

## **Summary of excerpt from Blumer's "Society as Symbolic Interaction"**

There are three essential features to Mead's analysis of symbolic interaction:

1. Human beings have selves. By this Mead meant that they can be objects of their own actions and indicate things to themselves.

Making indications to oneself is important because indicating something involves giving it meaning, i.e., making it an "object."

2. Action is constructed, i.e., built up step by step through self-indication.

"The individual notes things, assesses them, gives them a meaning, and decides to act on the basis of the meaning."

3. Collective action consists of fitting together individual actions, brought about by interpreting each other's actions.

Most sociology does not treat society as symbolic interaction.

1. Sociologists don't treat people as though they have selves. Instead, they treat people as though they just respond to forces which play upon them.

2. Action is treated not as a construction, but as the expression of forces playing on people.

3. Collective action is treated as an expression of the action of society.

Symbolic interactionism also treats social organization differently than these other sociological models:

1. Social organization is the framework within which social action takes place. It shapes situations and provides symbols used to interpret them.

2. Social organization is the product of people acting in it.