Blumer's contribution beyond Mead: An assessment of the significance of Herbert Blumer to sociology.

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BLUMER'S CONTRIBUTION BEYOND MEAD

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HERBERT BLUMER TO SOCIOLOGY

by

C

Thomas Groulx

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of Sociology and Anthropology
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ABSTRACT

The status of Herbert Blumer as a sociologist is undeniably of a large magnitude. There does, however, seem to be some question as to what constitutes his major original contributions to the discipline. This study attempts to demonstrate that not only has Herbert Blumer not advanced significantly beyond the formulations of his mentor George Herbert Mead, but that in some instances his work is actually incompatible with what Mead proposed. Major topic areas are discussed with reference to their originality and overall significance to the development of symbolic interactionism as a perspective in sociology. The major conclusion attained is that Blumer made his most lasting mark on sociology as an integrator of Mead's philosophies and as a catalyst in the resurrection of this humanistic theory.
DEDICATION

Affectionately dedicated to two very special ladies - my mother Patricia, and my wife Jan.
INTRODUCTION

Among the contributors to symbolic interactionism, the name of Herbert Blumer is strongly associated with the history of this theory. Blumer has been one of the major spokesmen for the perspective and he is in a rather unique position in that he inherited the role following the death of one of the founding fathers, George Herbert Mead.

The fact that Mead published very little, and that most of the works attributed to him are posthumous applications of his theory, gave rise to the need for a proper presentation and explanation of Mead's theories that were not clouded by problems of interpretation. Being a student of Mead at the University of Chicago, Blumer occupied a strategic position to achieve this task.

Although the burden of attempting to present a concise formulation of Mead's theories is not an enviable one, Blumer's rather lofty position in the field of sociology suggests that his role has not only been limited to that of explicator of Meadian philosophy.

The present study proposes to examine his original contributions and significance to contemporary sociological theorizing. The need for this work seems to be justified by the observation that throughout the literature there appear to be contradictory and rather vague assertions regarding Blumer's creative theoretical contributions beyond the original formulations of George Herbert Mead.

Blumer (1966; 535) realized that although Mead made many brilliant
contributions in his lifetime, he did not map out a coherent theoretical scheme of human society. He stated that such a scheme is implicit in Mead’s work and it has to be constructed by tracing the implications of the central matters which he analyzed. He is careful throughout his work to acknowledge the importance of Mead’s influence upon his work, but Blumer claims that he has developed his own version of symbolic interactionism, dealing with many crucial matters which were only implicit in the thought of Mead and others. An evaluation will be conducted to establish the nature of this “different version” that Blumer alludes to as being uniquely his own.

This study will seek to establish the congruencies between Blumer’s theoretical formulations in contrast to Mead’s which would assess the question of whether Blumer should be placed in a position of being more than just a commentator on Meadian conceptions.

In the course of this examination, there is the problem of establishing what is inherently Meadian, and unquestionably Blumer’s. This will be resolved through a thorough and careful delineation of Mead’s theoretical formulations prior to the arrival of Blumer upon the scene. Also problematic is the fact that both Mead and Blumer are eclectic thinkers who were exposed to a vast number of influences which necessitates an examination of many of the other major works of their respective times.

The major portion of this study will be derived from publications and thus it will take the form of a literature review. The nucleus of the investigation will proceed from a sketchy survey of Mead’s basic
theoretical formulation and a detailed analysis of Blumer's own work, as well as an examination of material written on Blumer by other theorists in the literature of the school of symbolic interactionism in particular, and sociological theory in general.

It is believed that an adequate answer to the proposed questions requires the articulation of the theoretical problem areas that Blumer attempted to explore.

This study will be divided into five sections. Section one will deal with the theoretical contributions of the central figures out of which symbolic interactionism evolved. Heavy emphasis will be placed on Mead since his work is directly relevant to an analysis of Blumer.

Section two will discuss the nature and diversity of interactionism as a contemporary sociological theory. Here, the major theoretical issues will be identified.

Section three will attempt to present the nature of Blumer's theory. This section will be mainly based upon a thorough examination of his published works with a special focus being placed upon his major work, Symbolic Interactionism (1969).

Section four will emphasize the similarities and the contrasting aspects of the two theorists, Mead and Blumer. This section will be the key to the proposed study. It will rely heavily upon the examination of some of the most recent literature in symbolic interactionism, (Charon: 1979, Kando: 1977, Strycker: 1980) in order to determine the significance of Blumer's contribution beyond the original Meadian formulation.

The final section of this study will present the major conclusions
derived not only as they pertain to the underlying question of the im-
portance of Blumer to contemporary interactionism, but it will attempt
to present a critical evaluation of the present status and trends in
symbolic interactionism, with further hope of showing Blumer's grasp of
the strategic groundwork laid by Mead for a dynamic sociology is relevant
to the present theoretical crisis in this discipline.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

The interactionist perspective was first given its distinctive structure by a group of sociologists, psychologists, and philosophers, the greater part of whom were at the University of Chicago at the turn of the century.

To properly understand the state of symbolic interactionism prior to Herbert Blumer's indoctrination into the perspective, it is necessary to demarcate the theoretical contributions of the central figures who played a crucial role in the development and genesis of the theory. In examining the intellectual underpinnings which gave rise to Blumer's theories, a brief critical discussion of the works of Dewey, James, Thomas, Cooley, and of course Mead, is essential in order to establish Blumer's theoretical points of departure.

The fact that symbolic interactionism is such a diverse theoretical orientation is due to the fact that the individuals who played important roles in the development of the perspective differed with respect to the ways in which they defined social and human motivation (Maines: 1977: 235). In this sense, the evolution of the position has not been controlled and superintended in a manner common to other sociologies.¹

The following brief discussions of the founders of symbolic interactionism, with the exception of Mead, are merely meant to state a few of the most notable contributions of the various theorists, and in no way capture the entire nature and scope of their works.
W. I. Thomas

Perhaps the most important contribution that Thomas made was in his development of the notion of the "definition of the situation." This concept, which was to become central to symbolic interactionist theory, placed its emphasis on the idea that the past and the future are defined or anchored within an emergent or self-interpreted present.

This notion is extremely important when it is applied to the future because it implicitly assumes that the individual rationally contemplates all possible courses of action which are open to him, and that he is also cognizant of the ramifications of each of the potential avenues of behavior. According to Thomas, this process of defining the situation takes place prior to any overt action. Basic to this process is the fact that the individual must continually redefine his position relative to the social groups of which he is a member.²

Defining the situation presupposes the existence of intelligence, which is the ability to solve problems of present behavior in terms of its future consequences as implicated on the basis of past experience. It involves both memory and foresight. Social cohesion is attained when those actors involved in the exchange utilize shared meanings or common definitions of the situation is a social process.³

This concept was central to the genesis of symbolic interactionism because it forced students of human behavior to focus on the uniquely interpretive, deliberative, and conscious nature of human behavior, as distinct from that of animals.

Thomas extended the principles of symbolic interactionism, which were mainly concerned with the genesis of the self and personality as
they occurred in the child, to an analysis which dealt more with behavior as it occurred in adults.

In a more general sense, Thomas is often noted for his attempt to delineate the domain of sociology, and his efforts to find out what sociologists could discover in contrast to other social scientists.

John Dewey

The works of John Dewey were also prominent in the development of symbolic interactionism. Dewey was a major force in the expansion of the sphere of psychology into sociology in an effort to use both individual and social elements as the basis for the explanation of human behavior. He contended that the interaction between the individual and his social situation should be focused upon because it provided the key for the understanding of action.

According to Dewey, all interaction is "situated" or "located" within environments, and that we bring to the situation an understanding of meanings and objects which is at least partially culture-bound. This, however, does not imply that we are socially determined. Dewey felt that society does not restrict creativity and individuality, but allows for their development in interactional settings that define them as such.

It is notable that Dewey did not concern himself with the individual's interpretation of certain situations, as did most other early interactionists, but with the very existence of the conditions themselves. This idea lends itself to application because then we could establish certain conditions which would be more favorable to elicit our desired behavior. This would seem to be partially congruent to some of the premises of Watsonian behaviorism.
Dewey saw the need to take into account both cultural and historical factors in his search for the conditions that enter into human behavior at different times. In this light then, Dewey's theory advocates an interpretation of human action as being emergent while opposing both the static and the ahistorical theories of conduct. Dewey was especially critical of those psychological theories of motivation which ignored the role of social interaction and the setting in which it took place in their explanation of behavior. Dewey's position was one which defined humans, their environment, and their thought as interrelated linkages which must be accounted for as a basis for understanding human action. Activity is to be seen in terms of the integration of mind, body, and the environment.

These observations of Dewey's have very important theoretical consequences. They support the interactionist contention that knowledge and experience are both social because they are derived from or are the result of human interaction. This view is thus diametrically opposed to the metaphysical position which supports the notion that knowledge or thought can exist innately prior to the emergence of the individual as a thinking body.

Dewey is perhaps best known for his advocacy of a system of educational reform. He basically felt that there was a difference between being trained and being educated. He supported the idea of creating an environment in which creativity could flourish; and condemned the teaching modalities of the day in which learning involved training the individual in an animal-like fashion in an environment which was not conducive to originality and spontaneity which is based upon stimulated
Another one of the founding fathers of symbolic interactionism was William James. He was a firm believer in studying processes, and the most important process according to James is contained within the dialectic which exists between the "I" and the "Me". The "Me" symbolizes the internalization or incorporation of others within the individual. The "I", on the other hand, represents the impulsive, spontaneous, and creative part of the self.

James recognized the complexity of the concept of the self. Realizing that situational determinants were very much part of the dialectical process that occurs between the "I" and the "Me", James posited the existence of "multiple selves". These different selves are a response to our assessment of what would be the most appropriate response given the presence of people whose opinion of our self is important.

The self which is displayed may even be inconsistent or contradictory, and the group serves as a referent for the individual to extrapolate one of the selves of which the social self totality is composed of.

James realized that the self was not as cut and dried as his theory implied. In conjunction with Dewey, he placed paramount importance on the situation, and from this he theorized that the individual could be influenced by the social groups of which he was a member, and that this influence was bilateral. Groups serve to act as referents or guides when deciding upon courses of action. Depending on the social situation, the "I" or the "Me" is exercised to varying degrees.
In conjunction with Thomas' "definition of the situation", the reflexiveness of the self, or the internal debate between the two component parts of the self, takes place prior to any overt expression or action. Inherent in this schema is the individual's ability to "take the role of the other". This latter notion has utility when attempting to derive the nature of the relationship between the individual and the social group.

James' other major contribution to the genesis of symbolic interactionism dealt specifically with the notion of consciousness. Through his theory he formulated the idea that the emerging present can never be totally identical to the experienced past, regardless of apparent similarity. In other words, "no state once gone can recur and be identical with what it was before". Consciousness thus, in the Jamesian conceptualization, is of a dynamic nature, and James metaphorically refers to it as a "stream of consciousness". Regardless of man's every-changing notion of consciousness, James does assume that there is continuity between past and present states of consciousness (1892: 160).

James also developed a theory of "instincts". He took the conventional view of instincts one step further and posited that they should be understood in their relationship to socially learned habits that serve to inhibit or modify them.6

Instincts become implanted by habits, which are a uniquely human capacity. According to James, many human mental capabilities exist because of the large number of instinctive impulses that have been implanted (Meltzer et al., 1975).
Charles Horton Cooley

Another major force in the development of symbolic interactionism was Charles Horton Cooley. Although he was not directly a part of the scene at the University of Chicago, he was a colleague of Mead's at the University of Michigan where Mead taught for two years. He is considered to be a member of the Chicago tradition, due to the fact that his works were closely linked to those theorists who are identified as being the founders of interactionism as it existed in Chicago at the turn of the century.

Cooley's contributions to the expansion of symbolic interactionism is best remembered by his concepts of "looking glass self", and the "primary group".

The "looking glass self" basically is our subjective interpretation of the interaction process. It attempts to explain the interactive situation as being one in which constant adjustment is being made in accordance with our imagined appearance to those present.

The concept has three components: the imagination of our appearance to the other person, the imagination of his judgement of that appearance, and some sort of evoked feeling as the result of the judgement. Cooley's main point is that imagination, namely the imagination of what we appear to be and how others respond to that, is a critical element of the self (Kando: 1977; 115).

Thus, according to Cooley, society consists of the imagination that people have of one another. He felt that the self that you understand is the result of information reflected back at you in the judgement of others with whom you interact. This process is central to the inter-
actionist ideology because society and social structure are thus envisioned as mental constructs, and the unity that exists is a psychological abstraction.

In direct accordance with his theory of the "looking glass self", Cooley advocated a corresponding humanistic methodology which he entitled "sympathetic introspection". This methodology did not settle for observations of external behavior, but attempted to tap the meaning and interpretations of the interacting participants.

Cooley believed that the basic focus of the real study of any society must pay utmost attention to the processual character of human interaction. Cooley posited that the relationship between the social environment and the "self" can be empirically verified through the use of introspections.

As researchers, Cooley states that we should move beyond the study of overt action and attempt to tap the covert by trying to understand the minds of others, as their interpretation of the objective social condition may differ from ours. Cooley thus sees human action as contextual and subjective.

Cooley's other major contribution was his concept of the primary group. Primary groups are characterized by "intimate face-to-face association and cooperation." These groups are primary in several senses but chiefly in that they are fundamental in forming the social nature of the ideals of the individual and that they serve as a referent for the individual. This concept tied in with his larger theoretical stance in that it is through communication with others, most notably the primary group, that the self arises and some sort of self conceptuali-
zation occurs. Cooley felt that as time went on, it was necessary that new primary groups develop which could serve to facilitate the individual's changing self.

George Herbert Mead

Of all the precursors of symbolic interactionism, none is more important or influential than George Herbert Mead. Regardless of the varying ways in which interactionism has been interpreted, most of those identifying with the perspective trace its principle origins to the works of Mead.

It is with some trepidation that I have approached the task of representing and critically exploring Mead's thought. He was an eclectic thinker whose theories and ideas were always in a state of flux. The diversity of influences which are evident in Mead's works leads one to wonder how any real logical theory of human action could have emerged. The three most obvious influences that Mead experienced were pragmatism, Darwinism, and Watsonian Behaviorism. Although it would be impossible to delineate all of Mead's many contributions to sociology, the following are examples that are central to the development of the thesis at hand, and are commonly listed as being his major theoretical achievements.

One process which is a central premise of symbolic interactionism is Mead's concept of "self-reflexive behavior". Mead believed there to be an intervening process between the initial stimulus and the subsequent response which is constituted by a flow of self interaction in which the individual indicates various things and objects to himself, defines them, judges them, selects from among them, pieces together his selec-
tions and thereby organizes himself to act.

Self-reflexiveness takes the classical behavioristic formulation of stimulus-response one step further and introduces an intermediary step which is manifested by a delay in response, in which the individual is adjusting to a stimulus by adjusting a type of response.

This ability to become the object of one's own actions or to possess a self, represents a point of departure between man and animal. Mead was intrinsically interested at that point on the evolutionary continuum that man became differentiated from animal.

According to Mead, self-reflexive behavior takes place within the dual framework of indeterminacy/determinacy. These two features of the self were given the names the "I" and the "Me" respectively, by William James.

The "I" represents the response of the organism to the attitudes of others. The "I" indicates the emergent nature of the self and it is in line with Mead's humanistic conception of man. The "I" is a reminder that we are more than the sum of our roles and our socialization. Critics of Mead have alluded to the fact that sentiment and unconscious behavior have been overlooked in his formulation.

The reflexiveness of the self underlies the individual's ability to take the role of the other. The human actor indicates to himself matters that confront him in the situations in which he acts, and organizes his action through his interpretation of such matters. The actor engages in this social interaction with himself, according to Mead, by taking the role of others.

The idea that the individual is in possession of a "self" is central
to Meadian theory and symbolic interactionism in general. The possession of a "self" means that the person can be the object of his own actions. Mead considers this capacity to objectify himself as the mechanism with which human beings utilize to deal with their world. The discovery of the 'self, in Mead's conceptualization, is the necessary condition of intelligent behavior and significant speech. Once symbolic thought, or language, has been mastered, there is a "self".

In order for the individual to gain possession of a self, a number of things must occur beforehand. First, the individual must be able to "talk to himself", in which there is a prerequisite of language. According to Mead, language is only one of the symbols which we use. Mead defines a symbol as "the stimulus whose response is given in advance". A significant symbol occurs when there is a shared or identical meaning between the conveyor of the symbol and respondent(s) to whom the communication is directed. Mead explains, "What such symbols do is to pick out particular characteristics of the situation so that the response to them can be present in the experience of the individual" (1934; 50).

The second necessary prerequisite of a "self" is for the individual to learn the process of the aforementioned "taking the role of the other". According to Mead, the recreational activities of the child provides us with valuable information as to how the self emerges.

The initial recreational diversion of the child usually involves a situation where there is some sort of understanding of the roles in which the child has witnessed. This unilateral role taking or elementary imitation has been called the "play stage" by Mead. As the child gets older he begins to assimilate his position and carry it out in relation
to those whom he is immediately experiencing, taking into account that there is a degree of inter-dependence amongst the various others. Mead called this the "game stage", and it is characterized by adjustment to the roles of those who are present.⁸

A critical development takes place when the individual transgresses the game stage and takes into account what Mead has called the "generalized other". This is the attitude of others, or the group, taken towards oneself. The generalized other is synonymous with the "me" aspect of the self.⁹

Taking the role of the generalized other is so fundamentally important because it makes possible thinking itself, since, as Mead says, "the internal conversation of the individual in terms of words or significant gestures ... is carried on by the individual from the standpoint of the generalized other" (Natanson: 1973; 102).

Another concept which Mead utilized in his theory was that of the "definition of the situation".¹⁰ This also occurs in the time lapse between stimulus and response. According to Mead, the response that is ultimately chosen is directly related to the individual's definition of the situation. Humans do not respond to a static world, but rather to a reality which is subjective and dynamic.

This idea is closely associated with his concern as a pragmatist with the individual's ability to rationally solve problems of the present using creativity and ingenuity which are accordingly exclusively human attributes.

Another subject to which Mead devotes a great deal of his time is the idea of "mind". Mind, according to Mead, arises out of the capacity
of the individual to point out meanings to others and to itself. Mind is not a physical entity, but it is a process which is derived from social interaction.\textsuperscript{11}

The mind, according to Mead, acts as a mediator between the individual and the environment. He views the mind as being socially based, but does not ignore the fact that biological and psychological factors are also important. He saw mind and the human propensity for symbolic communication as emergents from the evolutionary process. Mead states:

What I suggested as characteristic of the mind is the reflective intelligence of the human animal which can be distinguished from the intelligence of lower forms. The intelligent man as distinguished from the intelligent animal presents to himself what is going to happen. Man definitely pursues a certain course, pictures a certain situation, and directs his own conduct with reference to it (1934: 118-119).\textsuperscript{12}

In summary, then, this abbreviated presentation of Mead's theories was intended to serve as a basis for the ensuing discussion. The historical relevance of his works and the works of other early symbolic interactionists must be understood against the background of theories which provoked this reaction, and concurring need for reconceptualization.

The basic aim of the early interactionist literature was to provide an alternative explanation to the prevailing view of the relationship between the individual and society. Although all of the aforementioned theorists realized that membership within a social group was necessary for the fulfillment of human potential, it was Mead who arrived at a truely social-psychological perspective which did not attempt to accord primacy to either the individual or society.

The manifestation of the mind in behavior was the ultimate concern of these men. They all stressed the need to take account of mental
phenomena as it proceeded in the course of interaction.

The lack of clear systematization of Meadian theory along with ambiguities which arose as a result of the oral tradition gave rise to a number of diverse interpretations. The following chapter will focus on the nature and scope of symbolic interactionism as a contemporary sociological theory. The key theoretical issues will be identified.
FOOTNOTES

1. This point is alluded to by Paul Rock (1979: 5). This continues to be a major criticism of symbolic interactionism in that it is a perspective and not a theory. It is often referred to as being understated.

2. The definition of the situation can best be understood as a covert or internal conversation. This deliberation takes place prior to any self-determined form of behavior.
   Also implicit in the terms is that when an individual defines a situation, he takes into account the values and attitudes of the person or group with whom he is interacting (Meltzer, Reynolds, & Petras: 1975).

3. The now famous "Thomas Theorem" states: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." (Thomas & Thomas, 1928: 571-573).
   This statement is considered to be one of the major premises of symbolic interactionism. However, if we examine its contents closely it is clear that it is a tautology.

4. Kando points out that James' introduction of the "Me" concept led to a vast amount of work that was subsequently done on roles, role conflict, and reference groups (1977: 106).

5. The idea of multiple selves is closely linked to the theories of two other sociologists:
   a) it implies a manipulation of Cooley's first stage in his "looking glass self" theory, namely our imagination of how others interpret our appearance and behavior.
   b) it is also related to Goffman's Dramaturgical approach in that it involves a form of impression management.

6. James, like Mead, was interested in establishing the characteristics which were uniquely or exclusively human in nature. As a result of this preoccupation, James described humans as different from animals in that they were capable of memory. Since the human organism is capable of memory, the repetition of what was once instinctual behavior can call to mind the performance of the act at a previous time.

7. Non-symbolic interaction is merely the response to a gesture which is instinctual and does not involve a movement beyond the behavior-istic S-R model.
As children we go through a period in which we amuse ourselves by imitating mother or father, or the teacher or policeman. This is the play stage.

The classic example given of the game stage is a baseball game in which the defensive player must see his position in relation to the other eight players on the field and take their roles into account when devising action strategy.

Caution must be taken against personifying the "me". It is best understood as being synonymous with conscience and bound by cultural norms.

As has already been noted, this concept was introduced by W. I. Thomas but Mead located it within the general framework of theoretical schema.

As Natanson points out, one of the major problems that Mead and all symbolic interactionists faced is how to develop a theory that takes into account the necessarily subjective quality of the mind yet describes that quality in terms which can be objectively verified (1973; 10).

Mead's reliance on the works of John Dewey is evident in his discussion of this concept.
CHAPTER II

Currently, symbolic interactionism can be described as a diverse theoretical perspective which embraces many conflicting interpretations of Mead and the other seminal thinkers discussed in the previous section.

Most of the variation that exists centers around attempts to develop the Meadian initiative. Due to the fact that Mead died before he had the opportunity to publish his works, we are dependent on a posthumous salvage operation for much of our knowledge of the thought of George Herbert Mead.\(^{13}\)

The materials available for venturing to understand his theory are of three kinds: first, a not very large literature of Mead's published papers,\(^{14}\) a valuable collection of manuscripts and notes, which, as is natural, range widely in length, clarity, and subject matter,\(^ {15}\) and thirdly, collections of notes taken by students in Mead's classes which have been carefully organized into the substance of three volumes\(^ {16}\) (Poloma: 1979; 91).

As a result of all of this, the content of Mead's production is fragmentary and unsystematic. Much of what Mead had to say has probably been lost or deformed through improper translation. The perspective's problematic historical roots and the ensuing lack of concise formulation has given rise to the criticism that symbolic interactionism is unorthodox, disordered, incoherent, and deficient in that it does not provide
a definitive statement concerning the basis of human society.

In general, symbolic interactionism represents an important historical break from traditional macro-structural theories. Interactionists are interested in analyzing individual behavior, as contrasted with those whose roots lie in analyzing social systems. Its substantive content focuses in on concepts that very few sociologists have seriously considered, and thus the perspective can be viewed as being a departure from mainstream sociology.

All the different varieties of symbolic interactionism share the view that human beings construct their realities in a process of interaction with other humans. The behavior of men is seen as stemming from a reflective and socially derived interpretation of the internal and external stimuli that are present (Poloma: 1979; 100).

Symbolic interactionism has traditionally been divided into two main sectors, the Chicago and Iowa schools. However, other recently evolved theoretical offshoots which will be discussed in the following include dramaturgy and ethnomethodology. The differences amongst these perspectives reflect the key theoretical issues which form the major points of departure.

The Chicago School

The Chicago school of symbolic interactionism continues to be the approach which the theory in general is identified with. It basically represents an attempt to extrapolate classical Median theory. Herbert Blumer has been the major spokesman for this school. He was in an opportune position to assume this role due to the fact that he was a student of Mead's at the University of Chicago, he was a consultant on
Mead's posthumous publications, and that he taught at Chicago until 1952 when he moved to the University of California, Berkeley.

The Chicago school image of man is basically humanistic, in which the individual is viewed as being an active constructor of his reality. Built into behavior is an unpredictable, indeterminate dimension, a factor which has made this theory unpopular.

Advocates of this school of interactionism stress that we should pay attention to the actor's definition of the situation and any ensuing redefinition which may occur as a result of the actor's interpretation of the reaction of others. The demands of others, whether real or imagined, serves to impinge upon the potential avenues of action. This, however, is not to say that they necessarily limit behavior alternatives, but rather that they are usually taken into account by the individual prior to an overt act. Basic to their position is the notion that studying overt behavior itself is not enough to ascertain the dynamics of human action. Thus, by stressing the interpretative, evaluative, and defining processes, the Chicago school concentrates extensively upon the constructed and changeable nature of interaction.

Perhaps the most obvious feature of Chicago sociology is its advocacy of a methodology which taps the covert aspect of behavior which these theorists deem as being vitally important in the formation process that occurs between the stimulus and the overt act.

They are not dogmatic about any one type of methodology, although they show a definite preference for qualitative procedures. They argue that we should use any and all of the different tools that we have because each one of them allows us to tap a little more information which
is essential to the construction of a more accurate picture of social reality. However, since they assume that the meaning of the object or stimulus is seldom if ever intrinsic, they rely heavily upon observation and the questioning of the subject of whom they seek the information.

Observation is deemed to be necessary in order to comprehend action because the others present in the interaction situation serve to provide role obligations to the individual which may or may not be coercive. It becomes necessary for the observer to discern the precise influence that these others may have in formulating the individual's interpretation of the situation and his subsequent action. The observer must take the viewpoint of the person(s) he is studying and must also attempt to ascertain their covert thought formation leading to action.

Another one of their basic viewpoints is that society, as we know it, is merely a framework inside of which social action takes place and is not a determinant of that action. Thus, Chicago interactionists tend to concentrate largely upon the dynamics of the interaction process itself, and social relations in general.

Within this general schema social organization, along with the self, are viewed as being both fluid and tenuous. Social organization is deemed to be the result of shared meanings and mutual interpretations, and that society as we know it, is simply the sum of the interacting individuals whose separate actions are pieced together to form what appears to be a larger cohesive unit.

The Iowa School

The Iowa school of symbolic interactionism represents a more conventional approach to the study of social life. Its founder, the late
Manford Kuhn, attempted to explore the premises of interactionism in a more systematic and positivistic fashion. It was his belief that if he could operationalize some of the key concepts of the theory, that he could conclusively test the validity of some of Mead's assumptions.

Iowa interactionism differs from the Chicago type both in substantive and methodological areas. One of the major points of departure between the two schools centers around the degree of structure and constancy in the human character. Kuhn felt that the socialization process provided the individual with a personality structure which was fairly fixed. He also felt that stability lent itself to accurate prediction of human conduct if certain structured patterns of relationships could be established.

Kuhn theorized that the personality was far more static and structured than Blumer's image which saw man as being far more spontaneous and creative. Kuhn felt that a lot of what Blumer and his adherents termed "creativity" or "free will" was a reflection of the ignorance that these men had of the structured pattern of relationships which are such an integral part of the interaction process. Action is thus envisaged as being a "release" under the constraint of role-obligations and status. Kuhn felt that attached to the various roles and positions that the individual could occupy were congruent norms and expectations which served to deny the individual with the apparent free will which Blumer claimed to be present.

In accordance with such an image of man, Kuhn sought to tap the attitude of the individual prior to action. Blumer, of course, was also interested in this, but Kuhn's interest had different roots. Kuhn
assigned causal significance to the roles and attitudes that the actor brought with him to the interaction setting. He also placed heavy emphasis upon the role of reference groups in the formation of attitudes.

While both Blumer and Kuhn are interested in subjective matters, the latter advocates a methodology which attempts to elicit the attributes of the self.\textsuperscript{20} Relying heavily upon his Twenty Statement Test (T.S.T.), Kuhn bases his analysis of the self concept upon the answers to the question, "Who am I?" Here, the self concept and self attributes are scrutinized because it is Kuhn's belief that behavior is determined by the actors' self-definitions. He felt that all individuals possessed a "core self", and it was to the exposure of this that he addressed his research endeavors. His logic was that if we could establish what these self definitions were, and realize that they fluctuate pending on the reference group that is present at the time of the act under study, we could accurately predict action.

Kuhn used quantitative survey techniques and variable analysis in his search for the dynamics of human action. He felt that questionnaires and attitude scales could be useful in the identification of self attributes.

Through this brief summary of Iowa interactionism, it is hoped that the major areas of divergence between Kuhn and Blumer are readily apparent. Kuhn's methodological preferences served to appease those critics who felt that interactionism was merely speculative in nature, although this appeasement of Blumer's protagonists was not intended by Kuhn.
The Dramaturgical Approach

The dramaturgical approach, under the guidance of its leading proponent, Erving Goffman, has emerged as a distinct offshoot of classical Meadian theory. Goffman studied at the University of Chicago under Blumer, and the influence is readily apparent. Both men rely heavily upon the "situation" as their basic unit of analysis, and they also agree that the self becomes objectified.

What is not so obvious is Goffman's adherence to some of Kuhn's theoretical propositions. Both Kuhn and Goffman seem to agree that there exists an "essential self", and that one should be able to detect this through observing consistencies in action. They are also in agreement that status and roles serve to direct performance and that their corresponding societal values serve to constrain action.21

The pervasive themes of Goffman's work deal with impression management and presentation of the self. He postulated that when individuals interact, the respective parties desire to "manage" the impressions that the others will receive of each other. As such, Goffman feels that the essential aspect upon which human encounters are based is "acting" or "performing". These performances are intended to reveal a pre-determined image of the self to others. Knowledge of the others helps the individual to "define the situation" and choose an appropriate response which will satisfy the audience in that they will not be in violation of the larger societal norms or the informal rules which may govern the interaction between age specific audiences. Expectations of proper action is mutual in that the acting individual also assigns an expectation of certain responses to those with whom he is interacting.
Goffman's image of man basically sees him as being calculative and manipulative. This manipulation of one's impressions may become so intense and extensive that the actor may actually deceive himself as to his true motives, although Goffman does not deal explicitly with the fact that these performances may become subconscious after a while.

Goffman's analysis leaves little room for sincerity and he leaves no clue as to how the observer would detect it if it were ever displayed. He does state, however, that changes in situation and interacting group provide an ideal time for the observer to catch the transitional aspects of the self and see the additions and deletions of the component parts of the total self.

Goffman has applied his theory to the study of the area of mental illness. He believes that the symptoms of mental illness have no physiological basis but that the action that is deemed as being indicative of some sort of a disturbance is merely an inappropriate role performance. In this sense he is in agreement with Szasz, Sarbin, and Laing, who share similar opinions about what constitutes psychological malfunctioning.

Goffman's work has been criticized on the grounds that it is not theory but rather a methodological device (Kando: 1977; 120). The standard complaint about his work is that it is too "situational" and "too descriptive." Regardless of these complaints, it does present an interesting theory which is no doubt correct to a certain extent.

**Ethnomethodology**

Another orientation which is closely identifiable with symbolic interactionism is ethnomethodology. It is deeply rooted in the pheno-
menological tradition of Husserl and Schutz in that it seeks to understand how reality is constructed. Its leading advocate, Harold Garfinkel, felt that reality was not a static entity but that rather it was constructed, and that language is the vehicle through which this negotiation takes place. Another commonality it shares with interactionism in general is that it emphasizes the importance of the definition of the situation or to use Garfinkel's term, the "indexicality" of the situation.

Garfinkel seeks to grasp the rules and rational behind commonplace everyday activities. He believes that shared assumptions and understandings are the vital cog upon which society runs. The essence of his work is directed toward the empirical detection of the methods employed by people to make sense out of their world, refuting the claim of others that the norm system is definite and clear.

Garfinkel, relying heavily upon qualitative analysis of an experimental variation, advocates the disruption of the order of events in order to grasp the essential characteristics and implicit rules which guide action. Garfinkel feels that we, as researchers, are prisoners of our standardized expectations and that these expectations obscure our knowledge seeking ventures and thus, standardized methodology is not suitable to the study of the commonplace, a stance which has made him very unpopular among many mainstream sociologists.

Although his approach is thought provoking, it lacks the unification of propositions and concepts in much the same manner as symbolic interactionism in general. To make matters worse, Garfinkel's written works are likely to baffle the most capable student of the English language.
Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to present a very brief overview of some of the post-Median developments in symbolic interactionism. What all these offshoots have in common is a claimed allegiance to Mead, and an assertion that they have a valid interpretation which accurately captures the substance of the Median message.

Herbert Blumer has continually had to defend his position against the challenge of others who have an interpretation of Mead which is at variance with his. Blumer remains adamant in his insistence that he has captured the essence of Mead's theory.\(^2\)

Despite the controversy, the question remains as to how Blumer has improved upon the Median initiative. Section three will present the nature of Blumer's theory. The section will be structured around a careful and detailed analysis of his published works.
FOOTNOTES

13 The explanation given for this is an apologetic, sounding line that "his thought was too rich in internal development to allow him to set down his ideas in an ordered array" (Preface to: Mind, Self, and Society; 1934).

14 Thayer (1973; 177), states that there were even problems with Mead's written works. According to William James, Mead was guilty of "uncouthness of form" and a "blunted literary sense."

15 Cottrell informs us that Mead never brought any lecture notes with him to class.

16 Lecture notes taken by students are seldom if ever stenographical verbatim.

17 It is clear from this that Chicago interactionists do not deny the existence of structure and constraint. Their point is that by taking these constraints into account the individual may restructure his action.

18 As such, the usefulness of studies of this sort lie in their ability to explain and not in prediction.

19 Kuhn preferred to call his endeavors by the name of "self-theory", and not Iowa interactionism. The name "Iowa school" was coined because of his affiliation with the State University of Iowa.

20 For a more recent attempt at such a venture, see Morris Rosenberg's "Conceiving the Self" (Basic Books, 1980).

21 Zeitlin (1973; 209), states: The self we find in Goffman is all 'Me' and never 'I'. This statement seems to underplay the creative and active aspect of man which partially comprises Goffman's image of man.

22 This image is very similar to that presented in Exchange theory in that Goffman is saying that we select a particular aspect of the self to serve our immediate needs and maximize our returns from the given situation.

23 If it is a methodological device, Goffman gives us very little in the way of a guide in which we can refer to in our research endeavors.

24 For a good argument to the contrary, see McPhail and Rexroat (American Sociological Review, June, 1979).
CHAPTER III

This section seeks to present the nature of the theoretical formulations of Herbert Blumer. He continues to be identified as the leading spokesman for symbolic interactionism, and it is his conception which continues in the classical Meadian tradition that dominates the perspective's thinking and research today (Zeitlin: 1973; 218).

Blumer constantly acknowledges his indebtedness to the founders of interactionism, especially Mead, and when Mead died in 1931, he took it upon himself to become the leader of the perspective which he named six years later.

Blumer felt that none of the early interactionists presented a systematic statement of the nature of human group life from the position of symbolic interactionism (1969; 78). In this sense it is correct to view Blumer as a sociologist who elaborated, extended, interpreted, and integrated the works of Mead and his associates.25

Blumer sought to bring Mead's theories into the domain of sociology because he felt that "Mead's central concern was with cardinal problems of philosophy" (Ibid; 61).26 Blumer built his version of symbolic interactionism on the basis of three premises. It is interesting to note at this point that there is nothing in these premises which would indicate any modification of Mead's position. They are as follows:

1. That human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that things have for them.
2. That these meanings are derived from the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.

3. That these meanings are modified through an interpretive process (1969; 82).

In order to assess the full impact of these three premises, further elaboration is needed. They are being discussed in the present section because they are the focal point of Blumer's whole theoretical schema. Hopefully the implications of these premises will be made clearer by the following discussion of each one of them on an individual basis.

Premise #1

According to Blumer, in order to act toward things there must first be a process of self indication or, in other words, the act is preceded by a cognitive step in which the thing (object) is assigned a meaning on the basis of the individual's interpretation of how it fits in with the ongoing event.

While arguing that meanings are basically subjective and spontaneous, he does acknowledge the fact that over a period of time there does occur an emergence where there is a relatively high degree of agreement concerning the meaning and definition of an object.\textsuperscript{27} Thus, there is this assumption that actors share a system of culturally established symbols and meanings. The use of symbols to moderate interaction is thought to be unique to humans.

To elaborate further, there is nothing inherent in an object that provides meaning for the individual, and according to Blumer, significance is imputed. Persons apply subjective meaning to their world of objects rather than simply accepting a predesignated interpretation of the
objective reality that they encounter. In this sense, humans respond to a reality that is actively defined by them.

Blumer's first premise does not move significantly beyond the position of "idealism". It is the least controversial of the three premises which make up the interactionist position.

Premise #2

In this second premise the source of meaning is the point of departure between symbolic interactionism and other paradigms. Blumer here is denying the position of realism which regards meaning as being inherent in the object. Also, Blumer denies that meaning arises through a combination of psychological factors that are present in the individual. He is also in opposition to the conventional view which treats the interaction process as merely a filter through which outside factors impinge upon.

Blumer is in agreement with Mead that we as humans are social animals. It is solely through our previous interaction with other individuals that we develop and acquire common understandings. Underlying this premise is the assumption discussed earlier that action and meaning are defined by particular group contexts.

Blumer speaks of these socially learned definitions and alludes to their importance when he states: "such common definitions serve, above anything else, to account for the regularity, stability, and repetitiveness of joint action in vast areas of group life; they are the sources of the established and regulated social behavior that are envisioned in the concept of culture" (1969; 71).

The existence and meaning of an object is spun through an ongoing
social process. Hence, reality is that which is perceived and given meaning through the use of significant symbols and ultimately brought into the formative process leading to the overt act.

Premise #3

Premise three is the most important of the three premises. The nature of this interpretive process is an issue to which much of the research in interactionism is directed. As Wallace and Wolfe point out, "Blumer's discussion of interpretation is an elaboration of Mead's argument against Watsonian behaviorism or any other stimulus-response approach" (1980: 234).28

The interpretive process occurs between the stimulus and the act. Empirically it is very difficult to locate because we cannot infer its nature through the study of overt action alone.29 Interpretation involves an understanding of the interaction that the individual has with his self and with others.30 Object perception, which is thought to be the beginning of thought, gives way to this procedure and allows for the emergence of new definitions.

As mentioned above, the act of interpretation becomes very problematic when one attempts to study it. Blumer states that methodologically we must "catch the interpretive process of interaction as it occurs in the experience of the acting unit which uses it" (1969: 188).

However, as Wilson points out, if social interaction is reducible to an interpretive process, then even descriptions of interaction necessarily have an interpretive element attached to them, which perhaps explains why a lot of what Blumer is saying fails to pass the test of intersubjective verification (1970: 704).
The act of interpretation gives way to Blumer's concept of the "joint act". A joint act represents the effort of participants to choose a specific course of action in light of what they observe and interpret each other to be doing. Part of this interpretation process involves the individual's "definition of the situation". Group action is the fitting together of the acting units respective lines of action. It is based upon reciprocal and symbolic interpretation of each other's actions. Thus, society, instead of being an abstract structural concept, is merely the linkages of a system of intrepetive processes.

The preceding discussion of Blumer's premises naturally leads one into an examination of his methodological preferences which follow logically from his image of man. Blumer realized the need for empirically testing his premises, but he is adamant about the fact that they cannot be tested by what he calls the "alien criteria of an irrelevant methodology" (1969; 49).

Blumer builds his methodological stance around a constant attack of the conventional empirical lines of action that sociology has adopted from the physical sciences. He concerns himself extensively with the logic of inquiry and he is in opposition to the use of quantitative procedures and scientific protocol in general. One of his strongest objections to the methodologies of mainstream sociology is that they completely ignore the act of interpretation through the use of variables which are static and unable to account for or capture this event. This will be discussed in more detail later.

Blumer feels that the social world is where we should place the focus of our attention. He advocates a "naturalistic" study of human
group life which directs our attention towards natural everyday settings in which human conduct and group life takes place. This type of study has two components, namely exploration and inspection.\(^{31}\)

Blumer constantly stresses the importance of exploratory inquiries. Exploration is needed in light of the complexity of the social world. This preliminary step to a more focused type of research makes sure that as researchers, our perception of the world (or situation) which we deem to study is empirically grounded. It involves a scrutiny of the area in which we are studying so as to sensitize us to the fact that we may have to revise previous images and beliefs that we may have entering our research endeavor. Exploration requires a progressive sharpening of our conceptualizations as the inquiry proceeds. It involves acquainting oneself with the field of study through the use of such techniques as direct observation, interviewing, listening to conversations, and reading journals (1969: 40-41).

Once this familiarity has been accomplished, the researcher is ready to move into the subsequent step in the inquiry procedure inspection. Blumer explains: "By inspection, I mean an intensive focused examination of the empirical content of whatever analytical elements are used for the purposes of analysis, and this same kind of examination of the empirical nature of the relations between such elements" (Ibid; 43).

As the preceding statement indicates, Blumer wants this step to be a much more careful, but still flexible procedure. These steps necessarily employ qualitative methodology which is thought to be capable of capturing the processual nature of the interaction situation.

Blumer's ultimate goal is to ascertain regularities in human be-
behavior, or in other words, knowledge. If, as Blumer indicates throughout his works, the world is in a constant state of flux, how can we possibly know anything?

Blumer also attacks the deductive nature of conventional scientific research. Deductive inquiry starts with theory and then continues on into the research phase. It commonly concerns itself with hypothesis verification. This type of research, it is charged, places the researcher within the limits of a narrow causal schema.32

Instead, Blumer feels that we should utilize an "inductive" approach in which the research is the initial step in the process and on the basis of our empirical findings explanations are induced. It allows for flexibility in that the researcher redefines his research problem in light of evidence which may be contradictory to his initial beliefs and findings.33

Blumer asks a lot of the researcher who uses his perspective. He claims that "we must catch the interpretive process of interaction as it occurs in the experience of the acting unit which uses it" (1969; 188). Although he demands that the researcher experience the situation from the perspective of the people who are under study, he is very vague as to how this is to be accomplished. This requirement that we familiarize ourselves with the situation and the actors, does not guarantee us that some sort of intersubjective mergerence of interpretation will occur. Nor does it guarantee that what the researcher observes is correct or helpful because eyewitness testimony, even though desirable, has been proven to be unreliable and is certainly open to challenge.

If Blumer's version of symbolic interactionism is supposed to increase our understanding of human action, what would be the test of this
understanding? What can we do with Blumer's theory and methodology that someone who doesn't use it can't? It would seem that one of Blumer's problems is his desire to be "scientific" and "humanistic" at the same time (Shurraydi: 1973b; 10).

Another area that Blumer has devoted a lot of his literary efforts to is the field of collective behavior. His work in this area represents an application of his theoretical position. He basically sought to understand how individuals perceived and interpreted events and how they decided to act upon this.

Blumer was interested in the study of collective phenomena because he felt that these basically unstructured situations provided the best opportunity to study the interpretive process and that, "the more unstructured the situation the more likely it is that symbolic interactionist analysis is indispensible to its understanding" (1969; 70).

He also felt that the nature of the social act, or the fitting of individual lines together to form a collectivity was best exemplified by the constituents of a situation where a spontaneous event occurs (e.g., riot).

Blumer coined the term "circular reaction" to explain what happens in a collective situation. He refers to it as a type of interstimulation wherein the response of one individual reproduces the stimulation that has come from another individual and in being reflected back to this individual reinforces the stimulation (Evans: 1975; 22).

Blumer believes that in situations where a collective outburst occurs, an individual loses the ability he has to interpret the activity of others. Interestingly, he substitutes the term self-consciousness
for Mead's "Me". He states that self-consciousness is lowered in such situations, and he defines the term as "a means of barricading oneself against the influence of others", for with it the individual checks his immediate responses and impulses, and makes judgements before acting. He equates the loss of self-consciousness with the loss of control (Ibid; 28).

He goes on further to point out how a crowd differs from a conventional social setting and talks about some other parts of our objective reality which he usually either ignores or simply just gives passing reference to:

- The group lacks other important marks of society such as an established social organization, an established division of labor, a structure of established roles, a recognized leadership, a set of norms, a set of moral regulations, an awareness of its own identity, or a recognized 'we consciousness' (Ibid; 30).

Blumer's contributions to the area of collective behavior is deficient in several ways. He treats all instances of collective behavior as being analogous without giving much thought to the intensity behind the feelings that provoked such actions in the first place.

His works in this area remain at the abstract level with very little practical value. He gives us very little in the way of intervention strategy, nor does he tell us how we could possibly curtail a riot before it happens.

Although there are those who contend that it is his collective behavior theories which are indicative of Blumer's most significant empirical contribution (Skidmore: 1975; 212), it is obvious that Blumer falls into the same theoretical rut as most other sociologists who attempt to study such occurrences. Since we have no way to empirically verify what
Blumer is saying, it is pure conjecture.

Symbolic interactionism really has no utility in analyzing events that have already occurred. Collective outbursts tend to be spontaneous, and since this is the case, sociologists in general have few noteworthy contributions. In Chapter II I looked at the perspective's contemporary state and examined some of the theoretical offshoots. Chapter III represented a very briefly sketch of what I felt were Blumer's basic theoretical contributions once all of the rhetoric was removed.

The next section, which is the most important to the development of the thesis at hand, will evaluate Blumer's overall contributions to sociology. My conclusions are based upon an extensive review of both Mead's and Blumer's writings, as well as an examination of the current literature in symbolic interactionism and theoretical sociology in general.
FOOTNOTES

25 Denzin states that the posthumous publication of Mead's works have led us to the "age of inquiry" which brought forth a transformation of creative energies into refinement, and proliferations of sub-theories stemming from the framework developed by Mead and others.

26 Shuraydi (1973b), in his discussion of Mead's philosophies, states that much of what Blumer tries to bring under the domain of scientific discussions are actually "ancient philosophical controversies."

27 Blumer defines an object as anything that can be referred to. There are three types of objects: (1) physical—desks, plants, cars; (2) social—mother, teacher, friend, and (3) abstract—morals, rights and laws (Poloma: 1979; 170).

28 It is my opinion that Blumer did not follow through on the implications of the interpretation process.

29 This is the basis of the argument that Blumer and other interactionists have against Bales-type analysis which infers a lot about meaning through the study of subtle but meaningful overt manifestations.

30 I find it interesting that Blumer disregards knowledge of tendencies as being useful and instrumental because this knowledge gives us no clue as to how the person is going to interpret the situation. I think that knowledge of tendencies is one of the only useful pieces of information we can ascertain about an individual and is a good, although not always accurate, indicator of future lines of action.

31 The origins of these two terms can be traced back to an article which appears in Symbolic Interactionism (1969) called "Science Without Concepts" (1930). At this time he had not yet named these procedures exploration and inspection.

32 Most causes are deductive in nature.

33 Deductive research, in its ideal form, allows for such a procedure.

34 This statement is interesting in that Blumer seems to imply that normal everyday activity is bound by an element of the self, the "Me", which is a lot stronger than he admits it to be in other parts of his works.

35 Note the obvious Marxist connotation of the term "we consciousness".
McPhail (1971) recognizes the weakness of such an approach: "Too frequently respondent's attitude or opinion statement after the disorder, at 'time 3', is taken as an indicator of some cognitive state or predispositional set prior to the disorder at 'time 1', which presumably produced the individual's participation in the disorder at 'time 2'. The attitude or opinion statement at 'time 3' may well be a product of experience of the respondent's at or following the 'time 2' event" (p. 1062).
CHAPTER IV

It is a widely held opinion that the theory and methodology of Herbert Blumer's symbolic interactionism is the contemporary extension and manifestation of "the Meadian tradition". Until recently, this claim has gone virtually unchallenged. However, as more and more scholars begin to re-examine the published works of George Herbert Mead, they quickly come to the conclusion that there is more substance in his philosophical and methodological doctrines than he is often given credit for (Lewis: 1976; 347; McPhail & Rexroat: 1979; 450; Natanson: 1975; 1).

This thesis addressed itself to the question: To what extent does Herbert Blumer move significantly beyond the work of his mentor, George Herbert Mead? Although Blumer claims that his works are deeply indebted to Mead, and that his theories represent both a clarification and advancement over Meadian formulations, it becomes very evident upon an examination of their respective works, and the works of others who have concerned themselves with the task of illustrating these alleged demarcations, that Blumer's version of symbolic interactionism does differ from Mead's social behaviorism.

Blumer not only claims allegiance to Mead (1980; 409), but also purports to build upon the theories of the latter. He states that he has developed his own version of symbolic interactionism, dealing explicitly with many crucial matters which were only implicit in the
thought of Mead and others (1969; 17), and elsewhere he claims that he
covers crucial topics with which they (the early interactionists) were
not concerned (Ibid; 2).

The following seeks to answer three basic questions: (1) What is
inherently Blumerian in symbolic interactionist literature, or to re-
phrase the question, does he move beyond the theoretical framework pos-
ited by Mead, and if so, where? (2) Are some of his views contrary to
Mead's despite his repeated refutations against such claims? (3) What
do the answers to these questions mean for Blumer and his alleged im-
portance to sociology?

At this point, I feel it is necessary to point out that my reading
and interpretation of Mead and Blumer's published works necessarily have
a subjective element attached to them. However, my conclusions are not
only based upon an extensive scrutinization of their literature, but also
upon an examination of the literature which attempts to come to grips
with this very problem. In this sense, it is hoped that I will have
introduced a degree of objectivity into my analysis, although realizing
that my assessment, or anyone else's, is to a large extent based upon an
acceptance or denial of Blumer's theoretical and methodological affini-
ties.

An examination of the literature revealed a vast array of opinions
concerning Blumer and his contributions to sociology. Some of the follow-
ing comments are along the line of the more conventional view of Blumer:
"Blumer has taken a leading role, making his career as a sociologist by
elaborating and extending what Mead said" (Skidmore: 1975; 212);
"Herbert Blumer is probably the most important integrator and interpreter
of the perspective" (Charon: 1979; 20); "He is the most influential voice since Mead in the elaboration of symbolic interactionism" (Strycker: 1980; 89); "Provided with the groundwork of an existing philosophy, Blumer contributed a great deal towards pragmatism's evolution into the sociology of symbolic interactionism" (Douglas: 1980; 39); "Blumer's chief contributions to the symbolic interactionist perspective are his work on interpretation, the three basic premises of symbolic interactionism, structure and process, and methodology" (Wallace & Wolf: 1980; 234).

However, there are those who hold an opposing viewpoint, and in recent years they have been very vocal about their insistence that they feel that Blumer is perhaps given credit for a lot more than he should be. The following opinions are representative of those sociologists who have serious doubts about Blumer and his works: "Mead's work has suffered from well intentioned but nevertheless mistaken interpretations which, unfortunately, have come to be taken as authorized accounts of his position" (Natanson: 1973; 1); "We challenge the long standing assumption that Blumer's symbolic interactionism is an extension and explication of the Meadian tradition" (McPhail & Rexroat: 1979; 465); and finally, Meltzer, Petras and Reynolds challenge the common notion that Blumer is responsible for the three basic premises; "the historical underpinnings of Blumer's three premises on symbolic interactionism are found not only in the works of Mead, but also Charles Horton Cooley's theory of society, John Dewey's formulation of the concept of habit, and W. I. Thomas' notion of the definition of the situation" (1975; 1-2).

The preceding represent a movement away from the unquestioned accep-
tance of Blumer's contention that he is the contemporary spokesman for Mead, and that he has developed ideas that were only implicit in Mead's theories. There definitely seems to be some doubt among symbolic interactionists and historians of sociology as to the legitimacy of Blumer's claims.

First of all, attention will be directed toward those areas which seem to bear out the contentions that Blumer differs from Mead in substantive areas. The first alleged area of divergence concerns Blumer's preference to inductive reasoning. As I discussed in the previous section, Blumer feels that deductive reasoning stifles effective research because it places the researcher within the limits of a very narrow causal schema which may blind him to the true nature of the empirical world.

A good illustration of Mead's viewpoint on this matter is cited in the following passage: "Indeed, all formulations of problems are deductive, whether we undertake their solution or not, but (in the impractical situation requiring thought experiments) ... the method of approach seems (necessarily) to be entirely deductive" (1938; 83).

McPhail and Rexroat are direct in their appraisal of these differences: "Whereas Mead's treatment of hypotheses is theoretically grounded, though not formally deductive, Blumer's treatment is virtually atheoretical, inductive empiricism" (1979; 453). 38

Another indication of this difference is illustrated very clearly in Mead's essay on "Empirical Realism" which is found in the supplementary essay section of his Philosophy of the Present. 39 Here we see that Mead advocates research which can be directed toward rational problem solving.
He states: "one starts with a hypothesis which proposes a solution to one's problem, or an answer to one's question, and then submits that hypothesis to test. When you have tested it, it becomes a working hypothesis. And if others test it and it works, it becomes a working theory" (1932; 285).

In the above quote, Mead also seems to be advocating the need for empirical validation of research findings through further testing. Blumer is opposed to such a practice on the grounds that replication studies beg the question if the primary study was without valid grounding in the empirical world (1969; 29).

There are assertions that Blumer's larger methodological scheme is different from what Mead espoused (McPhail & Rexroat: 1979; 425; Manis & Meltzer: 1972; 1). The former are adamant in their insistence that it is simply not true, as Blumer claims, that Mead failed to discuss procedures for the study of human behavior.

Mead seemed to be partial towards experimentation as the major method of conducting research. He believed that the investigator should intervene and manipulate. Douglas felt that Mead was also more positivistically oriented and sought both the solution to specific problems and the discovery of general behavioral laws (1980; 39).

One thing which was surprising was the extent to which Mead dealt with methodological issues. We are mistakenly led to believe by Blumer (1969; 17), and others (Wallace & Wolf: 1980; 234) that Blumer himself was responsible for attaching a methodology to the symbolic interactionist perspective, and that this represented one of his major achievements as a sociologist.
While the above discussion only deals with divergencies in methodological preferences between Mead and Blumer, there are areas where their theories overlap. Both agree that the social scientist must take an active part in their research endeavors (Blumer: 1966; 20; Mead: 1936; 406), and experience the event(s) first hand, (although Mead felt this was necessary in order to encounter situations that were contrary to previously advanced theory), and Blumer felt that it was essential to the discerning of the empirical nature of the area under study.

Mead, although not formally a proponent of Blumer's naturalistic mode of inquiry, did advocate something very similar to Blumer's "exploration" phase. He stated: "we are not aware of the objects about us, except as we seek to reassure ourselves of their existence, their qualities and their meanings" (1938; 115).

It is apparent that both men advocate systematic observation as being essential to proper research. Again, though, this is done for two entirely different reasons. Mead felt that it was necessary in order to detect the exceptional event or contradiction, while Blumer posits a "come what may" type of observation which he feels is necessary in order to ascertain the "nature" of the specified area of study.

There are several other areas in which the two men converge. Blumer relies heavily upon Mead's discourse concerning the symbolic meaning of the situation. Both men approach the area of structured action and normative constraint with a great deal of hesitancy, although I think that it is fairly safe to say that Blumer did devote more of his writings to this area. Blumer seems to be frustrated in his attempt to explain this concept more clearly than what Mead did, and deal with those critics
of symbolic interactionism who say that the theory is incapable of handling such a concept (Charon; 73).

Blumer is not without some originality in his thought, however. What seems to be inherently Blumerian is his insistence that as researchers we should "insightfully feel our way inside the head of the actor" (1969; 188). It is difficult to speculate on whether or not Mead would have found this a necessary practice.

Another area which Blumer spent a great deal of time with, and which is not readily apparent in the works of Mead and the other pragmatists, is his discussion of "concepts". In his book, *Symbolic Interactionism* (1969), Blumer devotes no less than four essays to topics which deal directly with the use of the "concept" in sociology. Skidmore seems to be of the opinion that this does represent a substantial topic area of Blumer's focus but that this theoretical stance was again derived from Mead and other pragmatists (1975; 216).

Blumer's argument is that there are deficiencies in our attachment to the concepts which we use in sociology and that they are not flexible enough. This desire to maintain a certain level of flexibility is tied in with Mead's requirement that revisions are constantly needed in the course of a research venture. Blumer also believes that the concepts that we use are ambiguous and that this ambiguity "blocks or frustrates contact with the empirical world" (1969; 151). As a substitute, he advocates the use of "sensitizing concepts", which act as an aid in working through the empirical instance.

Most of the discussions of Mead and Blumer end up leading back into methodological matters. Theoretically, there are many areas of overlap,
some area of difference, but it is certainly difficult to see where there has been any substantial improvement or advancement by Blumer over the theoretical foundations presented by Mead in the works that were published after his death.

As for the area of methodology, Blumer seems to be rather confused in his opinion on Mead's contributions in this area. At one point Blumer states that "Mead's thought had only partial impact on how Chicago sociology was actually done" (1966; 9), and elsewhere he states that "Mead did not deal in his writings or lectures with the methodological problems involved in applying his scheme to the study of human conduct and human group life" (1980; 411). However, at another point in the very same article, Blumer states that "there are no fundamental differences between the ways in which Mead and I see methodology in scientific inquiry" (Ibid.; 416).

It is simply not true that Mead did not discuss methodological procedures for applying his theoretical formulations. Blumer does however, for one reason or another, downplay Mead's discussions of methodological matters.

There are those who believe that Blumer's methodological position merely represents yet another elaboration of Mead (Kinloch; 253; McPhail & Rexroat; 1979; 422). These assertions are rather interesting because there are those who believe that one of Blumer's most significant contributions was his methodological addition to Mead's theoretical perspective (Wallace & Wolf: 1980; 248; Poloma: 1979; 163). We are led to believe by Blumer himself that the methodological addition to Mead's theoretical perspective is his most noteworthy achievement. However, if
we do not accept Blumer's claim at face value, and examine what Mead himself had to say, it becomes rather evident that Blumer is taking credit for a lot more than he is responsible for, while at the same time downgrading Mead's writings in this area. A further examination of the literature is needed to bear out this point.

Let us assume for a moment that Blumer is entirely correct in his contention that he developed the methodology which is associated with the Chicago school of symbolic interactionism. Since Blumer's image of man (as derived from Mead) to a very large extent determined his methodology, Mead made Blumer's task a relatively easy one. Blumer himself admits, "In providing an approach outlining the subject matter for study, and establishing what has to be handled, a perspective is the most important factor in research and analysis" (1979: 21).

Another crucial development in the history of Chicago symbolic interactionism type research occurred when W. I. Thomas and Znaniecki's work (1918), "The Polish Peasant in Europe and America", produced a pioneering effort making use of life histories and a more subjective approach than had ever been utilized before (Douglas: 1980: 50).

Given the above information, one should become rather skeptical of Blumer's alleged original contributions in the area of research procedure. First of all, he is given a perspective, which admittedly was not fully developed, but which nevertheless was theoretically sound enough to spawn a secondary phase of research and development in the area (Denzin: 1973). Then he was exposed to an actual demonstration of research in the form of Thomas' work. Given this much of an initiative, Blumer's task seems now to have been a little less formidable than maybe he would like us to
believe.

I think that it is fair to say that Blumer did concern himself far more extensively with the logic of inquiry in the social sciences. Much of this literature is directed towards methodological controversies within the discipline and not in the way of new formulations. Blumer's stance appears to be slightly different from that which Mead was working on near the end of his life. His essays on methodology were definitely fragmented and unsystematized, but they are the best clue that we have of this eclectic thinker's methodological view.

Blumer has undoubtedly thoroughly thought through all of the implications of his methodological stance. It is undeniably true that to date he has been the author of the best explanation of what symbolic interactionism's methodology entails. There is, however, no reason to believe that Blumer's writings represent (a) an advancement over Mead, or (b) that any alleged advancement is the logical extension of the underdeveloped philosophical doctrines of Mead.

It may very well be that Blumer stumbled upon his methodological position through an insightful look at the woeful deficiencies that existed in the social sciences at the time, and still exist today.

If Blumer has done anything, it has been to defend the perspective that he so strongly clings to. Since Mead died before his works were published, he escaped for the most part the critics who would have naturally reacted to a theory of this sort (Meltzer et al.: 1975; 100). As such, it was Blumer who bore the brunt of the attack. This was because he claimed to be the contemporary spokesman for the perspective and he was the most visible and vocal supporter. Maines bears me out in
this point, "symbolic interactionism appears to have become equated with Blumer's work, consequently, those areas in which Blumer is most con-
ceptually vulnerable have become the standard targets of attack" (1977;
236).41

Maines brings out the point in the above quote that Blumer's work
is often equated as being representative of symbolic interactionism in
general. Symbolic interactionism has been shaped and moulded and modi-
fied by a host of theorists to the point that it only bears a scant re-
ssemblance to the theory of the pragmatists who spawned it.

Much of what Mead meant when he wrote may be lost forever. In this
sense Blumer did forward a new version of symbolic interactionism, a
version which is the direct result of his interpretation of what Mead had
to say. Manford Kuhn's version of interactionism is another interpreta-
tion, and who is to judge which version is a better indicator of what
Mead's methodological and theoretical positions would have been if he
had lived to develop his ideas to their fullest.

Upon reading Mead very carefully, an arduous task in itself, it
became obvious that there was a need for a certain amount of clarifica-
tion of his philosophies. I think that it is fair to say that Blumer
was instrumental, to a certain extent, in this clarification process.

From an examination of their literature, I have come to the con-
clusion that Blumer did not move significantly beyond Mead. It is also
felt that Blumer was influenced to a great extent by the other pragmatists
of the day,42 something which Blumer only mentions in passing. Blumer
claims a special allegiance to Mead, who in turn, was a philosopher who
tried to systematize the works of the other leading pragmatists of the
day, namely, Cooley, Thomas, James and Dewey. In this sense Blumer carried on Mead's systematization efforts, something which Blumer never really discusses. As a student, I was surprised at how Blumer was deficient in the fact that he did not document his formative influences with the rigor that is required of other sociologists.

If we examine Blumer's written works, especially his book *Symbolic Interactionism* (1969), we find something very unusual. Blumer has no bibliography, no index, and very little in the way of footnotes. At first I thought that maybe this was because most of the articles that appeared in this collection were previously published in journals and edited books, but the articles that I examined in their original form were also deficient in this matter. I don't really know what the reason behind this is, whether it is because of Blumer's arrogance, which is detectable from his writings and his insistence that he is Mead's only accurate contemporary voice, or if he is under the opinion that he is somehow excused from detailing his formative influences. To merely say that Mead provided a great influence is not enough. I would like to see Blumer write an article, although because of his advanced age I do not think that this is likely, explaining in a detailed fashion where he was influenced by Mead and others, and what is original in his works. He does spend a lot of time trying to defend his position as an expositor of Mead, but he spends very little time demarcating his advancements.

The purpose of this investigation has not been to make Blumer's achievements seem somehow irrelevant or small in stature. As an integrator of a perspective which was in desperate need of systematization, he has done a very creditable job. As a student and colleague of Mead's
he has been of paramount importance in the disseminating and keeping alive the Meadian tradition at a time when it was very unpopular in sociology. As Wallace and Wolf point out, Blumer's stature in the profession and the profound respect commanded, are indicated by his editorship of the American Journal of Sociology (1941-1952), and his presidency of the American Sociological Association (1956), (1980; 234).

If we examine Blumer's works on their own merits, what do we have? First of all, his naturalistic methodology is undoubtedly useful for the study of certain phenomena. As a methodology in and of itself, it is very weak. A social scientist could conduct very few good empirical studies if he relied solely on Blumer's approach. As such, it would seem to be the most useful if it were combined with other methods in triangulation. If we extract the useful aspects of Blumer's methodology, instead of rejecting it totally because it happens to be used by a perspective which many people do not happen to care for, or if we are at odds with some of its contentions, then I feel that we will, as a discipline, be better off.

Secondly, if we examine Blumer's theoretical preferences we have a useful and interesting theory of how we interact with others in the course of our daily lives. In the course of the development of the thesis, I became aware that it is difficult to argue with much of what Blumer has to say. A great deal of it seems to be simplistic and overstated. One does have to realize that a lot of what he has to say has radical consequences for social analysis, but one does get the distinct impression that his repetitiveness is due to the fact that he feels that his message is so profound.
In summary then, my research has led me to the following conclusions. First, his theoretical stance does represent an integration of the pragmatist perspective. As far as extensions and improvements go, I am at a loss to be able to find instances where this is blatantly the case. His major theoretical endeavour at originality, his collective behavior works, is the closest thing that I was able to detect as being creative, and to some extent it is indebted to R. E. Park (Meltzer et al.: 1975; 54).

Secondly, his methodological position, while being original to a certain extent, is also different than what Mead had to say in a few instances. My conclusion is that maybe Blumer has taken more credit for developing the methodology than perhaps he should have.

In my estimate, Blumer has contributed the most in his discussions of the shortcomings of other methodologies. It is here where we see Blumer at his best. There is a need for more input in sociological discussions of the philosophy of the social sciences. While the alternatives that he presents may not always be feasible or realistic, they are needed if the discipline is to advance beyond its current state.

In summary, I think that Blumer has had a lot of useful things to say in the course of his academic career, some of them have been original, but for the most part they have been redundant extrapolations of the pragmatists that were the colleagues of George Herbert Mead. He should go down in sociological history as a defender of the symbolic interactionist perspective, and as an interpreter and integrator of the same theory. My conclusion is, however, that the degree to which Blumer advanced significantly beyond Mead is marginal at best.
The final section of this study will summarize the major conclusions, and will more importantly, critically evaluate the present status of symbolic interactionism as it relates to sociology as a whole.
FOOTNOTES

37 In Blumer's "Reply to Lewis" (1977; 288), Blumer stated that when he took over Mead's course in social psychology in 1930, due to Mead's illness, he was allowed to do so because Mead had confidence in Blumer that he would accurately convey his message. This seems to be proof on Blumer's part that he and Mead are in agreement theoretically.

38 Since all theories require certain basic assumptions, no theory is ever formulated in the strict deductive sense in the social sciences.

39 I think that it is fairly safe to say that these essays have been ignored to a very large extent, and that Mead's stance on scientific inquiry is much more developed than Blumer and other interactionists lead us to believe (McPhail & Rexroat: 1980; 424).

40 Note the similarity to Garfinkel's ethnomethodology.

41 Both Maines (1977) and Klabünman (1976) attempt to illustrate how Blumer and other interactionists have dealt with the concept of structure.

42 Thayer believes that past analysis of American pragmatism have posited it to be a lot more of a unified tradition than it ever was.

43 For a discussion of how interactionism has been received through the years, see George Ritzer (1975). Ritzer attempted to apply Thomas Kuhn's book (1962 The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, to the study of sociology.

44 I disagree with McPhail and Rexroat, who are of the opinion that Blumer's naturalistic methodology neither compliments Mead's writings on this subject, nor do they facilitate the examination of Mead's theoretical ideas (1979; 449). I think that this is overstating their point that Mead's writings diverge from Blumer's in this area.
CHAPTER V

A detailed focus on the face-to-face interaction process is undoubtedly necessary. However, symbolic interactionism, (at least the Chicago school), is either neglectful or naive about the importance of both unconscious and emotional reactions, while positing an image of man as being far more free than what he may actually be (Charon: 1979; 173).

It is also apparent that the perspective does not offer the explanatory power of a grand theory, and Shibutani's criticism that it does not offer a "definitive ontology, but merely stresses the difficulties which are involved in describing human affairs" (1970; 2) is a very fair and accurate assessment of interactionism.

From time to time, its theorists seem to lose sight of the fact that interactionism has limited power and that its strengths lie mainly in the description of the dynamics of the interaction process. I think that the efforts to describe collective outbursts using this perspective is a prime example of this. As such interactionism would seem to be a conceptual framework rather than a theory (although I have used the two terms interchangeably throughout this thesis).

There are a number of areas which symbolic interactionists, themselves, should re-examine as far as their perspective goes. Before they forge ahead with any more research endeavors they should focus on solving some of the internal problems which plague it. One of the major areas
to which it should direct its attention is upon the act of interpretation which is its major concept. It needs to be re-examined and honed to give it some qualitative constancy. Similar efforts have already been directed towards the concepts of "role taking" and "self".

Another major problem area, which is related to the above criticism, is that many of the concepts used in interactionism are ambiguous or they are used in an inconsistent fashion. In Blumer's essay, What is Wrong with Social Theory? (1969; 140-152), he criticizes other sociological perspectives because their ambiguity in concepts blocks or frustrates contact with the empirical world and keeps theory apart in a corresponding unrealistic realm. I contend that maybe Blumer should re-examine his own perspective and make the necessary corrections.

One of the main weaknesses of interactionism, and I mentioned this previously, is that the ultimate test of any theory should be its predictive power. True understanding of the social world is evident upon our ability to forecast outcomes given contingencies. Interactionism's inductive approach does not lend itself to such ventures. I am not saying that the perspective does not have anything to offer, but only that it should work within the boundaries of its theoretical relations.

As for Herbert Blumer, Charon's assessment of him is probably the most accurate. "His work probably represents the best interpretation and integration of the writings of others, and at the same time, it pulls out the social implications and unique insights of the perspective" (1979; 23). While my overall opinion of Blumer as a major force in sociology has decreased somewhat, I still have an appreciation for his efforts.

Perhaps one of the boldest criticisms that I have read in the course
of the development of this thesis came from Rucker who strongly believes that neither Mead nor Blumer should be called the "father of interactionism," but rather that this distinction should belong to Charles A. Ellwood (1969, 138-40). His name is only vaguely familiar to me, but apparently Blumer studied under him at the University of Missouri, where he obtained his M.A. degree. Ellwood, who was a close friend and colleague of John Dewey is not mentioned at all by Blumer in any of his works as far as I can tell. Apparently his publications are numerous (Blumer was a consultant on some of them), and that an investigation of his works reveals concepts and theories which bear a striking resemblance to Blumer's symbolic interactionism, which he wrote about extensively some forty years later. Rucker does not develop his argument fully, and thus it becomes a topic which would lend itself to further investigation.

In defense of Blumer and symbolic interactionism in general, credit should be given because the perspective does focus on concepts which other paradigms do not seriously contemplate. Interactionism has also added important insights on the nature of human conduct, and to this extent it has been instrumental in the development of social psychology.

Many of the criticisms which are directed at interactionism are conventional and they tend to totally neglect its positive features. If you take a close look at Blumer's methodological stance, I think that it is fairly safe to say that it is used extensively in sociology today, and that there are probably not too many students of the social sciences who would disagree entirely with the objectives of Blumer's approach.

Presently, there has been some re-emphasis placed on the subjective side of symbolic interactionist theory, particularly from the existential-
ist and phenomenological perspectives (Warshay: 1975; 32). This represents a reincarnation of ancient philosophical debates which continue to hamper sociology as a discipline. Sociology continues to stumble in its efforts to find a methodology which is appropriate to the dislodging of the intricacies of human behavior. The methodologies which we borrowed from the physical sciences have proved to be inadequate for the study of social phenomenon. As such, symbolic interactionism became a methodological alternative, but it would be grossly wrong to call it "science".49

Interactionism became a major focus point in sociology as other paradigms began to reveal their theoretical shortcomings. However, its day in the sun was short lived, and presently I would speculate that those who are dogmatic adherents to the perspective will dwindle in number and probably will continue to do so unless there emerges some sociologist who is willing to defend the perspective in the manner that Blumer has. At his advanced age (81), he cannot be expected to do so himself for very much longer.

Perhaps the best statement that I have read concerning symbolic interactionism's place in sociology comes from Wallace and Wolf, who state: "Symbolic interactionism with its negative view of social structure is certainly not considered to be in the mainstream of sociology. However, a perspective that places a primary value on subjective meaning and on process as opposed to structure, combined with a methodology that takes great pains to capture the 'world of the other' as seen by that other, asks important sociological questions that cannot be answered by mainstream sociology. It therefore deserves recognition as an approach that makes important and distinctive contributions to sociology" (1980;
In conclusion, I think that symbolic interactionism does add to our knowledge of the dynamics of the social world, and if it were used in combination with some of the more pertinent findings in the other paradigms, it would be appreciated more by sociologists. As far as my final assessment of Herbert Blumer is concerned, I feel very strongly that Blumer's assertions of his original contributions to the perspective are largely exaggerated. There is no doubt in my mind, however, that without his systematization and explanations of the vague concepts of Mead, and some of the other pragmatists, that symbolic interactionism would not have reached its present stage in its development as a perspective. (See Table I).
### TABLE I
Summary of Herbert Blumer's Contributions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Contribution by Blumer</th>
<th>Degree of Originality in his Writings on Topic</th>
<th>Criteria for Evaluating Blumer's Contribution in Designated Area</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collective Behavior</td>
<td>Extensive</td>
<td>Blumer's &quot;Outline of Collective Behavior&quot;, as it appeared in R. Evans, Readings in Collective Behavior (1969, 22-45).</td>
<td>Blumer must be credited for his work in this area. It is one of the only areas in which Blumer advances significantly beyond Mead, while remaining faithful to his mentor's basic premises.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE I (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Contribution by Blumer</th>
<th>Degree of Originality in his Writings on Topic</th>
<th>Criteria for Evaluating Blumer's Contribution in Designated Area</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of the &quot;Concept&quot; in Sociology</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Symbolic Interactionism (1969; 127-182).</td>
<td>Blumer's discussion of concepts while useful in the interdisciplinary search for better methodological procedures, does not advance significantly beyond the previous debates on the subject matter. It is here in his debates on the logic of inquiry that he seems to have developed his methodological preferences, and not from Mead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrator of Meadian Philosophies</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>A comparison of both Mead and Blumer's literature with emphasis upon Blumer attempts at clarification of Mead's philosophies in which Blumer's discourse is much more comprehensible. Such a practice is highly visible when Blumer defends his interpretation of Mead against those who have alternate understandings, i.e., Blumer (1977; 285-9), 1979; 21-22.</td>
<td>While this does represent one of Blumer's major accomplishments as a sociologist, it is merely a repitition of Mead using somewhat different terminology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area of Contribution by Blumer</td>
<td>Degree of Originality in his Writings on Topic</td>
<td>Criteria for Evaluating Blumer's Contribution in Designated Area</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developer of Median Philosophies</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>On the very first page of Blumer's Symbolic Interactionism (1969), Blumer claims that he has developed his &quot;own version of symbolic interactionism&quot;. He fails to specifically allude to any of these alleged points of departure in the development of the ensuing essays.</td>
<td>There is no concrete empirical evidence in Blumer's writings that demonstrate conclusively that Blumer elaborated upon and advanced significantly beyond the works of Mead, despite his claims to the contrary. This area of contention is of utmost importance in evaluating the extent to which Blumer developed the Meadian initiative.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOOTNOTES

45 As Reynolds and Reynolds point out, one of the major weaknesses of symbolic interactionism lies in its failure to answer the questions as to the source of the definition of the situation (1973; 78).

46 Mead's concept of the "self" is a classic example of the inconsistent use of a concept. Blumer never did clarify this concept. Perhaps M. Kuhn's work was a recognition of the need for clarification and obtaining some sort of quantitative measure for the concept.

47 To the best of my knowledge I know of no reply that Blumer has made to Rucker in defense of himself. Blumer is usually prompt and direct in his reply to his critics, especially those who challenge his claims to originality.

48 Maines (1977; 235) feels that many of the criticisms of interactionism is based upon their ignoring of certain concepts, i.e., structure. He feels that if it is a benigh neglect, pertaining more to the selection of topics and research problems, rather than to the explanatory power of the perspective itself.

49 Since one single paradigm seems to be capable of explaining everything, the answer would seem to be to adopt an interdisciplinary approach. The realization of this is still a long way off, however.
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