

Structural functionalism assignment

[Sociology](#)



One of the basic tenets of sociology is the structural functional theory. It answers the basic question of how society is organized and how it is maintained. With its roots in the analogy between society and an organism, this social perspective identifies various parts of a social organization and determines how they work (Brinkerhoff, White, Ortega, & Weitz, 2007). Moreover, Calhoun and Gerteis (2007) states that the theory rests on an analogy that society is likened to a physical body with various parts.

These parts or subsystems are necessary in order for the whole system to be properly functioning. To better understand the concept, it is important for sociologists to trace the functions of each subsystem (Calhoun & Gerteis, 2007). A common thing among sociologists is the quest to know how societies work. In the structural functional theory, three assumptions are behind the perspective. The concepts of stability, harmony, and evolution identify and distinguish this particular view. Each of these assumptions will be discussed with a goal of making it more understandable.

The first concept is stability. As defined, stability is the strength to stand or endure and or the quality or degree of being stable, in a state of equilibrium. For a society to be functioning at large, it is imperative to have a stable system of how things work. Any social pattern or structure must have this stability. This is actually a social need that has developed out of the existing subsystems working together towards a functioning structure. An example would be the need for a common form of communication. Society would be in jeopardy if an established form of communication is absent.

This particular need leads to the creation of language. Although the development of language is a slow and evolutionary process, it has maintained the stability of a given society rendering peace and order as well as a stable way of how things are done. Accordingly, stability is the chief evaluative criterion for any social pattern whether it mainly contributes to the maintenance of society or not. The second assumption for structural functionalism is the concept of a harmonious relationship among the members of society.

Not only the people should have harmony but there is a need to have harmony among the activities rendered in a society to function. As an integrated part of a whole, the idea of conflict and disharmony only creates chaos. There is no social structure if elements within are not working together in a good way. A good and harmonious relationship in a sociological perspective has an element of consensus where every member agrees to the imposed rules and laws (Brinkerhoff, White, Ortega, & Weitz, 2007). Another point would be that a harmonious relationship in a society fosters the sharing of common values.

This proves that there is an adherence of the members to be in constant contact and interaction with each other for a positive working relationship. As stated by Brinkerhoff et al. (2007), as the parts of an organism work perfectly with each other for the benefit of the whole, what goes along with it is the harmony among those parts. To illustrate, there is a need for a common mode of communication; as time passed, this need to have understanding among the members spurred the creation of language and

along with its birth, the harmony among the people who use it as a tool for communication.

The last element in the structural functionalism theory is evolution. As with the changes that occurred in the society, evolution is inevitable as this goes together with the other elements such as stability and harmony. This is the most peaceful adaptation of social structures to new needs and demands where the elimination of unnecessary or outmoded structures is done (Brinkerhoff, White, Ortega, & Weitz, 2007). Change can only be brought about by evolution and evolution can only be the answer to a functional form of society.

The three assumptions would then leads to the most important part in making a society functional. The assignment of roles for a particular piece of work is a crucial stage because this is the moment when people are classified according to their specific stratification. Different social positions with relevant social roles define their being. This would result to a more stable system of stratification or a system which is functional because it serves the outright needs of society as a whole and not only the interest of a single individual (Brinkerhoff, White, Ortega, & Weitz, 2007).

Based on the assumptions of structural functionalism, social stratification in the United States reflects the pattern in which individuals complement each other in order to perform positions which make society function the way it is. In other words, inequalities that persist in society are necessary for social cohesion and stability. To view social stratification under this theory, it is important to answer the question of the basic nature of social structure or

what patterns exist in society. Functionalism purports that society is characterized in the manner it organizes itself to achieve stability or harmony.

There can only be two things that define the consequence: positive function or negative dysfunction. Accordingly, functions are consequences of social structures that have positive effects on the state of equilibrium of a society while dysfunction brings about negative a consequence that entirely affects the stability of a given society (Brinkerhoff, White, Ortega, & Weitz, 2007). This would now bring forth social inequality or an institutionalized pattern of inequality in which social status rank people according to their access to scarce resources. In a dysfunctional society, stratification among certain social structures is apparent.

As the individuals have to occupy fixed social roles, inequality is and always been inevitable as it is a function that makes the society working. Social order can only be possible if there is consensus among the public view and that there is a strong value for each other. Societal change can be achieved as the struggle for social equality will happen and when social disorganization is overcome. References Brinkerhoff, D. B. , White, L. K. , Ortega, S. T. , & Weitz, R. (2007). *Essentials of Sociology*. New York: Cengage Learning. Calhoun, C. , & Gerteis, J. (2007). *Classical Sociological Theory*. London: Wiley-Blackwell.