

Structural Functionalist Perspective

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Structural functionalism are institutions, relationships, roles and norms that come together to serve a purpose in society. Social order plays a huge role when it comes to structural functionalism in a society. In society, when related to structural functionalism each part of a society has a specific task that they have to complete in order for the society to function properly. Structural functionalism is what keeps society functioning smoothly and by each of the parts going smoothly the society will continue to have less problems. Regulation and rules are set in place for us as a society to obey them to cause less anomie within a society. When the society is chaotic it leads to a lot of problems and the social order is no longer working and institutions are not working together. When studying how structural functionalism works in a society there are several theorists that have applied their knowledge and findings to how a society should operate.

Emile Durkheim was a French sociologist, he was born April 15, 1858, in France. Durkheim's structural functionalism theory was that society is viewed as an organism. His main focus was social order within society. He views society as a complex system whose parts are intertwined and that they are all related and can connect somehow. If society does not work together it can lead to lots of chaotic events and that will make society dysfunctional. Like other functionalists, he focused on the problem of order and the positive effects of social institutions, explaining their existence in terms of their functionally necessary contributions (Pope,1975). Durkheim believed that everyone should thrive within society and that rules and regulation should be set in place so everyone can succeed equally. Family, government, education, and religion are all institutions that have their own functions.

Auguste Comte was a French philosopher, he was born January 19, 1798, in France. Comte formulated the doctrine positivism, which was methodology of social science. The doctrine of positivism consisted of three different stages that included theological, metaphysical,

and positive stage. Positivism was about the belief that societies had their own laws that formulated around the nature of scientific studies. Comte made it known that the laws that we follow and obey should be applied to the sociological world. Comte separated sociology into two primary fields: social dynamics, which studies the factors that bring about social change, and social statics, which examines the forces that keep society together. In his work he talks about philosophy and that there is scientific reasoning behind everything that happens in society. According to Plé (2000), “the sociologist’s task was to discover the laws that govern social institutions, and the ways in which human beings relate themselves to the natural world as well as to their civilization. Comte envisaged a future where positive morality could determine the discipline of existence” (p.424). Comte hoped that sociologists would learn about the social world through scientific methods.

Harriet Martineau was an English social theorist and also seen as the first female psychologist. She was born June 12, 1802 and later died June 27, 1876 in the United Kingdom. Martineau examined social class, religion, suicide, national character, domestic relations, women’s status, criminology, interrelations between institutions, and individuals. She believed that society had to be changed through two social forms which are necessitarianism and unitarianism. She came up with morals and manners and she described this term by morals meaning societies collective ideas of prescribed and proscribed behavior and manners the patterns of actions in association within a society. Martineau argues for a naturalist, staunchly empirical, and observationally rich science of morals. In cautionary reflection that foreshadows concerns about self reflexivity, Martineau cautions, "There are two parties to the work of observation on Morals and Manners—the observer and the observed. ... Yet a moment's

consideration shows that the mind of the observer—the instrument by which the work is done, is as essential as the material to be wrong (Allahyari, 2004).

Talcott Parson was an American psychologist of structural functionalism and social action theory. He was born December 13, 1902 in Colorado Springs. He believes the structure of society was shaped by its function and each individual had a distinct role within its society. He viewed society differently than the sociologists I mentioned above. He stated that changes emerge from processes within a social system in process of change of the social system itself. His main argument was that School takes over as a socializing agency for children because it helps prepare them for the real world. He states that school is The main component of how children are taught in life. Within his work he said that each social system had four basic functional prerequisites which include adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and pattern maintenance. he saw these four basic functions as problems that society must be able to solve in order to survive in the world and if the society didn't have these they would not function properly.

After reading through all of the following sociologists they have many different ways of how they see social order in institutions. They all desire social order, but they all desire it in different ways, and some of them can relate to one another while others cannot. Some psychologists felt that people within a society should thrive so that they can succeed in society rather than others who thought that scientific methods should determine how everything happens in society. Others thought that the component of school is what had a major impact on how social order is established because you are taught certain things in school to take you out into the real world so you can be great. Talcott Parson took a different approach when thinking about structural functionalism, he makes it know that family is main point of socialization. He states

that family is the culture of society because they are the first people that teach you everything.

The other sociologists have the same approach as the others, but Talcott Parson has the most relevant form of structural functionalism today that still continues.

References

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