

Key Ideas

Interactionism

- The Self ("I" and the "Me" - Self concept).
- Meanings and Interpretations
- Negotiated reality
- Symbolic universe of meaning
- Social context (relativity, Definition of a situation)
- Social construction of reality (Subjective sociology)
- Social Action approach (Micro, small-scale)
- Society actively constructed through Social Interaction
- Labelling theory (master labels, categorisation, stereotyping)
- Role Play (ascription and achievement)
- "Society" has no objective existence (society = "elaborate fiction")
- Interpretivist methodology

Key Names: Mead, Cooley, Becker, Berger and Luckmann, Goffman, Garfinkel.

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Theoretical Perspectives

Key Criticisms

Interactionism

- Focus on small-scale, relatively trivial, aspects of social life
- Over-emphasis on "the individual" (little sense of social structure)
- Too much focus on individuals (and their "common sense", subjective, interpretations)
- Doesn't explain how or why societies change
- Questions of social order and social change not adequately explained
- Social Structures (doesn't explain why these may be important)
- How do structures affect individual perceptions, meanings and interpretations?
- Power relationships (where does power come from?).
- Relativity:
 - Are there objective features of society?
 - Is all knowledge relative?

Key Critics: Gouldner, Structuralist sociologists (Marxists, Functionalists).

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Theoretical Perspectives

Key Ideas

Liberal Feminism

- Focus on male / female relationships
- Social change = evolutionary.
- Laws needed / used to "redress" male / female power imbalance
- Equality of Opportunity for women (parity with men)
- Women not inferior to men (legal / political / economic and social equality)
- Main weapon = legal system (outlaw sex discrimination)
- Anti-discrimination legislation, equal pay, child-care facilities for working women (equal legal protection and social rights)
- Women's dual role (family and work)
- Patriarchal attitudes of society / men
- Successful (UK, USA) in terms of anti-discrimination, equal pay and maternity rights

Key Names: Toynbee (journalist), Shirley Williams (politician)

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Theoretical Perspectives

Key Criticisms

Liberal Feminism

- Women - like working class men - are at a fundamental economic disadvantage
- Bourgeois / middle-class feminists
- Ignores study of social structural factors (e.g. class)
- Legal equality not same as status equality
- Legal changes mainly benefited middle class women
- Institutionalised sex inequality (part of fabric of Capitalist society)

Key Critics: New Right (politicians, journalists: Melanie Phillips, Patricia Morgan), Marxist, Socialist and Radical Feminists

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Theoretical Perspectives