

## Theory and Methods – Consolidated

**Structuralism** = consensus versus conflict = **meta theories versus micro theories.**

### Theories

#### **(1) Consensus Structuralism**

##### Functionalism

##### **Parsons, Davis and Moore**

- Gradual changes
- Harmony and stability
- Meritocracy, equality of opportunities
- Parson = human body analogy
- Balance between social cohesion and social control
- Parsons = evolutionary gradual changes, otherwise excessive crime
- Conformity, internalisation
  - Facilitating harmony, cohesion and consensus
  - How to achieve value consensus = socialisation and social control
  - Socialisation primary (particularistic) and secondary (universalistic values)
  - Social control = reinforcement of value consensus via rewards and sanctions, positive functions
  - Anomie = rapid changes, vacuum, moral confusion, social instability

##### New Right

##### **Charles Murray** = underclass

- Consensus theory but with some limitations, political ideology, not structural
- Traditional institutions and values to facilitate consensus and social order
- In reality it doesn't work, increased levels of crime, functionalism failed
- More a political movement than a sociological theory
- Conservatives, Margret Thatcher, Ronald Regan
- Minimal state intervention

- Free market
- Welfare state accused for the breakdown of consensus (underclass)
- Family breakdown
- Sexual freedom

## **(2) Conflict structuralism**

### Marxism

#### Marx

- Infrastructure = the economy determines the superstructure
- Capitalism
- Class conflict and inequality
- False consciousness, indoctrination, perpetuation
- Revolution, Communism, utopia
- Dialectical

#### Neo-Marxism

#### Ideology

- **Gramsci** = ideology, hegemony
- Ideological conflict
- Ideological control rather than economic
- Ruling class controls the means of producing ideas (media and education)
- **Althusser** = ideological state apparatuses
  - Such as press media, religion, education
  - Agents of socialisation

### Feminism

#### Patriarchy

- Liberal feminists
- Radical feminists
  - Kate Millet
- Marxist feminists
- Difference feminists
- Post modernism feminism

#### Structural theories general evaluation

- Macro, meta, structural
- Determinist
- Reductionist
- Ignore free will and focus on passive individuals

### **(3) Social action theories**

- Micro theory
- Social actors, agency, free choice, active individuals
- Interaction between society and the individual
- Action theories regard social order as a social construction; social construction is a product of individuals' mind = subjectivity
- Action theories reject the idea that sociology is objective

#### Interactionism

**Labelling theory** – self-fulfilling versus self-refuting prophecy

Individual differences

#### Weber – Verstehen

- Four types of actions

#### Symbolic interactionism

#### **Herbert Mead**

- Taking the role of the other
- Interpretation, subjectivity, perceptions, shared knowledge

#### Ethnomethodology

#### **Garfinkel**

- Society is a construct and created from the bottom-up, not objective
- Indexicality (dependent on context) and Reflexivity (common sense)

#### Structuration

#### **Giddens**

- Combination of social action theory and structural theory

#### Related concepts to social action theories

- The looking glass self = **Cooley**
- Dramaturgical approach = **Goffman**
- Labelling theory and self-fulfilling/refuting prophecy = **Becker**
- Individual differences
- Moral panic

## (4) Modernity and Post modernity

### Modernity

- Late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the emergence of the industrial world
- Together with industrialisation and Renaissance, rational ideas, science, machinery, objective thinking, deductive thinking

### Postmodernity

- Combination of characteristics of contemporary society with specific ideas and values
- Pick-and-mix culture
- Rapid changes, with free will and choice
- Morality and diversity
- Globalisation
- Individual choice
- Subjectivity
- Relativism
- Narratives are fluid and ever changing
- **Baudrillard** and hyper reality, consumption, simulacra

### Late modernity

- **Giddens** = Reflexivity and Disembedding
- Two processes in society Reflexivity relates to the constant reflection on ourselves and actions, and modification, and Disembedding relates to interactions with one another without meeting face-to-face (social media)
- Constant change
- Individualism
- Risk consciousness
- Rationality

# Sociology as Science

## What is science

- Empirical, objective, systematic, hypothesis testing, accumulative, collective

## Epistemological approaches

- Nature of knowledge = how do we know that we know
- Accumulation of knowledge = how does science progress

**Logical positivism** = induction and deduction

- General scientific laws
- Experiments
- Accumulated knowledge

**Karl Popper** = falsification

**Thomas Kuhn** = paradigm and scientific revolution

- Circular, paradigms, and normal science

## Is sociology a science – the case for yes

- Based on the features of science and the scientific steps
- Positivist sociologists, can directly measure and observe social facts
- Correlations in data and cause-and-effect
- Quantitative methods

## Evaluation for the case for yes

- Human beings are more complicated and have agency
- Relies on inductive rather than deductive reasoning
- Popper's issue of lack of falsification
- Difficult to operationalise/measure and quantify = issue of reliability

## Is sociology a science – the case for no

- Interpretivists argue that sociology needs to be subjective = point of view of the individual
- Qualitative methods
- Weber, important to use empathy and *verstehen*
- Does not want to be a science
- Interactionists, social action, postmodernists, emphasise the interest in: subjective views, emotions, opinions, values
- The difference between social facts and social constructs

- Data cannot be empirically defined and measured and it requires interpretation

### Evaluation the case for no

- If sociology not a science, then what is it and the what is its purpose

### **Mixed orientation**

### **Realist sociology**

### **Subjectivity, Objectivity and Value freedom**

Ontology

Epistemology

Phenomenology

Objectivity, subjectivity, reliability

Values

# Research Methods

**Reliability**

**Validity**

**Objectivity and potential bias**

**Primary data**

**Secondary data**

**Official statistics**

**Quantitative data**

**Qualitative data**

**Key issues in research methods**

- 1- Theoretical considerations
  - i. Positivism – Macro sociology
  - ii. Interpretivists/Interactionists- Micro
- 2- Practical considerations
- 3- Ethical issues

**Research and Design**

1. Choosing the topic = aim
2. Funding and cooperation
3. Researcher's career
4. Reviewing the field = literature review
5. Research question
6. Hypotheses
7. Operationalisation (based on conceptualisation)
8. Triangulation
9. Pilot study
10. Social surveys
11. Sample = representative and non-representative, types of
12. Questionnaires
13. Interviews
14. Experiments
  - Laboratory
  - Field

## 15. Observations

- Covert
- Overt
- Participant
- Non-participant

## 16. In-depth methods

- Case studies
- Focus groups
- Longitudinal studies
- Ethnography

## 17. Secondary data

- Statistics = hard, soft, social trends, UK census, CSEW, non-official statistics
- Documents and mass media = personal, official, content analysis
- Comparison of secondary documents

### **Ethical issues**

## **Social Policy**

### **Giddens**

### **Weber**

### **Social policies and conflict theories**

### **Contemporary views**

New right

Social democrats

Third way = Giddens

Postmodernists

## Theory and methods in context

**Exam questions**

**Applying and evaluating specific methods to specific theoretical concepts**

**See revision guide and notes**

Hidden curriculum

Differential achievement

Labelling

Anti-school subcultures

Parental attitudes

Mixed ability teaching

Education policies