

Symbolic Interactionism:

The Hybrid (Virtual Offsite / Traditional ‘Brick and Mortar’) Workforce

Donna L Zeller

BS, Organizational Leadership,
The Pennsylvania State University

MPS, Human Resources and Employment Relations,
The Pennsylvania State University

Web Site: <http://zellerdonna.wixsite.com/books-and-articles>

Blog: DZellerResearch.Blogspot.com

Twitter: @ResearchZeller

Version 2020

Abstract

From the standpoint of symbolic interactionism, human group life is a process in which objects are being created, affirmed, transformed, and cast aside. The life and action of people change in line with the changes taking place in their world of objects (Blumer, 2017). This issue is significant because when technology also includes a virtual workforce, the familiar objects in the internal environment; such as those related to job, work, and business processes, particularly standardized processes, are changed. For this paper, the focal point of the analysis will be the two schools of thought; the Chicago school and the Iowa school. The objective of the analytical paper** is to provide a brief overview of the findings from a variety of sources on symbolic interactionism; then, to identify the role, if any, of symbolic interactionism, in the hybrid (virtual offsite / traditional ‘brick and mortar’) workforce in the transnational model of organizations. The question is: Does symbolic interactionism have a role, if at all, in the hybrid (virtual offsite / traditional ‘brick and mortar’) workforce in the transnational organization?

**Analytical papers “include information from a range of sources; the focus is on analyzing the different viewpoints represented from a factual rather than an opinionated standpoint” (Personal Writer, 2008).

**In an analytical paper, the author poses a question, collects relevant data from other researchers, analyzes the data from their viewpoints, then concludes with a summation of findings and a suggested framework for further study (Paper Pile, 2020; Personal Writer, 2008). The author maintains a neutral position; the focus is “on the findings and conclusions of other researchers” (Paper Pile, 2020).

Table of Contents

- '1. Introduction
- '2. Objectives
- '3. Problem Definition and Significance
- '4. Definition of Terms
- '5. Literature Review
- '6. Analysis of Existing Viewpoints
- '7. Summation of the Findings and Suggested Framework for Future Research

References

Introduction

Essentially, organizations are “a social unit of people” structured with a collective purpose to meet the strategic objectives and goals. (BusinessDictionary.com, n.d.). Currently, the organizational landscape is being changed by the revisions to the informal systems introduced by the hybrid (virtual / traditional) workforce (Choi & Click, 2007) (Zeller, 2017). For example, virtual workers do not have the opportunity to share information during coffee breaks or at chance meetings in the hall. They are also deprived of those important non-verbal cues that are an indication as to whether or not a colleague is on board with an idea (Bailey, 2013, para. 3). There is an added layer of conceptualization when face-to-face meetings and social interaction take place via technology such as Skype, Google, or LiveMinutes.com. In spite of the advantages of advanced technical infrastructures, the ‘people’ component remains the biggest challenge that is needed for achieving organizational goals and maintaining sustainability (Zeller, 2017).

Moreover, organizations “affect and are affected by their environment” (BusinessDictionary.com, n.d.). The framework for this analytical paper is the hybrid (virtual offsite / traditional ‘brick and mortar’) workforce in the United States-based transnational model of multinational organizations. Bartlett and Ghoshal predict that, due to increased globalization, multinational organizations will need to embrace the transnational model. Their transnational approach invites the transfer of practices to, from and within the affiliates; parent organizations and subsidiaries are aware of their own role as well as the role of others. There is high pressure for integration and high pressure for differentiation (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989) (Zeller, 2018).

Then, “from the standpoint of symbolic interactionism, human group life is a process in which objects are being created, affirmed, transformed, and cast aside. The life and action of people necessarily change in line with the changes taking place in their world of objects” (Blumer, 2017). George Mead’s symbolic interactionism is “based on the analysis of society on the subjective dimension of action and its relation to intentional meaning and forms of symbolic mediation. From this point of view, an organization or an organizational unit is not a structure which anticipates individual and intersubjective action, but rather its results” (Strati, 2000, p. 94-5).

This issue is significant because when technology also includes a virtual workforce, the familiar objects in the internal environment; such as those related to job, work, and business processes, particularly standardized processes, are changed. These changed objects influence the process in group life and the life and action of people; e.g. the hybrid (virtual offsite / traditional ‘brick and mortar’) workforce. The objective of the analytical paper is to provide a brief overview of the findings from a variety of sources on symbolic interactionism; then, to identify the role, if any, of symbolic interactionism, in the hybrid (virtual offsite / traditional ‘brick and mortar’) workforce in the transnational model of organizations. The question is: Does symbolic interactionism have a role, if at all, in the hybrid (virtual offsite / traditional ‘brick and mortar’) workforce in the transnational organization?

Objectives

In an analytical research paper, a question is presented, relevant data from other researchers is collected, and their different viewpoints are analyzed. The focus is on the findings and conclusions of other researchers (Paperpile, 2020).

For this paper, the focal point of the analysis will be the two schools of thought; the Chicago school and the Iowa school. The objective is to analyze the findings from a variety of sources on symbolic interactionism; then, to identify the role, if any, of symbolic interactionism, in the hybrid (virtual offsite / traditional ‘brick and mortar’) workforce in the transnational model of organizations.

Problem Definition and Significance

Martins, Gilson, and Maynard (2004) concluded that “with rare exceptions all organizational teams are virtual to some extent. We have moved away from working with people who are in our visual proximity to working with people around the globe” (Ebrahim, Ahmed & Taha, 2009). Accordingly, the “Intuit 2020 Report, Twenty Trends that will Shape the Next Decade” noted that “the brick-and-mortar office will be a thing of the past, as the where and how people work and do business will change due to emerging Internet cloud and mobile technologies. Working in the cloud will increasingly shift work lives away from corporate offices altogether and toward an in-my-own-place, on-my-own-time work regimen” (Intuit, 2020). As organizations are offering the option to work virtually, spatial boundaries are expanding and, sometimes, even indistinct. Their physical location or spatial proximity is important as it is “interrelated in business practices” (Andersson & Mattsson, 2014, p. 2). Thus, the hybrid traditional office / virtual work placement of workers within an organization is influencing a range of issues; including organizational structure, job and business process design, management, knowledge sharing, and communication (Zeller, 2017).

For example, Chiat-Day in Venice, California returned to the traditional one person per desk ‘brick and mortar’ office. In this case, Chiat-Day learned that it wasn’t the people who couldn’t let go of the past as much as it was the organization’s “traditional organizing practices” that encouraged people to show up early at temporary office spaces to claim a desk (Ellison, 2004, p. 5). Essentially, instead of encouraging a traditional / virtual venue, employees “created ‘work arounds’ to counter the effects of poor design” to avoid the virtual office option (Ellison, 2004, p. 4). That is, their world of objects had changed (Zeller, 2017)..

In a study by Lautsch and Kossek (2011), an interviewee noted that there may be a difference in the perception of the job responsibilities and tasks in the workforce; particularly with regards to managing. The employee, who would have preferred more than the allowed 4 days per month to work virtually, felt that the difference between the formal job structure and perception of the work actually done may have been the basis for the disagreement with management. Overall, the employee felt that it was just a matter of opinion as to the best location—traditional office, home office, or client site—for the job to be done (Lautsch & Kossek, 2011). In this case, the action of management had changed in light of the changed objects (Zeller, 2017)..

However, in “Microsoft’s Amsterdam office—a prototype of the hybrid (virtual offsite / traditional ‘brick and mortar’) organization structure—sales have increased 50% since employees have been free to work where and when they like, using mobile technology” (Dodd, 2011). In this case, the life and action of people adapted to the changes taking place in their world of objects (Zeller, 2017).

Definitions

Symbolic Interactionism: “a theory that human interaction and communication is facilitated by words, gestures, and other symbols that have acquired conventionalized meanings” (Dictionary.com, n.d.).

Hybrid Virtual Offsite / Traditional ‘Brick and Mortar’ Organizations: The term ‘hybrid’ can refer to organizational structure or technology / manufacturing designs or, as applied in this study, to where people work; i.e. traditional physical office or virtual location. For this paper, hybrid organizations are defined as having both a virtual offsite and a traditional physical ‘brick and mortar’ workforce.

Transnational Model of Multinational Organizations: Based on Bartlett and Ghoshal’s models of globalization (1989), the transnational approach, selected for this research, invites the transfer of practices to, from and within the affiliates; parent organization and subsidiaries are aware of their own role as well as the role of others. There is high pressure for integration and high pressure for differentiation; knowledge and innovation is developed and distributed within the entire organization. In the transnational model, the practice of knowledge sharing also recognizes the benefits gained from local responsiveness and adaptation (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2009). Overall, “the key philosophy of a transnational model is adaptation to all environmental situations and achieving flexibility by capitalizing on knowledge flows (which take the form of decisions and value-added information) and two-way communication throughout the organization” (Reference for Business, n.d.).

Literature Review

In the late 19th and early 20th century, classical rationalism, the “dominant philosophy of the time”, “sought certainty and attempted to solve the philosophical problems by finding simple ideas as the principles on which to ground their philosophical systems”. However, change was imminent as the advent of the “American philosophical tradition of pragmatism” “saw reality as dynamic, individuals as active knowers, meanings as linked to social action and perspectives, and knowledge as an instrumental force that enables people to solve problems and rearrange the world” (Sandstrom, Martin, & Fine, 2001, Ch 17).

The pragmatic philosophical tradition was the backdrop for the creation and development of symbolic interactionism. George Herbert Mead, considered to be the “true originator of symbolic interactionism”, as well as the founder of the Chicago school of thought, (Reynolds, 2006, p.3) is credited for “translating pragmatism into a theory and method for the social sciences” (Sandstrom, Martin, & Fine, 2001, Ch 17). John Dewey, Mead’s colleague at the University of Chicago, “was his greatest inspiration” (Sandstrom, Martin, & Fine, 2001, Ch 17). In addition, Mead drew on the ideas of “pragmatist founders, Charles Peirce and William James” (Sandstrom, Martin, & Fine, 2001, Ch 17).

Notably, the term ‘symbolic interactionism’ was actually created by Mead’s student, Herbert Blumer. Blumer diligently disseminated Mead’s ideas; thereby, advancing the Chicago school of thought (Snow, 2001). There are several “major variants” of symbolic interactionism; e.g. (1) the Chicago school, (2) the Iowa school, (3) the dramaturgical approach, and (4) ethnomethodology (Reynolds, 2006, p.3). For this paper, the focal point of the analysis will be the two schools of thought; the Chicago school and the Iowa school. Whereas the Chicago school emphasizes a qualitative

approach “in studying the process of reality construction within the natural social settings”; the Iowa school advocates a quantitative approach in studying the results of social interaction, particularly those related to self-concepts (Encyclopedia.com, 2020).

The Chicago School

The symbolic interactionists’ “approach strives to understand human behavior, not to predict and control it, nor to have mere statistical knowledge of it” (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003, p. 97). George H. Mead, recognized as the founder of the Chicago school, followed the role or attitude of others; e.g. W. I. Thomas’s definition of the situation; and John Dewey’s notion of deliberation. Their perspectives “all suggest that it is fundamental to understand, as best we can, the subjective intentions of actors” (p. 97). Ultimately, this type of understanding provides a more in-depth, contextual explanation of human behavior (p. 97).

George H. Mead

Discussion Point: George H. Mead also turned to Wilhelm Wundt’s work on “reasoning and writing on language and the gesture” (Reynolds, 2006, p.12). According to Mead, “the gesture is the transitional link to language from action, and is also the phenomenon establishing the continuities of human and infrahuman social life. The gesture mediates the development of language as the basic mechanism permitting the rise of the self in the course of ongoing social activity” (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2006, p. 44).

Key Hybrid (Virtual / Traditional) Workforce Issues: As a transitional link to language from action, the reasons for the use of the gesture are being revisited as participants in online meetings, like Zoom, find themselves waving goodbye at the end of a session. As one claimant said, “Why do I feel compelled to wave at the end of zoom calls? I have literally never walked out of a meeting room waving.”

Behaviors at the end of a traditional meeting/ i.e. closing your notebook, checking your watch, putting things in a bag, or getting ready to stand up; do not translate on video meetings. Furthermore, according to Laura Dudley, an associate clinical professor at Northeastern University and expert in behavior analysis and body language, “We’re hungering for that human interaction, that friendliness, so we’re starting to do things like waving goodbye” (Yurieff, 2020).

Discussion Point: Mead “used the ideas of flux, continuity, and emergence by applying them to that spot on the ‘evolutionary continuum’ where gestures and symbols meet, where communication is birthed and language is formed” (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003, p. 72).

Key Hybrid (Virtual / Traditional) Workforce Issues: From an organizational perspective, tacit knowledge, or knowledge that people possess, is a valuable resource for

sustaining a competitive edge in a growing global economy (Endres, Endres, Chowdhury, & Alam, 2007). However, in a hybrid traditional / virtual workforce, workers are no longer physically situated; i.e. by business process or department; thereby, changing the evolutionary continuum, where gestures and symbols meet to form communication and language.

Hence, some organizations have recalled their virtual workers to work in the traditional 'brick and mortar' office. Other organizations, allowing for virtual and traditional work options, have developed informal structures that facilitate the communication of knowledge; particularly individual, tacit knowledge. While other organizations have invested vast amounts of resources on building technology infrastructures to facilitate the communication and language for the codification, storage, organization, and retrieval of knowledge (Zeller, 2017).

Discussion Point: Mead also argued "that the real basis of social life is found in the capacity of individuals to take the role of others." If you put yourself in the other person's place, you can gain a feeling for the other person's position; hence, you can align your conduct with their behavior (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2006, p. 69).

Key Hybrid (Virtual / Traditional) Workforce Issues: For instance, past practices for performance appraisals relied on job analysis and descriptions, as based on the organization's strategic objectives. As part of the performance appraisal, managers supervised the work being done, observed problem areas, and communicated those issues to the employee.

Alternatively, in virtual offices, managers no longer directly supervise the work and may not be aware of problems or changed roles. Likewise, employees are faced with responsibilities that are not clearly defined in their job descriptions, as well. Generally, the business is faced with dealing with management procedures that are no longer applicable – and with employee needs that are not being met (Zeller, 2017).

Discussion Point: According to Mead, "those who could explain individual behavior without first seeing it within the context of the collectivity are way off base" (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003, p.69).

Key Hybrid (Virtual / Traditional) Workforce Issues: Well-known organizations, such as Yahoo! and Best Buy, have recalled their virtual workers to the traditional 'brick and mortar' offices to work side-by-side in order to facilitate collaboration and communication. On the other hand, the Open Source Software Community and online

gamers manage to circumvent the spatial dimensions to facilitate collaboration and communication. That is, regardless of their physical location, the individual has learned how to work in their hybrid (virtual / traditional) venue without seeing individual behavior within the context of the collectivity (Zeller, 2017).

Herbert Blumer

Discussion Point: In Blumer's version, 3 basic principles of symbolic interactionism were identified: (1) "that people act toward things (physical objects as well as abstract ideas) on the basis of meanings that the ascribe to them; (2) these meanings are created in interaction with other people; (3) these meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process with things people encounter" (Snow, 2001).

Key Hybrid (Virtual / Traditional) Workforce Issues: At one time, Françoise LeGoues, the former vice president of innovation at International Business Machines (IBM) Corporation, commented that online "gamers can thrive at firms like IBM, where employees must collaborate with colleagues anywhere in the world, often without having met in person" (Rubenfire, 2014). Recently though, IBM has recalled its virtual workers. The stated reason for requiring employees to work from any one of the traditional 'brick and mortar' offices is to "encourage, efficiency, collaboration and innovation" (Elkin, 2017).

Discussion Point: "The actor selects, checks, suspends, regroupes, and transforms the meanings in the light of the situation in which he or she is placed and the direction of his or her action. Accordingly, the interpretation should not be regarded as a mere automatic application of established meanings but as a formative process in which meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action" (Blumer, 2017, Ch 8).

Key Hybrid (Virtual / Traditional) Workforce Issues: The Life Insurance Application Processing Organization had no prior experience with or policy for virtual work. The job description, the same for the traditional office and virtual office, required processing life insurance applications for their assigned group of agents. Almost immediately, there were miscommunications regarding the stage of processing of the application - as well as the location of the file and appended documents. For instance, the existing procedure in the home office required all forms to be printed and then filed in hanging folders. Anyone, including managers, who needed to know the status of the application, simply located the hard copies. However, in the virtual office, forms were filed electronically; the link location was sent to the appropriate personnel. The traditional office workers, including managers, had not been prepared for the electronic retrieval of information (Zeller, 2018). After reviewing the process, the home office

determined that converting to an electronic file system – and following the virtual worker's process - reduced expenses as well as provided more efficient procedures for online retrieval and dynamic updates of information (Zeller, 2013).

The Iowa School

The division between the Chicago school (qualitative analysis) and the Iowa school (quantitative analysis) developed early in the 1960s. The quantitative analysis of the Iowa school researchers “investigated and analyzed generic processes constructed by role-playing participants in simulated experimental contexts which allowed the creation of patterned models representing sequences of acts that could be repeatedly researched and tested as the researchers review what had been tested” (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003, p.132). Although the “foundations of the Iowa School of thought continue with a commitment to pragmatism, empirical science, the sociological imagination, and naturalistic study of life”; it has “shifted from the systematic study of the self to the systematic study of the processes and structures of coordinated social behavior” (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003, p. 121). Manford H. Kuhn is recognized as the founder of the Iowa school.

Manford H. Kuhn

Discussion Point: Kuhn questioned symbolic interactionism in that it “did not seem to have a program or recipe to explore complexity in scientific ways” (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003, p. 120). Hence, Kuhn “developed the Twenty Statements Test (TST) to measure the self in a manner consistent with interactionist theory” (p. 120).

Key Hybrid (Virtual / Traditional) Workforce Issues: The increase in the hybrid (virtual / traditional) workforce is influencing many factors in the workplace, companies are experiencing a change in how and where work is done, in management procedures, and in how people communicate. Additionally, “advanced information technologies produce changes in attitudes, feelings, thinking, behaviour, and/or performance of individuals, groups and/or organizations” (Aviolo, et al, 2000, p. 617, as cited in Verbeke, 2008, p. 163). Thus, linking the workforce outcomes to strategies will require more than cost productivity or retention reports. Though these human resource management assessment reports are relevant; understanding the full range and effect of productive outcomes will require identifying, then interpreting and applying the conclusions drawn from multiple points of data. (Zeller, 2016).

Discussion Point: “Kuhn asserted that the main contribution of the work arising out of Iowa was its demonstration that ‘the key ideas of symbolic interactionism could be operationalized and utilized successfully in empirical research” (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003, p. 376)

Key Hybrid (Virtual / Traditional) Workforce Issues: From a business viewpoint, “operationalizing organizational performance has not been easy for Strategic Human Resource Management scholars” (Ericksen & Dyer, 2004, p. 9). Nevertheless, operationalizing / controlling variables is essential to empirical foundations; e.g. evidence for the actual cause of the claimed outcomes in terms of employee behaviors; and evidence that those behaviors will benefit all enterprises in all circumstances (Lovell, 2009, p. 93). To illustrate, Raquel Sanz-Valle, Ramon Sabater-Sanchez, and Antonio Aragon-Sanchez researched the link between human resource practices and types of business strategies. Their empirical research, based on data from 200 companies, “identified significant associations between some human resource practices and business strategies” (Sanz-Valle, Sabater-Sanchez, & Aragon-Sanchez, 2011, Abstract) (Zeller, 2019).

Discussion Point: “As a result of the complexity of modern society and the multiplicity of reference groups, Kuhn conceived of identity as fractured into multiple components. The prominence of a self-reference may be understood as the relative spontaneity with which a particular reference will be used as an orientation in the organization of behavior” (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003, p. 375).

Key Hybrid (Virtual / Traditional) Workforce Issues: Basically, organizations “are social units of people with recognizable boundaries to reach certain goals” (Önday, 2016, p. 97). “Most ‘twenty-somethings’ entering the workforce have never had a private office, so to begin their work life without one is not a traumatic change.” However, “employees who are accustomed to a structured office environment may find it hard to adjust to a largely self-directed schedule, and those who are used to working within earshot of many colleagues may be lonely in a remote setting.” Another issue that continues to plague the current hybrid (virtual / traditional) setting is that “middle managers usually put up the strong resistance to the alternative workplace, in part because they feel as though the very foundations of their roles are being pulled out from under them” (Apgar, 1998) (Zeller, 2019).

Carl Couch

Discussion Point: Then, in the 1970s, another school of thought developed. The new Iowa school, led by Carl Couch took a different direction (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003, p. 124). Under Couch’s leadership, symbolic interactionism studies were “grounded in fine-grained, close-up audio-video studies of social interaction” (Katovich, 2017, p. xiii). Couch claimed that by using audio-video technology, heretofore ‘invisible’ sequences of social interaction, that were unattainable in

the past using naked eye observation, could be identified (p. xii). “Unlike many symbolic interactionists who took for granted that interaction proceeds toward broader changes in face-to-face encounters, Couch’s processual view maintained that significant changes occurred in the second-by-second nature of the interactional processes” (p. xii).

Key Hybrid (Virtual / Traditional) Workforce Issues: Whether the interaction proceeds toward broader changes or there are significant changes within the second-by-second nature of the interactional processes, identifying the changes in the interaction introduced by the hybrid (virtual / traditional) workforce is the issue. In this case, using audio-video technology to research heretofore ‘invisible’ sequences of social interaction “through verbal expressions, physical behavior, and the verbal expressions of others” in the hybrid (virtual / traditional) workforce may be challenging in that virtual offices are generally located in the virtual workers’ homes (Rigby, 1965, p. 152) (Zeller, n.d.).

Discussion Point: Couch, working in a research setting that placed complex processes “in controlled and metaphorical environments in the laboratory”, was considered successful in creating social worlds to “detect and articulate patterns produced in controlled environments” (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003, p.134).

Key Hybrid (Virtual / Traditional) Workforce Issues: However, the multinational organization with a transnational approach selected for this paper invites the transfer of practices; moreover, there is an increase in the planned implementation of virtual work team programs--to, from, and within the affiliates. Thus, “coordination will be needed across multiple dimensions (e.g. functions, products and geography)” (Brewster, Sparrow, & Vernon, 2007, p. 212). Accordingly, the evaluation process will require special evaluator skills such as “an awareness of cultural blinders and biases; cross-cultural sensitivity; and skills in understanding and incorporating different perspectives” to detect and articulate patterns (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 1999, p. 61) (Zeller, n.d.).

Analysis of Existing Viewpoints

Symbolic interactionists in the *Chicago school* emphasized a qualitative approach in studying the process of reality construction within the natural social settings. They endeavored to understand human behavior, not to predict and control it, nor to have mere statistical knowledge of it. George H. Mead, considered to be the true originator of symbolic interactionism, promoted the gesture as the transitional link to language from action, and that it is also the phenomenon establishing the continuities of human and infrahuman social life. Furthermore, the real basis of social life is found in the capacity of individuals to take the role of others. That is, if you can gain a feeling for the other person’s position by putting yourself in their place, you can align your conduct with their behavior. Thus, those who could explain individual behavior without first seeing it within the context of the collectivity are way off base.

The term symbolic interactionism, created by Mead’s student, Herbert Blumer, identified 3 basic principles of symbolic interactionism: (1) that people act toward things (physical objects as well as abstract ideas) on the basis of

meanings that the ascribe to them; (2) these meanings are created in interaction with other people; (3) these meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process with things people encounter. Essentially, the actor, applying a formative process in which meanings are used and revised; selects, checks, suspends, regroupes, and transforms the meanings in the light of the situation in which he or she is placed and the direction of his or her action.

The *Iowa school* researchers, using a quantitative approach, endeavored to investigate and analyze generic processes constructed by role-playing participants in simulated experimental contexts which allowed the creation of patterned models representing sequences of acts that could be repeatedly researched and tested as the researchers reviewed what has been tested. Manford H. Kuhn, recognized as the founder of the Iowa school, questioned symbolic interactionism in that it did not seem to have a program or recipe to explore complexity in scientific ways; thereby, asserting that the main contribution of the work arising out of Iowa was its demonstration that the key ideas of symbolic interactionism could be operationalized and utilized successfully in empirical research. Nonetheless, the challenge for empirical research is to operationalize the complexity of modern society and the multiplicity of reference groups that contributes to disintegrating identity into multiple components. In this case, Kuhn promoted that the prominence of a self-reference may be understood as the relative spontaneity with which a particular reference will be used as an orientation in the organization of behavior.

Then, in the 1970s, the new Iowa school, led by Carl Couch, took a different direction. Under Couch's leadership, symbolic interactionism studies were grounded in fine-grained, close-up audio-video studies of social interaction. Unlike many symbolic interactionists who took for granted that interaction proceeds toward broader changes in face-to-face encounters, Couch's processual view maintained that significant changes occurred in the second-by-second nature of the interactional processes that were best captured in audio-video studies. Moreover, working in a research setting that placed complex processes in controlled and metaphorical environments in the laboratory, Couch was considered successful in creating social worlds to detect and articulate patterns produced in controlled environments.

Summation of the Findings and Suggested Framework for Future Research

Whereas symbolic interactionists in the *Chicago school* selected a qualitative approach in studying the process of reality construction within the natural social settings; the *Iowa school* researchers, elected to use a quantitative approach to investigate and analyze generic processes constructed by role-playing participants in simulated experimental contexts which allowed the creation of patterned models representing sequences of acts that could be repeatedly researched and tested as the researchers reviewed what has been tested.

From the standpoint of symbolic interactionism, human group life is a process in which objects are being created, affirmed, transformed, and cast aside. The life and action of people necessarily change in line with the changes taking place in their world of objects. However, due to the spatial proximity of a hybrid traditional / virtual workforce, workers are no longer physically situated; i.e. by business process or department. Overall, there are changes in their world of objects. Moreover, there is a lack of opportunity to observe each element or part thereof.

Richard Hyman asserts that societal phenomena must be analyzed in terms of actually existing structures and causal mechanisms that are not necessarily directly observable; thereby, not quantifiable (Frege, Kelly, & McGovern, 2011, p. 216). Furthermore, Hyman's promotion of "cross-national comparative research is being increasingly accepted as conventional wisdom among researchers. Hence, Hyman has positioned himself as a proponent of qualitative research and of what some researchers describe as 'contextualized comparisons'" (Frege, Kelly, & McGovern, 2011, p. 225).

In conclusion, the suggested framework for future research is cross-national comparative research (transnational organization) that includes contextualized comparisons (the setting or context of virtual and traditional offices). Regardless of the approach, quantitative or qualitative, the research will require special evaluator skills such as "an awareness of cultural blinders and biases; cross-cultural sensitivity; and skills in understanding and incorporating different perspectives" (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 1999, p. 61). Furthermore, in that virtual offices are generally located in private homes, studies will have to find methods; e.g. video, audio, technology-based applications; that are acceptable in observing virtual workers.

References

- Andersson, P. & Mattsson, L. (2014). Connecting temporal and spatial dimensions in business practice – with application to globalization of markets. From https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228455459_CONNECTING_TEMPORAL_AND_SPATIAL_DIMENSIONS_IN_BUSINESS_PRACTICE-WITH_APPLICATION_TO_GLOBALIZATION_OF_MARKETS
- Apgar, IV, M. (1998, May-June). The alternative workplace: Changing where and how people work. From <https://hbr.org/1998/05/the-alternative-workplace-changing-where-and-how-people-work>
- Bailey, S. (2013, March). How to beat the five killers of virtual working. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/sebastianbailey/2013/03/05/how-to-overcome-the-five-major-disadvantages-of-virtual-working/>.
- Bartlett, C. & Ghoshal, S. (1989, 2009). Global strategies for MNCs: Christopher A. Bartlett & Sumantra Ghoshal. From <http://www.businessmate.org/Article.php?ArtikelId=13>
- Blumer, H. (2017). The nature of symbolic interactions. Mortensen, C., Ed. Communication theory. From <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=pNwzDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT6&dq=symbolic+interaction+communication&ots=cGOryaji2N&sig=uc1o8ODzMBI1g8I1GT64N0cvv74#v=onepage&q=symbolic%20interaction&f=false>
- Brewster, C., Sparrow, P., & Vernon, G. (2007) *International human resource management* (2nd ed.). London: CIPD
- BusinessDictionary.com (n.d.). Social network. From <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/social-network.html>
- Choi, J. & Click, R. (2007). *International finance review, volume 7. Value creation in multinational enterprise*. San Diego, CA: JAI Press
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The sage handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Dictionary.com (n.d.) Symbolic interactionism. From <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/symbolic-interactionism>
- Dodd, S. (2011). Business of tomorrow: Creating the hybrid organization. From <http://www.iod.com/MainWebSite/Resources/Document/Q3-Businesses-of-tomorrow-creating-the-hybrid-organization.pdf>
- Ebrahim, N., Ahmed, S. & Taha, Z. (2009). Virtual teams: A literature review. *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Science*, 3(3), 2653-2669
- Elkin, L. (2017). IBM put walls around the ‘anywhere’ office. From <http://www.palisadeshudson.com/2017/05/ibm-puts-walls-around-the-anywhere-office/>
- Ellison, N. (2004). *Telework and social change. How technology is reshaping the boundaries between home and work*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers
- Encyclopedia.com (2020). Symbolic interactionism. From <https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/sociology-and-social-reform/sociology-general-terms-and-concepts/symbolic-interactionism>

- Endres, M., Endres, S., Chowdhury, S., & Alam, I. (2007). Tacit knowledge sharing, self-efficacy theory, and application to the Open Source community. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, (11),3, 92-103
- Ericksen, J. & Dyer, L. (2004). Toward a strategic human resource management model of high reliability organization performance (CAHRS Working Paper #04-02). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies. From <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cahrswp/9>
- Fortune Editors (2011). What will the future workplace look like? Fortune.com Retrieved from <http://fortune.com/2011/01/19/what-will-the-future-workplace-look-like/>
- Frege, C., Kelly, J., & McGovern, P. (2011). Richard Hyman: Marxism, trade unionism, and comparative employment relations. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, (49), 2, 209-230
<http://personal.lse.ac.uk/fregec/PDF%20articles/2011%20Richard%20Hyman%20Marxism%20Trade%20Unionsism%20and%20Comparative%20Employment%20Relations.pdf>
- Intuit (2010, Oct). Intuit 2020 Report, Twenty Trends that will Shape the Next Decade. From http://http-download.intuit.com/http.intuit/CMO/intuit/futureofsmallbusiness/intuit_2020_report.pdf
- Katovich, M. (2017). Carl J. Couch and the Iowa school: In his own words and in reflection. Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing Limited From https://books.google.com/books?id=XqIyDwAAQBAJ&pg=PR13&lpg=PR13&dq=Carl+Couch+symbolic+interactionism&source=bl&ots=Q25Ipsr6oT&sig=ACfU3U20uA8cjAJWc3G7WCyokAJhmoYj_A&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjC34G0l4frAhXHm-AKHc7jDMs4PBD0ATASegQICxAB#v=onepage&q=Couch&f=false
- Lautsch, B. & Kossek, E. (2011). Managing a blended workforce: Telecommuters and non-telecommuters. *Organizational Dynamics*, 40, 10-17. (SHRM), Vol. 56, No. 6
- Lovell, K. (2009). Strategic human resource management: What does it mean in practice? From <https://epubs.scu.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1131&context=theses>
- Önday, Ö (2016, Feb). Human resource theory: From Hawthorne experiments of Mayo to groupthink of Janis. *Global Journal of Human Resource Management*, 4, 1, 95-110
- Paperpile. (2020). What are the different types of research papers? From <https://paperpile.com/g/types-of-research-papers/>
- Personal Writer. (2008). 7 most popular types of research papers. From <http://personal-writer.com/blog/7-most-popular-types-of-research-papers>
- Reference for Business (n.d.). Transnational organization. From <http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/management/Tr-Z/Transnational-Organization.html>
- Reynolds, L. (2006). Interactionism: Exposition and critique. 3rd Ed. Lanham, MD: General Hall From https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=YisaULoW5_UC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=symbolic+interactionism+dewey&ots=mjUtmRfTWP&sig=s6Wlmb0bt7M2riMR5908XqPee0#v=onepage&q=symbolic%20interactionism%20dewey&f=false

- Reynolds, L. & Herman-Kinney, N. (2003). *Handbook of symbolic interactionism*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press
- From
https://books.google.com/books?id=bjkTxML-wpEC&pg=PA91&lpg=PA91&dq=chicago+school+of+symbolic+interactionism&source=bl&ots=0-jc-zWbDf&sig=ACfU3U1n_fsn7ukYp1NxHrPiCctH63ntug&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjBsQKJuPXqAhU9mXIEHfeICek4FBD0ATAFegQIChAB#v=onepage&q=symbolic%20interactionism&f=false
- Rigby, P. (1965). *Conceptual foundations of business research*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons, Inc
- Rubens, A. (2014, Aug.). Can 'World of Warcraft' game skills help land a job? *The Wall Street Journal*. From
<http://www.wsj.com/articles/can-warcraft-game-skills-help-land-a-job-1407885660>
- Sandstrom, K., Martin, D. & Fine, G. (2001). Symbolic interactionism at the end of the century. Ritzer & Smart, Eds. *Handbook of social theory*. From
<https://books.google.com/books?id=OO8qQKM2nXkC&pg=PA217&lpg=PA217&dq=helena+lopata+symbolic+interaction&source=bl&ots=hRw35VUZnu&sig=ACfU3U1Xu7v8Ilg2yQDXWSXyy35f4RfILw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiyOz5qLvqAhVkljQIH8gBv04ChDoATADegQIBxAB#v=onepage&q=helena%20lopata%20symbolic%20interaction&f=false>
- Sanz-Valle, R., Sabater-Sanchez, R. & Aragon-Sanchez, A. (1999, 2011). Human resource management and business strategy links: An empirical study. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 10,4, 655-671
- Snow, D. (2001). Symbolic interactionism. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Science, Science Direct*. From <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/symbolic-interactionism>
- Sternfeld, R. (1958, Sept). Reason and necessity in classical rationalism. *The Review of Metaphysics* (12, 1), 48-56 From <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20123682?seq=1>
- Strati, A. (2000). *Theory and method in organization studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications From
<https://books.google.com/books?id=g2KGqarJJC4C&pg=PA29&lpg=PA29&dq=joan+woodward+symbolic+interaction&source=bl&ots=9Ixf4FYBk&sig=ACfU3U0MjoiWdcweNkA0KizQgbGP8yoVhg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjZ5sjmt7nqAhXRhHIEHam2BowQ6AEwAnoECAgQAQ#v=onepage&q=symbolic%20interaction&f=false>
- Verbeke, A., Schultz, R., Greidanus, N., & Hambley, L. (2008). *Growing the virtual workplace*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing Inc
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation (1999). *Evaluation handbook*. Retrieved from <http://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2010/w-k-kellogg-foundation-evaluation-handbook>
- Yurieff, K. (2020). Why we can't stop waving at the end of video calls. *CNN Business*. From
<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/23/tech/waving-video-calls/index.html>

- Zeller, D. (n.d.). Evaluating a virtual work teams program. From https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MoNL_0sI69CKRCkbwfb4Z2KXVgCVoWE8Zq5ExvQlDXA/edit?usp=sharing
- Zeller, D. (n.d.). Moving organizational knowledge into the future. From https://docs.google.com/document/d/1T2S22zWBq_2RJ7rKK4hWrkMv1kyZs9KNlh5R9MzWMg/edit?usp=sharing
- Zeller, D. (2013). The virtual workforce: Adapting human resource policies. From https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rc0o_s6ad_hNF-RvJ0Tb6FOV4CIL10n9BakmPL9oz2s/edit?usp=sharing
- Zeller, D. (2016). Human resource management (HRM) research methods in multinational corporations. From https://docs.google.com/document/d/1D8-f5_fQaqWWtbSdc9Y87n9zG43MI1-a6qfNTU0r7MA/edit?usp=sharing
- Zeller, D. (2017). The hybrid traditional / virtual workforce: spatial dimensions and tacit knowledge sharing. From https://docs.google.com/document/d/1H3veGfe-mn-u4lSfKusS-_eyz2GpaK6jG3GNy-LQy-E/edit?usp=sharing
- Zeller, D. (2017) The hybrid work environment: The business process argument for adapting organizational structure. From <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VYXJUmMEyJjCTVnqWxcklhoWcqGbcZ6qmPDxXmVuRAI/edit?usp=sharing>
- Zeller, D. (2018). Organizational management in the hybrid (combined virtual offsite / traditional ‘brick and mortar’) transnational organizations. From https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UG1Q5U6Cs2YQoMWuu8JqI_6Gy0DvjHTSMLStWqUBzVA/edit?usp=sharing
- Zeller, D. (2018). The hybrid (combined virtual / traditional office) work environment implications for social networks in organizations. From <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zcrfO2uLpy5j3AoGUi52nyzWLyBWeBvcdMyOPgkvBIU/edit?usp=sharing>
- Zeller, D. (2018). Stand-alone literature review: The hybrid (virtual offsite / traditional ‘brick and mortar’) transnational organization. From <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fICWfXTabOCdbhVxyfJrRVibDw7x5qRtdUj8n-q5R7g/edit?usp=sharing>
- Zeller, D. (2019), Strategic human resource management in the hybrid (virtual offsite / traditional ‘brick and mortar’) organization. From <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1i-OouG3K9oaf6oGnFIRXFnZgRihN4e1z6-6wo4c4ad0/edit?usp=sharing>
- Zwass, V. (1998). *Foundations of Information Systems*. New York, NY: Irwin/McGraw-Hill