

# [Micro and macro social theory assignment](https://assignbuster.com/micro-and-macro-social-theory-assignment/)

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Micro and macro social theories Functionalism and symbolic interactionism are contrasting sociological theories. Like all theory, sociological theory cannot explain everything and therefore differing theories have different perspectives and ideas. As a result they only offer partial or specific points of view of society in general. There are a wide range of sociological theories, which can be categorised into two main groups: structural or macro and social action or Micro perspectives. (Langhoff, 2002).

These perspectives differ in that macro examines society as a whole whereas symbolic interactionism views the effects of human behaviour within that society. This text will attempt to highlight the similarities and differences between these two sociological theories. Functionalism was developed by Emile Durkheim, expanding on the work of Auguste Comte and later continued by Talcott Parsons. This perspective was the dominant social theory during the 1940s and 1950s and views society as a system with different parts working together. Central to this premise is the view that society should be interpreted organically.

In the same way as the body needs healthy parts to function, society has specific prerequisites or basic needs that are essential to enable society to function healthily. These basic needs are called “ functional prerequisites” (Haralambos and Holborn 2004 p. 937). These prerequisites are defined by Haralambos and Holborn (2004) as factors that without which, would lead to the “ breakdown or termination of society” (Haralambos and Holborn 2004 p. 937). Functionalists believe that along with functional prerequisites, a general consensus of norms, values and traditions must be taught and learned.

These then shape individuals rather than the individual shaping society. Durkheim named this sharing of norms, values and traditions the “ conscience collective” and saw this as an essential component of social order (Craib 2007 p. 65). Durkheim expanded on the idea that social structure and institutions are determined by a social conscience and that the individual is governed by this collection of shared fundamental morals and ideals. One criticism of this idea is that functionalism gives weight to the idea that society constrains and shapes us and gives little or no validity to the idea that human action can shapes society. Giddens 2009). Durkheim explains behaviour that falls outside the collective conscience can be categorised as either egoism (self-interest) or anomie defined as “ normlessness or moral vacuum” (Harrington 2005 p. 317). Usually, the work of George Herbert Mead (1863 to 1931) is taken as the starting point for ‘ symbolic interactionism’ although the term “ symbolic interactionism” was introduced in 1937 by Herbert Blumer (Roberts 2006; Roberts 2006p. 47). Blumer , a former student and interpreter of Mead, states that ” http://www. grin. com/en/e-book/4703/comparison-of-functionalism-and-symbolic-interactionism