

Ethnomethodology

Ethnomethodology: Study of how people make sense of the world and the methods people use in their everyday lives

Developed by Harold Garfinkel (b. 1917). Studied under Parsons at Harvard). Coined term in 1954 during research on jury deliberations. Professor at UCLA from 1954-87.

Some key ideas:

Social facts are not external and coercive. Rather, they are the accomplishment of people. (Eth-meth doesn't focus on micro- or macro-structures, but on the practices that produce them.)

Most action is routine and relatively unreflective.

Reality is precarious because nothing is really out there. Everything we know is constructed through conversation, records, etc. All we have are these interpretations or *accounts*.

People make accounts to explain particular situations. This is called *accounting*.

Our strongest social principles is to leave these interpretations alone. People resist when the taken-for-granted reality is questioned.

The breaching exercise attempts to uncover taken-for-granted rules by breaking them.

One of the strongest areas to eth-meth research is conversational analysis.

Some research topics: how phone conversations opened, record keeping, accomplishing gender, how we know when to laugh, applaud or boo, negotiations.

Some disagreements with symbolic interactionism: (1) ethmeth focus on precariousness of social order (as opposed to SI's resourceful actors), (2) ethmeth rejection of social science constructs (as opposed to SI's "grounded theory" approach), (3) ethmeth rejection of theory and claim that it is entirely empirical.