyzes much of the statistical work presented in that literature to show the variety of assumptions, shortcuts, and gross errors upon which our knowledge in those fields rests.

Franzosi is currently devoting his energies to the substantive aspects of his project of going "from words to numbers," building upon work that he carried out in the late 1980s. With a team of coders Franzosi had collected systematic information from some 15,000 newspaper articles on the 1919–22 period taken from *Il Lavoro*, another 15,000 on the 1986–87 period taken from *L'Unità*, and, partially, some 40,000 more articles on the 1968–72 period. Although the three projects deal with Italy as a test case, they tackle broader substantive/theoretical problems. The project on the 1919–22 period focuses on processes of mobilization and counter-mobilization, on the transition from a revolutionary to a counter-revolutionary phase, from the "red years" to the "black years" and the rise of Fascism. The 1986–87 project deals with another kind of transition: what happens to labor conflicts when a society moves from an industrial to a service base? Finally, the 1968–72 project focuses, again, on issues of social mobilization; its aim is that of comparing the failed mobilization of 1919–20 (it all ended with the Fascist takeover of power in 1922) with its more successful counterpart in the postwar period. Franzosi's current projects build upon that work. With a 2003 Nuffield Foundation grant he converted to a Windows platform the DOS-based software he had developed in the 1980s to carry out data collection from textual sources (PC-ACE, Program for Computer-Assisted Coding of Events). Using this new flexible and powerful tool, at the University of Trento, Franzosi has been carrying out further data collection from *Avanti!* and *Popolo d'Italia*, with grants from the University of Reading and the University of Trento (Italy).

The exploratory analyses of the data collected on the 1919–22 and 1986–87 periods have produced interesting and novel results (see the papers: "Mobilization and Counter-Mobilization Processes ..." on the 1919–22 period, *Theory and Society*, 1997, and "Labor Unrest in the Italian Service Sector ..." on the 1986–87 period, in Carl W. Roberts' edited book *Text Analysis for the Social Sciences*, 1997). Those exploratory results are confirmed and strengthened by the use of network models. For the 1919–22 period, the models reveal drastic temporal shifts in patterns of social interaction, well in line with the vast processes of mobilization and counter-mobilization that characterized those years (see the papers: "The Return of the Actor. Networks of Interactions Among Social Actors During Periods of High Mobilization (Italy, 1919–22)," *Mobilization*, 1999, and "Narrative as Data. Linguistic and Statistical Tools for the Quantitative Study of Historical Events," *International Review of Social History*, 1998).

With grants from the British Academy (2004) and the Nuffield Foundation (2005), Franzosi has also been carrying out another project on the rhetorical foundations of social science quantitative work, focusing on three literatures in the 1960s and 1970s (strikes, unionization, wage inflation), in three countries (Italy, UK, US), and three disciplines (economics, political science, sociology). A book, entitled *Trilogy of*

Rhetoric: Rhetorical Foundations of Social Science Quantitative Work to be published by Cambridge University Press will report the results of this research.

Over the years Franzosi has taught a variety of courses, both substantive and methodological, undergraduate and graduate, in several institutions: Political Sociology, Industrial Sociology, Historical Sociology, Ideology, Mass Media; Network Analysis, Regression Analysis, Exploratory Data Analysis, Interior Analysis and Regression Diagnostics, Text and Content Analysis, Qualitative Research Methods. In 1992 he was awarded "Best professors at the University of Wisconsin-Madison" based on a campus-wide survey of all professors. In 2003 he was nominated for the award "Best professor at the University of Reading."

Between 1993 and 1995, Franzosi acted as a Consulting editor for *The American Journal of Sociology*. He was managing editor of the *Journal of Historical Sociology* (1997–2003). He is a member of the editorial board of *Current Sociology*.