



Symbolic Interactionism: An Introduction, An Interpretation, An Integration (10th Edition)

By Joel M. Charon

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Using a unique step-by-step, *integrated approach*, this text organizes the basic concepts of symbolic interactionism in such a way that students understand them clearly and are able to *apply* them to their own lives. It emphasizes the *active* side of human beings—humans as definers and users of the environment, humans as problem solvers and in control of their own actions—and it shows students how society makes *us*, and how we in turn *shape* society.

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- Sales Rank: #1142692 in Books
- Published on: 2009-08-14
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .50" w x 6.00" l, .65 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 256 pages



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Editorial Review

Review

General Thoughts

“Charon’s work is appropriate for undergraduate social psychology courses at introductory and advanced levels. It can serve as an excellent introduction to Symbolic Interactionism even at the graduate level. There is no other text I can think of that attempts such a comprehensive introduction to the perspective.”

Dr. Joel O. Powell, Minnesota State University, Moorhead

“I really like this book. It is well written and would generate a great deal of discussion.”

Dr. Rhonda Matthews, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania

“This book is very reliable and credible!”

Jennifer L. Kalfsbeek, St. Paul College

Readability and Writing Style

“Charon makes very difficult concepts easy to understand without compromising their importance and complexity. The student is held in mind throughout.”

Dr. Joel O. Powell, Minnesota State University, Moorhead

“This is perhaps the most clearly-written social science text I have ever read.”

Dr. Joel O. Powell, Minnesota State University, Moorhead

“It’s a good combination of intellectual and accessible.”

Dr. Rhonda Matthews, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania

“I appreciated the order and flow of the chapters in this textbook. They are very cohesive, each chapter either supporting the coming chapter, or transitioning smoothly from the previous chapter. My introductory-level students are able to keep up with the reading with little problem.”

Jennifer L. Kalfsbeek, St. Paul College

From the Publisher

This text is a clear, well-organized, and interesting introduction to symbolic interactionism.

From the Inside Flap

Preface

The first edition of this book was an attempt to fulfill a promise I made to myself in graduate school: to write a clear, organized, and interesting introduction to symbolic interactionism. It was meant to integrate that perspective, to be as accurate as possible, and to help the reader apply the ideas to real life. Since that first edition, symbolic interactionism has become increasingly important to the discipline of sociology. Its criticisms of traditional sociology have made an impact. Its research studies have increasingly become a part

of sociology. Its practitioners are some of the leading officers, journal editors, and researchers in the discipline.

I vividly recall my discussion with Eleanor VanderHaegen and Mary Zimmerman in Walter Library more than 25 years ago. We knew then that symbolic interactionism had something important to say; it was just that too many books seemed to miss the message. This book is an attempt to make that message clear; thankfully, other fine symbolic interactionists are successfully making the message clear.

Social psychology is a very broad area of scholarship in both sociology and psychology. There are many studies; there are many concepts; there are many theoretical perspectives. Social psychology is much more than just symbolic interactionism. However, no perspective within social psychology, in my opinion, comes closer to capturing the essence of the human being as a social being—a creator, a product, and a shaper of society—than symbolic interactionism. The essence of the human being is that we interact with one another, and that social interaction leads to society, who we are as human beings, and who we are as individuals. We may have now gone beyond George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer, and Erving Goffman, but this essence remains critical to what symbolic interactionism is, and this essence remains the message that this perspective brings to the student.

Each time I attempt to improve on what I have written before, it brings a certain humility to my work. After revising each edition, I wonder how in the world I could ever have written what I had previously. In the fourth edition I was very fortunate to include a chapter on Erving Goffman by Spencer Cahill, which proved to be a wonderful addition. Joel Powell's contribution to that fourth edition also proved significant. In the fifth edition I thoroughly revised the chapter on social interaction and the last chapter on applications of the perspective. Now, in this seventh edition, I focus on presentation of all concepts in a clearer and more teachable manner. My guide is primarily criticisms by students who used this book. No one chapter was thoroughly revised, but readers will find this edition more understandable and applicable to real-life situations. Students in my classes are increasingly recognizing the relevance of symbolic interactionism to issues they care about, and relevance is the principle that guides this revision.

As always, I examine each chapter of the previous edition very carefully in order to update the material and to correct any errors and ambiguity. I especially cut down on direct quotations by paraphrasing more of the ideas of other writers. On the basis of my own teaching experience, I constantly ask myself how to best present difficult material to students so they understand it and are able to apply it to their own lives and to issues that matter to them. I make special efforts to appeal to students who think sociologically and students who are attracted to the world of ideas. After all, the sociological ramifications and ideas are the source of the excitement this perspective has always had for me.

Finally, I would like to thank certain symbolic interactionists who have been very important to my thinking from, afar. I read what they write. I listen to and watch them at meetings. They are important models to me, although they may not know it. They are Howard Becker, Lonnie Athens, Spencer Cahill, Norman Denzin, Gary Fine, Ruth Horowitz, Helena Lopata, John Lofland, Lyn Lofland, David Maines, Bernard Meltzer, and Tamotsu Shibutani. I also admired Carl Couch, and I will miss him.

I dedicate this book to my wife, Susan, who continues to be my best friend and greatest supporter.

Joel M. Charon

Users Review

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