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STUDYING HUMAN LIVED EXPERIENCE

An Introduction to the Intersubjective Enterprise

Hooks, that's what you use to hook an audience into an act.[1] It can be anything that attracts them, sex, money, power, greed, mystery. Anything to get their attention and hopefully hold on to it. . . . The importance of the hook goes back, it all has to do with the performance of magic. And the hook is, "Why would someone be interested in watching me do a magic trick?" This is the question we have to ask. And once hooked, "Why would they continue to be interested?" . . . You have to assume that magic is inherently boring. It's like juggling, you can only watch it for about four minutes and then you really get sick, "Yeah, it's amazing, so what?" Yeah, the guy spent fifteen years (practicing). . . . It's boring because you're watching it, you're not involved in it. . . . The hook has to be, "How do you make what you're doing interesting to the audience?" And, this applies to magic, anything! Why is the audience interested? You have to figure out how to hook them into it, how to keep them hooked. Well, magic, the way I do it is, I have certain rules. I try to appeal to one of the seven deadly sins. Greed, that's a good one for me, and gambling and fate. . . . So a lot of my tricks have to do with gambling, that sort of thing. . . . The hook is, finding something the spectator is interested in, and relating the trick to what he's interested in. If you can't do that, you don't have a good trick or you don't have a good presentation. . . . You don't want the question to arise, "How did you do that?", until you've finished performing.

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1. *Sharper: He's [magician] talking about the hook here. The hook for hustlers was the fast buck gambling, the game of chance. That was our hook, everyone wants to make a buck, you know what I mean. If they've seen us gambling, and fast money, money changing hands, the game looked good. You were comfortable with the people around the room, people at the table. That was the hook. We didn't have to use a hook, the hook was there. The hook is the money, obviously. You know people, they want to make a fast buck, an easy dollar. (Prus and Sharper, 1991:252, 253)*

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At the heart of the sociological enterprise is the idea that human behavior is the product of community life; that people's behaviors cannot be reduced to individual properties. A major task facing sociologists (and social scientists more generally), therefore, revolves around the study of *the accomplishment of intersubjectivity*; that is, indicating how people become social entities and how they attend to one another and the products of human endeavor in the course of day-to-day life.

Part of the reason that magicians and hustlers are so intriguing to many people may reflect the notions that we "live in a world of images" and that anyone able to manipulate these images can shape the realities experienced by other people. As the preceding statements from a magician and a card and dice hustler indicate, however, those attempting to do influence work are always dependent on those with whom they interact. Although anyone may be able to generate a little "magic" when the other accepts the images or viewpoints one promotes, there can be no "magic" without the other. One can improvise and rehearse routines on one's own, but without someone to experience the mutuality of the encounter, without someone to accept (however temporary) one's definitions of the situation, there is no magic, no sharing of one's creativity with the other.

Magicians and hustlers may be seen as somewhat unique in that they deliberately, systematically, and more or less continuously attempt to create illusions,[1] but since they must relate to others in ways that those people find meaningful to encourage them to take certain lines of action, their work is of interest across the realm of human association. Despite their varying interests and intentions, concerns with "image work" (and the ensuing interpretations and adjustments on the part of the other) are central not only to. magicians and hustlers, but also to politicians, religious leaders, union leaders, advertising agents, salespeople, entertainers, journalists, scientists, counsellors, teachers, friends, parents, children, work associates, enemies, and anyone else who endeavors to influence, or even communicate with, anyone else. All constructions of reality, all notions of definition, identification, and explanation, all matters of education, enterprise, entertainment, interpersonal relations, organizational practices, cultic involvements, collective behavior, and political struggles of all sorts are rooted in the human accomplishment of intersubjectivity.

Once one accepts the dictum that a major objective of any "science" (or the concerted study of some phenomenon) is to achieve intimate familiarity with one's subject matter, then concern with developing a social science centers on the pursuit of a theory and a methodology sensitive to the interpretive and interactive features of human group life.

Over the past century, the social sciences have been dominated by "positivist" (structuralist) approaches to the study of human behavior. Although positivism will be discussed in more detail as this volume unfolds, positivist

(positivist/structuralist) approaches tend to assume that people can be studied in manners paralleling the methods used to study physical objects. This viewpoint has been challenged in many ways over time, but the major debate in the social sciences has been between the positivists and the interpretivists. Some scholars have tried to blend the two approaches in various ways, but no viable syntheses have been sustained. As will become more evident in the chapters following, the development of an interpretivist social science has run somewhat concurrently with a critique of positivist social science.[2]

Since the 1980s, the positivist-interpretivist debate has become complicated somewhat by the introduction of postmodernism (poststructuralism, decon-structionism) to the social sciences. The intellectual roots and some major variants of postmodernist thought are considered in chapters 7 and 8, wherein the approaches falling under both the positivist/structuralist tradition and the postmodernist/poststructuralist umbrella are compared and contrasted with the intersubjectivist approach taken in this volume. In the interim, it is useful to appreciate that (a) the essential theoretical and methodological foundations of an interpretivist approach to the study of human group life were developed long before concerns with postmodernist agenda were introduced to the social sciences, and (b) positivism has represented the major obstacle to the development of an interpretive social science for the past century. As well, (c) while post-modernism has yet to contribute a major or consequential epistemological legacy to the social sciences, the deeply entrenched positivist tradition seems apt to dominate the study of human behavior for some time to come. Thus, although the current intellectual context has become complicated somewhat by the introduction of postmodernist thought, the issues raised by those embarking on postmodernist agendas are best examined later in this volume. Regardless of the significance one attributes to the "postmodernist impulse,"[3] it is important to attend first to the more enduring debates surrounding the study of human behavior as these pertain to matters of theory, methods, and ongoing research, and to examine the intersubjectivist approach in more detail. Only in these ways may one be in a more appropriate position to contextualize and assess contemporary lines of thought as these relate to the quest for understanding the human condition.

SOCIAL SCIENCE AND AN INTRODUCTION TO THE POSITIVIST-INTERPRETIVIST DEBATE

"When you cannot measure ✦ your knowledge is ✦ meager ✦ and ✦ unsatisfactory ✦" Lord Kevin (Bulmer, 1984:151)

The positivist-interpretivist debate revolves around the ways in which human behavior should be conceptualized and studied. Extended discussions of matters pertaining to epistemology (a consideration of the relationships of theory and methods of knowing about the world) are discouraged in many programs in the social sciences, wherein an emphasis on observable phenomena and the operationalization of variables has preempted many considerations of the premises undergirding the study of the human condition. Nevertheless, except in the most extreme cases, virtually all academics in the social sciences find themselves attempting to deal with issues revolving around (positivist) determinism and (interpretivist) human agency. As a result, almost everyone will be thrust into at least occasional debates regarding "the most pertinent theoretical and methodological directions for the studying the human element."

Some social scientists may prefer to avoid such issues, contending that they have no time for or interest in "philosophical issues," or claiming that such groundwork has already been established by those initiating or promoting the positivist agenda. In part, their position is justified by concerns with "getting on with the tasks at hand" and related reservations that discussions of this sort will take them into endless realms of metaspeculation or various moral issues. At the same time, however, these viewpoints are somewhat academically remiss. Considerations of the baseline assumptions that inform the social sciences provide scholars with important opportunities to assess the viability of the very foundations of their claims about the nature of the world, their methods of approaching the study of the world, and often a very substantial portion of their (hopefully) productive life's work.

While there is much variation within each approach, those adopting a *positivist* (or positivist/structuralist) orientation generally take the viewpoint that human behavior is a product of the forces, factors, or structures (internal and external) that act on people to generate particular outcomes. The intellectual foundations of positivism are considered in more detail later,[4] but it may be useful to observe that the canons of contemporary positivism in the social sciences were most centrally formulated in Auguste Comte's *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1830–1842) and John Stuart Mill's *System of Logic* (1843). While differing somewhat in their emphasis on the primacy of sociology vs. psychology (respectively) in their systems, both scholars argued for a human science that would follow the compelling successes, logic, and methods that they associated with the physical sciences.

Auguste Comte (1798–1857) who coined the terms "positive philosophy" and "sociology" (Giddens, 1976:131), extended and crystallized many of the ideas with which his mentor, Saint-Simon, had worked. Like Saint-Simon,

Comte was concerned with employing the methods and insights of (physical) science to establish a vital new (moral) order. Comte, however, envisioned an even more vital role for sociology or "social physics" in the development of that new order. Although Comte's concerns with fashioning a new community orientation were inconsistent with large parts of his positivist philosophy, his commitments to scientific practices resonated with the position of others, perhaps most notably John Stewart Mill, who also argued for the development of a social science grounded rigorously in the images of the physical sciences. While somewhat persuaded by Comte's arguments regarding the unique features of human societies, Mill (1843) concentrated on developing the laws of individual psychology and emphasized experimentation and observation. Comte's approach was considerably more ambiguous (and confused) conceptually and methodologically, but his insistence on the study of society as a unique, irreducible configuration (which displayed an affinity with the models invoked in the biological sciences) was integral in carving out and legitimating "the human group" as a realm of intellectual focus.

Viewing science as a form of emancipation from theology and metaspeculation, Comte argued that the scientific method, which he envisioned as directly adaptable from the natural sciences, would provide the fundamental means for both developing knowledge about, and ways of more effectively dealing with, the human condition. Human society, Comte posited, could and should be studied scientifically, using the methods that had shown themselves to be so successful in the natural sciences. Likewise, he argued for the desirability of developing a series of lawlike generalizations, which would enable social scientists to predict and control (direct, shape) the human condition. Given his centrality in defining the field of sociology at its inception, Comte's notions of science and knowledge—causation and determinism, and structuralism and objectivism—became highly consequential in shaping the elementary theoretical and methodological directions of the field. As Bryant (1985:29–30) observes, Comte was not especially concerned about the precise techniques of positivist social science, but nonetheless saw the development of observation, experimentation, and comparison as essential to the scientific enterprise, with mathematics as the fundamental tool for the development of all science.

In complementary fashion, Emile Durkheim's (1897) quantitative or rate-data analysis of suicide and Wilhelm Wundt's efforts to establish the first experimental psychological laboratory (1879) are especially noteworthy with respect to the development of a positivist methodology in the social sciences. Although Wundt (see chapter 2) also encouraged his colleagues to pursue a form of social ("folk") psychology informed by interpretive analysis, this was largely ignored in the

quest for methodological rigor and scientism. The die was cast. Inspired by
Mill and Wundt, psychology was to become a "science of experimentation,"
while sociology was to become largely dominated by "survey research." In both
cases, and across the social sciences more generally, a positivist "methodology"
was invoked.

Although Comte and Durkheim were clearly not intersubjectivists, their
emphasis on the necessity of explaining human behavior by reference to group
life is most notable. Indeed, in discussing Comte's work, Mead (1936: especially
465–466) contends that Comte's primary contribution to the field is his in-
sistence on maintaining the notion that society was a reality *sui generis*, a unique,
but essential element in the study of the human condition. This emphasis (with
its concomitant refusal to engage in psychological reductionism), likewise, may
be the most enduring sociological contribution of Emile Durkheim who, like
those instructing others in architectural design, also left his mark on the
contemporary foundations of sociology and the directions that survey research
has taken more generally.

Like Comte, Durkheim fully intended to apply the methods of the physical
sciences to the study of the human condition. In contrast to the vagueness
with which Comte left the field, however, Durkheim proposed a specific
methodological orientation for examining and detailing "the forces shaping
society."

Durkheim's (1897) study of *Suicide* provided a model that, much like
Wundt's psychological laboratory, prominently encouraged positivist research
in social sciences. No less importantly, though, Durkheim's (1895 [1938]) *The
Rules of Sociological Method*, which built upon the thinking of Auguste Comte,
provided a statement that was intended to (*a*) outline the appropriate subject
matter for sociology, (*b*) establish the field as a "science" in its own right, and
(*c*) establish the methodology of the natural sciences as the method for the
social sciences:

> *Our principle, then, implies no metaphysical conception, no speculation about
> the fundamental nature of beings. What it demands is that the sociologist put
> himself in the same state of mind as the physicist, chemist, or physiologist when
> he probes into a still unexplored region of the scientific domain. When he penetrates
> the social world, he must be aware that he is penetrating the unknown; he must
> feel himself in the presence of facts whose laws are as unsuspected as were those
> before the era of biology. . . . (Durkheim, 1938 [trans.] author's preface to the
> second edition: xlv)*

A social fact is every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint; or again, every way of acting which is general throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations. (Durkheim, 1895 [1938]: 13). . . . The determining cause of a social fact should be sought out among the social facts preceding it and not among the states of individual consciousness. (Durkheim, 1895 [1938]: 110)

Durkheim's visions of applying the highly successful models of the physical sciences to the human condition quickly became widely acknowledged in the fledgling social sciences. Clearly, too, it was a methodological approach that Durkheim intended to have envisioned as beyond epistemological debate.[5] However, as becomes more evident in the following quotation (see the references to philosophy, free will, determinism, and causation), Durkheim's (positivist) approach is self-contradictory:

Our method. . . . is entirely independent of philosophy. . . . Sociology does not need to choose between the great hypotheses which divide metaphysicians. It needs to embrace free will no more than determinism. All that it asks is that the principle of causality be applied to social phenomena. . . . Since the law of causality has been verified in other realms of nature, . . . we are justified in claiming that is equally true of the social world. . . (Durkheim, 1895 [1938]: 141)

Despite its epistemological flaws, Durkheim's methodology has had a major impact on both sociology more specifically and the social sciences more generally. Not only have mainstream social scientists (particularly those favoring survey research) used Durkheim's statement on methods as a foundational justification for perpetuating a positivist social science (and discounting alternative approaches), but they have further objectified its tenets by embarking on research modelled after *Suicide* and many have employed his model(s) of social order as foundational themes with which to develop their own interpretations of the data they have gathered.

Although Durkheim's theoretical (functionalist) viewpoint has fallen into some relative disfavor among positivist/structuralist researchers over the past few decades, his (survey) methodological orientation has maintained a strong following in mainstream social sciences. As a consequence of computer-aided technology, quantitative analysis has become more sophisticated since Durkheim's time, but Durkheim's essential rationale has maintained currency in present day positivist/structuralist research in the social sciences. Like Durkheim, those working in the positivist/structuralist tradition have accepted the notion that

human behavior should be studied in manners similar to the ways in which one might study physical or nonminded objects (ergo, the referent, "billiard ball determinism").

Emphasizing the (causal) relations between certain structures or conditions and particular outcomes, those adopting a positivist approach leave little room in their models for human agency in the production of action. For these scholars, the operationalization (and quantification) of "variables" or "factors" is extremely consequential and provides essential grist for their statistical procedures. Using data from experiments, surveys (questionnaires, census data), and other counting practices, these researchers are concerned with uncovering and specifying the structures, forces, or conditions that (they assume) cause people to act in this or that manner. Focusing on outcomes and variable correlates, they typically portray human behavior in terms of dependent (outcome conditions), independent (causal), intervening (mediating conditions), and control (possibly confounding) variables. Aspects of the human condition are then represented in the statistical relationships by which these researchers define particular sets of (rate-based) data.

While most researchers in the social sciences are quantitative in their emphasis, not all positivists or structuralists are particularly concerned with the operationalization of variables, measurements, and statistical analysis. Much topical historical analyses, as well as a great deal of the discourse inspired by Weberian, Freudian, Marxist, feminist, and postmodernist emphases, invoke baseline variants of structural determinism, even though those adopting these viewpoints need show little inclination toward, or reverence for, statistical portrayals of the human condition. Unlike their more quantitatively oriented counterparts, most of these structuralists do not strive to be defined (nor are they apt to be envisioned as) "scientific" in their work. Some of these people may be quite precise in developing aspects of their analysis, but often the key concepts with which they work are more vaguely developed (e.g., Marxist notions of social class, feminist notions of gender). Consequently, while these analysts often disavow positivist (quantitative) identification, they rather commonly employ baseline notions of structural determinism in the models and images they promote. The pursuit of secondary agendas (e.g., the ideologies implied in Marxist and feminist analysis) as well as some mixing of positivist and interpretivist orientations often serve to obfuscate or conceal an underlying emphasis on structural determinism (e.g., economic determinism, biological determinism).[6]

By contrast, the *interpretivists* contend that people are different from other objects and that the study of human behavior, consequently, requires a metho-

dology that is attentive to those differences. The interpretivists envision human group life as actively constituted by people in interaction with others. Human behavior is seen as denoting an interpretive, interactive process. The primary methodological procedures are ethnographic (participant-observation, observation, and open-ended interviews) in nature. Human life is studied as it is experienced and accomplished by the very people involved in its production. The interpretivists are centrally concerned with the meanings people attach to their situations and the ways in which they go about constructing their activities in conjunction with others.

The positivists have been highly critical of the interpretive approach. One of the most central lines of criticism alleges that the interpretivist approach is subjective and unscientific because (a) the interpretivists emphasize the meanings that people attach to their behaviors and (b) these meanings are not readily operationalized (observed, counted, and statistically processed). The positivists argue that they are much more scientific in the ways in which they study human behavior because they develop "objective" (i.e., standardized) measurements of causes and effects (or independent and dependent variables) and use statistical procedures to analyze the data that they've collected through experiments, surveys, and other measurement strategies.

In response, the interpretivists observe that the *study of human behavior is the study of human lived experience and that human experience is rooted in people's meanings, interpretations, activities, and interactions.* These notions, they posit, are the essential substance of a social science. Likewise, the interpretivists contend that, in disattending to the interpretive, interactive processes by which human behavior is developed, the positivists overlook the fundamental social essences of human behavior. Thus, one might ask if an approach (positivism in this case) that disregards or disattends to the essence of its own subject matter should be envisioned as a "scientific" approach. Because of this fundamental flaw, the interpretivists do not accord positivist social science the scientific status its practitioners claim.

However, insofar as positivist approaches presently dominate the social sciences (departments, journals, publishing houses, granting agencies), the interpretive critique has not fallen on welcome ears. Most social scientists have developed their careers acknowledging, pursuing, and promoting positivist research. Many have achieved considerable levels of personal competence and recognition within academic circles because of their (structuralist) work. Insofar as these scholars see their position or competencies jeopardized in some manner by the interpretive critique, some may reject or even refuse to carefully consider the interpretive approach on grounds quite other than its intellectual merits.[7]

SYMBOLIC INTERACTION AND THE STUDY OF HUMAN LIVED EXPERIENCE

Although symbolic interaction (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969) represents only one of several interpretive approaches to the social sciences, it may be useful to provide a preliminary overview of this particular approach to the study of human group life before examining more fully the roots, variations, issues, and debates cutting across the study of human lived experience. People more familiar with the interactionist tradition will find much that they recognize in this immediate discussion, but this material may be particularly helpful to those newer to the field, since it outlines some very basic features of both the interactionist and interpretivist approaches to the social sciences.

Developed most explicitly by George Herbert Mead (1934) and Herbert George Blumer (1969),[8] symbolic interaction may be envisioned as the study of the ways in which people make sense of their life-situations and the ways in which they go about their activities, in conjunction with others, on a day-to-day basis. It is very much a "down to earth" approach, which insists upon rigorously grounding its notions of the ways in which human group life is accomplished in the day-to-day practices and experiences of the people whose lives one purports to study. Although Herbert Blumer very much envisioned himself as a student of George Herbert Mead, the interactionist tradition may be seen to build more broadly on four subtraditions (discussed in detail later): (1) the hermeneutics (interpretive understanding) of Wilhelm Dilthey, (2) American pragmatism (which emphasized the practical accomplishment of human activity), (3) Cooley's (1909) method of "sympathetic introspection" or what more commonly has become known as ethnographic research or field research, and (4) the body of ethnographic research, which was developed primarily at the University of Chicago.

Central to the interactionist approach is the notion that human life is community life; that *human life is thoroughly intersubjective in its essence*. At base is the recognition that humans (and human behavior) cannot be understood apart from the community context in which people live. *Humans derive their (social) essences from the communities in which they are located, and human communities are contingent on the development of shared (or intersubjectively acknowledged) symbols or languages*. This means that there can be no self without the (community) other. People may be born with physiological capacities of sorts, but people's awarenesses of the world (their abilities to learn, think, and create) are contingent on the acquisition of a (community-based) language. It is only in the process of acquiring a language (and interacting with others) that humans may begin to acquire "stocks of knowledge" or develop minds. Only on this basis may

individuals begin to distinguish and make sense of the objects (including themselves) that they envision as constituting their worlds.

It is in the course of developing familiarity with the language of a community that people are able to approximate rudimentary understandings of, or perspectives on, human life-worlds. Only once people develop some fundamental conceptualizations of "the world" may they begin to exhibit some sort of reflectivity and meaningful human agency. Only with the acquisition of a language-based set of understandings or perspective are people able to take themselves into account in developing and pursuing particular lines of action. As Mead (1934) observes, it is the attainment of language that makes the possession of a "self" possible.

Language acquisition and use is at the core of human intersubjectivity. Only when people share sets of symbols are they able to communicate with one another and act in other ways that are mindful of the viewpoints of the other. Accessing or sharing a common language does not presuppose that people will automatically act in cooperative ways or in manners that others might deem rational. However, language provides the basis on which people establish common (community) understandings and it is through ongoing (symbolic) interaction with the other that one may establish more precise levels of intersubjectivity or more comprehensive understandings of the viewpoints of the other as well as more intricate senses of self.

While human worlds are symbolically or linguistically constructed (i.e., effectively denoting multiple symbolic realities), *the human world is also a world of activity*. Thus, just as one cannot reduce the study of human behavior to the study of individual qualities, similarly one cannot reduce human behavior to symbolic or linguistic realities, even though people's activities are meaningful only within the symbolic frameworks that humans collectively develop in the course of their existence.[9] While some human activity is directly predicated on the human struggle for existence in an environment that can resist human definition and enterprise in some very basic manners, by no means is the human condition limited to the struggle for existence. In fact, the areas to which human attention may be directed seem infinite. The diverse meanings that people are able to attach to any [objects] of their awareness require a particular attentiveness on the part of those studying human behavior to the ways in which people assign (and alter the) meanings to [objects].[10]

Rather than endowing [objects] with inherent meanings or assuming that certain shapes, colors, masses, sizes, and the like, exist in predefined terms, the position taken here (Mead, 1934:78) is that *people bring [objects] into existence by the ways in which they attend to, distinguish, define, and act toward these [experiential*

essences]. This is not to deny that [things] are "out there" or that particular [objects] may impinge on people or resist people's efforts to perform actions. Indeed, the capacity for [things] to act on (and resist) people are central to Blumer's (1969) notion of an "obdurate reality" and the human struggle for existence. However, people's awarenesses of [things], the ways in which they view (delineate, categorize, appreciate) these [objects], and the manners in which people act toward the [objects] they've distinguished from other [things] are all problematic in scope, emphasis, and particulars.

Moreover, insofar as people develop conceptualizations of the world in the course of achieving a mutuality (or sharing) of experience (through linguistic or symbolic interchange), the [objects] of human awareness reflect a community or intersubjective base. As people acquire a language and a sense of object relations through association with particular human groups, they develop capacities for self-reflectivity. By adopting the viewpoint of the (community-based) other, people begin to distinguish themselves from other things in their environment; they acquire selves (or more accurately, images or senses of self). In the process of becoming "objects unto themselves," people achieve capacities for thought and action on a more solitary or independent basis.

Working with stocks of knowledge (and conceptual schemes) gleaned through interaction with others, but now applying these in particular or situated contexts, in familiar and in different ways, people formulate thoughts, achieve unique experiences, experience novelty, and pursue creativity. Indeed, given the limitations of their existing (linguistic) stocks of knowledge on a collective basis as well as individual variants within, people's experiences may well outstrip their abilities to retain and formulate more precise or lasting images of these events. People may sometimes retain particularly vivid images of events even when they are unable to define and classify these within their current linguistic terms, but it is only when people are able to find ways of sharing their experiences with others that they achieve the potential of turning these experiences into more enduring (i.e., community objectified or signified) features of reality. Thus, the processes of "indicating" (pointing to, drawing attention to, or signifying [things]) and "representing" (illustrating, imitating, describing in word or gestures, writing about, photographing, or recording) become exceedingly consequential in the matter of sharing experiences with others. As Mead (1934) observes in his discussion of the *symbol,* successful sharing is contingent on one's ability to invoke the sensations that one experiences in the mind of the other. Better approximations of shared experiences are dependent, therefore, not only on the sender's attempts and abilities to formulate or portray experiences to the

other in manners that the other would comprehend, but also on the recipient being willing and able to adopt the viewpoint of the sender in interpreting these messages.

The pre-existence of human communities, each with its prevailing stocks of knowledge, means that individuals do not have to bring most objects of their awareness into existence on their own, at least on a foundational level. Thus, *to a very large extent, the world of (delineated, meaningful) objects precedes (and "object-ifies") one's (existence and) experience*. In the process of providing newcomers with a language and a set of practices for making sense of, and coming to terms with, the world at hand, others in the community not only inform newcomers about the nature of [reality] as they know it, but also enable newcomers to make sense of the experiences they have with people, themselves, and the other objects and situations they encounter. It is on this basis that people achieve foundations for embarking on meaningful activity.

As interacting, self-reflective beings, people not only develop ways of viewing and acting toward other objects (including other people and themselves), but they also can direct, monitor, assess, and adjust their own behaviors over time. This recognition, that *people do not merely act toward objects, but also can make self-indications (i.e., attend to, consider, and alter their own behaviors) in the process of developing particular lines of action toward things*, has profound implications for the study of human behavior. While people seem amenable to some forms of learning by means of object association or conditioning, these can be dra-matically affected by any symbolic or linguistic linkages that people establish between (alleged) "stimuli" [object 1] and "responses" [objects 2, 3, etc.]. On the flip side, the intersubjective nature of the human condition also enables humans to greatly transcend the modes of learning associated with other mammal species. *The human capacity for intersubjectivity*, as indicated by language and cultural development, meaningful interaction, self-reflectivity, and minded behavior, *introduces complexities that require an entirely different theoretical and methodological approach than those that may be appropriate for studying other animals* (including the most sophisticated nonhuman mammals).[11]

Likewise, it is not enough to ask about people's attitudes or backgrounds and to try to correlate these in some manner with people's behaviors (or the consequences of their behaviors). It is, as Blumer (1969) so cogently argues, a fundamental error to view people as mediums through which various structures may find expression. *People not only think, anticipate, act, interact, assess, and adjust; but they do so by invoking intersubjectively derived languages and they operate most fundamentally within intersubjectively sustained symbolic realities*. This is why it is so unproductive to endeavor to explain human behavior by invoking "factors,"

"variables," or "structures" at either the level of group properties or individual characteristics. Although people need not act wisely or in manners considered desirable from this or that perspective, it is most inappropriate to embark on studies of the human condition without attending centrally to the very features that are distinctively human. Any "science of human behavior" should respect, both conceptually and methodologically, the intersubjective features of the human condition.

This emphasis on intersubjectivity is best appreciated within the context of human activity. People are not perpetually or uniformly active, but human group life is characterized by activity. As reflective entities, people may pursue activities on their own on a meaningful basis, but are also commonly faced with the tasks of coordinating (cooperation, competition, conflict) their activities with those of others. Further, human activity does not simply involve someone invoking behavior of some sort, but more accurately entails several subprocesses. Most notably, these include: defining the situation at hand, considering and anticipating both particular lines of action and potential outcomes, implementing behavior, monitoring oneself along the way, assessing situations both in process and in retrospect, and adjusting or modifying one's behavior both during immediate events and following earlier episodes.

This means that [objects] not only take on meanings as people initiate activity mindful of these [things], but in the process of acting toward [objects] people may revise the meanings they had earlier attached to those [objects]. More is involved, though. Even as they (a) develop lines of action (anticipating, manipulating, adjusting their behavior) toward particular [objects], people are also faced with (b) the task of managing the constituent parts of activities (e.g., capacities, motions, timing) that those activities entail. Consider something as simple as bouncing a ball off the wall and catching it; finding the washroom at night in darkened, especially unfamiliar, living quarters; or going for a walk in the woods ("Watch your step!").

When other people are involved, activity often entails (c) the matter of coming to terms with these others. Frequently, this means attending and making adjustments to others in the contexts of cooperation, competition, or conflict of various sorts. As well, insofar as people realize that they have limited stocks of knowledge with which to work, are unable to anticipate all eventualities, are dependent on the cooperation of other people, and are faced with the prospects of coming to terms with the resistances implied in encounters with other objects in their environment, it becomes apparent that a great deal of human behavior is characterized by ambiguity. Thus, in addition to attentiveness to the diversity of meanings that people may attach to [objects] at one point

in time, social scientists also need to be mindful of people's capacities for adjustive reflectivity and the practical human matter of developing lines of action in nebulous contexts.

Recognizing the centrality of these concerns, it may be instructive to specify a set of assumptions that people working within an interactionist/interpretive tradition normally make (sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly) as they approach the study of human lived experience:

1. *Human group life is intersubjective.* Human group life reflects a shared linguistic or symbolic reality that takes its shape as people interact with one another. Human group life is community life, and human behavior cannot be reduced to individual properties. All meaningful essences, including the more solitary experiences of (linguistic) members of human groups, derive from or are built on comprehensions of "the reality of the other."

2. *Human group life is (multi) perspectival.* Rather than posit the existence of a singular or objective reality that people would experience in some uniform manner, it is recognized that people distinguish and develop meanings for [objects] as they interact with one another and develop styles of relating to those objects. Both the identification of [things] as "objects" and the meanings attached to objects are problematic in their existence and directions. However, when groups of people establish consensus among themselves on the existence and meanings of particular objects, they tend to envision their definitions of situations as "real" or "objective."[12] While the adoption of certain world views may enable a group of people to do things that others may not, it is essential to attend carefully to the realities of the groups under consideration. It is these viewpoints that represent the paramount realities for understanding people's participation in the situations at hand. Thus, people are seen to operate in versions of (multiple) realities, which they share (albeit imperfectly) with others at an "intersubjective" level.

3. *Human group life is reflective.* Through interaction with others and by taking the viewpoint of the other with respect to oneself, people develop capacities to become objects of their own awareness. By attending to the viewpoint of "the other" (what Mead [1934] terms "role-taking"), people are able to attribute meanings to their own "essences" and to develop lines of action that take themselves (and other objects) into account. Enabling people to see themselves from

the standpoint of the other and to "converse with themselves about themselves," the acquisition of (self-) reflectivity fosters meaningful initiative (i.e., human agency, enterprise, intentionality) as people develop their activities in manners that take themselves into account. As reflective entities, people may pursue activities on their own as well as resist unwanted input from others.

4. *Human group life is activity-based.* While human behavior is meaningful only within intersubjectively constructed, conveyed, and mediated contexts, and implies an ongoing interpretive process with respect to behaviors invoked in both solitary and collective instances, human group life is organized around the doing, constructing, creating, building, forging, coordinating, and adjusting of behavior. There is no requirement that the activity in question be successful as intended, nor it be viewed as wise or rational by others, or even by the actors themselves, over time. Activity draws our attention to the matter of ongoing enterprise, to the constituent notions of defining, anticipating, invoking, encountering resistance, accomplishing, experiencing failure, reassessing and adjusting, on both interactive as well as more solitary behavioral levels.

5. *Human group life is negotiable.* Acknowledging the abilities of people to influence and resist the influences of others, this premise makes the interactive dimension of human reflectivity especially explicit. Thus, the activities implied in cooperation, competition, conflict, and compromise are recognized as central to human interaction. Although all matters of interaction may be quite uneven, some element of mutuality, sharedness, or intersubjectivity is evident whenever people attend to, endeavor to shape the behaviors of, or attempt to "get their own way" in dealing with others.

6. *Human group life is relational.* People do not associate with one another in random or undifferentiated manners but tend to associate somewhat selectively with others as they develop more particularistic bonds or affiliations with other members of the communities in which they find themselves. This premise not only acknowledges the differing identities (i.e., self and other definitions) that people attach to one another, but it is also mindful of the loyalties, disaffections, and other interactional styles that emerge between people in the course of human interaction. Thus, in addition to the perspectives characterizing the community at large, many of the activities in which people engage are made particularly meaningful and shaped in certain manners

because of people's attentiveness to specific others in the setting. Ensuing definitions and negotiations of reality (including language), thus, depend centrally on people's involvements and embeddedness in particular groups within the broader community of others.

7. *Human group life is processual.* Human lived experiences are viewed as emergent or ongoing social constructions or productions. The emphasis is on how human group life is shaped by people as they go about their activities at this, that, and other points in time. While notions of intersubjectivity, particularized worldviews, reflectivity, activity, negotiated interchange, and relationships are all central to the ways in which the interactionists approach the study of human lived experience, so is the matter of process. Referring to the emergent or ongoing nature of group life, process is basic to an understanding of these other themes. Intersubjectivity (and the sharing of symbolic realities) is an ongoing process. Perspectives are also best approached in process terms, as the meanings that people attach to objects are developed, acted upon, and changed over time. Likewise, reflectivity is not only a product of ongoing association, but assumes its signifi-cance as "human agency" when people go about their activities. Reflectivity is dialectically experienced and expressed as people engage in instances of definition, interpretation, intentionality, assessment, and minded activities over time. Representing the implementation of the perspectives that people acquire through association with others and their senses of (reflective) self-agency, activity is also fundamentally tied to process. Denoting (experiential and behavioral) sequences of definitions, anticipations, implementations, assessments, and adjust-ments, which build up over time (techniques, practices, skills, stocks of knowledge and manners of engaging objects), activity provides a very powerful sense of emergence, transition, or process. Negotiation or interchange also assumes a processual dimension as people define situations (and selves), work out tentative lines of action, make indications to others, interpret the indications of others, and make ensuing adjustments to others in the form of subsequent definitions, plans, and indications. Relationships, as well, are best understood in processual terms (or as having natural histories) with respect to their emergence, intensification, dissipation, and possible reconstitu-tion, as people attend to specific others and attempt to adjust their activities mindful of those with whom they associate. The primary conceptual and methodological implication of this processual emphasis

is this: since all aspects of group life take place in process terms or take their shape over time, *it is essential that the human condition be conceptualized and studied in manners that are acutely mindful of the emergent nature of human lived experience.*

ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH: THE QUEST FOR INTIMATE FAMILIARITY

Although it is beyond the scope of the present volume to provide a detailed statement on the practices involved in conducting ethnographic research, people newer to the field may find it useful to briefly consider some rudimentary features of an interactive examination of the way of life of a group of people. Much of the ensuing discussion presupposes some familiarity with the ethnographic tradition.[13] Following a brief discussion of the hermeneutic essence of the human condition and its implications for research in the social sciences, attention is directed to some baseline practices and concerns associated with field research.

Since people differ from other objects of study by virtue of their interpretive (and interactive) capacities, it is essential that those embarking on studies of human life-worlds be sensitive to the "double hermeneutic" (or the task of interpreting entities that themselves interpret the worlds they experience), at the outset.[14] The "objects" (people [and their activities]) that social scientists study not only interpret other aspects of their worlds, but they also exchange (and recast) their interpretations as they interact with others and reflect upon their experiences in the course of their daily routines. Further, not only may people attempt to make sense of researchers' attempts to study them, but, as skilled interactants in their own right, people can act back on researchers. They can help researchers understand their situations by their openness, tutelage, and other modes of sharing aspects of their worlds with these researchers. However, people can also withhold cooperation, engage in purposive deception, and embark on other types of evasive and concealing activity. In contrast to the physical scientists who study nonminded or noninterpreting objects, *those in the social sciences require a methodology that is sensitive to the human capacity for "symbolic interaction."* To ignore any of the earlier discussed features of group life (intersubjectivity, multi-perspectives, reflectivity, activity, negotiability, relationships, and processes) is to violate central qualities of this subject matter.

The research implications of these assumptions are highly consequential. It means that people studying people should attend to: (1) the intersubjective nature of human behavior; (2) the viewpoints of those whose worlds they purport to examine; (3) the interpretations or meanings that people attach to themselves,

other people, and other objects of their experiences; (4) the ways in which people do things on both a solitary and interactive basis; (5) the attempts that people make to influence (as well as accommodate and resist the inputs and behaviors of) others; (6) the bonds that people develop with others over time and the ways in which they attend to these relationships; and (7) the processes, natural histories or sequences of encounters, exchanges, and events that people develop and experience over time.

While each ethnography will assume somewhat different emphasis from the next, ethnographers generally rely on three sources of data (observation, participant-observation, and interviews) in their attempts to achieve intimate familiarity with the life-worlds of those they study.

Observation encompasses not only those things that one witnesses through one's visual and audio senses, but also includes any documents, diaries, records, frequency counts,[15] maps, and the like that one may be able to obtain in particular settings. While the materials thusly gathered can be valuable, it is imperative to recognize that the worth of any observation (or artifact) is contingent on researchers' abilities to achieve clear and accurate definitions of how that phenomenon or aspect of the situation was experienced and constructed by those participating in the situations under consideration. Even richly detailed, observational material, on its own, is much too limited (i.e., intersubjectively inadequate as) a basis on which to build an ethnographic study because one would have to make extensive inferences regarding people's meanings (and intentions). However, observational materials (particularly those that are more detailed, more descriptive in essence) can be very valuable in helping researchers formulate questions to be pursued in interviews as well as in providing a means of assessing and contextualizing the information one obtains through interviews and participant-observation.

Participant-observation adds an entirely different and vital dimension to the notion of observation. Although the practice of describing and analyzing one's own experiences has often been dismissed as "biased" or "subjective" by those who think that researchers should distance themselves from their subject matters, the participant-observer role allows the researcher to get infinitely closer to the lived experiences of the participants than does straight observation. Their experiences as participants may afford researchers with invaluable vantage points for appreciating certain aspects of particular life-worlds. As well, it may enable them to access the experiences of others in these settings in much more mean-ingful fashions than can be accomplished through questionnaires or experiments, for instance. Still, researcher-participants in the field should strive for as much balance in representation as possible in attending to the experiences of those

who constitute the setting under consideration. In particular, it is critical that
researchers develop a thorough appreciation of where and in what ways one's
own experiences may approximate and differ from those of others in the setting.

Like those doing straight observation, researchers engaged in participant-
observation normally try to remain fairly unobtrusive or nondisruptive in the
setting being studied. However, participant-observation entails a more active
(and interactive) and ambiguous role as researchers attempt to fit into the
(dynamic) settings at hand. Insofar as more sustained participant-observation
typically allows researchers to experience on a firsthand basis many aspects
of the life-worlds of the other, it offers a rather unique and instructive form
of data to those able and willing to assume the role of the other in a more
comprehensive sense. Additionally, since it typically puts researchers in close,
sustained contact with others, participant-observation generates further opportun-
ities for researchers to gain insight into the viewpoints and practices of the
other through ongoing commentary and other interactions. Participant-observa-
tion, thus, may provide researchers with a doubly privileged form of contact
with the other.

Interviews represent the third major method of gathering ethnographic data,
and under some circumstances may provide the primary source of data for field
researchers. By inquiring extensively into the experiences of others, interviewers
may learn a great deal about the life-worlds of the other. Interviews should
not be seen as substitutes for extensive involvements as participant-observers,
but it is not always feasible for researchers to participate in all settings in all
membership manners. When researchers are able to establish extended levels
of trust and openness with people who are willing to share their experiences
and teach them about their life-worlds, extended, open-ended interviews may
be used to obtain much insight into the life-situations of the other.

Ethnographers sometimes develop fairly extensive interview formats, but
these normally take shape in the field as researchers learn more about the
situations and the participants involved. The ethnographic interview is charac-
terized by careful and receptive listening, open-ended queries, and extensive
probing. It reflects an intense curiosity about the situation of the other and
questions that develop as the researcher spends more time in the life-world
of the other. Researchers in the field vary greatly in the ways in and extent
to which they pursue interview materials, but a fuller openness to the other
or greater receptiveness to letting the other "talk back" to the researcher is
fundamental in achieving a more viable sense of intersubjectivity. Indeed, without
this opportunity to uncover, ascertain, and qualify the meanings that others
hold for objects in their life-worlds and the ways in which people go about

accomplishing their activities in practice, it would make little sense to talk about studying human lived experience.

Although each research setting is somewhat different from the next (as is each encounter with the same person), and may necessitate some change in one's practices, there is little doubt about the generally enhanced quality (amount and depth) of the data one may obtain by spending more time in the setting and more fully participating in the life-worlds of the other. When researchers are able to gather observational, participant-observation, and interview data on a more or less simultaneous basis, this generally leads to a more complete understanding of the other. Researchers who become more completely immersed in the setting are not only more apt to be exposed to a wider and more intricate range of materials, but they are typically in a much better situation to inquire about, pursue, and assess incoming information gleaned in all of these manners.

OVERVIEW OF THE VOLUME

The recognition that intersubjectivity is at the core of the human essence implies that any viable theory of human behavior would necessarily be interpretive, hermeneutic, or reflexive in its thrust. It would be based explicitly on ongoing reflective interchange. There are a variety of interpretive viewpoints (see chapters 2 and 3) that one might invoke to meet the criterion of intersubjectivity at a theoretical level. However, one also faces the matter of developing a methodology that both respects the intersubjective nature of human group life and maintains a coherence with one's hermeneutic viewpoint. There may be many ways of learning things about people, but to qualify as an intersubjective method, one would have to employ some variant of an ethnographic approach: an approach that opens the researcher to the life-world of the other through interpersonal exchange. In this same schema, one would anticipate that the ensuing analysis also would reflect a relativistic appreciation of the (inter-subjective) context in which the research has emerged. Thus, the analysis would likely be somewhat comparative, as well as descriptive, as researchers attempt to uncover and examine both the more unique and more mundane experiences and practices of the ethnographic other and consider these against a background of literature that scholars working in an intersubjective tradition have developed around the studies of other life-worlds that they have had opportunities to examine on a firsthand basis. Further, to pursue an intersubjectively informed social science, it would be expected that the theory and the method employed would be sufficiently flexible that they could be adjusted, more or less con-

tinuously, to accommodate ongoing inquiries (and the resistances encountered) into the life-worlds of the other. Minimally, then, it is proposed that the study of human behavior requires the blending of (a) an interpretive viewpoint with (b) the practice of ethnographic inquiry, (c) a comparative-adjustive style of analysis, and (d) an ongoing appraisal and adjustment of existing theoretical and methodological positions to actual studies of experiences and practices of the (ethnographic) other.

A number of other interpretive viewpoints will be addressed in subsequent chapters, but for our purposes *Chicago-style (or Blumerian) symbolic interaction* is particularly compelling. Not only does this tradition emphasize the thoroughly intersubjective nature of community life, but it also draws attention to the active dimensions (human struggles and enterprise) of the accomplishment of intersubjectivity. As well, since it is steeped in ethnographic inquiry, Chicago-style interactionism both lends itself to a comparative-reflective mode of analysis and insists that theory and methods be adjusted to researchers' experiences in their encounters with the other.

Interactionism is sometimes portrayed (by positivist/structuralist critics) as a subjective social science or a microlevel sociology, but both these images are quite mistaken. Symbolic interaction is *inter*subjective to the core and envisions the development of language or ongoing symbolic interchanges as fundamental to the human essence (and the human struggle for existence). People are seen to develop (multiple) worldviews or definitions of reality as they interact with one another and attempt to incorporate particular objects of their awareness into their activities. Notions of community, self, action, reflectivity, symbolic realities, human interchange, and collective behavior are fundamental to interactionism, as are the processes of conflict, cooperation, and compromise. Likewise, while interactionism builds on situated definitions and interchanges, and insists on the pursuit of research grounded rigorously in human lived experience and the ongoing production of action, it is quite able to deal with more molar matters such as fashion, the media, social problems, industrialization, economic development, law and policy formation, and other political processes.

At first glance, the methodology (open-ended inquiry, participant-observation, and observation) of ethnographic research may seem less rigorous or scientific than some other approaches in the social sciences, especially to those who have been encouraged to envision positivist structuralism and quantification as synonymous with scientific progress. However, this inference is highly inaccurate. Ethnographic inquiry is a singularly powerful technique for studying the ways in which human behavior takes its shape. Ethnographic research requires an openness to the other. Indeed, it is only through "role-taking" (Mead, 1934)

and interpersonal inquiry (or what Cooley [1909] termed, "sympathetic introspection") that one may attempt to achieve intersubjectivity with "the (human) other." It is only through conversing with the other and attempting to experience the situation of the other through extended role-taking activity that one may tap into the life-worlds of the other on a more adequate (accurate, sustained, and comprehensive) basis. Attempting to achieve an insider-level working knowledge of the other by opening oneself to the lived experiences of the other by direct, sustained contact, ethnography is the technique in the social sciences that most readily enables researchers to respect the nature of human group life. Envisioning people as having capacities for human agency; to think, act, and interact within a community (intersubjective) context, ethnographic research is the method in the social sciences which is most attentive to the manners in which people define their situations and accomplish their activities on an ongoing, day-to-day basis.

While ethnographic inquiry uniquely fosters the pursuit of an intersubjectively informed, activity-based study of community life, the approach taken in this volume is also concerned with developing concepts that enable scholars to both appreciate the idiographic features of particular contexts and transcend the particular contexts in which inquiries are conducted. Approaching ethnographic research in a more transcontextual or transsituational manner not only fosters the development, elaboration, and assessment of generic or basic social processes, but also suggests a framework that may be used as conceptual inspiration for future inquiry as well as a forum around which dialogue pertaining to diversely contextualized inquiry may be more productively (i.e., conceptual cross-fertilization) focused and developed.

Focusing on the "doing" or "accomplishing" of everyday life, the chapters in this volume examine a series of theoretical and methodological issues entailed in an interpretive/ethnographic study of human group life. Drawing heavily on the works of scholars who have contributed most centrally to the development of symbolic interaction and other interpretive approaches to the study of human lived experience, the material considered in this volume is essential to a wider appreciation of the social or human sciences. The chapters developed here deal with the historical roots, assumptions, variants, concepts, and literature characterizing an interpretive/ethnographic approach to the study of human behavior and address many of the major issues and obstacles facing those embarking on the study of human lived experience.

Chapter 2, *"Interpretive Roots: Experience as Intersubjective Reality,"* focuses on what was to become the intellectual foundation of symbolic interaction, but in the process traces the broader origins of the interpretive tradition in

the social sciences. This chapter begins by examining the hermeneutics (interpretive understanding) of Wilhelm Dilthey and considers the contributions of Georg Simmel, Max Weber, and Wilhelm Wundt to the development of the interpretive paradigm, before turning to American pragmatism, as represented by the works of Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead. Despite some variation in overall emphasis, these scholars envisioned the social sciences as a study of human lived experience: as the interpretive or hermeneutic understanding of the self and the other within an interactive community context. They were concerned with ascertaining the ways in which people make sense of their worlds, mindful of the others with whom they jointly constitute a community. From this viewpoint, language or the development of a shared set of symbolic meanings is seen as both the product of human interchange and the essential foundation on which human community life exists.

Chapter 3, *"Contemporary Variants of the Interpretive Tradition"* elaborates on the notions of intersubjectivity outlined in chapter 2, showing how these took root in the social sciences and the ways in which they have been pursued and reformulated within the contexts and debates in which a more contemporary set of scholars found themselves. While the work of Herbert Blumer (who most thoroughly epitomizes Chicago-style symbolic interactionism) is singularly consequential in this respect, a number of other noteworthy offshoots are presented. Thus, attention is given to the Iowa school of symbolic interaction, dramaturgical analysis, labeling theory, social construction theory, ethnomethodology, structuration theory, and the new sociology of science. These variants will be compared and contrasted with the symbolic interactionism of George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer, but together they provide a body of concepts and resources that people pursuing the study of everyday life will find exceedingly important.

"The Ethnographic Research Tradition," chapter 4, is concerned with the development of the research traditions, in anthropology and sociology, which focus on the life-styles or human lived experiences of particular groups of people. Although it does not offer the conceptual tools provided in the earlier chapters, chapter 4 is especially valuable for understanding the intellectual heritage of contemporary ethnography. Some attention is given to the anthropological literature, but particular emphasis is placed on the development of ethnographic research in sociology as it took root at the University of Chicago. Consideration is given to "the classics" in this area and to the scholars (such as W. I. Thomas, Ernest Burgess, Robert Park, Everett Hughes, and Herbert Blumer) who played such vital roles in the development of field research. As well, by considering the objectives, dilemmas, and tentative early steps of these inquiries, this chapter

provides a frame of reference with which to approach and assess subsequent efforts in this direction.

The fifth chapter, *"Generic Social Processes,"* builds on many of the theoretical concerns and ethnographic considerations discussed in the preceding chapters, but more explicitly addresses the matter of conceptual development through ongoing ethnographic inquiry. Emphasizing a series of action-based concepts, such as acquiring perspectives, achieving identities, getting involved, doing activities, and developing relationships, *generic social processes* provide trans-situational reference points that enable scholars to compare and contrast ethnographic studies in many contexts. For instance, by focusing on a particular generic social process, such as "acquiring perspectives," and attending to people's participation in settings seemingly as diverse as deviant subcultures, hospitals, religious groups, schoolrooms, and the marketplace, we may begin to obtain a fuller appreciation of how people develop orientational frameworks or world-views regardless of the contexts in which they find themselves. Likewise, the notion of "getting involved" not only allows us to compare the recruiting practices of biker gangs, shuffleboard clubs, fund-raisers, and political parties, but also the ways in which people pursue involvements with respect to ballet, medical school, or tattoos. By attending to the analytical grids represented by these transcontextual, action-oriented processes, one may acquire the major conceptual tools for embarking on research in any setting involving human behavior.

Providing an interactionist statement on *"Experiencing Emotionality,"* chapter 6 might well have been included within the preceding discussion of generic social processes; for it not only acknowledges and builds upon the other generic social processes discussed therein, but also contributes to a more comprehensive appreciation of the subprocesses entailed in acquiring perspectives, doing activity, developing relationships, and the like. Still, since the topic of emotionality has been less explicitly addressed in the interactionist literature than the other themes discussed in chapter 5, it requires a more extended discussion than was possible to achieve in a style keeping with the more succinct formulations of the other processes. While people may only be able to partially control and direct their emotional experiences, this does not differentiate emotional activity from other realms of human involvement and activity, for in the struggle for human existence there is much that people cannot control or direct on either an individual or a collective basis. The inability to entirely direct and control emotional experiences, therefore, does not remove emotional experience from the realm of human enterprise or intersubjective accomplishment. Indeed, and to the contrary, there is much to be gained by approaching the study of emotion in

process terms, as a matter of human endeavor and intersubjective accomplishment (and frustration). In this chapter, three processes central to emotion work are delineated: (1) learning to define emotional experiences; (2) developing techniques for expressing and controlling emotional experiences; and (3) experiencing emotional episodes and entanglements. Although "emotional activities" may be seen as sufficiently unique to justify development as another generic social process, it should be recognized that this consideration of affective involvements very much builds on the preceding generic social processes.

Chapter 7, *"Betwixt Positivist Proclivities and Postmodernist Propensities,"* locates a number of themes pertinent to the study of human lived experience within the context of some major issues (and dilemmas) facing contemporary social scientists. Consequently, consideration is given to the positivist/structuralist–interpretivist/interactionist debate and to interactionist/ethnographic encounters with postmodernism. While the social sciences appear to have derived considerable early impetus from concerns with moral reform and social control, and an emphasis on "appropriate" moral orders continues to define the agenda for the social sciences in some respects (e.g., funding and researcher moralities), this chapter focuses primarily on the problematics of pursuing an intersubjective social science within (*a*) the context of a deeply entrenched set of positivist paradigms, (*b*) an emergent postmodernist thrust, and (*c*) the ongoing demands of ethnographic inquiry. It may be tempting, and even appropriate in certain respects, to locate the intersubjectivist or interactionist approach as a midpoint of sorts on a continuum between positivism and postmodernism, but a more extended consideration of these three approaches suggests that this would be inaccurate and impractical for a great many purposes. This statement indicates realms of conceptual and methodological overlap as well as the epistemological discrepancies characterizing interactionism and positivism on the one hand and interactionism and postmodernism on the other. Thus, particularly mindful of the sorts of resistances and challenges facing scholars who take seriously the task of studying human lived experience, this chapter situates the pursuit of an intersubjective social science within the context of these developments. Of the various chapters in this volume, readers may find chapter 7 the most controversial. Rather than attempt to fuse or synthesize the intersubjectivist approach with either positivist or postmodernist approaches, this chapter lays out the baseline assumptions of each and endeavors to assess the relative merit of each for developing a social science that is genuinely attentive to human lived experience and the human struggle for existence. Those who wish to avoid academic debate for one reason or another or those who (optimistically) hope for an eclectic blending of sorts may find this material somewhat polemical

or purist in thrust. However, the view taken here is one of insisting on a rigorous attentiveness to the world as known and acted toward by human beings in a community context. Only in this way may one maintain an integrity or coherence of theory, methods, and research as this pertains to the ongoing accomplishment of everyday life.

The last chapter, *"Obdurate Reality and the Intersubjective Other,"* represents an extension of some of the issues developed in chapter 7, but focuses more directly on the task of generating a social science that builds on the intersubjective essence of community life and the ongoing production of action. In contrast to postmodernist sociologists who tend to reduce human experience to textual reality and the positivist social scientists who tend to reduce human lived experience to structuralist reality, it is argued that human existence is predicated on people coming to terms with the day-to-day situations in which they find themselves. What is required is a pragmatic appreciation of the human life-world as it is accomplished by people acting and interacting with others in community settings, on a day-to-day, moment to moment basis. This active participation "in the world out there" necessitates a pronounced appreciation of the "obdurate reality" to which Blumer (1969) referred. By attending to Blumer's notion of a resistant, objectified, intersubjectively sustained, and processually oriented reality in which the human struggle for existence takes place on the one hand, and being mindful of the ethnographic implications of the "privilege of presence" on the other, we may more effectively pursue a thoroughly intersubjective social science—one that is rigorously grounded in the study of human lived experience.

Addressing a series of theoretical and methodological concerns of central consequence to people studying human group life, this volume fosters a fuller sense of the research tradition in which the emphasis on studying human lived experience emerged. This book is not intended as a formula or recipe for doing ethnographic research. Instead, it is anticipated that these statements, along with the bibliography at the end, may serve as a part of the ethnographer's "tool kit," a set of conceptual and methodological resources that one may use in approaching "the study of the other."

NOTES

1. It matters not whether the illusions are intended to convey the impression that "something unusual is happening" when it is not, or whether they are designed to indicate that "nothing unusual is happening" when it

is. In actual practice, card and dice hustlers try to maintain an overall impression of an unexceptional context ("just a regular game") and magicians specialize in producing dramatic effects; but both sets of performers often engage in both types of effects (something is happening, nothing is happening) in the process of shading (distracting, covering) and enhancing their intended overall (natural or exceptional appearing) effects. (See Prus and Sharper 1991.)

2. As indicated later in this chapter, but developed more fully in chapters 2, 3, and 4, the interpretivist or intersubjectivist tradition is very much rooted in the works of scholars such as Wilhelm Dilthey, George Herbert Mead, Charles Horton Cooley, Herbert Blumer, Alfred Schutz, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, Harold Garfinkel, and T. S. Kuhn.

3. In postponing a fuller discussion of postmodernism until a later point in the volume, no attempt is made to avoid direct consideration of the postmodernist critique. At the risk of attempting to address rather complex issues in a highly truncated fashion, the essential position taken on post-modernism is this: while people may view postmodernism in many ways, what is most compelling from the point of view of developing a social science grounded in (theoretical and methodological) intersubjectivity is the postmodernist recognition of relativism and the linguistically mediated nature of reality. Although postmodernism offers some novelty of ex-perience in the ways in which these notions are expressed, these themes are far from unique to postmodernism. Conversely, what is most prob-lematic about the postmodernist enterprise is (1) its baseline, debilitating, totalistic (Nietdschean) skepticism; (2) its inattentiveness to (a) "obdurate reality," (b) the human struggle for existence, (c) the human production of action and the products of human endeavor, and (d) human interaction and its processual features; (3) its lack of conceptual discipline and epistemological integrity; (4) the tendency for postmodernist thinkers to lapse into structuralist explanations; and (5) the tendency of those invoking a postmodernist frame to use "scholarly text" as vehicles for promoting a variety of other agendas (e.g., morality, consciousness-raising, self-expressionism) that subvert a more careful, rigorous study of human lived experience. Postmodernism has attracted a great deal of attention in academic circles but, as indicated in chapters 7 and 8, it does not have much to offer to those already working in the interpretivist tradition.

4. While comparisons and contrasts of positivist and intersubjectivist approaches to the social sciences are made throughout this volume, a more sustained examination of the premises that undergird positivist approaches to the physical and social sciences is developed in chapters 7 and 8.

5. Viewing pragmatism as somewhat of a threat not only to the sociology he had been developing but also to French civilization more generally, Durkheim prepared a series of lectures on pragmatism and sociology in 1913–1914 (Durkheim, 1983). While he found a number of features of pragmatism (via Peirce, James, Dewey, and Schilling) rather intriguing, Durkheim was clearly bothered by what he envisioned as James's (whom Durkheim defines as the major spokesperson for the tradition) tendencies toward psychological reductionism. Durkheim also tended to locate relativist orientations in the philosophies of Nietzsche and Bergson. Had Durkheim encountered the writings of Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead or been more familiar with the writings of Wilhelm Dilthey, his reactions to pragmatism might have been quite different. For a very insightful discussion of Durkheim's consideration of pragmatism and his possible receptivity to the writings of George Herbert Mead, see Stone and Farberman (1967).

6. I apologize for this highly cryptic rendering of a wide assortment of literature. There are extensive variations in the positions adopted by Weberians, Marxists, and feminists, for example. Indeed, as in the case of "feminist scholarship," the arrays of theoretical and methodological orientations and practices are so far ranging, that the term "feminist" obscures much more than it reveals on an epistemological level (see Reinharz, 1992; Oleson, 1994). Readers interested in an interactionist position on gender and sexuality should see Kuhn (1954), who takes issues with the biological determinism implied in research along the lines of the Kinsey reports.

   Unless one wishes to argue that one needs a special theory of human association for each subgroup that someone may identify in the broader population (e.g., young-old, rich-poor, male-female, black-white-oriental; and every sub-subgroup, such as young, rich, university-educated, females of color), then it seems essential to attend to more generic features of human association. Likewise, scholars able to divest themselves of secondary agendas (e.g., moralism, consciousness-raising) may concentrate more clearly on the task of developing an appreciation of the lived experiences of all peoples. Otherwise, these same academics risk objectifying (and encouraging grand narratives that perpetuate) the very "structures" (and modes of analysis) that they seem at times interested in eliminating from sociological analysis (e.g., biological determinism, racial accentuation). Scholars who wish to privilege themselves by involving certain moral or popular agendas as a means of fostering their scholarship, should recognize

that their work is apt to become identified with, and subject to, criticisms directed toward those modes of analyses. People sometimes make important contributions to the understanding of the human condition while pursuing secondary agendas, but their overall products are likely to be weakened as a result.

7. A consideration of personal and culturally motivated resistances to new developments in academia is developed somewhat more fully in chapter 7.

8. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of this volume provide a much more detailed account of both the roots of symbolic interaction and the varieties of interpretive approaches to the study of human group life. For other statements on symbolic interaction, see Mead, 1934; (especially) Blumer, 1969, as well as Shibutani (1961), Laurer and Handel (1977), Charon (1979), Karp and Yoels (1979), and Morrione (forthcoming). Those more familiar with symbolic interaction will quickly recognize that the approach taken here is very consistent with, and centrally builds on, Blumerian or "Chicago-style" symbolic interaction. While Mead (1934) referred to this approach as "social behaviorism," the term, "symbolic interactionism," which Blumer (1937) rather casually struck, has become the more enduring referent.

9. As indicated in chapters 7 and 8, this attentiveness to the human production of action represents a vital point of divergence between interactionist and postmodernist approaches to the human condition.

10. An object is any item, thing, distinction, concept, behavior, or image to which people may refer (i.e., become aware of, attend to, point to, acknowledge, consider, discuss, or otherwise act toward).

11. The experiences of preverbal (normally) infants pose particular problems for social scientists. Not only (in the absence of shared gestures) is it virtually impossible to ascertain any meanings that preverbal children may assign to [objects], but it is also most difficult to define the point(s) at which infants cease to be "preverbal." Although reflectivity seems most evident when the child begins making generally acknowledged indications to oneself or others, an inability to communicate outwardly does not mean that some minimalist internal verbal comprehension or reflectivity may not be taking place. As well, insofar as verbally astute others are organizing their routines and those of the child around certain (linguistically informed) practices and modes of relating to the preverbal other, they may be endowing even preverbal beings with qualities that they may be quite unable to achieve or sustain on their own. Readers interested in the relationship between language, thinking, and self are apt to find Don

Evan's (Evans and Falk, 1986; Evans, 1987, 1988, 1994) ethnographic work with deaf children both fascinating and highly insightful.

12. See Schutz (1962, 1964) and Berger and Luckmann (1966) for particularly valuable elaborations of the "objectification" (and typification) process as this pertains to people's sense of reality and their "stocks of knowledge."

13. Chapter 4 in this volume provides an account of the development of ethnographic research in anthropology and sociology (especially with respect to interactionist ethnography). For materials dealing a little more squarely with ethnographic research in the field, see Palmer (1928), Paul (1953), Becker (1970), Wax (1971), Bogdan and Taylor (1975), Lofland and Lofland (1984), Jorgensen (1989), Shaffir and Stebbins (1991).

14. Although Giddens (1974, 1976, 1984) appears to have been the first person to use the term, "double hermeneutic," notions of this sort have long been deemed fundamental to an interactionist viewpoint.

15. Although frequency counts are usually so highly abstracted that much of their contextual value is lost, they may be useful in providing researchers with a certain kind of information about the situation at hand. Unfortunately, most (positivist) social science is built on these highly decontextualized "observations." Attempts to explain human behavior are often further confounded when researchers embark on the process of correlating two or more sets of these (highly abstracted, decontextualized) frequency counts, and then endeavor (however "learnedly") to speculate on the relevance of these (now increasingly nebulous) "findings."