

A social interaction is a social exchange between two or more individuals. These interactions form the basis for social structure and therefore are a key object of basic social inquiry and analysis. Social interaction can be studied between groups of two (dyads), three (triads) or larger social groups.

Social structures and cultures are founded upon social interactions. By interacting with one another, people design rules, institutions and systems within which they seek to live. Symbols are used to communicate the expectations of a given society to those new to it, either children or outsiders. Through this broad schema of social development, one sees how social interaction lies at its core.

The empirical study of social interaction is one of the subjects of microsociology, which concerns the nature of everyday human social interactions and agency on a small scale. Methods include symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology, as well as later academic subdivisions and studies like psychosocial studies, conversational analysis and human–computer interaction.