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Study of Society

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## Chapter - 1

**The Study Society** is established according to the Friendly Societies Act, 1974, and based at Colet House, Barons Court, London. It is a centre for the study and practice of a number of approaches to self-discovery and spiritual development. The principal purpose of the Society is to encourage individuals “to pursue a journey towards Self-realisation—realisation of their full potential—through experience of the true nature of Consciousness and its deep level of stillness, truth and love.”

The three main sources it draws upon are: the teaching of P. D. Ouspensky, the teachings of Swami Shantanand Saraswati who came from the Advaita Vedanta tradition, and the Sufi tradition of Mevlana. The Society seeks to develop a teaching and practice that unifies eastern and western spirituality and philosophy and “is designed to bring an inner unity to individuals and to society at large.” One of its main aims is to seek to correlate the methods and knowledge it employs with current developments in scientific and medical understanding.

### History

The Society was registered in 1951 by Dr Francis C. Roles, after the death of his teacher, the Russian philosopher P. D. Ouspensky, who settled in England in 1921. In Russia, Ouspensky had learned a system of knowledge and certain practical methods from G. I. Gurdjieff and until his death in 1947 Ouspensky devoted his life to further developing this system in the light of his own ideas. He established large groups of pupils in London and New York. Ouspensky’s London headquarters before and following World War II were at Colet House. This work led him to the conviction that the system was essentially incomplete; in particular it lacked a simple accessible method to allow the ideas to develop naturally into behaviour and experience. Dr Roles continued with Ouspensky’s teaching for 13 years but in 1960, as a result of Ouspensky’s instruction to search for ‘the source of the system’, he came to meet Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in London. He recognised the method of meditation that the Maharishi was disseminating as the simple method that Ouspensky had told him to find. The Study Society was instrumental in setting up the Maharishi’s seminal lecture to 5000 people at the Royal Albert Hall in 1961 which greatly raised his profile in Europe. Nevertheless, it was not until Dr Roles was introduced to Swami Shantanand Saraswati, Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath—the head of the Advaita tradition in Northern India whose teaching of the non-dual philosophy of the Vedanta complemented and completed all he had learnt before—that he became convinced that his search was over. Dr Francis C. Roles died in 1982 and Shantanand Saraswati in 1997. The stated objectives of the Study Society are: “for the public benefit: to advance the education of the public in religion, science, philosophy and the arts; the promotion of moral and spiritual welfare.” The Study Society teaches the moral code of Sanatan Dharma, which it summarises as “Do as you would be done by”.

The Society maintains a connection with the Shankaracharya tradition in India and is currently directed by Dr Peter Fenwick. In October 2013 the Study Society applied for registration with the Charities Commission.

### Teachings

The Study Society runs study groups in which the teachings of P. D. Ouspensky, Shantanand Saraswati and Dr F. C. Roles are discussed and their practical application developed. There are three types of study groups specialising in different aspects of the teachings:

## **Non-Duality**

The Non-Duality group focuses on the non-dual aspects of the Society's teachings. The foundation of the non-dual philosophy is the Advaita Vedanta which is the basis of the Shankaracharya tradition to which Shantanand Saraswati belonged. Advaita is a Sanskrit word meaning 'not two' and teaches that there is an underlying unity of consciousness which upholds the whole of creation. Vedanta refers to this philosophy as embodied in the great works such as the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita. In practical terms it offers another way of perceiving the drama of everyday life. Shantanand Saraswati taught that when perception is from this underlying universal consciousness there is a sense of freedom from the drama, a relief from personal concerns and life is enjoyed in a harmony and wholeness brought about by a realisation that it is this universal consciousness or Absolute, not the separate individual, that lives. A key principle is that the individual soul and all phenomena of nature are not different from this Absolute, referred to in the Advaita tradition as Brahman, hence non-duality.

Shantanand Saraswati

In addition to explanation of Advaita Vedanta, Shantanand Saraswati gave much practical advice to Dr Roles and other members of the Society in a series of audiences over a period of 32 years from 1961 to 1993 on overcoming the various obstacles to spiritual development that occur in everyday life. This advice extended beyond the pure non-dualistic teaching of Advaita Vedanta to include ideas from other dualistic interpretations of the Vedanta as were appropriate to the question and the questioner. Extracts from these audiences have been published by the Society in a series of books. Weekly groups focus on the study and practice of all of the teachings of Shantanand Saraswati, with the dualistic aspects of his teaching also being employed, as he recommended, 'for training purposes' in clearing away the habitual illusions that conceal the fundamental conscious unity of creation.

## **Fourth Way**

P. D. Ouspensky developed his system of Self-discovery from the fundamental idea that ordinary human consciousness is incomplete and that it is possible for it to evolve further by personal effort and understanding. Historically, this approach has generally been confined to closed orders, religious or otherwise and directed to the development of one particular human faculty: intellectual, emotional or physical. Ouspensky promoted the practice of a 'Fourth Way', whereby ordinary people, remaining engaged in life, could work on all three aspects simultaneously. His teaching demonstrates the unity of the individual with the whole cosmos in both structure and potential and expresses this understanding in plain language. At the Study Society, P. D. Ouspensky's teaching has for 60 years been continuously reformulated and developed to keep pace with current science and culture. It presents a profoundly practical psychology and cosmology, both expressed in accessible Western terms and language. Together with its basic training in attention and self-awareness, this system of knowledge leads towards a clear understanding of non-dualism. The Fourth Way study groups take Ouspensky's teaching as their starting point, following the journey that Dr Roles took with Shantanand Saraswati that led Ouspensky's system back to its Source.

## **Practical Methods**

In addition to the practices of self-observation and Self-remembering, prescribed by both P. D. Ouspensky and Shantanand Saraswati, the Society has three methods for training attention. These are the practice of mantra meditation, the Mevlevi Turning and 'The Movements'.

## Origins

Sociological reasoning predates the foundation of the discipline. Social analysis has origins in the common stock of Western knowledge and philosophy, and has been carried out from as far back as the time of ancient Greek philosopher Plato if not before. The origin of the survey, i.e., the collection of information from a sample of individuals, can be traced back to at least the Domesday Book in 1086 while ancient philosophers such as Confucius wrote on the importance of social roles. There is evidence of early sociology in medieval Islam. Some consider Ibn Khaldun, a 14th-century Arab Islamic scholar from North Africa, to have been the first sociologist; his *Muqaddimah* was perhaps the first work to advance social-scientific reasoning on social cohesion and social conflict. Most sociological concepts were used in English prior to their adoption as the technical language of sociology. The word sociology (or "sociologie") is derived from both Latin and Greek origins. The Latin word: *socius*, "companion"; the suffix *-logy*, "the study of" from Greek *-λογία* from *λόγος*, *lógos*, "word", "knowledge". It was first coined in 1780 by the French essayist Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès (1748–1836) in an unpublished manuscript. Sociology was later defined independently by the French philosopher of science, Auguste Comte (1798–1857), in 1838. Comte used this term to describe a new way of looking at society. Comte had earlier used the term "social physics", but that had subsequently been appropriated by others, most notably the Belgian statistician Adolphe Quetelet. Comte endeavored to unify history, psychology and economics through the scientific understanding of the social realm. Writing shortly after the malaise of the French Revolution, he proposed that social ills could be remedied through sociological positivism, an epistemological approach outlined in *The Course in Positive Philosophy* [1830–1842] and *A General View of Positivism* (1848). Comte believed a positivist stage would mark the final era, after conjectural theological and metaphysical phases, in the progression of human understanding. In observing the circular dependence of theory and observation in science, and having classified the sciences, Comte may be regarded as the first philosopher of science in the modern sense of the term.

Comte gave a powerful impetus to the development of sociology, an impetus which bore fruit in the later decades of the nineteenth century. To say this is certainly not to claim that French sociologists such as Durkheim were devoted disciples of the high priest of positivism. But by insisting on the irreducibility of each of his basic sciences to the particular science of sciences which it presupposed in the hierarchy and by emphasizing the nature of sociology as the scientific study of social phenomena Comte put sociology on the map. To be sure, [its] beginnings can be traced back well beyond Montesquieu, for example, and to Condorcet, not to speak of Saint-Simon, Comte's immediate predecessor. But Comte's clear recognition of sociology as a particular science, with a character of its own, justified Durkheim in regarding him as the father or founder of this science, in spite of the fact that Durkheim did not accept the idea of the three states and criticized Comte's approach to sociology.

— Frederick Copleston *A History of Philosophy: IX Modern Philosophy* 1974,

Both Auguste Comte and Karl Marx (1818-1883) set out to develop scientifically justified systems in the wake of European industrialization and secularization, informed by various key movements in the philosophies of history and science. Marx rejected Comtean positivism but in attempting to develop a science of society nevertheless came to be recognized as a founder of sociology as the word gained wider meaning. For Isaiah Berlin, Marx may be regarded as the "true father" of modern sociology, "in so far as anyone can claim the title."

To have given clear and unified answers in familiar empirical terms to those theoretical questions which most occupied men's minds at the time, and to have deduced from them clear practical directives without creating obviously artificial links between the two, was the principle achievement of Marx's theory. The sociological treatment of historical and moral problems, which Comte and after him, Spencer and Taine, had discussed and mapped, became a precise and concrete study only when the attack of militant Marxism made its conclusions a burning issue, and so made the search for evidence more zealous and the attention to method more intense.

— Isaiah Berlin *Karl Marx: His Life and Environment* 1937,

Herbert Spencer (27 April 1820 – 8 December 1903) was one of the most popular and influential 19th century sociologists. It is estimated that he sold one million books in his lifetime, far more than any other sociologist at the time. So strong was his influence that many other 19th century thinkers, including Émile Durkheim, defined their ideas in relation to his. Durkheim's *Division of Labour in Society* is to a large extent an extended debate with Spencer from whose sociology, many commentators now agree, Durkheim borrowed extensively. Also a notable biologist, Spencer coined the term "survival of the fittest". Whilst Marxian ideas defined one strand of sociology, Spencer was a critic of socialism as well as strong advocate for a laissez-faire style of government. His ideas were highly observed by conservative political circles, especially in the United States and England.

#### Foundations of the academic discipline

Formal academic sociology was established by Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), who developed positivism as a foundation to practical social research. While Durkheim rejected much of the detail of Comte's philosophy, he retained and refined its method, maintaining that the social sciences are a logical continuation of the natural ones into the realm of human activity, and insisting that they may retain the same objectivity, rationalism, and approach to causality. Durkheim set up the first European department of sociology at the University of Bordeaux in 1895, publishing his *Rules of the Sociological Method* (1895).

For Durkheim, sociology could be described as the "science of institutions, their genesis and their functioning". Durkheim's seminal monograph, *Suicide* (1897), a case study of suicide rates amongst Catholic and Protestant populations, distinguished sociological analysis from psychology or philosophy. It also marked a major contribution to the theoretical concept of structural functionalism. By carefully examining suicide statistics in different police districts, he attempted to demonstrate that Catholic communities have a lower suicide rate than that of Protestants, something he attributed to social (as opposed to individual or psychological) causes. He developed the notion of objective sui generis "social facts" to delineate a unique empirical object for the science of sociology to study. Through such studies he posited that sociology would be able to determine whether any given society is 'healthy' or 'pathological', and seek social reform to negate organic breakdown or "social anomie".

Sociology quickly evolved as an academic response to the perceived challenges of modernity, such as industrialization, urbanization, secularization, and the process of "rationalization". The field predominated in continental Europe, with British anthropology and statistics generally following on a separate trajectory. By the turn of the 20th century, however, many theorists were active in the Anglo-Saxon world. Few early sociologists were confined strictly to the subject, interacting also with economics, jurisprudence, psychology and philosophy, with theories being appropriated in a variety of different fields. Since its inception, sociological epistemologies, methods, and frames of inquiry, have significantly expanded and diverged.

## Chapter - 2

### Social class

"Class system" redirects here. For the role-playing game concept, see Character class.

**Social class** (or simply "class"), as in a **class society**, is a set of concepts in the social sciences and political theory centered on models of social stratification in which people are grouped into a set of hierarchical social categories, the most common being the upper, middle, and lower classes.

Class is an essential object of analysis for sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists, and social historians. However, there is not a consensus on the best definition of the term "class", and the term has different contextual meanings. In common parlance, the term "social class" is usually synonymous with "socio-economic class," defined as "people having the same social, economic, or educational status," e.g., "the working class"; "an emerging professional class." The precise measurements of what determines social class in society has varied over time. According to philosopher Karl Marx, 'class' is determined entirely by one's relationship to the means of production, the classes in modern capitalist society being the "proletarians": those who work but do not own the means of production, the "bourgeoisie": those who invest and live off of the surplus generated by the former, and the aristocracy that has land as a means of production.

The term "class" is etymologically derived from the Latin *classis*, which was used by census takers to categorize citizens by wealth, in order to determine military service obligations. In the late 18th century, the term "class" began to replace classifications such as estates, rank, and orders as the primary means of organizing society into hierarchical divisions. This corresponded to a general decrease in significance ascribed to hereditary characteristics, and increase in the significance of wealth and income as indicators of position in the social hierarchy.

### History

Historically social class and behaviour was sometimes laid down in law. For example, permitted mode of dress in some times of places was strictly regulated, with sumptuous dressing only for the high ranks of society and aristocracy; sumptuary laws stipulated the dress and jewellery appropriate for a person's social rank and station.

### Theoretical models

Definitions of social classes reflect a number of sociological perspectives, informed by anthropology, economics, psychology, and sociology. The major perspectives historically have been Marxism and Structural functionalism. The common stratum model of class divides society into a simple hierarchy of working class, middle class and upper class. Within academia, two broad schools of definitions emerge: those aligned with 20th-century sociological stratum models of class society, and those aligned with the 19th-century historical materialist economic models of the Marxists and anarchists. Another distinction can be drawn between analytical concepts of social class, such as the Marxist and Weberian traditions, and the more empirical traditions such as socio-economic status approach, which notes the correlation of income, education and wealth with social outcomes without necessarily implying a particular theory of social structure.

## **Marxist**

Main article: Class in Marxist theory

"[Classes are] large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labor, and, consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it."

Vladimir Lenin, A Great Beginning - June, 1919

For Marx, class is a combination of objective and subjective factors. Objectively, a class shares a common relationship to the means of production. Subjectively, the members will necessarily have some perception ("class consciousness") of their similarity and common interest. Class consciousness is not simply an awareness of one's own class interest but is also a set of shared views regarding how society should be organized legally, culturally, socially and politically. These class relations are reproduced through time.

In Marxist theory, the class structure of the capitalist mode of production is characterized by the conflict between two main classes: the bourgeoisie, the capitalists who own the means of production, and the much larger proletariat (or 'working class') who must sell their own labour power (See also: wage labour). This is the fundamental economic structure of work and property, a state of inequality that is normalized and reproduced through cultural ideology.

Marxists explain the history of "civilized" societies in terms of a war of classes between those who control production and those who produce the goods or services in society. In the Marxist view of capitalism, this is a conflict between capitalists (bourgeoisie) and wage-workers (the proletariat). For Marxists, class antagonism is rooted in the situation that control over social production necessarily entails control over the class which produces goods—in capitalism this is the exploitation of workers by the bourgeoisie. Furthermore, "in countries where modern civilisation has become fully developed, a new class of petty bourgeois has been formed". "An industrial army of workmen, under the command of a capitalist, requires, like a real army, officers (managers) and sergeants (foremen, over-lookers) who, while the work is being done, command in the name of the capitalist".

Marx himself argued that it was the goal of the proletariat itself to displace the capitalist system with socialism, changing the social relationships underpinning the class system and then developing into a future communist society in which: "...the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." (Communist Manifesto) This would mark the beginning of a classless society in which human needs rather than profit would be motive for production. In a society with democratic control and production for use, there would be no class, no state and no need for money.

## **Weberian**

Main article: Three-component theory of stratification

Max Weber formulated a three-component theory of stratification, that saw political power as an interplay between "class", "status" and "group power". Weber believed that class position was determined by a person's skills and education, rather than by their relationship to the means of production. Both Marx and Weber agreed that social stratification was undesirable, however where Marx believed that stratification would only disappear



along with capitalism and private property, Weber believed that the solution lay in providing "equal opportunity" within a competitive, capitalist system.

Weber derived many of his key concepts on social stratification by examining the social structure of Germany. He noted that contrary to Marx's theories, stratification was based on more than simply ownership of capital. Weber examined how many members of the aristocracy lacked economic wealth yet had strong political power. Many wealthy families lacked prestige and power, for example, because they were Jewish. Weber introduced three independent factors that form his theory of stratification hierarchy; class, status, and power:

**Class:** A person's economic position in a society. Weber differs from Marx in that he does not see this as the supreme factor in stratification. Weber noted how managers of corporations or industries control firms they do not own.

- **Status:** A person's prestige, social honor, or popularity in a society. Weber noted that political power was not rooted in capital value solely, but also in one's individual status. Poets or saints, for example, can possess immense influence on society with often little economic worth.
- **Power:** A person's ability to get their way despite the resistance of others. For example, individuals in state jobs, such as an employee of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or a member of the United States Congress, may hold little property or status but they still hold immense power.

## **Great British Class Survey**

Main article: [Great British Class Survey](#)

On April 2, 2013 the results of a survey conducted by the BBC developed in collaboration with academic experts and slated to be published in the journal *Sociology* were published online. The results released were based on a survey of 160,000 residents of the United Kingdom most of whom lived in England and described themselves as "white." Class was defined and measured according to the amount and kind of economic, cultural, and social resources reported. Economic capital was defined as income and assets; cultural capital as amount and type of cultural interests and activities, and social capital as the quantity and social status of their friends, family and personal and business contacts. This theoretical framework was developed by Pierre Bourdieu who first published his theory of social distinction in 1979.

## **The common three-stratum model**

Today, concepts of social class often assume three general categories: a very wealthy and powerful upper class that owns and controls the means of production; a middle class of professional workers, small business owners, and low-level managers; and a lower class, who rely on low-paying wage jobs for their livelihood and often experience poverty.

### **Upper class**

A symbolic image of three orders of feudal society in Europe prior to the French Revolution: The rural third estate carrying the clergy and the nobility.

The upper class is the social class composed of those who are wealthy, well-born, or both. They usually wield the greatest political power. In some countries, wealth alone is sufficient to allow entry into the upper class. In others, only people born into certain aristocratic bloodlines are considered members of the upper class, and

those who gain great wealth through commercial activity are looked down upon as nouveau riche. In the United Kingdom, for example, the Upper Classes are the aristocracy and royalty, with wealth playing a less important role in class status. Many Aristocratic Peerages Titles have 'seats' attached to them, with the holder of the title (e.g. Earl of Bristol) and his family being the custodians of the house, but not the owners. Many of these require high expenditures, so wealth is typically needed. Many Aristocratic Peerages and their homes are parts of estates, owned and run by the title holder with moneys generated by the land, rents, or other sources wealth. In America, however, where there is no aristocracy or royalty, the Upper Class status belongs to the extremely wealthy, the so-called 'super-rich', though there is some tendency even in America for those with old family wealth to look down on those who have earned their money in business, the struggle between New Money and Old Money.

The upper class is generally contained within the wealthiest 1 or 2 percent of the population. Members of the upper class are often born into it, and are distinguished by immense wealth which is passed from generation to generation in the form of estates. Sometimes members of the upper class are called "the one percent".

### **Middle class**

Main articles: Middle class and Bourgeoisie

The middle class is the most contested of the three categorizations, the broad group of people in contemporary society who fall socio-economically between the lower and upper classes. One example of the contestation of this term is that in the United States "middle class" is applied very broadly and includes people who would elsewhere be considered working class. Middle class workers are sometimes called "white-collar workers".

Theorists such as Ralf Dahrendorf have noted the tendency toward an enlarged middle class in modern Western societies, particularly in relation to the necessity of an educated work force in technological economies.[27] Perspectives concerning globalization and neocolonialism, such as dependency theory, suggest this is due to the shift of low-level labour to developing nations and the Third World.

### **Lower class**

In the United States the lowest stratum of the working class, the underclass, often lives in urban areas with low-quality civil services.

Main articles: Working class and Proletariat

Lower class (occasionally described as working class) are those employed in low-paying wage jobs with very little economic security.

The working class is sometimes separated into those who are employed but lacking financial security, and an underclass—those who are long-term unemployed and/or homeless, especially those receiving welfare from the state. The latter is analogous to the Marxist term "lumpenproletariat". Members of the working class are sometimes called blue-collar workers.

In the United States, the terms working class and blue-collar may refer to employed and hard-working members of the middle-middle and lower-middle class, while the upper-middle class in the United States often refers to employment positions that require a college or graduate degree.

### **Consequences of class position**

A person's socioeconomic class has wide-ranging effects. It may determine the schools they are able to attend, the jobs open to them, who they may marry, and their treatment by police and the courts.

## **Education**

A person's social class has a significant impact on their educational opportunities. Not only are upper-class parents able to send their children to exclusive schools that are perceived to be better, but in many places state-supported schools for children of the upper class are of a much higher quality than those the state provides for children of the lower classes. This lack of good schools is one factor that perpetuates the class divide across generations.

In 1977, British cultural theorist Paul Willis published a study titled "Learning to Labour", in which he investigated the connection between social class and education. In his study, he found that a group of working class schoolchildren had developed an antipathy towards the acquisition of knowledge as being outside their class, and therefore undesirable, perpetuating their presence in the working class.

## **Health and nutrition**

Members of the working class, and particularly peasantries, starve to death at a much higher rate than petits-bourgeois professionals or capitalists.

A person's social class has a significant impact on their physical health, their ability to receive adequate medical care and nutrition, and their life expectancy. Lower-class people experience a wide array of health problems as a result of their economic status. They are unable to use health care as often, and when they do it is of lower quality, even though they generally tend to experience a much higher rate of health issues. Lower-class families have higher rates of infant mortality, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and disabling physical injuries.

Additionally, poor people tend to work in much more hazardous conditions, yet generally have much less (if any) health insurance provided for them, as compared to middle and upper class workers.

## **Employment**

The conditions at a person's job vary greatly depending on class. Those in the upper-middle class and middle class enjoy greater freedoms in their occupations. They are usually more respected, enjoy more diversity, and are able to exhibit some authority. Those in lower classes tend to feel more alienated and have lower work satisfaction overall. The physical conditions of the workplace differ greatly between classes. While middle-class workers may "suffer alienating conditions" or "lack of job satisfaction", blue-collar workers are more apt to suffer alienating, often routine, work with obvious physical health hazards, injury, and even death.

## **Class conflict**

Main article: [Class conflict](#)

Class conflict, frequently referred to as "class warfare" or "class struggle," is the tension or antagonism which exists in society due to competing socioeconomic interests and desires between people of different classes.

For Marx, the history of class society was a history of class conflict. He pointed to the successful rise of the bourgeoisie, and the necessity of revolutionary violence—a heightened form of class conflict—in securing the bourgeoisie rights that supported the capitalist economy.

Marx believed that the exploitation and poverty inherent in capitalism were a pre-existing form of class conflict. Marx believed that wage labourers would need to revolt to bring about a more equitable distribution of wealth and political power.

### **Classless society**

Main article: Classless society

"Classless society" refers to a society in which no one is born into a social class. Distinctions of wealth, income, education, culture, or social network might arise and would only be determined by individual experience and achievement in such a society.

Since these distinctions are difficult to avoid, advocates, such as Anarchists, communists, etc. of a classless society propose various means to achieve and maintain it and attach varying degrees of importance to it as an end in their overall programs/philosophy.

Relationship between race/ethnicity and class

Race and other large-scale groupings can also influence class standing. The association of particular ethnic groups with class statuses is common in many societies. As a result of conquest or internal ethnic differentiation, a ruling class is often ethnically homogenous and particular races or ethnic groups in some societies are legally or customarily restricted to occupying particular class positions. Which ethnicities are considered as belonging to high or low classes varies from society to society. In modern societies strict legal links between ethnicity and class have been drawn, such as in apartheid, the caste system in Africa, the position of the Burakumin in Japanese society, and the Casta system in Latin America

## Chapter - 3

**Sociology** is the study of human social behavior and its origins, development, organizations, and institutions. It is a social science which uses various methods of empirical investigation and critical analysis to develop a body of knowledge about human social actions, social structure and functions. A goal for many sociologists is to conduct research which may be applied directly to social policy and welfare, while others focus primarily on refining the theoretical understanding of social processes. Subject matter ranges from the micro level of individual agency and interaction to the macro level of systems and the social structure.[4]

The traditional focuses of sociology include social stratification, social class, social mobility, religion, secularization, law, and deviance. As all spheres of human activity are affected by the interplay between social structure and individual agency, sociology has gradually expanded its focus to further subjects, such as health, medical, military and penal institutions, the Internet, environmental sociology, political economy and the role of social activity in the development of scientific knowledge.

The range of social scientific methods has also expanded. Social researchers draw upon a variety of qualitative and quantitative techniques. The linguistic and cultural turns of the mid-twentieth century led to increasingly interpretative, hermeneutic, and philosophic approaches to the analysis of society. Conversely, recent decades have seen the rise of new analytically, mathematically and computationally rigorous techniques, such as agent-based modelling and social network analysis.

### Classification

Sociology should not be confused with various general social studies courses which bear little relation to sociological theory or social science research methodology. The US National Science Foundation, classifies Sociology as a STEM Field

### Social studies

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

This article is about the integrated study to promote civic competence. For the general study of society and human behavior, see Social sciences. For the band Social Studies, see Social Studies (Band). For the Carla Bley album, see Social Studies (Carla Bley album). For the Loudon Wainwright III album, see Social Studies (Loudon Wainwright III album).

Social studies is the "integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence," as defined by the U.S. American National Council for the Social Studies.[1] Social studies is most commonly recognized as the name of a course or set of courses taught in primary and secondary schools or elementary, middle, and secondary schools, but may also refer to the study of aspects of human society at certain post-secondary and tertiary schools around the globe. Many such courses are interdisciplinary and draw upon various fields, including sociology but also political science, history, economics, religious studies, geography, psychology, anthropology, and civics.

At the elementary school level, social studies generally focuses first on the local community and family. By middle and high school, the social studies curriculum becomes more discipline-based and content-specific. Social studies varies greatly as a subject between countries and curricula and is not synonymous with sociology

or social science; some courses borrow heavily from the social and political sciences, whereas others are created independently for schools. By contrast with sociology, social studies courses often consist of a general and opinion-led discussion of topics without reference to academic theorists or research.

## **Sociological theory**

"Sociological perspective" redirects here. For the journal, see *Sociological Perspectives* (journal).

This article may require cleanup to meet Wikipedia's quality standards. The specific problem is: large amounts irrelevant, repetitive or incorrect content.. Please help improve this article if you can. (April 2013)

In sociology, sociological theories are statements of how and why particular facts about the social world are related. They range in scope from concise descriptions of a single social process to paradigms for analysis and interpretation. Some sociological theories explain aspects of the social world and enable prediction about future events, while others function as broad perspectives which guide further sociological analyses.

## **Sociological theory vs. social theory**

Kenneth Allan proposed the distinction between sociological theory and social theory. In Allan's usage, sociological theory consists of abstract and testable propositions about society. It often heavily relies on the scientific method, which aims for objectivity, and attempts to avoid passing value judgments. In contrast, social theory, according to Allan, focuses on commentary and critique of modern society rather than explanation. Social theory is often closer to Continental philosophy, less concerned with objectivity and derivation of testable propositions, and more likely to pass normative judgments. Sociological theory is generally created only by sociologists, while social theory can frequently come from other disciplines.

Prominent sociological theorists include Talcott Parsons, Robert K. Merton, Randall Collins, James Samuel Coleman, Peter Blau, Marshall McLuhan, Immanuel Wallerstein, George Homans, Harrison White, Theda Skocpol, Gerhard Lenski, Pierre van den Berghe and Jonathan H. Turner. Prominent social theorists include: Jürgen Habermas, Anthony Giddens, Michel Foucault, Dorothy Smith, Alfred Schütz, Jeffrey Alexander, and Jacques Derrida. There are also prominent scholars who could be seen as being in between social and sociological theories, such as Harold Garfinkel, Herbert Blumer, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Pierre Bourdieu and Erving Goffman.

## **History of sociological theories**

For more details on this topic, see history of sociology.

The field of sociology itself and sociological theory by extension is relatively new. Both date back to the 18th and 19th centuries. The drastic social changes of that period, such as industrialization, urbanization, and the rise of democratic states. The oldest sociological theories deal with broad historical processes relating to these changes. Since then, sociological theories have come to encompass most aspects of society, including communities, organizations and relationships.

## **List of sociological theories**

Traditional / classical theories

Social conflict is the struggle between segments of society over valued resources. Due to social conflict, it turned a small population into capitalists in the nineteenth century. Capitalists, are people who own and operate

factories and other businesses in pursuit of profits. However, capitalism turned most people into industrial workers, whom Marx called proletarians. Proletarians are people who sell their labour for wages. Conflict theories draw attention to power differentials, such as class, gender and race conflict, and contrast historically dominant ideologies. It is therefore a macro level analysis of society that sees society as an arena of inequality that generates conflict and social change. Karl Marx is the father of the social conflict theory, which is a component of the four major paradigms of sociology. Other important sociologists associated with this theory include Harriet Martineau, Jane Addams and W.E.B. Du Bois. This sociological approach doesn't look at how social structures help society to operate, but instead looks at how "social patterns" can cause some people in society to be dominant, and others to be oppressed. However, some criticisms to this theory are that it disregards how shared values and the way in which people rely on each other help to unify the society.

Structural functionalism or Functionalism is a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. This approach looks at society through a macro-level orientation, which is a broad focus on the social structures that shapes society as a whole. This approach looks at both social structure and social functions. Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements; namely norms, customs, traditions and institutions. Important sociologists associated with this approach include Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, Herbert Spencer, Talcott Parsons, and Robert K. Merton. A common analogy, popularized by Herbert Spencer, presents these parts of society as "organs" that work toward the proper functioning of the "body" as a whole. A criticism for this approach is that it disregards any inequalities that exists within a society, which in turn causes tension and conflict and the approach ends up being politically conservative. So in order to focus on this topic, the social conflict theory was made.

Interpretivism or Symbolic interaction; also known as Interactionism, is a sociological theory that places emphasis on micro-scale social interaction to provide subjective meaning in human behavior, the social process and pragmatism. The approach focuses on creating a framework for building a theory that sees society as the product of the everyday interactions of individuals. Society is nothing more than the shared reality that people construct as they interact with one another. This approach sees people interacting in countless settings using symbolic communications. Therefore, society is a complex, ever-changing mosaic of subjective meanings. However some criticisms to this approach are that it only looks at what is happening in one particular social situation, and disregards the effects that culture, race or gender may have on the people in that situation. Some important sociologists associated with this approach include Max Weber, George Herbert Mead, Erving Goffman, George Homans and Peter Blau.

### **Contemporary perspectives**

Positivism is a philosophy developed by Auguste Comte (widely regarded as the first true sociologist) in the middle of the 19th century that stated that the only authentic knowledge is scientific knowledge, and that such knowledge can only come from positive affirmation of theories through strict scientific method. Society operates according to laws like the physical world. Introspective and intuitional attempts to gain knowledge are rejected. The positivist approach has been a recurrent theme in the history of western thought, from the Ancient Egyptians to the present day.

Antipositivism (also non-positivist or interpretive sociology) is the view in social science that the social realm may not be subject to the same methods of investigation as the natural world; that academics must reject empiricism and the scientific method in the conduct of social research. Interpretivists hold that researchers should focus on understanding the meanings that social actions have for the people being studied.

Field theory examines social fields, which are social environments in which competition takes place (e.g., the field of electronics manufacturers). It is concerned with how individuals construct such fields, with how the fields are structured, and with the effects the field has on people occupying different positions in it.

Middle Range theory is an approach to sociological theorizing aimed at integrating theory and empirical research, developed by Robert K. Merton. It is currently the de facto dominant approach to sociological theory construction, especially in the United States. Middle range theory starts with an empirical phenomenon (as opposed to a broad abstract entity like the social system) and abstracts from it to create general statements that can be verified by data.

Mathematical theory, also known as formal theory, is the use of mathematics to construct social theories. Mathematical sociology aims to take sociological theory, which is strong in intuitive content but weak from a formal point of view, and to express it in formal terms. The benefits of this approach include increased clarity and the ability to use mathematics to derive implications of a theory that cannot be arrived at intuitively. The models typically used in mathematical sociology allow sociologists to understand how predictable local interactions are often able to elicit global patterns of social structure.

Socialization is the means by which human infants begin to acquire the skills necessary to perform as a functional member of their society, and are among the most influential learning processes one can experience. Sociologists use the term socialization to refer to the lifelong social experience by which people develop their human potential and learn culture. Unlike other living species, humans need socialization within their cultures for survival.

Structure and agency theory – The question over the primacy of either structure or agency in human behavior is a central debate in the social sciences. In this context, agency refers to the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices. Structure, in contrast, refers to the recurrent patterned arrangements which influence or limit the choices and opportunities available.

Critical theory is any sociological theory that aims to critique and change society and culture, not simply to document and understand it.

Ethnomethodology examines how people make sense out of their social lives in the process of living, as if each individual were a researcher engaged in inquiry. It is the study of how people attempt to make sense of their everyday surroundings. Harold Garfinkel (1967) is the one who devised this approach. It begins by pointing out that everyday behavior rests on a number of assumptions. Those assumptions are usually predictable due to the reaction of people or their behavior in everyday reality.

Interpretive sociology is a theoretical perspective based on the work of Max Weber, proposes that social, economic and historical research can never be fully empirical or descriptive as one must always approach it with a conceptual apparatus.

Network theory is a structural approach to sociology that is most closely associated with the work of Harrison White, who views norms and behaviors as embedded in chains of social relations.

Phenomenological sociology is an approach within the field of sociology that aims to reveal what role human awareness plays in the production of social action, social situations and social worlds. In essence, phenomenology is the belief that society is a human construction. The social phenomenology of Alfred Schütz



influenced the development of the social constructionism and ethnomethodology. It was originally developed by Edmund Husserl.

Post-colonial theory is a post-modern approach that consists of the reactions to and the analysis of colonialism.

Rational choice theory models social behavior as the interaction of utility maximizing individuals. "Rational" implies cost-effectiveness is balanced against cost to accomplish a utility maximizing interaction. Costs are extrinsic, meaning intrinsic values such as feelings of guilt will not be accounted for in the cost to commit a crime.

Social constructionism is a sociological theory of knowledge that considers how social phenomena develop in particular social contexts.

Dramaturgy or Dramaturgical Perspective is a specialized symbolic interactionism paradigm developed by Erving Goffman, seeing life as a performance. As "actors," we have a status, which is the part that we play, where we are given various roles. These roles serve as a script, supplying dialogue and action for the characters (the people in reality). They also involve props and certain settings. For instance, a doctor (the role), uses instruments like a heart monitor (the prop), all the while using medical terms (the script), while in his doctor's office (the setting). In addition, our performance is the "presentation of self," which is how people perceive us, based on the ways in which we portray ourselves. This process, sometimes called impression management, begins with the idea of personal performance.

Anomie theory, also known as normlessness, is where society provides little moral guidance to individuals. It is difficult for individuals to find their place in the society without clear rules or norms to help guide them. Sociologist Emile Durkheim observed that social period of disruption. The economic depression results in greater anomie and higher rates of suicide and crimes. Merton theorizes that anomie (normative breakdown) and some forms of deviant behavior derive largely from a disjunction between "culturally prescribed aspirations" of a society and "socially structured avenues for realizing those aspirations. In other words, a gap between people's aspirations and their access to legitimate means of achieving them results in a breakdown of values, at both societal and individual levels. In *The Division of Labor in Society*, Durkheim described anomie as one result of an inequitable division of labour within the society; such inequality, Durkheim wrote, causes a breakdown or lack of rules in society and results in class conflict. In *Suicide*, Durkheim viewed anomie as an outcome of rapid social and economic change and hypothesized that it explained a particular kind of suicide that occurs when individuals experience marked and sudden changes in their social condition. Broadly speaking, then, during times of great upheaval, increasing numbers of individuals' 'cease to accept the moral legitimacy of society,'" as sociologist Anthony R. Mawson, University of Keele, UK, notes.

Grounded theory is a systematic methodology in the social sciences involving the generation of theory from data.

Thomas theorem refers to situations that are defined as real are real in their consequences. Suggests that the reality people construct in their interaction has real consequences for the future. For example, a teacher who believes a certain student to be intellectually gifted may well encourage exceptional academic performance.

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**Social Exchange Theory** says that the interaction that occurs between people can be partly based on what someone may "gain and lose" by being with others. For example, when people think about who they may date, they'll look to see if the other person will offer just as much (or perhaps more) than they do. This can include judging an individual's looks and appearance, or their social status.

**Feminism** is a collection of movements aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, and social rights for women. The theory focuses on how gender inequality shapes social life. This approach shows how sexuality both reflects patterns of social inequality and helps to perpetuate them. Feminism, from a social conflict perspective, focuses on gender inequality and links sexuality to the domination of women by men.

**Postmodernism** is a theoretical perspective approach that criticises modernism and believes anti-theory and anti-method and has a great mistrust of grand theories and ideologies. Due to human subjectivity, theorists believe that discovering the objective truth is impossible or unachievable. This is due to a perspective that sees society as ever-changing along with the assumption that truth is constantly subject to change. A post-modern theorist's purpose is to achieve understanding through observation, rather than data collection. This approach uses both micro and macro level analysis. A question that is asked by this approach would be, "How do we understand societies or interpersonal relations, while rejecting the theories and methods of the social sciences, and our assumptions about human nature? or How does power permeate social relations or society, and change with the circumstances? " An example of a famous Post Modernist is Michael Foucault. He was a French philosopher and one of the most influential post modernist of all time.

**Pure sociology** is a theoretical paradigm developed by Donald Black that explains variation in social life with social geometry, that is, locations in social space. A recent extension of this idea is that fluctuations in social space - called social time - are the cause of social conflict.

### Theories in subfields of sociology

**Criminology** - The scientific study of crime and criminals.

- The general theory of crime: States that the main factor behind criminal behaviour is the individual's lack of self-control.
- Differential association theory: The theory was developed by Edwin Sutherland and it examines the acts of a criminal from the perspective that they are learned behaviours.
- Labeling theory: It is the main idea that deviance and conformity result not so much from what people do as from how others respond to these actions. It also states that a society's reaction to specific behaviors are a major determinant of how a person may come to adopt a "deviant" label. This theory stresses the relativity of deviance, the idea that people may define the same behavior in any number of ways. Thus the labelling theory is a micro-level analysis and is often classified in the social-interactionist approach. Bryant, Lee. "The Labelling Theory", History Learning Site, 2000-2012, retrieved March 13, 2013.

- **Control theory:** The theory was developed by Travis Hirschi and it states that a weak bond between an individual and society itself allows the individual to defy societal norms and adopt behaviors that are deviant in nature.
- **Rational choice theory:** States that people commit crimes when it is rational for them to do so according to analyses of costs and benefits, and that crime can be reduced by minimizing benefits and maximizing costs to the "would be" criminal.
- **Social disorganization theory:** States that crime is more likely to occur in areas where social institutions are unable to directly control groups of individuals.
- **Social learning theory:** States that people adopt new behaviors through observational learning in their environments.
- **Strain theory:** States that a social structure within a society may cause people to commit crimes. Specifically, the extent and type of deviance people engage in depend on whether a society provides the means to achieve cultural goals.
- **Subcultural theory:** States that behavior is influenced by factors such as class, ethnicity, and family status. This theory's primary focus is on juvenile delinquency.
- **Psychopath:** serious criminals who do not feel shame or guilt from their actions. They do not fear punishment and have little sympathy for the people they harm. These individuals are said to have a psychological disorder as psychopathy or antisocial personality disorder. They exhibit a variety of maladaptive traits such as rarely experiencing genuine affection for others. They are skilled at faking affection, are irresponsible, impulsive, tolerate little frustration and they pursue immediate gratification. Robert Hare, one of the world's leading experts on psychopathy, developed an important assessment device for psychopathy, the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised. For many, this measure is the single, most important advancement to date toward what will hopefully become our ultimate understanding of psychopathy (McCann, Weiten, 641).
- **Containment theory:** when an individual has a stronger conscience it will make one more tolerable to frustrations and therefore are less likely to be involved in criminal activities.
- **White-collar crime:** defined by Edwin Sutherland as crime committed by persons of high social position in the course of their occupation (Sutherland and Cressey, 1978:44). The white-collar crime involves people making use of their occupational position to enrich themselves and others illegally, which often causes public harm. In white-collar crime, public harm wreaked by false advertising, marketing of unsafe products, embezzlement, and bribery of public officials is more extensive than most people think, most of which go unnoticed and unpunished.
- **Corporate crime:** refers to the illegal actions of a corporation or people acting on its behalf. Corporate crime ranges from knowingly selling faulty or dangerous products to purposely polluting the environment. Like white-collar crime, most cases of corporate crime go unpunished, and many are not even known to the public.
- **Organized crime:** a business that supplies illegal goods or services, including sex, drugs, and gambling. This type of crime expanded among immigrants, who found that society was not always willing to share its opportunities with them. A famous example of organized crime is the Italian Mafia.

- Hate crime: a criminal act against a person or a person's property by an offender motivated by racial, ethnic, religious or other bias. Hate crimes may refer to race, ancestry, religion, sexual orientation and physical disabilities. According to a Statistics Canada publication, "Jewish" community has been the most likely the victim of hate crime in Canada during 2001-2002. Overall, about 57 percent of hate crimes are motivated by ethnicity and race, targeting mainly Blacks and Asians, while 43 percent target religion, mainly Judaism and Islam. A relatively small 9 percent is motivated by sexual orientation, targets gays and lesbians.

Physical traits do not distinguish criminals from non criminals, but genetic factors together with environmental factors are strong predictors of adult crime and violence. Most psychologists see deviance as the result of "unsuccessful" socialization and abnormality in an individual personality

## **Methodology**

Methodology is the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study, or the theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge. It, typically, encompasses concepts such as paradigm, theoretical model, phases and quantitative or qualitative techniques.

A Methodology does not set out to provide solutions but offers the theoretical underpinning for understanding which method, set of methods or so called "best practices" can be applied to a specific case.

It has been defined also as follows:

1. "the analysis of the principles of methods, rules, and postulates employed by a discipline";
2. "the systematic study of methods that are, can be, or have been applied within a discipline";
3. "the study or description of methods".

### **Relation to methods and theories**

Generally speaking, methodology does not describe specific methods, even though much attention is given to the nature and kinds of processes to be followed in a particular procedure or in attaining an objective. When proper to a study of methodology, such processes constitute a constructive generic framework; thus they may be broken down in sub-processes, combined, or their sequence changed.

### **Methodology as a buzzword**

In recent years, the word methodology has become a "pretentious substitute for the word method". Many recent uses of the word methodology mistakenly treat it a synonym for method or body of methods. Doing this shifts it away from its true epistemological meaning and reduces it to being the procedure itself, the set of tools or the instruments that should have been its outcome. A methodology is the design process for carrying out research or the development of a procedure and is not in itself an instrument for doing those things. Using it as a synonym for method or set of methods, leads to misinterpretation and undermines the proper analysis that should go into designing research. Generally for any research study both primary and secondary research are done which facilitates in the better understanding of the entire study. Primary research helps garner relevant and adequate data of the current state of affairs pertaining to any subject and provides an insight into the exact nature of the problem. Owing to the broad and complex nature of this research topic which would require delving into many

aspects of the study including an ethnographic study which would in turn include a longitudinal time horizon which cannot be possibly encompassed within this research as it goes "

### Relation to paradigm and algorithm

In theoretical work, the development of paradigms satisfies most or all of the criteria for methodology. A paradigm, like an algorithm, is a constructive framework, meaning that the so-called construction is a logical, rather than a physical, array of connected elements.

### **Social network diagram**

Functionalist systems theorists such as Niklas Luhmann remained dominant forces in sociology up to the end of the century. In 1994, Robert K. Merton won the National Medal of Science for his contributions to the sociology of science. The positivist tradition is popular to this day, particularly in the United States. The discipline's two most widely cited American journals, the *American Journal of Sociology* and the *American Sociological Review*, primarily publish research in the positivist tradition, with ASR exhibiting greater diversity (the *British Journal of Sociology*, on the other hand, publishes primarily non-positivist articles). The twentieth century saw improvements to the quantitative methodologies employed in sociology. The development of longitudinal studies that follow the same population over the course of years or decades enabled researchers to study long-term phenomena and increased the researchers' ability to infer causality. The increase in the size of data sets produced by the new survey methods was followed by the invention of new statistical techniques for analyzing this data. Analysis of this sort is usually performed with statistical software packages such as SAS, Stata, or SPSS.

**Social network analysis** is an example of a new paradigm in the positivist tradition. The influence of social network analysis is pervasive in many sociological sub fields such as economic sociology (see the work of J. Clyde Mitchell, Harrison White, or Mark Granovetter, for example), organizational behavior, historical sociology, political sociology, or the sociology of education. There is also a minor revival of a more independent, empirical sociology in the spirit of C. Wright Mills, and his studies of the Power Elite in the United States of America, according to Stanley Aronowitz.

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### **Social fact**

In sociology, **social facts** are the values, cultural norms, and social structures which transcend the individual and are capable of exercising a social constraint. French sociologist Émile Durkheim, who put the term into broad circulation, states that in the study of society, "The first and fundamental rule is to consider social facts as things." These "things" form the distinctive subject matter of sociology.

### **Durkheim's social fact**

For Durkheim, sociology was 'the science of social facts'. The task of the sociologist was to search for correlations between social facts in order to reveal laws of social structure. Having discovered these, the sociologist could then determine whether a given society is 'healthy' or 'pathological' and prescribe appropriate remedies. Within social facts Durkheim distinguished material and nonmaterial social facts. Material social facts have to do with the physical social structures which influence the individual. Nonmaterial social facts are values, norms and conceptually held beliefs.

Among the most noted of Durkheim's work was his discovery of the 'social fact' of suicide rates. By carefully examining police suicide statistics in different districts, Durkheim was able to 'demonstrate' that the suicide rate of Catholic communities is lower than that of Protestant communities. He ascribed this to a social (as opposed to individual) cause. This was considered groundbreaking and remains influential even today.

Initially, Durkheim's 'discovery of social facts' was seen as significant because it promised to make it possible to study the behavior of entire societies, rather than just of particular individuals. Modern sociologists refer to Durkheim's studies for two quite different purposes, however:

- As graphic demonstrations of how careful the social researcher must be to ensure that data gathered for analysis is accurate. Durkheim's reported suicide rates were, it is now clear, largely an artifact of the way in which particular deaths were classified as 'suicide' or 'non-suicide' by different communities. What he had actually discovered then was not different suicide rates at all—it was different ways of thinking about suicide.
- As an entry point into the study of social meaning, and the way in which apparently identical individual acts often cannot be classified empirically. Social acts (even such an apparently private and individual act as suicide), in this modern view, are always seen (and classified) by social actors. Discovering the 'social facts' about such acts, it follows, is generally neither possible nor desirable, but discovering the way in which individuals perceive and classify particular acts is what offers insight. A further complication is introduced by asking about the status of our "discovery" of these perceptions and classifications. After all, don't such "discoveries" also reflect socially embedded practices of classification? But if the alleged discoveries of perceptions of social facts aren't therefore dubious, it's hard to see why the original claims about the social facts are.

### **Mauss's total social fact**

For Marcel Mauss (Durkheim's nephew and sometime collaborator) a total social fact (French *fait social total*) is "an activity that has implications throughout society, in the economic, legal, political, and religious spheres".[4]

Diverse strands of social and psychological life are woven together through what he comes to call 'total social facts'. A total social fact is such that it informs and organizes seemingly quite distinct practices and institutions.

The term was popularized by Marcel Mauss in his classic *The Gift*:

"These phenomena are at once legal, economic, religious, aesthetic, morphological and so on. They are legal in that they concern individual and collective rights, organized and diffuse morality; they may be entirely obligatory, or subject simply to praise or disapproval. They are at once political and domestic, being of interest both to classes and to clans and families. They are religious; they concern true religion, animism, magic and diffuse religious mentality. They are economic, for the notions of value, utility, interest, luxury, w Principles of sociology

According to Durkheim, sociologists, without preconceptions and prejudices, must study social facts as real, objective phenomena.

Durkheim wrote:

“ The first and most fundamental rule is: Consider social facts as things. ”

This implies that sociology must respect and apply a recognized objective, scientific method, bringing it as close as possible to the other exact sciences. This method must at all cost avoid prejudice and subjective judgment

ealth, acquisition, accumulation, consumption and liberal and sumptuous expenditure are all present

## **Scientific method**

The **scientific method** is a body of techniques for investigating phenomena, acquiring new knowledge, or correcting and integrating previous knowledge To be termed scientific, a method of inquiry must be based on empirical and measurable evidence subject to specific principles of reasoning. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the scientific method as: "a method or procedure that has characterized natural science since the 17th century, consisting in systematic observation, measurement, and experiment, and the formulation, testing, and modification of hypotheses."

The chief characteristic which distinguishes the scientific method from other methods of acquiring knowledge is that scientists seek to let reality speak for itself supporting a theory when a theory's predictions are confirmed and challenging a theory when its predictions prove false. Although procedures vary from one field of inquiry to another, identifiable features distinguish scientific inquiry from other methods of obtaining knowledge.

Scientific researchers propose hypotheses as explanations of phenomena and design experimental studies to test these hypotheses via predictions which can be derived from them. These steps must be repeatable to guard against mistake or confusion in any particular experimenter. Theories that encompass wider domains of inquiry may bind many independently derived hypotheses together in a coherent, supportive structure. Theories, in turn, may help form new hypotheses or place groups of hypotheses into context.

Scientific inquiry is generally intended to be as objective as possible in order to reduce biased interpretations of results. Another basic expectation is to document, archive, and share all data and methodology so they are available for careful scrutiny by other scientists, giving them the opportunity to verify the results by attempting to reproduce them. This practice, called full disclosure, also allows statistical measures of the reliability of the data to be established (when data is sampled or compared to chance).

## **Social research**

Social research refers to research conducted by social scientists, which follows by the systematic plan. Social research methods can generally vary along a quantitative/qualitative dimension.

- Quantitative designs approach social phenomena through quantifiable evidence, and often rely on statistical analysis of many cases (or across intentionally designed treatments in an experiment) to create valid and reliable general claims. Related to quantity.
- Qualitative designs emphasize understanding of social phenomena through direct observation, communication with participants, or analysis of texts, and may stress contextual subjective accuracy over generality. Related to quality.

While various methods may sometimes be classified as quantitative or qualitative, most methods contain elements of both. For example, qualitative data analysis often involves a fairly structured approach to coding the raw data into systematic information, and quantifying intercoder reliability. Thus, a strong distinction between "qualitative" and "quantitative" should really be seen as a somewhat more complex relationship, such that many methods may be both qualitative and quantitative.

Social scientists employ a range of methods in order to analyse a vast breadth of social phenomena; from census survey data derived from millions of individuals, to the in-depth analysis of a single agents' social experiences; from monitoring what is happening on contemporary streets, to the investigation of ancient historical documents. The methods rooted in classical sociology and statistics have formed the basis for research in other disciplines, such as political science, media studies, program evaluation and market research.

## **The Rules of Sociological Method**

The Rules of Sociological Method (French: *Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique*) is a book by Émile Durkheim, first published in 1895. It is recognized as being the direct result of Durkheim's own project of establishing sociology as a positivist social science. Durkheim is seen as one of the fathers of sociology, and this work, his manifesto of sociology. Durkheim distinguishes sociology from other sciences and justifies his rationale. Sociology is the science of social facts. Durkheim suggests two central theses, without which sociology would not be a science:

1. It must have a specific object of study. Unlike philosophy or psychology, sociology's proper object of study are social facts.
2. It must respect and apply a recognized objective scientific method, bringing it as close as possible to the other exact sciences. This method must at all cost avoid prejudice and subjective judgment.



This book was one of the defining books for the new science of sociology. Durkheim's argument that social sciences should be approached with the same rigorous scientific method as used in natural sciences was seen as revolutionary for the time.

The Rules is seen as an important text in sociology and is a popular book on sociological theory courses. The book's meaning is still being debated by sociologists.

Sociology as the study of social facts

Durkheim's concern is to establish sociology as a science. Argue for a place for sociology among other sciences he wrote:

“ Sociology is, then, not an auxiliary of any other science; it is itself a distinct and autonomous science. ”

To give sociology a place in the academic world and to ensure that it is a legitimate science, it must have an object that is clear and distinct from philosophy or psychology. He argued:

“ There is in every society a certain group of phenomena which may be differentiated from those studied by the other natural sciences. ”

With regards to social facts, Durkheim defined them as follows:

“ A social fact is every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint; or again, every way of acting which is general throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations. ”

One of the book's challenges is in showing how individual and seemingly chaotic decisions are in fact a result of a larger, more structured system, the pattern being held together by "social facts".

The definition of social facts illustrates the holistic paradigm in which Durkheim's social facts are defined by two main features: they are external to and coercive to individuals. They not only represent behavior but also the rules that govern behavior and give it meaning. Social facts are external to individuals, they predate them and survive them (we can give here the examples of the law, language, morality, etc.).

Social facts can be constraining: if individuals do not do act as they dictate, they may face social penalties. The binding nature of social facts is often implicit, because the rules of society are internalized by individuals in the process of education and socialization.

Durkheim distinguished two types of social facts: normal social facts - which, within a society, occur regularly and most often - and pathological social facts - which are much less common.

## Chapter - 6

### Social science

This article is about the science studying social groups. For the integrated field of study intended to promote civic competence, see Social studies.

Social science is an academic discipline concerned with society and the relationships among individuals within a society, which often rely primarily on empirical approaches. It includes anthropology, economics, political science, psychology and sociology. In a wider sense, it may often include some fields in the humanities such as archaeology, history, law, and linguistics. The term may however be used in the specific context of referring to the original science of society, established in 19th century, sociology (Latin: socius, "companion"; Greek λόγος, lógos, "word", "knowledge", "study."). Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber are typically cited as the principal architects of modern social science by this definition.

Positivist social scientists use methods resembling those of the natural sciences as tools for understanding society, and so define science in its stricter modern sense. Interpretivist social scientists, by contrast, may use social critique or symbolic interpretation rather than constructing empirically falsifiable theories, and thus treat science in its broader sense. In modern academic practice, researchers are often eclectic, using multiple methodologies (for instance, by combining the quantitative and qualitative techniques). The term social research has also acquired a degree of autonomy as practitioners from various disciplines share in its aims and methods.

### History of social science

The history of the social sciences begins in the Age of Enlightenment after 1650, which saw a revolution within natural philosophy, changing the basic framework by which individuals understood what was "scientific". Social sciences came forth from the moral philosophy of the time and was influenced by the Age of Revolutions, such as the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution. The social sciences developed from the sciences (experimental and applied), or the systematic knowledge-bases or prescriptive practices, relating to the social improvement of a group of interacting entities.

The beginnings of the social sciences in the 18th century are reflected in the grand encyclopedia of Diderot, with articles from Rousseau and other pioneers. The growth of the social sciences is also reflected in other specialized encyclopedias. The modern period saw "social science" first used as a distinct conceptual field. Social science was influenced by positivism, focusing on knowledge based on actual positive sense experience and avoiding the negative; metaphysical speculation was avoided. Auguste Comte used the term "science sociale" to describe the field, taken from the ideas of Charles Fourier; Comte also referred to the field as social physics.

Following this period, there were five paths of development that sprang forth in the social sciences, influenced by Comte on other fields. One route that was taken was the rise of social research. Large statistical surveys were undertaken in various parts of the United States and Europe. Another route undertaken was initiated by Émile Durkheim, studying "social facts", and Vilfredo Pareto, opening metatheoretical ideas and individual theories. A third means developed, arising from the methodological dichotomy present, in which social phenomena were identified with and understood; this was championed by figures such as Max Weber. The fourth route taken, based in economics, was developed and furthered economic knowledge as a hard science. The last path was the

correlation of knowledge and social values; the antipositivism and verstehen sociology of Max Weber firmly demanded this distinction. In this route, theory (description) and prescription were non-overlapping formal discussions of a subject.

Around the start of the 20th century, Enlightenment philosophy was challenged in various quarters. After the use of classical theories since the end of the scientific revolution, various fields substituted mathematics studies for experimental studies and examining equations to build a theoretical structure. The development of social science subfields became very quantitative in methodology. The interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary nature of scientific inquiry into human behavior, social and environmental factors affecting it, made many of the natural sciences interested in some aspects of social science methodology. Examples of boundary blurring include emerging disciplines like social research of medicine, sociobiology, neuropsychology, bioeconomics and the history and sociology of science. Increasingly, quantitative research and qualitative methods are being integrated in the study of human action and its implications and consequences. In the first half of the 20th century, statistics became a free-standing discipline of applied mathematics. Statistical methods were used confidently.

In the contemporary period, Karl Popper and Talcott Parsons influenced the furtherance of the social sciences. Researchers continue to search for a unified consensus on what methodology might have the power and refinement to connect a proposed "grand theory" with the various midrange theories which, with considerable success, continue to provide usable frameworks for massive, growing data banks; for more, see consilience. The social sciences will for the foreseeable future be composed of different zones in the research of, and sometime distinct in approach toward, the field.

The term "social science" may refer either to the specific sciences of society established by thinkers such as Comte, Durkheim, Marx, and Weber, or more generally to all disciplines outside of "noble science" and arts. By the late 19th century, the academic social sciences were constituted of five fields: jurisprudence and amendment of the law, education, health, economy and trade, and art.

Around the start of the 21st century, the expanding domain of economics in the social sciences has been described as economic imperialism.

Branches of social science

Social Science areas

The following are problem areas and discipline branches within the social sciences.

- Environmental Studies
- Anthropology
- Area studies
- Business studies
- Communication studies
- Criminology
- Demography

- Development studies
- Economics
- Education
- Geography
- History
- Industrial relations
- Information science
- Law
- Library science
- Linguistics
- Media studies
- Political science
- Psychology
- Public administration
- Sociology

The social science disciplines are branches of knowledge which are taught and researched at the college or university level. Social science disciplines are defined and recognized by the academic journals in which research is published, and the learned social science societies and academic departments or faculties to which their practitioners belong. Social science fields of study usually have several sub-disciplines or branches, and the distinguishing lines between these are often both arbitrary and ambiguous.

### Anthropology

Anthropology is the holistic "science of man", a science of the totality of human existence. The discipline deals with the integration of different aspects of the social sciences, humanities, and human biology. In the twentieth century, academic disciplines have often been institutionally divided into three broad domains. The natural sciences seek to derive general laws through reproducible and verifiable experiments. The humanities generally study local traditions, through their history, literature, music, and arts, with an emphasis on understanding particular individuals, events, or eras. The social sciences have generally attempted to develop scientific methods to understand social phenomena in a generalizable way, though usually with methods distinct from those of the natural sciences.

The anthropological social sciences often develop nuanced descriptions rather than the general laws derived in physics or chemistry, or they may explain individual cases through more general principles, as in many fields of psychology. Anthropology (like some fields of history) does not easily fit into one of these categories, and different branches of anthropology draw on one or more of these domains. Within the United States,

anthropology is divided into four sub-fields: archaeology, physical or biological anthropology, anthropological linguistics, and cultural anthropology. It is an area that is offered at most undergraduate institutions. The word anthropos (άνθρωπος) is from the Greek for "human being" or "person." Eric Wolf described sociocultural anthropology as "the most scientific of the humanities, and the most humanistic of the sciences."

The goal of anthropology is to provide a holistic account of humans and human nature. This means that, though anthropologists generally specialize in only one sub-field, they always keep in mind the biological, linguistic, historic and cultural aspects of any problem. Since anthropology arose as a science in Western societies that were complex and industrial, a major trend within anthropology has been a methodological drive to study peoples in societies with more simple social organization, sometimes called "primitive" in anthropological literature, but without any connotation of "inferior." Today, anthropologists use terms such as "less complex" societies or refer to specific modes of subsistence or production, such as "pastoralist" or "forager" or "horticulturalist" to refer to humans living in non-industrial, non-Western cultures, such people or folk (ethnos) remaining of great interest within anthropology.

The quest for holism leads most anthropologists to study a people in detail, using biogenetic, archaeological, and linguistic data alongside direct observation of contemporary customs. In the 1990s and 2000s, calls for clarification of what constitutes a culture, of how an observer knows where his or her own culture ends and another begins, and other crucial topics in writing anthropology were heard. It is possible to view all human cultures as part of one large, evolving global culture. These dynamic relationships, between what can be observed on the ground, as opposed to what can be observed by compiling many local observations remain fundamental in any kind of anthropology, whether cultural, biological, linguistic or archaeological.

### **Communication studies**

Communication studies deals with processes of human communication, commonly defined as the sharing of symbols to create meaning. The discipline encompasses a range of topics, from face-to-face conversation to mass media outlets such as television broadcasting. Communication studies also examines how messages are interpreted through the political, cultural, economic, and social dimensions of their contexts. Communication is institutionalized under many different names at different universities, including "communication", "communication studies", "speech communication", "rhetorical studies", "communication science", "media studies", "communication arts", "mass communication", "media ecology," and "communication and media science."

Communication studies integrates aspects of both social sciences and the humanities. As a social science, the discipline often overlaps with sociology, psychology, anthropology, biology, political science, economics, and public policy, among others. From a humanities perspective, communication is concerned with rhetoric and persuasion (traditional graduate programs in communication studies trace their history to the rhetoricians of Ancient Greece). The field applies to outside disciplines as well, including engineering, architecture, mathematics, and information science.

### **Economics**

Economics is a social science that seeks to analyze and describe the production, distribution, and consumption of wealth. The word "economics" is from the Greek. "family, household, estate," and "custom, law," and hence means "household management" or "management of the state." An economist is a person using economic concepts and data in the course of employment, or someone who has earned a degree in the subject. The classic brief definition of economics, set out by Lionel Robbins in 1932, is "the science which studies human behavior

as a relation between scarce means having alternative uses." Without scarcity and alternative uses, there is no economic problem. Briefer yet is "the study of how people seek to satisfy needs and wants" and "the study of the financial aspects of human behavior."

Economics has two broad branches: microeconomics, where the unit of analysis is the individual agent, such as a household or firm, and macroeconomics, where the unit of analysis is an economy as a whole. Another division of the subject distinguishes positive economics, which seeks to predict and explain economic phenomena, from normative economics, which orders choices and actions by some criterion; such orderings necessarily involve subjective value judgments. Since the early part of the 20th century, economics has focused largely on measurable quantities, employing both theoretical models and empirical analysis. Quantitative models, however, can be traced as far back as the physiocratic school. Economic reasoning has been increasingly applied in recent decades to other social situations such as politics, law, psychology, history, religion, marriage and family life, and other social interactions. This paradigm crucially assumes (1) that resources are scarce because they are not sufficient to satisfy all wants, and (2) that "economic value" is willingness to pay as revealed for instance by market (arms' length) transactions. Rival heterodox schools of thought, such as institutional economics, green economics, Marxist economics, and economic sociology, make other grounding assumptions. For example, Marxist economics assumes that economics primarily deals with the exchange of value, and that labor (human effort) is the source of all value.

## **Education**

Education encompasses teaching and learning specific skills, and also something less tangible but more profound: the imparting of knowledge, positive judgement and well-developed wisdom. Education has as one of its fundamental aspects the imparting of culture from generation to generation (see socialization). To educate means 'to draw out', from the Latin *educare*, or to facilitate the realization of an individual's potential and talents. It is an application of pedagogy, a body of theoretical and applied research relating to teaching and learning and draws on many disciplines such as psychology, philosophy, computer science, linguistics, neuroscience, sociology and anthropology

The education of an individual human begins at birth and continues throughout life. (Some believe that education begins even before birth, as evidenced by some parents' playing music or reading to the baby in the womb in the hope it will influence the child's development.) For some, the struggles and triumphs of daily life provide far more instruction than does formal schooling (thus Mark Twain's admonition to "never let school interfere with your education"). Family members may have a profound educational effect — often more profound than they realize — though family teaching may function very informally.

## **Human geography**

Geography as a discipline can be split broadly into two main sub fields: human geography and physical geography. The former focuses largely on the built environment and how space is created, viewed and managed by humans as well as the influence humans have on the space they occupy. This may involve cultural geography, transportation, health, military operations, and cities. The latter examines the natural environment and how the climate, vegetation and life, soil, oceans, water and landforms are produced and interact. Physical geography examines phenomena related to the measurement of earth. As a result of the two subfields using

different approaches a third field has emerged, which is environmental geography. Environmental geography combines physical and human geography and looks at the interactions between the environment and humans. Other branches of geography include social geography, regional geography, and geomatics.

Geographers attempt to understand the earth in terms of physical and spatial relationships. The first geographers focused on the science of mapmaking and finding ways to precisely project the surface of the earth. In this sense, geography bridges some gaps between the natural sciences and social sciences. Historical geography is often taught in a college in a unified Department of Geography.

Modern geography is an all-encompassing discipline, closely related to GISc, that seeks to understand humanity and its natural environment. The fields of urban planning, regional science, and planetology are closely related to geography. Practitioners of geography use many technologies and methods to collect data such as GIS, remote sensing, aerial photography, statistics, and global positioning systems (GPS).

## **History**

History is the continuous, systematic narrative and research into past human events as interpreted through historiographical paradigms or theories.

History has a base in both the social sciences and the humanities. In the United States the National Endowment for the Humanities includes history in its definition of humanities (as it does for applied linguistics).[19] However, the National Research Council classifies history as a social science.[20] The historical method comprises the techniques and guidelines by which historians use primary sources and other evidence to research and then to write history. The Social Science History Association, formed in 1976, brings together scholars from numerous disciplines interested in social history.[21]

## **Law**

Law in common parlance, means a rule which (unlike a rule of ethics) is capable of enforcement through institutions. However, many laws are based on norms accepted by a community and thus have an ethical foundation. The study of law crosses the boundaries between the social sciences and humanities, depending on one's view of research into its objectives and effects. Law is not always enforceable, especially in the international relations context. It has been defined as a "system of rules", as an "interpretive concept" to achieve justice, as an "authority" to mediate people's interests, and even as "the command of a sovereign, backed by the threat of a sanction". However one likes to think of law, it is a completely central social institution. Legal policy incorporates the practical manifestation of thinking from almost every social science and the humanities. Laws are politics, because politicians create them. Law is philosophy, because moral and ethical persuasions shape their ideas. Law tells many of history's stories, because statutes, case law and codifications build up over time. And law is economics, because any rule about contract, tort, property law, labour law, company law and many more can have long lasting effects on the distribution of wealth. The noun law derives from the late Old English lagu, meaning something laid down or fixed and the adjective legal comes from the Latin word lex.

## **Linguistics**

Linguistics investigates the cognitive and social aspects of human language. The field is divided into areas that focus on aspects of the linguistic signal, such as syntax (the study of the rules that govern the structure of sentences), semantics (the study of meaning), morphology (the study of the structure of words), phonetics (the study of speech sounds) and phonology (the study of the abstract sound system of a particular language);

however, work in areas like evolutionary linguistics (the study of the origins and evolution of language) and psycholinguistics (the study of psychological factors in human language) cut across these divisions.

The overwhelming majority of modern research in linguistics takes a predominantly synchronic perspective (focusing on language at a particular point in time), and a great deal of it—partly owing to the influence of Noam Chomsky—aims at formulating theories of the cognitive processing of language. However, language does not exist in a vacuum, or only in the brain, and approaches like contact linguistics, creole studies, discourse analysis, social interactional linguistics, and sociolinguistics explore language in its social context. Sociolinguistics often makes use of traditional quantitative analysis and statistics in investigating the frequency of features, while some disciplines, like contact linguistics, focus on qualitative analysis. While certain areas of linguistics can thus be understood as clearly falling within the social sciences, other areas, like acoustic phonetics and neurolinguistics, draw on the natural sciences. Linguistics draws only secondarily on the humanities, which played a rather greater role in linguistic inquiry in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Ferdinand Saussure is considered the father of modern linguistics.

### **Political science**

Political science is an academic and research discipline that deals with the theory and practice of politics and the description and analysis of political systems and political behavior. Fields and subfields of political science include political economy, political theory and philosophy, civics and comparative politics, theory of direct democracy, apolitical governance, participatory direct democracy, national systems, cross-national political analysis, political development, international relations, foreign policy, international law, politics, public administration, administrative behavior, public law, judicial behavior, and public policy. Political science also studies power in international relations and the theory of great powers and superpowers.

Political science is methodologically diverse, although recent years have witnessed an upsurge in the use of the scientific method,[1] that is, the proliferation of formal-deductive model building and quantitative hypothesis testing. Approaches to the discipline include rational choice, classical political philosophy, interpretivism, structuralism, and behavioralism, realism, pluralism, and institutionalism. Political science, as one of the social sciences, uses methods and techniques that relate to the kinds of inquiries sought: primary sources such as historical documents, interviews, and official records, as well as secondary sources such as scholarly journal articles are used in building and testing theories. Empirical methods include survey research, statistical analysis/econometrics, case studies, experiments, and model building. Herbert Baxter Adams is credited with coining the phrase "political science" while teaching history at Johns Hopkins University.

### **Public administration**

One of the main branches of political science, public administration can be broadly described as the development, implementation and study of branches of government policy. The pursuit of the public good by enhancing civil society and social justice is the ultimate goal of the field. Though public administration has been historically referred to as government management, it increasingly encompasses non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that also operate with a similar, primary dedication to the betterment of humanity. It's the government protocol to solve a public problem. According to Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram, policies constitute the discourses, text, regulations and laws. Also the making of public policies include the enforcement of such and the tools given to the institutions to do so.[2]

Differentiating public administration from business administration, a closely related field, has become a popular method for defining the discipline by contrasting the two. First, the goals of public administration are more



closely related to those often cited as goals of the American founders and democratic people in general.[citation needed][dubious – discuss] That is, public employees work to improve equality, justice, security, efficiency, effectiveness, and, at times, the profit.[citation needed] These values help to both differentiate the field from business administration, primarily concerned with profit, and define the discipline. Second, public administration is a relatively new, multidisciplinary field. Woodrow Wilson's *The Study of Administration* is frequently cited as the seminal work. Wilson advocated a more professional operation of public officials' daily activities. Further, the future president identified the necessity in the United States of a separation between party politics and good bureaucracy, which has also been a lasting theme.

The multidisciplinary nature of public administration is related to a third defining feature: administrative duties. Public administrators work in public agencies, at all levels of government, and perform a wide range of tasks. Public administrators collect and analyze data (statistics), monitor fiscal operations (budgets, accounts, and cash flow), organize large events and meetings, draft legislation, develop policy, and frequently execute legally mandated, government activities. Regarding this final facet, public administrators find themselves serving as parole officers, secretaries, note takers, paperwork processors, record keepers, notaries public, cashiers, and managers. Indeed, the discipline couples well with many vocational fields such as information technology, finance, law, and engineering. When it comes to the delivery and evaluation of public services, a public administrator is undoubtedly involved.

## **Psychology**

Psychology is an academic and applied field involving the study of behavior and mental processes. Psychology also refers to the application of such knowledge to various spheres of human activity, including problems of individuals' daily lives and the treatment of mental illness. The word psychology comes from the ancient Greek, *psyche* ("soul", "mind") and *logy* ("study").

Psychology differs from anthropology, economics, political science, and sociology in seeking to capture explanatory generalizations about the mental function and overt behavior of individuals, while the other disciplines focus on creating descriptive generalizations about the functioning of social groups or situation-specific human behavior. In practice, however, there is quite a lot of cross-fertilization that takes place among the various fields. Psychology differs from biology and neuroscience in that it is primarily concerned with the interaction of mental processes and behavior, and of the overall processes of a system, and not simply the biological or neural processes themselves, though the subfield of neuropsychology combines the study of the actual neural processes with the study of the mental effects they have subjectively produced. Many people associate psychology with clinical psychology, which focuses on assessment and treatment of problems in living and psychopathology. In reality, psychology has myriad specialties including social psychology, developmental psychology, cognitive psychology, industrial-organizational psychology, mathematical psychology, neuropsychology, and quantitative analysis of behavior.

Psychology is a very broad science that is rarely tackled as a whole, major block. Although some subfields encompass a natural science base and a social science application, others can be clearly distinguished as having little to do with the social sciences or having a lot to do with the social sciences. For example, biological psychology is considered a natural science with a social scientific application (as is clinical medicine), social and occupational psychology are, generally speaking, purely social sciences, whereas neuropsychology is a natural science that lacks application out of the scientific tradition entirely. In British universities, emphasis on what tenet of psychology a student has studied and/or concentrated is communicated through the degree conferred: B.Psy. indicates a balance between natural and social sciences, B.Sc. indicates a strong (or entire)

scientific concentration, whereas a B.A. underlines a majority of social science credits. This is not always necessarily the case however, and in many UK institutions students studying the B.Psy, B.Sc, and B.A. follow the same curriculum as outlined by The British Psychological Society and have the same options of specialism open to them regardless of whether they choose a balance, a heavy science basis, or heavy social science basis to their degree. If they applied to read the B.A. for example, but specialised in heavily science-based modules, then they will still generally be awarded the B.A.

## **Sociology**

Sociology is the systematic study of society and human social action. The meaning of the word comes from the suffix "-ology" which means "study of," derived from Greek, and the stem "soci-" which is from the Latin word *socius*, meaning "companion", or society in general.

Sociology was originally established by Auguste Comte (1798–1857) in 1838. Comte endeavoured to unify history, psychology and economics through the descriptive understanding of the social realm. He proposed that social ills could be remedied through sociological positivism, an epistemological approach outlined in *The Course in Positive Philosophy* [1830–1842] and *A General View of Positivism* (1844). Though Comte is generally regarded as the "Father of Sociology", the discipline was formally established by another French thinker, Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), who developed positivism as a foundation to practical social research. Durkheim set up the first European department of sociology at the University of Bordeaux in 1895, publishing his *Rules of the Sociological Method*. In 1896, he established the journal *L'Année Sociologique*. Durkheim's seminal monograph, *Suicide* (1897), a case study of suicide rates amongst Catholic and Protestant populations, distinguished sociological analysis from psychology or philosophy.

Karl Marx rejected Comte's positivism but nevertheless aimed to establish a science of society based on historical materialism, becoming recognised as a founding figure of sociology posthumously as the term gained broader meaning. Around the start of the 20th century, the first wave of German sociologists, including Max Weber and Georg Simmel, developed sociological antipositivism. The field may be broadly recognised as an amalgam of three modes of social thought in particular: Durkheimian positivism and structural functionalism; Marxist historical materialism and conflict theory; and Weberian antipositivism and *verstehen* analysis. American sociology broadly arose on a separate trajectory, with little Marxist influence, an emphasis on rigorous experimental methodology, and a closer association with pragmatism and social psychology. In the 1920s, the Chicago school developed symbolic interactionism. Meanwhile in the 1930s, the Frankfurt School pioneered the idea of critical theory, an interdisciplinary form of Marxist sociology drawing upon thinkers as diverse as Sigmund Freud and Friedrich Nietzsche. Critical theory would take on something of a life of its own after World War II, influencing literary criticism and the Birmingham School establishment of cultural studies.

Sociology evolved as an academic response to the challenges of modernity, such as industrialization, urbanization, secularization, and a perceived process of enveloping rationalization. Because sociology is such a broad discipline, it can be difficult to define, even for professional sociologists. The field generally concerns the social rules and processes that bind and separate people not only as individuals, but as members of associations, groups, communities and institutions, and includes the examination of the organization and development of human social life. The sociological field of interest ranges from the analysis of short contacts between anonymous individuals on the street to the study of global social processes. In the terms of sociologists Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, social scientists seek an understanding of the Social Construction of Reality. Most sociologists work in one or more subfields. One useful way to describe the discipline is as a cluster of sub-fields that examine different dimensions of society. For example, social stratification studies inequality and

class structure; demography studies changes in a population size or type; criminology examines criminal behavior and deviance; and political sociology studies the interaction between society and state.

Since its inception, sociological epistemologies, methods, and frames of enquiry, have significantly expanded and diverged. Sociologists use a diversity of research methods, drawing upon either empirical techniques or critical theory. Common modern methods include case studies, historical research, interviewing, participant observation, social network analysis, survey research, statistical analysis, and model building, among other approaches. Since the late 1970s, many sociologists have tried to make the discipline useful for non-academic purposes. The results of sociological research aid educators, lawmakers, administrators, developers, and others interested in resolving social problems and formulating public policy, through subdisciplinary areas such as evaluation research, methodological assessment, and public sociology.

New sociological sub-fields continue to appear — such as community studies, computational sociology, environmental sociology, network analysis, actor-network theory and a growing list, many of which are cross-disciplinary in nature.

Additional fields of study

Additional applied or interdisciplinary fields related to the social sciences include:

- Archaeology is the science that studies human cultures through the recovery, documentation, analysis, and interpretation of material remains and environmental data, including architecture, artifacts, features, biofacts, and landscapes.
- Area studies are interdisciplinary fields of research and scholarship pertaining to particular geographical, national/federal, or cultural regions.
- Behavioral science is a term that encompasses all the disciplines that explore the activities of and interactions among organisms in the natural world.
- Computational social science is an umbrella field encompassing computational approaches within the social sciences.
- Demography is the statistical study of all human populations.
- Development studies a multidisciplinary branch of social science which addresses issues of concern to developing countries.
- Environmental social science is the broad, transdisciplinary study of interrelations between humans and the natural environment.
- Environmental studies integrate social, humanistic, and natural science perspectives on the relation between humans and the natural environment.
- Information science is an interdisciplinary science primarily concerned with the collection, classification, manipulation, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information.
- International studies covers both International relations (the study of foreign affairs and global issues among states within the international system) and International education (the comprehensive approach that intentionally prepares people to be active and engaged participants in an interconnected world).

- Journalism is the craft of conveying news, descriptive material and comment via a widening spectrum of media.
- Legal management is a social sciences discipline that is designed for students interested in the study of state and legal elements.
- Library science is an interdisciplinary field that applies the practices, perspectives, and tools of management, information technology, education, and other areas to libraries; the collection, organization, preservation and dissemination of information resources; and the political economy of information.
- Management in all business and human organization activity is simply the act of getting people together to accomplish desired goals and objectives.
- Marketing the identification of human needs and wants, defines and measures their magnitude for demand and understanding the process of consumer buying behavior to formulate products and services, pricing, promotion and distribution to satisfy these needs and wants through exchange processes and building long term relationships.
- Political economy is the study of production, buying and selling, and their relations with law, custom, and government.

## **Methodology**

### **Social research**

In contemporary usage, "social research" is a relatively autonomous term, encompassing the work of practitioners from various disciplines which share in its aims and methods. Social scientists employ a range of methods in order to analyse a vast breadth of social phenomena; from census survey data derived from millions of individuals, to the in-depth analysis of a single agent's social experiences; from monitoring what is happening on contemporary streets, to the investigation of ancient historical documents. The methods originally rooted in classical sociology and statistical mathematics have formed the basis for research in other disciplines, such as political science, media studies, and marketing and market research.

Social research methods may be divided into two broad schools:

- Quantitative designs approach social phenomena through quantifiable evidence, and often rely on statistical analysis of many cases (or across intentionally designed treatments in an experiment) to create valid and reliable general claims.
- Qualitative designs emphasize understanding of social phenomena through direct observation, communication with participants, or analysis of texts, and may stress contextual and subjective accuracy over generality.

Social scientists will commonly combine quantitative and qualitative approaches as part of a multi-strategy design. Questionnaires, field-based data collection, archival database information and laboratory-based data collections are some of the measurement techniques used. It is noted the importance of measurement and analysis, focusing on the (difficult to achieve) goal of objective research or statistical hypothesis testing. A mathematical model uses mathematical language to describe a system. The process of developing a mathematical model is termed 'mathematical modelling' (also modeling). Eykhoff (1974) defined a

mathematical model as 'a representation of the essential aspects of an existing system (or a system to be constructed) which presents knowledge of that system in usable form'.<sup>[36]</sup> Mathematical models can take many forms, including but not limited to dynamical systems, statistical models, differential equations, or game theoretic models.

These and other types of models can overlap, with a given model involving a variety of abstract structures. The system is a set of interacting or interdependent entities, real or abstract, forming an integrated whole. The concept of an integrated whole can also be stated in terms of a system embodying a set of relationships which are differentiated from relationships of the set to other elements, and from relationships between an element of the set and elements not a part of the relational regime. A dynamical system modeled as a mathematical formalization has a fixed "rule" which describes the time dependence of a point's position in its ambient space. Small changes in the state of the system correspond to small changes in the numbers. The evolution rule of the dynamical system is a fixed rule that describes what future states follow from the current state. The rule is deterministic: for a given time interval only one future state follows from the current state.

See also: Scholarly method, Teleology, Philosophy of science, and Philosophy of social science

Theory

### **Social theory**

Other social scientists emphasize the subjective nature of research. These writers share social theory perspectives that include various types of the following:

- Critical theory is the examination and critique of society and culture, drawing from knowledge across social sciences and humanities disciplines.
- Dialectical materialism is the philosophy of Karl Marx, which he formulated by taking the dialectic of Hegel and joining it to the materialism of Feuerbach.
- Feminist theory is the extension of feminism into theoretical, or philosophical discourse; it aims to understand the nature of gender inequality.
- Marxist theories, such as revolutionary theory and class theory, cover work in philosophy which is strongly influenced by Karl Marx's materialist approach to theory or which is written by Marxists.
- Phronetic social science is a theory and methodology for doing social science focusing on ethics and political power, based on a contemporary interpretation of Aristotelian phronesis.
- Post-colonial theory is a reaction to the cultural legacy of colonialism.
- Postmodernism refers to a point of departure for works of literature, drama, architecture, cinema, and design, as well as in marketing and business and in the interpretation of history, law, culture and religion in the late 20th century.
- Rational choice theory is a framework for understanding and often formally modeling social and economic behavior.
- Social constructionism considers how social phenomena develop in social contexts.

- Structuralism is an approach to the human sciences that attempts to analyze a specific field (for instance, mythology) as a complex system of interrelated parts.
- Structural functionalism is a sociological paradigm which addresses what social functions various elements of the social system perform in regard to the entire system.

Other fringe social scientists delve in alternative nature of research. These writers share social theory perspectives that include various types of the following:

- Intellectual critical-ism describes a sentiment of critique towards, or evaluation of, intellectuals and intellectual pursuits.
- Scientific criticalism is a position critical of science and the scientific method.

### Education and degrees

Most universities offer degrees in social science fields. The Bachelor of Social Science is a degree targeted at the social sciences in particular. It is often more flexible and in-depth than other degrees which include social science subjects.

In the United States, a university may offer a student who studies a social sciences field a Bachelor of Arts degree, particularly if the field is within one of the traditional liberal arts such as history, or a BSc: Bachelor of Science degree such as those given by the London School of Economics, as the social sciences constitute one of the two main branches of science (the other being the natural sciences). In addition, some institutions have degrees for a particular social science, such as the Bachelor of Economics degree, though such specialized degrees are relatively rare in the United States

## Chapter - 7

### Social behavior

In physiology and sociology, social behavior is behavior directed towards society, or taking place between, members of the same species. Behavior such as predation which involves members of different species is not social. While many social behaviors are communication (provoke a response, or change in behavior, without acting directly on the receiver) communication between members of different species is not social behavior. The umbrella term behavioral sciences is used to refer to sciences that study behaviorality disturbance in general.

In sociology, "behavior" itself means an animal-like activity devoid of social meaning or social context, in contrast to "social behavior" which has both. In a sociological hierarchy, social behavior is followed by social actions, which is directed at other people and is designed to induce a response. Further along this ascending scale are social interaction and social relation. In conclusion, social behavior is a process of communicating.

Among specific social behaviors are regarded, e.g., aggression, altruism, scapegoating and shyness.

'Monosociality' describes social relations (or preference for such relations) with the same sex of a (putatively) nonsexual nature. 'Bisociality' describes social relations (or preference for such relations) with both the same and opposite sexes, also of a (putatively) nonsexual nature. Social behavior is not something needed in everyday life

### Social actions

"Social action" redirects here. For the Italian political party, see Social Action.

"Social action" redirects here. For the theory, see action theory (sociology).

In sociology, social action refers to an act which takes into account the actions of and reactions of individuals (or 'agents'). According to Max Weber, "an Action is 'social' if the acting individual takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course".(Secher 1962)

### Social action and Max Weber

The basic concept was primarily developed in the non-positivist theory of Max Weber to observe how human behaviors relate to cause and effect in the social realm. For Weber, sociology is the study of society and behavior and must therefore look at the heart of interaction. The theory of social action, more than structural functionalist positions, accepts and assumes that humans vary their actions according to social contexts and how it will affect other people; when a potential reaction is not desirable, the action is modified accordingly. Action can mean either a basic action (one that has a meaning) or an advanced social action, which not only has a meaning but is directed at other actors and causes action (or, perhaps, inaction).

Sociology is ... the science whose object is to interpret the meaning of social action and thereby give a causal explanation of the way in which the action proceeds and the effects which it produces. By 'action' in this definition is meant the human behavior when and to the extent that the agent or agents see it as subjectively meaningful ... the meaning to which we refer may be either (a) the meaning actually intended either by an individual agent on a particular historical occasion or by a number of agents on an approximate average in a given set of cases, or (b) the meaning attributed to the agent or agents, as types, in a pure type constructed in the

abstract. In neither case is the 'meaning' to be thought of as somehow objectively 'correct' or 'true' by some metaphysical criterion. This is the difference between the empirical sciences of action, such as sociology and history, and any kind of priori discipline, such as jurisprudence, logic, ethics, or aesthetics whose aim is to extract from their subject-matter 'correct' or 'valid' meaning.

— Max Weber *The Nature of Social Action* 1922,

The term is more practical and encompassing than Florian Znaniecki's "social phenomena", since the individual performing social action is not passive, but rather active and reactive. Although Weber himself used the word 'agency', in modern social science this term is often appropriated with a given acceptance of Weberian conceptions of social action, unless a work intends to make the direct allusion. Similarly, 'reflexivity' is commonly used as a shorthand to refer to the circular relationship of cause and effect between structure and agency which Weber was integral in hypothesising.

### **Types of social action**

- Rational actions (also known as value-rational ones, *wert*rational): actions which are taken because it leads to a valued goal, but with no thought of its consequences and often without consideration of the appropriateness of the means chosen to achieve it ('the end justifies the means'). Value rational or Instrumentally rational social action is divided into two groups: rational consideration and rational orientation. Rational consideration is when secondary results are taken into account rationally. This is also considered alternative means when secondary consequences have ended. Determining this mean of action is quite hard and even incompatible. Rational orientation is being able to recognize and understand certain mediums under common conditions. According to Weber, heterogeneous actors and groups that are competing, find it hard to settle on a certain medium and understand the common social action;
- Instrumental action (also known as value relation, goal-instrumental ones, *zweck*rational): actions which are planned and taken after evaluating the goal in relation to other goals, and after thorough consideration of various means (and consequences) to achieve it. An example would be a high school student preparing for life as a lawyer. The student knows that in order to get into college, he/she must take the appropriate tests and fill out the proper forms to get into college and then do well in college in order to get into law school and ultimately realize his/her goal of becoming a lawyer. If the student chooses not to do well in college, he/she knows that it will be difficult to get into law school and ultimately achieve the goal of being a lawyer. Thus the student must take the appropriate steps to reach the ultimate goal.

Another example would be most economic transactions. Value Relation is divided into the subgroups commands and demands. According to the law, people are given commands and must use the whole system of private laws to break down the central government or domination in the legal rights in which a citizen possess. Demands can be based on justice or human dignity just for morality. These demands have posed several problems even legal formalism has been put to the test. These demands seem to weigh on the society and at times can make them feel immoral.

The rational choice approach to religion draws a close analogy between religion and the market economy. Religious firms compete against one another to offer religious products and services to consumers, who choose between the firms. To the extent that there are many religious firms competing against each other, they will tend to specialize and cater to the particular needs of some segments of religious consumers. This specialization and



catering in turn increase the number of religious consumers actively engaged in the religious economy. This proposition has been confirmed in a number of empirical studies.

It is well known that strict churches are strong and growing in the contemporary United States, whereas liberal ones are declining. For Iannaccone's religious experience is a jointly produced collective good. Thus members of a church face a collective action problem. Strict churches, which often impose costly and esoteric requirements on their members, are able to solve this problem by weeding out potential free riders, since only the very committed would join the church in the face of such requirements. Consistent with the notion that religious experience is a collective good, Iannaccone et al. show that churches that extract more resources from their members (in the form of time and money) tend to grow in membership.

- **Affectional action (also known as emotional actions):** actions which are taken due to one's emotions, to express personal feelings. For examples, cheering after a victory, crying at a funeral would be affectional actions. Affectual is divided into two subgroups: uncontrolled reaction and emotional tension. In uncontrolled reaction there is no restraint and there is lack of discretion. A person with an uncontrolled reaction becomes less inclined to consider other peoples' feelings as much as their own. Emotional tension comes from a basic belief that a person is unworthy or powerless to obtain his/her deepest aspirations. When aspirations are not fulfilled there is internal unrest. It is often difficult to be productive in society because of the unfulfilled life. Emotion is often neglected because of concepts at the core of exchange theory. A common example is behavioral and rational choice assumptions. From the behavioral view, emotions are often inseparable from punishments.
- **Emotion:** Emotions are one's feelings in response to a certain situation. There are six types of emotion: social emotions, counterfactual emotions, emotions generated by what may happen (often manifested as anxiety), emotions generated by joy and grief (examples found in responses typically seen when a student gets a good grade, and when a person is at a funeral, respectively), thought-triggered emotions (sometimes manifested as flashbacks), and finally emotions of love and disgust. All of these emotions are considered to be unresolved. There are six features that are used to define emotions: intentional objects, valence, cognitive antecedents, physiological arousal, action tendencies, and lastly physiological expressions. These six concepts were identified by Aristotle and are still the topic of several talks.
- **Macro institutional theory of Economic Order:** Nicole Biggart and Thomas Beamish have a slightly different approach to human habit than Max Weber. Whereas Weber believed economic organization is based on structures of material interest and ideas, institutional sociologists like Biggart and Beamish stress macro-institutional sources of arrangements of market capitalism.

Micrological theories of economy consider acts of a group of individuals. Economic theory is based on the assumption that when the highest bidder succeeds the market clears. Microeconomics theories believe that individuals are going to find the cheapest way to buy the things they need. By doing this it causes providers to be competitive and therefore creates order in the economy.

- **Rational choice theorists,** on the other hand, believe that all social action is rationally motivated. Rationality means that the actions taken are analyzed and calculated for the greatest amount of (self)-gain and efficiency. Rational choice theory although increasingly colonized by economists, it does differ from microeconomic conceptions. Yet rational choice theory can be similar to microeconomic arguments. Rational choice assumes individuals to be egoistic and hyper-rational although theorists mitigate these assumptions by adding variables to their models.

- Traditional actions: actions which are carried out due to tradition, because they are always carried out in a particular manner for certain situations. An example would be putting on clothes or relaxing on Sundays. Some traditional actions can become a cultural artifact Traditional is divided into two subgroups: customs and habit. A custom is a practice that rests among familiarity. It is continually perpetuated and is ingrained in a culture. Customs usually last for generations. A habit is a series of steps learned gradually and sometimes without conscious awareness. As the old cliché goes, “old habits are hard to break” and new habits are difficult to form.

- Social Action models help explain Social Outcomes because of basic sociological ideas such as the Looking Glass Self. The idea of Cooley’s Looking glass self is that our sense of self develops as we observe and reflect upon others and what they may think of our actions. Additionally, impression formation processes allow us to interpret the significance of others' actions.

- Social Actions and Institutions Model: An ‘institution’ consists of specialized roles and settings that are linked together semantically, with the complex typically being devoted to serving some function within society.

In sociological hierarchy, social action is more advanced than behavior, action and social behavior, and is in turn followed by more advanced social contact, social interaction and social relation.

## Chapter - 8

### Social structure

Social structure is a term used in the social sciences to refer to patterned social arrangements in society that are both emergent from and determinant of the actions of the individuals. The usage of the term "social structure" has changed over time and may reflect the various levels of analysis within differing sub-fields of sociology. On the macro scale, it can refer to the system of socioeconomic stratification (e.g., the class structure), social institutions, or, other patterned relations between large social groups. On the meso scale, it can refer to the structure of social network ties between individuals or organizations. On the micro scale, it can refer to the way norms shape the behavior of actors within the social system.

These meanings are not always kept separate. For example, recent scholarship by John Levi Martin has theorized that certain macro-scale structures are the emergent properties of micro-scale cultural institutions (this meaning of "structure" resembles that used by anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss). Marxist sociology also has a history of mixing different meanings of social structure, though it has done so by simply treating the cultural aspects of social structure as epiphenomena of its economic ones.

Since the 1930s, the term has been in general use in social science, especially as a variable whose sub-components needed to be distinguished in relationship to other sociological variables.

### Overview

The notion of social structure as relationship between different entities or groups or as enduring and relatively stable patterns of relationship emphasises the idea that society is grouped into structurally related groups or sets of roles, with different functions, meanings or purposes. One example of social structure is the idea of "social stratification", which refers to the idea that society is separated into different strata (levels), guided (if only partially) by the underlying structures in the social system. This approach has been important in the academic literature with the rise of various forms of structuralism. It is important in the modern study of organizations, because an organization's structure may determine its flexibility, capacity to change, and many other factors. Therefore, structure is an important issue for management.

Social structure may be seen to influence important social systems including the economic system, legal system, political system, cultural system, and others. Family, religion, law, economy and class are all social structures. The "social system" is the parent system of those various systems that are embedded in it.

Society: self-contained, self-sufficient population united by social relationships, bounded from other populations by geographic locations

Stratification: unequal distribution of valued goods or holdings in a population (i.e. class, status, resources, grades, wealth, positional goods, etc.)

Network: pattern of relationships in a population of actors

Social structure variables: pattern of relationships, size of institution, income distribution, and concurrency of social relationships

## History

The early study of social structures has informed the study of institutions, culture and agency, social interaction, and history. Alexis de Tocqueville was apparently the first to use the term social structure; later, Karl Marx, Herbert Spencer, Max Weber, Ferdinand Tönnies, and Émile Durkheim all contributed to structural concepts in sociology. Weber investigated and analyzed the institutions of modern society: market, bureaucracy (private enterprise and public administration), and politics (e.g. democracy).

One of the earliest and most comprehensive accounts of social structure was provided by Karl Marx, who related political, cultural, and religious life to the mode of production (an underlying economic structure). Marx argued that the economic base substantially determined the cultural and political superstructure of a society. Subsequent Marxist accounts, such as that by Louis Althusser, proposed a more complex relationship that asserted the relative autonomy of cultural and political institutions, and a general determination by economic factors only "in the last instance".

In 1905, the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies first published his study *The Present Problems of Social Structure in the U.S.A*, arguing that only the constitution of a multitude into a unity creates a "social structure" (basing this approach on his concept of social will).

Émile Durkheim (drawing on the analogies between biological and social systems popularized by Herbert Spencer and others) introduced the idea that diverse social institutions and practices played a role in assuring the functional integration of society through assimilation of diverse parts into a unified and self-reproducing whole. In this context, Durkheim distinguished two forms of structural relationship: mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. The former describes structures that unite similar parts through a shared culture; the latter describes differentiated parts united through social exchange and material interdependence.

As did Marx and Weber, more generally, Georg Simmel developed a wide-ranging approach that provided observations and insights into domination and subordination, competition, division of labor, formation of parties, representation, inner solidarity coupled with exclusiveness toward the outside, and many similar features in the state, in a religious community, in an economic association, in an art school, and in family and kinship networks (however diverse the interests that give rise to these associations, the forms in which interests are realized may yet be identical (Crothers, 1996)).

The notion of social structure was extensively developed in the 20th century, with key contributions from structuralist perspectives drawing on the theories of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Feminist or Marxist perspectives, from functionalist perspectives such as those developed by Talcott Parsons and his followers, or from a variety of analytic perspectives (see Blau 1975, Lopez and Scott 2000). Some follow Marx in trying to identify the basic dimensions of society that explain the other dimensions, most emphasizing either economic production or political power. Others follow Lévi-Strauss in seeking logical order in cultural structures. Still others, notably Peter Blau, follow Simmel in attempting to base a formal theory of social structure on numerical patterns in relationships—analyzing, for example, the ways in which factors like group size shape intergroup relations.

The notion of social structure is intimately related to a variety of central topics in social science, including the relation of structure and agency. The most influential attempts to combine the concept of social structure with agency are Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration and Pierre Bourdieu's practice theory. Giddens emphasizes the duality of structure and agency, in the sense that structures and agency cannot be conceived apart from one another. This permits him to argue that structures are neither independent of actors nor determining of their behavior, but rather sets of rules and competencies on which actors draw, and which, in the aggregate, they

reproduce. Giddens's analysis, in this respect, closely parallels Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of the binaries that underlie classic sociological and anthropological reasoning (notably the universalizing tendencies of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism). Bourdieu's practice theory also seeks a more supple account of social structure as embedded in, rather than determinative of, individual behavior.

Other recent work by Margaret Archer (morphogenesis theory), Tom R. Burns and collaborators (actor-system dynamics theory and social rule system theory), and Immanuel Wallerstein (World Systems Theory) provided elaborations and applications of the sociological classics in structural sociology.

### Definitions and concepts

As noted above, social structure has been identified as

- the relationship of definite entities or groups to each other,
- enduring patterns of behaviour by participants in a social system in relation to each other, and
- institutionalised norms or cognitive frameworks that structure the actions of actors in the social system.

Lopez and Scott (2000) distinguish between institutional structure and relational structure, where in the former:

“ ...social structure is seen as comprising those cultural or normative patterns that define the expectations of agents hold about each other's behaviour and that organize their enduring relations with each other.

whereas in the latter: social structure is seen as comprising the relationships themselves, understood as patterns of causal interconnection and interdependence among agents and their actions, as well as the positions that they occupy.

**Social structure** can also be divided into microstructure and macrostructure. Microstructure is the pattern of relations between most basic elements of social life, that cannot be further divided and have no social structure of their own (for example, pattern of relations between individuals in a group composed of individuals - where individuals have no social structure, or a structure of organizations as a pattern of relations between social positions or social roles, where those positions and roles have no structure by themselves). Macrostructure is thus a kind of 'second level' structure, a pattern of relations between objects that have their own structure (for example, a political social structure between political parties, as political parties have their own social structure). Some types of social structures that modern sociologists differentiate are relation structures (in family or larger family-like clan structures), communication structures (how information is passed in organizations) and sociometric structures (structures of sympathy, antipathy and indifference in organisations - this was studied by Jacob L. Moreno).

Social rule system theory reduces the structures of (3) to particular rule system arrangements, that is, the types of basic structures of (1 and 2). It shares with role theory, organizational and institutional sociology, and network analysis the concern with structural properties and developments and at the same time provides detailed conceptual tools needed to generate interesting, fruitful propositions and models and analyses.

### **Sociologists also distinguish between:**

- normative structure — pattern of relations in given structure (organisation) between norms and modes of operations of people of varying social positions
- ideal structure — pattern of relations between beliefs and views of people of varying social positions
- interest structure — pattern of relations between goals and desires of people of varying social positions
- interaction structure — forms of communications of people of varying social positions

### **Origins and development**

Some believe that social structure is naturally developed. It may be caused by larger system needs, such as the need for labour, management, professional and military classes, or by conflicts between groups, such as competition among political parties or among elites and masses. Others believe that this structuring is not a result of natural processes, but is socially constructed. It may be created by the power of elites who seek to retain their power, or by economic systems that place emphasis upon competition or cooperation.

The most thorough account of the evolution of social structure is perhaps provided by structure and agency accounts that allow for a sophisticated analysis of the co-evolution of social structure and human agency, where socialised agents with a degree of autonomy take action in social systems where their action is on the one hand mediated by existing institutional structure and expectations but may, on the other hand, influence or transform that institutional structure.

### **Critical implications**

The notion of social structure may mask systematic biases, as it involves many identifiable subvariables, for example, gender. Some argue that men and women who have otherwise equal qualifications receive different treatment in the workplace because of their gender, which would be termed a "social structural" bias, but other variables (such as time on the job or hours worked) might be masked. Modern social structural analysis takes this into account through multivariate analysis and other techniques, but the analytic problem of how to combine various aspects of social life into a whole remains

## Chapter - 9

### Environmental sociology

Environmental sociology is typically defined as the sociological study of societal-environmental interactions, although this definition immediately presents the perhaps insolvable problem of separating human cultures from the rest of the environment. Although the focus of the field is the relationship between society and environment in general, environmental sociologists typically place special emphasis on studying the social factors that cause environmental problems, the societal impacts of those problems, and efforts to solve the problems. In addition, considerable attention is paid to the social processes by which certain environmental conditions become socially defined as problems.

Although there was sometimes acrimonious debate between the constructivist and realist "camps" within environmental sociology in the 1990s, the two sides have found considerable common ground as both increasingly accept that while most environmental problems have a material reality they nonetheless become known only via human processes such as scientific knowledge, activists' efforts, and media attention. In other words, most environmental problems have a real ontological status despite our knowledge/awareness of them stemming from social processes, processes by which various conditions are constructed as problems by scientists, activists, media and other social actors. Correspondingly, environmental problems must all be understood via social processes, despite any material basis they may have external to humans. This interactiveness is now broadly accepted, but many aspects of the debate continue in contemporary research in the field.

### History

Ancient Greeks idealized life in nature using the idea of the pastoral. Much later, Romantic writers such as Wordsworth took their inspiration from nature.

Modern thought surrounding human-environment relations can be traced back to Charles Darwin. Darwin's concept of natural selection suggested that certain social characteristics played a key role in the survivability of groups in the natural environment. Although typically taken at the micro-level, evolutionary principles, particularly adaptability, serve as a microcosm of human ecology. Work by Craig Humphrey and Frederick Buttel (2002) traces the linkages between Darwin's work on natural selection, human ecological sociology, and environmental sociology.

Sociology developed as a scholarly discipline in the mid- and late-19th and early 20th centuries, in a context where biological determinism had failed to fully explain key features of social change, including the evolving relationship between humans and their natural environments. In its foundational years, classical sociology thus saw social and cultural factors as the dominant, if not exclusive, cause of social and cultural conditions. This lens down-played interactive factors in the relationship between humans and their biophysical environments.

Environmental sociology emerged as a coherent subfield of inquiry after the environmental movement of the 1960s and early 1970s. The works of William R. Catton, Jr. and Riley Dunlap, among others, challenged the constricted anthropocentrism of classical sociology. In the late 1970s, they called for a new holistic, or systems perspective. Since the 1970s, general sociology has noticeably transformed to include environmental forces in

social explanations. Environmental sociology has now solidified as a respected, interdisciplinary field of study in academia.

## Concepts

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### Existential dualism

The duality of the human condition rests with cultural uniqueness and evolutionary traits. From one perspective, humans are embedded in the ecosphere and co-evolved alongside other species. Humans share the same basic ecological dependencies as other inhabitants of nature. From the other perspective, humans are distinguished from other species because of their innovative capacities, distinct cultures and varied institutions. Human creations have the power to independently manipulate, destroy, and transcend the limits of the natural environment (Buttel and Humphrey).

According to Buttel (2005), there are five basic epistemologies in environmental sociology. In practice, this means five different theories of what to blame for environmental degradation, i.e., what to research or consider as important. In order of their invention, these ideas of what to blame build on each other and thus contradict each other.

### Neo-Malthusianism

Works such as Hardin's *The Tragedy of the Commons* (1968) reformulated Malthusian thought about abstract population increases causing famines into a model of individual selfishness at larger scales causing degradation of common pool resources such as the air, water, the oceans, or general environmental conditions. Hardin offered privatization of resources or government regulation as solutions to environmental degradation caused by tragedy of the commons conditions. Many other sociologists shared this view of solutions well into the 1970s (see Ophuls). There have been many critiques of this view, particularly political scientist Elinor Ostrom or economists Amartya Sen and Ester Boserup.

Even though much of mainstream journalism considers Malthusianism the only view of environmentalism, most sociologists would disagree with Malthusianism since social organizational issues of environmental degradation are more demonstrated to cause environmental problems than abstract population or selfishness per se. For examples of this critique, Ostrom in her book *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (1990) argues that instead of self-interest always causing degradation, it can sometimes motivate people to take care of their common property resources. To do this they must change the basic organizational rules of resource use. Her research provides evidence for sustainable resource management systems around common pool resources that have lasted for centuries in some areas of the world.

Amartya Sen argues in his book *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (1980) that population expansion fails to cause famines or degradation as Malthusians or Neo-Malthusians argue. Instead, in documented cases, a lack of political entitlement to resources that exist in abundance causes famines in some populations. He documents how famines can occur even in the midst of plenty or in the context of low populations. He argues that famines (and environmental degradation) would only occur in non-functioning democracies or unrepresentative states.



Ester Boserup argues in her book *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth: The Economics of Agrarian Change under Population Pressure* (1965) from inductive, empirical case analysis that Malthus's more deductive conception of a presumed one-to-one relationship with agricultural scale and population is actually reversed. Instead of agricultural technology and scale determining and limiting population as Malthus attempted to argue, Boserup argued the world is full of cases of the direct opposite: that population changes and expands agricultural methods.

Eco-Marxist scholar Allan Schnaiberg (below) argues against Malthusianism with the rationale that under larger capitalist economies, human degradation moved from localized, population-based degradation to organizationally caused degradation of capitalist political economies to blame. He gives the example of the organized degradation of rainforest areas which states and capitalists push people off the land before it is degraded by organizational means. Thus, many authors are critical of Malthusianism—from sociologists (Schnaiberg), to economists (Sen and Boserup), to political scientists (Ostrom)--and all focus on how a country's social organization of its extraction can degrade the environment independent of abstract population.

### New Ecological Paradigm

In the 1970s, The New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) conception critiqued the claimed lack of human-environmental focus in the classical sociologists and the Sociological priorities their followers created. This was critiqued as the Human Exemptionalism Paradigm (HEP). The HEP viewpoint claims that human-environmental relationships were unimportant sociologically because humans are 'exempt' from environmental forces via cultural change. This view was shaped by the leading Western worldview of the time and the desire for Sociology to establish itself as an independent discipline against the then popular racist-biological environmental determinism where environment was all. In this HEP view, human dominance was felt to be justified by the uniqueness of culture, argued to be more adaptable than biological traits. Furthermore, culture also has the capacity to accumulate and innovate, making it capable of solving all natural problems. Therefore, as humans were not conceived of as governed by natural conditions, they were felt to have complete control of their own destiny. Any potential limitation posed by the natural world was felt to be surpassed using human ingenuity. Research proceeded accordingly without environmental analysis.

In the 1970s, sociological scholars Riley Dunlap and William R. Catton, Jr. began recognizing the limits of what would be termed the Human Exemptionalism Paradigm. Catton and Dunlap (1978) suggested a new perspective that took environmental variables into full account. They coined a new theoretical outlook for Sociology, the New Ecological Paradigm, with assumptions contrary to HEP.

The NEP recognizes the innovative capacity of humans, but says that humans are still ecologically interdependent as with other species. The NEP notes the power of social and cultural forces but does not profess social determinism. Instead, humans are impacted by the cause, effect, and feedback loops of ecosystems. The earth has a finite level of natural resources and waste repositories. Thus, the biophysical environment can impose constraints on human activity. They discussed a few harbingers of this NEP in 'hybridized' theorizing about topics that were neither exclusively social nor environmental explanations of environmental conditions. It was additionally a critique of Malthusian views of the 1960s and 1970s.

Dunlap and Catton's work immediately received a critique from Buttel who argued to the contrary that classical sociological foundations could be found for environmental sociology, particularly in Weber's work on ancient "agrarian civilizations" and Durkheim's view of the division of labor as built on a material premise of

specialization/specialization in response to material scarcity. This environmental aspect of Durkheim has been discussed by Schnaiberg (1971) as well.

## Eco-Marxism

In the middle of the HEP/NEP debate, the general trend of Neo-Marxism was occurring. There was cross pollination. Neo-Marxism was based on the collapse of the widespread believability of the Marxist social movement in the failed revolts of the 1960s and the rise of many New Social Movements that failed to fit in many Marxist analytic frameworks of conflict sociology. Sociologists entered the fray with empirical research on these novel social conflicts. Neo-Marxism's stress on the relative autonomy of the state from capital control instead of it being only a reflection of economic determinism of class conflict yielded this novel theoretical viewpoint in the 1970s. Neo-Marxist ideas of conflict sociology were applied to capital/state/labor/environmental conflicts instead of only labor/capital/state conflicts over production.

Therefore, some sociologists wanted to stretch Marxist ideas of social conflict to analyze environmental social movements from this materialist framework instead of interpreting environmental movements as a more cultural "New Social Movement" separate than material concerns. So "Eco-Marxism" was based on using Neo-Marxist conflict sociology concepts of the relative autonomy of the state applied to environmental conflict.

Two people following this school were James O'Connor (*The Fiscal Crisis of the State*, 1971) and later Allan Schnaiberg.

Later, a different trend developed in eco-Marxism via the attention brought to the importance of metabolic analysis in Marx's thought by John Bellamy Foster. Contrary to previous assumptions that classical theorists in sociology all had fallen within a Human Exemptionalist Paradigm, Foster argued that Marx's materialism led him to theorize labor as the metabolic process between humanity and the rest of nature. In Promethean interpretations of Marx that Foster critiques, there was an assumption his analysis was very similar to the anthropocentric views critiqued by early environmental sociologists. Instead, Foster argued Marx himself was concerned about the Metabolic Rift generated by capitalist society's social metabolism, particularly in industrial agriculture—Marx had identified an "irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism," created by capitalist agriculture that was destroying the productivity of the land and creating wastes in urban sites that failed to be reintegrated into the land and thus led toward destruction of urban workers' health simultaneously. Reviewing the contribution of this thread of eco-Marxism to current environmental sociology, Pellow and Brehm conclude "The metabolic rift is a productive development in the field because it connects current research to classical theory and links sociology with an interdisciplinary array of scientific literatures focused on ecosystem dynamics."

In recent years, Jason W. Moore has argued that Foster's groundbreaking account of Marx's eco-historical materialism did not go far enough. Indeed, Moore argues, Foster's approach has had little to say about the core dynamics of capital accumulation and the law of value. For Moore, the modern world-system is a capitalist world-ecology, joining the accumulation of capital, the pursuit of power, and the production of nature in dialectical unity. Central to Moore's alternative is a re-reading of Marx's value theory, through which abstract social labor and abstract social nature are dialectically bound. Where Foster and his colleagues have either abandoned or evaded global value relations, Moore argues that the emergent law of value, from the sixteenth century, was evident in the extraordinary shift in the scale, scope, and speed of environmental change. What took premodern civilizations centuries to achieve—such as the deforestation of Europe in the medieval era—capitalism realized in mere decades. This world-historical rupture, argues Moore, can be explained through a

law of value that regards labor productivity as the decisive metric of wealth and power in the modern world. From this standpoint, the genius of capitalist development has been to appropriate uncommodified natures—including uncommodified human natures—as a means of advancing labor productivity in the commodity system.

### **Societal-environmental dialectic**

In 1975, the highly influential work of Allan Schnaiberg transfigured environmental sociology, proposing a societal-environmental dialectic, though within the 'neo-Marxist' framework of the relative autonomy of the state as well. This conflictual concept has overwhelming political salience. First, the economic synthesis states that the desire for economic expansion will prevail over ecological concerns. Policy will decide to maximize immediate economic growth at the expense of environmental disruption. Secondly, the managed scarcity synthesis concludes that governments will attempt to control only the most dire of environmental problems to prevent health and economic disasters. This will give the appearance that governments act more environmentally conscious than they really do. Third, the ecological synthesis generates a hypothetical case where environmental degradation is so severe that political forces would respond with sustainable policies. The driving factor would be economic damage caused by environmental degradation. The economic engine would be based on renewable resources at this point. Production and consumption methods would adhere to sustainability regulations.

These conflict-based syntheses have several potential outcomes. One is that the most powerful economic and political forces will preserve the status quo and bolster their dominance. Historically, this is the most common occurrence. Another potential outcome is for contending powerful parties to fall into a stalemate. Lastly, tumultuous social events may result that redistribute economic and political resources.

### **Treadmill of production**

In 1980, the highly influential work of Allan Schnaiberg entitled *The Environment: From Surplus to Scarcity* (1980) was a large contribution to this theme of a societal-environmental dialectic. Moving away from economic reductionism like other neo-Marxists, Schnaiberg called for an analysis of how certain projects of "political capitalism" encouraged environmental degradation instead of all capitalism per se. This ongoing trend in Marxism of 'neo-Marxist' analysis (meaning, including the relative autonomy of the state) here added the environmental conditions of abstract additions and withdrawals from the environment as social policies instead of naturalized contexts.

Schnaiberg's political capitalism, otherwise known as the 'Treadmill of production,' is a model of conflict as well as cooperation between three abstracted groups: the state, capital (exclusively monopoly capital with its larger fixed costs and thus larger pressures for ongoing expansion of profits to justify more fixed costs), and (organized) labor. He analyzes only the United States at length, though sees such a treadmill of production and of environmental degradation in operation in the Soviet Union or socialist countries as well. The desire for economic expansion was found to be a common political ground for all three contentious groups—in capital, labor, and the state—to surmount their separate interests and postpone conflict by all agreeing on economic growth. Therefore, grounds for a political alliance emerge among these conflictual actors when monopoly capitalism can convince both of the other nodes to support its politicized consolidation. This can appeal to the other nodes since it additionally provides expanding state legitimacy and its own funding while providing (at least at the time) secure worker employment in larger industries with their desired stable or growing consumption. This political capitalism works against smaller scale capitalism or other uses of the state or

against other alliances of labor. Schnaiberg called the 'acceleration' of the treadmill this degradative political support for monopoly capitalism's expansion. This acceleration he felt was at root merely an informal alliance—based solely on the propaganda from monopoly capital and the state that worker consumption can only be achieved through further capitalist consolidation.

However, Schnaiberg felt that environmental damage caused by state-political and labor-supported capitalist expansion may cause a decline both in the state's funding as well as worker livelihood. This provides grounds for both to reject their treadmill alliance with monopoly capital. This would mean severing organized labor support and state policy support of monopoly capital's desires of consolidation. Schnaiberg is motivated to optimism by this potential if states and labor movements can be educated to the environmental and livelihood dangers in the long run of any support of monopoly capital. This potentially means these two groups moving away from subsidizing and supporting the degradation of the environment. Schnaiberg pins his hopes for environmental improvement on 'deceleration' of the treadmill—how mounting environmental degradation might yield a breakdown in the acceleration-based treadmill alliance. This deceleration was defined as state and working labor movements designing policies to shrink the scale of the economy as a solution to environmental degradation and their own consumptive requirements. Meanwhile, in the interim, he argued a common alliance between the three is responsible for why they prefer to support common economic growth as a common way to avoid their open conflicts despite mounting environmental costs for the state as well as for laborers due to environmental disruption.

## Ecological modernization and reflexive modernization

### Further information: Ecological modernization

By the 1980s, a critique of eco-Marxism was in the offing, given empirical data from countries (mostly in Western Europe like the Netherlands, Western Germany and somewhat the United Kingdom) that were attempting to wed environmental protection with economic growth instead of seeing them as separate. This was done through both state and capital restructuring. Major proponents of this school of research are Arthur P.J. Mol and Gert Spaargaren. Popular examples of ecological modernization would be "cradle to cradle" production cycles, industrial ecology, large-scale organic agriculture, biomimicry, permaculture, agroecology and certain strands of sustainable development—all implying that economic growth is possible if that growth is well organized with the environment in mind.

### Reflexive modernization

The many volumes of the German sociologist Ulrich Beck first argued from the late 1980s that our risk society is potentially being transformed by the environmental social movements of the world into structural change without rejecting the benefits of modernization and industrialization. This is leading to a form of 'reflexive modernization' with a world of reduced risk and better modernization process in economics, politics, and scientific practices as they are made less beholden to a cycle of protecting risk from correction (which he calls our state's organized irresponsibility)—politics creates ecodisasters, then claims responsibility in an accident, yet nothing remains corrected because it challenges the very structure of the operation of the economy and the private dominance of development, for example. Beck's idea of a reflexive modernization looks forward to how our ecological and social crises in the late 20th century are leading toward transformations of the whole political and economic system's institutions, making them more "rational" with ecology in mind.

## **Social construction of the environment**

Additionally in the 1980s, with the rise of postmodernism in the western academy and the appreciation of discourse as a form of power, some sociologists turned to analyzing environmental claims as a form of social construction more than a 'material' requirement. Proponents of this school include John Hannigan, particularly in *Environmental Sociology: A Social Constructionist Perspective* (1995). Hannigan argues for a 'soft constructionism' (environmental problems are materially real though they require social construction to be noticed) over a 'hard constructionism' (the claim that environmental problems are entirely social constructs).

Events

Modern environmentalism

United States

The 1960s built strong cultural momentum for environmental causes, giving birth to the modern environmental movement and large questioning in sociologists interested in analyzing the movement. Widespread green consciousness moved vertically within society, resulting in a series of policy changes across many states in the U.S. and Europe in the 1970s. In the United States, this period was known as the “Environmental Decade” with the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and passing of the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, and amendments to the Clean Air Act. Earth Day of 1970, celebrated by millions of participants, represented the modern age of environmental thought. The environmental movement continued with incidences such as Love Canal.

## **Historical studies**

While the current mode of thought expressed in environmental sociology was not prevalent until the 1970s, its application is now used in analysis of ancient peoples. Societies including Easter Island, the Anaszi, and the Mayans were argued to have ended abruptly, largely due to poor environmental management. This has been challenged in later work however as the exclusive cause (biologically trained Jared Diamond's *Collapse* (2005); or more modern work on Easter Island). The collapse of the Mayans sent a historic message that even advanced cultures are vulnerable to ecological suicide—though Diamond argues now it was less of a suicide than an environmental climate change that led to a lack of an ability to adapt—and a lack of elite willingness to adapt even when faced with the signs much earlier of nearing ecological problems. At the same time, societal successes for Diamond included New Guinea and Tikopia island whose inhabitants have lived sustainably for 46,000 years.

John Dryzek et al. argue in *Green States and Social Movements: Environmentalism in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and Norway* (2003) that there may be a common global green environmental social movement, though its specific outcomes are nationalist, falling into four 'ideal types' of interaction between environmental movements and state power. They use as their case studies environmental social movements and state interaction from Norway, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany. They analyze the past 30 years of environmentalism and the different outcomes that the green movement has taken in different state contexts and cultures.

Recently and roughly in temporal order below, much longer-term comparative historical studies of environmental degradation are found by sociologists. There are two general trends: many employ world systems theory—analyzing environmental issues over long periods of time and space; and others employ comparative

historical methods. Some utilize both methods simultaneously, sometimes without reference to world systems theory (like Whitaker, see below).

Stephen G. Bunker (d. 2005) and Paul S. Ciccantell collaborated on two books from a world-systems theory view, following commodity chains through history of the modern world system, charting the changing importance of space, time, and scale of extraction and how these variables influenced the shape and location of the main nodes of the world economy over the past 500 years. Their view of the world was grounded in extraction economies and the politics of different states that seek to dominate the world's resources and each other through gaining hegemonic control of major resources or restructuring global flows in them to benefit their locations.

The three volume work of environmental world-systems theory by Sing C. Chew analyzed how "Nature and Culture" interact over long periods of time, starting with *World Ecological Degradation* (2001). In later books, Chew argued that there were three "Dark Ages" in world environmental history characterized by periods of state collapse and reorientation in the world economy associated with more localist frameworks of community, economy, and identity coming to dominate the nature/culture relationships after state-facilitated environmental destruction delegitimized other forms. Thus recreated communities were founded in these so-called 'Dark Ages,' novel religions were popularized, and perhaps most importantly to him the environment had several centuries to recover from previous destruction. Chew argues that modern green politics and bioregionalism is the start of a similar movement of the present day potentially leading to wholesale system transformation. Therefore, we may be on the edge of yet another global "dark age" which is bright instead of dark on many levels since he argues for human community returning with environmental healing as empires collapse.

More case oriented studies were conducted by historical environmental sociologist Mark D. Whitaker analyzing China, Japan, and Europe over 2,500 years in his book *Ecological Revolution* (2009). He argued that instead of environmental movements being "New Social Movements" peculiar to current societies, environmental movements are very old—being expressed via religious movements in the past (or in the present like in ecotheology) that begin to focus on material concerns of health, local ecology, and economic protest against state policy and its extractions. He argues past or present is very similar: that we have participated with a tragic common civilizational process of environmental degradation, economic consolidation, and lack of political representation for many millennia which has predictable outcomes. He argues that a form of bioregionalism, the bioregional state, is required to deal with political corruption in present or in past societies connected to environmental degradation.

Interestingly, after looking at the world history of environmental degradation from very different methods, both sociologists Sing Chew and Mark D. Whitaker came to similar conclusions and are proponents of (different forms of) bioregionalism

## **Chapter - 10**

### **Methodology**

Social scientists are divided into camps of support for particular research techniques. These disputes relate to the historical core of social theory (positivism and antipositivism; structure and agency). While very different in many aspects, both qualitative and quantitative approaches involve a systematic interaction between theory and data. The choice of method often depends largely on what the researcher intends to investigate. For example, a researcher concerned with drawing a statistical generalization across an entire population may administer a survey questionnaire to a representative sample population. By contrast, a researcher who seeks full contextual understanding of an individuals' social actions may choose ethnographic participant observation or open-ended interviews. Studies will commonly combine, or 'triangulate', quantitative and qualitative methods as part of a 'multi-strategy' design.

### **Sampling**

Typically a population is very large, making a census or a complete enumeration of all the values in that population infeasible. A 'sample' thus forms a manageable subset of a population. In positivist research, statistics derived from a sample are analysed in order to draw inferences regarding the population as a whole. The process of collecting information from a sample is referred to as 'sampling'. Sampling methods may be either 'random' (random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling) or non-random/nonprobability (convenience sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling). The most common reason for sampling is to obtain information about a population. Sampling is quicker and cheaper than a complete census of a population.

### **Methodological assumptions**

Social research is based on logic and empirical observations. Charles C. Ragin writes in his *Constructing Social Research* book that "Social research involved the interaction between ideas and evidence. Ideas help social researchers make sense of evidence, and researchers use evidence to extend, revise and test ideas". Social research thus attempts to create or validate theories through data collection and data analysis, and its goal is exploration, description, explanation, and prediction. It should never lead or be mistaken with philosophy or belief. Social research aims to find social patterns of regularity in social life and usually deals with social groups (aggregates of individuals), not individuals themselves (although science of psychology is an exception here). Research can also be divided into pure research and applied research. Pure research has no application on real life, whereas applied research attempts to influence the real world.

There are no laws in social science that parallel the laws in natural science. A law in social science is a universal generalization about a class of facts. A fact is an observed phenomenon, and observation means it has been seen, heard or otherwise experienced by researcher. A theory is a systematic explanation for the observations that relate to a particular aspect of social life. Concepts are the basic building blocks of theory and are abstract elements representing classes of phenomena. Axioms or postulates are basic assertions assumed to be true. Propositions are conclusions drawn about the relationships among concepts, based on analysis of axioms. Hypotheses are specified expectations about empirical reality which are derived from propositions. Social research involves testing these hypotheses to see if they are true.

Social research involves creating a theory, operationalization (measurement of variables) and observation (actual collection of data to test hypothesized relationship). Social theories are written in the language of variables, in other words, theories describe logical relationships between variables. Variables are logical sets of attributes, with people being the 'carriers' of those variables (for example, gender can be a variable with two attributes: male and female). Variables are also divided into independent variables (data) that influences the dependent variables (which scientists are trying to explain). For example, in a study of how different dosages of a drug are related to the severity of symptoms of a disease, a measure of the severity of the symptoms of the disease is a dependent variable and the administration of the drug in specified doses is the independent variable. Researchers will compare the different values of the dependent variable (severity of the symptoms) and attempt to draw conclusions.

### Guidelines for "good research"

When social scientists speak of "good research" the guidelines refer to how the science is mentioned and understood. It does not refer to how what the results are but how they are figured. Glenn Firebaugh summarizes the principles for good research in his book *Seven Rules for Social Research*. The first rule is that "There should be the possibility of surprise in social research." As Firebaugh (p. 1) elaborates: "Rule 1 is intended to warn that you don't want to be blinded by preconceived ideas so that you fail to look for contrary evidence, or you fail to recognize contrary evidence when you do encounter it, or you recognize contrary evidence but suppress it and refuse to accept your findings for what they appear to say."

In addition, good research will "look for differences that make a difference" (Rule 2) and "build in reality checks" (Rule 3). Rule 4 advises researchers to replicate, that is, "to see if identical analyses yield similar results for different samples of people" (p. 90). The next two rules urge researchers to "compare like with like" (Rule 5) and to "study change" (Rule 6); these two rules are especially important when researchers want to estimate the effect of one variable on another (e.g. how much does college education actually matter for wages?). The final rule, "Let method be the servant, not the master," reminds researchers that methods are the means, not the end, of social research; it is critical from the outset to fit the research design to the research issue, rather than the other way around.

Explanations in social theories can be idiographic or nomothetic. An idiographic approach to an explanation is one where the scientists seek to exhaust the idiosyncratic causes of a particular condition or event, i.e. by trying to provide all possible explanations of a particular case. Nomothetic explanations tend to be more general with scientists trying to identify a few causal factors that impact a wide class of conditions or events. For example, when dealing with the problem of how people choose a job, idiographic explanation would be to list all possible reasons why a given person (or group) chooses a given job, while nomothetic explanation would try to find factors that determine why job applicants in general choose a given job.

### **Ethics**

Main article: Human subject research

The ethics of social research are shared with those of medical research. In the United States, these are formalized by the Belmont report as:



## **Respect for persons**

The principle of respect for persons holds that (a) individuals should be respected as autonomous agents capable of making their own decisions, and that (b) subjects with diminished autonomy deserve special considerations. A cornerstone of this principle is the use of informed consent.

## **Beneficence**

The principle of beneficence holds that (a) the subjects of research should be protected from harm, and, (b) the research should bring tangible benefits to society. By this definition, research with no scientific merit is automatically considered unethical.

## **Justice**

The principle of justice states the benefits of research should be distributed fairly. The definition of fairness used is case-dependent, varying between "(1) to each person an equal share, (2) to each person according to individual need, (3) to each person according to individual effort, (4) to each person according to societal contribution, and (5) to each person according to merit."

## **Types of method**

The following list of research methods is not exhaustive:

### **Statistical–quantitative methods**

- Cluster analysis
- Correlation and association
- Multivariate statistics
- Regression analysis
- Surveys and questionnaire
- Structural equation modeling
- Survey research
- Quantitative marketing research

### **Qualitative methods**

- Analytic induction
- Case study
- Ethnography
- Life history
- Morphological analysis
- Most significant change technique

- Participant observation
- Textual analysis
- Unstructured interview

### **Mixed methods**

- Archival research
- Content analysis
- Longitudinal study
- Focus group
- Historical method
- Semi-structured interview
- Structured interview

## **Foundations of social research**

### **Sociological positivism**

The origin of the survey can be traced back at least early as the Domesday Book in 1086, whilst some scholars pinpoint the origin of demography to 1663 with the publication of John Graunt's *Natural and Political Observations upon the Bills of Mortality*. Social research began most intentionally, however, with the positivist philosophy of science in the early 19th century.

**Statistical sociological research**, and indeed the formal academic discipline of sociology, began with the work of Émile Durkheim (1858–1917). While Durkheim rejected much of the detail of Comte's philosophy, he retained and refined its method, maintaining that the social sciences are a logical continuation of the natural ones into the realm of human activity, and insisting that they may retain the same objectivity, rationalism, and approach to causality. Durkheim set up the first European department of sociology at the University of Bordeaux in 1895, publishing his *Rules of the Sociological Method* (1895). In this text he argued: "our main goal is to extend scientific rationalism to human conduct... What has been called our positivism is but a consequence of this rationalism."

Durkheim's seminal monograph, *Suicide* (1897), a case study of suicide rates amongst Catholic and Protestant populations, distinguished sociological analysis from psychology or philosophy. By carefully examining suicide statistics in different police districts, he attempted to demonstrate that Catholic communities have a lower suicide rate than that of Protestants, something he attributed to social (as opposed to individual or psychological) causes. He developed the notion of objective *suis generis* "social facts" to delineate a unique empirical object for the science of sociology to study. Through such studies he posited that sociology would be

able to determine whether any given society is 'healthy' or 'pathological', and seek social reform to negate organic breakdown or "social anomie". For Durkheim, sociology could be described as the "science of institutions, their genesis and their functioning".

### **Modern methodologies**

In the mid-20th century there was a general—but not universal—trend for U.S.-American sociology to be more scientific in nature, due to the prominence at that time of action theory and other system-theoretical approaches. Robert K. Merton released his *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1949). By the turn of the 1960s, sociological research was increasingly employed as a tool by governments and businesses worldwide. Sociologists developed new types of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Paul Lazarsfeld founded Columbia University's Bureau of Applied Social Research, where he exerted a tremendous influence over the techniques and the organization of social research. His many contributions to sociological method have earned him the title of the "founder of modern empirical sociology".

Lazarsfeld made great strides in statistical survey analysis, panel methods, latent structure analysis, and contextual analysis. Many of his ideas have been so influential as to now be considered self-evident.

## Chapter - 11

### Social network

This article is about the theoretical concept as used in the social and behavioral sciences. For social networking sites, see social networking service. For the 2010 movie, see *The Social Network*. For other uses, see Social network (disambiguation).

A social network is a social structure made up of a set of social actors (such as individuals or organizations) and a set of the dyadic ties between these actors. The social network perspective provides a set of methods for analyzing the structure of whole social entities as well as a variety of theories explaining the patterns observed in these structures. The study of these structures uses social network analysis to identify local and global patterns, locate influential entities, and examine network dynamics.

Social networks and the analysis of them is an inherently interdisciplinary academic field which emerged from social psychology, sociology, statistics, and graph theory. Georg Simmel authored early structural theories in sociology emphasizing the dynamics of triads and "web of group affiliations." Jacob Moreno is credited with developing the first sociograms in the 1930s to study interpersonal relationships. These approaches were mathematically formalized in the 1950s and theories and methods of social networks became pervasive in the social and behavioral sciences by the 1980s. Social network analysis is now one of the major paradigms in contemporary sociology, and is also employed in a number of other social and formal sciences. Together with other complex networks, it forms part of the nascent field of network science.

The social network is a theoretical construct useful in the social sciences to study relationships between individuals, groups, organizations, or even entire societies (social units, see differentiation). The term is used to describe a social structure determined by such interactions. The ties through which any given social unit connects represent the convergence of the various social contacts of that unit. This theoretical approach is, necessarily, relational. An axiom of the social network approach to understanding social interaction is that social phenomena should be primarily conceived and investigated through the properties of relations between and within units, instead of the properties of these units themselves. Thus, one common criticism of social network theory is that individual agency is often ignored<sup>[6]</sup> although this may not be the case in practice (see agent-based modeling). Precisely because many different types of relations, singular or in combination, form these network configurations, network analytics are useful to a broad range of research enterprises. In social science, these fields of study include, but are not limited to anthropology, biology, communication studies, economics, geography, information science, organizational studies, social psychology, sociology, and sociolinguistics.

### History

In the late 1800s, both Émile Durkheim and Ferdinand Tönnies foreshadowed the idea of social networks in their theories and research of social groups. Tönnies argued that social groups can exist as personal and direct social ties that either link individuals who share values and belief (*Gemeinschaft*, German, commonly translated as "community") or impersonal, formal, and instrumental social links (*Gesellschaft*, German, commonly translated as "society"). Durkheim gave a non-individualistic explanation of social facts, arguing that social phenomena arise when interacting individuals constitute a reality that can no longer be accounted for in terms of the properties of individual actors. Georg Simmel, writing at the turn of the twentieth century, pointed to the

nature of networks and the effect of network size on interaction and examined the likelihood of interaction in loosely knit networks rather than groups.

Major developments in the field can be seen in the 1930s by several groups in psychology, anthropology, and mathematics working independently. In psychology, in the 1930s, Jacob L. Moreno began systematic recording and analysis of social interaction in small groups, especially classrooms and work groups (see sociometry). In anthropology, the foundation for social network theory is the theoretical and ethnographic work of Bronislaw Malinowski, Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, and Claude Lévi-Strauss. A group of social anthropologists associated with Max Gluckman and the Manchester School, including John A. Barnes, J. Clyde Mitchell and Elizabeth Bott Spillius, often are credited with performing some of the first fieldwork from which network analyses were performed, investigating community networks in southern Africa, India and the United Kingdom. Concomitantly, British anthropologist S.F. Nadel codified a theory of social structure that was influential in later network analysis. In sociology, the early (1930s) work of Talcott Parsons set the stage for taking a relational approach to understanding social structure. Later, drawing upon Parsons' theory, the work of sociologist Peter Blau provides a strong impetus for analyzing the relational ties of social units with his work on social exchange theory. By the 1970s, a growing number of scholars worked to combine the different tracks and traditions. One group consisted of sociologist Harrison White and his students at the Harvard University Department of Social Relations. Also independently active in the Harvard Social Relations department at the time were Charles Tilly, who focused on networks in political and community sociology and social movements, and Stanley Milgram, who developed the "six degrees of separation" thesis. Mark Granovetter and Barry Wellman are among the former students of White who elaborated and championed the analysis of social networks.

In general, social networks are self-organizing, emergent, and complex, such that a globally coherent pattern appears from the local interaction of the elements that make up the system. These patterns become more apparent as network size increases. However, a global network analysis of, for example, all interpersonal relationships in the world is not feasible and is likely to contain so much information as to be uninformative. Practical limitations of computing power, ethics and participant recruitment and payment also limit the scope of a social network analysis. The nuances of a local system may be lost in a large network analysis, hence the quality of information may be more important than its scale for understanding network properties. Thus, social networks are analyzed at the scale relevant to the researcher's theoretical question. Although levels of analysis are not necessarily mutually exclusive, there are three general levels into which networks may fall: micro-level, meso-level, and macro-level.

### **Micro level**

At the micro-level, social network research typically begins with an individual, snowballing as social relationships are traced, or may begin with a small group of individuals in a particular social context.

**Dyadic level:** A dyad is a social relationship between two individuals. Network research on dyads may concentrate on structure of the relationship (e.g. multiplexity, strength), social equality, and tendencies toward reciprocity/mutuality.

**Triadic level:** Add one individual to a dyad, and you have a triad. Research at this level may concentrate on factors such as balance and transitivity, as well as social equality and tendencies toward reciprocity/mutuality.

**Actor level:** The smallest unit of analysis in a social network is an individual in their social setting, i.e., an "actor" or "ego". Egonetwork analysis focuses on network characteristics such as size, relationship strength,

density, centrality, prestige and roles such as isolates, liaisons, and bridges. Such analyses, are most commonly used in the fields of psychology or social psychology, ethnographic kinship analysis or other genealogical studies of relationships between individuals.

Subset level: Subset levels of network research problems begin at the micro-level, but may cross over into the meso-level of analysis. Subset level research may focus on distance and reachability, cliques, cohesive subgroups, or other group actions or behavior.

### **Meso level**

In general, meso-level theories begin with a population size that falls between the micro- and macro-levels. However, meso-level may also refer to analyses that are specifically designed to reveal connections between micro- and macro-levels. Meso-level networks are low density and may exhibit causal processes distinct from interpersonal micro-level networks.

Organizations: Formal organizations are social groups that distribute tasks for a collective goal.[41] Network research on organizations may focus on either intra-organizational or inter-organizational ties in terms of formal or informal relationships. Intra-organizational networks themselves often contain multiple levels of analysis, especially in larger organizations with multiple branches, franchises or semi-autonomous departments. In these cases, research is often conducted at a workgroup level and organization level, focusing on the interplay between the two structures.

Randomly distributed networks: Exponential random graph models of social networks became state-of-the-art methods of social network analysis in the 1980s. This framework has the capacity to represent social-structural effects commonly observed in many human social networks, including general degree-based structural effects commonly observed in many human social networks as well as reciprocity and transitivity, and at the node-level, homophily and attribute-based activity and popularity effects, as derived from explicit hypotheses about dependencies among network ties. Parameters are given in terms of the prevalence of small subgraph configurations in the network and can be interpreted as describing the combinations of local social processes from which a given network emerges. These probability models for networks on a given set of actors allow generalization beyond the restrictive dyadic independence assumption of micro-networks, allowing models to be built from theoretical structural foundations of social behavior.

Scale-free networks: A scale-free network is a network whose degree distribution follows a power law, at least asymptotically. In network theory a scale-free ideal network is a random network with a degree distribution that unravels the size distribution of social groups. Specific characteristics of scale-free networks vary with the theories and analytical tools used to create them, however, in general, scale-free networks have some common characteristics. One notable characteristic in a scale-free network is the relative commonness of vertices with a degree that greatly exceeds the average. The highest-degree nodes are often called "hubs", and may serve specific purposes in their networks, although this depends greatly on the social context. Another general characteristic of scale-free networks is the clustering coefficient distribution, which decreases as the node degree increases. This distribution also follows a power law. The Barabási model of network evolution shown above is an example of a scale-free network.

### **Macro level**

Rather than tracing interpersonal interactions, macro-level analyses generally trace the outcomes of interactions, such as economic or other resource transfer interactions over a large population.

**Large-scale networks:** Large-scale network is a term somewhat synonymous with "macro-level" as used, primarily, in social and behavioral sciences, in economics. Originally, the term was used extensively in the computer sciences (see large-scale network mapping).

**Complex networks:** Most larger social networks display features of social complexity, which involves substantial non-trivial features of network topology, with patterns of complex connections between elements that are neither purely regular nor purely random (see, complexity science, dynamical system and chaos theory), as do biological, and technological networks. Such complex network features include a heavy tail in the degree distribution, a high clustering coefficient, assortativity or disassortativity among vertices, community structure, and hierarchical structure. In the case of agency-directed networks these features also include reciprocity, triad significance profile (TSP, see network motif), and other features. In contrast, many of the mathematical models of networks that have been studied in the past, such as lattices and random graphs, do not show these features.

## **Theoretical links**

### **Imported theories**

Various theoretical frameworks have been imported for the use of social network analysis. The most prominent of these are Graph theory, Balance theory, Social comparison theory, and more recently, the Social identity approach.

### **Indigenous theories**

Few complete theories have been produced from social network analysis. Two that have are Structural Role Theory and Heterophily Theory.

The basis of Heterophily Theory was the finding in one study that more numerous weak ties can be important in seeking information and innovation, as cliques have a tendency to have more homogeneous opinions as well as share many common traits. This homophilic tendency was the reason for the members of the cliques to be attracted together in the first place. However, being similar, each member of the clique would also know more or less what the other members knew. To find new information or insights, members of the clique will have to look beyond the clique to its other friends and acquaintances. This is what Granovetter called "the strength of weak ties."

## **Structural holes**

In the context of networks, social capital exists where people have an advantage because of their location in a network. Contacts in a network provide information, opportunities and perspectives that can be beneficial to the central player in the network. Most social structures tend to be characterized by dense clusters of strong connections. Information within these clusters tends to be rather homogeneous and redundant. Non-redundant information is most often obtained through contacts in different clusters.[49] When two separate clusters possess non-redundant information, there is said to be a structural hole between them.[49] Thus, a network that bridges structural holes will provide network benefits that are in some degree additive, rather than overlapping. An ideal network structure has a vine and cluster structure, providing access to many different clusters and structural holes.

## **Information benefits**

Networks rich in structural holes are a form of social capital in that they offer information benefits. The main player in a network that bridges structural holes is able to access information from diverse sources and clusters. This is beneficial to an individual's career because he is more likely to hear of job openings and opportunities if his network spans a wide range of contacts in different industries/sectors. This concept is similar to Mark Granovetter's theory of weak ties, which rests on the basis that having a broad range of contacts is most effective for job attainment.

## **Social capital mobility benefits**

In many organizations, members tend to focus their activities inside their own groups, which stifles creativity and restricts opportunities. A player whose network bridges structural holes has an advantage in detecting and developing rewarding opportunities. Such a player can mobilize social capital by acting as a "broker" of information between two clusters that otherwise would not have been in contact, thus providing access to new ideas, opinions and opportunities. British philosopher and political economist John Stuart Mill, writes, "it is hardly possible to overrate the value...of placing human beings in contact with persons dissimilar to themselves...Such communication [is] one of the primary sources of progress. Thus, a player with a network rich in structural holes can add value to an organization through new ideas and opportunities. This in turn, helps an individual's career development and advancement.

A social capital broker also reaps control benefits of being the facilitator of information flow between contacts. In the case of consulting firm Eden McCallum, the founders were able to advance their careers by bridging their connections with former big 3 consulting firm consultants and mid-size industry firms. By bridging structural holes and mobilizing social capital, players can advance their careers by executing new opportunities between contacts.

There has been research that both substantiates and refutes the benefits of information brokerage. A study of high tech Chinese firms by Zhixing Xiao found that the control benefits of structural holes are "dissonant to the dominant firm-wide spirit of cooperation and the information benefits cannot materialize due to the communal sharing values" of such organizations. However, this study only analyzed Chinese firms, which tend to have strong communal sharing values. Information and control benefits of structural holes are still valuable in firms that are not quite as inclusive and cooperative on the firm-wide level. In 2004, Ronald Burt studied 673 managers who ran the supply chain for one of America's largest electronics companies. He found that managers who often discussed issues with other groups were better paid, received more positive job evaluations and were more likely to be promoted. Thus, bridging structural holes can be beneficial to an organization, and in turn, to an individual's career.

## **Communications**

Communication Studies are often considered a part of both the social sciences and the humanities, drawing heavily on fields such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, information science, biology, political science, and economics as well as rhetoric, literary studies, and semiotics. Many communications concepts describe the transfer of information from one source to another, and can thus be conceived of in terms of a network.



## **Community**

In J.A. Barnes' day, a "community" referred to a specific geographic location and studies of community ties had to do with who talked, associated, traded, and attended church with whom. Today, however, there are extended "online" communities developed through telecommunications devices and social network services. Such devices and services require extensive and ongoing maintenance and analysis, often using network science methods. Community development studies, today, also make extensive use of such methods.

## **Complex networks**

Complex networks require methods specific to modelling and interpreting social complexity and complex adaptive systems, including techniques of dynamic network analysis.

## **Criminal networks**

In criminology and urban sociology, much attention has been paid to the social networks among criminal actors. For example, Andrew Papachristos has studied gang murders as a series of exchanges between gangs. Murders can be seen to diffuse outwards from a single source, because weaker gangs cannot afford to kill members of stronger gangs in retaliation, but must commit other violent acts to maintain their reputation for strength.<sup>7a</sup>

## **Diffusion of innovations**

Diffusion of ideas and innovations studies focus on the spread and use of ideas from one actor to another or one culture and another. This line of research seeks to explain why some become "early adopters" of ideas and innovations, and links social network structure with facilitating or impeding the spread of an innovation.

## **Demography**

In demography, the study of social networks has led to new sampling methods for estimating and reaching populations that are hard to enumerate (for example, homeless people or intravenous drug users.) For example, respondent driven sampling is a network-based sampling technique that relies on respondents to a survey recommending further respondents.

## **Economic sociology**

The field of sociology focuses almost entirely on networks of outcomes of social interactions. More narrowly, economic sociology considers behavioral interactions of individuals and groups through social capital and social "markets". Sociologists, such as Mark Granovetter, have developed core principles about the interactions of social structure, information, ability to punish or reward, and trust that frequently recur in their analyses of political, economic and other institutions. Granovetter examines how social structures and social networks can affect economic outcomes like hiring, price, productivity and innovation and describes sociologists' contributions to analyzing the impact of social structure and networks on the economy.

## **Health care**

Analysis of social networks is increasingly incorporated into health care analytics, not only in epidemiological studies but also in models of patient communication and education, disease prevention, mental health diagnosis and treatment, and in the study of health care organizations and systems.

## **Human ecology**

Human ecology is an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary study of the relationship between humans and their natural, social, and built environments. The scientific philosophy of human ecology has a diffuse history with connections to geography, sociology, psychology, anthropology, zoology, and natural ecology.

## **Language and linguistics**

Studies of language and linguistics, particularly evolutionary linguistics, focus on the development of linguistic forms and transfer of changes, sounds or words, from one language system to another through networks of social interaction. Social networks are also important in language shift, as groups of people add and/or abandon languages to their repertoire.

## **Literary networks**

In the study of literary systems, network analysis has been applied by Anheier, Gerhards and Romo, De Nooy, and Senekal, to study various aspects of how literature functions. The basic premise is that polysystem theory, which has been around since the writings of Even-Zohar, can be integrated with network theory and the relationships between different actors in the literary network, e.g. writers, critics, publishers, literary histories, etc., can be mapped using visualization from SNA.

## **Organizational studies**

Research studies of formal or informal organizational relationships, organizational communication, economics, economic sociology, and other resource transfers. Social networks have also been used to examine how organizations interact with each other, characterizing the many informal connections that link executives together, as well as associations and connections between individual employees at different organizations. Intra-organizational networks have been found to affect organizational commitment, organizational identification, interpersonal citizenship behaviour.

## **Social capital**

Social capital is a sociological concept which refers to the value of social relations and the role of cooperation and confidence to achieve positive outcomes. The term refers to the value one can get from their social ties. For example, newly arrived immigrants can make use of their social ties to established migrants to acquire jobs they may otherwise have trouble getting (e.g., because of unfamiliarity with the local language). Studies show that a positive relationship exists between social capital and the intensity of social network use.

## Chapter - 12

### Structural functionalism

Structural functionalism, or simply functionalism, is a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. This approach looks at society through a macro-level orientation, which is a broad focus on the social structures that shape society as a whole, and believes that society has evolved like organisms. This approach looks at both social structure and social functions. Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements; namely norms, customs, traditions, and institutions. A common analogy, popularized by Herbert Spencer, presents these parts of society as "organs" that work toward the proper functioning of the "body" as a whole. In the most basic terms, it simply emphasizes "the effort to impute, as rigorously as possible, to each feature, custom, or practice, its effect on the functioning of a supposedly stable, cohesive system". For Talcott Parsons, "structural-functionalism" came to describe a particular stage in the methodological development of social science, rather than a specific school of thought. The structural functionalism approach is a macrosociological analysis, with a broad focus on social structures that shape society as a whole.

### Theory

Classical theories are defined by a tendency towards biological analogy and notions of social evolutionism:

Functionalist thought, from Comte onwards, has looked particularly towards biology as the science providing the closest and most compatible model for social science. Biology has been taken to provide a guide to conceptualizing the structure and the function of social systems and to analyzing processes of evolution via mechanisms of adaptation ... functionalism strongly emphasises the pre-eminence of the social world over its individual parts (i.e. its constituent actors, human subjects).

—Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* 1984

Whilst one may regard functionalism as a logical extension of the organic analogies for society presented by political philosophers such as Rousseau, sociology draws firmer attention to those institutions unique to industrialised capitalist society (or modernity). Functionalism also has an anthropological basis in the work of theorists such as Marcel Mauss, Bronisław Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. It is in Radcliffe-Brown's specific usage that the prefix 'structural' emerged.

Radcliffe-Brown proposed that most stateless, "primitive" societies, lacking strong centralised institutions, are based on an association of corporate-descent groups. Structural functionalism also took on Malinowski's argument that the basic building block of society is the nuclear family, and that the clan is an outgrowth, not vice versa. Émile Durkheim was concerned with the question of how certain societies maintain internal stability and survive over time. He proposed that such societies tend to be segmented, with equivalent parts held together by shared values, common symbols or, as his nephew Marcel Mauss held, systems of exchanges. Durkheim used the term 'mechanical solidarity' to refer to these types of "social bonds, based on common sentiments & shared moral values, that are strong among members of pre-industrial societies". [10] In modern, complicated societies, members perform very different tasks, resulting in a strong interdependence. Based on the metaphor above of an organism in which many parts function together to sustain the whole, Durkheim argued that

complicated societies are held together by organic solidarity, i.e. "social bonds, based on specialization and interdependence, that are strong among members of industrial societies".

These views were upheld by Durkheim, who, following Comte, believed that society constitutes a separate "level" of reality, distinct from both biological and inorganic matter. Explanations of social phenomena had therefore to be constructed within this level, individuals being merely transient occupants of comparatively stable social roles. The central concern of structural functionalism is a continuation of the Durkheimian task of explaining the apparent stability and internal cohesion needed by societies to endure over time. Societies are seen as coherent, bounded and fundamentally relational constructs that function like organisms, with their various (or social institutions) working together in an unconscious, quasi-automatic fashion toward achieving an overall social equilibrium. All social and cultural phenomena are therefore seen as functional in the sense of working together, and are effectively deemed to have "lives" of their own. They are primarily analyzed in terms of this function. The individual is significant not in and of himself, but rather in terms of his status, his position in patterns of social relations, and the behaviours associated with his status. Therefore, the social structure is the network of statuses connected by associated roles.

It is simplistic to equate the perspective directly with political conservatism. The tendency to emphasise "cohesive systems", however, leads functionalist theories to be contrasted with "conflict theories" which instead emphasize social problems and inequalities.

Auguste Comte, the "Father of Positivism", pointed out the need to keep society unified as many traditions were diminishing. He was the first person to coin the term sociology. Auguste Comte suggests that sociology is the product of a three-stage development.

1. Theological Stage: From the beginning of human history until the end of the European Middle Ages, people took a religious view that society expressed God's will. In the theological state, the human mind, seeking the essential nature of beings, the first and final causes (the origin and purpose) of all effects—in short, absolute knowledge—supposes all phenomena to be produced by the immediate action of supernatural beings.
2. Metaphysical Stage: People began seeing society as a natural system as opposed to the supernatural. Began with the Enlightenment and the ideas of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. Reflected the failings of a selfish human nature rather than the perfection of God.
3. Scientific Stage: Describing society through the application of the scientific approach, which draws on the work of scientists.

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), a British philosopher famous for applying the theory of natural selection to society. He was in many ways the first true sociological functionalist. In fact, while Durkheim is widely considered the most important functionalist among positivist theorists, it is well known that much of his analysis was culled from reading Spencer's work, especially his *Principles of Sociology* (1874–96). Spencer allude society to the analogy of human body. Just as the structural parts of the human body - the skeleton, muscles, and various internal organs - function independently to help the entire organism survive, social structures work together to preserve society.

While most avoid the tedious tasks of reading Spencer's massive volumes (filled as they are with long passages explicating the organic analogy, with reference to cells, simple organisms, animals, humans and society), there

are some important insights that have quietly influenced many contemporary theorists, including Talcott Parsons, in his early work "The Structure of Social Action" (1937). Cultural anthropology also consistently uses functionalism.

This evolutionary model, unlike most 19th century evolutionary theories, is cyclical, beginning with the differentiation and increasing complication of an organic or "super-organic" (Spencer's term for a social system) body, followed by a fluctuating state of equilibrium and disequilibrium (or a state of adjustment and adaptation), and, finally, the stage of disintegration or dissolution. Following Thomas Malthus' population principles, Spencer concluded that society is constantly facing selection pressures (internal and external) that force it to adapt its internal structure through differentiation.

Every solution, however, causes a new set of selection pressures that threaten society's viability. It should be noted that Spencer was not a determinist in the sense that he never said that

1. Selection pressures will be felt in time to change them;
2. They will be felt and reacted to; or
3. The solutions will always work.

In fact, he was in many ways a political sociologist, and recognized that the degree of centralized and consolidated authority in a given polity could make or break its ability to adapt. In other words, he saw a general trend towards the centralization of power as leading to stagnation and ultimately, pressures to decentralize.

More specifically, Spencer recognized three functional needs or prerequisites that produce selection pressures: they are regulatory, operative (production) and distributive. He argued that all societies need to solve problems of control and coordination, production of goods, services and ideas, and, finally, to find ways of distributing these resources.

Initially, in tribal societies, these three needs are inseparable, and the kinship system is the dominant structure that satisfies them. As many scholars have noted, all institutions are subsumed under kinship organization, but, with increasing population (both in terms of sheer numbers and density), problems emerge with regard to feeding individuals, creating new forms of organization — consider the emergent division of labour —, coordinating and controlling various differentiated social units, and developing systems of resource distribution.

The solution, as Spencer sees it, is to differentiate structures to fulfill more specialized functions; thus a chief or "big man" emerges, soon followed by a group of lieutenants, and later kings and administrators. The structural parts of society (ex. families, work) function interdependently to help society function. Therefore, social structures work together to preserve society.

Perhaps Spencer's greatest obstacle that is being widely discussed in modern sociology is the fact that much of his social philosophy is rooted in the social and historical context of Ancient Egypt. He coined the term "survival of the fittest" in discussing the simple fact that small tribes or societies tend to be defeated or conquered by larger ones. Of course, many sociologists still use him (knowingly or otherwise) in their analyses, especially due to the recent re-emergence of evolutionary theory.

Talcott Parsons was heavily influenced by Émile Durkheim and Max Weber, synthesizing much of their work into his action theory, which he based on the system-theoretical concept and the methodological principle of

voluntary action. He held that "the social system is made up of the actions of individuals." [20] His starting point, accordingly, is the interaction between two individuals faced with a variety of choices about how they might act, choices that are influenced and constrained by a number of physical and social factors.

Parsons determined that each individual has expectations of the other's action and reaction to his own behaviour, and that these expectations would (if successful) be "derived" from the accepted norms and values of the society they inhabit. As Parsons himself emphasized, in a general context there would never exist any perfect "fit" between behaviours and norms, so such a relation is never complete or "perfect."

Social norms were always problematic for Parsons, who never claimed (as has often been alleged) that social norms were generally accepted and agreed upon, should this prevent some kind of universal law. Whether social norms were accepted or not was for Parsons simply a historical question.

As behaviours are repeated in more interactions, and these expectations are entrenched or institutionalized, a role is created. Parsons defines a "role" as the normatively-regulated participation "of a person in a concrete process of social interaction with specific, concrete role-partners." Although any individual, theoretically, can fulfill any role, the individual is expected to conform to the norms governing the nature of the role they fulfill.

Furthermore, one person can and does fulfill many different roles at the same time. In one sense, an individual can be seen to be a "composition" of the roles he inhabits. Certainly, today, when asked to describe themselves, most people would answer with reference to their societal roles.

Parsons later developed the idea of roles into collectivities of roles that complement each other in fulfilling functions for society. Some roles are bound up in institutions and social structures (economic, educational, legal and even gender-based). These are functional in the sense that they assist society in operating and fulfilling its functional needs so that society runs smoothly.

Contrary to prevailing myth, Parsons never spoke about a society where there was no conflict or some kind of "perfect" equilibrium. A society's cultural value-system was in the typical case never completely integrated, never static and most of the time, like in the case of the American society in a complex state of transformation relative to its historical point of departure. To reach a "perfect" equilibrium was not any serious theoretical question in Parsons analysis of social systems, indeed, the most dynamic societies had generally cultural systems with important inner tensions like the US and India. These tensions were (quite often) a source of their strength according to Parsons rather than the opposite. Parsons never thought about system-institutionalization and the level of strains (tensions, conflict) in the system as opposite forces per se.

The key processes for Parsons for system reproduction are socialization and social control. Socialization is important because it is the mechanism for transferring the accepted norms and values of society to the individuals within the system. Parsons never spoke about "perfect socialization"—in any society socialization was only partial and "incomplete" from an integral point of view.

Parsons states that "this point [...] is independent of the sense in which [the] individual is concretely autonomous or creative rather than 'passive' or 'conforming', for individuality and creativity, are to a considerable extent, phenomena of the institutionalization of expectations"; they are culturally constructed.

Socialization is supported by the positive and negative sanctioning of role behaviours that do or do not meet these expectations. A punishment could be informal, like a snigger or gossip, or more formalized, through

institutions such as prisons and mental homes. If these two processes were perfect, society would become static and unchanging, but in reality this is unlikely to occur for long.

Parsons recognizes this, stating that he treats "the structure of the system as problematic and subject to change," and that his concept of the tendency towards equilibrium "does not imply the empirical dominance of stability over change." He does, however, believe that these changes occur in a relatively smooth way.

Individuals in interaction with changing situations adapt through a process of "role bargaining." Once the roles are established, they create norms that guide further action and are thus institutionalised, creating stability across social interactions. Where the adaptation process cannot adjust, due to sharp shocks or immediate radical change, structural dissolution occurs and either new structures (or therefore a new system) are formed, or society dies. This model of social change has been described as a "moving equilibrium," and emphasises a desire for social order.

### Davis and Moore

Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore (1945) gave an argument for social stratification based on the idea of "functional necessity" (also known as the Davis-Moore hypothesis). They argue that the most difficult jobs in any society have the highest incomes in order to motivate individuals to fill the roles needed by the division of labour. Thus inequality serves social stability.

This argument has been criticized as fallacious from a number of different angles: the argument is both that the individuals who are the most deserving are the highest rewarded, and that a system of unequal rewards is necessary, otherwise no individuals would perform as needed for the society to function. The problem is that these rewards are supposed to be based upon objective merit, rather than subjective "motivations." The argument also does not clearly establish why some positions are worth more than others, even when they benefit more people in society, e.g., teachers compared to athletes and movie stars. Critics have suggested that structural inequality (inherited wealth, family power, etc.) is itself a cause of individual success or failure, not a consequence of it.

### Robert Merton

Robert K. Merton made important refinements to functionalist thought. He fundamentally agreed with Parsons' theory. However, he acknowledged that it was problematic, believing that it was over generalized [Holmwood, 2005:100]. Merton tended to emphasize middle range theory rather than a grand theory, meaning that he was able to deal specifically with some of the limitations in Parsons' theory. Merton believed that any social structure probably has many functions, some more obvious than others. He identified 3 main limitations: functional unity, universal functionalism and indispensability [Ritzer in Gingrich, 1999]. He also developed the concept of deviance and made the distinction between manifest and latent functions. Manifest functions referred to the recognized and intended consequences of any social pattern. Latent functions referred to unrecognized and unintended consequences of any social pattern.

Merton criticized functional unity, saying that not all parts of a modern complex society work for the functional unity of society. Consequently, there is a social dysfunction referred to as any social pattern that may disrupt the operation of society. Some institutions and structures may have other functions, and some may even be generally dysfunctional, or be functional for some while being dysfunctional for others. This is because not all structures are functional for society as a whole. Some practices are only functional for a dominant individual or a group [Holmwood, 2005:91]. There are two types of functions that Merton discusses the "manifest functions"

in that a social pattern can trigger a recognized and intended consequence. The manifest function of education includes preparing for a career by getting good grades, graduation and finding good job. The second type of function is "latent functions", where a social pattern results in an unrecognized or unintended consequence. The latent functions of education include meeting new people, extra-curricular activities, school trips. Another type of social function is "social dysfunction" which is any undesirable consequences that disrupts the operation of society. The social dysfunction of education includes not getting good grades, a job. Merton states that by recognizing and examining the dysfunctional aspects of society we can explain the development and persistence of alternatives. Thus, as Holmwood states, "Merton explicitly made power and conflict central issues for research within a functionalist paradigm" [2005:91].

Merton also noted that there may be functional alternatives to the institutions and structures currently fulfilling the functions of society. This means that the institutions that currently exist are not indispensable to society. Merton states "just as the same item may have multiple functions, so may the same function be diversely fulfilled by alternative items" [cited in Holmwood, 2005:91]. This notion of functional alternatives is important because it reduces the tendency of functionalism to imply approval of the status quo.

Merton's theory of deviance is derived from Durkheim's idea of anomie. It is central in explaining how internal changes can occur in a system. For Merton, anomie means a discontinuity between cultural goals and the accepted methods available for reaching them.

Merton believes that there are 5 situations facing an actor.

- Conformity occurs when an individual has the means and desire to achieve the cultural goals socialised into him.
- Innovation occurs when an individual strives to attain the accepted cultural goals but chooses to do so in novel or unaccepted method.
- Ritualism occurs when an individual continues to do things as proscribed by society but forfeits the achievement of the goals.
- Retreatism is the rejection of both the means and the goals of society.
- Rebellion is a combination of the rejection of societal goals and means and a substitution of other goals and means.

Thus it can be seen that change can occur internally in society through either innovation or rebellion. It is true that society will attempt to control these individuals and negate the changes, but as the innovation or rebellion builds momentum, society will eventually adapt or face dissolution.

### Almond and Powell

In the 1970s, political scientists Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell introduced a structural-functionalist approach to comparing political systems. They argued that, in order to understand a political system, it is necessary to understand not only its institutions (or structures) but also their respective functions. They also insisted that these institutions, to be properly understood, must be placed in a meaningful and dynamic historical context.



This idea stood in marked contrast to prevalent approaches in the field of comparative politics — the state-society theory and the dependency theory. These were the descendants of David Easton's system theory in international relations, a mechanistic view that saw all political systems as essentially the same, subject to the same laws of "stimulus and response" — or inputs and outputs — while paying little attention to unique characteristics. The structural-functional approach is based on the view that a political system is made up of several key components, including interest groups, political parties and branches of government.

In addition to structures, Almond and Powell showed that a political system consists of various functions, chief among them political socialization, recruitment and communication: socialization refers to the way in which societies pass along their values and beliefs to succeeding generations, and in political terms describe the process by which a society inculcates civic virtues, or the habits of effective citizenship; recruitment denotes the process by which a political system generates interest, engagement and participation from citizens; and communication refers to the way that a system promulgates its values and information.

### **Structural functionalism and unilineal descent**

In their attempt to explain the social stability of African "primitive" stateless societies where they undertook their fieldwork, Evans-Pritchard (1940) and Meyer Fortes (1945) argued that the Tallensi and the Nuer were primarily organized around unilineal descent groups. Such groups are characterized by common purposes, such as administering property or defending against attacks; they form a permanent social structure that persists well beyond the lifespan of their members. In the case of the Tallensi and the Nuer, these corporate groups were based on kinship which in turn fitted into the larger structures of unilineal descent; consequently Evans-Pritchard's and Fortes' model is called "descent theory". Moreover, in this African context territorial divisions were aligned with lineages; descent theory therefore synthesized both blood and soil as two sides of one coin (cf. Kuper, 1988:195). Affinal ties with the parent through whom descent is not reckoned, however, are considered to be merely complementary or secondary (Fortes created the concept of "complementary filiation"), with the reckoning of kinship through descent being considered the primary organizing force of social systems. Because of its strong emphasis on unilineal descent, this new kinship theory came to be called "descent theory".

With no delay, descent theory had found its critics. Many African tribal societies seemed to fit this neat model rather well, although Africanists, such as Richards, also argued that Fortes and Evans-Pritchard had deliberately downplayed internal contradictions and overemphasized the stability of the local lineage systems and their significance for the organization of society. However, in many Asian settings the problems were even more obvious. In Papua New Guinea, the local patrilineal descent groups were fragmented and contained large amounts of non-agnates. Status distinctions did not depend on descent, and genealogies were too short to account for social solidarity through identification with a common ancestor. In particular, the phenomenon of cognatic (or bilateral) kinship posed a serious problem to the proposition that descent groups are the primary element behind the social structures of "primitive" societies.

Leach's (1966) critique came in the form of the classical Malinowskian argument, pointing out that "in Evans-Pritchard's studies of the Nuer and also in Fortes's studies of the Tallensi unilineal descent turns out to be largely an ideal concept to which the empirical facts are only adapted by means of fictions." (1966:8). People's self-interest, manoeuvring, manipulation and competition had been ignored. Moreover, descent theory neglected the significance of marriage and affinal ties, which were emphasised by Levi-Strauss' structural anthropology, at

the expense of overemphasising the role of descent. To quote Leach: "The evident importance attached to matrilineal and affinal kinship connections is not so much explained as explained away."

## **Decline of functionalism**

Structural functionalism reached the peak of its influence in the 1940s and 1950s, and by the 1960s was in rapid decline. By the 1980s, its place was taken in Europe by more conflict-oriented approaches, and more recently by 'structuralism'. While some of the critical approaches also gained popularity in the United States, the mainstream of the discipline has instead shifted to a myriad of empirically-oriented middle-range theories with no overarching theoretical orientation. To most sociologists, functionalism is now "as dead as a dodo".

As the influence of both functionalism and Marxism in the 1960s began to wane, the linguistic and cultural turns led to a myriad of new movements in the social sciences: "According to Giddens, the orthodox consensus terminated in the late 1960s and 1970s as the middle ground shared by otherwise competing perspectives gave way and was replaced by a baffling variety of competing perspectives. This third 'generation' of social theory includes phenomenologically inspired approaches, critical theory, ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism, structuralism, post-structuralism, and theories written in the tradition of hermeneutics and ordinary language philosophy."

While absent from empirical sociology, functionalist themes remained detectable in sociological theory, most notably in the works of Luhmann and Giddens. There are, however, signs of an incipient revival, as functionalist claims have recently been bolstered by developments in multilevel selection theory and in empirical research on how groups solve social dilemmas. Recent developments in evolutionary theory — especially by biologist David Sloan Wilson and anthropologists Robert Boyd and Peter Richerson — have provided strong support for structural functionalism in the form of multilevel selection theory. In this theory, culture and social structure are seen as a Darwinian (biological or cultural) adaptation at the group level.

## **Criticisms**

In the 1960s, functionalism was criticized for being unable to account for social change, or for structural contradictions and conflict (and thus was often called "consensus theory"). Also, it ignores inequalities including race, gender, class, which causes tension and conflict. The refutation of the second criticism of functionalism, that it is static and has no concept of change, has already been articulated above, concluding that while Parsons' theory allows for change, it is an orderly process of change [Parsons, 1961:38], a moving equilibrium. Therefore referring to Parsons' theory of society as static is inaccurate. It is true that it does place emphasis on equilibrium and the maintenance or quick return to social order, but this is a product of the time in which Parsons was writing (post-World War II, and the start of the cold war). Society was in upheaval and fear abounded. At the time social order was crucial, and this is reflected in Parsons' tendency to promote equilibrium and social order rather than social change.

Furthermore, Durkheim favored a radical form of guild socialism along with functionalist explanations. Also, Marxism, while acknowledging social contradictions, still uses functionalist explanations. Parsons' evolutionary theory describes the differentiation and reintegration systems and subsystems and thus at least temporary conflict before reintegration (ibid). "The fact that functional analysis can be seen by some as inherently conservative and by others as inherently radical suggests that it may be inherently neither one nor the other." (Merton 1957: 39)

Stronger criticisms include the epistemological argument that functionalism is tautologous, that is it attempts to account for the development of social institutions solely through recourse to the effects that are attributed to them and thereby explains the two circularly. However, Parsons drew directly on many of Durkheim's concepts in creating his theory. Certainly Durkheim was one of the first theorists to explain a phenomenon with reference to the function it served for society. He said, "the determination of function is...necessary for the complete explanation of the phenomena" [cited in Coser, 1977:140]. However Durkheim made a clear distinction between historical and functional analysis, saying, "When...the explanation of a social phenomenon is undertaken, we must seek separately the efficient cause which produces it and the function it fulfills" [cited in Coser, 1977:140]. If Durkheim made this distinction, then it is unlikely that Parsons did not. However Merton does explicitly state that functional analysis does not seek to explain why the action happened in the first instance, but why it continues or is reproduced. He says that "latent functions ...go far towards explaining the continuance of the pattern" [cited in Elster, 1990:130, emphasis added]. Therefore it can be argued that functionalism does not explain the original cause of a phenomenon with reference to its effect, and is therefore, not teleological.

Another criticism describes the ontological argument that society cannot have "needs" as a human being does, and even if society does have needs they need not be met. Anthony Giddens argues that functionalist explanations may all be rewritten as historical accounts of individual human actions and consequences (see Structuration).

A further criticism directed at functionalism is that it contains no sense of agency, that individuals are seen as puppets, acting as their role requires. Yet Holmwood states that the most sophisticated forms of functionalism are based on "a highly developed concept of action" [2005:107], and as was explained above, Parsons took as his starting point the individual and their actions. His theory did not however articulate how these actors exercise their agency in opposition to the socialization and inculcation of accepted norms. As has been shown above, Merton addressed this limitation through his concept of deviance, and so it can be seen that functionalism allows for agency. It cannot, however, explain why individuals choose to accept or reject the accepted norms, why and in what circumstances they choose to exercise their agency, and this does remain a considerable limitation of the theory.

Further criticisms have been leveled at functionalism by proponents of other social theories, particularly conflict theorists, Marxists, feminists and postmodernists. Conflict theorists criticised functionalism's concept of systems as giving far too much weight to integration and consensus, and neglecting independence and conflict. Lockwood [in Holmwood, 2005:101], in line with conflict theory, suggested that Parsons' theory missed the concept of system contradiction. He did not account for those parts of the system that might have tendencies to Mal-integration. According to Lockwood, it was these tendencies that come to the surface as opposition and conflict among actors. However Parsons thought that the issues of conflict and cooperation were very much intertwined and sought to account for both in his model. In this however he was limited by his analysis of an 'ideal type' of society which was characterized by consensus. Merton, through his critique of functional unity, introduced into functionalism an explicit analysis of tension and conflict.

Marxism which was revived soon after the emergence of conflict theory, criticized professional sociology (functionalism and conflict theory alike) for being partisan to advanced welfare. Gouldner in Holmwood, thought that Parsons' theory specifically was an expression of the dominant interests of welfare capitalism, that it justified institutions with reference to the function they fulfill for society. It may be that Parsons' work implied or articulated that certain institutions were necessary to fulfill the functional prerequisites of society, but

whether or not this is the case, Merton explicitly states that institutions are not indispensable and that there are functional alternatives. That he does not identify any alternatives to the current institutions does reflect a conservative bias, which as has been stated before is a product of the specific time that he was writing in.

As functionalism's prominence was ending, feminism was on the rise, and it attempted a radical criticism of functionalism. It believed that functionalism neglected the suppression of women within the family structure. shows, however, that Parsons did in fact describe the situations where tensions and conflict existed or were about to take place, even if he did not articulate those conflicts. Some feminists agree, suggesting that Parsons' provided accurate descriptions of these situations. On the other hand, Parsons recognized that he had oversimplified his functional analysis of women in relation to work and the family, and focused on the positive functions of the family for society and not on its dysfunctions for women. Merton, too, although addressing situations where function and dysfunction occurred simultaneously, lacked a "feminist sensibility"

Postmodernism, as a theory, is critical of claims of objectivity. Therefore the idea of grand theory that can explain society in all its forms is treated with skepticism at the very least. This critique is important because it exposes the danger that grand theory can pose, when not seen as a limited perspective, as one way of understanding society.

Jeffrey Alexander (1985) sees functionalism as a broad school rather than a specific method or system, such as Parsons, who is capable of taking equilibrium (stability) as a reference-point rather than assumption and treats structural differentiation as a major form of social change. "The name 'functionalism' implies a difference of method or interpretation that does not exist." (Davis 1967: 401) This removes the determinism criticized above. Cohen argues that rather than needs a society has dispositional facts: features of the social environment that support the existence of particular social institutions but do not cause them.

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