

FINANCIAL OTABIL

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

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CHAPTER ONE UNDERSTANDING SOCIOLOGY

Introduction

Why are some lazy? Why do some people have inferiority complex? Why do people form families? Why worship gods? Why are some people poor whilst others are rich? Why are some people shy when interacting with others whereas others are not?

Until recently, answers to these came from intuition, from speculation, myth, superstition, folk wisdom handed down from one generation to another. But there came a discipline that

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is interested in explaining human societies and social behaviour called sociology. The term sociology was coined by a French sociologist known as Auguste Comte (1798-1857). What then is sociology?

Definition of Sociology

Sociology has been variously defined by scholars. Robertson, I (1987) defined sociology as a scientific study of human society and social behaviour. Giddens, A (2004) also defines sociology as the study of human social life, groups and societies. Generally therefore it could be defined as the scientific study of societies, human relations and the behavioural patterns of people. Schaefer (2005) stated that sociology is “the systematic study of social behaviour and human groups.” To him it focuses on social relationships, how these relationships influence people’s behaviour and how societies develop and change. Generally, sociology is the scientific study of social behaviour, social occurrences and human societies.

Basic Insight

The fundamental argument of sociological studies is that human behaviour is largely shaped by the groups to which people belong and by the social interaction that takes place within those groups; our behaviour is affected by social forces.

We are what we are and we behave the way we do because we happen to live in particular societies at particular time.

In sociological analysis the focus is on groups. Individuals matter though as well as social interaction. Sociologists do not ignore individuals. They show that to understand the actions of people and our own experiences, we have to understand the social context in which they take place. We are social animals; social beings.

Sociological Outlook

In whatever profession one finds him or herself whether in the medical, business, teaching, social work, military etc it is imperative to develop a sociological outlook and therefore

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think sociologically. This notwithstanding, there are professional sociologists. Thinking sociologically relates to looking at the broader view of social events and human behaviour. In other words, having a sociological outlook means putting things in a wider context.

This sociological perspective was described by the American sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959) as a sociological imagination, which relates to a vivid awareness of the relationship between private experience and the wider society. It is a way of looking at our experiences in the light of what is going on in the social world around us.

Sociological imagination allows us to escape from the cramped personal vision to stand apart mentally from our own place in society and to see with a new clarity the link between private and social events.

A key element in the sociological imagination is the ability to view one's own society as an outsider would, rather than only from the perspective of personal experiences and cultural biases. In line with this we have to 'think ourselves away' from the familiar routines of our daily lives in order to look at them anew.

As noted by Peter Berger, sociologists do not look at things of which others are unaware rather they look at everyday events in different ways. When people start questioning the popular, generally accepted, 'my grandmother told me' scenario, it is initially perceived in the phases of intellectual life as 'Proto-sociology'. With time refinements in protosociological thinking result in scientific sociology (Assimeng, 2006). This was even recognized by Odetola and Ademola (1985:13) when they said that, 'While a great deal of common sense knowledge is involved in what sociology studies, sociology is the discipline that attempts to understand and analyze the processes of social life in a systematized manner and as accurately as possible. In this way it goes beyond common sense'. So in sociological studies there is the examination of the hidden meanings of human actions.

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Factors for the development of sociology and sociological theory

Sociological theorizing began from the late 1700s. The development of these theories was as a result of certain intellectual, social and political changes that were occurring in Europe during that period.

Some of the factors that accounted for the changes were:

- **Industrial revolution:** There was the establishment of industries as a result of the development of new technologies and machinery. This resulted in the growth of cities since people were migrating from the rural areas to the city in search of blue collar jobs. There was thus urbanization and its accompanying problems such as social problems, housing problems. There were also new forms of social relationships. So as a result of these changes the existing social order was impacted. Scholars therefore started theorizing sociologically to explain the changes that were happening because of the industrial revolution.
- **Related to the industrial revolution is the rise of capitalism,** which also accounted for the development of sociological theories. There was the private ownership of the means of production for profit maximization. This resulted in the exploitation of workers who were offering their labour for wages. The exploitation caught the attention of Karl Marx for instance who even advocated for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat.
- **Political revolutions:** The American and French revolutions in the 18th century advocated for individual liberty and freedom over the traditional social order. These revolutions shattered the political and social order which had once been supposed to be of divine origin and inspiration. There was now an emphasis on sovereignty in the hands of the people opposed to monarchy. The revolutions therefore brought about social disorder and thus the development of sociological theories by Comte for instance in an attempt to bring about social order.
- **Religious change:** The religious changes that were happening also accounted for the development of sociological theories. The dominant role of Catholicism was being challenged by the people. Cases in point were the influences of Martin Luther (1483-1546), John Calvin (1509-64) etc. The changes affected the existing social

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order and thus sociological theorizing to find meanings to what was happening at that time.

- **Development of science:** There was the development of scientific methodology in the explanation of the natural world. Scientist like Copernicus (1473-1543) and Newton (1642-1727) were engaging in scientific enquiries on the basis of scientific methods. Sociologists therefore began to adopt the scientific methods to explain the social world. To them if it was possible to use science to unravel the laws of nature, it should also be possible to use them to unravel the laws of the social world. Comte therefore advocated for the use of 'positivism' in sociological studies, which was also adopted by Durkheim among others.
- **Discovery of new societies:** As a result of the exploratory works as well as colonialism there was the discovery of the existence of other societies with cultures that were different from that of the Europeans. Sociological theories were therefore developed to explain the difference in cultures and the behaviour of people.
- **The enlightenment:** This enlightenment period was one that people sort to explain social occurrences and the behavioural patterns of people on the basis of pragmatic reasons rather than religion. There were attempts to rationalize social occurrences and human behaviour. This resulted in challenging the existing ideas and thus affecting the social order, which accounted for sociological theorizing.
- **Humanitarianism:** During the nineteenth century, there was a growing sense within the sphere of social consciousness of the plight of the poor, of the afflicted, and of children and the aged. Social service organizations, orphanages, poor houses, child protective laws, and widespread concern within the literary and artistic, religious and political communities made itself felt. There was the notion that it was not sufficient to merely understand the nature of the plighted communities but a call to make life better. Sociological theories were therefore being propounded to understand and address the situation of the deprived communities

Scope of Sociology

The subject matter of sociology as an academic discipline is huge, complex and varied. It is therefore not an easy task to state its scope since it encompasses all aspects of social life. The scope of the discipline includes among others social structure, culture and socialization,

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social interaction, social inequality, social problems, social change and research methods. Sociologists specialize in different aspects of the discipline. For instance there are sociologists who are interested in medicine and health issues known as medical sociologists, those interested in religion, marriage and family; political sociologists; economic sociologists; development sociologists; those interested in work, business and organizations e.t.c

Importance of sociological knowledge

Sociological knowledge is of extreme importance. The relevance of sociological knowledge includes the following:

- **Awareness of cultural differences:** It enables people to appreciate viewpoints other than their own views. These results from an understanding of how these viewpoints came into being. This is of relevance to better understand people's attitudes and behaviour. It thus helps in doing away with ethnocentrism and even racism.
- **Self enlightenment:** The development of sociological knowledge also helps increase self understanding and thus influence our future. It helps people to find an acceptable balance between our personal desires and the demands of our social environment.
- **Interpretation:** Sociological knowledge enables people to explain what is happening in the social world. It helps people to get a fresh view of the world, which has been taken for granted
- **Policy analysis:** Sociological knowledge is relevant in designing, implementing and evaluating policies and programs aimed at improving the welfare of people in a society e.g anti-poverty programs; anti-blindness programs; National Health Insurance Scheme, housing programmes etc.
- **Researching:** Since research studies and practice is an integral part of sociological studies, sociological knowledge helps the student to be well versed in undertaking research to explain and predict social occurrences and human behaviour. It thus helps in providing scientific evidence on social conditions, dimensions of social problems as well as social solutions of these problems.

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Reflections

- Explain sociology as a discipline to a lay person
- How different is sociology from psychology?
- What relevance is the study of sociology to your profession?
- Examine the relevance of sociology to you as a social being?
- What is the difference between sociology and common sense?
- What was the social and intellectual context within which sociology as a discipline developed?

Note

The study of sociology is more than the study of a university course. If understood and applied to ones life it will help in a massive transformation of a person's interactive and thinking ability, making you a real social being.

CHAPTER TWO FOUNDING FATHERS OF SOCIOLOGY

ISIDORE AUGUSTE MARIE FRANCOIS XAVIER COMTE (1798-1857)

Auguste Comte was a French man who lived from 1798 to 1857. He was born in a southern French city of Montpellier. So his goal was the improvement of society because of the destructive effects of the French and industrial revolutions. He coined the term sociology in 1838 combining the latin word 'socius'(society) and the Greek word 'logos'(study of) and thus regarded as the founder of the discipline. He advocated for the use of the positivism in the study of the social world. This entails the application of the scientific method in uncovering the laws of the society. This scientific adventure could be done through observation, experimentation, comparison and the historical method.

Comte again subdivided the new discipline into two, namely social statics and social dynamics. Social statics involves the study of the conditions and processes by which the overall structure of a society remains relatively stable over time. Social dynamics on the other hand relates to the study of the processes and conditions by which elements within the society change in a systematic fashion.

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Comte also came out with the law of three stages or the law of human progress. First stage is the theological stage during which thoughts and explanations were guided by religious ideas. The second is the metaphysical or abstract stage. Here explanation of phenomena was sought within the realm of abstract and natural forces such as luck, destiny etc. The final stage is the positive or scientific stage involving the application of science to the study of the social world in the attempt to discover the laws of human relations.

The hierarchy of sciences is another work Comte did. He arranged the sciences in a hierarchical order from the least complex to the most complex. The hierarchy was from Mathematics followed by Astronomy to Mechanics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and then Sociology. Sociology is recognized by him as the last science but most significant and complex of all sciences. This is because it deals with the most complex of all the objects of scientific study, namely human beings. It is therefore recognized as the 'queen' of the sciences.

In his later days, he advocated for a Religion of Humanity, to replace the traditional religion. This new religion will abandon faith and dogma in favour of science, with sociology at the heart of this religion. Comte would be the prophet or high priest whereas sociologists will be the priests of this religion.

Despite Comte's contribution to the development of the discipline in terms of coining the term sociology, advocating for positivism as well as the subdividing the discipline, which are all relevant in modern day sociological studies, he has been criticised. Critics argue that he did not have original ideas but just adopted prevailing ideas. His law of three stages have also been criticised as not being practical in the real world of intellectual and social development.

KARL MARX (1818-1883)

He was born in 1818 in Trier in the Rhineland district of Germany. He was a philosopher, an economist and sociologist. He was influenced by a number of social thinkers, including

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Georg Hegel, who came out with the dialectical scheme. Hegel's conception of dialectics was based on ideas and therefore referred to as dialectical idealism-thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Marx applied Hegel's dialectics to a materialistic analysis of history.

He emphasized economic determinism by recognizing the economic system as the fundamental determinant of the structure and development of society. The economic system constitutes the substructure or infrastructure influencing all aspects of the society such as politics, religion, education, marriage, family etc, which is the superstructure.

Class theory was also developed by Marx. To him, in all stratified societies, there are two (2) major social classes, namely the ruling class and the subject class. The ideas of the ruling class become dominant resulting in false class consciousness. He noted that the ruling class dominates the subject class accounting for class struggle, which is the driving force of history and social change. In line with this view, Marx & Engels in the Communist Manifesto (1848) stated that 'the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.' His ideas of class struggle is known as historical materialism, that is the application of Hegel's dialectics from a materialistic perspective to the analysis of Western history or dialectical materialism which is the contradictions in a society based on material life. In his historical analysis he came out with four different economic systems. First is the primitive communism (had communal ownership of the mode of production); ancient stage (based on slave labour: masters and slaves); feudal stage (based on serfdom: lords and serfs); capitalist stage (based on wage labour: bourgeoisie and proletariat). To him there would be a struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat leading to the formation of a transitional period called the dictatorship of the proletariat and later a communist stage, which will be characterized by classlessness and thus no class struggle leading to an end of history.

The notion of alienation also remained central to Marx's social and economic analysis. It is a condition in which men are dominated by forces of their own creation affecting their personality and relationship with others. He emphasized on economic alienation that is alienation in the domain of work, which has fourfold aspects. This includes alienation from

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the object he produces; alienation from the process of production; alienation from oneself; and alienation from the community of one's fellows.

To explain the source of profit and wealth of the capitalist, he adopts the theory of the surplus value, which is the difference between the value of wages and commodities produced. On religion, Marx noted that it is an illusion which eases the pain produced by exploitation and oppression. It is the opium of the people.

Marx's work has come under intense criticisms. Critics argue that he over-emphasized the economic system as the cause of changes and historical development as well as class conflict. Again his prophecy of a revolution against capitalism has not been realized.

Religion does not always justify and maintain the existing social order but can be an agent of change. Despite these criticisms, he made significant contribution to the field in that he brought to the fore the importance of economic factors in social life. His views on alienation, class analysis among others are still relevant. His ideas have influenced many social thinkers, for example Emile Durkheim, Vilfredo Pareto etc and have been the basis of the reconstruction of social system of many countries e.g Cuba, China e.t.c

HERBERT SPENCER (1820-1903)

He is a British, born in Derby in the English Midlands, the heart of British industry. In terms of **methodology**, he advocated for comparison (of different societies; societies at different stages) and functional analysis. The foundation of his ideas is the law of **evolution**. Evolution to him is a change from a state of relatively indefinite, incoherent, homogeneity to a state of relatively definite, coherent, heterogeneity. Spencer also wrote on **social growth** indicating that this growth could be as a result of an increase in population or from the joining of previously unrelated units.

He again engaged in the **classification of societies** on different basis. On the basis of evolutionary complexity relating to classification according to degrees of structural complexity he identified four societies. These include simple societies, which consist of families; compound societies where families unified into clans; double compound societies,

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where clans unified into tribes and trebly compound societies in which tribes unified into nations or states. There is increasing complexity of structures. He also classified societies on the basis of the type of internal regulation or the regulatory system. With this he distinguished between militant and industrial societies. Militant societies are characterized by compulsion; restraints on individuals liberty and social mobility. Industrial societies are characterized by voluntary cooperation, self reliance, freedom and social mobility.

Even though he was individualistic to a large extent in his focus, he also came out with an organic analogy establishing the similarities and differences between the biological and social organism. Both, he recognized have progressive differentiation of structure an functions and the parts are interdependent among others. In terms of differences he noted that the parts form a concrete whole in an organism, whilst the parts are free and more dispersed in a society. Again in an organism, consciousness is concentrated in small part but I a society it is diffused through the members.

Another aspect of Spencer's work is the notion of non-intervention and survival of the fittest. He believed that the state should not interfere in the affairs of individuals for societal progress to be realized. He also acknowledged some obstacles to an objective study of objective study of society. These are the different kinds of biases including 'bias of patriotism', the 'class bias', the 'political bias' that he identified.

Spencer's work has been criticized. On his evolutionary view, critics argue that societies at the same stage of evolution do not necessarily possess similarities in politics, religion, morals and other cultural features as postulated. Again criticizing his views on nonintervention, critics advocate that governments' intervention is important at times for the good of the broader society.

EMILE DURKHEIM (1858-1917)

Emile Durkheim was born at Epinal in the eastern French province of Lorraine on April 15, 1858, living until 1917. He graduated from Ecole Normale Superieure in Paris. The main thrust of his overall doctrine is his insistence that the study of society must eschew

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reductionism and consider social phenomena sui generis-as unique in themselves. Rejecting biological or psychological interpretations, he focused on the socio-structural determinants of mankind's social occurrences and human behaviour. He was concerned with the characteristics of groups and structure in terms of explaining social phenomena rather than with individual attributes. This was the approach he adopted in the study of Suicide (1897). He then concluded that suicide rate varied inversely to the degree of social integration and social regulation. On the basis of this he identified four (4) types of suicide namely egoistic suicide (occurs because of weak group integration); altruistic suicide (occurs because of extremely strong group integration); anomic suicide (occurs because of lack of social regulation); and fatalistic suicide (resulting from 'over regulation').

He considered social facts as things that are social in nature, external to the individual, endure over time and endowed with coercive power imposing themselves on the individual. To Durkheim social facts, which are related to social institutions, should be the subject matter of sociology. With reference to this, he defined sociology as the science of institutions, of their genesis and functioning.

In his work The Rules of Sociological Method (1895) he sought to contribute to methodology in the explanation of the social world. He advocated for the comparative method and functional analysis in the study of social facts.

In his study of Division of Labour (1893), emphasizing on what hold society together, from a societal perspective he distinguished between mechanical and organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity is rooted in the similarity of the individual members, having strong state of collective conscience. With organic solidarity, solidarity in the society is rooted in the dissimilarity of members, developed out of increasing differentiation.

He engaged in the study of religion, defining it in 'The Elementary Forms of Religious Life' (1912) as 'a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden-beliefs and practices which unite in one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them'. To him religion performs

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disciplinary, cohesive, vitalizing, and euphoric functions. He also noted that within a society, it is the societal rules, regulations and practices that have been given sacred status. Society is therefore God.

Writing on education, he indicated that it is a social creation to bind individuals to the society.

Critics have argued that he was overly anti-individualistic in his study, over-emphasizing the group. Again, people who believe in the existence of God also counter his notion that society is God. He however contributed to the development of sociology as a scientific discipline by defining the subject. He also pointed out the need to examine socio-cultural factors in the explanation of social phenomena and human behaviour. This notion is fundamental to sociological analysis. Different fields of the discipline such as sociology of knowledge, religion and education have benefited from the views of Durkheim.

MAX WEBER (1864-1920)

He was born in Germany. Weber has been designated as a social nominalist since he saw social reality in terms acting individuals. Social action is the subject matter of sociology. Sociological analysis should therefore be concerned about the subjective meanings that human actors attach to their actions. He therefore defined sociology as ‘a science which attempts the interpretative understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its course and effects.

In terms of methodology, he advocated for *verstehen*, that is internal understanding, in the study of human behaviour. Weber also indicated that values are important in the selection of problems but researchers should be value-neutral in the actual investigation. He analyzed the influence of religious ideas in the emergence of capitalism in his work *Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism*. To him the Calvinist protestants emphasized on predestined salvation, success and ascetic lifestyle, resulting in the development of the spirit behind capitalism. He also came out with the conceptual tool known as ideal type, which is an analytical construct that serves the investigator as a measuring rod.

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Writing on power he noted that it is the ability to control the behaviour of others even in the absence of their consent. He also engaged in a discussion of legitimate authority, identifying three types, namely rational-legal, traditional and charismatic authority. Rational-legal authority is based on rational grounds, ie laws, decrees, regulations. Example is the modern democratic system of governance. Traditional authority is based on traditions, customs handed down from generation to generation. Example is the monarchical system as well as the chieftancy institution. Charismatic authority rests on devotion to the specific and exceptional qualities, heroism, or exemplary character of an individual such as Gandhi, Hitler, Jesus among others.

He wrote on bureaucracy, which relates to hierarchical organization operating on the basis of rules, impersonality of relations, meritocracy as well as the separation of private affairs from official duties.

Weber believed in the notion of causality in human affairs but expressed in terms of probability.

Generally he contributed significantly to the discipline. Methodologically he emphasized on sympathetic understanding. He also contributed to different fields of the discipline such as religion, organization, politics whilst influencing theories of scholars like George Ritzer, Talcott Parsons, Karl Mannheim etc. He has been criticized as being individualistic and subjective in his approach to the study of social occurrences.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES IN SOCIOLOGY

The use of theory in sociological analysis is critical. Haralambos & Holborn (2004), define theory as ‘a set of ideas which claims to explain how something works.’ Scott & Marshall (2005), indicated in their ‘Oxford Dictionary of Sociology’ that theory ‘embraces a set of interrelated definitions and relationships that organizes our concepts of and understanding of the empirical world in a systematic way’. Theory as such relates to the establishment of the relationships that exist between concepts for the explanation of things. It is as such the ‘brain’ behind every becoming.

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In defining sociological theory Haralambos & Holborn (2004) stated that a sociological theory 'is a set of ideas which claims to explain how society or aspects of society work. It provides explanation to the human society.' Sociological theory therefore is the use of sociological concepts to explain social occurrences and human behaviour.

There are three (3) broad theoretical perspectives that have been identified in sociological analysis, namely, functionalist perspective, conflict perspective and interactionist perspective.

- **Functionalist perspective:** Functionalists view society as a set of interrelated parts that work together interdependently to produce a stable social system. Society is held together through consensus. The society is therefore usually at equilibrium. They view elements of society with reference to their functions that is the positive consequences for society, as well as the dysfunctions, which refers to an element or process of society that may disrupt a social system or lead to a decrease in stability. Many dysfunctional behaviour patterns are viewed as undesirable but we should not automatically interpret dysfunctions as negative. The evaluation of a dysfunction depends on one's own values.

Functions can be manifest, which are the open, stated, conscious, intended and recognized consequence of an element of society, or latent, relating to the unconscious, unintended and unrecognized consequence of an element of society as identified by Robert Merton (1968).

The functionalists hold that if an aspect of social life does not contribute to society's stability or survival; if it does not serve some useful functions or promote value consensus among members of the society, it will not be passed on from one generation to the next.

For instance a university has a manifest function of the transmission of knowledge. However it could act as a marriage market being a latent function.

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Examples of functionalist theorists include Auguste Comte Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton etc.

- **Conflict Perspective:** Such sociologists see a social world in continual struggle. This perspective a social behaviour is best understood in terms of conflict or tension among competing groups. As noted by Scott & Marshall (2005), it emphasized coercion rather than consensus as the cause of social order. It focuses on the forces within the society that promote competition and change, disagreement, disharmony, contradiction as well as imbalance.

It is not only concerned about violent conflict but non-violent competition between groups such as men and women, blacks and whites, low, middle and high classes etc. It can also take the form of labour negotiations, party politics, competition between religious groups among others. It is concerned about inequality, what explains this social phenomena and how it could be dealt with to ensure social order. Examples of conflict theorists include Karl Marx, Ralf Dahrendort etc.

- **Interactionist Perspective:** Unlike the functionalist and conflict theorists who focus on society as a whole or groups within society, interactionist theorists focus on how individuals interact with one another in society. They are interested in the meanings individuals attach to their actions and those of others.

Symbols play an important role in interactionist analysis. Symbol is anything that stands for something else. The meaning of the symbol should be shared by members of the society for interaction to be possible. So, interactionists focus on the analysis of the interaction between people that takes place through the use of symbols with shared meaning. This perspective is also known as symbolic interactionism.

Reflections

- How important is theory in the study of social behaviour and societies?

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- What are the major works of the earlier sociologists discussed?
- Identify human behaviour/social occurrence and analyze using the three main theoretical perspectives in sociology.

CHAPTER THREE SOCIETIES & CULTURES

Introduction

Humans are social animals. We cannot survive without society. This notion was recognized by the English poet John Donne (1571-1631) when he said that no man is an 'island unto himself'. This denotes that we cannot be self-sufficient without others. Almost whatever is done is social in some sense—learned from others, done with others, directed toward others.

Definition of society

It is important to understand the concept, society. As noted by Robertson Ian (1987), society is 'a population that occupies the same territory, is subject to the same political authority, and participates in a common culture'. Embedded in this definition are the conditions that make an aggregation of people a society. The members must occupy a territory; share the same government or political authority; and to some extent have a common way of life and sense of membership and commitment.

Eitzen and Zinn (1993: 33-34) also viewed 'society as the largest social organization to which persons owe their allegiance. It is an aggregate of people, united by common culture, who are relatively autonomous and self-sufficient and who live in a definite geographical location. More generally therefore society according to Assimeng (2006: 8) is 'a relatively enduring, patterned and morally structured framework for interaction of people, usually within a specified locality.

Fundamental to a society is the feature of interaction. Individuals within the society must act and react to the actions of one another.

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It is important to appreciate what society is because as humans we live and act within society. Living in a society is necessary and inevitable. As infants we depend on other humans for survival. This was recognized by Geof Hurd (1973:95), when he stated that: 'At birth the human baby is completely helpless and absolutely dependent on others'. It is also relevant to live in a society since we are not self-sufficient. We have different capabilities, strengths and weaknesses. Living in society therefore helps in taking advantage of what others have, which one lacks.

Types of societies

- **Hunting and gathering society:** This kind of society started from human existence. It relies for its subsistence on wild animals and vegetation as its members can hunt and gather. It consists of small, scattered groups, which are based on kinship. The family is the distinct institution. Members in these societies do similar things, and have common life as well as beliefs and values. They do not place much premium on possession and are constantly moving with the exhaustion of the available resources at a location. Their needs, social structure and culture are simple. It takes account of unseen spirits but does not worship them. This type of society is not very common but Aranda of the central Australian desert, iKung Bushmen of the Kalahari desert, in South Africa, and the Mbuti hunters (Pygmies) of the Ituri rain forest of Congo in Central Africa.
- **Pastoral societies:** These societies rely for their subsistence on domesticated herd animals. First pastoral societies emerged between 10000 and 12000 years ago. These societies can grow because there is an assurance of steady food supply unlike the hunting and gathering. Wealth can be accumulated through surplus of livestock and thus the acquisition of power. However material possessions are not very many but more than the hunting and gathering societies. There is trade among these societies. They are usually nomadic. There exist inter group fighting over pastures and slavery through conquests. Worship of gods who are interested in human affairs is also prevalent in pastoral societies. The social structure and culture are more complex since population becomes larger and more complex.

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Examples are the Nandi and Masai, in Kenya, and the Fulani, in Northern Nigeria.

- Horticultural societies: These societies rely for subsistence on hoe cultivation of domesticated plants. They first appeared between 10000 and 12000 years ago when some hunting and gathering societies began to deliberately sow, tend and harvest edible vegetation. Members live relatively settled life but move periodically. Horticulture is an alternative to pastoralism and the choice of one over the other is dependent on the environment. It provides assured food supply, possibility of surplus, wealth creation and therefore the acquisition of power resulting in the development of political institutions. Specialization is also a feature of horticultural societies. They have elaborate cultural artifacts and complex social structure. There also exist intertribal conflicts. Religion is of great importance.
- Agricultural societies: The subsistence of agricultural societies is dependent primarily on the planned cultivation of crops through the use of irrigation, ploughs, draft animals and fertilizer. They came with the invention of the plough, about 6000 years ago resulting in the agricultural revolution accounting for large scale production, growth of cities, specialization, emergence of social classes, political institutions, religion with a high god and smaller gods as well as a more complex social structure and culture.
- Industrial societies: These societies rely for their subsistence primarily on mechanized production. They came with the emergence of the industrial revolution in Britain in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century in textile manufacture, and then agricultural development, spreading to Europe and later in North America. During this time, machines did the work by people and animals. There was also the development of large populations, urbanization; distinct institutions and thus an intensification of the complex social structure. Industrial activity has rationality, respect for time, elaborate division of labour, precision in production, and quality control. Religion shrinks in importance.

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- Post-industrial societies: They rely for subsistence primarily on the production of services and information. In these societies there is the manipulation of information by people e.g teaching, investment banking, production of knowledge particularly technological knowledge that can be leased, sold or used to produce goods; services or still more knowledge. Education and science are very important than religion. They are also characterized by large population and heterogeneous culture.

CULTURE

What is Culture?

Culture is a very important sociological concept which needs to be understood since it helps in the sociological analysis of the behaviour of people. E.B Tylor (1871: Vol 1,p.1) defines culture as ‘that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, custom and any other capabilities or habits acquired by man as a member of the society.’ Giddens, .A. (2004) also notes that culture refers to the ‘ways of life of the members of a society or of groups within a society. It includes how they dress, marriage customs, family life, patterns of work, religious ceremonies and leisure.’ Knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals and all aspects of culture are social creations in that they are created in society and by society. Humans are therefore regarded as culture creators, culture bearers, and culture transmitters. (Assimeng 2006). Culture is therefore the entire way of life of people in a society.

There is a close connection between culture and society. Culture cannot exist without society and a society cannot exist without culture. Culture and society are therefore interrelated. As such society and culture bear almost a symbiotic relationship.

Culture is learned not inherited. It is learnt through the process of socialization but not transmitted from one generation to another genetically. Apart from culture being learned, it is shared; transmissible; social; gratifying; adaptive; integrative; and also dynamic.

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Kinds of Culture

- **Material culture:** It refers to the physical or technological aspects of our daily lives. That is the tangible social creations which consist of artifacts and the physical objects human beings create and give meaning to such as wheels, clothing, schools, food items, houses etc
- **Non-material culture:** It comprises intangible or ideational aspects of life. They are the abstract human creations, which include languages, ideas, beliefs, rules, customs myths, values etc. Ideas of ghosts, ancestors, witchcraft, heaven and hell among others are non-material culture. These are more resistant to change.

An important point worth noting is that material cannot be understood without the ideas in the mind. There should be a shared meaning of the material culture for a meaningful interactive process to be realized.

Some Elements of Culture

As indicated there are material and non-material culture. Below is a discussion of some of the non-material cultural elements which are important in shaping the way members of a society live. These are language, norms, values and sanctions.

Language: This is a critical element of culture that sets humans apart from other species. It is an abstract system of word meaning and symbols for all aspects of culture. It includes speech, written characters, numerals, symbols and non-verbal gestures and expressions.

Since it is the foundation of every culture, the ability to speak other languages is crucial to intercultural relations. It can shape how humans see, taste, smell, feel and hear. It also influences the way we think about the people, ideas and objects around us. It communicates a culture's norms, values and sanctions to people. Members of a society generally share a common language, which facilitates day-to-day exchanges with others.

Even within the same society, a term can have a number of different meanings.

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Norms: They are the established standards of behaviour maintained by a society; the rules regulating behaviour of people in particular situations. That is, they are the shared rules or guidelines that prescribe the behaviour appropriate in a given situation. They describe how people ought to behave as members of a social collectivity.

Norms are situation specific. For example norm of modesty forbid nudity but permitted in bedrooms as well as during medical examination

Some norms apply to all members of a society e. g greeting in Ghana, monogamy in the U.S.A is applicable to all married couple. However some norms apply to some but not to others e. g taking human life does not apply to police men in shootouts or in self defence.

Norms are of extreme importance since they help in ensuring the smooth functioning of society. There would be chaos in a society with the absence of norms.

There are different **kinds of norms**. Norms can be classified according to their relative importance to society. With this there are folkways and mores.

- **Folkways:** These are the ordinary usages and conventions of everyday life, which are handed down from generation to generation. Conformity to folkways is expected of members in a society but not absolutely insisted. Violation of them therefore results in minor consequence. Examples of folkways include table etiquette, picking nose in public, mowing lawns, wearing matching pair of shoes. Those who violate consistently are regarded as peculiar, but are not regarded as criminals or immoral beings.
- **Mores:** They are ‘must and must not do’ rules. They are deemed necessary to the welfare of a society; the much stronger norms, dealing with things that are dear or sacred to the society; violations are treated seriously in terms of strong criticism, imprisonment, execution etc. The mores are crucial for the maintenance of order and decent society. Examples of mores include murder; incest, theft.

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Norms can also be classified as either formal or informal.

- **Formal Norms:** They are the norms that have generally been written down and specify punishments for violators. For example laws. Laws: Some norms particularly mores are encoded in **law**, which relates to a rule that has been formally enacted by a political authority and is backed by the state. There are the enacted laws and common law which is based on custom and precedent, reflecting past practice of the courts.
- **Informal Norms:** They are the norms that are generally understood but not precisely recorded. For example standards of proper dressing.

Again there can be ideal and real norms.

- **Ideal norms:** They are the expectations of what people would do under perfect conditions. They tend to be simple, making few distinctions and allowing for no exceptions. For instance norm that a driver should stop at red lights is an ideal norm.
- **Real norm:** These norms specify how people actually behave. For instance if at a particular traffic light, drivers do not immediately stop when the red light shows, it constitute the real norm.

Values: Values are also elements of culture. These are the socially shared ideas about what is good, right and desirable. They are the standards by which people evaluate goals and actions. Values are ideas which define what is considered important, worthwhile and desirable eg monogamy is a value in Western societies, showing respect to an elder is a value in Ghana. They influence the content of norms. They may be specific or general.

Sanctions: Another important element of a society's culture is sanctions. They are the penalties and rewards for conduct concerning a social norm. There are positive and negative sanctions. Positive sanctions are awarded for conformity to social norms. These include

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pay rise, medal, word of gratitude, pat at the back etc. Negative sanctions are awarded for non-conformity. For example fines, threats, imprisonment etc.

Sanctions are dependent on a culture's values and priorities. The most cherished values will be most heavily sanctioned; matters regarded as less critical will carry light and informal sanctions.

Cultural concepts

- **Cultural universals:** These are the general practices found in every culture. They are the practices found in every culture. Cultural universals derive from the common problems facing humanity as a result of the natural and social environment. Many cultural universals are adaptations to meet essential human needs such as people's need for food, shelter and clothing. The anthropologist George Murdock (1945) compiled a list of general traits found in every culture. This includes athletic sports, bodily adornment, family, cooking, funeral ceremonies, religion, food taboos, gift giving, sexual restrictions, and toilet training among others. Language is also a cultural universal.

These cultural practices may be universal but the manner in which they are expressed varies from culture to culture. The expression within a society may also change over time.

- **Ethnocentrism:** William Graham Sumner (1906) coined the term to refer to the tendency to assume that one's culture and way of life represent the norm or are superior to all others. This relates to the situation where there is loyalty to one's culture and belittling of others. In other words, referring to one's culture as the best and thus superior to others. There is therefore the use of terms such as backward, primitive, and undeveloped for some cultures. Such ethnocentric people tend to evaluate or judge other cultures on the basis of their own. These people see their group as the centre or defining point of culture and view all other cultures as deviations from what is "normal".

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Ethnocentrism is strong in isolated societies with very little contact with other culture. Such an attitude has some functions for an individual and the society. This is because it provides faith and confidence among people. It also encourages group pride. It tends to enhance the patriotic sense of people and fosters solidarity.

However it can encourage racism; hostility and conflict between groups. Moreover, it can result in unwillingness to see the need for change. The objectivity of social research can also be marred if researchers are ethnocentric. It again tends to devalue groups and contribute to the denial of equal opportunities.

- **Xenocentrism:** This relates to the belief that the products, styles or ideas of one's society are inferior to those that originate elsewhere. It is a reverse ethnocentrism.
- **Cultural relativism:** It views people's behaviour from the perspective of their (the people) own culture. That is if A is studying the behaviour of B, he analyses the behaviour within B's own cultural context. Cultural relativism therefore places priority on understanding other cultures rather than dismissing them as strange. It therefore employs value neutrality in scientific study. Fundamentally, it stresses that different social contexts give rise to different norms and values.

There is as such the recognition that one's culture cannot be arbitrarily judged by the standards of another. The practices of another society as noted by this concept can be fully understood only in terms of their own norms and values. A researcher, who is culturally relative may understand a practice but might not approve of it.

- **Culture shock:** This is a feeling of surprise, disorientation, uncertainty, out of place that is experienced when people witness cultural practices different from their own. If one travels to a society with completely different culture, there is the experience of culture shock.

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- **Cultural lag:** This refers to the period of maladjustment when the non-material cultural still struggling to adapt to new material conditions. For example ethics of using the internet.
- **Cultural integration:** It relates to the bringing together of conflicting cultural elements, resulting in harmonious and cohesive whole
- **Assimilation:** It is the process of exchanging one culture for another. It happens rarely especially if cultures are greatly different. When one finds him or her self in a society it might be difficult for him or her to be assimilated but easier for the children and grandchildren to become assimilated.
- **Accommodation:** It is the situation where two groups are able to ignore some important cultural differences between them and emphasize common interests instead. This is very useful in ensuring cultural pluralism, which relates to the continued existence of several distinctive cultures within a society.

Aspects of Cultural variations

- **Subculture:** It is a segment of society which shares a distinctive pattern of mores, folkways and values different from the pattern of the larger society. It is a group sharing in the overall culture of the society but also has its own distinctive values, norms and lifestyles. Examples are the gangs in the U.S.A, Katanga Hall Association within the KNUST as a society.
- **Counter Culture:** This relates to a subculture that conspicuously challenges the central norms and values of the prevailing culture. It rejects societal norms and values and seeks alternative lifestyles. It is therefore a subculture whose values, norms and lifestyles are fundamentally at odds with the dominant culture.

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- **Ideal and real culture:** Ideal culture is the norms and values a society adheres to in principle, whilst real culture is the norms and values a society adheres to in practice.
- **High and popular culture:** High culture is the creations of a relatively profound and serious nature that primarily appeal to and supported by a fairly small and elite group. Popular culture on the other hand are the creations that are relatively less serious and less intellectually demanding nature that appeal to and supported by a large audience of typical members of the society.

CULTURE CHANGE

Are cultural values and norms static? No! They change over time. In most societies this is fairly slow. Culture tends to be inherently conservative especially in the non-material aspects. But it is changeable.

There are three (3) different social processes that can lead to culture change, namely;

- **Discovery.** This relates to a new perception of an aspect of reality that already exists. For instance if scientists unravel a new function of the heart or computer experts find out a new function of the computer, it is a discovery; or sociologists unravelling new functions or dysfunctions of the religious institution.
- **Invention.** This is the combination or new use of existing knowledge to produce something that did not exist before. All inventions are based on previous discoveries and inventions.
- **Diffusion:** It is the spread of cultural elements from one culture to another. This is probably the source of most cultural changes. It can be the form of borrowing from other cultures or people with different cultures migrating to a society.

Are humans prisoners of Culture?

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On the basis of the important role that culture plays in influencing the behavioural patterns of people, one may wonder whether humans are prisoners of their culture. It is a sociological fact that the culture into which we are born influences our sense of who we are and what our goals in life should be. However humans are not prisoners of culture. Culture makes us but we also make culture. It sets certain limitations on our options and behaviour but it cannot completely control us. If it did there would be no cultural change, for we would all conform rigidly to existing norms and values, which is not the case.

CHAPTER FOUR SOCIALIZATION

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Nature of Socialization

When infants are born they undergo a period of socialization. It is through this process that the biological organism is turned into a socially co-operating and acting person.

Haralambos and Holborn (2004) define socialization as 'the process by which individuals learn the culture of their society'. As indicated by Giddens, A, (2004) socialization is 'the process by which children, or other new members of society, learn the way of life of their society'. It is the primary channel for the transmission of culture over time and generations; it connects the different generations to one another. It is therefore the process whereby the helpless infant gradually becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable person, skilled in the ways of the culture into which she or he is born.

It should however be seen as a lifelong process in which human behaviour is continually shaped by social interaction.

Kinds of Socialization

Socialization can be primary or secondary

- **Primary socialization:** This is probably the most important aspect of the socialization process. This occurs in infancy and childhood and is the most intense period of cultural learning. It is the time when children learn language and basic behavioural patterns which form the foundation of later learning. It takes place usually within the family. Other important agencies include the educational system, the peer group.
- **Secondary socialization:** Socialization is not confined to childhood. It is a lifelong process. Secondary socialization takes place later in childhood and into maturity. At the beginning of their working lives, the young bricklayer, teacher and accountant soon learn the rules of the game and the tricks of the trade. Should they change jobs in later life, they will join a different occupational group and may well have to learn new skills and adopt different mannerisms and styles of dress.

In this phase other agents take over some of the responsibilities from the family.

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Importance of socialization

- It helps an individual to be normal by the standards of his society. Without socialization, an individual would bear little resemblance to any human being defined as normal by the standards of his or her society.
- It inculcates discipline by restraining people from immediate gratification. Through the process of socialization, an individual, whether a child or adult learns to be discipline, limiting instantaneous gratification. The absence of or deficiency in socialization, would cause people to exhibit instinct-directed behaviour like animals, not considering the do's and don'ts of the society.
- Socialization helps in the development of an individual's identity or sense of self. In other words socialization is critical in the development of one's personality. The sense of who we are is ascertained as a result of undergoing the training process. This self consciousness helps in our interaction with others.
- It instils aspirations. Humans are not born with aspirations. What to aspire for, and the efforts put in to gain the aspiration, are determined by the values of the social group in which one is brought up. In similar vein, to be excellent or mediocre in thinking and practice have a bearing on the socialization process one goes through.
- Socialization is also functional in the teaching of social roles. This process helps individuals to be status occupants and role acting personalities. In other words people are made aware of their status and statuses and the associated roles expected of them.
- It teaches skills. Skills relevant to the individuals to enable them fit into the society as productive creatures are inculcated into people. In traditional Ghanaian societies, boys follow their fathers in hunting, farming, fishing e.t.c, whilst girls follow their mothers in kitchen work, fetching of water, sweeping, washing clothes etc.

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- It allows individuals to develop themselves and their potential, to learn and make adjustments.

Cases to buttress

There is an extensive, though somewhat unreliable literature on children raised by animals. One of the best documented cases concerns the so-called 'wolf-children of Midnapore'. The females, aged 2 and 8 were reportedly found in a wolf den in Bengal in 1920. They walked on all fours, preferred a diet of raw meat, they howled like wolves and lacked any form of speech. Whether these children had been raised by wolves or simply abandoned and left to their own devices in the forest is unclear.

This example indicates that socialization involving prolonged interaction with adults is essential not only for fitting new members into society but also to the process of actually becoming human.

There is also the case of Isabelle who lived in total seclusion in a darkened room. She had little contact with other people, with the exception of her mother who could neither speak nor hear.

Kingsley Davis (1949) study of Anna the illegitimate and unwanted child of a farmer's daughter is also a case to buttress the importance of socialization. After trying unsuccessfully to place her in a foster home or an institution, Anna's mother confined her to a windowless room in the attic; fed only for survival; no other human contact. When discovered the child could not walk, talk, or feed herself at age six.

Nature-nurture debate

What makes us who we are? Is it the genes we are born with? Or the environment in which we grow up? Is a person's behaviour determined largely by biological make-up (nature) or

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by the environment in which he or she lives (nurture)? Scientists have been debating on this issue for a long time.

Advocates of the nature viewpoint held that much of human behaviour is instinctual in origin. An instinct is an unchanging, biologically inherited behaviour pattern. To them, laughing, motherhood, warfare, religion, capitalism, creation of society itself etc are all instinctual.

Nurture advocates attributed human behaviour and personality to environmental factors and social learning. The American psychologist John B. Watson claimed that he could take a dozen healthy infants and train them to become anything he wanted-doctors, lawyers, artists, beggars, or thieves-regardless of their abilities or ancestry.

Most contemporary social scientists reject the nature-nurture debate There is however the emphasis on the genetic basis of human behaviour by socio-biologists who engage in the systematic study of the biological basis of all social behaviour.

Currently there is rather the belief that human behaviour is as a result of a blend of nature and nurture. Contemporary sociologists have developed a synthesis, wherein both extremes of genetic and social environmental determinism are rejected. Instead, they see development as a result of the interaction of genetic potential and socially derived factors. Genes establish potential and limits. How much potential is realized depends upon socialization.

If human behaviour were genetically determined, children would develop characteristically human behaviour patterns, with or without social interaction; and males and females in one culture would behave in much the same way as their counterparts in another. Rather obviously this is not the case.

Agents of Socialization

Agent of socialization relates to 'an individual, group, or organization that influences a person's behaviour and sense of self'.

The agents operate both independently and interdependently.

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The influences that different agents of socialization have can be intentional or unintentional. It seldom follows a clear-cut path to a pre-selected goal.

The agents of socialization include the following.

- **The family:** It is perhaps the most basic agent of socialization in that it is the first, and possibly the most important influence on the individual. It represents the centre of children's lives; teaching children cultural values, attitudes about themselves and others. The family also confers on children a social position in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, class. It introduces children to group life.

There are different styles of parenting-authoritarian, permissive and democratic.

Parents socialize their children into the world they know, the one into which they (the parents) have been socialized, and with which they are most comfortable.

- **The school:** A lot of years are spent in school in modern times, making it an important agent of socialization.

Much of the socialization in the school is deliberate and intentional. This is because there is a spelt out syllabus that teachers are expected to follow. There is also unintentional socialization e.g. teachers becoming role models in terms of dressing, speech etc. Issues of discipline, conformity etc are hidden curriculum.

With the school as an agent of socialization, youngsters get the experience in dealing with large, bureaucratic organization in which the same rules are supposed to apply to everyone and individuals are valued in terms of their performance.

- **The Peer group:** It relates to a primary group composed of individuals of roughly equal age and social characteristics. The focus of socialization in peer group is on group interests and acquiring the skills to fit into a subculture. It helps in developing

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and internalizing a wide range of beliefs, norms and values including the concept of friendship. Socialization in the peer group is much more unstructured.

- **The Mass media:** It relates to the form of communication that reaches large numbers of people such as newspapers, magazines, books, television, radio, films etc. There is evidence that violence on primetime programs encourages aggressive behaviour and that sexual movies promote immorality among the population. But there is also evidence that TV can encourage pro-social behaviour and provide positive models.
- **Reference groups:** A group or social category that an individual uses as a guide in developing his/her values, attitudes, behaviour, and self-image. Used by individuals as both models and as measures of self-worth as they move through the life cycle.
- **Organizations:** They are agents of socialization since they teach people what goes on in the establishment to enable the individual fit into it. At times there is *anticipatory socialization* even before the individual becomes part of the organization. This relates to the process of starting to adjust one's belief, norms and values in anticipation of new socialization one is about to undergo.
- **Total institutions:** It is a setting in which people are isolated from the rest of society for a set period of time and are subjected to the control of officials of varied ranks e. g prisons, military camp, mental hospitals, certain religious groups etc. Within these institutions there is *de-socialization*, which is, the process whereby people are stripped of the values and self-conceptions acquired in the past, and *re-socialization* relating to the adoption of radically different norms and values.

CHAPTER FIVE UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Definition of Social structure

The relevance of social structure as a sociological concept has accounted for different scholars defining and explaining it. Giddens, Anthony (2001) defines social structure as “patterns of interaction between individuals and groups.’ This was in recognition of the idea that social life does not happen in a random fashion. C. Wright Mills (1970:149) also

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noted that social structure refers to the combination of institutions classified according to the functions each performs.

Human interactions are therefore characterized by certain patterns, which are developed over a period of time. This relationship among people is also relatively stable. It is this **patterned and relatively permanent network of relationships aimed at the satisfaction of basic needs of people** that sociologists call social structure.

Social structure is **not static**. The relationships and interactions which exist keep on changing whether slowly or rapidly. The political institution which is part of the social structure of Ghana that existed in pre-colonial times was not the same in the colonial era and post colonial era.

Social structure is viewed by sociologists as a **social fact**. Social facts are considered as things that are social in nature, extend over time, external to but coercive of the individual. In other words they are things outside of the individual which influence the behavioural pattern of the individual.

COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE STATUS

People within a social setting occupy different statuses. LaVerne, T. (1990) indicated that status is a socially defined position in a group or society. An individual can have more than one status at the same time. A woman can be a lawyer, a mother, a wife etc. All these have different roles.

Identifying the status of an individual is of immense importance. This was noted by Robertson, Ian (1987) who pointed out that a person's status determines where that individual 'fits' in society and how he or she should relate to other people. For example as an optometrist, a bank manager etc, this status determines how the person has to relate to his employees, shareholders, customers, managers of other companies among others. A status is occupied

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Categories of status

Status could be ascribed or achieved.

Ascribed status relates to one that is assigned to an individual. This is not based on the person's efforts or abilities. It is attached to a person on grounds over which they have no control. It is based on factors such as age, sex, religion, family, race etc. To be a chief in Ghana within traditional Ghanaian societies one has to be a member of the royal family. Becoming a chief is therefore an ascribed status.

Achieved status is the one that a person gets on the basis of his/her effort or abilities. You have the status of university student because of your ability. As far as these are concerned, individuals have control over their acquisition. This is normally achieved through competition.

Sometimes an ascribed status can make it difficult for an individual to earn an achieved status. For example if it is difficult to be a president of Ghana because one is a female, then the ascribed status of being a female is limiting the realization of an achieved status, namely being a president of Ghana.

Master status: Some statuses overshadow others. The status that overshadows other statuses that an individual has is the master status. This is known by the individual and others as well. It plays the greatest role in shaping the person's life and developing his social identity. In other words the behaviour of the individual is informed by this status. Broadly speaking, statuses that could be master statuses of people include the occupation, marital status, age etc. If one is a police officer, he is expected to behave in a certain way. If the behavioural patterns exhibited by the person in the capacity of a police officer is predominant in other statuses (eg as a husband, elder in a church etc), then that status (police officer) is the master status.

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ROLES

Every status has a role accompanying it. This relates to the expected rights and duties of the occupant of the status. Robertson, Ian (1987) defines a role as a set of expected behaviour patterns, obligations and privileges attached to a particular social status. The roles played depend on the status at a given time. Playing the role of a son, a daughter, a student, a hall president etc

Concepts under roles

Role Set: The different behaviours expected of the occupant of a status collectively is known as role set. As a student you are expected to attend lectures, go to the library, and support the university football team among others. These roles put together is known as role set as an occupant of the status, university student

Reciprocal roles: These are corresponding roles that define the patterns of interaction between related statuses. This tends to bind people together. One role cannot be played in the absence of the other. For example husband-wife, employer-employee, doctor-patient relationship. The role of a doctor for instance cannot be played if there is nobody to play the role associated with the status of a patient

Role expectations & Role performance: Role expectations are the socially determined behaviours expected of a person. Role performance on the other hand relates to the actual behaviour of a person in reality. In some cases the role expectation and role performance do not match.

Role conflict: This arises when in fulfilment of the role expectation of one status it becomes difficult to fulfil that of another status. This therefore culminates from the conflicting roles arising from the multiple occupancy of statuses For example being a student and a hall president; employee and good partner; police man arresting son (police man and father) To be a good student one has to devote time to his/her academic work. Meanwhile the student is also the hall president, which demands time. In such a situation, if being a hall president makes it difficult for one to perform the role expectations of a student, then there is role conflict.

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Role strain: This occurs when there is difficulty in the fulfilment of role expectations of a single status. It mostly occurs when there are contradictory expectations. For example an office supervisor is expected to maintain good relations with the workers but is also expected to enforce regulations that the workers may resent. If there is difficulty in the performance of these two roles of the status being occupied, there is role strain.

SOCIAL INSTITUTION Definitions

Social institution is an essential component of the social structure. As defined by C. Wright Mills (1970) earlier the social structure simply put is a combination of institutions classified according to the functions each performs. What then is a social institution? To Smith and Preston (1977: 169): ‘An institution is an established, relatively enduring, and organized set of procedures that enables a society to solve one or more of its major problems.’ Robertson, Ian (1987: 93) also noted that ‘institutions are a stable cluster of values, norms, statuses, roles and groups that develop around basic needs of society’.

The system of statuses and roles, rules and regulations that are aimed at the satisfaction of a social need is what is known as a social institution. Examples of social institutions include politics, religion, education, marriage, family, economy and health among others. All these have certain social needs they are addressing. Example the political institution deals with the distribution of power and maintenance of order; the educational institution is concerned with the transmission of culture among people in a society; the economic institution is concerned with the production and distribution of goods and services; whilst the health institution deals with the provision of health care delivery to members of a society.

Features

The features of the different social institutions vary greatly among societies. However generally social institutions have certain common features, which include the following:

- Social institutions tend to be resistant to change
- They tend to be interdependent; they interrelated and complimentary. In other words they depend on one another for the proper functioning of the entire social system.

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- They tend to change together. A change in one social institution causes changes in the other social institutions.
- They tend to be the site of major social problems: This is because the social institutions are centred on basic social needs, any significant institutional failure is likely to be regarded as a serious social problem e. g unemployment is a feature of a failure in the educational as well as the economic institution; divorce is regarded as a problem emanating from the marriage institution etc.

GROUP Definition

Social structure is also made up of groups. Robertson, Ian (1987) pointed out that a group 'is a collection of people interacting together in an orderly way on the basis of shared expectations about each other's behaviour.' Members expect a certain behavioural pattern from colleague members of the collectivity.

Classification of groups

Groups can be classified into primary and secondary groups; reference groups; in-groups and out-groups.

Primary group: It is a small number of people who interact over a relatively long period on a direct, intimate basis. So members within a primary group have:

- interpersonal relations
- informal relations
- emotionalism in the relations

Examples of primary groups are the family, kinship groups, peer groups as well as groups consisting of close neighbours

Primary groups are extremely important in small –scale, traditional societies.

Secondary group: They consist of a number of people who interact on a relatively temporary, anonymous and impersonal basis. The relations among the members of a secondary group are casual and centred on certain goals. As such members have:

- impersonal relations

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- formal relations
- less emotional commitment

Examples of secondary groups are corporations, government bureaucracies, political parties etc. These groups are present in large modern societies

Reference group: This is any group with whom individuals identify and whose attitudes and values they adopt. Members therefore identify themselves with the group and the group also influences their behavioural patterns. Examples of reference groups are school club and associations

In-groups: This relates to a group that a person belongs to and identifies with. Characteristically, members of an in-group use symbols to separate themselves from others. For instance there is the use of names, slogans, clothing, and badges as form of identification. Again members view themselves positively and view outsiders negatively. There is also competition with those who are not members and even conflict among them at times. If John belongs to group “A” but not group “B”, group “A” is his in-group.

Out-groups: An out-group is any group that a person does not belong to or identify with. With reference to John’s example above, group “B” is his out-group since he does not belong to or identify himself with that group.

IMPORTANCE OF THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The existence of a social structure is very relevant. In other words the presence of patterned and relatively permanent network of relationship for the satisfaction of basic needs of people is of immense importance. It is necessary because it:

- helps people to know what is expected of them in most social situations
- helps people to know what they can expect from others
- ensures that the general nature of society remains relatively stable from one generation to the next.

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- helps in regulating the behavioural pattern of people This helps in ensuring order in the society since absence might result in man living in a state of nature. As Hobbes noted this would lead to a life of existence which was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.

CHAPTER SIX SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

What is social stratification?

In all societies, members are not the same in terms of resources, control and respect. There are differences among people even within socialist and communist societies. Social stratification is therefore a feature of all societies within the globe with varying degrees of complexity. In fact having an 'idea of equality of all human beings in society, is not a proposition of social reality' (Assimeng, 2006: 62). H.M Hordges Jr (1971) even noted that social stratification is 'an omnipresent fact of life'.

It is a sociological concept which has been analyzed by different scholars. Nukunya (2003) defined social stratification as, 'the hierarchical ordering of people in a society differentiated according to their wealth, power, prestige and privilege'. Haralambos & Holborn (2004) also noted that it 'refers to presence of distinct social groups which are ranked one above the other in terms of factors such as prestige and wealth.'

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It is thus the ordering of members of a society in terms of importance with reference to factors like wealth, power and prestige.

Social stratification, it is important to note, is not synonymous to social differentiation. Social stratification arises out of social differentiation. The more differentiated a society is, the more complex stratification one is bound to have. Social differences exist on the basis of age, sex, religion, family, economy, education, ethnicity, race etc. When these differences are arranged in a hierarchical order in terms of importance, there is social stratification.

Dimensions of stratification

- **Wealth:** This is made up of one's assets and income
- **Power:** It is the ability to control the behaviour of others, with or without their consent. It is based on force, possession of a special skill or type of knowledge, a particular social status, personal characteristics, custom or tradition.
- **Prestige:** This is the respect, honour, recognition or courtesy an individual receives from other members of society. It is based on any characteristic a society or group considers important. In other words it is based on the values of a society. For example income, occupation, education, family background, area of residence, possessions, club membership etc of an individual can account for one acquiring prestige.

Social stratification exists in all human societies. However the degree differs on the basis of different factors such as the level of technological development, physical strength and appearance, wisdom, knowledge, family background etc. Societies with low technology for instance, have minimal degree of stratification compared to the high tech societies.

SYSTEMS OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

There are two main systems of social stratification, sociologically. These are the open and closed systems.

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Open system: This is the system within which there is social mobility (meaning movement upward or downward in the social strata). So a society is deemed to have an open system of stratification if people can modify their status positions within their lifetime. Membership is an achieved status, based on individual qualities and abilities and how he makes use of them. The U.S.A among others has an open system of social stratification. This open system also exists in Ghana.

So the open system is characterized by mobility in the social classes, which are viewed by LaVerne, T. (1990) groupings of people with similar levels of wealth, power and prestige. It thus relates to a group of people who occupy similar positions in the system of stratification because they occupy similar positions in the economy. The emphasis is on economic differences. This influences other social activities. In the 19th century as identified by Karl Marx there was the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, two main social classes in Europe. In modern societies there is the high class, middle class and lower class. In U.S.A there are further subdivisions of these broad social classes. They therefore have the high class, subdivided into the upper-upper class, which are those who have the old money; lower-upper class, relating to those having new money. There is the middle class, who are neither extremely rich nor extremely poor. This class is also subdivided into the upper-middle class and the lower middle class.

Closed system: With this system of social stratification social mobility is virtually or totally impossible. Status is determined by birth and is life-long. One is born into certain status positions and dies in those positions. Membership is therefore ascribed status. There is no control by the individual in the determination of where one fits in the society. In such systems, marriages are contracted within the same social category. There is thus the practise of endogamy. Example of a closed system of stratification is the caste system in India, which is a ritual, occupational and endogamous grouping. 'Only dharma (correct ritual behaviour) and re-incarnation can perhaps change a person's caste position.' (Assimeng, 2006: 67). The different groups are:

- Brahmins: priests; most holiest
- Kshatriyas: landowners, military, secular administrators

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- Vaisyas: farmers and merchants
- Sudra: labourers

The is also the Pariahs, who are the untouchables in the society

Again in South Africa during apartheid regime, stratification system was largely closed for blacks in the country.

SOCIAL MOBILITY Definition

In societies with an open system of social stratification, social mobility is an important characteristic. Giddens, Anthony (2004) defines social mobility as the movement of individuals and groups between different socioeconomic positions; LaVerne, Thomas (1990) also views social mobility as the movement between or within social classes or strata.

It is worth noting that the focus in the movement is not on occupational differences but on the socioeconomic worth of different categories of people.

Types of Social Mobility

Vertical mobility: This relates to an upward or downward movement between social classes or strata.

Upward mobility: This is a movement from a lower stratum to a higher one. Upward mobility therefore entails advancement in wealth, power and prestige. For instance, an individual moving from a secretarial to a management position with its associated socioeconomic benefits or moving from working class to middle class. There are a number of factors accounting for upward social mobility which include advances in technology, changes in merchandising patterns as well as increases in level of education among others.

Downward mobility: This entails the movement from a higher stratum to a lower one. In this case there is losing of property, income or status. For instance moving from a high class to a middle class is a downward social mobility. There are certain

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personal and structural factors that can account for a downward social mobility. The personal factors include illness, divorce, widowhood, retirement among others. The structural factors also include changes in the economy, changes in technology, shifts in consumer tastes etc.

Horizontal Mobility: This kind of social mobility is the movement within a social class or stratum. For example, when one moves from one job to another job of equal social ranking. A case in point is an accountant moving from a firm to another with similar conditions.

Apart from upward, downward and horizontal social mobility, there can also be an intragenerational mobility and inter-generational mobility. **Intra-generational mobility** relates to the movement upward or downward in a social scale in the course of one's working life whilst **inter-generational mobility** is the social mobility that occurs across generations. There are status differences between generations in the same family. For instance there is upward intergenerational mobility when a child assumes a high class status even though his or her parents were in a low class.

THEORIES OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

The explanation of social stratification can be analyzed from the functionalist as well as the conflict view.

Functionalist theory

According to the functionalist theory, social stratification is necessary for the smooth functioning of the society. In other words, the hierarchical ordering of people within the society is relevant for the proper operation of the entire social system. To the functionalists, people should occupy different statuses and perform different roles as well as enjoy different benefits for the maintenance of the system. This theory argues that the more important the role, the more skill required and thus more reward. This explains why physicians are placed on a higher social stratum than garbage collector. Differences among people in terms of wealth, power and prestige in the society are therefore functional and should not be discouraged.

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Conflict theory

The conflict theory holds the view that social stratification is as a result of class exploitation. Differences in social classes exist because of exploitation by those have the economically productive resources. To the conflict theorists, gainers of power shape public policy and opinion to maintain the status quo, that is to maintain their dominance over those who do not have it.

CHAPTER SEVEN SOCIAL CHANGE

The modes of life and social institutions characteristic of the modern world are radically different from those of the recent past. How do sociologists account for the processes of change that have transformed the way humans lived?

Definition

Social change is difficult to define since every day is a new day; every moment is a new instant in time. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus pointed out that a person cannot step into the same river twice.

Wilbert Moore (1968:366) defined social change as ‘the significant alteration of social structure (that is, patterns of social action and interaction), including the consequences and manifestations of such structures embodied in norms (rules of conduct), values, and cultural products and symbols.’ To Calhoun et al (1994), social change refers to ‘alterations, over time, in the behaviour patterns, culture, and structure of the society’. As noted by Anthony Giddens (2004) also, ‘social change is the alteration in the basic structures of a social group or society’.

Identifying significant change involves showing how far there are alterations in the underlying structure of an object or situation over a period of time.

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In the case of human societies, to decide how far and in what ways a system is in a process of change we have to show to what degree are there any modifications of the basic institutions during a specific period. All accounts of change also involve showing what remains stable, as a baseline against which to measure alterations.

Abotchie (1997) noted that social change may originate endogenously or exogenously in any institutional area, bringing about changes in other institutional areas, which in turn make for further adaptations in the initial sphere of change.

Not all changes that are of interest to sociologists fall into the category of social change as defined here. Eg the socialization that we experience as children profoundly changes our personal lives, but it does not alter the basic organization of the family or the larger society and therefore is not social change.

Sources of social change Internal

Sources

- **Natural environment:** The physical environment provides the opportunity for social change, but it also constraints or limits the kinds of changes humans might choose to make. Availability of natural resources-clean water, easily retrievable fuels, fertile soil, and abundant food supplies-has done much to shape human history.

Those societies in which resources are abundant have developed in substantially different ways from those living in environments where they are scarce. Diverse technological innovations have been developed to enable human societies to survive in diverse ecosystems. So the geographic location of a society is important in explaining the social structure and change. People organize their ways of life in relation to the weather conditions. People who live in Alaska, where the winters are long and cold, tend to follow different patterns of social life from those who live in warmer countries. Again natural disasters or catastrophes can also cause social change.

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But the direct influence of the environment on social change is not very great. People are often able to develop considerable productive wealth in relatively inhospitable areas.

- **Population:** The importance of population trends as a cause of social change cannot be overemphasized. Increases or decreases in the size of a population, or its relative numbers of young and old, male and female, urban and rural inhabitants, will have profound effects on social behaviour and social organization.
- **Innovation:** This relates to the social creation and institutionalization of new ideas, products, processes, or structures. There are some types of innovations that bring about social change. Discoveries relate to new knowledge about the external world. eg Columbus' voyage, James Watson and Francis Crick's discovery of the structure of DNA. Invention is also the combination or new use of existing knowledge to produce something that did not exist before.
- **Conflicts:** Much change is produced by conflicts among groups within societies. Inter-tribal conflict for instance can be the cause of social change. Eg the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s removed many barriers to AfricanAmerican participation in the mainstream of American society. Conflict among the many Protestant denominations seems to have been the basis for making separation of church and the state part of the US Constitution.
- **Religion:** On the basis of religious beliefs and practices there can be social change. The challenge of Catholicism by people like Martin Luther and John Calvin accounted for the development of a change in the social structure.
- **Human Action**
 - Individual Action: action of political leaders
 - Collective Action: can be a form of structured social movement
 - The actions of both individuals and collectivity can be the cause of social change.

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External sources of change

Significant alterations in the social structure can be as a result of external factors. A combination of both internal and external factors tends to explain social change. Some of the external or exogenous factors include:

- Diffusion: Transfer of innovation whether in the form of new weapons, new customs, or new religions.

This is the spread of innovations from one social setting to another, the transplanting of ideas or products into the social life of a different group of people. Agents of diffusion include soldiers, colonial administrators, missionaries, migrants, traders, visiting scholars and artists, exchange students and tourists.

Diffusion is not something that used to happen; it stills happens all the time. But with modern communications, it happens very rapidly causing rapid changes within societies.

Rates and patterns of diffusion vary considerably. At one extreme, contact between societies may result in a cultural 'takeover'. At the other extreme, contact may prompt people to withdraw and cling to their traditions.

Between these extremes are numerous examples of societies selectively borrowing elements of other cultures.

Material objects and technology spread more readily. However systems of beliefs and values or forms of social organization also diffuse. Eg Buddhism, Christianity and Islam are belief systems which have spread from their original sources to different societies. Sometimes in the process of being diffused, a cultural idea or technology is modified to suit the needs of the society adopting it.

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- Conflicts: Threats from other societies frequently are sources of social change.
- Political influences: influence of governments from outside.

Theories of social change

Social theorists have tried for the past two centuries to develop a grand theory that explains the nature of social change. But no single factor or theory has the chance of accounting for the diversity of human social development.

The different theories developed to explain social change include the evolutionary theory, equilibrium theory and conflict theory.

Evolutionary Theory

This theory is based on the assumption that societies gradually develop from simple to complex forms. Some of the early sociologists believed societies evolved in a unilinear way that is one line. They were convinced that change meant progress. This notion is evident in the writings of scholars like Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer emphasizing on the survival of the fittest, Emile Durkheim writing on mechanical to organic solidarity as prevailing in archaic and industrial societies respectively etc

Modern social scientists agreed that societies generally tend to move from simple societies to complex ones. But they argued that this process is multilinear, that change occurs in different ways. Again they no longer believe that change necessarily means progress.

Equilibrium theory

Building on the functionalist idea, functionalist theorist Talcott Parsons came to see change not as something that disturbs the social equilibrium, but as something that alters it so as to produce a new and qualitatively different equilibrium. Just like a living organism, Parsons argued that a change in one part of the social system produces changes in the other parts of the system. So even though there is a change there is still the maintenance of stability.

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To him evolutionary change takes place through a two-step process of differentiation of parts and integration.

Conflict theory

To them social change is the result of conflicts between groups with opposing interests. Conflict to them is a normal not an abnormal process. Change is a constant and inevitable feature of society. This view is evident in Marx's analysis of classes. To him class struggle is the driving force of social change. To him the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the capitalist stage would struggle resulting ultimately in the development of communist societies.

CHAPTER EIGHT SOCIAL PROBLEM: POVERTY

SOCIAL PROBLEM

Societies are characterized by social conditions that are abhorred. These conditions are termed social problems. A social problem is therefore an undesirable state which needs to be dealt with. The unwanted social phenomenon is recognized by the society and is its concern. Examples of social problems include unemployment, prostitution, HIV/AIDS among others. Poverty, which will be the focus of our discussion, is also recognized as a social problem in Ghana.

Social problems are relative to the society at a particular time. What may be considered as an undesirable situation in a particular society might not be the case in a different society. Also what may be considered a social problem within a society today might not be the same in 10 years time. It is therefore sensitive to time and space.

EXPLAINING POVERTY

Poverty is a social problem, which is predominant in many societies especially those in developing countries. Todaro, M.P (2004) reports that more than 1.2 billion people live on less than \$1 a day and more than 2.8 billion, almost half of the world's population live on less than \$2 a day.

However, there have been significant gains in poverty reduction especially among the East Asians and China. From 1987 to 1998, the headcount of the poor fell from 417.5 million to 278.3 million in East Asia. Also in China, the headcount of the poor fell from 303.4 million to 213.2 million.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, absolute poverty increased substantially from 217.2 million people to 290.9 million, within this same period as noted by Todaro, M.P.

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What is poverty? Poverty as a concept is examined by LaVerne, Thomas (1990) generally as a standard of living that is below the minimum level considered decent and reasonable by the society.

It could be classified as absolute and relative. *Absolute poverty* is grounded in the notion of subsistence. It is often known as subsistence poverty since it is based on assessments of minimum subsistence requirements, which are the basic conditions that must be met in order to sustain a physically healthy existence, namely food, clothing and shelter.

The concept of absolute poverty is seen as universally applicable.

In the measurement of absolute poverty, the technique adopted is to determine a poverty line based on the price of the basic goods needed for human survival in a particular society. They are the total no of people living below a specified minimum level of real income. On the basis of this perspective international poverty line, which is \$1 a day, has been set.

Relative Poverty: This kind of poverty indicates that it is a relative term. It is therefore not possible to identify a universal standard below which one is considered poor. Relative poverty relates poverty to the overall standard of living. Human needs are different both within and across societies.

So the definition of poverty must relate to the standards of a particular society at a particular time. The affluence of the society will determine the dividing line that separates the poor from others. In this vein, Peter Townsend (1979) noted that poverty can be defined objectively and applied consistently only in terms of the concept of relative deprivation. The society determines the needs of people. To him 'individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary or at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong'.

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Poverty is a multi-dimensional and dynamic concept. There are three (3) dimensions of poverty. These are the income or consumption dimension, access to social services dimension and the participatory dimension

Poverty finds much expression in the rural areas and among women and children. As identified by the World Development Report (1990), 80% of the 65% rural dwellers are poor.

Causes of poverty

There are two (2) broad theoretical perspectives in the assessment of the causes of poverty. These are the 'blame the victim' and 'blame the system' perspectives.

- **'Blame the victim'**- These are theories that see poor individuals as responsible for their own poverty. Poor were seen as those who were unable-due to lack of skills, moral or physical weakness, and absence of motivation or below average ability to succeed. For instance the poor are accused of being lazy.
- **'Blame the system'**- According to this perspective, there are larger social processes that produce conditions of poverty that are difficult for individuals to overcome. For example there are certain structural factors such as class, gender, ethnicity, educational attainment etc that limit the ability of poor to get out of the poverty syndrome.

Oscar Lewis (1967) argues that 'culture of poverty' exists among many of the poor. Poverty is therefore not a result of individual inadequacies, but a larger social and cultural atmosphere into which poor children are socialized.

Effects of Poverty

The experience of poverty has some effects on the individual. These effects are classified into two (2), which are the effects on life chances and the effects on patterns of behaviour.

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- Poverty affects the life chances of the poor. This relates to the likelihood individuals have of sharing in the opportunities and benefits of society. That is the probability that one will benefit from good health facilities, life expectancy, housing, education among others.

Life chances vary by social class. The lower the class, the less opportunity individuals have to share in the benefits of society. Eg shorter life expectancy among the poor

Life expectancy is the number of years a person born in a particular year can be expected to live, which is also affected by the experience of poverty. There is also high mortality rate among the poor. These are because of the inadequate nutrition and less access to medical care because of lack of money and knowledge of good nutrition

- Poverty gain has an effect on the behavioural patterns of people. Certain behaviours differ depending on the social class and the differences in wealth level. For example the incidences of crimes like murder, assault, robbery, burglary, auto theft are normally among those in lower classes.

Economic growth and Poverty reduction

There is a close relationship between the economic growth and poverty reduction but this does not by itself indicate causality.

Economic growth has much influence on poverty reduction. But growth alone will not result in poverty reduction. It must be blended with policies that look at direct interventions for the vulnerable and excluded and one that seeks to improve the distribution of income and assets.

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World Bank (1990) report on poverty indicated that with appropriate policies, the poor can participate in growth and contribute to it, and when they do, rapid declines in poverty are consistent with sustained growth.

Policy Options for Poverty Reduction

There are various policies that could be adopted in the realization of poverty reduction which are the concern of both developed and developing countries. In Ghana there have been diverse development plans and programmes aimed alleviating poverty. Currently there is the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy. (NB: Read the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy, which ended in 2005 and the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy documents.)

These policy options include the following:

- 1) **Redistribution of asset ownership:** There is the unequal distribution of wealth in terms of productive and financial resources. To address poverty, there is the need for a reduction in the concentration of assets, unequal distribution of power and unequal access to educational and income generating opportunities

Example of such redistribution policies is land reform. This is concerned with transforming tenant cultivators into small holders who will have the incentive to raise production and improve their incomes. Land reform alone would not address poverty as a social problem. There would not be reduction in poverty if the small farm holders are unable to secure needed inputs because of unfair system. This should therefore be considered if land reform for instance would make an impact in poverty reduction effort, in terms of a redistribution of asset ownership.

- 2) **Assisting small entrepreneurs:** Again small and mediums scale enterprises should be assisted with micro-credit; managerial and technical know-how etc. These are relevant in enhancing the capacity and thus the productivity of the enterprises for a reduction in poverty.

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- 3) Human capital development in the form of education and skills' training: Education and training of the poor with employable skills are also important in poverty reduction. With these the poor could better their lot. However it is important to note that education alone won't make the poor any better off unless there are complimentary policies such as provision of more productive employment opportunities or opportunities for self employment. A critical consideration of this aspect of the poverty reduction matrix is relevant in addressing the poverty issue.
- 4) Industrialization: Poverty in terms of the inability to satisfy the needs of people materially are as a result of the poor not engaging in productive ventures and having income. This presupposes that countries that are agriculturally-based such as Ghana should encourage the establishment of agro-based industries to offer employment avenues to poor people, enhance their purchasing power and thus work their way out poverty.
- 5) Direct transfer payments: There is also the option of redistributing money among various segments of society from taxes. Examples include Social Security, unemployment benefit, Aid to Families with Dependent Children. These are relevant to help ameliorate poverty and its associated effects.
- 6) Public provision of goods and services: These relate to tax-financed public consumption goods and services For instance public health projects, school lunches, provision of clean water, rural electrification, subsidized food programmes, food for work programs among others
- 5) Agricultural development: This entails improved seeds, irrigation facilities, mechanization and commercialization of agriculture among others. This is relevant in increasing productivity and income. What is equally important in terms of agricultural development is the provision of market for the produce of the farmers.
- 6) Globally, fair international economic order: Fair trade is critical in the reduction of poverty. This is in line with the provision of marketing opportunities for the products of the poor to help better their situation.

CHAPTER NINE SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

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Introduction

Sociological research is conducted to go beyond surface understanding of ordinary life. It is undertaken to explain social phenomena and human behaviour on the basis of social factors. What are the circumstances in which minority groups live? How can mass starvation exist in a world that is far wealthier than it has ever been before? Is the family beginning to disintegrate? Why is there high spate of armed robbery? Sociologists try to answer these questions among others. The findings from sociological research are not conclusive. However it often breaks away from the speculative manner in which the ordinary person usually answers it.

Research Process

1. Defining the problem: This entails selecting a topic for research and defining key concepts. The researcher identifies a problem that is a puzzle, which are not just a lack of information but a gap in our understanding. A sociologist may discover puzzles by reading the work of other researchers in books and professional journals or by being aware of specific trends in society. For example sociologists may ask what has given rise to the growing cocaine deals. Topics of interest to sociologists are not just descriptive but explanatory.
2. Reviewing the literature: Literature review deals with the familiarization of oneself with the existing theory and research on the topic. Finding out what is already known about the subject helps in avoiding duplication. Reviewing the literature helps in research design to test existing theories. This helps in deciding on what research questions to ask.
3. Forming a hypothesis: A hypothesis is a tentative statement about how two or more variables affect or are related to each other. It involves defining the relationship between measurable variables so that they can be measured and the hypothesis tested. A variable sociologically is any aspect of social life that can fluctuate over time, or appear in different amount of frequencies. There is the dependent and independent variable.

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Dependent variable: It is a variable or factor causally influenced by another (the independent variable)

Independent variable: This is a variable or factor that causally influences another (dependent variable).

For example, the higher the educational level, the higher the level of income. The level of income is the dependent variable whereas the educational level is the independent variable.

4. Choosing a research design: Research design entails selecting a method for the study that is coming out with an actual plan for collecting the information that is needed. It is a planning stage. So the methods relevant for data collection and analysis are decided upon. The research methods include
 - Survey: It is a method of sociological research usually involving the administration of questionnaires to a population being studied, and the statistical analysis of their replies to find patterns and regularities. The questionnaire can be sent to respondents by post or e-mail for a self-administration or questions can be answered over the phone.

There can also be the use of the interview method. This relates to a conversation in which a researcher asks a series of questions or discusses a topic with another person. Interview can be structured (in which the wording and sequencing of questions are carefully planned in advance); semi-structured (the general and specific issues to be covered are worked out in advance but the subjects are free to talk about each topic in the terms most meaningful to them); unstructured interviews (in which the questions and precise topics are not predetermined and the interviewer and the subject engage in free-flowing conversation).

With the survey method data is collected from a population. This relates to the total number of people having the same characteristic that the researcher is interested in studying. Since it is costly and time consuming to contact everyone in the population, there is the use of a sample, which is a subset of the population. It is a

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small number of people within the population that can be used to make generalizations about the attitudes, behaviour or other characteristics of the larger population. The sample being used should be representative of the entire population. There are different methods of sampling including random sampling, purposive sampling, cluster sampling among others.

- **Experiment:** This is the most effective technique for establishing a cause and effect relationship. With this method there is the creation of an artificial situation in which researchers can observe how people respond to different stimuli. There can be laboratory and field experiments. Laboratory experiment brings subjects into artificial conditions that can be regulated carefully by the investigator; control for the effects of some factors that is extraneous factors, while isolating the factor or factors that are of experimental importance. Field experiments are those conducted in the real world settings. With experiment, whether laboratory or field there is the need for an experimental (subjects undergoing the experiment) and control (subjects not undergoing the experiment) group. A comparison of the experimental and control groups would help in the relevant analysis.
- **Observation:** With this research method, the researcher observes people in everyday settings, usually over a long period of time for a description and explanation of their social life. The observation can be either participant or nonparticipant observation. Participant observation entails the researcher participating in the social life of the subjects. This involvement can be either overt (the role of the researcher is made known to the subjects) or covert (the role of the researcher is not made known to the subjects). Non-participant observation on the other hand is a research technique in which the investigators observe behaviour of subjects without being involved in the activities of the group. The field notes are taken in private areas or after leaving to avoid suspicion.
- **Historical approach:** This method entails the use of historical materials that is data about actions, structures, ideas and events that have shaped human behaviour in the past. There is thus the use of business records, church records, birth and death, works of historians and other sociologists.

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What then is the best research method? In an attempt to get accurate data for research the best approach to be adopted is a combination of several research strategies. For instance there can be the use surveys plus observation plus document searches. It is also important to undertake a proper evaluation of existing data.

5. Collecting the data: This step involves the actual field work. There is the collection and recording of the information that will be used in testing the hypothesis.

6. Analyzing the data: Data analysis entails working with and examining the data to shed light on the hypothesis. It is the process of looking to see which parts go together to form a pattern or whole and how these pieces are related. This step is undertaken to determine whether the data supports the research hypothesis or not. It is this stage that there is coding of data, use of statistical tools for analysis in case of quantitative research and the interpretation of the findings.

7. Draw conclusion: Depending on what patterns have emerged and how these patterns are interpreted, the hypothesis may be confirmed, rejected or left unsettled. Conclusions are not regarded as final but are always open to question and reinvestigation. There is thus the summary of the outcome of the study, indicating its significance, relating the findings to existing theory and research and identifying problems for future research.

Challenges in doing sociological research

In the conduction of sociological research there are some challenges that are encountered. These challenges ought to be dealt with to reduce the incidence of error in the conclusion. These include:

- The difficulty in assessing the validity of the data especially historical records.
- Difficulties of determining causal relationships: Variables may not be causally related but rather correlated. Correlation is a regular relationship between variables. It does not prove that they have a cause and effect relationship. This is known as spurious correlation. Identifying these is difficult

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- The subject matter is people whose attitude can change when they know they are being researched, unlike the natural sciences which deal with objects.
- Creatively combining social theory and social research.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The study of sociology is a broad adventure since the subject entails all aspects considered as social in nature. The Introduction to Sociology as a course therefore offered is just to familiarize students with some of the different aspects of sociological enquiries. This is relevant in the development of sociological imagination necessary to be productive in a society and therefore help in ensuring the progress of the society as a whole. This is the brain behind people of diverse professions seeking for sociological knowledge to enable them function and interact with people properly. This knowledge is relevant even for parents be they literate or illiterate to enable them train their children for a fruitful and more fulfilling life in the future. In line with this teachers need to have this background as well since they play a significant role in the formation of people's personality, status and role

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