

Example of essay on strengths and weaknesses of symbiotic interactionism

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Strengths and Weaknesses of Symbiotic Interactionism

Symbiotic Interactionism is one of the sociological theories which focus on the relationships and individual perspectives of people. It states that even if people belong to families, they have individual interpretation of things. Their reactions and actions towards them are according to their understanding of such. It involves tries to understand how social interaction is done in simple everyday activities of people, like communication, interpretation of actions and responding to them. Self-awareness or reflexive thinking, the symbols used and a negotiated order are keys that help the two interacting bodies understand and communicate with each other. (Ferrante, 2011) Specifically, focuses on the use of rules, words, gestures and the roles of individuals in interacting.

An outstanding strength of the theory is the fact that it recognizes the individuality of individuals. It accepts the fact that people have their own choices, their own free will and their own understanding of things. It is beneficial to individuals in the sense that it gives importance to small interactions. It looks into the details of the interaction of individuals rather than looking at them in a large scale. In this way, the individual behaviors towards the interpretation and reaction to things are focused. Some common social issues that benefit from this theory are racial and gender issues.

Because of the recognition of individual differences in the interpretation of these, the theory accepts no wrong or correct ideas towards these social issues. Everyone is entitled to his own opinion or perspective of race or gender even if this is against the accepted social norm.

Although this theory has been widely recognized by sociologists, one

weakness of the social interactionism theory is that some symbols may be interpreted wrong. Since, interaction among individuals widely uses symbols, and since people interprets things based on their own subjective understanding, there is a big possibility that the interpretation of an individual on a single symbol may be different from another. For example, some people finds no fault in living together without the benefit of marriage, but because some people are influence by a social norm that couples must me married first before living together, this can affect their reaction and relationship towards the couple. The subjectivity in the interpretation of symbols can be one cause of misunderstanding among individuals. Another weakness of the theory is that the idea of socialization is not developed instead the subjective basis of society is overstated. Although the theory is based on the meaning of symbols, it was unable to give an in-depth explanation of how people get the meaning of the symbols except through the interactions with people around them. Actions or the behavior done by individuals is influenced by other people. (Andersen and Taylor, 2008)

Because of the subjective nature of the theory, it is very difficult to quantify things especially when one needs to prove something of test something. Because of the existence of other factors that may influence one's behavior towards things, it may become difficult to determine if a reaction made by an individual his natural reaction or a result of social typecasting.

A method that can be partnered with this theory to help determine if the reactions of individuals are their natural reaction and not influenced by stereotyping is participant observation. Participant observation is a method in which a researcher immense himself in the social group where he wants to

make a study to make objective observations. However, there are questions as to what degree does the observer make disintegrates himself to the community to be able to make the required objective observations. Although some researchers say that they should have full participation, others disagree saying that it would be impossible. With full participation, there is a danger that the observations and data collected will now be influenced by the degree of association the researcher has with the social group. (Kolaja, 1956) An example of this would be the movie Avatar. The supposed to be researchers weren't able to make the objective observations required because they were able to be influenced by their immersion with the community.

Another closely related theory to symbiotic interactionism is the labeling theory developed by Howard Becker. Labeling theory asserts that there is no behavior that is deviant in nature. The individual perspectives or reactions of people are the one that makes a specific action deviant. This is congruent with the subjectivity nature of the symbiotic interactionsim theory. For example, some parents believe in the spanking of children as one disciplinary action. For those who also believe in this, there are no questions. However, for the people who believe otherwise, spanking children to inculcate discipline is against the child's rights and must be stopped. The goodness or the badness of one thing is based on one's individual judgment. It is just like saying that that " the beauty is in the eye of the beholder".

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