

Introduction second book, the social system (1951), extends



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IntroductionOf his time, Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) was considered the most admired American sociologist. Parsons was bred into a well-to-do family and was given a strong educational foundation as a child. Starting as a biologist, Parsons felt out of place and transferred to economics and sociology. As he excelled in these fields, Parsons began studies in Europe, giving him a wide view on different societies.

He began teaching at Harvard, and there he exposed his sociological thoughts. Although very controversial, Parsons' works had influences on all aspects of Sociology. He generally focused on social action and systems and believed that morality in social action is the main element to help preserve social order. In *The Structure of Social Action* (1937), Parsons developed earlier sociologists' views into a theory of social action, or the action theory. These ideas look into today's society and its institutional structures, which work to clarify action and to gain from it. His second book, *The Social System* (1951), extends and further explains his prior theories, including a structural-functional strategy. Talcott Parsons' functionalistic ways, influenced by Bronislaw Malinowski, became the center of debate.

His beliefs were questioned and challenged by rival sociologists. His studies became even greater and his theories more significant. Until the time of his death, his principal aim focused on the systematic study of social action and its components. He looked at the surrounding factors and if and why they influenced the social system. As an award before his death, Parsons received high honors for his accomplishments in sociology. Many people considered him the most intelligent sociologist of his era. *Methods for Securing*

*Information*To gather material on this subject, I used a few research tools.

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First, I utilized the internet as a source of information. Starting off, I figured I would use search engines, or special programs that find websites concerning your topic, to begin. I listed as many keywords as I could, including Talcott Parsons, Parsons, sociology, sociologists, dead sociologists, and structural-functional paradigm. I then used these keywords in my searches on the yahoo!, excite, starting point, and webcrawler search engines. I passed through websites, selecting valuable information and printing out what was needed.

I looked over the various internet articles, and I highlighted and took notes on some important details. I kept the web pages nearby for quick reference. Next, I visited the Boca Raton Public Library to collect more substantial data. I began by using the library's computers to search for information on Talcott Parsons and sociology. I was lead to the International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, in which I found biographical supplements. I copied specific pages concerning Talcott Parsons, and as I read the text, I choose certain information for reviewing. This information was observantly copied to note cards.

I located two other encyclopedias, The New Encyclopedia Britannica and Encyclopedia Americana, and repeated the steps as before, using note cards to take notes. During my search, I found a paperback book on sociology. I studied the section pertaining to Talcott Parsons, and I took careful notes on his works. Afterwards, I researched the historical events happening while Parsons grew up. Initially, I found these events on the Society in History: Time Lines in my sociology text book.

I noted the events and relied on the internet. I used the same method as before, search engines and websites. I listed the keywords on the subjects and found many different articles. I printed the useful documents and reviewed them for significant points. Last, I highlighted the main topics and noted the major facts.

Biographical InformationTalcott Parsons was born on December 13, 1902 in Colorado Springs. His family consisted of five siblings and his mother and father, Mary Ingersol Parsons and Edward Parson. According to the Inter. Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, “ His mother...was a suffragist.

.. and his father was a ‘ social gospel’ Protestant of broad academic interests” (610).

Parsons was academically pushed by his father, who was the first in the family to attend college. Although of Christian faith, his family was still interested in the sciences of Darwinism, which gave Parsons an early view of science. He attended high school at Horace Mann High School in New York City.

After graduation, he started his studies at Amherst College. Parsons majored in biology, but shifted his thoughts to sociology later in his learning experience at Amherst. In 1924, Talcott graduated from Amherst and moved on to the London School of Economics.

During his instruction in sociology and economics, Parsons began finding a correlation between his two interests. Sociology at Hewett explains that Talcott’s most crucial experience was in his lecture with Bronislaw

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Malinowski: “ He was converted to functionalism under the influence of the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski” (1 of 2). Soon after Parsons began the London School of Economics, he was offered a place at the University of Heidelberg. In Germany, he was exposed to a new view of social thought, entailing Max Weber’s beliefs. Parsons began his classes in economics and sociology and Marxian theory.

In 1927, he was awarded his doctorate in economics at Heidelberg, and he married Helen B. Walker around the same time. He then returned to America to teach economics at Harvard University. From 1928 to 1929, Talcott produced two writings about his main thoughts on society. He used different sociologists’ views and made critiques on them and incorporated his own conceptions. Parsons was still interested in the relationship between economics and sociology, and he began to notice that they had complex links. He was caught between the two fields, which he both admired, and noticed he had to make a change. So in 1931, Parsons became a member of Harvard’s sociology department and launched his teachings in the new subject.

During 1937, while teaching at Harvard, Talcott brought forth his first major work, *The Structure of Social Action*. Encyclopedia Britannica describes, “ Parsons drew on elements from the work of several European writers..

. to develop a common systematic theory of social action” (171). In the book, he investigated the theorists views and compared and contrasted between them. And he always centered his focus on morality’s place in social action. Soon, Parsons became a full professor in Sociology and began relating other

fields to his own. Two years later, Parsons attended a psychology institute, where he focused on Freud's theories. Parsons started paying attention to anthropology and psychology, and he formed an in depth analysis of the Freudian theory. In 1946, Talcott helped create the department of social relations, in which he was nominated as chairperson.

To add, he became the president of the American Sociological Society in 1949. By the 1950's, he became the most celebrated sociologist in academic life (International Encyclopedia of Social Science 616). Parsons' second book, *The Social System*, looked at his theses on a much bigger scale, and included many altered thoughts.

He used his new studies as background information on the three types of action organization, cultural, social, and personality. He included the major problems of society and his structural-function views, how society's parts work together to maintain social order. As his views formed, he received much controversy on his subjects because they were so broad and varied. Although, Parsons continued his studies and developed an even wider view over time. He thought of society as four main parts, which were specialized for their purposes. He began using these examples for many studies in his later career.

Also, Parsons looked at ancient civilizations as references. His study ran through the investigation of these societies and how they evolved to today's people. He examined all aspects of society and tried to incorporate them into one social science. His studies continued at Harvard University until 1973, when he retired. Not much is said about his after life, but he may have

continued his views on society. He was very controversial and had a broad view, however, he was still an extremely influential Sociologists and contributed a lot to the field. On May 8, 1979, Talcott Parsons died in Munich, Germany. Living a long life, Parsons achieved many goals and left his mark in Sociology.

Historical Events While Parsons grew up, several historical events occurred. To begin, in 1903, the first working airplane was invented. Orville and Wilbur Wright successfully invented a working airplane in December 1903. They flew this plane for thirty-seven miles around a town in Ohio, and it landed perfectly.

The airplane was later used in WW1. Another main event that happened was World War 1. This war was fought from 1914-1918, while Parsons was a teenager. During this segment, America, Great Britain, Russia, and France, fought against the German army in Europe.

Simultaneously, America was battling Japan on the other side of the world. Both axis powers, Germans and Japanese, were trying to gain political control of other nations. In sociological history, there were two happenings that took place. Both losses were of the same subject and transpired around the same time. In 1917, Emile Durkeim, a French sociologist who was known for his suicide study, died. Then, three years later, Max Weber passed away.

Patricia Miller-Shaivitz claims that Max Weber was a German sociologist, who was recognized for his study on institutions. These were considered two big losses for sociology. Contributions to Sociology Talcott Parsons started with

his assessment of other sociologists' views. He used these matters to form his own understanding on the subject and to create his theories.

His views on social action and the social system created motion in the world of sociology. His works lead to Parsonianism, and they helped followers form their own theories on the matter. Parsons' writing caused a lot of opposition in sociology, which helped arguing associates intervene with their thoughts. His first book made a base for his theses and attracted a lot of attention. His supporters were formed and so was his Parsonian concept.

His followers and concepts grew and widened. His notions created a big mark in sociology and in also other subjects. His views built a new way of thinking for other sociologists, leading to new subject matters and thoughts. With the release of Parsons' second book, antagonism began stirring in sociology.

His works caused competitors to criticize, and this enticed them to construct thoughts to fight Parsons' conception. In turn, he developed theories that associates could use to make similar or diverse assumptions. Until now, his works still are used as basic views on society, and they help us understand specific subject matters. During his teachings at Harvard University, Talcott induced his and other views into the minds of many young students.

So, you can say that he bred a strong herd of sociologists. Parsons assisted in the movement for a sociology department at Harvard and ran it for many years. This new department was where the elite sociologists learnt their basics and graduated as leading theorists. Parsons also merged three fields of study, anthropology and psychology with sociology, which is still used by modern day sociologists. Even though he contributed in many other ways, <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-second-book-the-social-system-1951-extends/>

Parson theories and views are still his main benefactions to sociology. Many people were interested in the action theory and his thoughts on social action, systems, evolution, and order, and people even ponder them nowadays.

Encyclopedia Americana acknowledges that “ His work will continue to capture our imagination and respect..

.” (480). Sociologists and theorists will be using his notions for a long time to come. My ReactionsAs I began to research Talcott Parsons, I could not realize why people, mostly in the social science field, respected him so much. With the little information I could secure, I started to learn more about his life, and why he was so admired. I feel that people liked him because of his works, incorporating all aspects of society, and his contributions to society. His views looked at society’s different parts, and how they worked as a group to perform specialized tasks.

People felt that as he was trying to understand society, Parsons was trying to help society. His views included the whole society and created a new chapter of sociology. Along with this, he helped sociology by making the field well known.

He was one person who started Harvard’s department of sociology, and he affiliated three main studies: anthropology, psychology, and sociology. All these factors influenced sociology and, therefore, made people honor Talcott Parsons. I would like to add that from the 50’s to 60’s, Parsons’ life and career was awfully complex. He was involved in many views on society, and he had numerous writings. I was not able to include that whole part of his life because it was too in depth and detailed.

However, I pointed out the major elements of that time frame. Also, information on the last ten years of his life was out of my grasp. It is either unknown or exceptionally hard to locate. Bibliography