

#40DayChallenge Day 8

Outline and explain **TWO** reasons that social action theories are useful for explaining contemporary social issues (10)

One reason for social action theories being useful for explaining contemporary social issues is the methodology used by social action researchers. Social action researchers use interpretivist methodologies in order to investigate social issues. The advantage that this gives them is that it enables them to gain a greater insight into the meanings and motivations people attach to their own actions and the actions of others. The use of methods such as participant observations and unstructured interviews allows the researcher to gain an insight, or *verstehen*, into the lives of those they are researching and allow them to draw conclusions based upon highly valid data. This is especially useful in contemporary society as some sociologists would suggest that we have moved from an era of modernity to an era of either late or post modernity. Both eras are typified by increased individualisation, more choice and less social control from institutions such as the family, religion and education. Consequently, using interpretivist methodology allows social action theorists to be more adaptable in researching contemporary social issues than structural theorists.

A second reason for the usefulness of social action theories in explaining contemporary social issues is the understanding of the self and interactions with others. In today's media saturated society people's sense of self is often shaped by how they measure themselves against others in the media or their friends on social media. The image that a person portrays on social media is an increasingly important part of their self-concept, as research has shown that approval on social media can impact on self-esteem. Social Action theorists are best placed to understand and explain these phenomena given their focus on the individual, rather than society, as a starting point and their focus on the impact of interactions on the behaviour of individuals. Social Action theorists are also best suited to understanding individual behaviours as they look to uncover the meanings people see in these interactions, and in an increasingly individualised and diverse world, are better positioned to understand why and how these interactions influence people's behaviours than more structural

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theorists who look to adopt a one size fits all approach that does not take into account individual differences.