

Harold Garfinkel



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出版者:SAGE Publications Ltd

出版时间:2003-5-2

装帧:Hardcover

isbn:9780761974598

Born in 1917, Harold Garfinkel is one of a handful of sociologists to have founded a major sociological research programme, and he is perhaps the only one to have done so in the 20th century. Unlike many major theorists, whose individual contributions have become part of the sociological canon, Garfinkel's contribution is identified with a distinctive empirical approach that continues to be taken up in sociology and a number of other social science fields. He coined the term ethnomethodology - to describe a unique orientation to the production of social order. This term became established to describe the approach he founded. His book *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967) was a landmark publication that articulated the ethnomethodological programme and illustrated it with a number of studies. Much of Garfinkel's contribution is embodied in a research programme, consisting of studies written by his students who took up his research agenda. The four volumes include an introduction by Lynch and Sharrock that discusses Garfinkel's intellectual biography and reviews his contribution. The 80 selections included in the set of volumes consist of

basic position statements, critical discussions, methodological writings, discussions of the problem of social reality, comparisons between ethnomethodology and other perspectives, and studies exemplifying Garfinkel's influence at different phases of his long and distinguished career. The result is an unparalleled resource in understanding Garfinkel's achievement and the extraordinary wealth of his sociological ideas and methods. The four volumes are organized in seven sections: 1. Position Statements This section provides: a guide to the meaning of ethnomethodology; the ethnomethodological programme; the relationship between Garfinkel and classical sociology; an assessment of the significance of the ethnomethodological movement; and evaluations of the contribution of ethnomethodology. 2. Criticisms and Reactions Garfinkel's work provides a number of challenges and opportunities for sociologists. Some have found it very liberating, others have questioned its durable contribution. Included here are criticisms and reactions from some of the leading figures in the discipline, notably Anthony Giddens, Ernest Gellner, Alvin Gouldner, John Goldthorpe, Louis Coser and Jürgen Habermas. 3. Ethnomethodology and Other Perspectives Ethnomethodology both drew on other established perspectives and revitalized them. The editors single out four perspectives here for special consideration: phenomenology; symbolic interactionism; conversation analysis; and constructionism. 4. Methods as Topics and Resources This section explores: ordinary and scientific measurement as ethnomethodological phenomena; evidence and inference in ethnomethodology; and quantitative practice and ethnomethodology. 5. From the Problem of Reality to the Production of Reality This section addresses: questions of objectivity and realism; the anatomy of factual accounts; the anatomy of reality; and reflexivity of actors and accounts. 6. Studies of Organizations and Institutions One of the distinctive features of ethnomethodology is the productiveness of the approach as an instrument of research. This section conveys the wealth of ethnomethodological studies by focusing on investigations of practices in legal, medical, educational, and other organizations. 7. Studies of Work in the Professions and Sciences The final group of studies exemplifies the influence of Garfinkel's programme in 'studies of work in the sciences and professions'. These studies focus on practices of scientific research, mathematical proving, and technological design. The studies develop upon Garfinkel's insights about the relationship between formal accounts and the 'lived-work' of producing accountable actions.

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