

A consensus theory is one which believes that the institutions of society are working together to maintain social cohesion and stability.

A structural theory is one which looks at how the social institutions influence the running of society and individuals behaviours.

Value Consensus means that a majority of society agree with the goals that society sets to show success.

Anomie means a feeling of normallessness where a person doesn't know what it means to be normal within society.

What are Social Facts and who is the key thinker?

Durkheim

Social facts are things such as institutions, norms and values which exist external to the individual and constrain the individual.

Durkheim's Ideas of Society

1 Society shapes the Individual
It is a top down theory where the institutions of society influence the behaviour of the individual.

2 Social solidarity socialisation and anomie. Social solidarity and cohesion is achieved and maintained through socialisation process and learning of norms and values. Without this society can fall into anomie (Normallessness)



What is the Organic Analogy and who used it?

Talcott Parsons

Society acts in a similar way to the human body through the way that social institutions interact in the same way as human organs.

Three similarities between society and biological organisms.

1 **System:** Society and humans are systems of interconnected and inter-dependent parts which function for the good of the whole.

2 **System needs:** Organisms like the human body have needs that need to be met and so does society. Social institutions have evolved to meet society's needs.

3 **Functions:** Just as the organs of the body function for the good of the whole so do social institutions, which have evolved functions which benefit society as a whole.

Two means of maintaining value consensus and social order

1 Formal Social Control – Official groups who enforce societies laws, such as CJS and the Police.

2 Informal Social Control – Other social groups such as family and peers who keep us in line through punishment and ostracization.

The Four Basic needs of society

G Goal Attainment (Political Function) – Societies set goals and decisions about how power and economic resources are allocated.

A Adaption (Economic Function) – every society has to provide for the needs of its members in order of the society survive.

I Integration (Social Harmony) – specialist institutions develop to reduce conflict in society. For example education and media create sense of belonging.

L Latency: The unstated consequences of actions – there are 2 types of latency: Pattern Maintenance: Maintaining value consensus through socialisation and Tension Management. Opportunities to release tension in a safe way.

Internal Criticisms of Functionalism



Key Thinker
Robert K. Merton

Three Main Criticisms of
Parson's Assumptions

1 **Indispensability** – not all social institutions are functionally indispensable and that there are functional alternatives. For example the family are not the only institution that can perform primary socialisation.

2 **Functional Unity** – Not all social institutions are a tightly linked as Parsons suggests. Some institutions are quite far removed from each other. For example the rules of banking and Education.

3 **Universal Functionalism** – Not all the institutions of society perform a positive function for society, instead for some people they are dysfunctional, for example domestic abuse makes the family dysfunctional for its members.

A Manifest Function is the intended function of a social institution.

An example of a manifest function is the rain dance performed by the Hopi Indians with the intention of making it rain.

A Latent Function is the unintended function of a social institution.

An example of a latent function is also shown by the Hopi Indians, the rain dance also helps to maintain social solidarity

External Criticisms of Functionalism

Logical Criticisms

- The theory is teleological – a thing exists because of its function or effect.
- Contradictory – how can something be both functional and dysfunctional
- Unscientific – impossible to falsify or verify the theory.

Conflict Perspective

- Unable to explain conflict and change in society.
- It is a conservative ideology that tries to maintain the status quo.
- Legitimises the position of the powerful.

Action Perspective

- Wrong (1961) – Functionalism is deterministic
- Functionalism reifies society – treating it as a distinct 'thing'

Postmodern Perspective

- Unable to explain diversity and instability in society.
- Functionalism is outdated due to being a meta-narrative.