

Forms of relation and interaction

According to Piotr Sztopka, forms of relation and interaction in sociology and anthropology may be described as follows: first and most basic are animal-like behaviors, i.e. various physical movements of the body. Then there are actions – movements with a meaning and purpose. Then there are social behaviors, or social actions, which address (directly or indirectly) other people, which solicit a response from another agent. Next are social contacts, a pair of social actions, which form the beginning of social interactions. Social interactions in turn form the basis of social relations. Symbols define social relationships. Without symbols, our social life would be no more sophisticated than that of animals. For example, without symbols people would have no aunts or uncles, employers or teachers—or even brothers and sisters. In sum, symbolic interactions analyze how social life depends on the ways people define themselves and others. They study face-to-face interaction, examining how people make sense out of life, how they determine their relationships.

Categorizing social interactions enables observational and other social research, such as *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (lit. "community and society"), collective consciousness, etc. However different schools and theories of sociology and other social sciences dispute the methods used for such investigations. In sociology, social interaction is a dynamic sequence of social actions between individuals (or groups) who modify their actions and reactions due to actions by their interaction partner(s). Social interactions can be differentiated into accidental, repeated, regular and regulated.