

Weblecture pdf # 01

Online Sociological Study Reference Material

SOCIAL CHANGE

Prof. D. K. Verma

School of Social Sciences, BRAUSS

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Sociology and Social Change

- In a broader sense and as a scientific approach –
 - Sociology emerged out of the need to develop a science for understanding everything about being the *Social*,
 - Scientific Study of Society.
- conceptions and analyses of social change have continued to occupy a central position in sociology.

Contemporary Sociology and Social Change

i) scientific method

- sociology's connections to ideas about the reasoning power and analysis provided by scientific reasoning - rational basis for re-organizing social life and ameliorating social problems

ii) religion for humanity

- Sociology's connections to "a religion for humanity" which was complete with notions of God working his purpose out and pre-ordained ends

iii) Modernity

- sociology as emerged with modernity concerns and methods that shaped early sociology still shape contemporary discipline

iv) new questions

- subject to question because of globalization and the notion of a world society- What is the source of moral and political order in a global society that is "highly rationalized and progressive"?
- social change is also being examined through a discussion of intellectual and human interventions causing disorder, the product of globalizing trends about modernity, modernization, modernism, And the CURRENT COVID-19 PANDEMIC .

Understanding Social Change ...

- The total reality (including natural realities and socio-culturally constructed realities) that surrounds us makes our social system.
- Activities performed by us (social roles), in our group (society) according to its established rules (social institutions), create a pattern of dynamic inter-relationships among roles or set of roles (social structure) through a continuous transformation of changes (social processes) in a manner that maintain and sustain our social system or evolve a different social system (social evolution) from ours through changes- in-structures and/or structural change (social change).

Understanding Social Change

- Changes–in-structure are generally a slow process of smooth transition of small scale which normally result in internal differentiation or multiplication or forms of roles and relationships within the social structure without disturbing the entire social system.
- Thus, from alternative or wider differentiation of roles and statuses in society along with co-existence of older roles, a new division of labour comes into being for example the traditional roles of family are passed on to specialized agencies like schools, clubs, hospitals, crèche or old-persons' home.

Understanding Social Change

- Structural changes are large scale revolutionary changes that bring replacement of older forms of structures with new ones.
- For example the industrial revolution and science and technological revolutions have replaced many social institutions of feudalistic and agrarian social systems. However, some basic social institutions like kinship are not entirely replaced.
- Thus, even revolutionary social change consists not entirely of structural changes as it contains the processes of changes in structures.

Sociological Thinkers

- Sociological thinkers have dealt social change in different perspectives. Comte, Spencer, Marx identified social change with linear view while Pareto, Sorokin, Toyanbee considered its cyclical features.
- A synthesis of these two views is also represented as spiral view on social change. Hegel and Comte stressed on ideational and intellectual factors for social change while Karl Marx elaborated economic factors at the root of social change.
- Ferdinand Tönnies's dichotomy explains it when community (Gemeinschaft) changes over to association (Gesellschaft), Durkheim contrasted mechanical solidarity of primitive with organic solidarity of complex societies and believed social change as a consequence of division of labour.
- Herbert Spencer explained it through social evolution. Henry Maine contrasted status with contract and Ogburn proposed that material or technological changes precedes social change.
- Wundt's theory of dynamic and guiding social forces and Tarde's concept of imitation provide the psychological perspective on social change. There are also many other views on social change.

Social Change Contexts & Definition

Social contexts

Definition

Stability

A situation where an event, regardless of its pace, does not affect the equilibrium of a society's social and normative structures nor the cultural identity of group members. The event, may, however, impact an isolated number of individuals.

Inertia

A situation where an event, regardless of its pace, does not either reinstate the equilibrium of a society's social and normative structures or clarify the cultural identity of group members.

Incremental social change

A situation where a slow event leads to a gradual but profound societal transformation and slowly changes the social and/or the normative structure or changes/threatens the cultural identity of group members.

Dramatic social change

A situation where a rapid event leads to a profound societal transformation and produces a rupture in the equilibrium of the social and normative structures and changes/threatens the cultural identity of group members.

Social Change : Classical Theories

Theories	Perspective on social change	Key authors
Evolutionary theory	Society moves in a linear direction from a simple to a more complex structure.	Comte, 1853/1929; Spencer, 1898; Pareto, 1901/1968
Conflict theory	Individuals and their groups fight to maximize their benefits. Society is in a constant state of disequilibrium.	Marx and Engels, 1848
Functionalist theory	Society is in a constant state of equilibrium. When a change occurs in one part of society, adjustments are made. Social change occurs when the equilibrium is compromised due to the rapidity with which events occur.	Durkheim, 1893/1967; Parson, 1951

Social Change: Neo-classical Theories

Theory	Perspective of social change	Key authors
Cultural and evolutionary psychology	Focuses on how social change and human biology are linked and aims to identify how social change influences human genetics and the way humans adapt to these changes.	Feldman and Laland, 1996; Laland et al., 2000
Developmental psychology	Research in this field has demonstrated that social change has the potential to impact developmental stages for children and adolescents as well as their identities and well-being.	Pinquart and Silbereisen, 2004; Greenfield, 2009, 2016
Industrial/organizational psychology	Focuses on organizational change as a form of social change. Three main themes emerge from this field: how to successfully implement organizational change, how to limit the negative impact of organizational change and understand the psychological processes of people who are confronting organizational change.	Kanter, 1991; Burke and Litwin, 1992; Sanzgiri and Gottlieb, 1992; Meyer and Allen, 1997; Reichers et al., 1997

Theory	Perspective on social change	Key authors
Social Identity Theory (SIT)	Social identity relies on two aspects that may be associated with social change. First, SIT is a theory of social structure that is based on perceptions of legitimacy, stability, and permeability. Second, SIT proposes identity management strategies such as collective action whereby minority groups aim to maintain or acquire a positive and distinctive social identity.	Tajfel and Turner, 1986
Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)	In terms of SDO, social change can be interpreted as the opposition of hierarchy-enhancing attitudes in individuals with high SDO and hierarchy-attenuating ones in individuals with low SDO.	Sidanius and Pratto, 1999
Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT)	RDT can be applied to social change in two distinct ways. First, collective relative deprivation occurs when people compare their group to other groups and feel that their group is worse off which will motivate them to improve their status by means of collective action. Second, in times of DSC, people are usually confronted with a unique situation that results in confusion and the loss of social cues. It is therefore easier and more relevant for them to compare their group's present situation to their group's status at another well-defined time period, than to compare their group with another group. Recent research proposes the use of a historical trajectory when assessing one's group's collective relative deprivation.	Runciman, 1966; de la Sablonnière et al., 2009a, 2010
Immigration and Identity Integration (III)	Immigration is a form of social change that requires human adaptation. Research in this field has demonstrated that individuals who simultaneously identify with their culture of origin and with the receiving group's culture and also desire contact with both cultures experience the highest levels of well-being.	Benet-Martínez and Haritatos, 2005; Berry, 2005; Amiot et al., 2007
Identity Process Theory (IPT)	IPT explores the structure of an individual's identity and the coping strategies used when facing an identity threat or change that results from social change.	Breakwell, 1986
System Justification Theory (SJT)	SJT is a theory that explains how to preserve the status quo. It's more a theory of stability than of social change. Both advantaged and disadvantaged individuals endorse system-justifying ideologies, to preserve the existing social structure.	Jost et al., 2004
Identity Threat Theory (ITT)	In ITT, when a threat to identity occurs as a result of social change, individuals will regulate the structure of their identity by restoring the imbalance and modifying their identity through different processes that include integrating the new elements into their identity and assigning a positive or negative valence to them.	Steele et al., 2002
Adjustment to Change Theory (ACT)	ACT considers how individuals adjust to social change and argues that factors such as social support and the nature of the event predict the way individuals and groups evaluate social change.	Goodwin, 2006