Difference Between Micro- And Macro Theories Of Sociology Essay, Research Paper

What is the difference between the general perspectives? How does the work of Ritzer attempt to overcome this problem?

Micro theories examine the processes of face-to-face contact among individuals and personal points-of-view in society; whereas, the macro theories deal with large-scale social events of society – meaning things that have public concern.

The theories that are apart of the micro-level are symbolic interactionism, dramaturgy, ethnomethodology, and exchange theory. Symbolic interaction is an individual-based theory that uses constructed symbols, such as language and gestures, to which people give meaning in their everyday interactions. Dramaturgy, best stated by Goffman (1959), is what actors portray on a the theatrical stage is similar to the way people act in society. Ethnomethodology is basic common-sense used in for general situations in everyday life (Ritzer, 77). Exchange theory is a given relationship is found to be attractive whereas the rewards tend to outweigh punishment (Blau, 1964).

Structural functionalism and conflict theory are two types of macro-theories. Structural functionalism (Perrucci, 1983) has three main ideas: 1) society is a system containing interdependent and interacting parts bound together in time and space, 2) shared values among members of the system are social glue that helps hold it together, 3) and systems have a need for stability and therefor attempt the parts working together harmoniously. Conflict theory is the belief that society contains basic inequalities in wealth, power, and prestige (Coser, 1967; Dahrendorf, 1959).

Ritzer, like many other sociologists, wants to disintegrate the split between the micro and macro sociology. Ritzer attempts to do this by adding on to Gurvitch s insights . Ritzer views the micro-macro issue, not by subjective-objective continuum, but the phenomena as subjective or objective; therefore, concluding that there are four major levels of analysis (See Table I) that are a product of dialectical interrelationships (Ritzer, 1996).

Table I – Ritzer s Major Levels of Social Analysis

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I. Macro-objective

Examples – society, law, bureaucracy, architecture, technology, and language

II. Macro-subjective

Examples- culture, norms, and values

III. Micro-objective

Examples – patterns of behavior, action, and interaction

IV. Micro-subjective

Examples – perceptions, beliefs; the various facets of the social construction of reality

MICROSCOPIC

In row 1, the macro-objective, involves the large-scale basic standards and material realities (Ritzer, 359) by which the general populous abides by; whereas as the macro-subjective is the large-scale intangible ideals such as norms and values which shape our everyday lives. In row 2, the micro theories also have the objective and subjective consistencies but on a smaller scale. The micro-objective deals with the individual trends of interaction and behavior; whereas micro-subjectivity is what people think, do and belief based on their own experiences.

This is just one of many different ways in which sociologists try to combine the micro and macro theories into one ultimate sociological theory. A better explanation for this is like ice cream. Some people like chocolate mint chip, and others like strawberry sorbet; however, putting these to flavors together will not have a great taste as the two do alone, this is the dilemma that sociologists want to overcome.

References

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