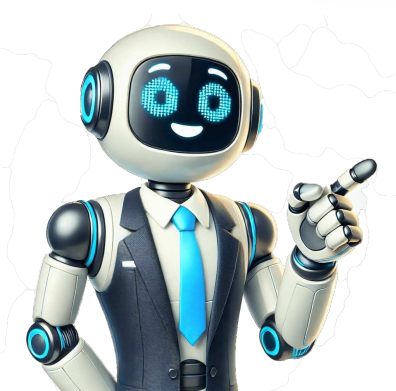


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While the history of symbolic interactionism stretches back through the 20th century, it emerged as a prominent theoretical perspective in American sociology during the 1960s. Currently most undergraduate sociology textbooks highlight this perspective, along with functionalism and conflict theory, as one of the three distinctive models for understanding social life. In contrast to functionalism and conflict theory, symbolic interactionism emphasizes the micro-processes through which people construct meanings, identities, and joint acts. In doing so it accentuates how symbols, interaction, and human agency serve as the cornerstones of social life. Symbolic interactionism grew out of the American philosophical tradition of pragmatism in the late 19th century, especially as elaborated by William James, John Dewey, and Charles S. Peirce. The most important bridge between the pragmatic tradition and sociology was George Herbert Mead. One of his most famous books, *Mind, Self, and Society* (see Classic Works and Original Statements) is often taken as a charter for the symbolic interactionist approach. Along with Mead, two other important early sociologists who shaped the interactionist tradition were Charles Horton Cooley and William Isaac Thomas. The most influential contributor to the symbolic interactionist tradition was Herbert Blumer, who coined the perspective's label in 1937. Blumer's book, *Symbolic Interactionism* (see Classic Works and Original Statements) serves as another foundational work for the perspective. Symbolic interactionism has its most significant impact on sociology between 1950 and 1985. In challenging functionalism, the dominant sociological paradigm of the 1950s, interactionists urged their colleagues to examine how people "do social life"—that is, how they construct and negotiate meanings, order, and identities in their everyday interactions. Interactionists stressed that sociologists could best understand social life's core features by taking the role of the individuals or groups they were studying, particularly by engaging in participant observation. By the 1980s mainstream sociology had accepted much of the core of the symbolic interactionist approach, with its emphases on meaning, agency, and the interpretive analysis of interactional processes, as a legitimate and central part of the discipline. Thus, interactionism no longer represented a distinctive oppositional perspective as it has previously. In recent decades interactionism has grown in a number of new directions. With respect to methodology, its approach has broadened to include contextualized discourse analysis, ethnographic observation, constant subject, textual analysis, performance studies, and autoethnography. Interactionism has also become a more prominent perspective in a diverse array of disciplines. Scholars interested in interactionism have often reflected upon and debated about the origins, evolution, and future directions of this perspective. For instance, in the late 1970s McPhail and Rexroat crafted an influential and controversial assessment of Herbert Blumer's role in translating George Herbert Mead into sociology (McPhail and Rexroat 1979). In a related vein, Lewis and Smith 1981 proposes that the links between pragmatist philosophy, Mead's social behaviorism, and the symbolic interactionist perspective were less direct than Blumer claimed. Shalin 1986 offers a detailed analysis of the connections between pragmatism, Mead, and interactionist theory, concluding that they were closely tethered. Fine 1993 examines the shifts that took place in symbolic interactionism from the 1970s to 1990s, highlighting the processes that led to these changes. Sandstrom, et al. 2001 builds upon Fine's earlier observations while also taking stock of symbolic interactionism's place within social theory at the end of the 20th century. Finally, Maines 2001 is a critical analysis of the relationship between interactionism and mainstream sociology, highlighting how sociologists are often unaware of interactionism's contributions to social theory. Fine, Gary Alan. 1993. The sad demise, mysterious disappearance, and glorious triumph of symbolic interactionism. *Annual Review of Sociology* 19:61-87. DOI: 10.1146/annurev.so.19.080193.000425 This review article describes the shifts that have taken place in interactionism. It also highlights the impact of the perspective on the key debates (e.g., structure/agency) characterizing sociology. Fine addresses the decline of symbolic interaction as a distinctive, oppositional perspective in sociology, in part because of the acceptance of many of its principles by sociologists outside of the perspective. Lewis, J. David, and Richard L. Smith. 1981. American sociology and pragmatism: Mead, Chicago sociology, and symbolic interaction. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press. In exploring how pragmatism influenced the development of symbolic interaction theory, Lewis and Smith challenge prevailing beliefs regarding the unity of pragmatism and the centrality of George Herbert Mead to Chicago sociology. The authors emphasize the Peirce-Mead link in James Dewey and James Dewey's pragmatist philosophy. They also stress that Mead was best characterized as a social behaviorist. Maines, David. 2001. The faultline of consciousness: A view of interactionism. New York: Aldine. Maines reveals and critiques sociologists' misguided views of interactionism. He also demonstrates how many prominent sociologists are "unaware" interactionists," making theoretical arguments based on interactionist concepts without recognizing they are doing so. This book includes several empirical chapters that illustrate how interactionism appeals to the study of narratives and to the analysis of race, gender, urban inequality, and social institutions. McPhail, Clark, and Cynthia Rexroat. 1979. Mead vs. Blumer: The divergent methodological perspectives of social behaviorism and symbolic interactionism. *American Sociological Review* 44:449-467. DOI: 10.2307/2094866 McPhail and Rexroat critique Herbert Blumer's translation of George Herbert Mead's philosophical insights into sociological theory. They argue that Blumer misinterprets Mead by ignoring his emphasis on social behaviorism and positing a naturalistic perspective. In a comment, Blumer responds to this critique and defends his interpretation of Mead's key ideas. Sandstrom, Kent, Daniel Martin, and Gary Alan Fine. 2001. Symbolic interactionism at the end of the century. In *The handbook of social theory*. Edited by George Ritzer and Barry Smart, 217-231. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE. In this wide-ranging overview, the authors emphasize the key contributions of interactionism, demonstrating how it has informed and extended core sociological interactionist theory. The authors also consider the new voices that have emerged within interactionism, such as feminism, conflict theory, and postmodernism, and the challenges these voices pose for the future of the perspective. Shalin, Dmitri. 1986. Pragmatism and social interactionism. *American Sociological Review* 51:9-29. DOI: 10.2307/2095475 Shalin demonstrates the multiple effects that pragmatic philosophy had on the writings of George Herbert Mead and subsequently on the development of symbolic interactionist theory. Users without a subscription are not able to see the full content on this page. Please subscribe or login. Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt — remix transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation . No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. Create your free account by continuing, you agree to Quizgecko's Terms of Service and Privacy Policy. > Cardiac Catheterization > Pelvic Prolapse Surgery PreviousBrowse our selection of curated spotlight pages spanning various disciplines and Oxford Bibliographies modules. These pages provide a unique gateway to topical research areas and showcase the benefit of using selections from multiple modules as an interdisciplinary research tool. Explore more. >Led by Editor-in-Chief Richardson Dilworth, Urban Studies is a broad, interdisciplinary field of study that includes subfields not only in most of the major social sciences, but also in the humanities, and in more technical fields such as architecture, planning, engineering, environmental science, and legal studies. Explore Now. >Led by Editor in Chief, Kevin D. Murphy, Architecture, Planning, and Preservation uncovers a wealth of sources for the study of the built environment while also providing essential guidance in navigating the wide range of material, both print and online. Built on the comprehensive knowledge and professional expertise of its authors, uncover Oxford Bibliographies' new subject, Architecture, Planning, and Preservation. >This page, curated by Abbas Aghdasi, features a select group of annotated bibliographies from existing subject areas in Oxford Bibliographies that address key topics in Iranian and Persian Studies. Read More. >Next What's New Led by Editor in Chief Megan Elias, Oxford Bibliographies in Food Studies shares the best academic resources available on a wide variety of topics, including food and material culture, food and media, nutrition and health, food system, food labour, and more. 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Unlike macro-theories like Functionalism or Marxism, which focus on large-scale social structures (such as the family, or religion), symbolic interactionism delves into the intricacies of face-to-face interactions and the subjective meanings individuals attach to symbols. Symbols, whether verbal or non-verbal, are not inherently meaningful; their significance is derived from social interaction. The social world viewed by individuals as passive products of society, this perspective sees people as active participants who shape their social world through everyday interaction. Symbolic interactionism is a social theoretical framework associated with George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer. Society as the product of shared symbols, such as language. The social world is constructed by the meanings that individuals attach to events and social interactions, and these symbols are transmitted across the generations through language. A central concept of symbolic interactionists is the Self, which allows us to calculate the effects of our actions. Symbolic interactionism theory has been criticized because it ignores the emotional side of the Self as a basis for social interaction. Symbolic interactionism theory assumes that people respond to elements of their environments according to the subjective meanings they attach to those elements. For example, meanings being created and modified through social interaction involving symbolic communication with other people. Symbolic interactionism involves several key concepts that help explain how individuals interpret and give meaning to their social world: A symbol is anything that carries a specific meaning recognized by people who share a culture. Symbols can be words, body language, objects (like a flag or a wedding ring), etc. Humans act toward things based on the meanings those things have for them. Importantly, these meanings are not inherent in objects or actions; they arise from social interaction. For example, the word "dog" or a thumbs-up gesture only have meaning because we as a society agree on what they signify. Symbols are crucial in communication - they allow people to share understanding. When we interact, we exchange symbols (through language or gestures), and we interpret each other's actions based on the shared meanings of those symbols. This active meaning-making is fundamental to how we navigate social life. Social Interaction Social interaction is the process by which people act and react in relation to others. Symbolic interactionism sees society as the product of these everyday interactions. Through interaction, individuals continuously create, negotiate, and modify meanings. Communication - the exchange of symbols in interaction - is how people make sense of their world. Because individuals are constantly adjusting their behavior based on others' actions (and vice versa), social interaction is dynamic and formative. Even simple greetings or conversations involve interpreting symbols (e.g. tone of voice, words used) and responding based on those interpretations. In short, reality is socially constructed through interactions, where perceptions of "what is going on" are shaped by the symbols we use to communicate. Symbolic interactionism is a social psychological perspective that views human behavior as being shaped by the meanings we give to symbols. Social experience, Charles Horton Cooley Cooley's concept of the looking-glass self describes how one's self-image arises from interpersonal interaction, and the perceptions of others. In simple terms, other people function as "mirrors" for us - we imagine how we appear to others, interpret how they judge us, and then adjust our self-concept accordingly. For example, if a student perceives that their classmates see them as a leader, the student may come to see themselves that way and act more confidently in group projects. George Herbert Mead further explained self-development through role-taking. He noted that developing a self requires learning to take the role of the other - that is, to put ourselves in someone else's shoes and see ourselves from their perspective. Children do this in play (by pretending to be parents, doctors, superheroes, etc.), which helps them learn social expectations. Over time, they internalize the perspectives of many others (what Mead called the "generalized other"), allowing them to guide their behavior according to social norms. Thus, the self emerges from social interaction: we become who we are by imagining how others view us and by adopting roles in relation to others. 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