

# A Level Sociology Knowledge Organiser

## Theories of crime

(Miss Cantwell)

### Functionalist theories

**Durkheim** Crime is inevitable, can perform positive functions for society

- 1) **Boundary maintenance** (helps to distinguish between right and wrong, helping to unite individuals and prevent atrophy)
  - 2) Allows **social change** (society can adapt and progress as crimes/deviance challenge ways of thinking e.g. on homosexuality)
  - 3) Can act as a **warning device** that something is wrong in society and needs to be fixed
- × Crime is not always beneficial for society
  - × Durkheim can't explain why crime and deviance exist in the first place

**Merton: Strain theory** - when there is disparity between the goals of society and the legal means of achieving them, may turn to crime e.g. by innovation and using illegal means to achieve material success

- × Can't explain why not all individuals who experience strain commit crime
- × Cannot account for crimes that do not result in monetary success or achieving

### Subcultural theories

**Cohen:** juvenile delinquency, **status frustration**, young, working class boys fail Join subcultures to achieve status in peer group and to find illegitimate ways of achieving success.

- × W/C have 'focal concerns'
- Cloward and Ohlin:** three types of subcultures 1) criminal (w/c areas), 2) conflict (unstable areas) 3) retreatist
- × Matza – Delinquency drift
  - × Overlap between subcultures

### Marxist theories

**Criminogenic capitalism:** crime is an inbuilt part of capitalist life, causes **alienation** – lack of power, control satisfaction of the working classes, leads to a culture of envy and crime.

- × However not capitalist societies have high crime rates, crime is also present in communist societies

**Laws based on ruling class ideology:** laws reflect capitalist values of protecting private property, government don't pass laws that regulate businesses or threaten profit. W/C unaware due to false class consciousness, health and safety laws only serve to maintain productivity and keep workers safe to maximise profit

- × Marxists to recognise that many laws actually benefit all members of society
- Selective law enforcement:** Law is not equally enforced and W/C targeted and prosecuted more, creates a false representation in crime statistics

- × Ignore other inequality linked to crime
- × Marxist theories are too deterministic

### Neo-Marxist theories

**New criminology:** Crime is a deliberate and meaningful act as a response to powerlessness created by capitalism, criminals are not passive puppets but active individuals who attempt to change society and protect against exploitation, injustice etc.

- × **Left realists** – this view romanticises criminals as being 'robin hoods'
- × Doesn't offer solutions, cannot explain crimes that don't have political motivation

### Labelling theory

**What is the process of labelling?** primary deviance (acts not publicly labelled, don't affect individual) secondary deviance (acts that have been publicly labelled and can have an influence on how an individual views themselves). Label can become master status and can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy and a deviant career

- ✓ Evidence suggests labels do exist within the police force e.g. black individuals 8X more likely to be stopped and searched,
- × Removes blame from offender as blames society
- × Cannot explain why individuals commit a primary act
- × Ignores that crime/deviance may be a rational choice
- × Is too deterministic – not all accept the criminal label
- × Labelling can actually reduce crime – reintegrative shaming involves labelling the act and not the criminal

### Left Realism

Blame inequality in society, three **reasons** for crime:

- 1) Marginalisation 2) Relative deprivation 3) Subcultures

**Solutions:** community policing, improving community facilities, multi-agency

- ✓ Holistic view of crime
- × Fail to explain white collar crime
- × Too deterministic – not all w/c commit crime

### Right Realism

Blame the individual, **reasons** for crime:

- 1) Biological differences 2) poor socialisation 3) rational choice theory

**Solutions:** maintaining environment (broken windows theory), situational crime prevention

- × Fail to address structural causes of crime
- × Cannot account for crimes that are not a rational choice



Knowledge organiser Global development topic one – Development, underdevelopment and global inequality		
<p><b>1 -Defining Development</b>  Development as the goal for achieving a desirable society  Economic development – involves economic growth and a rise in living standards  Social development – the everyday experiences and opportunities that people have e.g. education or health.  The reduction or elimination of poverty – combining both the implementation of both economic and social development.  Sen argues that development is about overcoming poverty because a minimum living standard is needed to take part in everyday life this means people can meet their potential.</p>	<p><b>2 –Measuring Development</b>  Economic development – GNI  GNI is a misleading measure because – no social measure, only average, only official economy, nothing of side effects of development, is economic growth sustainable?  Social development – uses education, health, democracy and gender equality.  Combined measures of economic and social development – HDI, gender inequality index, happiness indices, Good country index.  Poverty – income less than \$1 a day, MDG’s  Evaluation of measures  + measures can be useful for basic patterns  - Different ways to measure so depends what you look for  Statistics may be unavailable or unreliable  Difficult to measure all aspects of development  GNI doesn’t tell you about distribution of wealth.</p>	<p><b>3- Terminology</b>  First and Third world  North and South  West  Majority and minority  Undeveloped, underdeveloped, developing and developed countries.  MEDC’s  LEDC’s  LLEDC’s  Bottom Billion</p>
<p><b>4 – Modernisation theory</b>  Dominant theory on development over the last 50 years – suggests movement from traditional society to modern western capitalist values.  Transformations include strong community bonds to individualism, religious beliefs to rational decision making, patriarchy to gender equality, high birth rates to low birth rates, rural to urban living, simple division of labour to complex division of labour and subsistence agriculture to commercial manufacturing  Rostow saw 5 stages of economic growth – see diagram below.</p>	<p><b>5 – Neo liberalism</b>  Has replaced modernisation theory as the official approach to development in the 1980’s – sees obstacles to development as internal such as economic policies and institutions that limit the free market.  Policies include – reducing the role of the state, privatisation, cutting government subsidies, cutting taxes, free trade, and trade is better than aid and integration into the global economy.  Evaluation  + sets clear policies for free market capitalist economies.  -they don’t work, some countries made greater progress before neo lib. Policies. Often opens countries up for greater exploitation by TNC’s.  Foreign investment rarely reaches poorest</p>	<p><b>6 – Dependency theory</b>  Developed in the 1970’s as a response to modernisation theory. Focus on external reasons for under development. View is taken from the poor countries of the ‘south as opposed to the wealthy northern countries of the north. It is a Neo Marxist view of development.  Stages of dependency.  Stage 1- Mercantile capitalism  Stage 2- Colonialism  Stage 3- Neo colonialism  What prevents development?  Developing countries in a different position – so cannot develop like developed countries. Spread of capitalism has led to greater underdevelopment.  Neo colonialism has locked countries into a chain of dependency – this includes exploitation, inappropriate systems inherited from colonialism,</p>

Hoselitz said that developing countries also need to develop socially and culturally through urbanisation, education and the media.

Evaluation

- + Western standards and etc. growth aspirational for many.
- Rich countries continue to help poorer countries through development aid.
- distinction between modern and traditional questionable.
- Ethnocentric. Ignores downsides of modern society.
- Assumes LEDC's need western help.
- Assumes economic development is always best. Focuses on internal factors against external.

countries. Free trade disadvantages the [poorest countries].

dependency on conditional aid, political alliances that developed countries dominate, elite powers being bought off, power for TNC's and huge debt burdens.

How can development happen?

State led development, isolation or economic policies based around nationalism.

Evaluation

- + recognises historical issues for underdevelopment, recognises that developed countries cause underdevelopment of poorer countries and shifts focus from internal issues to external issues.
- doesn't recognise other causes of underdevelopment e.g. economic corruption.
- Doesn't provide practical solution, can be very pessimistic. Out of date as some former colonies are now very developed e.g. S. Korea. Ignores that colonialism may have brought some benefits and that rich countries still provide aid.

7 – World Systems theory

Modified version of dependency theory based on Marxism. Focuses on external factors. By Wallerstein as a reaction to criticisms of dependency theory.

Governments are now less important – TNC's more important and they override national boundaries. Accepts some the poorest countries are also able to develop. World is part of a unified capitalist system, the core, semi-periphery and the periphery – this system is dynamic i.e. wealth moves within in it as does a countries position.

Evaluation

- +focuses on capitalism as a global system. Recognises that global capital and TNC's transcend national borders in search of profit. Recognises underdevelopment and dependency aren't permanent.
- same weaknesses as dependency theory.

8 – Impasse development theory and post-development theory

No theory is able to fully explain development and underdevelopment – made worse by Growth of post-modern ideas. The emergence of post development theory i.e. is the western view really the most desirable form of development. There is a growing focus on globalisation. There is now a growth of environmentalism – is development sustainable.

9 – People centred development and environmentalism

This is about 'grassroots' development or a 'bottom up' approach.

Features include – sustainability, community participation, social justice, meeting people's basic needs, and funding by NGO's and small scale projects.

Evaluation

- + Greatly improves the lives of people in local communities.
- favoured by neo liberals as it stops the state having to take responsibility. Small scale – so can't help whole countries.

# Action Theories

Unlike structural theories which start with society and look at how it affects the individual, action theories start with the individual. We have free will and free choices and are not manipulated like puppets. Meanings and actions are central to this approach. Action theories form a major part of the interpretive approach in sociology



Max Weber 1864-1920

One of the founding fathers, Weber is a little chameleon like in his theoretical approach. Some of his work veers towards the structural, but his work really set the ground for the development of the action approaches.

He did appreciate that structural factors can shape our behaviour, but individuals do attach meaning to their actions.

Weber saw 4 crucial types of action

1. Rational (instrumental) - i.e. logical. An actor works out the best way of achieving a goal with a measured step by step approach.
2. Traditional – customary behaviour - we do it because we've always done it! This is habitual and needs little conscious thought
3. Affectual – This is emotion led action e.g. crying, laughing etc in response to events
4. Value-rational – relates to actions towards a goal that the actor sees as desirable for its own sake e.g. a religious ritual like praying – to some this is not logical

For Weber sociologists should observe individuals or small groups, using the concept of **verstehen** - trying to see things through the eyes of the person/s under study (empathetic understanding).

## Criticisms

- Verstehen is not truly achievable because we cannot actually put ourselves in the position of others and actually see things 'through their eyes'.
- His typology of action is confusing – some aspects overlap
- Some criticise his emphasis on the individual at the expense of shared meaning

## Symbolic Interactionism

Literally the interaction via the use of symbols – this model developed in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in the USA and looks at the meanings we attach to these 'symbols' – the most used one being language.

### G H Mead 1863-1931

Mead argued that humans interact through the use of symbols such as

- Symbols can be:
  - Visual signs (red traffic light = stop)
  - Visual gestures (waving = hello)
  - Expressions (frown = angry)
  - Verbal (scream = fear)
  - Sounds (siren = emergency)

Shared understanding of these symbols and how to respond to them form the basis of communication.

Whilst we are each conscious individuals, the way in which we choose to behave is influenced by the social context of that behaviour.

### H Blumer 1900-87

Blumer developed Mead's concepts of the Me and the I. There are 2 aspects of the self, which can influence behaviour:

1. The "I" aspect which largely consists of spontaneous actions.
2. The "Me" aspect which consists of an awareness of how other people expect us to behave at any given moment.

Unlike in animals where the "I" is dominant, for humans the "Me" is dominant which in effect means that most human behaviour is socially constructed.

### Labelling Theory

Perhaps the most well known application of symbolic interactionism is labelling theory. Developed initially by H Becker it has been used widely in Education and Deviance.

- We all label people and objects
- Those with power are able to label someone, and make others accept that label
- Labelling of humans can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy
- If the label is especially damaging, it can become a **master status**

## E Goffman

Goffman uses a dramaturgical model and develops Mead's work on the Me/I.

- He argues that life is like a play – we take on a character for ourselves in each social situation.
- Our role is to carry out a convincing performance on the stage that is our life.

2 concepts are important

1. Presentation of the self – we control how we put ourselves across to others.
2. Impression management – we see how the audience is responding and adjust our behaviour accordingly

- Goffman even suggests that we do not have a real sense of self – we do not know our true personality so therefore it may not exist

## Evaluation Of Symbolic Interactionism

- It over-emphasises the significance of the individual. There tends to be little conception of social structures.
- It cannot explain **power** relationships in society in the way that Marxists or feminists have. It does not explain why some individuals / social groups are more powerful than others.
- It concentrates too much on small-scale, trivial aspects of social life, therefore ignoring the much bigger picture of life at a society-wide level of analysis.
- It believes that nearly everything is socially constructed - so logically one could argue that sociology is itself a social construct, and therefore useless?
- It fails to explain **social order** and **social change**.
- The dramaturgical analogy is weak because at times we are actors and audience members.
- Ethnomethodologists believe it fails to explain how actors create meanings

# Action Theories 2

Unlike structural theories which start with society and look at how it affects the individual, action theories start with the individual. We have free will and free choices and are not manipulated like puppets. Meanings and actions are central to this approach. Action theories form a major part of the interpretive approach in sociology

## Phenomenology

Phenomenon is the term used to describe 'things' as they appear to our senses. Husserl (1859-1939) argued that the world only makes sense because we impose meaning on it. The world and the things in it are products of our mind.

## Shultz (1899-1959)

Humans make sense of the world by categorizing it. These categorizations are shared – what he calls **typifications**. We need to have these shared typifications to prevent confusion as the meaning given to acts can vary from situation to situation. E.g. putting your hand up in class means something different from putting it up at an auction.

Typifications are learned and passed on through language, and are referred to as 'common sense'. We build up a stock of shared typifications and gain what Shulz calls 'recipe knowledge'

## Criticisms

- Schutz based his ideas on speculation – he did not actually do any research.
- Structuralists would say that social facts DO exist. external to individuals and act on them
- If there is no social reality then studying Sociology is pointless.
- The fact that we do share typifications suggests that there IS a social reality with social order.

## Ethnomethodology

- First developed in 1960s, mainly from the work of Harold Garfinkel (1967). Unlike structuralism, Garfinkel sees order being created from the bottom up. As individuals we construct order from common sense knowledge.
- Garfinkel coined the term 'ethnomethodology', to mean 'the study of the methods used by people to make sense of social life'. This is where ethnomethodology differs from symbolic interactionism. SI is interested in the effects of attaching meanings to things, EM is interested in how we produce these meanings in the first place.
- Meanings are not always clear – what Garfinkel calls indexicality. The notion of 'social order' is a myth. Humans pretend there is an order and meaning to life because we can't cope with uncertainty.
- Humans use the '**documentary method**' to convince themselves that social order exists. This involves finding a pattern in a situation and using it to help in future situations. Garfinkel got students to pretend to be strangers in their own home – and caused bewilderment and anxiety amongst parents. I.e. the pattern was disrupted.
- This documentary method – seeking patterns to help find order – is used by coroners to aid with suicide verdicts according to Garfinkel. Coroners go through a check list - like Atkinson found. Those deaths which tick more things on the list are more likely to be seen as suicide. E.g., mode of death, notes left, recent life events, mental illness history etc.

## Criticisms

- Some see EM as trivial – stating the obvious
- Social class, age, ethnicity and gender can have real, powerful affects on people's lives. It is naive to assume these things are meaningless.
- EM says that we all create order by identifying patterns – and some are fictions. If this is the case then the same could be said about EM itself.
- Structuralists would argue that norms, values etc are social facts not fictions and do exert significant influences on individuals

## Structuration - Giddens

*Exploring the idea that structural and social action perspectives should be combined!*

Do we have to have this structural versus interpretive/action divide in the subject? Does it have to be one or the other? Some sociologists believe that we can have the best of both worlds and combine the 2 approaches.

Giddens is one of these to follow Weber's lead and combines the 2 approaches in Structuration.

- Social structures can influence our actions
- Our actions can influence social structures
- In other words, sometimes society controls us, but sometimes we control society
- Giddens sees 2 forms of structures in society, which can influence human behaviour
  1. Rules – laws and unwritten guidelines, norms values etc.
  2. Resources - These can be 'things' such as the economic - materials, land, technology, goods (**allocative** resources)  
Or having power over others (**authoritative** resources)

Individuals have the power to change and affect these structures. But often we reproduce them via socialisation and routine (things become traditional). We like order and stability.

But individuals can make changes – we continually **reflect** on our lives and make decisions about our actions. In the 21<sup>st</sup> C this is important as traditions exert less and less influence and the pace of change (e.g. new technology) is greater than ever before.

And sometimes our actions (Giddens calls them 'agency') have unintended consequences – e.g. The Calvinists adoption of a protestant work ethic caused capitalism to develop according to Weber – but this was an unintended bi-product. Glorifying God was their motivation.

## Evaluation Of Structuration

- Is Giddens just restating Weber's theoretical approach?
- Giddens does not give enough examples to show how structure and agency are linked
- Mary Archer (1995) believes he has underestimated the power of structures to resist change.
- Craib believes that his approach is really another action theory reducing the structure bit to small scale every day actions and fails to explain what happens to large scale structures like the state and economy

# Feminist Theories 1

## Liberal or Reformist feminism:

- Liberals are concerned with the human and civil rights and freedom of the individual.
- In keeping with the Enlightenment tradition, they believe that all human beings should have equal rights.
- Reformism is the idea that progress towards equal rights can be achieved by gradual reforms in society without the need for a revolution.
- Liberal/Reformist feminists believe women can achieve gender equality by arguing that laws and policies against sex discrimination in employment and education can secure equal opportunities for women.
- They also campaign for cultural change. Traditional prejudices and stereotypes about gender differences are a barrier to equality.
- They reject the idea that biological differences make women less competent or rational than men, or men are biologically less emotional or nurturing than women.

## Sex and gender:

- Oakley (1972) distinguishes between sex and gender.
- **Sex** refers to biological differences between males and females such as their reproductive role, hormonal and physical differences.
- **Gender** refers to culturally constructed differences between the 'masculine' and 'feminine' roles and
- While sex differences are fixed, gender differences vary between cultures and over time.
- Sexist attitudes are stereotypical beliefs about gender and culturally constructed and transmitted through socialization.
- To achieve gender equality we must change society's socialisation patterns. They seek to promote appropriate role models in education and the family for example female teachers in traditional male subjects. They challenge stereotyping in the media. Over time they believe such actions will produce cultural change and gender equality will become the norm. They can be seen as a critique of the functionalist view of the gender role.
- **Instrumental roles** are performed in the public sphere of paid work, politics and decision making. This sphere involves rationality, detachment and objectivity.
- **Expressive roles** are performed in the private sphere of unpaid domestic labour, childrearing and caring for family members. This sphere involves emotion, attachment and subjectivity.
- In Parson's view, instrumental roles are the domain of the men and expressive roles are the domain of women.
- Liberal feminists challenge this division. It argues men and women are equally capable of performing roles in both spheres and that traditional gender roles prevent men and women from leading fulfilling lives.
- Despite its critique of the functionalist view of gender divisions, it is the feminist theory closest to a consensus view of society. Although it recognizes conflicts between men and women, these are merely a product of outdated attitudes.

## Evaluation of liberal feminism:

- Studies conducted by liberal feminists have produced evidence documenting the extent of gender inequality and discrimination and legitimizing the demand for reform in areas such as equal pay and employment practices etc. This has helped to demonstrate that gender differences are not inborn but the result of different treatment and socialisation patterns.
- However, they are criticised for their over-optimism. They ignore the possibility that there are deep-seated structures causing women's oppression, such as capitalism and patriarchy.
- Walby (1997) argues they offer no explanation for the overall structure of gender inequality.
- Marxist and radical feminists argue that liberal feminism fails to recognize the underlying causes of women's subordination and that it is naïve to believe that changes in law or attitudes will be enough to bring equality. Instead, they believe that far-reaching revolutionary changes are needed.

## Evaluation of radical feminism:

- Marxists argue that class, not patriarchy is the primary form of inequality. Capitalism is the main cause of beneficiary of women's oppression and not men.
- Radical feminism offers no explanation of why female subordination takes different forms in different societies. It also assumes all women are in the same position and ignores class and ethnic differences between women, e.g. a MC woman a may have more in common with WC woman.
- Pollert (1996) argues the concept of patriarchy is of little value in explaining women's position because it involves a circular argument – male violence is explained as patriarchy while patriarchy is seen as being maintained by male violence.
- Radical feminism has an inadequate theory of how patriarchy will be abolished. Notions such as separatism are unlikely to be achievable.
- Patriarchy may already be in decline. Liberal feminists argue that women's position has improved greatly in recent years as a result of social reforms and changing

## Radical feminism:

- Radical feminism emerged in the early 1970s. Its key concept is patriarchy.
- They believe patriarchy is universal and exists in all societies.
- Firestone (1974) believes the origins of patriarchy lie in women's biological capacity to bear and care for infants, since performing this role means they become dependent on males.
- They believe patriarchy is the primary and most fundamental form of social inequality and conflict. The key division in society is between men and women as men are women's main enemy.
- All men oppress all women. All men benefit from patriarchy especially from women's unpaid domestic labour and from their sexual services.
- Patriarchy is direct and personal, not only in the public sphere of work and politics but in the private sphere of the family, domestic labour and sexual relationships.
- All relationships involve power and they are political when one individual tries to dominate another. Personal relationships between the sexes are therefore political because men dominate women through them. Radical feminists refer to these power relationships as sexual politics.
- They focus on the ways in which patriarchal power is exercised through personal relationships, often through sexual or physical violence or the threat of it.
- In general, male stream sociology regards sexuality as a natural biological urge. However, radical feminists argue that patriarchy constructs sexuality so as to satisfy men's desires e.g. women are portrayed in pornography as passive sex objects.
- Given that patriarchy and women's oppression of women is exercised through intimate domestic and sexual relationships these must be transformed if women are to be free. They have proposed a number of strategies to achieve this :
  1. Separatism – living apart from men and creating a new culture of female independence. Greer (2000) argues for the creation of all-female households as an alternative to the heterosexual family.
  2. Consciousness-raising – through sharing their experiences in women-only consciousness-raising groups, women come to see that other women face the same problems. This may lead to collective action, such as 'reclaim the night' marches.
  3. Political lesbianism – many radical feminists argue that heterosexual relationships are inevitably oppressive because they involve 'sleeping with the enemy' and that lesbianism is the only non-oppressive form of sexuality.

# Feminist Theories 2



## Marxist feminism:

- They reject the liberal feminist view that women's subordination is merely the product of stereotyping and outdated attitudes and also the radical feminist view that it is the result of patriarchal oppression by men.
- They see women's subordination as rooted in capitalism.
- This results from their primary role as an unpaid homemaker which places them in a dependent economic position in the family. Their subordination performs a number of important functions for capitalism.
  1. **Women are a source of cheap, exploitable labour for employers** – they can be paid less as they are partially dependent on their husbands.
  2. **Women are a reserve army of labour** – that can be moved into the labour force during economic booms and out against at times of recession.
  3. **Women reproduce the labour force** – both by nurturing and socializing children to become the next generation of workers.
  4. **Women absorb anger** - that would otherwise be directed at capitalism. Ansley (1972) describes wives as 'takers of shit' who soak up the frustration their husbands feel because of the alienation and exploitation they suffer at work.
- Because of these links between women's subordination and capitalism, Marxist feminists argue that women's interests lie in the overthrow of capitalism.
- Barrett (1980) argues that we must give more emphasis to women's consciousness and motivation and to the role of ideology in maintaining their oppression. The ideology of 'familism' presents the nuclear family and its sexual division of labour as natural and normal. The family is portrayed as the only place where women can attain fulfillment – helps to keep women subordinated. We must overthrow the ideology of 'familism' along with that of capitalism in order to secure women's liberation.

## Difference feminism:

- Difference feminists do not see women as a single 'homogeneous group'. All women have different experiences of capitalism, patriarchy, racism e.t.c
- Difference feminism argues that feminist theory has claimed a 'false universality' for itself- it claimed to be about all women but really was only about white, Western, MC, homosexual women.
- Essentialism is the idea that all women share the same fundamental 'essence' – all women are essentially the same and all share the same experiences of oppression.
- They argue that liberal, Marxist and radical feminists are essentialist – they see all women as the same. As a result, they fail to reflect the diversity of women's experiences and they exclude other women and their problems.

## Evaluation of Marxist feminism:

- Marxist feminists are correct to give weight to the relationship between capitalism and women's subordination as they show greater understanding of the importance of structural factors than liberal feminism.
- However, it fails to explain women's subordination in non-capitalist societies as it is also found in non-capitalist societies.
- Unpaid domestic labour may benefit capitalism, but this doesn't explain why it is women and not men who perform it.
- Marxist feminism places insufficient emphasis on the ways in which men and not just capitalism, oppress women and benefit from their unpaid labour.
- It is not proven that unpaid domestic labour is in fact the cheapest way of reproducing labour power. It could be done through the market or through state provision such as publicly funded nurseries.

## Dual systems feminism:

- Dual systems feminists have sought to combine the key features of Marxist and radical feminism in a single theory.
- Namely an economic system – capitalism, and a sex-gender system – patriarchy.
- Radical feminism regards patriarchy as the cause of women's oppression, whereas Marxist feminism sees capitalism as responsible.
- Hartmann (1979) sees capitalism and patriarchy as two intertwined systems that form a single entity 'patriarchal capitalism'.
- They argue patriarchy is universal but it takes a specific form in capitalist societies.
- We must therefore look at the relationship between their position both in the domestic division of labour (patriarchy) and in paid work (capitalism).
- For example, domestic work limits women's availability for paid work but the lack of work opportunities drives many women into marriage and economic dependence on a man.
- Walby (1988) argues that capitalism and patriarchy are inter-related. However, she argues that the interests of the two are not always the same. They collide over the exploitation of female labour. Capitalism demands cheap labour for its workforce whereas patriarchy resists this, wanting to keep women subordinated to men within the private domestic sphere. However, in the long run capitalism is more powerful and so patriarchy adopts a strategy of segregation instead- women are allowed into the capitalist sphere of paid work but only in low status 'women's' jobs.

## Poststructuralist feminism:

- They offer an alternative approach concerned with discourses (ways of seeing, thinking or speaking about something) and power/knowledge. The world is made up with lots of sometimes competing discourses e.g religious, scientific, medical and artistic.
- By enabling people to define others in certain ways, a discourse gives power over those it defines.
- For example, by defining childbirth as a medical condition and healthy women as patients, medical discourse empowers doctors and disempowers women.
- Poststructuralists argue that the Enlightenment project is a discourse.
- Butler uses this idea in her critique of existing feminist theories. She argues that the Enlightenment ideals were simply a form of power/knowledge that legitimated the domination of Western, white, MC males over other groups and excluded women, black people and other oppressed groups.
- She also argues that white, Western, MC women who dominate the feminist movement have falsely claimed to represent 'universal womanhood' because women are not a single entity who all share the same 'essence'.
- For poststructuralist, there is no fixed essence of what it is to be a woman because our identities are constituted through discourses and because discourses change in different times and different cultures.
- Poststructuralism offers advantages for feminism as it enables them to analyse different discourses to reveal how they subordinate women. Different discourses give rise to different forms of oppression.
- In Butler's view therefore, by rejecting essentialism and by stressing the diversity of discourses, poststructuralism recognizes and legitimizes the diversity of women's lives and struggles, rather than prioritizing some and excluding others.

## Evaluation of poststructuralist feminists:

- Walby (1992) argues that there are differences among women, but she argues that there are important similarities – they are all faced with patriarchy.
- Celebrating difference may have the effect of dividing women into an infinite number of sub-groups which weakens feminism as a movement for change.
- Segal (1999) criticizes them for abandoning any notion of real, objective social structures. Oppression is not just the result of discourses but about real inequality. Feminists should therefore continue to focus on the struggle for equality of wealth and income.

# Consensus Structuralism – Functionalism –

**Consensus** means agreement, harmony, balance and **structuralism** refers to the way in which the individual is seen as constrained by society

## Durkheim 1858-1917

Emile Durkheim was the first professor of Sociology and the founding father of Functionalism.

Durkheim introduced the concept of 'collective conscience' to show how societies needed agreement to stick together. He was concerned that the changes in modern society were weakening the social solidarity and consequently we needed the institutions in society to act together to prevent a state of anomie (normlessness, anarchy etc) from emerging.

Use the notes on family, education, religion and deviance to illustrate how this 'solidarity' is achieved

Society exists external to the individual for Durkheim and there are a group of external factors (social facts) acting on us shaping our behaviours.

Remember to link all of your Functionalist notes to work done on NEW RIGHT

### NB

You must also link this Knowledge Organiser to your notes and revision notes for a fuller understanding

## Parsons 1902-79

Talcott Parsons is credited for developing the modern strands of functionalism and introduced the biological (organic) analogy where society is compared to a human body with all the institutions working together like the parts of the body.

Remember how the family is often seen as at the 'heart' of society!

For Parsons, as with Durkheim, the key question was how does society hang together – how is social order achieved – just what is the social glue?

Having a shared culture (norms, values, beliefs, goals etc) is essential for social order. This is achieved via:

- **Socialisation** – passing these values down the generations through the family, education, media, beliefs etc
- **Social Control** – Rewarding good behaviour and punishing bad behaviour – thus reinforcing the value system to the majority of the population

Parsons identifies 4 basic needs of society and shows how they are met: GAIL

## GAIL

**G - Goal Attainment:** society needs to set goals and try to achieve them. This is done via the political system e.g. Local and national government

**A - Adaptation** this is where the material needs of society are met - e.g. working, wages etc

**I - Integration** - The different institutions must work together e.g. the family links to school links to work etc

**L - Latency** - refers to how underneath the whole system is maintained and kept going e.g. the role of family in socializing and being a pressure valve to let off steam

### Internal Criticisms - Merton

Although himself a Functionalist – Merton did have some issues with the work of Parsons

- Dysfunctional elements – Merton recognized that some elements can be harmful in society. e.g. religion can unite but can cause divisions too
- Indispensability – Merton argues that other institutions can perform tasks well e.g. single parent families can do just as good a job as nuclear 2 parent ones.

## 2 Types Of Society

Building on work by Durkheim Parsons identifies 2 main types of society each with its own patterns of norms and values – what he called pattern variables.

Type A Societies Traditional Societies	Type B Societies Modern Societies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Status is based on ascription (e.g. birth)</li> <li>• Relationships are multifunctional – e.g. knowing all the people in your community</li> <li>• Particularistic standards are used to judge people –i.e. who you are not what you are.</li> <li>• Immediate gratification prevail (living for the moment)</li> <li>• Collective orientation is important - all for one and one for all – the group comes first</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Status is based on achievement – what you do!</li> <li>• Relationships are specific – i.e. linked to specific purposes</li> <li>• Universalistic standards are applied – e.g. qualifications are used to determine the best person for the job!</li> <li>• Deferred gratification is more common – e.g. staying on at school to get better rewards later.</li> <li>• Individualism is rife – pursuing one's own interests</li> </ul>

As societies have changed mainly from type A to B, our institutions have evolved and adapted. E.g. extended family to nuclear family, schools replacing education at home.

Both Parsons and Durkheim did appreciate that this process has its dangers – something Postmodernists certainly pick up on

### External Criticisms

- Functionalism over emphasizes 'consensus/agreement'. They ignore conflict. People often have different values to others. Functionalists see the world through 'rose tinted specs'
- Functionalists use reification - *This means 'treating something as though it were alive'*. Functionalists see society as a human body – but societies are not tangible, 'real' things!
- Functionalism is a tautology - This means it uses a circular (therefore unscientific) argument: institutions exist because they are functional. They are functional because they exist...chicken or egg?
- Feminists say functionalists are sexist - They assume women should all be housewives, rather than take up important positions in society
- Marxists claim functionalists ignore the evils of capitalism - Functionalists think capitalism is functional – maybe they are under false consciousness?
- Interactionists say functionalists are deterministic and ignore individuality and free will. They assume individuals all share the same norms and values – is this really the case?
- Postmodernists are critical of the 'meta-narrative' of functionalism i.e. a big cover all explanation for social behaviour. Society is so fragmented now that such explanations are redundant.

# Conflict Structuralism - Marxism



It is important to note that there are different varieties of Marxism – each with their own little twist on the basic theme of conflict.

## Karl Marx 1818-83

Marxism is a structural perspective and like functionalism sees society shaping the behaviour and ideas of individuals.

However, that is where the similarities end – Marxism does not see society as stable but rather underpinned by conflict

### Key Ideas

#### 4. Historical materialism

Marx saw 2 classes emerging in the capitalist era. The relationship to the means of production dictated which class one belonged to:

- One class own the means of production (factories etc) **The Bourgeoisie** (Capitalists – Ruling Class)
- The other class owned only their labour – The **Proletariat** - The Working Class

The mode of production forms the economic base of society. i.e how things are produced and by whom shapes the rest of society – the superstructure (institutions, ideas, beliefs etc)

#### 5. Class Conflict and Capitalism

This is a central concept to the work of Marx. In capitalist societies the bourgeoisie (middle class / ruling class) need the proletariat to work for them. They want to pay out as little as they can – the workers want to earn as much as they can – hence they are reliant on each other but in conflict with each other.

There is polarization between the 2 groups. That is society divides into 2 distinct groups in opposition

#### 1. Class consciousness

Capitalism is on the road to destruction according to Marx as the larger WC begin to realise that they are being exploited by the RC and realise that they can do something about the situation if they work together.

This is where class consciousness occurs – the WC develop a ‘true consciousness’ about their situation.

The RC are aware that this can happen and do every thing to prevent this true consciousness emerging. They do this by conning the WC into accepting their position – what Marx calls ‘false consciousness’.

This is done via education (those with good results deserve better jobs etc) through the family (keeping the WC worried about keeping their jobs to pay for stuff at home) through the media (creating wants/needs through adverts etc)

This helps to legitimise (make it seem right) the superior position of the RC.

Marx’s writings were very much aimed at helping the WC see through this fog of false consciousness

#### 2. Alienation

Marx believes that a sense of control, creative work and interest is important to us. This gets bashed out of us at work where we lose control over the process and work in boring monotonous places.

Hence we become alienated – even from ourselves – a feeling of helplessness. Consequently religion, alcohol, Etc help us to escape (partially)

#### 3. Communism

For Marx the solution arrives when the WC realise that they are bigger than the RC, can unite to overthrow them and consequently via revolution implement a communist society

In communism every one owns the means of production (every one has a slice of the cake!). Private ownership is outlawed, alienation is alleviated as workers take control of their labour and the products.

Exactly how this revolution was to come about was not really developed by Marx and has led to much debate amongst neo-marxists

#### Criticisms Of Traditional Marxism

- Seen as too simplistic. Society is more complex than 2 classes. Weber argued that status and power are important factors too
- Others argue that there are more than just 2 classes. The WC can be divided into skilled and unskilled and the MC has grown as a group between the ruling class and the WC.
- Class polarisation has not occurred – The new MC has grown and the old industrial WC has shrunk (apart from countries like China and India where the WC has grown)
- Economic determinism – many disagree that the economic controls all other aspects of society. Action theorists focus more on the free will of individuals to bring about change via ideas, new inventions etc
- Revolution hasn’t happened – Only in some countries like Russia in 1917 has anything like Marx’s predicted revolution occurred.
- Focuses on class and ignores other marginalised groups such as women, ethnic minority groups etc

#### • Neo Marxism – 2 main schools

Since the death of Marx there have been many attempts to update his work. 2 examples are shown below

Gramsci 1891-1937 <b>Humanistic Marxism</b>	Althusser 1918-90 <b>Structuralist Marxism</b>
<p>Gramsci’s key concept is hegemony – i.e. the ideas and values used to ‘persuade’ the WC that the status quo is good and fair e.g. education is a meritocracy! Coercion (force) goes along with this –e.g. Police Gramsci believes that the WC can see through the false consciousness of hegemony – like Willis’ lads did in school. And the WC can do something about it – by organizing behind intellectuals who can lead the masses in radical change.</p> <p><b>Critics say:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He underestimates the role of coercion.</li> <li>• Workers may want to overthrow system but scared of consequences - losing jobs etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Althusser is critical of humanistic marxism He disagrees with the base/superstructure model of Marx For Althusser the economic works alongside the political and ideological levels – not forming them He looks at how capitalism keeps going –it regenerates every generation via socialization The ‘ideological state apparatus’ (ISA) transmits the values via the family, education, media etc. Also there are ‘repressive state apparatuses’ (RSA) to keep is further in line –the police, army etc We are products of this conditioning.</p> <p><b>Critics say:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too much emphasis is placed on structure rather than action</li> <li>• Individuals are seen as powerless puppets</li> <li>• It is seen as abstract with little empirical evidence to back it up</li> <li>• Humanists Marxists see it as discouraging human political action against the unfair system</li> </ul>

# Modernity V Postmodernity

Some researchers believe that the pace of change in recent times means that we are now living in a very different society - a postmodern one!  
Others disagree and say that the changes are just a continuation of the modern age itself.  
Here we will look at these approaches and the variations explanations offered:

## Modern Society (since the 18<sup>th</sup> century)

Modern society first emerged in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and is often subtitled the 'enlightenment' as the key focus has been on how enlightened we have become with the advance of science, rational thought and reason. We became enlightened as we threw off the shackles of religion, customs and ascribed status.

Key features of modernity:

- **The Nation state:** a bounded territory controlled by a centralized government – whose people share language and culture.
- **Capitalism:** Most modern societies have capitalist bases – largely privately owned means of production. But wealth distribution is unequal – leading to conflict.
- **Science and technology:** science dominates as secularism replaces religion – rational thought and new technology push this forward
- **Individualism:** Customs and traditions become less important as we gain greater personal freedom.

## Globalisation

In recent times many believe that the Nation state is powerless in the face of globalization. The global village is a reality and the whole world is now interconnected: this has many + points but also many – ones too!

1. **Technology:** plays a crucial role in the globalization of the planet. Satellites, Internet, global media etc all close the distances once separating countries.  
Beck sees this as creating a 'risk society' as threats to our well being can come from 1000's of miles away ( e.g. volcanoes in Iceland stopping flights in Europe for 6 days)
2. **Economic Changes:** The growth of Trans National Companies (TNC's like Coca Cola, Nike, and Sony) highlight the impact of the cross border elements of the global economy. The recent banking crisis suggests that nation states are now powerless to do anything individually to affect their economies.
3. **Power and cultural identity:** Some TNC's have more wealth and power than many nation states. Individual cultures and customs become swamped by a global culture via the media and trade.

3 main theories have developed to offer explanations for these rapid changes and the consequences:

1. **Postmodernism**
2. **Late Modernity**
3. **Marxism and postmodernity**

### Postmodernism

Postmodernism emerged in the 1970's and suggests that we do literally now live in a postmodern society. I.e. after the modern age – the global village existence has brought instability and fragmentation. We define ourselves less in terms of where we come from, class, gender etc and more in terms of how we consume goods and services. The post modern stage is not a continuation of modernity but a complete break from it and consequently needs a new theory to explain it.

**Foucault 1979** believes that science as a route to enlightenment is dead and that the old meta-narrative explanations (Marxism, Functionalism etc) –big all embracing explanations (big stories) are no longer useful. Instead postmodernists take a relativist position – meaning that they see no one overall truth but all views are true for those who hold them.

**Lyotard (1992)** says it is like having a series of 'different language games' Lots of ways of seeing the world – and encourages minorities to have their say.

**Baudrillard (1983)** uses the phrase simulcrum (simulacra is the plural) to suggest that postmodern society values style over substance. We buy and sell into images, lifestyles etc that have no underlying reality. We exist in a state of 'hyper-reality' and many find it difficult to distinguish between image and reality.

All these messages we become bombarded with via the media adds to a feeling of fragmentation. Our identity becomes destabilized as we use a pick and mix approach to constructing who we are.

### Late Modernity

Theories in this section believe that changes are occurring but that they are a continuation of modernism rather than a completely new thing.

**Giddens – Reflexivity:** We are now in a stage of high modernity where rapid change is having a global effect.

- Disembedding – we no longer need face to face interaction and therefore it is much more impersonal e.g. email, eBay etc
- Reflexive – traditions and customs are less important and we are forced to reflect on who we are, what we are etc. No jobs for life anymore, geographical mobility takes us away from our roots etc.

As a result of the above, change is becoming increasingly rapid and instability results. As the famous youtube video once said 'shift happens!'

### Beck – Risk Society

He sees modern society as facing dangers;

- In the past most dangers were natural – earthquakes, disease, drought etc
- Today more dangers are manufactured risks resulting from human activity – global warming, pollution etc

He agrees with Giddens about the growth of individualism and says we constantly need to reflect on our actions (he calls it reflexive modernization).

As a result awareness of risk becomes central to our lives – what we eat, where we go, what our children are doing etc

## Evaluation Of Postmodernism

- Marxists believe it ignores power - particularly the use of the media as a tool of the ruling class
- Poverty prevents many from freely constructing identities - globalisation means that much is on show - but cannot be accessed by many.
- The simulacrum scenario is criticised as it insults the intelligence of many who can actually distinguish between reality and media image.
- Treating all views as valid means that morally indefensible positions are accepted e.g. Holocaust
- Postmodernists are seen as too pessimistic - science, politics etc still have important roles to play
- It is self defeating - it claims no theory holds the truth....logically this applies to postmodernism too!

## Evaluation Of Late Modernity Theories

- Not everyone is 'free' to reflect on actions to reduce our risks – the poor due to environmental factors, lack of resources etc may not have the choice to lead healthier lives.
- Rustin (1994) says capitalism is responsible for many risks – not technology! Profit is pursued irrespective of the consequences.
- Many believe that protection groups such as environmentalists have little power when faced with the might of the capitalist funds.

## Positivism vs. Interpretivism

<p><b>Positivism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Society has a reality external to individuals - there are social structures and social facts independent of the individual which exercises constraint over him or her and moulds their behaviour</li> <li>Social behaviour can be measured objectively</li> <li>Methods should be similar to those used in natural sciences e.g. the hypothetico-deductive model (hypothesis is devised, then tested against empirical, observable and measurable data)</li> <li>More likely to be large-scale, macro research on large numbers of people</li> <li>Generally associated with structural views e.g. Marxism and functionalism</li> <li>They use quantitative, statistical techniques including:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Official stats (e.g. suicide, crime, social class)                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Experiments</li> <li>➤ Comparative method</li> <li>➤ Social surveys</li> <li>➤ Structured questionnaires</li> <li>➤ Formal/structured interviews</li> <li>➤ Non-pp observation</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Interpretivism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerned with understanding the meanings that individuals give to situations</li> <li>Natural science methods are inappropriate for studying society – society is different to the natural world</li> <li>Inductive approach - theories emerge from insights, issues and evidence gained</li> <li><i>Verstehen</i> (Weber) – developing closeness and empathy to understand the world through the other person's eyes i.e. through deep conversations/unstructured interviews/close observation e.g. on crime, not looking at the causes like positivists do, but like Becker looking at why some behaviour gets labelled as deviant while other similar behaviour does not, and people's response to being labelled criminal or deviant</li> <li>More likely to use qualitative methods, giving in-depth descriptions and insight into the attitudes/values/meanings/interpretations/feelings of individuals and groups</li> <li>Close involvement is the only way of gaining a truthful, valid understanding</li> <li>Small-scale/micro research on small numbers of people, associated with social action theories such as symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Features</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>View of society</b> – society is an objective reality made up of social structures/social facts that are independent of individuals – individuals are constrained/moulded by and react to external social forces and social structures that exist outside of them and cause their behaviour</li> <li><b>Theoretical perspective</b> – structural theories e.g. functionalism and Marxism – structural theories adopt a macro approach, studying the role of institutions/structures like the family, education, the law, religion, the media, and the economy in shaping behaviour</li> <li><b>Methodological approach</b> – positivist/scientific approach – more likely to discover causes of human beh., and predictions of future trends</li> <li><b>Research methods used:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Quantitative methods with objectivity and detachment – standardised methods and careful sampling means more reliability and representativeness, making it easier to generalise</li> <li>➤ Use of statistics (surveys or official stats e.g. crime, suicide, health, unemployment) – use of representative samples and quantitative methods, or large-scale official stats means quantitative data (reliable and easy to analyse)</li> <li>➤ Experimental method – comparative method most likely due to avoiding problems of artificial conditions, ethical risks of harm, practical difficulties etc.</li> <li>➤ Large-scale sample surveys – representative, quantitative data on large numbers of people (reliable and can be checked and replicated). Also involves personal detachment which reduces risk of interviewer bias.                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Non-pp observation – detachment, collect quantitative data by categorising</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Features</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>View of society</b> – society is a social construction of meaning – individuals have free will and choice, and actively construct society through their social action, driven by meanings and interpretations they give to their own behaviour and that of others</li> <li><b>Theoretical perspective</b> – social action or interpretivist theories e.g. symbolic interactionisms/ethnomethodology – micro approach, studying interaction between individuals in small groups to discover the meanings and motivations behind their actions and how these are created in the process of interaction</li> <li><b>Methodological approach</b> – interpretivist approaches – society is different from the natural world, must adopt verstehen approaches that enable them to gain insight into people's motivations and meanings by seeing the world as they do</li> <li><b>Research methods used:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Qualitative methods, achieving validity through involvement and empathy – ensures greater understanding of people's meanings, interpretations and motives, and how these influence their behaviour</li> <li>➤ Newspapers/autobiographies/personal diaries/letters – personal views and opinions told by the people themselves. Where positivists prefer social facts e.g. official suicide statistics, interpretivists prefer to study the coroner's decision making process and to understand the rules they use to interpret sudden deaths and label them as suicides</li> <li>➤ Uncontrolled experiments – field experiments (e.g. Garfinkel – asked students to behave as visitors or lodgers in their own homes and to record how their parents reacted to the sudden change in the taken-for-granted relationship they had with their parents) reveal meanings and assumptions people attach to everyday interaction</li> <li>➤ Unstructured/semi structured open-ended questionnaires and interviews/group interviews/focus groups – verstehen achieved in these groups gains insights into what people really think, as they can express and develop their answers in their own words. This helps to avoid the imposition problem in the structured questionnaires and interviews used by positivists</li> <li>➤ Participant Obs – enables verstehen by fully immersing the researcher in the world of the researched. Produces highly valid, in-depth data and detailed accounts of the world as seen by those being researched.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Criticisms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpretivists argue the methods do not produce valid data/a true account of society – they simply impose the researcher's own frame-work and assumptions e.g. they decide what questions to ask (or not to ask), and give little opportunity for people to explain and elaborate about what they think and feel</li> <li>Detachment means they do not develop a rapport (empathy and closeness) necessary to understand the meanings and interpretations of people</li> <li>Interpretivists reject the use of official stats because they see them as socially and politically constructed, and therefore lacking in validity. They are simply a record of official decision-making, labelling and interpretations, and political decisions about what statistics to collect and what not to collect, rather than objective social facts e.g. suicide stats are simply a record of decision-making and labelling by coroners.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Criticisms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positivists argue that such small scale research tends not to be representative. It is hard to replicate to check findings, and the closeness and involvement of the researcher with the researched can be distorted, invalid findings generated by factors like interviewer bias</li> <li>Positivists see the closeness and involvement (verstehen) as producing data that is not reliable, as it is hard to check findings, which depend on the researcher's interpretations of what they observe. The Hawthorne effect is also something that positivists think these methods encourage.</li> <li>It is often difficult for other sociologists to check the findings of interpretivist research or to repeat the research as it depends so much on the personal characteristics and skills of the researcher.</li> <li>The small scale of the research means it is not generalizable to the whole population, or even to other groups, and so is of limited use.</li> </ul>

# Sociology and Social Policy

Social policy generally refers to the tackling of social problems. It looks at how the actions of governments (local and national) affect the lives of its members. – Both positively and negatively

As far as sociology is concerned, the big questions are

- Should sociologists get involved in social policy making?
- Should sociological research inform policy making?
- Should sociology look at the effects of social policies?

## It is important to distinguish between social problems and sociological problems:

- **Social problems** are ...social behaviours 'that cause public friction and/or private misery...and calls for collective action to solve it' (Worsley 1977). E.g. poverty
- **Sociological problems** is 'any pattern of relationships that call for explanation' (Worsley 1977)

So most social problems will also be seen as sociological problems...poverty is worth sociological scrutiny – but not all sociological problems can be regarded as social problems! E.g. why do people obey rules?

So some sociologists are not interested in solving social problems but merely want to report on what goes on in society. Others however feel that in digging deep in certain areas it is impossible to remain detached and not want to do something about a problem e.g. poverty. (See values sheet)

Many sociologists are directly employed by groups with particular interests in social problems – the government, charities, housing associations etc. Having a direct input in policy is desired.

**Postmodernists** see no role for sociology in the realm of social policy making as sociology should merely exist to give individuals an understanding of their own personal; lives within a social context

## Functionalism

Functionalists are heavily into consensus in society and see the government as acting for the good of its citizens. Social policies are used for the good of all, helping society to run in a harmonious fashion.

Look back on your family and education notes to see a whole array of policies aimed at helping groups in society.

The role of the sociologist is to pass objective data to the policy makers.

Critics – such as Marxists – argue that policies are not aimed at equalizing for all and cause more conflict than balance.

## Marxism

Marxists see social policies as serving the interests of the capitalist system

- They legitimize exploitation – e.g. education policies 'pretend' to offer equal opportunities for all – but do not!
- It keeps a docile labour force
- They act as measures of social control – when conflict arises policies are offered to appease the working class – they are conned and bought off – part of the false consciousness process.

Marxists do recognize that some policies are aimed at doing good and some do benefit the working class – but often they see policies akin to rearranging the deck chairs on the titanic.....the whole ship of capitalism is what needs to be sunk!

## Feminism

Feminists see society in a state of conflict - between genders.

Feminists argue that their research has had a big impact on social policies since the 1960's.

- **Education** – children's books, learning materials etc have less gender bias
- **Family** – policies reflect domestic and work place changes for women
- **Domestic violence** – women's refuges, police handling of cases etc

## Does sociology influence social policy?

Even when sociologists are directly concerned with research into social problems, there is no guarantee that their work will affect the policy makers decisions.

A number of factors can affect this:

- **Cost** – Often seen as the bottom line – even when the government agrees with some research findings it may feel that it cannot afford to implement any relevant social policies
- **Funding** – related to the above [post is the source of the money for the research – Researchers may feel 'obliged' to find in favour of their paymasters, even subconsciously.
- **Elections** – near election time governments don't want to adopt a policy they feel may alienate the electorate.
- **Globalisation** – policies made within nation states may be ineffective against the forces of global change. Some large multi-national organizations like the IMF (International Monetary Fund) make decisions which cross cut whole continents.
- **Critical sociology** – literally because it is critical of much state policy (e.g. Marxism) it is rarely 'invited' to partake in policy making.

## The New Right

- Believe that the state should have only minor involvement in social policy
- They believe that sociology can offer useful insights for policy makers but only if they aim at restoring individual responsibility for their own and their families' welfare.
- They support strong law and order policies (see broken window thesis in deviance notes)

In short they support sociological input into social policies as long as they are policies in line with their philosophy!"

# Sociology And Science

With Psychology now being classified as a science at A level – where does this leave Sociology – Is it a science? Does it want to be classified as one?

## So what is science?

Science can be seen as a specific body of knowledge different from other forms such as magic, religion, philosophy etc. because it has 5 key components:

1. **Empirical** – basically this means that we can count and measure information.
2. **Testable** - scientific experiments can be repeated and retested and hence scientific knowledge is seen as more reliable than less testable forms.
3. **Theoretical** – science seeks causal relationships and doesn't rely simply on describing but seeks to explain
4. **Cumulative** – It builds on previous knowledge and moves forward out understanding of the world.
5. **Objective** – personal feelings, prejudices etc have no place in science. It has to be unbiased.

In the past Sociology has often pursued the kudos of being seen as a science – particularly by positivists. Durkheim was keen to have sociology seen as the science of society when he was made the first professor of the subject over 100 years ago.

More recent movements in sociology have been less keen to follow the science route – interactionists, postmodernists and feminists believe that a scientific approach is not suitable for studying social behaviour and that the pursuit of scientific status has been more about funding, prestige and status.

## Popper and Science - Falsification

Karl Popper (1902-94) believed that instead of trying to verify (prove true) theories, science uses the process of falsification – i.e. try to prove it wrong. By failing to prove the theory wrong then it shows the theory to have been rigorously tested.

Sociology would do well to adopt this approach, according to Popper as much of what has gone on before is not easily testable or capable of standing up to the falsification analysis – e.g. Marxism

## Kuhn – Paradigms

Kuhn (1970) argues that 'normal science' operates within a paradigm – an accepted framework of concepts and procedures.

Unlike perspectives in sociology where there is competition between various theories etc the scientific paradigm is rarely questioned. Only when a whole lot of research doesn't fit into the accepted paradigm is it challenged and ultimately a new paradigm is instated. Just think how homeopathic medicine struggles to fit into accepted science as we know it.

**Sociology doesn't have a shared paradigm and therefore by this definition is not scientific** – but Kuhn believed it could be given time!

## Keat and Urry - Realism

Keat and Urry (1982) stress the similarity between sociology and certain types of natural science.

They distinguish between open and closed systems

**Closed Systems** – this is where variables can be controlled and precise measurements can be taken – the typical lab experiment of physics, chemistry and biology.

**Open Systems** – are where not all variables can be controlled – seismologists, vulcanologists, meteorologists etc all have elements which cannot be controlled .e.g. it cannot be accurately predicted just when and where an earthquake may happen.

**Sociology can fit into this realist view of science** as it seeks to uncover underlying structures and processes. We can't actually see social class – but we can see the effects of it!

## Is Sociology a science?

So what can we conclude about sociology and science

Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Positivists</b> see sociology as adopting the methods of the natural sciences – the focus on objectivity, quantitative data, reliability, generalisability etc means the 'ology' of society is the science of society</li> <li>• <b>Popper</b> says that sociology isn't scientific enough yet but has the potential to be if it focuses on falsification</li> <li>• <b>Kuhn</b> says it possibly can be if we ever get to the stage where one paradigm is accepted within the subject (just don't hold your breath)</li> <li>• <b>Realists</b> – say that with their definition of open systems sociology fits in rather well and therefore is scientific (according to this definition)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Interpretivists</b> see human beings as conscious actors – they are not governed by external forces. Human behaviour cannot be studied in the same way as the natural world and therefore scientific analysis is not suitable.</li> <li>• <b>Feminists</b> – many are critical of adopting a scientific approach in sociology. Science is seen as malestream knowledge – based on male perceptions and understandings.</li> <li>• <b>Postmodernists</b> – argue that knowledge is itself relative to the world of those who seek it and there isn't a knowable world out there waiting to be discovered.. Science has set itself up as expert knowledge – but this is now outdated</li> </ul>

So the answer to the question, 'Is sociology a science?' is not easy to answer. As seen above some say yes definitely, some say yes with qualifications, some say no definitely not and some say 'why are we still bothered about such a debate?'

Moore et al sum up nicely 'somewhere in the middle lie the bulk of sociologists...who accept the debate.....but get on with their research attempting to make sense of society in the best ...way they can'

## Is science a science?

Some have turned the scientific spotlight back on science itself and argue that a lot of what goes on in the name of science does not actually fit the rigorous standards scientists like to believe they follow.

Feyerabend (1975) sees science as 'anarchic' and that the paradigm approach actually prevents new ideas coming to the fore.

Much of scientific research is in the commercial world and therefore cannot be truly unbiased. Funding sources, reputations and egos all challenge the ideal of objectivity

# Values and Sociology

Can sociology be value free? Can sociology be free of personal beliefs, prejudices, opinions etc.

Given that sociologists are human beings – can they study society objectively as they are part of what they are studying? 3 main positions on this can be identified:

1. Value freedom is possible
2. Value freedom is not possible
3. Values should be celebrated and incorporated into sociological research – Committed Sociology.

## 1. Value Free Sociology

This has developed from positivists who believe that we should copy the methodology of the natural sciences (like Biology, Chemistry etc). Like the natural scientist the sociologist studies phenomena that exist totally externally to the individual. These social facts can be observed objectively by following the scientific procedure.

Any personal or political beliefs and biases of the researcher are irrelevant as long as the research is well designed and the findings are not altered or tampered with.

## 2. Value Laden Sociology

This school of thought believes that sociology cannot be value free – even if it wants to be. A number of areas show how it is impossible to keep values out of the picture:

1. **Funding** – Like other sciences, sociology relies on funding from various sources and it is important to question why a certain piece of research has been commissioned.
2. **Career progression:** - Sociologists have personal ambitions and career aspirations. Reputations can be made and these desires can intrude into research (knowingly or subconsciously).
3. **Personal beliefs:** - As sociologists we are human beings and consequently it is impossible to escape from our personal beliefs no matter how hard we try when conducting research. Choice of topic in the first place is often a result of personal interests we have.



### Weber and Values

- For Weber values, unlike facts, cannot be disproved and he saw an essential role for values in sociological research:
- **Values as a guide to research:** - values are essential to help us choose which aspects of social life to study.
- **Values and data collection:** - **When** collecting data Weber believed we should keep our values out of the process.
- **Values and data interpretation:** - values are important again when we interpret what the research is telling us. We need to put the findings within a theoretical concept. We need to tell others about our values so that our interpretations can be made in context.
- **Values and effects of research:** - Weber believed that as sociologists we have a responsibility to look at the effects of our research. We cannot hide behind 'objectivity' at this stage – particularly if our findings can cause harm.

### Values and Methods

**There is a link between the beliefs of value freedom/laden approaches and the methods chosen to study social behavior.**

**Those who believe a value free approach is possible – such as positivists tend to favour methods generating quantitative data which are seen as reliable, objective and offering the chance to look for correlations etc.**

**For those who believe that values cannot be ignored and those who warmly welcome their input – qualitative methods are preferred where depth, validity, verstehen etc. are seen as important.**

## Committed Sociology

Some sociologists argue that sociology cannot and should not be value free and rather as a subject it should have values guiding research.

In the 1970s there was a big debate between Gouldner and Becker. Both agreed that sociology should openly 'take sides' as it were in research.

Gouldner believed that

1. Sociologists cannot ignore their values when doing research
2. Sociologists need to hold on to their values or they risk 'selling out' to the highest bidders when conducting research.

Becker (famous for labeling theory) argued that sociologists should argue from the side of the 'underdog' (criminals, Mentally ill patients etc) because little is known about their position.

Gouldner argued the opposite and suggested that sociologists should focus on the really powerful groups as these create the 'structures of oppression'. Gouldner is critical of Becker's position which he sees as an over-sentimental view of disadvantaged groups. Instead Gouldner advocates a Marxist position in siding against the powerful, exploitive groups in society.

Feminists agree with this idea of exposing exploitive groups, but see the key issue being the patriarchal nature of society – how males dominate and control society.

Left Realists are also committed to the rights of exploited groups – but unlike Marxists, they do believe that change can occur within capitalism.

### Relativism

The relativist position argues that there are many different versions of 'truth' - the sociologists research is just one of these. As we have already seen this is the position of the postmodernist.

Others disagree and say that there is a real factual world out there and sociologists can observe, record and report on what is going on out there irrespective of their values.