

Top 5 features of...



Micro-Scale: The smaller scale research conducted by those adopting an **Interpretivist** methodology means that groups and individuals can be studied in greater detail and a more complete understanding of their situation, their actions and their thoughts documented. Unlike structural theories which see people as passive, Social Action theories see people having choice and small scale research enables us to understand those.



Interactions: **Symbolic Interactionists** see the key to understanding individuals is through their interactions with others. Our interactions with other people and social institutions shape our behaviour to some extent. **E.g. labelling theories** suggest that negative labels will lead to people acting out those labels as this is how they believe they are being perceived by others. In a media saturated society, often negative associations can have lasting impacts



Understanding Self: **Symbolic Interactionism** focuses on the understand of the self and how individuals make sense of the world. **Cooley** referred to the 'looking glass self' when describing how people come to make sense of who they are. We see ourselves as funny because people laugh – but are they laughing at us or with us. In an increasingly individualised world, the concept of the self is important to understand motivations



Focus on the individual: As social action theories assume that the social world begins with the individual, this allows them to investigate a more diverse subsection of society and try and understand the meanings and motivations of each individual rather than use broad generalisations. This is useful when examining the more global society we live in today as the experience of women may be dependent on their social class, their ethnicity or their sexuality. Social changes have meant that humans are rarely predictable.



Symbols: Social Action Theories examine the importance of symbols. **Symbolic Interactionists** see symbols as a way of organising the social world so that we know what behaviours are expected of us, or how we group unique objects into categories. **Phenomenologists** suggest that the way we see symbols is subjective and down to personal interpretation. This may explain the differences in norms and values of different social groups of generations. **E.g. Atkinson's research into suicide.**

Social Action Theories