

## **Chapter 2      Perspectives in Sociological Social Psychology**

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### **Chapter Goal**

This chapter provides an extensive review of three major perspectives in sociological social psychology. Students will learn about the historical, theoretical, and empirical importance of these perspectives.

### **Chapter Outline**

#### **I. The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective**

- A. Society and Agency
- B. Basic Principles of Symbolic Interactionism
  - 1. Symbols, Language, and the Development of Meaning
  - 2. The Use of Meaning Once Derived
  - 3. The Interpretive Process
- C. Two Schools of Symbolic Interactionism
  - 1. The Chicago School
  - 2. The Iowa and Indiana Schools
- D. Section Summary
- E. The Take-Away Message

#### **II. The Social Structure and Personality Perspective**

- A. The Components Principle
  - 1. Status
  - 2. Roles
  - 3. Social Norms
  - 4. Social Networks
- B. The Proximity Principle
- C. The Psychology Principle
- D. Section Summary
- E. The Take-Away Message

#### **III. The Group Processes Perspective**

- A. Studying Processes
  - 1. Power
  - 2. Status
  - 3. Justice
  - 4. Legitimacy
- B. Group Structures
  - 1. Group Size
  - 2. Dyads and Triads
  - 3. Types of Groups
- C. Relationships between Groups

- D. Section Summary
- E. The Take-Away Message

#### IV. Bringing It All Together

#### V. Summary

#### VI. Key Terms and Concepts

#### VII. Discussion Questions

### Test Questions

#### *Part I. Matching Items*

Match the term to its definition by filling in the letter before the term in the appropriate blank.

A. Proximity principle	J. Social networks	S. Power
B. Reference groups	K. Primary groups	T. Symbols
C. Components principle	L. Indiana and Iowa schools	U. Justice
D. Society	M. Small groups	V. Secondary groups
E. Language	N. Psychology principle	W. Triad
F. Thomas theorem	O. Chicago school	X. Dyad
G. Social forces	P. Legitimacy	Y. Framing
H. Group	Q. Collective behavior	Z. Social Scripts
I. Agency	R. Social construction of reality	

- \_\_\_\_\_ Element of the social structure and personality perspective referring to how individuals internalize proximal experiences. [*Answer: N*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ A perspective within symbolic interactionism that focuses on understanding the social processes involved in a given situation rather than on trying to quantify and predict people's thoughts, feelings, and behavior. [*Answer: O*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ The action or behavior of people in groups or crowds. [*Answer: Q*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ Within the social structure and personality perspective, the ability to identify the elements or components of society most likely to affect a given attitude or behavior. [*Answer: C*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ A two-person group. [*Answer: X*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ Interactions that involve more than one person. [*Answer: H*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ Perspective within symbolic interactionism that focuses on the quantitative study of social interaction processes because of the stable nature of social life. [*Answer: L*]

- \_\_\_\_\_ The process by which individuals transform the meaning of a situation using basic cognitive structures provided by society. [*Answer: Y*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ Perceptions that a social arrangement or distribution is fair. [*Answer: U*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ Theorem stating that when people define situations as real, the consequences of those situations become real. [*Answer: F*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ A series of symbols that can be combined in various ways to create new meanings. [*Answer: E*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ The perception that a social arrangement or position is the way that things should be. [*Answer: P*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ The ability to obtain what we desire in a group despite resistance. [*Answer: S*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ People we are close to and interact with regularly. [*Answer: K*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ Element of the social structure and personality perspective referring to how people are affected by social structure through their immediate social environments. [*Answer: A*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ People we look to as a source of standards and identity. [*Answer: B*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ People we affiliate with to achieve common goals or meet common needs. [*Answer: V*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ Two or more persons (generally, not more than 20) engaged in or capable of face-to-face interaction. [*Answer: M*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ Any way in which society compels individuals to act in accordance with an external norm, rule, or demand. [*Answer: G*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ A series of relationships between individuals and groups. [*Answer: J*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ In symbolic interactionism, the network of interaction between people. [*Answer: D*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ The appropriate thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that should be displayed in a particular social frame. [*Answer: Z*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ Anything that has a similar meaning for two or more individuals. [*Answer: T*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ A three-person group. [*Answer: W*]
- \_\_\_\_\_ The ability to act and think independent of the constraints imposed by social conditions. [*Answer: I*]

\_\_\_\_\_ The process by which we use symbols and language to give meaning and value to objects and people. [*Answer: R*]

***Part II. Multiple-Choice Questions***

Circle the response that best answers the question.

1. The development of symbolic interactionism stems from which philosophical tradition or traditions?

- A) French philosophy
- B) German economic analysis
- C) American pragmatism
- D) Austrian theory

*Answer: C      Page Ref: 29*

2. Which social theorists are most associated with the concept of the social construction of reality?

- A) Marx and Engels
- B) Thomas and Thomas
- C) Berger and Luckmann
- D) Blumer and Mead

*Answer: C      Page Ref: 31*

3. A local fraternity developed a special hand signal whenever members see each other on the university quad. In symbolic interactionist terms, this signal has become a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ for this group.

- A) cultural exchange
- B) important source of pride
- C) language
- D) symbol

*Answer: D      Page Ref: 31*

4. Terence has started to believe that a friend at work is really a spy from another company, leading him to avoid interactions with this person as much as possible. He treats all interactions with her as suspect and is reluctant to share any work-related information with her. Which of the following principles, theorems, or concepts best explains Terence's behavior?

- A) the components principle of the social structure and personality perspective
- B) the Thomas theorem
- C) the Peter principle
- D) the group processes concept of legitimacy

*Answer: B      Page Ref: 34*

5. Who coined the expression "symbolic interaction"?

- A) Emile Durkheim
- B) Herbert Blumer
- C) Auguste Comte
- D) George Herbert Mead

*Answer: B Page Ref: 30*

6. Professor Swanson is studying the meaning of “goodness” using a survey of public attitudes toward the topic. Which school, or schools, of symbolic interaction is she most likely using in her research?

- A) the Chicago school
- B) the Indiana and Iowa schools
- C) the Swanson school
- D) the sociological social psychology school

*Answer: B Page Ref: 37*

7. Socioeconomic status (social class), race or ethnicity, gender, age, and sexuality all relate to which principle of the social structure and personality perspective?

- A) the components principle
- B) the proximity principle
- C) the psychology principle
- D) the Peter principle

*Answer: A Page Ref: 39*

8. Role theory is associated with which perspective in sociological social psychology?

- A) conflict theory
- B) social structure and personality
- C) group processes
- D) structural functionalism

*Answer: B Page Ref: 41, Box 2.3*

9. Networks are important to the study of the effects of society on individuals’ thoughts, feelings, and behaviors because \_\_\_\_\_.

- A) they provide important links between people
- B) they give people more friends
- C) they provide ways of managing life’s problems
- D) they give people more prestigious jobs

*Answer: A Page Ref: 41*

10. Franklin did not think much about how the economy or society affects his life until he lost his job. Franklin’s change in attitude about the impact of the economy on his life best reflects which principle from the social structure and personality perspective?

- A) the components principle

- B) the proximity principle
- C) the propinquity principle
- D) the psychology principle

*Answer: B Page Ref: 42-43*

11. In the previous question, Franklin's internal processing of his job loss best represents which principle from the social structure and personality perspective?

- A) the components principle
- B) the proximity principle
- C) the propinquity principle
- D) the psychology principle

*Answer: D Page Ref: 43-44*

12. After Donna cheated on her most recent exam, she started to feel a sense of guilt, making her reconsider whether she will cheat again. Donna's feelings of guilt can be considered a \_\_\_\_\_, according to the social structure and personality perspective, leading her to rethink her future behaviors.

- A) social more
- B) social norm
- C) social force
- D) social fear

*Answer: C Page Ref: 43*

13. Which of the following are considered major dimensions of group processes?

- A) power and justice
- B) justice and legitimacy
- C) legitimacy and power
- D) power, justice, and legitimacy

*Answer: D Page Ref: 46-48*

14. Janelle wants to study how and why some people are able to tell other people what to do, whereas others are not. What aspect of group processes is she studying?

- A) power
- B) status
- C) justice
- D) legitimacy

*Answer: A Page Ref: 46*

15. Which social psychologist is most associated with the concepts of dyads and triads?

- A) Emile Durkheim
- B) Auguste Comte
- C) Herbert Blumer

D) Georg Simmel

*Answer: D Page Ref: 49*

16. The difference between dyads and triads is important because \_\_\_\_\_.
- A) moving from a dyad to a triad exponentially increases the number of relationships available in an interaction
  - B) moving from a dyad to a triad exponentially increases the amount of intimacy possible in a group
  - C) moving from a dyad to a triad exponentially decreases the number of relationships available in an interaction
  - D) moving from a dyad to a triad does not impact the amount of intimacy possible in a group

*Answer: A Page Ref: 49*

17. A group of friends getting together for dinner represents a \_\_\_\_\_ group, whereas a group of people at work represents a \_\_\_\_\_ group?
- A) reference; primary
  - B) primary; reference
  - C) primary; secondary
  - D) secondary; reference

*Answer: C Page Ref: 50*

18. Bob goes to the beach on a hot summer day and is surprised when he observes a group of people dressed in formal wear sitting in beach chairs among the sunbathers. Bob was surprised because the \_\_\_\_\_ did not meet his expectation for that situation.
- A) reference groups
  - B) social scripts
  - C) frames
  - D) norms

*Answer: B Page Ref: 34*

### ***Part III. Essay Questions***

Answer the questions in your own words.

1. Discuss how symbolic interactionists define the concept of society. What role do symbols and language play in the development society?
2. Review the three principles of the social structure and personality perspective. How do scholars from this perspective see society affecting interaction among individuals?

3. Discuss the ways that group structures can impact interaction in groups. Specifically, examine how group size (dyads and triads) and types of groups (e.g., primary groups) impact interactions between people.

#### ***Part IV. Vignette Analysis***

Read the vignette and answer the questions that follow.

*When Malcolm started working at the local print shop, he got along with everyone. He was a supervisor but always tried to stay friends with the people who worked for him. Soon after joining the shop, a new supervisor, Ginny, was hired to manage the shipping department. One day Malcolm heard Ginny use a racial slur. Then Malcolm started noticing other things about her behavior. He noticed that Ginny would eat only with people of her own race and gender, for that matter. He heard her make another racist remark. He ignored her as best he could, sharing his concerns with coworkers and questioning whether a racist should be managing other people. Malcolm discussed Ginny's behavior with his supervisor but she did not see enough evidence of racism to do anything about it.*

1. Which symbolic interaction principle helps to explain Malcolm's behavior toward Ginny?
  - A) Meanings arise through social interaction among individuals.
  - B) People use the meanings they derive from their first impressions only to guide their own behavior.
  - C) People employ a biological process regarding interactions.
  - D) The size of Malcolm's group influences his relationships with members.

*Answer: A     Page Ref: 30*

2. What type of group is depicted in the vignette?
  - A) primary
  - B) secondary
  - C) tertiary
  - D) reference

*Answer: B     Page Ref: 50*

3. What component of the group processes perspective is most evident in Malcolm's belief that Ginny should not be a supervisor?
  - A) power
  - B) status
  - C) justice
  - D) legitimacy

*Answer: D     Page Ref: 48*

4. Review the three principles of symbolic interaction. Apply the principles to explain why Malcolm and his supervisor reach different conclusions about Ginny.



## **Lecture Ideas**

1. Show a slideshow of symbols that have different meanings based on culture to illustrate the concepts of symbols, language, and the development of meaning.
2. Bring in children's clothing or ads of children's clothing. Have students describe who the clothing is intended for based on the color, texture, and design. Discuss the function of the clothes and explore how the function may be the same but the meaning we may assign to the clothing items may be very different. You may want to include the historical construction of appropriate gender colors as well.

## **Classroom Activities**

1. Bring in a print advertisement or show a television commercial with no sound. After the students have studied the print ad or commercial, have them write down the meaning they ascribe to it. Use the different interpretations to illustrate the Thomas theorem and to explain symbolic interaction.
2. A variation on the above activity would be to create several possible interpretations of the ad or commercial for the students and to have students discuss why the interpretations of the situation are so different.
3. Have students write as many alternate words as possible for a common word in U.S. culture. Choose a word that has many different synonyms or slang terms for it, such as money, beauty, or sex. Discuss why that one word has so many different interpretations based on context.

## **Outside Class Assignments**

1. Using the three core principles of symbolic interaction, have students write about an event in their lives about which they can apply and interpret the event using the three principles.
2. Ask students to make a flowchart or cluster diagram illustrating their various statuses. Have them list the social networks they are part of because of these statuses.