

Monday, September 13

Garfinkel and Breaching Experiments

Garfinkel: Breaching Experiments

- Garfinkel's proposal: there are numerous, hidden social norms that govern our everyday lives
- Concerned with the “moral order” without
- **Ethnomethodology**: the study of the methods by which people make sense of the world, create the everyday “moral order”
- **Moral Order**: “the rule governed activities of everyday life” (225).

Garfinkel: Breaching Experiments

- To reveal the hidden rules: start with a familiar scene and make “trouble”
- We engage in social interactions with “common understandings” and “shared agreement”
 - We don’t need to discuss or explain, we take things for granted

Garfinkel: Breaching Experiments

- (S) Hi, Ray. How is your girl friend feeling?
- (E) What do you mean, how is she feeling? Do you mean physical or mental?
- (S) I mean how is she feeling? What's the matter with you? (He looked peeved).
- (E) Nothing. Just explain a little clearer what do you mean?
- (S) Skip it. How are your Med School applications coming?
- (E) What do you mean, 'How are they?'
- (S) You know what I mean.
- (E) I really don't.
- S) What's the matter with you? Are you sick?
 - **What does this troublemaking reveal?**

Garfinkel: Breaching Experiments

- “Students were required to spend from fifteen minutes to an hour in their homes **imagining that they were boarders [renters] and acting out this assumption**. They were instructed to conduct themselves in a circumspect and polite fashion. They were to avoid getting personal, to use formal address, to speak only when spoken to” (231-2).
- **What was revealed by this experiment?**

Garfinkel: Breaching Experiments

- “Common sense knowledge of the facts of social life for the members of the society is **institutionalized knowledge of the real world**. Not only does common sense knowledge portray a real society for members but in the manner of a self fulfilling prophecy the features of the real society are **produced by persons’ motivated compliance** with these background expectancies” (236).