Symbolic Interactionism and Social Work: A Forgotten Legacy, Part 1
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Families in Society; Jul-Sep 2004; 85, 3; Research Library
pg. 391

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ABSTRACT

Social workers have forgotten their interactionist ancestors. This article is the first installment in a 2-part series designed to remedy this amnesia. Part 1 introduces the tradition of applied symbolic interactionism and reports on the historical and exemplary partnerships between social workers and interactionists. Part 1 also reviews the social work use of symbolic interactionism in the areas of human behavior theory and practice with varied size social systems. Part 2 reviews interactionist contributions to social work in varied fields of practice, to social policy and welfare, to research, and to professional education. An appraisal of the social work use of the interactionist legacy and a summary of resources from within and outside North America for revitalizing the partnership are also provided in Part 2.

Symbolic interactionism provides an ideal conceptual framework for social work theorizing and practice. It offers social workers a tradition integrating scholarship and practice (Forte, 2001); a set of distinguished role models including Jane Addams, George Herbert Mead, and John Dewey (Goldstein, 2001); and varied conceptual toolboxes suited for interpretive, pragmatic, progressive, and humanistic helping work (Forte, 2003). Since the early 1900s, Mead and many other symbolic interactionists have inquired about issues of great relevance to social work practitioners. These include the self, identity, social membership, communication, change, diversity, social action, justice, and the healthy society.

Only Howard Goldstein (2001), Max Siporin (1983), and a few other social work theorists, however, have realized the richness of this tradition. In a review of theories used by social workers, Payne (1991), for example, characterized symbolic interactionism as a humanistic theory in its emphasis on the person's capacity for change and social influence. Symbolic interactionism can help practitioners understand culturally different interpretations of similar social experiences, explore meanings such as those of the members of undervalued groups, and attend to the social aspects of intense emotions. Symbolic interactionism, Longres (1995) asserted, contributes to our understanding of the labeling process and the impact of labels on self-image and esteem. It reminds social workers to avoid stigmatizing clients and to refrain from assigning negative labels during the assessment process. Despite the work of a few champions, social workers have not even generated a comprehensive review of the interactionist literature like those available for behavioral social workers (Thyer, 1983).

The present article is the first of a two-part series on the legacy of symbolic interactionism. In this series, I will attempt to remedy the profession's neglect of the interactionist heritage by describing and appraising the body of scattered but provocative social work articles and books inspired by symbolic interactionism. Part 1 reports on the

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missed opportunities for the creation of a partnership between interactionist sociologists and interactionist social workers. Part 1 also documents the few historical moments when members of the two distinct disciplines collaborated, and the attempts of some North American social workers to use symbolic interactionism as a professional behavior theory and practice theory. In Part 2, I discuss how interactionist ideas have been incorporated into all phases of the planned change process, into work in varied fields of practice and work with at-risk clients, and into social work pedagogy. Part 2 concludes with an appraisal of social work's use of the interactionist legacy.

Social Work, Sociology, and Applied Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical perspective and school of thought created between 1890 and 1910 by philosophers, sociologists, and social workers aligned with the University of Chicago (Forte, 2003; Menand, 2001). The naming of the tradition is credited to Herbert Blumer, and the school's intellectual reputation was advanced mostly by sociologists like Blumer, Charles Horton Cooley, W. I. Thomas, Ernest Burgess, Robert Park, and Erving Goffman. Symbolic interactionionism, as defined by Plummer (1991), examines the symbolic and the interactive together as they are experienced and organized in the worlds of everyday lives. It looks at how meanings emerge, are negotiated, stabilized and transformed; at how people do things together through joint action; and at how interaction strategies organize such meanings at all levels of collective life. (p. ix)

The core concepts of the interactionist language include symbol, interaction, attitude, socialization, role-taking, self, generalized other, reference group, role, and definition of the situation (Lauer & Handel, 1983). Interactionists have developed a distinctive "architectonic," an approach to social science "structured around discussions about the interpretive, reflexive, and contingent character of human action; a naturalistic methodological position; a negotiated order approach to social organization; and an implicitly humanistic stance" (Colomy, 1991, p. 272). Despite interactionism's pragmatist roots, there has been little development of a distinctive interactionist approach to social work or public problem-solving theory.

A time machine traveler returning to the early part of this century might examine the social and professional scene and predict a long and fertile marriage between social work and symbolic interactionism. The interactionist theorists at the University of Chicago, for example, were inspired by the philosophy of pragmatism and thus were committed both to social reform and to the generation of knowledge for practical use (Turner, 1998). Social work reformers at Hull House pioneered the integration of research, theory, policy analysis, and direct practice in the service of poor city residents (Menand, 2001). Academics from the University and social workers from the settlement worked in the turf of their counterparts regularly (Forte, 2003). The public saw sociology and social work as compatible companions (Chaiklin, 1975). Distinctions between the disciplines were acknowledged, but there was agreement that interdisciplinary cooperation would ameliorate social problems and improve human welfare (Munson, 1978). Jane Addams, Jessie Taft, and other "scholarly practitioners," persons dedicated to knowledge building and to effective practice, were the ideological offspring of the marriage between social work and sociology.

Our time traveler might be distressed to discover that the marriage was called off. The original participants are unavailable to justify their actions, but since then, the accounts of the uncoupling have been numerous. Sociologists were interested in macro-level social phenomenon, whereas social workers focused attention on smaller scale social systems (Munson, 1978). Sociologists chose the "value-free scientists" of the natural sciences as their role models and so disowned their reformist origins. Social workers, in contrast, emulated the physicians and psychiatrists practicing the healing arts, and rejected assertions that they were stepchildren of academic sociologists (McClung Lee, 1976). Commonly, sociologists were the "rugged individualists" (Turner, 1998, p. 257) and thus were uncomfortable with the collaborative and self-sacrificing activity required of social workers. Or worse, academic sociologists were powerful sexists who chose not to allow female social reformers and social workers into the academy, and then conspired to reconstruct history as if women social workers did not play a critical role in the formation of the sociological perspective (Seigfried, 1996). Organizational auspices were different. Sociologists anchored their careers in colleges and universities, whereas social workers were anchored in community agencies. So collegial relationships, joint undertakings, and common perspectives were rare (Chaiklin, 1975).

Many obstacles challenge those interested in a reconciliation. Sociologists and social workers read different journals, graduate students from different programs, use different textbooks (even when on the same topic), ignore each other's literature, discourage the hiring of professors without the credentials of their own organizations, and rarely join together for theory building or intervention projects. Some sociologists hope that sociology can escape a likely decrease in stature by applying knowledge as clinical sociologists, sociological practitioners, and applied sociologists (Clark, 1990; Rebach & Bruhn, 1991; Turner, 1998). However, even these sociological activists write as if social workers don't exist, offer nothing to social work, and resist encroachment into their vaguely defined professional turf by social workers and other human service practitioners. In turn, and as a matter of educational policy, social work educators prohibit sociologists from teaching social work practice courses, restricting this privilege to those with masters level social work course experience and internships.

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Applied Symbolic Interactionism

The similarities in the interests and inclinations of sociologists aligned with symbolic interactionism and social workers seem numerous (Forte, 2001; Maines, 1997). If a reconciliation is to occur (perhaps not in this generation but in the next), mediators might take advantage of these similarities. Interactionists develop practical theories, and social workers need theories for practice. Interactionists interpret human action as meaningful and contextual, and social workers tune into behavior that is intelligible in terms of social group memberships. Interactionists give central importance to communication, and social workers view talk as the primary means for providing aid.

Many interactionists have noted the affinity of the interactionist perspective to social work practice. Dunn and Cardwell (1986) urged interactionists to move into the "age of application." Interactionists might contribute to social work problem solving, they suggested, by asking "How can SI [symbolic interactionism] help us understand what is happening here?" and "How can the principles of SI be applied to this situation to the benefit of those involved?" (p. 19). Lindesmith, Strauss, and Denzin (1975) made an argument about the relevance of symbolic interactionists. They asked, "Does their perspective contribute anything to the problems of human societies?" Then, they answered their own question: "To those who claim it is irrelevant for the analysis of practical issues, we would respond it is hard to conceive of any situation involving policy issues that could not be better handled with greater firsthand knowledge of the materials with which one is dealing" (p. 8).

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Several interactionists have explicitly advised a social work and symbolic interactionist partnership. In a 1985 Distinguished Lecture published in *Symbolic Interaction*, Zurcher (1986) made the first recorded call for the development of an "applied symbolic interactionism" and for making "better use of the lessons provided by our intellectual forebearers" (p. 175). He also recognized the challenge to interactionists from "colleagues such as social workers who are professionally involved in the amelioration of social problems and the salutary application of sociological knowledge" (p. 175). He urged interactionists to seek answers to questions about self, social change, and professional socialization posed by these social workers. Maines (1997) commended Jane Addams, Edith Abbott, Julia Lathrop, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead for uniting applied and intellectual pragmatism into what would now be called "interactionism and social work" (p. 3). Maines recommended additional efforts to merge symbolic interactionism with general interventionist purposes.

Reciprocal Influences: Historical Highlights

Although interest by social workers in interactionism has waxed and waned, there have been periods of intellectual exchanges and collaboration between social workers and symbolic interactionists. In 1910, for example, Sophonisha Breckinridge, a social worker, was also a member of a committee that George Herbert Mead chaired. This committee investigated the work conditions of laborers and offered to mediate a major labor dispute in the garment industry (Deegan & Burger, 1978). The Chicago social workers involved in the settlement movement in the early part of this century also worked closely with Mead. Mead, in turn, supported the efforts of Jane Addams, a very close friend (Lane, 1984), and praised her and other settlement house workers for their defense of the rights of the underprivileged (Shalin, 1988). Graham Taylor, a social worker, wrote of Mead that, "more than any of us know, the social settlement and city club movements owed much to his enlistment and guidance" (Shalin, 1988, p. 924).

The influence was not one way. Practitioners also influenced sociologist theorists. Jane Addam's observations of juvenile gang behavior served Cooley, an "armchair sociologist," as "stimulus for his classic definition of the primary group" (Chaiklin, 1975, p. 102). Mead deepened, through involvement with Hull House and careful observation of immigrants eager for success in their new country, his theoretical understanding of many sociological topics (Lane, 1984). Important social workers and symbolic interactionists encouraged each other, in the early part of the century, to promote social activism and democratization. In 1917, for example, Mead, Dewey, and Addams marched down Chicago's Michigan Avenue in unified support of women's suffrage (Deegan & Burger, 1978). Dewey, a social philosopher and educational innovator, acknowledged his indebtedness to

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Addams, especially for her lessons about how those with conflicting interests might be reconciled (Menand, 2001).

Symbolic interactionists provided intellectual stimulation to practitioners. Mary Richmond acknowledged the influence of Mead on her thought (Montalvo, 1982). She developed her concept of "wider self" with reference to Mead, and she appreciated Mead's assumption that humans are defined in terms of interpersonal relationships. Moreover, through the 1920s, Richmond enthusiastically kept up with Mead's refinements of his self theory. The progressive education movement initiated by John Dewey provided a philosophical base for early, democratically minded group workers (Germain & Gitterman, 1980). Dewey was also an active and influential member of an organization called "The Inquiry." Between 1923 and 1933, the members of this group "brought into being a form of study and helping that they called 'group work'" (Siporin, 1986). Group workers responded favorably to the influence of Dewey and his friend, William Heard Kilpatrick, and even considered aligning with education rather than social work (Konopka, 1972). Siporin (1972) notes that the person-in-situation perspective, a central element of all social work practice theory, emerged from the converging interests of important social workers like Edward C. Lindeman in community organizing and group work, Ada E. Sheffield in social casework, Mary Follett in social welfare administration, and the interests of symbolic interactionist researchers and theorists. Specifically, Siporin identifies the work of Mead, Cooley, Dewey, Thomas, and Florian Znaniecki as central to the development of social work's situational theories.

Symbolic interactionism helped provoke the theoretical shift by social workers away from psychoanalysis to the functional approach in the 1930s (Constable & Cocozzelli, 1989). Robinson and Taft, for instance, offered a new conceptualization of the helping process and a new view of the client as an active, reflecting subject interacting dynamically with an agency. This explanatory framework incorporated the thought of Dewey, Thomas, and Mead. Taft had studied with Mead and Thomas at the Chicago School of Sociology from 1909 to 1913. With their guidance, she completed a doctorate. This manuscript developed Mead's ideas about social consciousness (Deegan, 1986; Taft, 1915/1987). Taft also borrowed interactionist notions of the social self, the impulse toward fulfilling one's potential, childhood socialization, and temporal orientation. Her model of the professional education of students was also interactionist in flavor (Deegan, 1986). Taft brought applied symbolic interactionism to the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work, and it became the center for functionalist social work.

Little evidence of a strong symbolic interactionist influence on social work writing in the 1940s and 1950s was found. Perlman's (1957) problem-solving model was clearly indebted to Dewey and Mead's pragmatist formulations about problem-solving inquiry and the scientific method. In addition, her work on personal and social role (1968) was also quite compatible with interactionism's dramaturgical approach to role performance. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Schwartz's (*1961(Possible)*1976) formulated the "interactionist" model of social group work. This drew heavily on the work of symbolic interactionists. He traced the roots of his approach to Dewey's view of the learning process, Dewey's articulation of the emotional component of human experience, and Cooley's emphasis on the group as an entity with properties different from those of its individual members. J. D. Anderson (1984), acknowledging Mead's importance to the "interactionist" knowledge base, extended Schwartz's work so that it could serve as a generic practice theory for social work with all size social systems. Unfortunately, later developments of the model by Shulman (1991) made only passing reference to Mead, failed to build on the insights of symbolic interaction, and used the "concept of 'interaction' in a different context from traditional sociological symbolic interaction theory" (Munson, 1993, p. 15).

The 1970s were a productive decade for interactionist-inspired social workers. Benjamin Knott (1971) offered one of the earliest written endorsements of symbolic interactionism as a theoretical base. After reviewing its premises and major concepts, Knott argued that symbolic interactionism can inform the social work assessment, direct work with deviant clients, service to families, and community organizing. A special 1979 issue of the *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* devoted to symbolic interactionism followed. The issue opened with an argument for interactionism as the profession's theoretical framework of choice (Chaiklin, 1979). Chaiklin suggested that it offered a way to integrate the "social" into practice, a way compatible with how social workers actually related to people. The issue also included articles on the development of an interactionist approach to assessment (Horner, 1979); the application of symbolic interactionism to various practice problems, including work with the mentally ill (Maines & Markowitz, 1979), the disabled (Birenbaum, 1979), and preschoolers (Malon & Ruckdeschel, 1979); and consideration of the symbolic meaning of "woman" and the implications of such symbolization for social welfare settings (Schmitt & Grupp, 1979).

Germain's (1983) work in the 1980s on the ecological perspective and the Life Model of social work used the interactionist concept of "transaction" as a theoretical cornerstone. In 1949, Dewey and Bentley had argued that human experience can be understood only in terms of the ongoing transactions between the person as an organism and his or her environment. Growth for these interactionists, as for ecological social workers, involved efforts of the person to achieve a more extensive balance with the surrounding environmental conditions. Germain saw that the concept of transaction could remedy the individualist biases of much social work theorizing while also emphasizing that people shape and are shaped by their environments.

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Beginning in the early 1990s, Roberta Greene (Greene, 1994; Greene & Ephross, 1991), the chief editor of two collections on theories for understanding human behavior and the social environment, gave a prominent place to symbolic interactionism. Her earlier collaborative chapter on symbolic interactionism (Ephross & Greene, 1991) succinctly presented the history, basic assumptions, major concepts, assessment approaches, and intervention strategies of the approach. The later chapter (Greene & Saltman, 1994) argued that symbolic interactionist's emphasis on language and the group membership context of meaning—whether cultural, ethnic, religious or other—makes it a consummate base for cross-cultural social work.

Symbolic interactionism has many similarities to social constructionism. In the mid-nineties, some social workers made a concerted effort to import the ideas of constructivism and social constructionistism into our knowledge base (Carpenter, 1996; Fleck-Henderson, 1993; Franklin, 1995; Lee & Greene, 1999). However, few social workers have fully appreciated the ancestry of these approaches. The American pragmatists, Dewey and Mead, were probably the first constructionists (Pearce, 1995). Berger and Luckmann (1966) wrote a classic formulation of constructionism and, in it, acknowledged Mead's contribution to this line of thought. Leaders of this next wave in social work theorizing are explicating the constructivist and the constructionist approaches to assessment, intervention, research, education, and human behavior theory. Social work constructionists are making important contributions, but they write as if their work is novel. Claims of originality are plausible only if the works of interactionists are ignored.

Recently, grounded theory, a creative, process-oriented, qualitative approach to research formulated and refined by interactionists (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), has become a major tool for social work inquiry. Social workers using this approach are well represented, for instance, in two major collections on qualitative science (Reissman, 1994; Sherman & Reid, 1994).

Symbolic Interactionism and Human Behavior Theory

Several full-length books rely on symbolic interactionism as the foundation theory for understanding human behavior and the social environment.

Symbolic Interactionism as Foundation Social Work Theory

In one major but rarely cited text, Segalman (1978a) offered a sophisticated analysis of symbolic interactionism. This book expanded his briefer articles on the interactionist view of the fully functioning person (Segalman, 1976) and on deviance (Segalman, 1978b). His text includes overviews of the interactionist approach to enculturation and human development, to the development of a self-concept and social identity, to distressful emotions, to social roles and role failures, and to class disparities in meaning making. Segalman also presented an interactionist typology of deviance. Clients' problems in social functioning are explained as derived from self-concept, group membership, and social development issues. Segalman's typology includes the following ideal types: (1) the "mainstream member"; (2) the member of a deviant culture with distinctive group-based meanings; (3) the "mentally ill with idiosyncratic meanings" not validated by a group; (4) the "mentally ill committed to psychiatric institutions," who shed their accumulated self-validations and accept institutional meanings; (5) the "neurotics," who experience the insecurity of slight incongruence between their meanings and those of important others; (6) the "sociopath," who relies on meanings learned as an infant and centered on tension reduction; and (7) the "non-somatically damaged mental retardates," who have not been adequately prepared to master age-appropriate meanings. Segalman concluded his book by suggesting how interactionism might be applied to parenting and to work with delinquents and under socialized clients.

In another interactionist text for social practitioners, Ganter and Yeakel (1980) identified and explained four major constructs that they selected from symbolic interactionism. These are the self-concept, reference group, social reality, and social role. This exposition is followed by their use of the four constructs to conceptualize human behavior across life stages. Breakwell (1982) developed a social psychological framework for social work that borrows much from symbolic interactionism (Breakwell & Rowett, 1982). After explicating central concepts such as identity, identity processes, impression management, relationship, personal and social change, she applied the approach to social work in group homes, in the community, with the disabled, with the mentally ill, and with abused children. Further developing the model, Breakwell (1986) used symbolic interactionism as a tool for defining and classifying threats to identity and the ways persons cope with such threats. Her "threatened identity model" was brought to bear on the problem of unemployment. She presented her theory in propositional form linking identity structure, type of threat, social context, cognitive resources, and choice of coping strategy.

Symbolic Interactionism and Related Human Behavior Theories

Various social workers have argued that theories used by social workers are enriched when supplemented by symbolic interactionism. Deegan (1986) asserted that the richness of Taft's functional approach stems from its blending of Rankian concepts such as "will" with Mead's notions of the genesis of self. Taft's approach also usefully incorporated interactionist thinking about the importance of social relationships, about the contribution of rational problem solving to growth, and about a present-centered orientation

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to assessment and intervention. Lane (1984) reported on the parallels between how James, Cooley, and Mead explicated internal psychological processes and how recent psychoanalytic theorists conceptualize the self and self-development. The symbolic interactionist emphasis on the centrality of social experience to sense-making processes and, specifically, the centrality of mutually influential relationships to changes in personal meanings, Lane added, can improve psychoanalytically oriented work.

Balgopal and Vassil (1983) offered a book-length integration of Lewin's ecological field theory and symbolic interactionism as a framework for social group work. These practitioners argued that appraisal of the interactional social field and of the dynamic aspects of interaction best addresses group phenomena such as the group worker's influence and the group member's role dysfunctions. Cingolani (1984) contended that merging the conflict perspective and the interactionist "negotiated order approach" explains well the social work process of forming relationships with involuntary clients. The social conflict perspective sees therapy as political and assumes a conflict of interest between the involuntary client and some part of his or her environment. The negotiated order approach conceptualizes relationships as continuously negotiated social realities. Failures in forming relationships with involuntary clients, this perspective suggests, often stem from negotiations that are incomplete or incompetent because conflict, not cooperation, prevails.

A sophisticated analytic framework for categorizing the interpersonal interactions of social work professions was developed by Harry Specht (1985). He married symbolic interactionism and social exchange theory. Specifically, Specht proposed that all the professional tasks of social workers can be delineated by consideration of the qualities of the interaction. These qualities include duration or intensity of interaction; the nature of resources exchanged during interaction; and the kind of "others"—clients, collaterals, colleagues, or sociopolitical actors—involved in the interaction. Black and Enos (1981) desire creativity in the therapeutic process. A phenomenological and symbolic interaction base is offered as a guide to poetic self-analysis. Mead's idea of "significant symbols" can also be applied, they suggested, to help clients understand poetic images while Cooley's method of introspection and Thomas and Znaniecki's life history approach provide practice directives.

In one of the few recent theory-building programs that uses symbolic interactionist work, Nurius (1989) updated older thinking about the self-concept by incorporating the latest developments from symbolic interactionism and social cognition theory. Nurius endorsed the interactionist image of the person as symbol-using and sense-making. She used current cognitive research on schemas, memory systems, and self-appraisals to support her ideas about working self-concepts, self-concept repertoires, and possible selves. Her model of the self explains peoples' capacities for both stability and for change, and suggests how clients might visualize future self-concept change. In a later work, Nurius, with Brower's help (Brower & Nurius, 1993), joined her social cognitive approach with the ecological perspective. The book-length presentation of theoretical assumptions, guidelines for assessment, goal setting, and intervention, and its extended, illustrative case study offers a comprehensive base for practice theory more sympathetic to symbolic interactionism than any other currently available.

Interactionist Practice With Varied Size Systems

Social workers have used interactionist thought to guide work with all size social systems. However, practitioners tend to borrow interactionist theories of small size systems more often than theories about communities, organizations, and social institutions.

Symbolic Interactionism and Dyadic Helping Relationships

Various writers have used interactionist tenets to steer the social work helping relationship and the interview. Kuhn (1962) conceptualized the helping process as an interactional situation and used Mead's notion of the social act to illuminate common features of the beginning, middle, and end phases of an interview. He also borrowed from Goffman to compare the social work interview to a dramatic performance. Finally, Kuhn described how worker–client class, prestige, or gender differences often decrease the worker's ability to take the client's role. Locke, Pemberton, and Schacht (1975) argued that social caseworkers attend insufficiently to interactionist assumptions about the normative order, the primacy of intersubjective experience, and the emergent and contested nature of meaning. Symbolic interactionist theories of reality negotiation and their focus on the micropolitics of dyadic relationships can remind workers to examine power differentials in helping. For example, workers' greater social power relative to clients often allows them to impose situational definitions on a client's circumstances. At times, this serves the social agency rather than the client's interests. Attention to power-reality definition dynamics and to the client's need to confirm his or her desired identities and views of social reality might lessen diagnostic and treatment failures.

After an in-depth study of social work intake interviews, Day (1985) showed how symbolic interactionism helps the worker understand the client's personal identity, her meaningful relationships, and her situation as she experiences it. Day emphasized that different constructions of the client's reality are possible. Moreover, the likelihood of arriving at a mutually agreed-on worker and client construction depends on features of the service organization, the values and ideology of the social worker, and the available agency strategies for reconciling bureaucratic and treatment demands. An extended interview excerpt illustrated these key points. Epstein (1985) made extensive use of symbolic

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interactionism in her book on task-centered social work interviewing. Among other interactionist topics, she discussed social interaction, the encounter, defining the situation, tacit agreement (often referred to by interactionists as "working consensus"), situational identities, taking the other's role, lines of action, and interactional competencies. Kadushin (1990), the author of a widely used text on interviewing, recycled several ideas from the interactionist literature. For instance, he referred to Hochschild's groundbreaking research on the social psychological management of emotion as a contribution to understanding the affective aspects of interpersonal communication.

Symbolic Interactionism and Family Practice

Symbolic interactionism had a rare and highly regarded social work champion in family practice: Nathan Hurvitz. Siporin (Hurvitz & Straus, 1991) commended Hurvitz for his creative development of the symbolic interactionist framework for family practice. Hurvitz used his extensive practice experience with lower-class African-American and Hispanic clients in a rapidly changing Los Angeles neighborhood to refine the interactionist approach.

In a series of articles, Hurvitz offered interesting formulations of his original synthesis of interactionism and social work. These included a discussion of how a couple's use of instrumental and terminal hypotheses is implicated in their efforts to arrive at shared situational definitions (Hurvitz, 1970); a review of basic practitioner functions cast in interactionist terms (Hurvitz, 1974); an extensive transcript of a full-length family therapy session, including word-for word-reports with Hurvitz's reflections on his use of applied interactionism with this family (Hurvitz, 1975); and suggestions on how to become a significant other to clients (Hurvitz, 1979).

In a posthumous, book-length summary of this life work compiled by the symbolic interactionist Roger Straus (Hurvitz & Straus, 1991), Hurvitz explicated in greater detail the interactionist concepts central to his work with marital and family systems. He also presented a set of interactionist helping techniques. This inventory included therapeutic discussion, interactional hypotheses, and a "four questions strategy." This last technique focuses on family members' perceptions of self and others. Hurvitz elaborated on the notion of significant other and his view that a social worker will only be effective if he or she becomes meaningful to the family. Strategies for becoming significant were introduced. Hurvitz also analyzed family problems in terms of group roles, role reciprocity, and disturbances in reciprocity. He offered an interactionist typology of three such disturbances: problems related to a member's personal limitations or interpersonal predicaments, mundane or disruptive family conflicts, and family crises. Three phases of family work were delineated. A naturalistic assessment characterizes the opening phase. Reality reconstruction (introspective reconstruction, situational reconstruction, or prospective reconstruction) is central to the change-inducing Phase I. Change inducing Phase II involves the facilitation of the meaning-making processes (decision making, bargaining, and problem solving) necessary to resolve conflicts and predicaments. Phase III deals with the termination process. Extensive case examples of Hurvitz's work are also provided in the book.

Other family-oriented social workers have borrowed much from the symbolic interactionist perspective. In a major effort at conceptualizing family-centered social work practice, Constable (1984) referred extensively to the Chicago School and to the interactionist family theory of Ralph Turner. Constable defined the family as a socially constructed institution, one distinguishable from other social groups by its permanence, generational alliances, and identity bonds. He also discussed how interactionist tenets and concepts contribute to practitioner understanding of the collective creation of family role networks, of varied family communication styles, and of family socialization processes. Family workers were encouraged by Constable to attend to emergent family patterns and to how these blend individual member reality and social–institutional realities. C. M. Anderson (1979) used symbolic interactionist tenets and concepts as the core of her communication approach to family practice. Mostwin (1980) presented an integrative model of therapy for families in crisis. Six dimensions—spatial, systems, symbolic, social, cultural, and intrapersonal—organized his approach to assessment and intervention. Central attention was given to symbolic processes, especially to the paths and qualities of family communication. A mapping scheme was presented for visualizing a family's symbolic interaction, and Mostwin illustrated the scheme with a case scenario. Finally, a partnership between the University of Minnesota School of Social Welfare and a local Family and Children's Services agency resulted in the development of the interactionist-based Minnesota Couples Communication program (Nunnally, Miller, & Wackman, 1975). This later became a major model of marriage enrichment.

Symbolic Interactionism and Group Work

Although many group workers make extensive but unacknowledged use of symbolic interactionist concepts such as self, identity, role, communication, interaction, social process, and reference group, some group work theorists have delineated interactionist contributions to social work with groups. Goroff (1983) advocated for a humanistic and interactionist approach to group formation and to the group worker role. From this perspective, the worker aims to aid new group members cope with service-related stigma, negotiate identities that support their sense of value, and accept the unpredictably inherent in the creation of a helping group. Group formation is viewed as a collective process of situation defining. The practitioner attempts to establish an open awareness context, one where information is freely shared between pro-

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fessionals and clients. Balgopal and Vassil's (1983) text on group work was an ambitious effort to merge Lewinian field theory and symbolic interactionism. In the text, these authors also summarized the influences of Mead and Blumer on social group work; discussed key interactionist concepts such as self, identity, meaning, group membership, reference groups, roles, and social process; and analyzed a group recording using interactional field theory terms.

In his creative and ambitious extension of symbolic interactionist and social group work thinking, Falck (1984, 1988) called for a new conceptual foundation for the social work profession. He argued that each person is a social, not an individual, being; that all social life is group life; that all social work is group work; and that social work is the profession that aids people in their enhancement of group memberships. His membership framework offers a philosophical base, a vocabulary of relationships, and a conceptualization of social work that echoes the antidualism of interactionism by avoiding the extremes of individualism and collectivism. Client behavior is understood as reflecting current group involvement or past, internalized group experiences. Although Falck considers symbolization to be one of the four major dimensions of membership behavior, his book is primarily informed by psychoanalytic object relations. Mead receives only passing mention; and Dewey, none. Symbolic interactionism's potential as an orientation for illuminating the assumptions and principles of the membership perspective on social work is hinted at but not fully realized (Goldstein, 1989; Toseland, 1990).

Two application papers illustrate the utility of symbolic interactionism for particular aspects of social work with groups. Munson (1981) conducted one of the first social work research studies using symbolic interactionism. He systematically observed three different suburban outpatient therapy groups. From his notes and audio recordings, he developed a comprehensive framework for categorizing group member interaction, one that accounts for therapist and client behavior in the same language. Munson also generated a matrix linking worker–member interactional categories to assessment and intervention and used this to identify key group worker tasks. He concluded his work with a fascinating exposition on Mead's notion of irrationality as the result of social environments that don't respond properly to clients' inner lives. Our final scholarly group worker, Scharlach (1989), suggested that interactionist role theory explains the experience of aging and its relation to social identity, role behavior, and later life socialization. He presents his model as a preferred modality for service to older adults.

Symbolic Interactionism and Community Organizing

Many social workers have made use of symbolic interactionism as a microsociological underpinning for work with individuals, couples, families and groups. The profession has less often applied interactionist thought to work with larger social systems. Queralt (1996), however, in her text on human behavior and the social environment, gave importance to the community theorizing of Robert Park, a Chicago School sociologist who taught many symbolic interactionists. In addition, she discussed Park's application of concepts like the "web of life," succession, and competition to community processes and judged these as forerunners of the modern social work ecological model.

The interactionist school also supplies an action theory for community organizers. Brueggemann (1996) wrote a macro social work text that fully incorporated symbolic interactionism. A community, from this perspective, is "the arena in which humans find their identity as social beings who are active agents in the creation of social reality" (p. 117). Therefore, he argued, community organizers should prioritize the everyday perceptions, needs, and meanings of community members.

Symbolic Interactionism and Organizational Work

Interactionist social work in the organizational arena has also been rare. Hasenfeld (1992) offered an overview of organizational theories and described symbolic interactionism as an important theory for understanding human service organizations. He made a special reference to Strauss' negotiated order perspective, and regarded it as a useful conceptualization of how social organizations are continually changing and evolving. Organizational structures, for interactionist social workers, emerge as a "temporal reflection of the 'negotiated order' among different actors (staff and clients) who participate in the work" (Hasenfeld, 1992, p. 30). Interactionist concepts like work, service trajectory, negotiation, social world, and division of labor are also reviewed by Hasenfeld. The perspective is recommended, finally, because it was developed in the context of hospitals and other human service organizations.

In their application of symbolic interactionism to human service organization, Maines and Markowitz (1979) investigated how some psychiatric halfway houses perpetuate the dependency of their residents. Using participant-observation research methodology, these researchers found that a focus on social structure, social roles, communication, and identity illuminated the iatrogenic features of social organizations. Halfway house roles, they discovered, were constructed in a way that hindered movement to independent living. The halfway house developed a culture with a structural vocabulary (official titles and diagnostic labels) and an interpersonal vocabulary (nicknames and terms used by house members) that legitimized dependency. Organization-based expectations regarding employment, adherence to house policies, and appropriate social relationships revealed contradictory or ambiguous messages. The quest for independence was not consistently endorsed. Maines and Markowitz concluded with interactionist suggestions for organizational improvements that would foster independence.

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Royal Inheritance of Discarded Gifts

Contemporary social workers have received a legacy from the pragmatic philosophers, the University of Chicago sociologists, and the Hull House practitioners who unified theory and practice in a symbolic interactionist perspective on social work. In Part 1 of this two-part series, I have documented how well interactionist sociologists and social workers once partnered. I have identified some of the gifts of this inheritance, especially the literature from social workers who have used this intellectual property to inform human behavior theory and practice with all size social systems.

Part 2 will extend the review of the interactionist legacy. The contribution of earlier generations of scholarly practitioners to social work's conceptualization of the planned change process and to the profession's efforts to ameliorate various public problems and better the lives of at-risk client will be presented. In addition, I will consider interactionist contributions to the development of policy analysis, research, and education. Part 2 will conclude with an appraisal of the profession's use of the interactionist legacy, including evidence indicating that much of the bequest from Addams, Mead, Dewey, DuBois, Taft, and other interactionist social workers has been discarded or forgotten. Several resources, including efforts by social workers outside North America to revitalize applied interactionism, will be introduced.

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Manuscript submitted: January 29, 2003
Revised: March 4, 2004
Accepted: March 5, 2004

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