

## Introduction

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Harold Garfinkel, one of the most influential sociologists of the 20th century, passed away on April 21, 2011 at the age of 93. This Special Issue of HUMAN STUDIES is dedicated to his life and work.

Garfinkel's name is inextricably linked with ethnomethodology. He had first coined the word ethnomethodology and stayed the spiritus rector of this type of sociological analysis. His *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967) is one of the earliest publications and undoubtedly the most influential book in the field.<sup>1</sup>

Those who were privileged to experience him as a teacher remember him as a rare scholar. Yet, the main body of sociology had at first argued with him and later ignored him. It was not until the formation of a Section of the American Sociological Association titled "Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis" that there was a formal recognition by the professional association in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Garfinkel was honored at the meeting of the International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis, July, 2011 held at Fribourg

<sup>1</sup> It was first published by *Prentice Hall* which later also published nine hardback editions with *Polity Press* publishing a paperback edition in 1985.

<sup>2</sup> There were continually meetings of the International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis (founded by George Psathas and Jeff Coulter), beginning in alternate years from 1975 and more recently over varying numbers of years and held at Boston University, Bentley University, Manchester University, Oxford University, and Fribourg University (Switzerland).

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University in Switzerland (organized by Esther Martinez Gonzalez, University of Fribourg, and Lorenza Mondada, University of Lyon) with several tribute events (organized by Doug Maynard, University of Wisconsin). As an indication of Garfinkel's international influence there were over 118 papers presented by scholars from universities or research institutes and 231 participants, one-third of whom were students, from 24 countries.

Drawing upon Alfred Schutz's writings, Garfinkel also criticized Parsons for neglecting the subjective perspective of the constitution of social order (1949, 1952). Garfinkel did justice to ordinary social actors and their judgmental and pragmatic competencies. In analyzing the self-organizing processes of social orders, Garfinkel mainly concentrated on two aspects: on the one hand, regarding common situations, he took interest in the so-called "breaching experiments," i.e., intended and direct irritations of interaction processes, the interruption of which brings up the constitutive character of the taken-for-granted; on the other hand, regarding routines of working processes in formal organization, Garfinkel used the "ethno-methods," as he called them, for the possible "accountability" of formal rules.

A leading theme for Garfinkel's work, the fact that social reality should be understood not only as a sum of orders of action, but should above all be considered a result of continuously situated daily practices, proved itself fruitful for a large number of sociological studies. This holds true, *firstly*, for the use of his perspective on the fundamental processual and self-organizing character of social reality in studies on verbal and non-verbal interaction processes (Garfinkel and Sacks 1970), as is the case in Conversation Analysis. *Secondly*, the sociology of science extensively used Garfinkel's insights, achieved through participant observations in "laboratory studies," making sense of the way in which scientists produce institutionalized characteristics of science (Garfinkel et al. 1981; Lynch et al. 1983). *Thirdly*, he developed the program of the "studies of work" mainly analyzing embodied skills and practices of professional actors in various working environments (Garfinkel 1986).

Harold Garfinkel will be missed for many reasons, but the continuing contributions he made and the opportunities he provided for personal meetings and discussions for many scholars interested in his work certainly are among the most prominent ones. As the contributions to this issue demonstrate, Harold Garfinkel influenced many persons, some of whom continue to study, teach or do research on some of the many issues he had first raised.

Included in the current issue of HUMAN STUDIES are papers by former students, colleagues, and others he had associated with, some of them contributing personal memoirs, others presenting empirical or more theoretical studies. Thus, this issue documents the continuing influence of Garfinkel's work.

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