Symbolic Interactionism

Key Players, Concepts, and Assumptions

The Self As A Social Construction

Components of Interaction

Symbolic Interactionism

Key Players

Herbert Blumer: came up with the term

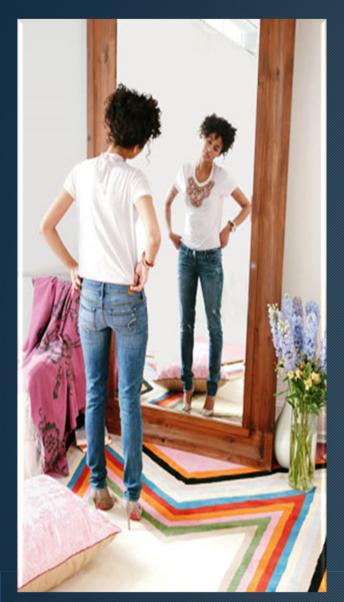**George H. Mead**: meaning comes from symbols which come from interactions

Key Concept

Symbol: an abstract/arbitrary stimulus which people make meaningful

Key Assumptions

We learn the meanings of symbols via social interactions with other people

Those meanings are neither universal nor timeless

We come to learn who we are via social interactions with other people

- **What Is The Self?**
  - The **"I"** . . . the part of the self that acts & responds
  - The **"Me"** . . . the part of the self that is seen & known
  - **Self-Awareness** . . . our ability to know our self
  - **Self-Concept** . . . the consequence of that knowing
  - **Self-Esteem/Efficacy** . . evaluative aspects of the self

- **Where Do We Get The Self From?**
  - Imagining how we appear to others
  - Imagining how others judge us
  - Our emotional reactions to those judgments

These Are Called Reflected Appraisals

and they are results of interactions (**role-taking**)
with **specific** and **generalized** others

The Self As A Social Construction

CONTEXTS
Situations and Definitions Of Situations

Thomas Theorem
What humans define as real is real in its consequences

Actors define the context and situation, so how we define the contexts determines the actions and solutions we undertake

Components Of Interaction

IDENTITIES
Salience and Commitment

Identity
is a socially defined character we develop as occupants of particular social positions

Salience
is an identity's position in the identity set hierarchy

Commitment
is based on the number of ties and emotional strength of ties to other people who treat us like a holder of the identity

Components Of Interaction

ROLES

Role Making

Role Strain, Role Conflict, and Role Exits

Roles
are sets of prescriptions and proscriptions for behavior tied to our positions

Role Making
is society's move to create/modify roles in order to make them more explicit

Role Strain
is an inability to enact competing expectations of a single role

Role Conflict
is an inability to manage competing expectations of a multiple roles

Role Exit
is disengagement from a central role & (re)establishment of a related one

Components Of Interaction

INTERACTIONS
Impression Management

Facework
Tasks aimed at controlling our public self-image

Front
Parts of our performance which define it for our "audience"

Regions
Front Stage
Back Stage

Audiences & Teams
People whose cooperation is required if our front is to be maintained

Components Of Interaction

JOURNAL QUESTION

Describe a longstanding front your family puts on for the public outside your household. What public identity are they protecting? Who is the audience for the front? Who are the team-members involved in maintaining it? What makes the backstage and frontstage distinctive? Why bother saving face with this performance? What, if anything, would happen if your family "lost face"?