

Soc 2

Sociology



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Symbolic Interactionism Symbolic interactionism refers to the theory that provides a systematic explanation of the activities involved during social interactions. Max Weber and Herbert George are the two leading theorists behind this concept of human interaction. These theorists postulated that human interactions within their social settings are mainly based on the activities they engage themselves during their communication exercises. According to these theorists, people communicate by interpreting their actual actions with respect to their immediate environment instead of merely reacting to the actions. Application of the symbolic interactionism concepts facilitates the process of comprehending human interactions within their immediate environment (Stryker 56).

The entire concept of symbolic interactionism is comprised of some main elements of communication which explicitly define every part of human interaction processes within their immediate environment. Symbolic interactionism asserts that human communication is guided by three principles that lead to the establishment of the end result in communication, which is the conveyance of the message being communicated. The first principle involves the development of meaning in an interaction context. This principle asserts that the activities and reactions of humans towards others in the society during an interaction process are centered on the meaning they accord to those people. The second principle entails the aspect of language employed during interaction exercises. Language enables an individual to convey meaning through actions and symbols. The last principle of this concept is the thought process. Thought during interactions adjusts and modifies an individual's interpretation of symbols and actions during communication (Stryker 62).

According to the works of the two theorists, this theory acknowledges the fact that human interactions in terms of interpreting and formulating meanings of messages is directly related to the individual's immediate environment. In this regard, human interaction is best understood by the activities elicited by the nature of their social context. In addition, the communication techniques employed by an individual in a given social setting serves to create the image and social content of an individual within that social context. In this regard, these theorists assert that the immediate context of a social interaction determines the language, meaning and thoughts employed by the subjects participating in the actual interaction (Stryker 78).

At this juncture, we can apply the principles of symbolic interactionism to evaluate the interaction process taking place between two strange people. The underlying concept of symbolic interactionism acknowledges the fact that human actions and responses through language, symbols and gestures are determined by their immediate environment. The creation of meaning, the language used and the process and level of thought employed during interaction context is mostly based on the nature of the immediate environment. During the interaction of two strange individuals, the meaning created by the two persons depends on their opinion and perception regarding the other person. In this case, one person in the context of a blind date may perceive the other person as arrogant or rude based on the language used by that person when communicating. In addition, the thinking style employed by each person depends on the meaning he/she draws from the verbal and non-verbal cues depicted by the other party during the interaction process. In this regard, application of the three principles guiding

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the symbolic interactionism theory serves to highlight the interaction process that takes place between two strangers (Stryker 81).

Work Cited

Stryker, Sheldon. Symbolic Interactionism: A Social Structural Version. Blackburn: Blackburn Press, 2010. Print.