Click to verify



```
Structural Functionalism is a sociological theory that explains why society functions the way it does by emphasizing on the relationships between the various social institutions that make up society (e.g., government, law, education, religion, etc). The structural-functional approach is a perspective in sociology that sees society as a complex system
whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. It asserts that our lives are guided by social structures, which are relatively stable patterns of social behavior. Social behavior. Social structures give shape to our lives are guided by social structures, which are relatively stable patterns of social behavior. Social structures give shape to our lives are guided by social structures, which are relatively stable patterns of social behavior.
religious ceremonies, give structure to our everyday lives. Each social functions, or consequences for the operation of society as a whole. Education, for example, has several important functions in a society, such as social functions in a society as a whole. Education, for example, has several important functions in a society as a whole.
work together. Thus one of the key ideas in Structural Functionalism is that society is made-up of groups or institutions, which are cohesive, share common norms, and have a definitive culture. [1] Robert K. Merton argued that functionalism is about the more static or concrete aspects of society, [1] institutions like government or religions. However,
any group large enough to be a social institution is included in Structural Functionalist thinking, from religious values to sports clubs and everything in between. Structural Functionalist thinking, from religious values to sports clubs and everything in between the way society is organized is the most natural and efficient way for it to be organized. Gender inequality offers a good illustration. According to
Structural Functionalist perspective, women being subordinate to men allows the wage-earners to function is that, because society is functioning smoothly with gender stratification, such stratification is that, because society knows his or her respective position in the hierarchy. The implication is that, because society knows his or her respective position in the hierarchy.
to change the arrangement. This example illustrates that Structural Functionalism is generally seen as being supportive of the status quo. Another key characteristic of Structural Functionalism is that it views society as constantly striving to be at a state of equilibrium, which suggests there is an inherent drive within human societies to cohere or
stick together. This is known as the cohesion issue.[1] Societies encourages equilibrium, not through dictatorial mandate by the leaders of society but rather because the social structure of societies encourages equilibrium. For example, Jim Crow laws in the southern United States were a formalized version of informal structural advantages that
empowered whites. Because of the history of slavery in the southern United States, whites had amassed more wealth than blacks. During slavery, whites continued to control many of these institutions, but because they were outnumbered in some
areas by blacks, threatening their dominance, they instituted formal laws, Jim Crow laws, that allowed them to maintain their structural advantages. And whites were able to pass these laws because they already controlled many of the social institutions instrumental in the passage of laws (e.g., courts, government, businesses, etc.). Thus, the
advantages whites had prior to a change in society allowed them to maintain their advantages after the change through both informal and formal means because of the structure of society. Structural Functionalism does much to explain why certain aspects of society continue as they always have, despite some phenomena being clearly less beneficial
for society as a whole (e.g., Jim Crow laws). However, Structural Functionalism falls short in explaining opposition to social institutions and social structural Functionalism falls short in explaining opposition to social institutions and social structural Functionalism falls short in explaining opposition to social institutions and social structural Functionalism falls short in explaining opposition to social institutions and social structural Functionalism falls short in explaining opposition to social institutions and social structural Functionalism falls short in explaining opposition to social institutions and social structural Functionalism falls short in explaining opposition to social institutions and social structural Functionalism falls short in explaining opposition to social institutions and social structural Functionalism falls short in explaining opposition to social institutions and social structural Functionalism falls short in explaining opposition to social institutions and social structural Functionalism falls short in explaining opposition to social institutions and social structural Functionalism falls short in explaining opposition to social institutions and social structural Functionalism falls short in explaining opposition 
assumption is that institutions are distinct and should be studied individually.[citation needed] Structural Functionalists look at institutions are interlinked in society and those employing a structural functionalist approach should be taken into
consideration the network of relationships that exist between these institutions.[2] Social cohesion describes the bonds that bring people together in a society. In order for groups to be cohesion can be looked at on both an
individual and group level. Individual-levels include: an individuals desire or intention to remain a part of a group, the individuals intention to remain a part of a group, the individuals intention to remain a part of a group level is
directly affected by the individual members.[3] Social inequality refers to any scenario in which individuals in a society do not have equal social status. Areas of potential inequality include voting rights, freedom of speech and assembly, the extent of property rights and access to education, health care, quality housing and other social goods. Social
inequality is an important characteristic of Structural Functionalism as the theory assumes, since inequality exists, there needs to be a certain level of inequality in order for a society to operate. One possible function of inequality is to motivate people, as people are motivated to carry out work through a rewards system. Rewards may include income
status, prestige, or power.[citation needed]Interdependence is a central theme in structural functionalism; it refers to the parts of society sharing a common set of principles.[citation needed] Institutions, organizations, and individuals are all interdependent with one another. Equilibrium, in a social context, is the internal and external balance in a
society. While temporary disturbances may upset the equilibrium of society strives toward equilibrium also means that changes happen slowly.[citation needed] Propositions are proposed relationships between two concepts. This section explores some
of the propositions of structural functionalism. One proposition derived from Structural Functionalist theory is that people have social capital, and that greater amounts of social capital will remain members of the institution in order to maximize the
potential of their social capital. Schepens found support for this proposition by examining religious switching; less than 5% of church members in the Netherlands shift their church associations during their lifetime, conserving and maximizing their social capital. [2]One of the assumptions of Structural Functionalism is that a society is cohesive if it
consists of various intermediate groups which share the same norms. This assumption leads to another proposition: The higher the level of integration between these intermediate groups, the more cohesive society will be as a whole. The absence of social cohesion can result in greater violence toward others and one's self.[1] The diagram below is a
general conceptual diagram of Structural functionalism. It shows that all of the different organizations and institutions in society changes, other institutions in society are interdependent. When one institutions in society changes, other institutions accommodate that change by changing as well, though the ultimate effect is to slow overall change. Below is a chart depicting how deviance is
 functional for society and how society responds to deviance. A "deviant" individual commits an act that is deemed by the rest of society as criminal, because a large portion of society respond to the action as though it is deviant, this draws a boundary between what is and is not deviant. Thus,
deviance actually helps to indicate what is not deviant, or, the function of labeling behaviors or ideas as deviance is to insure that most people do not engage in those behaviors. Functionalism developed slowly over time with the help of many sociologists in different parts of the world. Perhaps the most significant contributors to the initial
development of this theory are mile Durkheim and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown. However, we begin with Herbert Spencer. Herbert Spencer. Herbert Spencer, an English sociologist, was a forerunner of formalized Structural Functionalism. He is best known for coining the phrase "survival of the fittest" in his book Principles of Sociology (1896). Spencers intention was to
support a societal form of natural selection. One of the primary focii in Spencer's work was societal equilibrium. Spencer argued that there is a natural tendency in society towards equilibrium. Spencer argued that there is a natural tendency in society towards equilibrium.
[4]In the late 19th century French Sociologist mile Durkheim laid the primary foundations of Structural Functionalism. Durkheim originally wanted to explain social institutions as a shared way for individuals in society to meet their own
biological needs. He wanted to understand the value of cultural and social traits by explaining them in regards to their contribution to the operation of the overall system of society meet the social needs of individuals within that
society. Durkheim was interested in four main aspects of society: (1) why societies formed and what holds them together, (2) religion, (3) suicide, and (4) deviance and crime. Durkheim addressed his first focus in his book, The Division of Labor in Society.
know why. Durkheims answer to this question can be found in his idea of "solidarity". In older, more primitive societies Durkheim argued that "mechanical solidarity kept everyone together. Mechanic Solidarity kept everyone together. Mechanical solidarity kept everyone together.
labor; people hunted or gathered. Durkheim theorized that shared values, common symbols, and systems of exchange functioned as the tools of cohesion in these societies individuals are quite different and they do not
perform the same tasks. However, the diversity actually leads to a different form of solidarity - interdependence. Durkheim referred to this as "organic solidarity."[8]. Organic solidarity leads to a different form of solidarity leads to a different form of solidarity actually leads to a different form of solidarity."[8].
on the job, he will turn to a doctor for treatment (and probably a lawyer to sue his employer). The division of labor in society requires specialization, and the result is organic solidarity. Durkheim hypothesized that social relationships reduced the likelihood of
suicide. By collecting data across large groups in Europe, Durkheim was able to distinguish patterns in suicide rates and connect those patterns with other variables.[7] Throughout the book, Durkheim was able to distinguish patterns in suicide rates and connect those patterns with other variables.
between individuals the less likely one was to commit suicide. One concrete example Durkheim explored was the difference in solidarity between Protestants and Catholics. Due to a variety of factors, Durkheim explored was the difference in solidarity between Protestants and Catholics.
helped maintain societal order. Another thread in the development of Structural Functionalism comes from England, where it emerged from the study of anthropology in the early twentieth century in the theorizing of Bronislaw Malinowski and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown. Malinowski argued that cultural practices had physiological and psychological
functions, such as the satisfaction of desires.[5]Radcliffe-Browns structural functionalism focused on social structure. He argued that the social world constituted a separate "level" of reality, distinct from those of biological forms. Radcliffe-Brown argued that the social phenomena had to be constructed at the
social level.[5] To Radcliffe-Brown this meant that people were merely replaceable, temporary occupants of social roles in sociological roles in sociological roles in sociological roles in sociological roles.
thinking by Talcott Parsons, who introduced the idea that there are stable structural categories that make up the interdependent systems of a society and functioned to maintain society. He argued that this homeostasis is the critical characteristic of society and functioned to maintain society. He argued that there are stable structural categories that make up the interdependent systems of a society and functioned to maintain society. He argued that this homeostasis is the critical characteristic of society and functioned to maintain society.
should find how they fit into the different aspects of society on their own, rather than being assigned roles. Parsons saw social systems as "a plurality of individual actors who are motivated in terms of a tendency to the "optimization of gratification"
and whose relation to their situations, including each other, is defined and mediated in terms of a system of culturally structured and shared symbols."[citation needed] The foundation of Parsons social system is the status-role complex, which consists of structural elements or positions that individuals hold in a system. These positions are referred to
as statuses and are occupied by individuals who must carry out the roles in order to maintain the order of the system. Therefore, within this social system individuals perform certain roles and statuses that occur, allowing individuals to
express their unique personalities resulting in individualism. Another important aspect of Parsons social systems argument is his theory of action based on the idea that the decision making of an individual in a social system has motivational significance to himself. [citation needed] The individual is constantly
reminded of the norms and values of society, which binds him to society, which binds him to society, which binds him to society as a whole. Structural functionalism was the dominant approach of sociology between World War II and the Vietnam War. In the
1960s Structural Functionalism was quite popular and used extensively in research. It was perhaps the dominant theoretical orientation in sociology and anthropology.[2] However, by the 1970s, it was no longer so widely credited. "Structural Functionalism has lost much importance, but modified it directs much sociological inquiry."[9] On September
11, 2001 modern American culture was disoriented due to an attack. This event affected both American travel customs, reflecting the Structural Functionalist idea that a change in one element of society results in changes in other aspects of society. Before the attacks, airport security in the U.S. existed, but they changed substantially as a result of
the attacks. Scrutiny of travelers was heightened and included new protocols, like the removal of shoes, belts, and eventually liquids, as well as random, more detailed screenings. Thus, a change in the cultural sense of security resulted in a corresponding change in travel protocol. Modern technology has resulted in substantial changes to the
economy and the military. Before the advent of telephones, the internet, and video conferencing, most business meetings occurred face to face. If an individual had a business proposal for a company in San Francisco but lived in New York, she would have to travel to San Francisco. Modern technology has changed this, reducing the necessity of
business travel. As a result, the function of face to face meetings in business has changed; they are no longer a necessary part of social interactions and have therefore begun to lose their structural role. Likewise, the traditional approach to war between two nations was an all-out invasion involving hundreds of thousands if not millions of troops.
During WWI, America sent over two million men to fight. During WWII, America sent over eleven million soldiers to fight. During the Korean War America sent over two million troops. And finally, in 1990, just over 700,000 soldiers fought in Operation Desert Storm. Due to the increase in military technology and new military tactical norms.
the number of military personnel present in war zones has dramatically decreased. When America invaded Iraq in 2003, they sent 150,000. Modern technology, including advanced, long-range weapons and unmanned drones, have changed the function of mass invasions. Structural Functionalism a b c d Hak, Durk. 2007. "Stark and Finke or Durkheim
on Conversion and (Re-)Affiliation: An Outline of a Structural Functional Requirements and Finke." Social Compass. 54, 2:295-312. a b c Sjoberg, Gideon. Contradictory Functional Review of Sociology. 30:409-25. Bain, A.
Spencers, Principles of Sociology. Fair Use. Mind. Volume 1 No. 1, 1876. a b c Porth, E., Neutzling, K., & Edwards, J. (n.d.). Anthropological Theories - Department of Anthropology - The University of Alabama. The University of Alabama. Retrieved April 15, 2011, from Durkheim, Emile. Division of Labor in Society. N.p.: Free Press, 1997. a b Perrin,
Robert G. 1973. The Functionalist Theory of Change Revisited. The Pacific Sociologist Review 48.5 (1983) Bottomore, Tom. Competing Paradigms in Macrosociology, Aug. 1975. Share copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format
for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any
doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation. No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as
publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. Skip to main contentBrowseInstitutionsLearnersLoginWhat is Structural Functionalism? Study GuidesGeorgie WilliamsMA, Gender Studies (London School of Economics & Political Science)Date Published: 23.03.2023,Last Updated: 02.08.2023Structural Functionalism (often
referred to as Functionalism) is a theory on the framework of societies. Most popular as a theory in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, Structural Functionalism in Sociology, Wsevolod Isajiw wrote that: The question which functionalism tries to
answer is how social phenomena can be treated as dynamically interdependent variables. (1968)Structural Functionalism argues that society all affect and interact with each-other in an interdependent manner. In terms of its academic application, Isajiw states: Functional
analysis studies the functions which a structural item of the social system has for the structural item of the system as a whole, and how these functions bear on the structural item of the system. This tension can occur
 within the social norms, institutions, roles or relationships that constitute a social system. For example, during the Great Depression in the USA in the 1930s, the significant economic downturns felt across the country prompted religious organisations to fill the gap for social and financial support. This adaptive response suggests one sector of a
society relieves the tension that has been created by another - the religious organizations relieving the tension caused by rising economic struggle. Although there is a general consensus on this broad definition of Structural Functionalism, Sociological scholars conceptualized and debated over the specificities of Structural Functionalism throughout
the early to mid 1900s. American sociologist Talcott Parsons was one of the most prominent voices on this subject and is best known for both his work on Social Action Theory and the tenets of Structural Functionalism. Parsons is often credited with the conceptualisation of Structural Functionalism - although earlier scholars such as Auguste Combe
and Herbert Spencer often alluded to concepts similar to Structural Functionalism in their writing. Parsons believed that societies had four needs which had to be met in order to function. These needs include adaptation, goal attainment, integration and latency (AGIL) (Izadi, Mohammadi, Nasekhian & Memar, 2020). We can break these four
functions down in the following way: Adaptation: The problem of settling and implementing goals. Integration: The problem of settling goals. Integration: The problem of 
maintaining and transmitting the social system's specific culture and/or values. Parsons believed that these functional requirements were met through the harmonious interaction of the components of a society which was dependent on a moral consensus and a lack of social conflict. Parsons conceptualisation should be described as
foundational; it was the framework for more extensively on this subject - fundamentally agreeing with Parsons theory but Merton wrote extensively on this subject - fundamentally agreeing with Parsons theory. In
Robert K. Merton and Contemporary Sociology, Carlo Mongardini writes the following of Mertons perspective: Merton refers to the claim of Bronislaw Malinowski that the functional view of culture insists therefore upon the principle that every type of civilization, every custom, material object, idea and belief fulfills some vital function. Such functional
custom, material object, idea and belief fulfills some vital function. Such functional analysis, furthermore, adheres to the indispensability of social structures and processes. (2018) (emphasis our own)In making structures and processes.
a society functioned together. For example, Mongardini notes Mertons framing of religious beliefs have a dual function: they control social action and contribute to social integration. In other words, certain problems have to be solved in every society, and certain structural and cultural patterns are essential in order to
latent and manifest functions, originally conceptualized outside of structural functionalism by Bronislaw Malinowski. Manifest functions contrastingly, were any unrecognizable, unintentional or unanticipated consequences of a particular social
pattern. Merton considered this introduction essential for differentiating how motives and outcomes vary within the context of a social outcome- and should be analyzed with this differentiation in mind. Structural Functionalism is most often applied in the field of Sociology and Anthropology, as it is used to account for patterns and practices within the
large social groups or societies. The majority of theorists credited with helping to develop Structural Functionalism in Architecture, which is the principle that the design of buildings should be grounded solely in their purpose and function. It must also
not be confused with Functionalism in International Relations, sometimes referred to as Mitranian Functionalism. This form of Functionalism emphasizes the dynamics and the importance of common interests between political states. Two examples of what Talcott Parsons would describe as institutions within a society are formal education and family
These institutions are components of society which have a specific function(s). Each institution has its own specific and individual but interrelated function properly. As mentioned previously, Structural Functionalism operates on the
notion that societies must have a moral consensus - a general agreement amongst the members of a society about its values and principles. Sociologist Damian Milton said the following on the subject of implementing this consensus and the role of families as an institution: Functionalists argue that this consensus of values is possible due to
socialisation. Socialisation means the process by which individuals learn the norms and values of their given culture. Thus, the Family as an institution is seen by functionalists as vital for providing this function for individual family members and for society as a whole. (Milton, 2007) (emphasis our own) According to Structural Functionalism, this
socialisation is then bolstered and further developed in formal education. This formal education also allows parents in families to engage in economic labour whilst the caregiving needs of their children are met - thus tying families to engage in economic labour whilst the caregiving needs of their children are met - thus tying families and formal education together as two institutions functioning in an individually specific yet interdependent arrangement
with one another. Structural Functionalism reached its peak in popularity in the mid 1900s. From the 1960s onwards, sociologists and anthropologists began to criticize many of the tenets of Structural Functionalism. One of the key criticisms was that Parsons conceptualized Structural Functionalism through the context of the social practices he
witnessed during World War II. During this period, equilibrium and social order was crucial rather than social change (Subedi, 2015). In Subedis writing it is noted that under the theory of Structural Functionalism, Just like internal organs of a normal biological organism, society maintains its stability, order and progress only when social organs
structure and institutions coordinate and cooperate with each other (are in equilibrium) - NOT conflict with each other. Because of Parsons social context being a time period in which equilibrium was considered paramount for the survival of society, his theory of Structural Functionalism may falsely represent how societies generally operate.
Structural Functionalisms suggestion that equilibrium comes from a lack of conflict has been criticized, with critics sometimes referring to Structural Functionalisms suggestion that equilibrium comes from a lack of conflict has been criticized, with critics sometimes referring to Structural Functionalisms suggestion that equilibrium comes from a lack of conflict has been criticized, with critics sometimes referring to Structural Functionalisms instead as consensus theory. This is because Structural Functionalisms instead as consensus theory.
through conflict. Structural functionalists also argue that this equilibrium often comes from said society being in general agreement about what their social norms, rules, values and regulations are. Structural Functionalism gave way to a focus on more conflict-oriented theories by the early 1980s. Another criticism confronts how Structural
Functionalism is limited in the social mechanisms it recognises in the building of societal relationships. In Functionalism, Exchange and Theoretical Strategy, sociologist Michael Mulkay highlights how the inflexibility of Structural Functionalism led to it being surpassed by theories which accounted more for the benefits and balances of social
relationships: For example, where the functional conceptual scheme was elaborated most comprehensively, as in Parsons' work, an increasingly important role had been assigned to the concept of exchange; and, as can be seen in Merton's analyses, where functionalism was more conceptual scheme was elaborated most comprehensively, as in Parsons' work, an increasingly important role had been assigned to the concept of exchange; and, as can be seen in Merton's analyses, where functionalism was more conceptual scheme was elaborated most comprehensively, as in Parsons' work, an increasingly important role had been assigned to the concept of exchange; and, as can be seen in Merton's analyses, where functionalism was more concept of exchange; and, as can be seen in Merton's analyses, where functionalism was more concept of exchange; and, as can be seen in Merton's analyses, where functionalism was more concept of exchange; and the concept of exchange; and the concept of exchange is a second of exchange is a se
exchange had often been implied. But, despite this tendency for the idea of social exchange to recur in functional analysis was so intricately organized around the concept of social function that its adherents necessarily failed to develop all the theoretical
implications of the idea of social exchange as its central organizing principle-was eventually formulated only by those openly critical of functionalism. (2014) (emphasis our own)Functionalism, Exchange and Theoretical Strategy (RLE
Social Theory) Michael Mulkay For example, where the functional conceptual scheme was elaborated most comprehensively, as in Parsons' work, an increasingly important role had been assigned to the concept of exchange; and, as can be seen in Merton's analyses, where functionalism was more conceptual scheme was elaborated most comprehensively, as in Parsons' work, an increasingly important role had been assigned to the concept of exchange; and, as can be seen in Merton's analyses, where functionalism was more concept of exchange; and, as can be seen in Merton's analyses, where functional concept of exchange; and, as can be seen in Merton's analyses, where functional concept of exchange; and, as can be seen in Merton's analyses, where functional concept of exchange; and, as can be seen in Merton's analyses, where functional concept of exchange; and, as can be seen in Merton's analyses, where functional concept of exchange; and, as can be seen in Merton's analyses, where functional concept of exchange; and the concept of exchange; and the concept of exchange; and the concept of exchange in the concept of exchange in
notion of social exchange had often been implied. But, despite this tendency for the idea of social exchange to recur in functional analysis was so intricately organized around the concept of social function that its adherents necessarily failed to develop all the
theoretical implications of the idea of social exchange as its central organizing principle-was eventually formulated only by those openly critical of functionalism. (2014) (emphasis our own)Social Exchange Theory argued that, beyond the
functions an individual or institution had in society, relationships were also built on a symbiotic foundation where the stability of a social relationship is dependent on the balance of exchange. Structural Functionalism neglects to address how, for example, people choose romantic partners to form long term relationships with. Social Exchange Theory
however, allows us to understand how the balance of costs (actions to maintain relationship) and benefits (e.g. security, social approval, access to goods or services) may impact the formation and maintenance of social bonds. Although Structural Functionalism is rarely applied in isolation to contemporary sociological and anthropological research.
many facets of this theory still hold scientific value when used in conjunction with other theories, such as Social Exchange Theory. Although its applicability is confined by social context, Structural Functionalism endures as a valuable lens through which to assess wider social structures and the dynamics that exist within the components of them
Through Structural Functionalism, the utility of concepts such as latent and manifest functions has been demonstrated- and these concepts need not be applied alongside all the pre-existing tenets of Structural Functionalist theory. This theory represents sociologys first attempts to explain how individuals and the values they hold can operate as a
whole- and its limitations have kindled progressive and dynamic schools of thought in sociology and across the social Action Theory. The interconnections of Parsons theories can be best understood by reading Toward a General Theory
of Action: Theoretical Foundations for the Social Sciences by Parsons and his colleague Edward Shils. This text is interdisciplinary in nature and spans the social structures and functions. Given the developments on this subject after Parsons initial
conception of the theory, The Idea of Social Structure: Papers in Honor of Robert K. Merton by Lewis Coser is a very useful compilation of papers which explore Mertons more refined approach to Parsons take on Structural Functionalism. These texts convey an increased awareness of the sociopolitical aspects of inequality and how they drive social
change. Finally, if you are interested in exploring the pre-Parson origins of Structural Functionalism, Herbert Spencer and Social Theory by John Offer is hugely insightful. 19th Century philosopher Herbert Spencer was the first scholar to make comparisons between the functioning of a human body and how a society operates as a sum of parts. Often
credited as the first sociological functionalist during the development of modern Sociology (Turner, 1985), Spencers writings often bridged the gaps between the disciplines of Sociology - Yehuda ElkanaTalcott Parsons: Despair and Modernity
Shaun BestStructure and Social Action: On Constituting and Connecting Social Worlds - John ScottThe Consensus-Conflict Debate: Form and Content in Social Structure: Papers in honor of Robert K. Merton. Routledge. Izadi, A., Mohammadi, M., Nasekhian, S., & Memar, S.
(2020). Structural functionalism, social sustainability and the historic environment: A role for theory in urban regeneration. The Historic Environment: Policy & Practice, 11(2-3), 158-180. Milton, D. (2007). Sociological theory: an introduction to Functionalism. Offer, J. (2010). Herbert Spencer and social theory. Springer. Parsons, T., & Shils, E. A.
(2017). Toward a general theory of action: Theoretical foundations for the social sciences. Routledge. Subedi, D. P. (2015). Structural Functional Perspective in Sociology. Retrieved June, 3, 2015. Georgie Williams is a deferred doctoral student in the field of Social
Justice at University College Dublin and founder of gender & sexuality research hub, /Queer. Georgies research predominantly focuses on the development of gender and sociological field research. Welcome to the
Social SciencesLibrary. This Living Library is a principal hub of the LibreTexts project, which is a multi-institutional collaborative venture to develop the next generation of open-access texts to improve postsecondary education at all levels of higher learning. The LibreTexts approach is highly collaborative where an Open Access texts to improve postsecondary education at all levels of higher learning.
is under constant revision by students, faculty, and outside experts to supplant conventional paper-based books. Campus BookshelvesLearning Objects Home is shared under a not declared license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts. Synopsis: Structural functionalism is considered to be a prominent classical
sociological perspective. It is a macro-level theory concerned with large-scale social structures and social institutions. Structural functionalism as an explanatory theory has lost its significance in the contemporary era. Nevertheless, it is a significant theoretical perspective in social sciences. This article presents an insight into the Structural
social institutions, their interrelationships, and implications on society. In Structural Functionalism, the terms structure and function are not necessarily complementary. One can study the structural functions of different social processes can be studied without examining its functions, similarly, functions of different social processes can be studied without examining its functions, similarly, functions of different social processes can be studied without examining its functions.
form. The basic principles of Structural Functionalism can be comprehended in three simple terms: maintenance of social structure of social struct
component of the structure has a specified role and altogether these social patterns contribute to the balanced and stable functioning of society, if any part of the structure acts dysfunctional then society as a whole might collapse. According to the Structural Functionalists, any
form of rapid social change is perceived as something that arises when there is an occurrence of social tensions between traditional belief systems and social change. Drastic changes in society are considered problematic because these rapid changes
disrupt the equilibrium and result in instability. Structural Functionalism is an explanatory theory primarily developed by Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons. Further debates and theories on Structural Functionalism have been articulated by various scholars like Radcliffe Brown, Kingsley Davis, and Wilbert Moore. Division of Labor by
DurkheimEmile Durkheim(1858-1917) was a French sociologist and one of the founding fathers of the Functionalist school of thought. In his initial phase of social evolution. Moreover, he was influenced by the works of Herbert
Spencer(1820-1903) and his study of organic analogy. The Division of Labour in Society (1893) was Durkheims first book in which he explained that there are two types of society characterized by mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity is often present in primitive communities.
where there is an absence of economic advancement and status differentiation. Whereas, societies characterized with organic solidarity are economically specialized with extensive division of labor and status differentiation. Durkheim argued that functional differentiation is a prerequisite of society because it strengthens the sense of social solidarity
and binds people together, each depending upon the functional services of all for the maintenance of social order. Also Read: Understanding our society through Durkheims Division of LabourAGIL model by ParsonsTalcott Parson (1902-1979) was an American Sociologist who did tremendous theoretical work on structural functionalism and the theory
of social action. According to Parsons, a function refers to a set of activities that fulfill the needs of society. He described four functional imperatives that are necessary for the survival of every social system needs to adapt in accordance with the emerging demands of its environment. Goal attainment: a social system needs
to define and accomplish its goals. Integration: regulation of interrelationships between all the components is essential. Latency: a social system needs to preserve and enhance the sense of motivation. Parsons had a conservative approach and his major
works convey the ideas of social stability, order, and integration that play a massive role in society. Concept of Function by Radcliffe Brown(1881-1955) was a social anthropologist who immensely contributed to the theory of Structural Functionalism. In his book Structure and Function in Primitive Society(1952), Brown established as
comparative analysis between the life of a living organism and the functioning of a social structure. According to him, the structure of an organism tends to preserve the continuity of its structure by losing some of its molecules through respiration and
gaining new ones through absorption. Similarly, the social structure of society is required to function collectively in order to maintain its survival. On one hand, social facts are equally essential for keeping a check on human
actions and eradicating any form of deviance. Social facts can be understood as an invisible instrument of social control which is present in every society in the form of laws and norms. Functional Theory of Stratification Theory of Stratificatio
considered as the best-known piece of work in Structural Functionalism. According to Structural Functionalists, social stratification is considered an essential prerequisite of society. It is a division of the population into strata that are interconnected yet differentiated based on their social role and status. The system of stratification can also be
 understood as a means of regulating access to scarce resources. Stratification is seen as a functional necessity because a single unit cannot perform all the required tasks of society therefore each unit of society th
individuals to evolve and grow. For example, different responsibilities are assigned to a teacher and a laborer. However, both of them have a significant contribution to the functioning of society yet a teacher and a laborer in the occupational hierarchy. The system of stratification is considered as a system of positions in which certain
positions are regarded as prestigious and superior. These higher-ranking positions are associated with certain rewards to ensure diligence among the masses. Criticism of Structural Functionalism is estimated as incompatible in understanding the modern advanced society. It has been subjected to criticism in the
the functioning of society. It claims individualism to be substantively erroneous. Structural Functionalist lens, the whole structural functionalist lens, the w
accountable for maintaining equilibrium and steadiness in society. Any form of rapid deviation or change may cause disruption in its functioning. Structural Functionalism as an explicative theory has been developed and redefined by various scholars. For Durkheim, this perspective is significant for understanding social differentiation, social order,
feature of modern society.References:Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, The University Structural functionalism. Accessed 12 March 2021. Sociological Theory (seventh edition). McGraw Hill Education Private Limited.
(Edition 2016) pp. 98-122.R.Radcliffe Brown. Structure and Function in Primitive Society, chapter IX: On The Concept of Functional theory Figure 1. Functionalism emphasizes how various social institutions work together to meet the needs of
a society. Structural-functional theory, also called functionalism, sees society as a structure with interrelated parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of the individuals in that society. Functionalism grew out of the writings of English philosopher and biologist, Hebert Spencer (18201903), who saw similarities between society and the
human body. He argued that just as the various organs of the body work together to keep the body functioning, the various parts of society that Spencer referred to were the social institutions, or patterns of beliefs and behaviors focused on meeting social needs, such as
government, education, family, healthcare, religion, and the economy, mile Durkheim, another early sociologist, applied Spencers theory to explain how societies change and survive over time. Durkheim believed that society is a complex system of interrelated and interdependent parts that work together to maintain stability (Durkheim 1893), and that
society is held together by shared values, languages, and symbols. Durkheim believed that individuals may make up society, but in order to study society, sociologists have to look beyond individuals to social facts. Social facts are the laws, morals, values, religious beliefs, customs, fashions, rituals, and all of the cultural rules that govern social life
(Durkheim 1895). Each of these social facts serves one or more functions within a society. For example, one function of a society from violence, while another is to preserve publicsafety. Although suicide is generally considered an individual phenomenon, mile Durkheim was
interested in studying the social factors that affect it. He studied social ties within a group, or social solidarity, and hypothesized that differences in suicide rates might be explained by religion-based differences in suicide rates might be explained by religion.
Protestants were more likely to commit suicide than Catholics in Durkheims society, and his work on this topic demonstrated the utility of theory for sociological research. Another noted structural functions are the consequences of a social
process that are sought or anticipated, while latent functions are the unsought consequences of a social process. A manifest function of college education, for example, includes gaining knowledge, preparing for a career, and finding a good job that utilizes that education. Latent functions of your college years include meeting new people, participating
in extracurricular activities, or even finding a spouse or partner. Another latent function of education attained. Latent functions can be beneficial, neutral, or harmful. Social processes that have undesirable consequences for the operation of society are called dysfunctions. In
education, examples of dysfunction include getting bad grades, truancy, dropping out, not graduating, and not finding suitable employment. One criticism of the structural-functional theory is that it cant adequately explain social change. Also problematic is the somewhat circular nature of this theory; repetitive behavior patterns are assumed to have
a function, yet we profess to know that they have a function only because they are repeated. Furthermore, dysfunctions may continue, even though they dont serve a function, which seemingly contradicts the basic premise of the theory, but that it does serve
a useful purpose in some mid-level analyses. Figure 2. Some sociologists see the online world contributing to the creation of an emerging global culture. Are you a part of any global communities? (Photo courtesy of quasireversible/flickr) Sociologists around the world look closely for signs of what would be an unprecedented event: the emergence of a
global culture. In the past, empires such as those that existed in China, Europe, Africa, and Central and South America linked people from many different countries, but those people rarely became part of a common culture. They lived too far from each other, spoke different languages, practiced different religions, and traded few goods. Today,
increases in communication, travel, and trade have made the world a much smaller place. More and more people are able to communicate with each other instantly wherever they are located by telephone, video, and text. They share movies, television shows, music, games, and information over the Internet. Students can study with teachers and pupils
from the other side of the globe. Governments find it harder to hide conditions inside their countries from the explore the dynamics involved in the social interactions of global online communities, such as when members feel a closer kinship to other
group members than to people residing in their own countries. Other sociologists study the impact this growing international markets and the outsourcing of labor impact social inequalities. Sociology can play a key role in peoples abilities to
understand the nature of this emerging global culture and how to respond to it.dysfunctions:social patterns that have undesirable consequences for the operation of societyfunctionalism/structural-functional theory:a theoretical approach that sees society as a structure with interrelated parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of
individuals that make up that societylatent functions: the unrecognized or unintended consequences of a social processmanifest functions: sought consequences of a social processmanifest functions: and all of the cultural rules that govern social lifesocial institutions: patterns of beliefs and
behaviors focused on meeting social needssocial solidarity: the social ties that bind a group of people together such as kinship, shared location, and religion
```