

# Functionalist vs symbolic interactionist

Sociology



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Functionalists believe that each aspect of society is interdependent and contributes to society's functioning as a whole to create stability or work toward the same common goal. The government, or state, provides education for the children of the family, which in turn pays taxes on which the state depends to keep itself running. The family is dependent upon the school to help children grow up to have good jobs so that they can raise and support their own families.

In the process, the children become law-abiding, taxpaying citizens, who in turn support the state. They also note that organizations can be dysfunctional, usually due to alienation of workers. Symbolic interactionists focus on interpersonal relationships and believe that people can determine what goes on in a group or organization. They consider the symbols and details of everyday life, what these symbols mean, and how people interact with each other.

People attach meanings to symbols, and then they act according to their subjective interpretation of these symbols. Symbolic interactionists state that a double standard exists due to stereotyping between men and women. Critics claim that symbolic interactionism neglects the “big picture.” In other words, symbolic interactionists may miss the larger issues of society by focusing too closely on the “trees” rather than the “forest”. The most appealing theoretical perspective to me is functionalism.

I like the functionalist approach because I believe that for a society, a company, or even a family to get along and function well, there needs to be cooperation. Working towards the same goal is also a fundamental reason to approach a task with the functionalistic perspective. Basically having

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common ground is the basis to success no matter if you are working in a small business, a corporation, or just trying to get something achieved in your own home.