

# **Student Essay on Differences in Macro and Micro Level Theories**

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# Essay

There are many differences between macro and micro-level theories. Micro-level focuses on individuals and their interactions. For example the relationship between adult children and their parents, or the effect of negative attitudes on older people. Some criticize on micro-level theories because they focus on what older people do rather than on social conditions and policies that cause them to act the way they do. Macro-level focuses more upon social structure, social processes and problems, and their interrelationships. For example the effects of industrialization on older people's status, or how gender and income affect older people's well being. This approach tends to minimize people's ability to act and overcome the limits of social structures. Both micro and macro-level theories can take one of three perspectives which include: interpretive perspective, normative, and conflict.

Normative perspective says rules and status exist in society to provide social control or social order. Social order is necessary for survival. This perspective focuses upon macro-level. For example structural-functionalism, role theory, modernization theory, and age-stratification.

Interpretive perspective says that the social world is created in an ongoing manner, via social interaction. How do we relate to each other on a day-to-day basis? It focuses upon micro-level.

Conflict perspective deals with macro and some micro levels. Causes of poverty, health disparities, distribution of life chances via, social class, and gender.

Micro level perspectives is the study of small scale structures and processes in society. It says explanations of social life and social structures are to be found at the individual level or in social interaction. George Mead said that objects and events have no meaning in themselves. Rather, people give them meaning through daily interaction. For example gray hair is a sign of wisdom in one. People give meanings to objects then base their actions on these meanings like some people will refuse to wear a hearing aid because it symbolizes decrepitude and weakness. Some examples of micro-level theories include symbolic interactionism, social phenomenology, and exchange theory. Micro level theories are role theories. For example understanding adjustment to getting older. Elderly people are more likely to lose roles than acquire new ones. Macro level theories include age stratification theory. It focuses upon flow of age cohorts through the life cycle.