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SOCIAL CHANGE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOME PROMINENT CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGISTS

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Abstract

This study focuses on contemporary theories explaining social change. The thoughts of the following thirteen sociologists, who have important impact on the issue, were used during the examination of social change. These are Parsons, Sorokin, Merton, Dahrendorf, Bourdieu, Giddens, Smelser, Alexander, Habermas, Beck, Bauman, Cohen, and Baudrillard. From their perspectives, social change was handled and told comprehensively in the study. Only primary sources belonging those thirteen contemporary sociologists were used in this work.

Keywords: Contemporary Sociologists, Social Change, Society.

Introduction

It is possible to see various thoughts about social change in classical theory; Comte (1866) emphasizes positivism and presents a linear social change based on three stages of knowledge which are theological, metaphysical and positive stages.

Social order and harmony between institutions gained importance in Durkheim (1884)'s work, while he believes that social change is represented by transformations in the social structure of the social relations that links individuals into a coherent entity, society, laws, norms, and sanctions that regulate social life. Durkheim's scheme of social change involves a contrast between a simple division of labor and corresponding mechanic solidarity, on the one hand, and a complex division of labor accompanied now by what he calls organic solidarity, on the other.

For Marx (1848), the analysis of social change is present in an evolutionary model that contends human history has been a succession of modes of production, and that the present capitalist mode of production is bound to be outmoded by the socialist mode of production.

However, these classical approaches have been the subject of disagreements and attacked by many sociologists. Durkheim was found guilty of his conservative approach that gives emphasize on the maintenance of social order.

Modern and post-modern social change theories emerged as the society, knowledge, the division of labor and the world changed. The main goal of this study is to understand the changes in the social change theories. Modern and post-modern social change theories are the subject matter of this study.

Among many sociologists who have great impacts on sociology, this study covers only a small part of the whole not to lose the main concept, namely social change. In this study it can be found only the following sociologists' thoughts about social change: Parsons, Sorokin, Merton, Dahrendorf, Bourdieu, Giddens, Smelser, Alexander, Habermas, Beck, Bauman, Cohen, and Baudrillard. This study investigates how the above theorists examine and handle social change.

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Modern and Post-modern Social Change Theories

Society is composed of interdependent components working together to keep up the balance of the whole society according to Parsons (1991). Its structure is different from human being's body composed of interdependent organs functioning for the health of the whole organism. Integration and differentiation are the main concept of Parsons' theory. When societies become more complex differentiation happens; however, the new institutions have to be integrated and incorporated with the other institutions as a part of a whole. Integration among these institutions comprising the new structure guarantee the proper functioning of society. According to functionalist theory, in order to maintain the equilibrium, stability, and social order in a society, individuals have to work together.

Like Parsons, Sorokin (1957) claims that the fragmented cultural elements unify into a whole according to their logical significance. He explains that these culture elements are integrated in different forms such as spatial or mechanical adjacency, indirect association through a common factor, causal or functional integration and logico-meaningful integration.

Merton (1949) also focuses its explanation largely on the order and maintenance of the system, while Beck (2000) believes that paid work was the key point for struggle against poverty and for providing social order. In order to maintain democracy people had to work for political rights and freedom.

Merton shows (1949) cultural goals as a "frame of aspirational reference" explained by cultural and social structure. Institutional norms are formed as the outcome of this structure to adjust, control, and regulate the acceptable modes of attaining these goals. When these two objects are in agreement harmony is seen in the system. When there is a conflict between institutional means and cultural goals, disorder or anomie arises.

Parsons' structural differentiation is related to evolutionary change. Evolutionary change occurs in society after the development in the literate and science, and the emergence of the religious systems.

As a structural functionalist, to Parsons (1991), each institution of society has a specific function to maintain the order in the entire society. Adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency are the four sub-systems having vital functions and related to the environment in the social system. Adaptation is related to the economy, it a kind of exchange and the distributions of the sources. Goal attainment is related to the government or polity and priorities among the goals of the system. Integration is related with the social control, legal institutions and system. Latency is related with motivations and tensions of people, and enculturation.

Alexander (1998) critiques Parsons' work of conflation between the AGIL division in the model and the empirical differentiation of contemporary society that reduces the dynamism of systems analysis.

Smelser (1995) also believes that differentiation has some common problematics such as inefficiencies and other costs associated with increased differentiation, limited causes of differentiation, focusing on successful differentiation, which is sequences that actually produce more differential structures and more complex arrangement.

Although Parsons focuses on the maintenance of order, Merton (1949) emphasizes that anomie generated by the conflict in social and cultural structure have an impact on individuals in that it constitutes the structural basis for different sorts of deviant behavior. Implied in Merton's argument is that once accumulated, anomie can move a society toward change via deviant agents.

According to Giddens (1984), a general theory of social change is doomed. Social change is blemished by the similar type of rational inadequacies that attach more generally to the assumption that the social sciences can not cover universal laws and human conduct. Only it is important that what are the elements of human beings' history, and which or what kinds of influences are affected and changed it.

It is needed to give emphasis on evolutionism for explanation of social change. Evolutionism is influential in various areas of social sciences. Evolutionism was applied to the

social science for the explanation of the social change in terms of schemas including the following characteristics: "an irreversible series of stage through which societies move, even if it is not held that all individual societies must pass through each of them to reach the higher ones; some conceptual linkage with biological theory of evolution; and the specification of directionality through the stages indicated, in respect of a given criterion of criteria, such as increasing complexity or expansion of the forces of production" (Giddens, 1984: xxxviii-xxix).

To Giddens (1984), societies are not essentially united collectivities. Social change must not be compared with the consolidation of social cohesion. The location of actors and of collectivities in diverse sectors or regions of more surrounding social systems significantly and effectively influences the impact of even their usual and routine behavior upon the integration of communal entirities.

According to Bourdieu (1972), habitus and structure mutually produce each other, and the dispositions and the social positions are mutually congruent, the dialectic relations, while Giddens defines theory of structuration as the process whereby the duality of structure evolves and is reproduced over time and space, agents in their actions constantly produce and reproduce and develop the social structures which both constrain and enable them. "All structural properties of social systems are the medium and outcome of the contingently accomplished activities of situated actors. The reflexive monitoring of action in situations of co-presence is the main anchoring feature of social integration" (Giddens, 1984: 191)

Bourdieu also informs that on the negative side, habitus may limit social progress in that it defines expectations of the possible and may limit one's aspirations. Bourdieu distinguishes doxa from orthodox and heterodox which imply the awareness and recognition of the possibility of different or antagonistic beliefs. The drawing of the line between fields of doxa and opinion is the struggle for the imposition of the dominate systems of classification (Bourdieu, 1972), whereas Giddens (1984) claims that power is the capabilities of agents to bring about intended outcomes of action but not merely a constraint.

Bourdieu (1972) criticizes Durkheim by stating that it is erroneous to consider only the cognitive or speculative functions of mythico-ritual representations, "these mental structures, a transfigured reproduction of the structures constitute a mode of production and a mode of biological and social reproduction, contribute at least as efficaciously as the provisions of custom,... through the ethical dispositions they produce, such as the sense of honor or respect of elders and ancestors" (Bourdieu, 1972: 165)

Giddens categorizes social change in terms of "origin, momentum, type and trajectory" (Giddens, 1984: 245). Intensity and extensity of change are the types of social change. Momentum refers to the rapidity with which change occurs in relation to specific forms of episodic characterization, while trajectory concerns the direction of the change. The starting point and the end point of presumed sequence of change are important to identify the episodic characteristics of social change (Giddens, 1984). Like Giddens, Sorokin (1957) claims that cultural change process requires unit, time, space and direction.

To Giddens, social change is relevant and can be analyzed in terms of the following five concepts: "Structural principles, intersocietal systems, time-space edge, episodic characterizations, and world time" (Giddens, 1984: 244). In terms of whole range of social activity, all social life is episodic. The main institutions within a communal entirety are affected by the sequences of change. Modes of institutional articulation are modes of comparable institutional change, relations between societal totalities, connections between societies of different types, and conjunctures in global social history.

For Bourdieu (1972), the evident opposition between the right, or orthodoxy, and the wrong, the heterodoxy limit the universe of possible discourse; while Giddens (1984) claims that structural principles are the principles of organization which allow recognizably consistent forms of time-space distancing on the basis of definite mechanisms of social integration. According to this principle he classifies the types of society as tribal society, class-divided society and class society. By structural principles he refers to principles of organization of societal totalities. Structure is rule-resource sets, involved in the institutional articulation of

social systems. Structural properties are institutionalized features of social systems, stretching across time and space.

Moreover, Giddens (1984) criticizes evolutionary theories in social science and states that these theories which explains social changes must have some distinctive meaning and characteristics, such as conceptual continuity with biological evolution, social evolutionism must specify something more than just a progression of change in respect of certain designated criteria, that something being a mechanism of change, and a sequence of stages of social development must be specified, in which the mechanism of change is linked to the displacement of social organizations by others.

Like Giddens' classification of society in terms of class, Dahrendorf (1959) distinguishes social classes on the basis of the individual's ability to exercise authority. Power becomes important in his view, while Marx and Engels classify society on the basis of their ownership of the means of production.

Dahrendorf (1959) lumps together all those who exert authority over others, whether or not they own the means of production, into a new ruling class. This class includes not only capitalist owners but all levels of managers and supervisors as well. For an effective conflict and progress, Dahrendorf suggests that regulations must be possible, both parties have to recognize the necessity and the reality of the conflict situation and the fundamental justice of the opponent, interest groups have to be organized, and the opposing parties in social conflict have to agree on certain formal rules of the game that provide the framework of their relation.

Beck claims that changes occurring today are results of conflict, but reflexive modernization that has unintended and unwanted consequences such as class society, ecological crisis, revolution in family life, globalization of cooperations and production, the imaginative world of a private sphere, and questioning the traditional rules. Change in society will not occur anymore; change of society started in modern society. That is, whole modern societies will be affected by change. For him modernization implies imperialism and exploitation. However, reflexive modernization focuses on self-transformation, opening up of national modernity to "risk-filled modernity characterized by general insecurity" (Beck, 2000: 19).

Smelser (1995) also sees social change in differentiation and group conflict. For him, differentiation shapes the structuring of groups, group interests, and group conflicts and spill over into the political process. Social change occurs as the result of the process. The change in the unit of the stratification system has to be considered in order to understand the change in stratification. People's preference leisure over work, increasing differentiation and number of occupations and jobs, access to higher education, change in women's status, change in the structure of family and kinship are the reasons of complexity of today's stratification system.

To Alexander (1998), changes occur in different lines which are elaboration, proliferation, revision, reconstruction, tradition-creation, and tradition-deconstruction. Although traditionalism implies habitual behavior, it does not imply lack of change. He acknowledges that these lines do not describe the real advance; shifts occur by significant social and global developments. Competition also plays a role on social changes.

Like many modern sociologists, Habermas (1998) views social change in increasing population, productivity, technological developments and globalization. He classifies current social changes in three fields:

First one is demographic changes. The population growth in Europe and Third World countries introduced us the concept of mass. Wider networks of communication emerged with the symbolic inclusion of the consciousness in masses.

Structural changes in the nature of employment, is the second one. Increase in the productivity created structural changes in the labor system. Shifts to secondary sectors of manufacturing, shifts to commerce, transportation, and services and educational revolution are the deriving elements of these structural changes.

Third one is the course of development of science and technology. Technological improvements and scientific progress changed modes of human interaction and forms of their

lives. Individuals have become more aware of the risks. New technologies also affected the space and time consciousness.

For Bauman (2001), progress is a declaration of intent to devalue history. It stands for self-confidence of the present. It is the feelings that time on our side because we are the ones who make things happen. Absence of an agency able to move the world forward and less clear idea about the role of agency to improve on the shape of the world are the reasons of absence of self-confidence. He gives importance to agency and self confidence, while Cohen (2003) explains social change by creative destruction that capitalism causes. Progress in one sector creates an imbalance in other productive processes which are bound to old techniques. Capitalism gave the transition the means to express itself. Bauman (2001) states that like other parameters progress also deregulated and privatized.

Sorokin (1957) develops a comprehensive theory to account for social and cultural change in human civilization. He starts his assumptions by defining human culture as a product of interaction between individuals, whether these activities are conscious, or unconscious. He differentiates the elements of thought as internal and external. Claiming that internal controls the external, he calls internal part as "mentality of culture." In this mentality he finds out the "nature of mentality," "the nature of needs and ends to be satisfied," "the extent to which these needs and ends are to be satisfied," and finally "the methods of satisfaction" as the major premises (Sorokin, 1957: 25).

According to these premises, Sorokin (1957) sees the types of culture as Ideational Culture and Sensate Culture while showing that there is also mixed type. Ideational Culture perceives reality as non-sensate and non-material. However, while some variation of Ideational Culture is passive and engages with internal needs (Ascetic Ideationalism), others are active and also engage with the transformation of the sensate world (Active Ideationalism). Sensate Culture is also varies as active, passive, and cynical mentality that uses masks to achieve the biggest profit. The process continues without ending in a cyclical way, but there is also change.

Similar to Sorokin's claim history does not have an end, Baudrillard states that history is a "chaotic formation, in which acceleration puts an end to linearity and the turbulence created by acceleration deflects history definitively from its ends" (Baudrillard, 1992: 111), while starting from a point and ending up at the same point. The double characteristics of history, exponential instability and exponential stability, are combined in the catastrophic normal system.

Sorokin gives some principles for immanent change. "Principle of Immanent Generation of Consequences" (Sorokin, 1957: 639) provides that due to its existence and activity change is inevitable. "Principle of Immanent Self-Determination of the System's Destiny" (Sorokin, 1957: 639) provides that socio-cultural system passes through some forms and phases while the activities of its destiny are determined by the system. However, external circumstances can crush the system, but can't force the system. "Principle of Immanent Self-Determinism as synthesis of Determinism and Indeterminism" (Sorokin, 1957: 641) provides that the system is self-deterministic while it emerges, but deterministic when its autonomy ends and external conditions influence the system. "Principle of Differential Degrees of Self-Determination and Defense for Various Socio-cultural Systems" (Sorokin, 1957: 641) provides that system's kind, circumstances, and its immunity to environment influence the system.

Baudrillard (1992) gives three hypotheses from physics in order to explain the social change which is never ending, but repeating itself:

The first hypothesis is that modernity, technology, events, media and all events gave acceleration and with the escape velocity individuals have become free from reality and history. In other words, individuals are liberated in every sense of the term. However, a certain speed is needed to stay in reality and history. Once the gravitational effect has been lost bodies, processes and messages are lost in the hyperspace. In this situation theory cannot reflect anything. While it loses objective validity, it gains real affinity with the present system.

The second hypothesis, that Baudrillard states, is the opposite of the first which claims that the process is slowing down. Time at the surface of the dense body seems to be going in

slow motion. The phenomenon intensifies as the density increases. History is around the hyper density of cities, commodities, messages, and circuits. History, meaning and progress can not reach their escape velocity. The effects of history accelerate while meanings slow down.

The third hypothesis is about disappearance of music because of perfection of its materiality, into its own special effect. History follows the same order for Baudrillard. Immediate high-powered broadcasting, special effects, secondary effects, fading and feedback effect produced in acoustics by a source and a receiver being too close together and in history cause them to interfere disastrously. Stereophonic effect, absolute proximity to the real, effect of simulation threatens the existence of history.

According to these three theories Baudrillard rejects the idea of an end in history.

Causes of Social Change

According to Parsons (1991), differentiation and integration are the causes of social change. Differentiation occurs as society becomes more complex but the new institutions integrate with each other into the whole. He upholds the concept that humans have basic needs and societies constantly adapt themselves to meet these needs. The adaptations may show increasing differentiation, as societies become more complex, but the needs they serve remain constant. Thus, despite interferences from external forces, societies constantly seek to preserve or re-establish their social institutions. Like Parsons, Smelser (1995) claims that differentiation produces changes in the social structure.

The system change, to functional analysts, can be seen as stemming both from the environment and the system itself. For Merton (1949), internal change is a result of the malfunctioning of the social system. This malfunction can stem from many causes, but among these causes, he emphasizes on the conflict between cultural goals and institutional norms, both of which can be seen as either two of many elements or two analytical phases of social and cultural structure.

Dahrendorf (1959) focuses on the polarization of classes in capitalist societies. As the classes polarize, their class situations become increasingly extreme. The two classes become more homogenous internally, which leads to social change. Not conflict between classes but competition in all levels is the main cause of social change for Alexander. He states tradition advances when there is a competition. Challenges to opposite thoughts force them to respond and improve (Alexander, 1998).

Bourdieu (1972) accepts the possibility that it is the disjunction between habitus and the field that may lead to a critical consciousness and the attendant possibility of social change. Habitus or dispositions are, in some sense, the internalization of the objective structure. The causal relationship is; the habitus, as a product of history, produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemes engendered by history.

Giddens (1984) explains the cause of social change by stating that if there is a disruption in what is taken for granted, either due to changes in external conditions, or thought and reflection on part of the actor, then there are probabilities for changes in forms of action. Where these are associated with more than a single actor, on a larger scale or broader basis, such changes can be connected to social change.

Habermas (1998) sees the population growth, increase in the productivity, technological improvements, scientific progress and globalization as the cause of social change, whereas Bauman (2001) looks from more individualistic perspective and claims that agency and self-confidence of the present are the causes of social change.

While Beck (2000) explains the causes of social change as unintended consequence of neoliberal free-market utopia, for Cohen (2003), creative destruction of capitalist system is the main reason.

For Baudrillard (1992), there is no real social change but repetition of history and an illusion of change. He claims that we won't be able to produce new history and won't be able to ensure its symbolic reproduction.

Patterns and Results of Social Change

Like Parsons' concept of adaptation and latency, Merton's concept of order and equilibrium leads society to status quo but he also argues that anomie can move a society toward change by deviant agents. However, this can result with maintained social system, or a new system. Conflict between cultural goals and institutional norms brings five modes of adaptations which are conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion (Merton, 1949).

Sorokin (1957) draws a linear model and states that a process moves in a certain quantitative or qualitative or spatial direction or in all these directions, reaches its point of saturation, and reverses its movement. However, this process is unique in time. The limited integration of mentalities in culture causes them cycle with a periodical time rhythm. It is also limited with the change of direction, and possibilities. The direction of change may vary as unilinear, oscillating, spiral and branching, unless there is a mutation that interrupts the rhythm. The socio-cultural processes have time limits which end the linear trends, which are replaced by other trends. For Sorokin, these rhythmic trends are Ideational, Idealistic, and Sensate forms of culture.

Although Habermas (1998) sees globalization from a optimistic perspective, and believes that globally networked, highly interdependent world society is possible, Beck (2000) is pessimistic and claims that exploitation will continue in a new structure which consists of the Columbus class, precarious skilled workers, unskilled poor workers and the class of no longer needed.

While Marxian approach rejects more than two classes, Dahrendorf (1959) claims that changes in the stratification of labor lead to a new class, unskilled workers. He suggests three modes of structure change;

First mode of change consists in total exchange of the personnel of positions of domination in an association.

The second mode of change is the partial exchange of the personnel of positions of domination.

The third mode of change is the change by class conflict which does not involve any exchange of personnel.

Like Bourdieu (1972)'s dialectic model, habitus and structure mutually produce each other and the dispositions and the social positions are mutually congruent, Giddens' theory of structuration is also a dialectical model. He sees the social change in the duality of structure that evolves and reproduces over time and space. Agents in their actions constantly produce and reproduce and develop the social structures as an enabling and constraining factor (Giddens, 1984).

Baudrillard draws a cyclical method and claims that like cosmic space, historical time-space is also curved. History brings individuals to antipodal or starting point, which means there is no end for history, but a process of reversals. According to Baudrillard (1992), the only way to escape from reversed history is to set ourselves, from the outset, on a different temporal orbit. It is possible to accept the social change as an illusion and the recurrence of history will take societies to old systems. He claims that history has become a dustbin. For him, democracy and human rights are confused end-product of the reprocessing of all residues of history. All the leftovers are recyclable thus history will not come to an end.

Cohen (2003) sees the social change as a progress and explains the problems by creative destruction of capitalist system; for him, destruction is obvious, but capitalism creates new opportunities. As a result, capitalism will survive with its new structure.

Conclusion

While the attacks on functionalist approach continue, the modern approach gives emphasize on Durkheim's concept of "anomy" to explain its importance on social change. While cyclic and linear approaches claim that change has an identifiable direction or a pattern, structural functionalist theories does not contain the idea. They claim that change is affected by human action, whereas others believe that human action is limited.

Marxian approach has been leaving the utopian understanding and adding new concepts such as power or formation of a new class and their importance on social change. Conflict between classes and exploitation of lower classes has been in the center of both modern and post-modern conflict approaches. However, post-modernists are more pessimistic in their theories.

The understanding of progress, which means positive social change giving its way to negative social change in society. Globalization, technological improvements do not prevent exploitation, but become new means for it.

Interestingly, Baudrillard draws a different perspective by claiming that end is an illusion. It is possible to manipulate his view and state that actually there is no social change and social change itself is an illusion, while the main elements of society maintains itself, like a man changing his mask claiming that he is different every time.

Giddens elaborates the issue and gives more information than the others. Some of them attract our attention to the effects of social change. When they criticize the other contemporary theorists, they also sometimes argue the classical theories.

As mentioned by Cohen, "modern era is still an incomplete revolution" (Cohen, 2003: 114). It is accepted that changes in the societies are faster than it was in the past. It also easily can be said it is fast as it never became in the past.

From the perspectives of contemporary theorists, Parsons, Sorokin, Merton, Dahrendorf, Bourdieu, Giddens, Smelser, Alexander, Habermas, Beck, Bauman, Cohen, and Baudrillard, social change told in society in this study. There also seems disagreement among them; however, it does not prevent us to see the whole picture. On the other hand, it is believed that different aspects of the same issue will help to understand the topic easier. Additionally, it can be thought that different dimensions of the same issue told and handled by different sociologists, provide more precise knowledge. Moreover, they complete the others. They illuminate our understandings and give us new insights.

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