

# Major Theoretical Strands of Research Methodology

on the basis of  
'how society is conceived'  
and  
'how society is to be studied'

## Structural Approach

(also known as Systems Approach  
and Macro-Sociological Approach)

### Basic Assumptions:

- focuses on society as a whole
- views society as a system of patterned social relationships
- society as an objective reality
- primacy is accorded to society (social structure) over the individual (agency)
- focuses on how social structure influences or shapes the individual behaviour
- emphasizes on the application of positivist approach in the study of social reality
- primarily relies on the use of quantitative research methods

Consensus Theory

(Functionalism)

Conflict Theory

(Marxism and  
Feminism)

## Social Action Approach

(also known as Interpretive,  
Anti/Non-Positivist and  
Micro-Sociological Approach)

### Basic Assumptions:

- argues that the subject matter of natural and social sciences is fundamentally different
- hence, methods and assumptions of natural sciences are inappropriate to study social behaviour of man
- social action is meaningful
- emphasizes on the interpretative understanding of social action
- primarily relies on empathetic understanding and use of qualitative research methods

Weberian Sociological Thought

Symbolic Interactionism

Ethnomethodology