

Interactionist perspective

Sociology



Interactionist Perspective Sociologists often analyze the society by using three main perspectives, which include symbolic interactionism, the conflict perspective and the functionalism perspective. Using the various interpretations and the generalization of the society together with the social behavior, sociologists study the very specific occurrences of society at the micro level as well as the bigger picture or the macro level. Symbolic interactionism brings out the micro level analysis of the society.

Interactionist perspective also known as symbolic interactionism directs sociologists to explain the society using symbols, which are used to explain the human behavior in everyday life. According to this perspective people attach meanings to the symbols and act according to their own understanding of these symbols. Functionalism explains that all the facets of society are interrelated and contribute to the functioning of society. This interrelatedness of the society serves to bring order and stability and if this is not achieved the society must adapt to the change in order to bring the desired order. Proponents of functionalism believe that the society is held together through unity and social harmony and members of the society hold similar values and beliefs. The conflict perspective focuses on the conflicting, pessimistic and dynamic society while challenging the status quo and encouraging the much needed social change. This perspective explains that the rich people are the ones who often force social change on the poor people in the society. The end result of the conflict theory is that the rich will exploit the poor people for their own personal gain (Conrad, 1999).

Conrad (1999) points out that conflict theory and the functionalist perspective are similar in the sense that both perspectives view the society as an important division of determining how people behave between

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themselves. These two perspectives view humans as creatures in a certain social system and refers to the family as a worldwide representative of the society because it meets the basic functions of for the society such as controlling sexuality, reproducing new members of the society, providing the family members with their basic needs and shaping the young ones in to conforming to the society's norms and values. The main contrast that exists between functionalist and the conflict theory is that functionalism views religion as a basis of unity and organization whereas the conflict theory views religion as a control mechanism that is applied by the powerful and mighty in the society to oppress the poor thus hiding the real foundation of power. Interactionist perspective on the other hand only attaches symbols to the various aspects of the society.

There are various strengths and weaknesses of the interactionist perspective. Field and Taylor (1998) highlights that the main advantage of the interactionist perspective is that everything in the society can be interpreted by attaching symbols to it so long as it can explain anything beyond itself. The major weakness of this perspective is that it does not reflect the bigger picture or the macro level thus sociologists might miss the larger and critical issues of society. Another weakness is that the interpretation of the symbols might not be understood by both parties since different people have different interpretation of the symbols. The main weakness of the conflict theory is that it focuses on the negative aspects of society. The perspective claims that any positive effort in the society is geared towards controlling the masses and not for the greater good of the society as a whole.

In conclusion, I align closely to the interactionist perspective because it <https://assignbuster.com/interactionist-perspective/>

attaches symbols to all the occurrences in the society and tries to explain the meaning of the symbol. This perspective is important since it can be successfully applied to explaining the smallest phenomena known as the micro picture. People will always act in different ways depending on an individual's understanding of the symbol

References

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Field, D. J. & Taylor S. D. 1998. Sociological perspectives on health, illness and health care. Oxford: Blackwell Science.