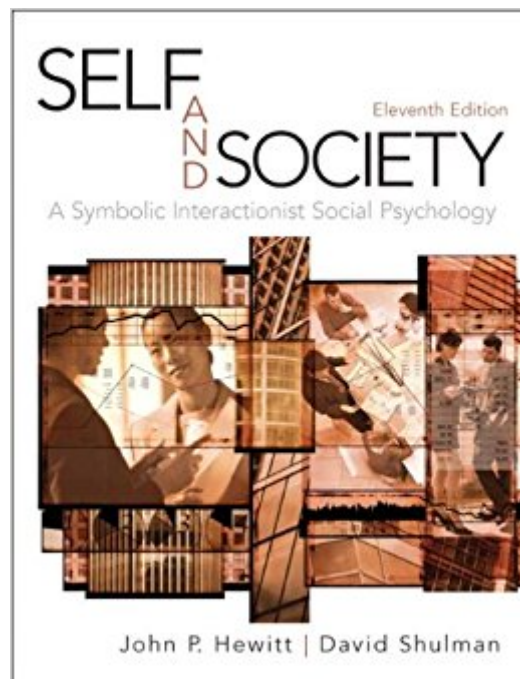




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# **Self And Society: A Symbolic Interactionist Social Psychology (11th Edition)**



## Synopsis

Self and Society is a clearly written, up-to-date, and authoritative introduction to the symbolic interactionist perspective in social psychology and in sociology as a whole. Filled with examples, this book has been used not only in the classroom, but also cited in literature as an authoritative source. Self and Society is not a distillation of textbook knowledge, but rather, a thoughtful, well-organized presentation that makes its own contribution to the advancement of symbolic interactionism.

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## Customer Reviews

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John P. Hewitt is Professor (Emeritus) of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He received his PhD in Sociology from Princeton University. David Shulman is an Associate Professor and Department Head of Anthropology and Sociology at Lafayette College. He received his PhD in Sociology from Northwestern University. He is author of From Hire to Liar: The Role of

Deception in the Workplace (Cornell University Press, 2007), co-author (with Gary Alan Fine) of Talking Sociology 5th edition (Allyn and Bacon, 2002) and co-editor (with Ira Silver) of Academic Street Smarts: Informal Professionalization of Graduate Students (American Sociological Association 2008). His scholarship addresses the subjects of deception, impression management and symbolic interaction.

Okay so this book was good and helped me to understand that there are people out there like me...going through a "quarter life crisis," but the Author is so dry and did not keep me interested.

Very clean book arrive on time

Ordered 11th edition received 4th edition. Will take book back but have to wait for correct one .Not pleased.

A dozen or so years ago, I included an earlier edition of Hewitt's Self and Society on the reading list for a graduate course I taught in the sociology of education. I wanted to make clear to students that regression-based models of status attainment and school effectiveness were not the be-all and end-all of sociology as it is applied to schooling and other institutions. Furthermore, I wanted something that was of general theoretical applicability but was not unduly dense. Foolishly, I had not read Self and Society, but knew it only by reputation as an introduction to symbolic interactionism that had gone through an unusually large number of editions but was still a seller. I compounded my foolish error by asking students to read Self and Society after I had given a fairly long in-class presentation on George Herbert Mead's Mind, Self, and Society. Included with the presentation was a twenty page written synopsis of Mead's work that I had prepared for students to read. The material in Mind, Self, and Society, even when presented first by way of in-class lecture and then using a written synopsis augmented with instructor's explanatory comments, is difficult. I had hoped that Hewitt's book would make Mead, commonly cited as the founder of symbolic interactionism, easier to understand. In addition, I wanted students to see ways in which symbolic interactionism had developed and been applied since Mead's work was first published in the early 1930's. When I began reading Self and Society, knowing that my students had been assigned the same task, I was mortified. I suffered a good deal of self-inflicted embarrassment for assigning a book I had not read, one that turned out to be a redundantly wordy mish-mash of the worst sort of self-indulgence in high-sounding nonsense. I was familiar with Herbert Blumer's theoretical work, but had concluded

that his oft-cited position as the heir to the intellectual mantle of the author of *Mind, Self, and Society* was, at best, precarious. Gone in Blumer's work is the priority of the organism, an essential part of Mead's perspective. And gone is the genuine social behaviorism, with equal emphasis on "social" and "behaviorism" that were so crucial to understanding Mead. In their place, Blumer seemed to re-introduce a sort of mind-body dualism that Mead had so effectively overcome, whether or not he intended to do so. In retrospect, I have no idea why I expected Hewitt's work to be any better than Blumer's. Maybe it was all those editions. However, instead of explaining and illustrating ways in which people use shared symbol systems to create meaning through social interaction, Hewitt, using a variety of locutions, all of which meant pretty much the same thing, repeated again and again that creating meaning through social interaction is what people do. In a rough and ready way, *Self and Society* was much like a windy meta-theoretical treatise on the philosophy of science wherein a philosopher, who may or may not know anything about science, tells you again and again how it should be done. Had I known of its existence, a far better choice of books would have been Anselm Strauss' *Mirrors and Masks*, first published in 1956. In my view, *Mirrors and Masks* provides a genuinely brilliant foundation for what was to become labeling theory, a legitimate product of symbolic interactionism that has since devolved into a set of sensitizing concepts. In any case, a reader who is interested in understanding symbolic interactionism, an expression Mead never used, would do well to go to the universally acknowledged source, *Mind, Self, and Society*. It's a difficult book, but one that is worth the effort. I think I under-estimated my students when I tried to work around it rather than assigning it. When struggling with Mead's first fifty or so pages, the reader may take comfort in the knowledge that the functional redundancy built into the book makes it easier to read the further you get into it. Then read *Mirrors and Masks*. As for Hewitt, it's possible that there is more merit in *Self and Society*, especially in its later editions, than my students, all professional educators, and I were able to discern. Until someone instructs me otherwise, however, I'm stuck with the conclusion that *Self and Society* represents the sort of wordy, even if sometimes engaging, nonsense that gives the social sciences, especially their softer varieties, a bad name.

This book, a book I am using in my graduate study of social psychology, is a useful guidebook for anyone interested in the subject. I recommend it to anyone!

The book took a while to get here and is pretty marked up on the inside but none the less I got it in time.

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