

Chapter 3 Theories and Methods

Topic 8 Action Theories

Answers to QuickCheck Questions on page 233

1. Structural theories see society as something objective, existing outside individuals and shaping or constraining them. Action theories see society as the creation of its members through their subjective meanings and their interactions with one another.
2. Instrumentally rational action; value-oriented rational action; traditional action; affectual action.
3. Because it focuses on the use of symbolic meanings (such as language) by human beings in constructing reality.
4. A model that makes use of analogies from the theatre, such as actors, scripts and props.
5. Gestures/body language, clothing, spoken language, 'props' such as equipment, furniture etc.
6. For ethnomethodologists, indexicality means that meanings (of events, actions etc) are always potentially unstable and unclear; they always depend on the context. Reflexivity is the use of commonsense knowledge to construct a sense of meaning and order and thus make sense of events as if they had fixed meanings.
7. Because everyday life involves following rules and using resources and this therefore reproduces the structure of society; and because of our need for ontological security (i.e. a need to feel that the social world is stable and orderly).
8. The feeling that the world is stable and predictable and really is as it appears to be.