Book Reviews


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Since 1967, when *Studies in Ethnomethodology* first appeared, Garfinkel has continued his writing and research but has presented them only in various lectures, reports, edited books, and occasional papers. This volume, edited by Anne Rawls (who first met Garfinkel in 1975, when she was a graduate student at Boston University and he was lecturing at the first International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis [with Harvey Sacks]), provides a dramatically enhanced overview and total immersion in the developments in Garfinkel’s thinking and research over the past several decades. The answer to, Where has Garfinkel been?, is more than fully answered as well as the question of what new directions he has been pursuing.

The volume has a brief introduction by Charles Lemert, editor of the “Legacies of Social Thought” series, and an extensive (75-page) tour de force editor’s introduction by Rawls that reviews the development of ethnomethodology, Garfinkel’s personal background (including details of his life not previously reported), a summary and overview of each of the nine chapters of the book, and an informative and penetrating discussion of the implications of ethnomethodology for sociology as a discipline.

Garfinkel, in an author’s introduction, presents the main thesis of the book, that ethnomethodology’s program is, in fact, a more correct specification of Durkheim’s aphorism that “the objective reality of social facts is sociology’s fundamental principle (or phenomenon)” (p. 65); a discussion of the nature of the “several orderlinesses” that ethnomethodology studies; and a series of instructional maxims for how readers should read each of the following chapters. The collection, he says, has been “assembled and edited by Anne Rawls from tub files of occasioned documents, transcribed lectures, tape-recorded seminars and telephone conferences, publications, fugitive notes on discussions with an EM [ethnomethodology] congregation that was concerned to respecify the natural sciences as discovering sciences of practical action” (p. 75). A second volume will be a collection of EM studies of science.

Garfinkel then offers for the first time in print a brief autobiography in which he details the course of his academic career, the schools he
attended, the mentors he studied with, the subjects he studied, who his fellow graduate students were, and the colleagues with whom he has been associated over the years. Ethnomethodology has a long history, virtually beginning with Garfinkel’s first research explorations while a graduate student at the University of North Carolina and extending through a lengthy period of teaching and research at UCLA from 1954 to 1987 when he officially retired. Clearly, as this collection demonstrates, Garfinkel has “retired” only to the luxuries of a life of continued scholarship, research, teaching, lecturing, and writing.

As the title suggests, the relation of ethnomethodology to sociology is explicitly addressed by framing EM studies as more “correct” approaches to the study of Durkheim’s fundamental phenomenon, the objective reality of social facts. Garfinkel is clear in his own view that EM offers a direct approach to the phenomena of order that Durkheim originally proposed and that it “belongs” in sociology. The programmatic task of EM studies then is to provide alternate studies of social order: “specific, technological, and workplace specific details of the ordinary society’s phenomena of social order . . . ordinary society in concreteness, in lived details, its distinctive details, uniquely identifying of ordinary society’s orderlinesses, endogenously produced and accountable, inescapable and ignored” (pp. 66–67).

These are “the social facts of immortal, ordinary society . . . the distinctive order phenomena of ordinary society that Durkheim was actually talking about” (p. 66). This is in contrast to the social sciences’ use of formal analytic (FA) methods to specify orderlinesses and methods that assume an absence of orderliness “until and only in case concreteness is respecified by the social sciences: displayed in details of orderliness of formal analytic methods and generic representational theories” (p. 65).

The nine chapters are divided into two parts: the first five under the heading “What Is Ethnomethodology?” offer an advanced introduction to Garfinkel’s various ways of approaching and teaching ethnomethodological policies and methods first by a detailed consideration of Durkheim’s aphorism, then a contrasting of FA alternates with EM studies, a discussion of rendering theorems, tutorial problems, and ethnomethodological policies and methods. The last four chapters, under the heading “Instructed Action,” include studies of instruction and their enactment: the work of teaching undergraduate chemistry in lecture format, the orderliness of formatted queues, and a study of Galileo’s inclined plane demonstration of falling bodies. (There is no bibliography or references section.)

This ambitious volume will not end the controversial discussions of ethnomethodology, but will certainly enrich them by providing enormous intellectual resources. It is hard to believe that after over 40 extraordinarily influential years and thousands of research studies, articles, and books, ethnomethodology still needs “explaining” or that its major contributions in epistemology and methodology for studies of ordinary action are still

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This is a short book with a large and compelling agenda. John Urry’s intent is to extend sociological and social scientific research and thinking beyond the confines of specific organized societies. Instead, Urry sees the current global mobility of people, technologies, ideas, and even diseases as emerging dynamics that demand a reconsideration of traditional sociological and social science constructs. This agenda views the global arena as dominating nation-states and regions, and thus makes “globalization” the proper and most salient focus of social science research. The author’s belief that globalization inevitably transforms sociology is evidenced in his early statement: “Sociology’ will not be able to sustain itself as a specific and coherent discourse focused upon the study of given, bounded or ‘organized’ capitalist societies. It is irreversibly changed” (p. 3).

The sciences of complexity become the skeleton on which Urry hangs the meat of this argument. Urry argues that these sciences provide the intellectual lens required to envision the “complex” dynamics that typify the current global system. Thus, concepts now well established in the general literature of the sciences of complexity such as “nonlinear,” “bifurcation,” “attractor,” and “emergence,” become the conceptual foundation for much of the dynamics of Urry’s vision of global complexity. Urry also, quite properly, understands globalization as a series of debates rather than a wholly agreed upon concept.

This book paints a unique picture of the current state of the world. Rather than focusing on the somewhat microscopic concerns of social science, such as specific social movements or specific social groups, the reader is asked to view the world from the perspective of the “macroscope,” looking down on a dynamic mosaic of human activities and flows. The enormity of the movement of people across national borders, the capacity for global travel, and the uncountable flows of information all serve to create a world of remarkable texture but also one of inherent disorder. Urry uses the concept of “global fluids” to portray the multitude of trends and events that cross traditional boundaries, yet show greater porosity and viscosity than traditional notions of networks. In such a fluid