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John Delamater

University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin

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Contributors

Josh Ackerman, Center for Learning and Teaching Excellence, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85287

Mark M. Bernard, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Cardiff, Wales, UK CF10 3YG

Peter J. Burke, Department of Sociology, University of California-Riverside, Riverside, California 92521

Karen S. Cook, Department of Sociology, Stanford University, Stanford, California 94305

Shelley J. Correll, Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin 53706

William A. Corsaro, Department of Sociology, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47405

Donna Eder, Department of Sociology, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47405

Diane H. Felmlee, Department of Sociology, University of California-Davis, Davis, California 95616

Laura Fingerson, Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201

Michael A. Hogg, School of Psychology, University of Queensland, Brisbane, QLD 4072, Australia

Judith A. Howard, Department of Sociology, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195

Howard B. Kaplan, Department of Sociology, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843

Sandi Kawecka Nenga, Department of Sociology, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47405
Contributors

Douglas Kenrick, Psychology Department, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85287

Susan Ledlow, Center for Learning and Teaching Excellence, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85287

Kathryn J. Lively, Department of Sociology, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47405

Karen Lutfey, Department of Sociology, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

Michelle A. Luke, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Cardiff, Wales, UK CF10 3YG

Gregory R. Maio, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Cardiff, Wales, UK CF10 3YG

Douglas W. Maynard, Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin 53706

Jane D. McLeod, Department of Sociology, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47405

Karen Miller-Loessi, Department of Sociology, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85287

John Mirowsky, Department of Sociology, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 43210

Jeylan T. Mortimer, Department of Sociology, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

James M. Olson, Department of Psychology, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada N6A 5C2

Terri L. Orbuch, Department of Sociology, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan 48309

Timothy J. Owens, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana 47907

John N. Parker, Department of Sociology, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85287

Anssi Peräkylä, Department of Sociology and Social Psychology, University of Tampere, Tampere, Finland

Daniel G. Renfrow, Department of Sociology, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195

Eric Rice, Department of Sociology, Stanford University, Stanford, California 94305

Cecilia Ridgeway, Department of Sociology, Stanford University, Stanford, California 94305

Deana A. Rohlinger, Department of Sociology, University of California-Irvine, Irvine, California 92697

Catherine E. Ross, Population Research Center, University of Texas, Austin, Texas 78712

David A. Snow, Department of Sociology, University of California-Irvine, Irvine, California 92697

Susan Sprecher, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois 61790
Contributors

Jan E. Stets, Department of Sociology, University of California-Riverside, Riverside, California 92521

Sheldon Stryker, Department of Sociology, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47405

Kevin D. Vryan, Department of Sociology, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47405
Preface

THE VISION

This Handbook is one tangible product of a lifelong affaire. When I was re-introduced to social psychology, as a first-semester senior psychology major, it was "love at first sight." I majored in psychology because I wanted to understand human social behavior. I had taken an introductory sociology course as a freshman. The venerable Lindesmith and Strauss was our text, and I enjoyed both the text and the course. I thought at the time that it was the psychology of the material that attracted me. Two years later, after several psychology courses, I walked into social psychology, and realized it was the social that attracted me. I never looked back. Later in that semester I quizzed my faculty mentors, and learned that there were three places where I could get an education in social psychology: at Stanford with Leon Festinger, at Columbia, and at Michigan, in the joint, interdisciplinary program directed by Ted Newcomb. Fortunately, I arrived in Ann Arbor in the fall of 1963, and spent the next four years taking courses and seminars in social psychology, taught by faculty in both the sociology and psychology departments. I especially value the opportunity that I had to learn from and work with Dan Katz, Herb Kelman, and Ted Newcomb during those years.

These experiences shaped my intellectual commitments. I am convinced that social psychology is best approached with an interdisciplinary perspective. I bring such a perspective to my research, undergraduate training, and mentoring of graduate students. I do not believe that social psychology is the only relevant perspective, but I do believe that it is essential to a complete understanding of human social behavior.

As I completed my graduate work, I was fortunate to obtain a position in the University of Wisconsin Sociology Department. At that time, there were two other faculty members there who had earned degrees in the joint program at Michigan, Andy Michener and Shalom Schwartz. The three of us did much of the teaching in the social psychology area, graduate and undergraduate. We shared the view that social psychology is an interdisciplinary field, that combining relevant work by persons working in psychology and in sociology leads to a more comprehensive understanding. We viewed social psychology as an empirical field; theory, both comprehensive and mid-range, is essential to the development of the field but so is empirical research testing and refining those theoretical ideas. We believed that
research employing all types of methods, qualitative and quantitative, make an important contribution.

What, you ask, is the relevance of this personal history? The answer is that it is the source of the vision that guides my work. You will see this vision of the field reflected in various ways throughout this Handbook.

I was very pleased when the Social Psychology Section of the American Sociological Association decided to sponsor the volume, *Social psychology: Sociological perspectives*, edited by Rosenberg and Turner. I felt that there was a need for such a volume that could be used as a textbook in graduate courses. Following its publication in 1981, I used the book regularly in my graduate course. According to Cook, Fine, and House, it "became the textbook of choice for many sociologists teaching graduate courses in social psychology" (1995, p. ix). The need for an updating and expansion of that volume to reflect new trends in our field led the Section to commission a new work, published as *Sociological perspectives in social psychology* in 1995. I used this book in graduate courses for several years. By 2001 I felt that a new edition was needed. Conversations with members and officers of the Social Psychology Section indicated that the Section had no plans to commission such a book. At about this time Howard Kaplan, general Editor of this series of Handbooks, invited me to edit a volume on social psychology. And here it is. The editors of the two books commissioned by the Social Psychology Section graciously donated some of the royalties to the Section. I will donate to the Section one-half of any royalties from the sales of this Handbook.

**THE GOALS**

My goals as editor are similar to those of my distinguished predecessors, including Morris Rosenberg, Ralph Turner, Karen Cook, Gary Fine, and Jim House. I have also relied on the *Handbooks of social psychology*, which draw together work in our field from a more psychological perspective, in both my research and teaching. Now in the fourth edition, published in 1998, it convinced me of the value of a volume that can serve as a sourcebook for researchers and practitioners. One goal in preparing this *Handbook* is to provide such a sourcebook, or "standard professional reference for the field of social psychology" (Gilbert, Fiske, & Lindzey, 1998, p. xi). A second goal is to provide an opportunity for scholars in the field to take stock of and reflect on work in their areas of expertise. Authors were invited not only to draw together past work, but also to identify limitations in and to point to needed future directions. Third, I hope that this volume will serve as the "textbook of choice" for graduate courses for the next several years.

**THE FIELD OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Social psychology is a major subfield within sociology. The principal journal in the area, *Social Psychology Quarterly* (originally called *Sociometry*), was founded in 1937, and is one of only six journals published by the American Sociological Association. Sociologists share this field with psychologists. This has led to diverse views of the relationship between psychological and sociological social psychology. Twenty-five years ago, a widely held view was that these subfields were relatively distinct, that each was a distinctive "face" with its own core questions, theory, and methods (House, 1977). It is certainly true that there are differences in core questions; a comparison of the Table of Contents of the *Handbook of social psychology*
(1998) and *Sociological perspectives on social psychology* (1995) will make clear these differences. Psychologists often emphasize processes that occur inside the individual, including perception, cognition, motivation, and emotion, and the antecedents and consequences of these processes. In analyzing interaction, their focus is often on how aspects of self, attitudes, and interpersonal perception influence behavior. Sociologists have traditionally been more concerned with social collectivities, including families, organizations, communities, and social institutions.

*Social psychology* is the study of the interface between these two sets of phenomena, the nature and causes of human social behavior (Michener & DeLamater, 1999). Both intra-individual and the social context influence and are influenced by individual behavior. The *core concerns* of social psychology include:

- the impact of one individual on another
- the impact of a group on its individual members
- the impact of individuals on the groups in which they participate, and
- the impact of one group on another.

Given this set of concerns, I share Cook, Fine, and House’s (1995) view that social psychology is interdisciplinary, that it involves and requires a synthesis of the relevant work in the two disciplines on which it draws. The apparent division into “two social psychologies” reflects in part the bureaucratic structure of the modern American university, including the division of knowledge by departments, and the practice of requiring a faculty member to have a single “tenure home.” I do not believe that there are insurmountable differences in theory, method, or substance between the work of psychological and sociological social psychologists. The so-called “cognitive revolution” brought to the fore in psychology the same processes traditionally emphasized by symbolic interaction theory, identity theory, and the dramaturgical perspective in sociology.

One facet of social psychology within sociology is a set of theoretical perspectives. Rosenberg and Turner (1981) included chapter-length treatment of four theories: symbolic interaction, social exchange, reference group, and role theory. Cook, Fine, and House (1996) did not include a section devoted to theory, using instead an organization based on substantive areas. I have included a section on theory, with chapters on symbolic interaction, social exchange, expectation states, social structure and personality, and the evolutionary perspectives. The differences in the topics of theoretical chapters between Rosenberg and Turner and this Handbook reflect the changes in the field in the last two decades of the 20th century. Although it remains a useful metaphor, the role perspective *qua* theory has not flourished. Renewed interest in cognitive processes and their social context, and the development of social identity theory, has recast some of the concerns of the reference group perspective. Expectation states theory has become a major perspective, reflecting the continuing incremental and innovative theoretical development and research activities of a new generation of social psychologists. The rapid development of evolutionary perspectives and their application to such topics as interpersonal attraction, mate selection, family, and sexuality are the most visible changes to have occurred in the field.

Another facet is the methods we use to gather empirical data. Those who share(d) the “two social psychologies” view point(ed) to the dominance of the experiment in psychological social psychology, and of the survey in sociological social psychology. While there was a pronounced difference in this regard in the 1970s and 1980s, that difference has narrowed greatly in the past decade. Researchers, whether psychologists or sociologists, interested in areas such as prejudice and racism, mental health, and adult personality have always relied
heavily on surveys. Recent developments in the analysis of data and the increasing use of longitudinal designs have enhanced our ability to test causal models with survey data; the experimental method is no longer the only way to study causality. Furthermore, the use of the experiment by sociologically oriented social psychologists is increasing, particularly in research on expectation states and exchange theory. This development is welcomed by those of us who believe that problems are best studied using multiple methods. Finally, there has been a renaissance in the use of systematic observation by sociologically oriented researchers. Thus in 2002, social psychologists from both sides of the aisle are using surveys, experiments, and observational methods, and learning from each other how to improve these techniques.

At the same time, social psychology remains well integrated into the larger discipline of sociology. We share the use of the theories and methods described above with other sociologists. In our research and writing, we focus on topics that are of interest and in some cases central to the discipline: life-course analyses, social networks, socialization, status, stereotyping, and stigma, to name a few. Work by social psychologists is integral to most of the other major subfields in sociology: collective behavior and social movements, development, deviance, emotion, health, language, and social stratification. The relevance of social psychology to these topics is made clear in many of the chapters that follow.

THIS HANDBOOK

The topic outline for this Handbook is the result of a variety of input. I began by looking in detail at the outlines of four previous handbooks. I noted the frequency with which topics appeared, and developed an initial list of more than 25 topics. The sifting and winnowing of the list benefited greatly from input from the graduate student and faculty participants in the Social Psychology Brownbag/Seminar and other faculty members at the University of Wisconsin. Howard Kaplan also reviewed the outline. The Table of Contents contains all of the topics on my final list, save one. Despite repeated efforts, I was unable to find someone to author a chapter on the social psychology of race and gender.

Section I of the book contains five chapters, each of which presents a theoretical perspective basic to contemporary social psychology. They include symbolic interaction theory, expectation states theory, social exchange theory, the social structure and personality perspective, and evolutionary theory. Section II includes three chapters looking at developmental and socialization processes across the life of the person. Reflecting the divisions of the research literature, these chapters focus on childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, respectively. Section III contains chapters on major topics that are associated primarily with the person, including self, language, social cognition, values and attitudes, and emotions. Section IV includes chapters on interpersonal phenomena, including attraction and relationships, small groups, social networks, and the impact of structural location on psychological processes. The last section includes chapters discussing the contributions of social psychology to topics of general interest to sociologists, including deviant behavior, intergroup relations, collective behavior and social movements, and the study of cultural variation.

On the whole, the process of inviting persons to contribute to the Handbook went smoothly because most of the persons I approached agreed to contribute. In some cases, they added the writing of a chapter for the Handbook to an already long list of commitments, and I am very grateful for their willingness to do so. I believe that in many cases, accepting my invitation reflects the person’s sense that this is an important undertaking. Of the 38 contributors to this Handbook, 28 are new in the sense that they did not contribute to Cook, Fine, and
House. I invited more senior persons to collaborate with a younger scholar in writing their chapters, and many of them did so. I am delighted at the inclusion of so many members of the cohort recently entering the field.

In common with other recent Handbooks, this one has some limitations. Because it is a single volume, unlike Gilbert, Fiske, and Lindzey, some tough choices were necessary with regard to topics. Not included in this volume are chapter-length treatments of some important areas, including aging, ethnography, sexuality, social constructionism, and social psychology of organizations, of work. This volume does not include chapters on research methods. I considered this choice carefully, and I concluded that I wanted to use the pages to cover substantive topics, that there are other good sources of information on the methods qua methods. A second limitation arises from the page limit imposed on authors; the target was 40 manuscript pages, including references. This, of course, forced authors to omit some topics and abbreviate coverage of others.

In their preface, Rosenberg and Turner characterized sociological social psychology as “having reached the late adolescent stage of development; as such, it is heir to the various identity crises that so often characterize that developmental stage. This volume, we hope, will assist it in discovering and establishing that identity” (1981, p. xxxiv). Fourteen years later, in their Introduction, Cook, Fine, and House stated “we have grown as a field and become more integrated into the discipline” (1995, p. xii), and suggested that the field had reached early middle age. In light of the fact that only eight years has passed since then, and of the continued growth, emergence of new areas of work, and increasing integration captured in these pages, we cannot have grown much older. I foresee a long and healthy midlife.
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PART I

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES
CHAPTER 1

The Symbolic Interactionist Frame

SHELDON STRYKER
KEVIN D. VRYAN

THE IMAGERY, PREMISES, AND CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

This chapter reviews symbolic interactionism, a framework or perspective composed of an imagery and conceptualizations in terms of which this imagery is expressed, as well as a set of initiating premises from which questions of social psychology can be pursued. The forerunners, early formulaters, and current users share in important degree elements of the framework; they also in important degree differ in their imagery of, language describing, and premises about human beings, society, the relation of society and human beings, and the nature of human action and interaction. We begin our review by discussing underlying commonalities of most who see their social psychological work as stemming from symbolic interactionism. We hold for later discussion that differentiates social psychologists sharing the underlying commonalities.*

Imagery

From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, society is a web of communication or interaction, the reciprocal influence of persons taking each other into account as they act.

*Inevitably, this chapter draws heavily on the authors’ previous work (esp. Stryker, 1981), not departing from that work simply for the sake of being different. It reflects, however, an updating of that prior work through substantive changes in ideas, the existence of a second author, and changes in the relevant literature.
Interaction is *symbolic*, proceeding in terms of meanings persons develop in interaction itself. The environment of action and interaction of humans is symbolically defined. Persons interact using symbols developed in their interaction, and they act through the communication of these symbols. Society is a term summarizing such interaction; subparts of society designate the settings in which interaction takes place. In this image, social life is a thoroughly dynamic process. Neither society nor its subparts exist as static entities; rather, these are continuously created and recreated as persons act toward one another. Social reality is a flow of events involving multiple persons. Just as society derives from the social process, so do people: both take on meanings that emerge in and through social interaction. Since both derive from the social process, neither society nor the individual possess reality that is prior to or takes precedence over the other. Society, as a web of interaction, creates persons; but the actions of persons create, through interaction, society. Society and person are two sides of the same coin, neither existing except as they relate to one another.

The symbolic capacity of humans implies they have minds and think, they manipulate symbols internally. They can think about themselves and in so doing come to have a self both shaped by the social process and entering into the social process. Thinking occurs in the form of internal conversation making use of symbols that develop out of the social process. Mind and self arise in response to interruptions in the flow of activities—or problems—and involve formulating and selecting among possible courses of action to resolve the problems. Choice is part of the human condition, its content contained in the subjective experience of the person emerging in and through the social process. Consequently, in order to comprehend human behavior, sociology must come to terms with the subjective experience of persons studied and incorporate that experience into accounts of their behavior. Part of that subjective experience, important for choices made, is the experience of self.

This imagery contains the idea that, individually and collectively, humans are active and creative, not only responders to external environmental forces. The environments in which they act and interact are symbolic environments; the symbols attaching to human and non-human environments are produced in interaction and can be manipulated in the course of interaction; thought can be used to anticipate the effectiveness of alternatives for action intended to resolve problems; and choice among alternative courses of action is a feature of social conduct. Thus, human social behavior is at least in degree indeterminate as a matter of principle (and not incomplete knowledge), since neither the course nor the outcomes of social interaction are completely predictable from factors and conditions that precede that interaction.

**Premises***

As Snow (2001, p. 368) observes, a wide variety of persons who see their work as symbolic interactionist accept Blumer’s (1969, pp. 2–6) specification of the three basic premises or principles of the frame. This appears to be true for those who accept the methodological dicta (see below) Blumer takes as necessary implications of those premises and those who, like the authors of this chapter, do not believe his methodological dicta are necessitated by the

*Three “versions” of the premises are provided because they differ in an important respect. For Blumer, the premises are what *define* symbolic interactionism, Stryker’s premises reflect what persons presenting themselves as symbolic interactionists have in common, while Snow’s cover the range of ideas in the collective work of contemporary interactionism.*
premises. The three premises* on which symbolic interactionism rests—that is, the principles that are of defining significance for the frame—are, according to Blumer: (1) human beings act toward things—physical objects, other humans, categories of humans, institutions, ideals, activities of others, and situations encountered—on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them; (2) meanings arise in the process of interaction between people, that is, the meanings of things are social products growing out of how persons act toward one another with regard to the things; and (3) the use of meanings occurs through a process of interpretation in which actors communicate with themselves, selecting, checking, regrouping, transforming, and using meanings to form and guide their actions and interactions in situations in which they find themselves.

Stryker (1988), drawing on Blumer's treatment, gives these premises a somewhat different, albeit closely related, cast. He asserts that the premises shared among symbolic interactionists are: (1) an adequate account, whether explanation or simply understanding, of human behavior must incorporate the point of view of actors engaged in the behavior; (2) social interaction—the social process in Mead's terms—is fundamental, with both self and social structure emergent from interaction; and (3) persons' reflexivity, their responses to themselves, link larger social processes to the interactions in which they engage.

Believing Blumer's three principles do not adequately describe the tenets of the symbolic interactionist frame because they fail to explicitly articulate ideas implicit in them, Snow (2001) suggests a broader, more inclusive set of four “cornerstone” principles that better embrace the range of work symbolic interactionists do. By going beyond identifying meaning and interpretation as the orienting concerns of symbolic interactionism, Snow contends this set is not subject to criticisms levied at Blumer's conception of the frame (e.g., by Fine, 1992; Huber, 1973; Stryker, 1988).

The first and most basic of the set is the principle of interactive determination, asserting that understanding objects of analysis (self, identities, roles, organizational practices, etc.) cannot be achieved fully by considering only qualities intrinsic to them. Rather, understanding requires that the interactional contexts (“web of relationships”) in which they are embedded be considered as well. The priority accorded this principle reflects Snow’s argument that it is required to fully appreciate the remaining three principles, that the meaning and implications of other principles of symbolic interactionism result importantly from the interactional contexts in which they are embedded and from which they emerge.

The remaining members of Snow's symbolic interactionist principles are symbolization, emergence, and human agency. The principle of symbolization indicates that events, conditions, artifacts, individuals, aggregations of individuals, and other features of people’s environments take on meanings and become objects for persons that elicit feelings and actions. He notes that this principle is the heart of Blumer’s conception of symbolic interactionism and is typically taken as the focal concern of the framework. However, he asserts, too heavy an emphasis on the generation and imputation of meanings and on related interpretive processes can give rise to two related errors: seeing symbolization as always problematic, and seeing persons as continuously involved in trying to make sense of their worlds. Both errors fail to recognize how often symbols and meanings reflect cultural and organizational contexts. Otherwise stated, Snow’s assertion is that symbolization, meanings, and interpretations are often given in interaction embedded in social and cultural structures.

Nevertheless, symbolization is often at least in degree problematic, and Snow’s principle of emergence focuses attention on the side of social life in which it is. When habit does

*Blumer terms these premises "simple," but they are complex in their implications.
not guide behavior, when social change makes previously operative meanings rooted in existing social and cultural contexts insufficient or ineffective in dealing with issues arising in interaction, new cognitive and affective states as well as new states of social relationships can give rise to new symbolizations. As Snow notes, these emergent new meanings and interpretations can depart from, challenge, and potentially transform existing structures and cultures.

The principle of human agency attends to humans as active and willful players constructing their lines of action. Not necessarily dismissive of structural and cultural constraints, symbolic interactionists tend to see such constraints as circumstances human actors take into account rather than determinants of lines of action. This formulation opens the way to viewing constraints as variably effective in closing off or in enabling particular lines of action—in short, as under some circumstances effectively determining or precluding actions and under other circumstances being of minimal import with respect to actions. As Snow states the matter: structural and cultural constraints and the behaviors they prescribe are sometimes taken for granted and routinized, and when they are the issue of agentic action fade into the background. When, however, the taken for granted and routinized are disrupted, the agency comes to the foreground as persons seek corrective or remedial actions.

Neither Stryker nor Snow see their descriptions of the frame as incompatible with Blumer’s statement of its three premises. The former, who has strenuously rejected the methodological inferences Blumer draws from these meta-theoretical premises (see Stryker, 1980, 1988, and the discussion of these inferences below), finds the premises a reasonable statement of what symbolic interactionists can agree to. Snow sees his elaboration of the principles of symbolic interactionism as at least implicitly in Blumer’s premises.

**Conceptualizations**

The symbolic interactionist imagery and underlying premises described above incorporate many of the concepts of the framework. Central is *meaning*, conceptualizations of which begin with the social act, behavior of at least two persons taking each other into account in the process of resolving some issue or problem. Social acts occur over time, and so allow the appearance of gestures, parts of a social act that indicate other parts of the act still to come. Vocal sounds, facial expressions, bodily movements, clothing, and so forth allow actors to anticipate one another’s further actions; they are gestures. Gestures implying the “same” future behavior to those emitting and those perceiving them are *significant symbols*. When symbolized, things, ideas, and relationships between things and ideas enter people’s experience as objects whose meanings, developing from social interaction, become their social reality. These meanings may not be identical among participants in social acts, but human communication and interaction presuppose the existence of sufficiently shared meanings.

As anticipations of the future course of acts, symbols underwrite plans for action, organizing behavior with reference to what they symbolize. To interact with others in a coherent, organized way, meanings need to be at least tentatively assigned to the situations in which persons find themselves and to the parts of those situations. Without such *definitions of the situation*, behavior is likely to be random or disorganized. Tentative definitions may hold indefinitely, or they may be revised as interaction unfolds and early definitions prove insufficient to allow the interaction to proceed in a satisfactory manner.

In general, and from the point of view of those involved in them, the most relevant aspects of situations requiring definition are who or what persons—self and other(s)—in the situation are, and what the situation of action itself may be. Defining the situation itself
imposes limits on the kinds of people that can enter them, and in that sense, has primary import. Perhaps most often institutional parameters and the physical locations characteristic of these—is the table around which people are located in a seminar room at a university or in a dining room in a home?—are basic to emergent definitions. But institutions and physical locations allow great variation in the kinds of people entering them—the seminar room may be the scene of a dissertation defense or a discussion in an undergraduate honors class; the family dining table may be scene of a Thanksgiving dinner or a family conference about what to do about a wayward family member—and specifying the point or purpose of interaction may be critical to how interactants define themselves and others in particular situations.

Typically, others in the situation are defined by locating them in recognized social categories of actors representing the kinds of persons it is possible to be in a society: male or female, young or old, employed or unemployed, parent or child. Locating others in this way provides cues to their behavior in the form of expectations on the basis of which an actor can organize his/her own behavior with reference to the others. Expectations attached to social categories are *roles.* Often situations allow or even require locating others in more than a single category and so open the possibility that conflicting expectations of others emerge and no clear means of organizing responses are available. Similarly, defining oneself in a situation involves locating oneself in socially recognized categories, and can involve locating oneself in multiple categories, with comparable consequences.

To respond reflexively to oneself by classifying and defining who one is, is to have a *self.* The meaning of self, like the meaning of any significant symbol, develops in and through interaction, and self, like any significant symbol, implies a plan of action. This is not to say that all social behaviors are to be understood as self-directed: much social behavior is based on habit (e.g., Camic, 1986) and ritual (e.g., Goffman, 1967), and self enters only when behavior becomes problematic for one reason or another. Nor is it to say that self-awareness is always present in social interaction: the effects of self-processes below the level of awareness may well have substantial impact on social behavior.

*Role-taking* refers to a process by which persons anticipate responses of others, in effect putting themselves in the place of others to see the world as they do. Prior experience with those others, knowledge of the social categories in which they are located, and symbolic cues emerging in interaction provide tentative definitions and expectations that are validated and/or reshaped in interaction. Role-taking permits anticipating and monitoring the consequences for interaction of one's own actions, and allows the redirection of those actions as useful or necessary. Interaction, sometimes predominately, also reflects *role-making* (Turner, 1962), modifying or creating roles by devising performances responsive to roles imputed to others. Role-making occurs when roles lack concreteness or consistency but actors must nevertheless organize their behavior on the assumption that they are unequivocal.

Especially in complex, highly differentiated societies, meanings are not likely to be shared in detail by parties to interaction, and indeed meanings held by some may contradict meanings held by others. To the extent that meanings are not shared, inaccuracy in role-taking and difficulty in role-making are likely to occur, complicating social interaction. Implied in these assertions is that smooth and cooperative relationships do not necessarily

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*Many interactionists avoid the language of "role," believing the term implies fixed, static normative demands for behavior belied by the fluidity and creativeness of ongoing social life. The concept nevertheless is implied in interactionist work and provides a useful way of visualizing the link between social structure and social person central to some contemporary interactionist theory (see below).*
follow from accurate role-taking or from role-making processes; conflict may well be sharpened by or result from accuracy.*

**THE FOCUS OF THIS CHAPTER**

Generally, treatments of symbolic interactionism use the language of "symbolic interaction theory." Conventional, that language promises something other than is delivered here. As our chapter title announces, our topic is a theoretical framework or perspective, a set of ideas about some part of the social world, about what that part of the world consists of and how it is made up, about how to investigate that part of the world. Some view symbolic interactionism as a perspective or framework underlying sociology in general (e.g., see Blumer, 1969; Maines, 2001). While there is some justification for this view, we discuss symbolic interactionism as a set of ideas especially applicable to a sociological social psychology, defined broadly as the study of the interplay between society and individual.† Further, some who see their work as symbolic interactionist disdain the objective of achieving theoretical generalizations about the relations of society and individual, questioning—even denying—the ability of scholars to produce objective knowledge. Perhaps most (including those working from versions of the frame stemming from very different epistemological and methodological positions*) take the ultimate task of sociology and social psychology to be the development and test of theory. In this chapter, we do not discuss in detail interactionist work that rejects theoretical development as its goal.

The foregoing implies an important but often ignored distinction between "theory" and "theoretical framework" (or "perspective").§ The distinction is between a set of ideas intended as an explanation of some particular aspect of the empirical social world (theory) and the imagery, premises, and conceptualizations underlying that explanation (theoretical framework). Or, to use the slightly different and expanded terms of an earlier treatment of symbolic interactionism (Stryker, 1981, p. 27, footnote 3): "A theory, in a technical sense, is a set of propositions about some part of the empirical world specifying how this part presumably works, emerging from a set of assumptions or postulates and from a set of concepts used to describe the part of the world the theory purports to explain, and open to checking against empirical observations of that world."

This does not imply the lesser import of an underlying frame. There are virtually unlimited ways of viewing the empirical social world, and without some frame or another, a researcher faces a potentially bewildering range of possibilities. Indeed, to proceed without at least an implicit frame is a literal impossibility. The imagery, premises, and conceptualizations making up a theoretical frame give direction to inquiry. In short, a frame precedes theorization, suggesting some social phenomena in need of explanation, providing a sense of

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*A persistent criticism of symbolic interactionism through the years refers to its ostensible inability to deal with conflict in social relationships and interaction. That criticism rests on a failure to understand these points as well as a simplistic view of the concept of meaning.
†"Society" here is a gloss for all relatively stable patterns of social (joint) interaction and relationships, and incorporating close examination of micro-social processes (Stryker, 2001a).
§See, for example, the individual essays by Anselm Strauss (1994, pp. 3–8), Sheldon Stryker (1994, pp. 9–20), and Carl Couch (1994, pp. 21–34) in Volume 16 of *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*.
*Contemporary recognition of this distinction and its import, coming from opposite poles of the sociological spectrum, can be found in Maines (2001) and Jasso (2001).
what is relevant and important to observe, and offering ideas about how concepts may interrelate to form an explanation of the phenomena of interest.

Frameworks are necessarily partial in focus. Being explicit about a frame underlying an inquiry has the virtue of revealing the strengths of the frame in generating theory and research. Equally important, it reveals the limitations of the frame by informing us about what is outside the frame’s focus and, therefore, perhaps overlooked or discounted in its problem formulation, conceptualizations, and explanations, as well as the empirical evidence it pursues. There is another virtue in being explicit about the theoretical frame underlying specific inquiries: a frame can serve to tie individual theories together. Empty of an understanding of the frame joining individual theories, the latter are likely to develop on an ad hoc basis, in forms particular to the unique character of the empirical events being theorized, and thus limited in their more general meaning and significance.*

Frameworks are not themselves directly subject to empirical test, and so cannot be said to be true or false. Rather, they are to be judged by their fertility in producing theories consistent with empirical evidence. A framework that produces no empirically testable and ultimately tested theories has no value for sociology or social psychology, for we will never know if such a framework represents our creative imaginations or the social life we seek to understand. There are, indeed, testable and, in reasonable degree, tested theories that derive from a symbolic interactionist framework.† Historically, however, symbolic interactionists have spent more of their energies debating the virtues of preferred variations and providing illustrative applications of the frame, rather than in deriving and testing explanatory theories. More recently, there has been considerable movement toward correcting that imbalance.

There are a variety of perspectives in use among sociologists doing social psychology;‡ why should this volume devote a chapter to symbolic interactionism? The frame developed largely in the work of sociologists, and historically it has been prominent among frames used by sociological social psychologists. Of greater import, however, the frame brings into focus the unique contributions of sociology to social psychology: distinctive and valuable theoretical understanding of the impact of individuals’ locations in patterned social settings and relationships on social interactions, social constructions, and social persons,§ as well as the reciprocal impact of interactions, constructions, and individuals on social settings and relationships.

We continue our treatment of symbolic interactionism by examining the philosophic context from which the frame emerged, paying particular attention to a philosopher–psychologist, George Herbert Mead, whose writings** undergird all subsequent developments of the frame. We next attend to scholars who moved what Mead had to say into sociology and were, in that sense, early proponents of the frame, paying particular attention to Robert Park, Herbert Blumer,

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*It seems to us that contemporary psychological social psychology and the Group Processes field tend to proliferate special theories of a wide range of phenomena whose relationship to one another remains relatively underdeveloped.

†Examples include the labeling theory of deviance (e.g., Lemert, 1951; Becker, 1963), identity theory (e.g., Stryker, 1968, 1980), and affect control theory (Heise, 1979).

‡Apart from the frames treated as “Theoretical Orientations” in this volume, an earlier treatment of “sociological social psychology” (Rosenberg and Turner, 1981) included chapters on social exchange theory, reference group theory, and role theory, as well as symbolic interactionism. More recent treatments have included group processes and social structure and personality along with symbolic interactionism (Stryker, 2001a).

§In our judgment, if sociologists do not deal with the impact of social structures on social psychological processes, no one else will. The language used here, “social person,” is, from the perspective of symbolic interactionism, redundant: the person is necessarily social.

**Actually, Mead wrote very little for publication. Much of his thought appears in volumes of his lectures edited and published by his students (e.g., Mead, 1934).
and Manford Kuhn. Then we turn to presenting contemporary variations in the frame, concluding with a discussion of the mutual relevance of its variants.

THE PHILOSOPHIC CONTEXT OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

"Symbolic interactionism" is a term invented by Herbert Blumer (1937) to describe a set of ideas largely developed in the post-World War I context of the University of Chicago’s Department of Sociology. Strongly resonating with the ideas of 18th century Scottish Moral Philosophers, including Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, and David Hume (see Bryson, 1945), symbolic interactionism has been more directly influenced by the peculiarly American philosophy of pragmatism.*

Maines (2000, pp. 2218-2219) offers a succinct summary of the main ideas of pragmatism, and suggests their sources in a neo-Hegelian emphasis on dialectic processes that rejected dualistic views placing mind in opposition to body, the subjective in opposition to the objective, and the individual in opposition to the social; an evolutionary, Darwinian, emphasis on emergence of new forms through variations in the old, differentially adaptive and adjusted to changes in environmental circumstances; and a behavioristic emphasis on understanding and reality as rooted in persons’ conduct. Among the main ideas are:

First, humans are active, creative organisms, empowered with agency rather than passive responders to stimuli. Second, human life is a dialectical process of continuity and discontinuity and therefore is inherently emergent. Third, humans shape their worlds and thus actively produce the conditions of freedom and constraint. Fourth, subjectivity is not prior to social conduct but instead flows from it. Minds (intelligence) and selves (consciousness) are emergent from interaction and exist dialectically as social and psychical processes rather than only as psychic states…. Eighth, human nature and society exist in and are sustained by symbolic communication and language. (Maines, 2000, pp. 2218-2219)

Of particular importance for the ways in which the symbolic interactionist perspective developed were the late 19th-century and early 20th-century works of William James, John Dewey, and, most important of all, George Herbert Mead. James (1890), essentially neglected by sociologists given to symbolic interactionist ideas through about two thirds of the 20th century, was “rediscovered” in the last third by way of a key idea that is of strategic significance in contemporary formulations of those ideas. Sharing the then current view of humans as creatures of instinct, James argued that instincts are transitional and modifiable through the development of habits providing memories of prior experience, pointing to the impact of society (as well as biology) on human behavior. He saw human experience as a continuous flow rather than a sequence of discrete states, and he presented an analysis of consciousness as a continuous process. Emerging from consciousness is self, all that individuals can call their own, including self as knower (the I) and self as known (the Me). James continued his analysis by distinguishing four distinct types of self: material, spiritual, social, and

*Our discussion of pragmatism and pragmatic philosophers is selective, the selection a function of our immediate needs in presenting the symbolic interactionist frame. For a brief, excellent introduction to pragmatism and a bibliography dealing with the relations of pragmatism and sociology more generally, see Maines (2000); see also Shalin (1986) and Joas (1993).
The Symbolic Interactionist Frame

pure ego. The social self, in particular, has an empirical source in the recognition given the person by others. Indeed, James asserted that a person:

... has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him .... But as the individuals who carry the images fall naturally into classes, we may practically say that he has as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinions he cares.
(James, 1890, p. 294; italics in original)

In this passage, James prepared the way for viewing the self as multifaceted and as the product of a heterogeneously organized society, a view that, as suggested, has been neglected (and so unexploited) in interactionist theories incorporating self until recently (see below).

Fundamental to Dewey’s pragmatism is a view of mind as instrumental, itself emerging from his emphasis on evolution involving a process of human adjustment to environmental conditions. Mind (thinking) arises in that adjustment process (Dewey, 1930). Thinking or deliberation is a dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various competing lines of action ....
It is an experiment in making various combinations of selected elements ... to see what the resultant action would be like if it were entered upon. (1930, p. 190)

Mind, according to Dewey, arises through conduct, emerging from actions taken to resolve problems. Raising the question of what constitutes a “stimulus” to behavior (Dewey, 1896), he argued that stimuli are defined in the context of action and neither exist prior to nor are causes of action, for example, a needle in a haystack cannot be a stimulus to behavior outside the context of someone searching for it. “The world that impinges on our senses is a world that ultimately depends on the character of the activity in which we are engaged and changes when that activity is altered” (Stryker, 1980, p. 26). This argument makes action fundamental to human behavior, social or not, and underlies Strauss’ (1994, p. 4) assertion that the interactionism of its University of Chicago-linked practitioners is grounded in Dewey’s (and Mead’s) theory of action, a theory that describes a sequence of action: ongoing, blocked, deliberation about alternative possibilities of action, and then continued action.

Mead was Dewey’s contemporary and collaborator at the Universities of Michigan and then Chicago. However, he moved their jointly developed ideas in ways that made him the pre-eminent philosophic precursor of symbolic interactionism. His was a creative synthesis that, indeed, drew heavily upon Darwinian evolution and pragmatism but included the idea from German Romantic philosophers such as Fichte and Hegel that persons, as selves, determine what the world is for them. From the psychologist Wilhelm Wundt, he took the concept of gesture, developing through that concept the idea that gestures were the mechanisms through which mind, self, and society emerged from social interaction. And from the work of the behavioristic psychologist John Watson, he regarded the psychological principle of reinforcement as sound.

Incorporating the natural selection theoretical notion of the necessity of adaptation to ensure survival, Mead saw evolution as bringing into existence the mind and self that characterize human beings, and he argued that what held for the species held for individual members of the species. Individuals, that is, deal with whatever may block their ongoing behavior by exercising mind, internally manipulating symbols to try out alternative ways to get around or otherwise rid themselves of those blockages. Humans can also respond to themselves reflexively—adopting perspectives that allow them to step outside of themselves, so to speak, and see themselves as objects—in order to react to whatever they may be doing in the ways they can react to other persons or things. In short, given that they have selves, they can treat themselves as objects and they can communicate with themselves. These distinctive human possibilities—mind and self—Mead saw as having their source in ongoing social
processes of interaction in which people need one another in order to build solutions to problems that face them. Actions take time to occur, and early stages of actions—one’s own as well as those of others—can be used to predict the later stages yet to occur. The mutual need for others as resources in arriving at effective problem solutions, he argued, implies that people must take others into account as they construct solutions, and they do so by taking the attitude or role of others, anticipating these others’ responses to potential lines of action. Taking others into account is made possible by communicating with these others, and people communicate by developing in and through interaction significant symbols, gestures whose meaning—implications for the future course of their action—is shared in reasonable measure, thus making predicting one another’s ongoing acts possible. Cooperation based on communication via significant symbols is a requisite for human survival.

Three implications worth noting are contained in the foregoing: (1) Organized society is a continuous process of routinization or institutionalization of solutions to collective problems, and society undergoes continuous change as new problems emerge in a physical or social environment and are dealt with by participants. (2) Both mind and self are intrinsically social phenomena. This is because both come into being—indeed, can only exist—in and through the process of communicating via significant symbols. (3) Social life is modeled on scientific method, that is, on systematically examining proposed solutions to problems until a successful solution is found; and the actor is modeled on the scientist conducting an experiment.* This model of the actor tends to neglect affect or emotion in human behavior, a neglect currently being addressed by interactionists.

Thus, for Mead, social interaction or process is fundamental, and from that interaction or process emerge both society and self. Indeed, society is for him an ongoing social process writ large, and the basic dictum of his social psychology is to start with that ongoing social process. The self, as an emergent from that social process, must reflect—and indeed, it must incorporate—that process. It does so most directly through the part of the self that Mead, recalling James, calls the Me, anticipated responses to oneself of what he called the “generalized other.” Alternatively phrased, it is the organized attitudes or social roles of others with whom one interacts that become this part of self. The Me and the I, the other part of self, make up the person or personality as these develop via the social process. The I represents responses to the organized attitudes of others, and is used by Mead to deal with the spontaneity and creativity he believed to be an intrinsic part of human experience.† However, neither creativity nor spontaneity occur outside the social process. Social control, expressed through the Me, is a necessary condition for their appearance in action. In brief, social control and self-control are co-emergents from society. Finally, while the self is a product of society, the self, through an internal I-Me dialectic, continuously reacts to the society that shapes it. Consequently, society is never fixed; it is continuously being created and recreated. Social order and social change are together aspects of a larger social process.

*While this description resembles rational actor (or rational choice) theoretical models, a key difference is that these models assume an actor who has in hand a set of goals and means of achieving goals, while symbolic interactionists see both goals and means as emergents from interaction and subject to change in the course of interaction. Another distinction is that rational actor theorists adopt methodological individualism, while interactionists do not examine the individual in isolation from interactive and social contexts.

†Mead tended to a view of the I as pure impulse and essentially not further analyzable. An alternative view bringing spontaneity and creativity into the domain of social science is to view the I as the memory of former Me’s, that is, as the residue of prior social experience reacting to the other’s expectations in the moment.
LINKAGES OF PRAGMATISM AND SOCIOLOGY: THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM IN SOCIOLOGY

Not surprisingly, philosophic pragmatism had an early impact on American sociology. We will explore that impact through the work of two sets of sociologists, an earlier set comprised of Charles Horton Cooley, William Isaac Thomas, and Robert E. Park, and a somewhat later set comprised of Herbert Blumer, Everett Hughes, and Manford Kuhn. It is the work of these sociologists that brings us into the symbolic interactionism of modern sociology.*

The Early Set: Cooley, Thomas, Park

A contemporary of Dewey and Mead at the University of Michigan who was influenced by and influenced both (Miller, 1973, pp. xix–xx), Cooley began his academic career as an economist in the Department of Economics and Sociology and became a sociologist when offered an opportunity to teach in that field. His dissertation (Cooley, 1894) dealing with railroad transportation as a material link generating economic organization incorporated a discussion of communication as the “psychical” link generating social organization. That idea served as his prime bridge to sociology and social psychology. Indeed, his central sociological ideas all have a “psychical” quality.

The mental and subjective are, Cooley asserted, the special concern of sociology, for they are distinctively social. A person exists for another only in the latter’s personal idea of the former. Society is a relation among personal ideas in one person’s mind, as the contact and reciprocal influence of ideas having names (I, Peter, Deanna, etc.), and in another’s mind as an equivalent similar set of ideas. Thus, the imaginations people have of one another are the solid facts of society (Cooley, 1902, pp. 26–27). While this conception of society may seem to require autobiography as the method of sociology, Cooley called for “sympathetic introspection,” with the sociologist using sympathy (or empathy) to imagine the lives of persons studied.

Since persons exist in the observer’s imagination, and since society is the imagination of a set of persons, persons and society are the distributive and collective aspects of the same thing, respectively—in Cooley’s words, two sides of the same coin. Thus, a self cannot be distinct from others; it is a social product, defined and developed in social interaction. Specifically, it is the product of “the looking glass self,” a process involving three main components: impressions we have of how we appear to others, impressions of these others’ assessments of us, and our feelings (e.g., pride or shame) deriving from those imaginations. “We always imagine, and in imagining, share the judgments of the other mind” (Cooley, 1902, pp. 152–153).

Cooley held an organic conception of social life, seeing all aspects as linked just as all components of an organism are connected. Especially important, however, to self-development and to the ties people have to larger social organization are primary groups, defined by intimacy, face-to-face relations, and cooperation. Such groups form the social nature and ideals of a person and are the source of more complex relationships. He saw the groups that

*These two sets are highly selective, inadequate were we writing a history of symbolic interactionism but useful for the story we seek to tell in this chapter.
dominate childhood experience—family, play group, and neighborhood group—as most significant since childhood is the period when people are most open and plastic.*

Cooley’s conception of society and others as existing only in a person’s imagination may seem to imply an individualistic, idealistic, and subjectivist perspective on which a social psychology cannot be built. Indeed, Mead (1930; 1934, p. 224) took Cooley to task for what he termed the latter’s “mentalism,” which Mead saw as reducing social reality to the subjectivity of individual minds.† That charge is denied by Schubert (1998) who argues it does not hold since Cooley builds society into mind. More important, Cooley’s work, relatively neglected (compared with Mead) by early symbolic interactionists, has won renewed attention because his sensitivity to affect as a defining element in self resonates with contemporary social psychology’s interest in emotion.

“. . . (I)f men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Thomas & Thomas, 1928, p. 572). This aphorism, the source of symbolic interactionism’s prime—often misunderstood—methodological rule, is itself a major but not the sole reason for noting W. I. Thomas’ contribution to forming this framework. With the pragmatists, Thomas took sociology’s task to be examining the adjustive responses of people and groups to other people and groups. Adjustive responses occur in situations, objective circumstances in which persons and groups are embedded. The same objective circumstances, however, often do not lead to the same behavioral responses because subjective components of people’s experience—definitions of the situation—intervene. The “total situation” that must be taken into account by analysts of persons’ and groups’ adjustive behaviors must include both the objective and verifiable situation and the situation as it is defined or interpreted by the persons and groups involved (Thomas, 1927; Thomas & Thomas, 1928).

As Volkart (1951) notes, Thomas shifted his conceptualization of the situation often.‡ In his classic study, with Znaniecki, of the adjustment of Polish peasant immigrants to their new lives in America, situations were characterized as involving values and attitudes:

. . . (1) the objective conditions under which the individual or society has to act, that is, the totality of values—economic, social, religious, intellectual, etc.—which at the given moment affect directly or indirectly the conscious status of the individual or the group, (2) the pre-existing attitudes of the individual or group which at the given moment have an actual influence upon his behavior, and (3) the definition of the situation, that is, the more or less clear conception of the conditions and consciousness of the attitudes. (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918–1920, Vol. 1, p. 68)

However Thomas conceptualized the term, it invariably contained the dual reference to objective circumstances and subjective responses of persons and groups to those objective circumstances. In short, while some have used Thomas’ concept of definition of the situation to deny the relevance of objective facts of social situations for the behavior of persons and groups, his own formulation of the idea does not support this view.

Though apparently seriously overlooked in critical appraisals of his foundational work on human ecology, there are clearly important elements of pragmatism in Robert E. Park’s sociological perspective (Maines, 2001). Not generally seen as relevant to the development of symbolic interactionism, he becomes relevant through his central position on the faculty of

*Since Cooley’s characterization of family, play group, and neighborhood as primary groups was developed, sociologists have been forced to recognize that primary relations are not necessarily present in these groups.
†A reading of Cooley shared by one of the present authors (Stryker, 1981) in an earlier chapter on the topic of symbolic interactionism.
‡Sociology has still not arrived at a generally accepted conceptualization of the situation. For a recent attempt to do so, see Seeman (1997).
the University of Chicago during its early development and by his influence on generations of sociologists through that position, as well as through his co-authorship of a classic text that helped shape the discipline of sociology in the United States (Park & Burgess, 1922). A student of William James at Harvard who studied for a short time with Georg Simmel in Germany, he taught at Chicago when Mead’s influence there was strong. That influence was manifest in his insistence that communication was foundational to society and his further insistence that shared meaning both derived from interaction and was essential for communication. Accentuating his relevance is work that serves as a bridge between the social psychological writings of Mead and conceptions of social structure, with the concept of role playing a crucial aspect of the bridge. The following passage could serve as the introduction to some contemporary developments in symbolic interactionism.

The conceptions which men form of themselves seem to depend upon their vocations, and in general upon the role they seek to play in communities and social groups in which they live, as well as upon the recognition and status which society accords them in these roles. (Park, 1955)

Bridges to the Recent Past and Present: Blumer, Kuhn, Hughes

Undoubtedly the single most influential voice shaping the sense of the symbolic interactionist perspective among most sociologists belongs to Herbert Blumer. In part, Blumer’s influence reflects the fact that he inherited the University of Chicago’s tradition of sociology and social psychology stemming from Mead. In part, it reflects his role as the strongest advocate for that position through a time—roughly, the 1930s through the 1960s—when it was superseded by an ascendant structural-functionalism that dominated sociology both intellectually and institutionally and was taken to deny fundamentals of the symbolic interactionist frame. Blumer’s work maintained the pragmatic emphases on social change and social process, on the Dewey–Mead theory of action, and on the centrality of meaning and actors’ definitions or interpretations in both individual and collective social behavior.* Further, Blumer articulated a symbolic interactionism containing strong humanistic elements, and so attracted sociologists who rejected a structural-functionalism they regarded as seeing humans as puppets of social structure and that was seen as “scientistic” as a by-product of that view.

Blumer believed that the symbolic interactionism he articulated was entirely consonant with Mead’s thought (Blumer, 1980) and that it implied a set of methodological requirements.† With respect to his impact on the way in which symbolic interactionism as a social psychological framework has developed—our concern in this chapter—it is the methodological implications he drew from Mead that are most important.‡ Blumer asserted that pursuing

*See Maines (2001), esp. Introduction to part I: “Theoretical Concerns” (pp. 31–35) and chapter 3. For diverse but mostly supportive views of Blumer’s work, see “Special Issue on Herbert Blumer’s Legacy” edited by Gary Alan Fine (Symbolic Interaction 11(1), Spring 1988).
†Blumer’s more polemical methodological moments are exemplified in a book (1969) that incorporates a series of earlier publications. Some have pointed out that elsewhere Blumer was catholic in his methodological views (e.g., see Maines, 2001).
‡Maines (2001) makes a strong argument that Blumer’s substantive work is important and has been grossly neglected. A clear distinction between a sociology and a social psychology is untenable, a division of labor reflected in this volume’s focus on the latter justifies our focus on Blumer’s influential methodological arguments vis-à-vis symbolic interactionism. It is only fair to note that Stryker (1980, 1988) has been and is strongly critical of those methodological arguments.
the goal of general, predictive theory in sociological research is futile given the centrality of meanings, and consequently of definitions and interpretations of the situations people find themselves in, for subjects' actions. He sees persons as actively and continuously constructing behaviors in the course of ongoing interaction itself, and he takes such perpetual construction as characteristic of all social life. Thus, the meanings, definitions, and interpretations basic to social interaction undergo continuous reformulation in the course of the interaction itself. They are emergent and subject to moment-to-moment change, and so do not have the generality required of theoretical concepts in terms of which predictive theories are developed. They do not and cannot represent the emergent meanings, definitions, and interpretations of actors constructing their lines of interaction. Blumer concludes from this argument that it is possible for sociologists to achieve after-the-fact understandings of social behavior that has occurred but cannot develop general theoretical explanations that predict social behavior, whether individual or collective.

This argument is metatheoretical, specifying a conceptual framework. As any framework, it has methodological consequences. First, it implies that sociologists waste their time when they undertake research that starts from an existing theory (since existing theory must use concepts that came before the new research) and that derives hypotheses anticipating outcomes of social behavior from existing theory. Second, it implies that a research method that does not involve direct examination of the empirical world—that does not focus directly on actors’ meanings, definitions, and interpretations as these emerge in ongoing, naturally occurring interaction (e.g., experimental or survey methods)—cannot generate meaningful data and necessarily lacks validity. Third, it underwrites a denial of the value for sociology of mathematical and statistical manipulation of quantitative data, the argument being that such data are necessarily empty of the meanings that constitute the essential character of sociological phenomena. Fourth, it leads to minimizing the impact of social organization and social structure, at least within modern society, on social action, to seeing organization and structure as merely frames within which action takes place rather than as shaping action. Indeed, Blumer argues that seeking to link social behavior to elements of structure—role requirements, expectations, situational demands, and so forth—is inconsistent with recognizing that the human being is a constantly defining and interpreting creature.

Conventional sociological methodology and methods found wanting, Blumer proposes “exploration” and “inspection” as appropriate research methods. Exploration uses any ethical procedure that allows moving from a broad focus to a narrower understanding of how a problem of interest is to be posed, gathering appropriate data for pursuing this problem, and developing the conceptual tools that might be useful. It may involve, Blumer suggests, observation, interviewing, listening to conversations, life histories, letters, diaries, public records, and arranging for what today are called “focus groups” made up of people well-informed about the sphere of life being studied. In the process of attending to such materials, the researcher develops, tests, and revises images, beliefs, and conceptions of what is under scrutiny through direct observation, through posing questions sensitizing the researcher to new and different perspectives, and by recording observations that challenge working conceptions or that are odd and interesting but whose relevance is unclear.

Inspection is the procedure intended to meet the requirement of scientific analysis for identifying clear, discriminating analytic elements and isolating relationships between these elements. It aims to unearth generic relationships, sharpen the connotative reference of conceptions, and formulate theoretical propositions. Like exploration, inspection is a flexible procedure—imaginative, creative, free to change—and it involves a close, shifting examination
of analytic elements used for analysis (e.g., integration), looking at analytic elements in different ways, from different angles, and with different questions in mind.*

Manford Kuhn's view of symbolic interactionism contrasts starkly with that of Blumer, and is close in spirit to the view underlying this chapter in that he aspired to precisely articulated theoretical generalizations and their rigorous test while using a symbolic interactionist frame (e.g., Kuhn & McPartland, 1954). To emphasize that aspiration and differentiate it from Blumer, he labeled his frame "self-theory." Agreeing with the pragmatic philosophers and sociologists who argued that social structure is created, maintained, and altered through symbolic interaction, he asserted that structure, once created, constrains further interaction. To implement that insight, he brought elements of role theory and reference group theory into his framework, adopting the former's conceptions of social structure as composed of networks of positions in structured relations among people and of role expectations as associated with these positions.

Emphasizing that the relation of role expectations and behavior is loose, Kuhn saw more determinacy in the relation of self, rather than role expectations, to behavior. He proposed that self be conceptualized as a plan of action, assimilating Mead's idea that self is an object and that objects are attitudes or plans of action. Indeed, precisely because self is a plan of action, it is the most significant object to be defined in a situation: to know an actor's self is to have the best available index of that actor's future behavior.

Central to Kuhn's theorizing is the concept of core self, a stable set of meanings attached to self providing stability to personality, continuity to interactions, and predictability to behavior. However, stability is relative. The role-taking process allows for creativity as does the self-control made possible by that process. Further, according to Kuhn, the self is comprised of a large variety of component parts, including status identifications, role expectations, preferences and avoidances, personal attributes and traits, self-enhancing evaluations, areas of threat to and vulnerability of self, and patterns of selection of reference groups. This complexity also admits slippage in the relation of social structure and self; the person is not a social automaton.

Defining self as plan of action, conceptualizing core self as having stability, and accepting Mead's equation of attitude and plan of action provided a rationale for the Twenty Statements Test (TST), measuring self-attitudes in response to the question "Who Am I?" Not particularly successful and at least partially discredited (Tucker, 1966), the failure of the particular instrument does not invalidate Kuhn's more general methodological stance. That stance, oriented to what Blumer called conventional science, calls for the development of general propositions from which specific hypotheses can be deduced and tested. If tests support the hypotheses, theory useful in explaining and predicting behavior in social interaction results. The road to explanatory and predictive theory is through sound measurement of the concepts embodied in general propositions with which the researcher begins. Clear, precise concepts are required for sound measurement. Kuhn sees no contradiction between the kinds of concepts entailed in symbolic interactionism and meeting the requirements of sound scientific measurement or developing general explanatory theories of social behavior subject to the test of rigorous empirical examination.

Everett Hughes' significance as a bridge from "founders" to contemporary symbolic interactionism can be presented succinctly. That significance stems not from a conceptual or theoretical contribution to the frame. It stems rather from his courses at the University of

*Exploration and inspection are clearly valuable tools for the development of concepts and theory, but fall short with respect to the task of testing theory.