

## D. F. Aberle, A. K. Cohen, A. K. Davis, M. J. Levy, Jr., and F. X. Sutton: The Functional Prerequisites of a Society

A comparative social science requires a generalized system of concepts which will enable the scientific observer to compare and contrast large bodies of concretely different social phenomena in consistent terms. A promising step in furthering the development<sup>1</sup> of systematic social analysis is a tentative formulation of the functional prerequisites of a society. Functional prerequisites refer broadly to the things that must get done in any society if it is to continue as a going concern, i.e., the generalized conditions necessary for the maintenance of the system concerned. The specific structural arrangements for meeting the functional prerequisites differ, of course, from one society to another and, in the course of time, change in any given society.<sup>2</sup>

This paper offers (1) a definition of a society on the most general level; (2) a statement of four generalized conditions, the complete realization of any one of which would terminate the existence of a society as defined; (3) a list of the functional prerequisites of a society. It

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<sup>1</sup>Already well under way. Cf. Talcott Parsons, "The Position of Sociological Theory," *American Sociological Review*, XIII (1948), 156-64, and the references cited therein, esp. the "Discussion" by Robert K. Merton, *ibid.*, pp. 164-68.

<sup>2</sup>Thus all societies must allocate goods and services somehow. A particular society may change from one method, say business enterprise, to another, say a centrally planned economy, without the destruction of the society as a society but merely with a change in its concrete structures.

We seek to avoid the limitation inherent in defining the function of a social element solely in terms of its contribution to the survival or maintenance of the particular system of which it is a component. Structural analysis, which has recently undergone notable development, is prone to focus attention on static equilibriums. We consider *what* must be done in any society and hope our effort may be of use in considering the alterations that take place in *how* things are done in a society while that society persists.

seeks to justify the inclusion of each prerequisite by the demonstration that in its hypothetical absence the society could not survive, since at least one of the four conditions terminating a society would occur. There is no reason to believe that the list of functional prerequisites offered here is definitive. It is subject to revision with the growth of general theory and with experience in its application to concrete situations.

Any formulation of functional prerequisites depends for its categories on the theory of action employed. Our theory of action uses the concept of an actor whose orientation to his situation is threefold: cognitive, affective, and goal-directed. The actor is an abstraction from the total human being. Many of the qualities of the human being constitute part of the situation, the set of means and conditions, within which the actor operates.<sup>3</sup>

Though the definition of the functional prerequisites of a society logically precedes the development of a scheme of structural prerequisites—which tell *how* the functional prerequisites may be met—in actuality the theoretic development of the two approaches is indivisible.

### I. A DEFINITION OF A SOCIETY

The unit we have selected for analysis is a *society*, such as a nation, tribe, or band, and not any social system in general. The statement of the functional prerequisites of any social system—a monastery, a church, or a town, for example—would be on too general a level for the present discussion, though it may be an important task. Furthermore, once the functional prerequisites of a society are outlined, it becomes easier to state those of other types

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<sup>3</sup>Neither the nature of the dependence of our formulation on this theory of action nor the theory of action itself can be further elaborated here. The theory of action is outlined briefly in Talcott Parsons, *Essays in Sociological Theory* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1949), pp. 32-33.

of social systems, often by dropping certain prerequisites from the list, since most of these other types of systems are parts of a society (or result from the interrelations of two or more societies) and depend for their perpetuation on the existence of a society.

*A society is a group of human beings sharing a self-sufficient system of action which is capable of existing longer than the life-span of an individual, the group being recruited at least in part by the sexual reproduction of the members.*

The identity and continuity of a society inhere in the persistence of the system of action in which the actors participate rather than in the particular set of actors themselves. There may be a complete turnover of individuals, but the society may survive. The individuals may survive, but the society may disintegrate. A system may persist in a situation while its component relationships change. Its persistence inheres in the fact that it maintains its separation from the situation, i.e., it inheres in the *integrity* of the organism, not in its fixity or unalterable character.

A system of action always exists in a situation. In the case of a society this situation includes the nonhuman environment and, in almost every case, it includes other societies. The viability of a social system and its recognition as a society within the terms of this definition depend upon the particular set of conditions in which it functions. Study of the system itself cannot alone determine whether the system meets the criteria of the definition. What is crucial is that a social system contain successful arrangements for meeting the chronic and recurrent features of its milieu.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>This point receives further treatment below. A social system need not be copperplated to meet the definition of a society. Natural catastrophe may terminate a concrete society. Such an event does not represent a failure to meet the functional prerequisites but is rather to be considered the result of a change in the nonhuman environment beyond the limits assumed here as the setting of a society. Many concrete societies have been assimilated by the expansions

"Longer than the life-span of an individual" reminds us that a society must be able to replace its members with effectively socialized individuals from the maturing generation. The requirement of sexual reproduction excludes from consideration such groups (monasteries, cliques) as depend *solely* on types of recruitment other than sexual. But a society may be recruited in part by non-sexual means, e.g., by immigration and conquest.

The heart of the definition is "self-sufficient system of action."<sup>5</sup> Its full meaning will be developed in the exposition of the functional prerequisites and in the next paragraphs.

A number of questions are bound to arise in the reader's mind as to the application of the definition to particular social systems and as to the basis on which the decision is to be made as to whether such systems fall within the definition of a society. We emphasize that the definition is an ideal type. *A concrete aggregate is a society in so far as it approaches the generalized model.* The following examples, though not definitive, suggest the way in which the definition may be applied.

A society is not a culture. Culture is socially transmitted behavior conceived as an abstraction from concrete social groups. Two or more societies may have the same *culture* or similar cultures. Though the Greek city-states shared similar culture patterns, each possessed a self-sufficient structure of action and is hence to be considered a separate society. One society may be composed of groups with some marked differences in culture. The union of agricultural, industrial, and pastoral groups in a single structure of action is an example. We discuss below the limits as to the amount of diversity

of groups with which these societies had had little or no previous contact. This, too, represents an alteration in the situation of the society beyond the limits within which it had been meeting its functional prerequisites.

<sup>5</sup>"System" and "structure" will be used interchangeably throughout the remainder of this treatment.

possible and the diversity may occur of the society.

To some degree possess overlapping natural elements with distinct societies in the United States and function, in systems, does not depend on the sufficiency of the Britain as action-s

To be considered be self-sufficient with the structure of a society. Thus, the While imports and maintenance, arrangements are part of its self-

It is this, and not trade does not make of a larger society ited and relatively does not involve same self-sufficient

allel reasons the Nations are not so A series of diffi- tionships of various solved by the intro- differentiation. While capable of providing parts of structures tional prerequisites considered a society does not constitute since in the absence would seem to be the legitimized use can Indians govern sufficient length of structures necessary an independent en- ered part of Amer-

possible and the conditions under which such diversity may occur without the disintegration of the society.

To some degree two different societies may possess overlapping personnel and even structural elements without losing their identity as distinct societies. The fact that Englishmen live in the United States as diplomats and traders and function, in effect, as actors in both systems, does not destroy the identity or the self-sufficiency of the United States or of Great Britain as action-systems.

To be considered a society, a group need not be self-sufficient with respect to resources. It is the structure of action that must be self-sufficient. Thus, the United States is a society. While imports and exports are necessary to its maintenance, arrangements for foreign trade are part of its self-sufficient structure of action. It is this, and not the group of individuals, that is self-sufficient. Hence Chinese-American trade does not make China and America parts of a larger society. Trade relationships are limited and relatively unstable. Their existence does not involve the two aggregates in the same self-sufficient structure of action. For parallel reasons the British Empire and the United Nations are not societies but associations.

A series of difficult decisions about the relationships of various social systems can be resolved by the introduction of a point of crucial differentiation. When a social aggregate is not capable of providing a structure, structures, or parts of structures which can meet the functional prerequisites in question, it is not to be considered a society. Thus, occupied Japan does not constitute part of American society, since in the absence of American forces Japan would seem to be able to continue control and the legitimized use of force. A group of American Indians governed by the United States for a sufficient length of time may lack the crucial structures necessary for continued existence as an independent entity and therefore be considered part of American society, in spite of an

important cultural variation. An American town does not constitute a society because of its thorough participation in American political, economic, value, and other structures. The early Mormon settlement in Utah, however, did constitute a society.<sup>6</sup>

Under what circumstances do considerations of social change lead us to speak of a "new" society? Whenever social change results in a change of social structure on the most general level under consideration, we shall speak of a "new society" having been brought about. Such transitions may be gradual (evolutionary) or sudden and chaotic (revolutionary). The determination of the exact point of change may be extremely complex but is in theory possible. This criterion for a "new society" will not ordinarily enter the study of comparative institutions unless the developmental picture of some particular society (or societies) is under consideration.

We assume that social change characterizes all societies. Change may be gradual and peaceful or characterized by severe conflicts. In either case there may be profound structural changes. Societies may split or merge peacefully or violently. In all these instances a society of some sort exists. Whether it is considered the same society or a new one depends on the relation between the level of the structural change and the level of analysis. The changes in question may be analyzed in terms of this frame of reference. We may examine the way in which a society meets its functional prerequisites, the points of tension

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<sup>6</sup>There is no intention of making the political variable the sole criterion for the decision as to what constitutes a society. The nature of economic ties, the degree to which value-systems are shared, and the like are also crucial in making the differentiation between two systems of action.

Thus the decision as to the distinctness of two or more aggregates as societies rests on the analysis of all aspects of the systems of action, and not merely of a single variable, in their consequences for the self-sufficient character of the systems of action. Borderline cases undoubtedly exist, but the treatment made here is sufficiently refined for the purposes at hand.

(those functional prerequisites least effectively met), and the responses to those strains. We do not assume the perfect integration of any society.

We have omitted from our definition any statements regarding territoriality. Action, it has been pointed out, always takes place in a situation, one feature of which is a spatial dimension. The existence of two societies intermingled during a civil war, or any such example, does not negate considerations of spatiality, which are always an essential background feature of any society.

## II. FOUR CONDITIONS TERMINATING THE EXISTENCE OF A SOCIETY

The realization of any of the following conditions terminates the existence of a society—the existence of the structure of action, though not necessarily of the members.

A. *The biological extinction or dispersion of the members.*—To arrive at this condition, a society need not lose all its members but need only suffer such losses as to make inoperative its structure of action. Analyses of such conditions may be made at this level in terms of fertility, morbidity, and migration rates, without reference to the highly complex factors underlying them.<sup>7</sup>

B. *Apathy of the members.*—Apathy means the cessation of individual motivation. This condition affects some individuals to some extent in all societies and large numbers in a few societies. That migrant Polynesian laborers have died of nostalgia is well known. It is claimed that whole societies in Melanesia have withered away from ennui. In these cases, physical extinction is merely an extreme consequence of the cessation of motivation.

<sup>7</sup>In this regard certain catastrophic occurrences deriving from marked alterations in the situation are excluded from consideration in accordance with the line of reasoning previously outlined.

C. *The war of all against all.*—This condition appears if the members of an aggregate pursue their ends by means selected only on the basis of instrumental efficiency. Though the choice of means on this basis may result at times in co-operative combinations, these combinations are by definition subject to immediate dissolution if, for example, exploitation or annihilation becomes more advantageous for any one member. Hence a state of indeterminate flux, rather than a system of action, exists. The use of force is efficient only for limited purposes. Force is a sanction, but never the essence, of a society. A society based solely on force is a contradiction in terms that raises the classical question, *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*

D. *The absorption of the society into another society.*—This entails the partial loss of identity and self-sufficiency of the total action-system but not necessarily the extinction of the members.<sup>8</sup>

The more fully these four conditions are realized, the more indeterminate is the structure of action, a condition also induced when the rate of social change is very rapid. Hence we may hypothesize that fluctuations in the vital indices, in apathy, and in coercion are to some extent functions of the rate of social change. In fact, revolutions (extreme social change) are characterized by increases in mortality, morbidity, apathy, force, and fraud. The faster the change, the greater the stress, two manifestations of which are force and/or apathy. Viewing coercion as a response to stress should help us to put the discussion of the role of force in social systems on a nonideological basis.

<sup>8</sup>It is worth re-emphasizing that a given society may at one time contain arrangements for maintaining its distinctness from other societies that form part of its situation, but that an alteration of that situation (the arrival of a numerically and technically superior group bent on conquest) may render these arrangements ineffective. We would not, therefore, say that the society thus absorbed had never been a society, but that in a new situation it showed a relative inadequacy of one of its functional prerequisites that resulted in its absorption.

## III. THE FUNCTIONAL PREREQUISITES OF A SOCIETY

The performance of the prerequisites of a society is a function of the four conditions. This condition is shown at least under conditions negative to the pattern is present in the ideal-typical case. *What must be done?*

A. *Provision of the environment and the means of subsistence.*—This includes modes of production and altering the environment (a) to maintain the members of the society functioning; (b) to absorb other societies into the society; (c) to maintain the persistence of the pattern heterogeneity and opportunities and of reproduction and divisions, the group through the action through the action are to reproduce into another society. A society, however, is necessary for the physical maintenance of the members. Infanticide, suicide, and birth control are necessary to maintain certain conditions and in what proportion for the functioning of the social organization. A society must have enough adult members and to man the essential functions. A society must be able to alter its situation. A society must be able to deal with any change in the situation.

### III. THE FUNCTIONAL PREREQUISITES OF A SOCIETY

The performance of a given function is prerequisite to a society if in its absence one or more of the four conditions dissolving a society results. This can be demonstrated clearly in some cases. Less clearly, but still convincingly, the nonfulfilment of certain other functions can be shown at least to foster one or more of the conditions negating a society. No specific action-pattern is prerequisite to the existence of our ideal-typical society. We are concerned with *what* must get done in a society, not with *how* it is done.

A. *Provision for adequate relationship to the environment and for sexual recruitment.*—This includes modes of adapting to, manipulating, and altering the environment in such a way as (a) to maintain a sufficient number and kind of members of the society at an adequate level of functioning; (b) to deal with the existence of other societies in a manner which permits the persistence of the system of action; and (c) to pattern heterosexual relationships to insure opportunities and motivation for a sufficient rate of reproduction. In the absence of these provisions, the group will suffer biological extinction through the death of the members or failure to reproduce or it will suffer absorption into another social system.

A society, however, need not provide equally for the physiological needs of all its members. Infanticide, geronticide, limitation of marriage, and birth control may be necessary to maintain certain societies. Which members, and in what proportions, are most important for the functioning of a society depends on its social organization. Every society needs enough adult members to insure reproduction and to man the essential status-positions.

A society must adapt to, manipulate, and alter its situation. Among the features thus dealt with may be chronically threatening aspects of the situation. In a dry region a society

may employ techniques of food storage, irrigation, or nomadic migration. If neighboring societies are hostile, an army may be essential and the society thus dependent on the deliberate hazarding of some of its members' lives. The existence of Murngin society depends partly on the destruction of a portion of its adult males by chronic warfare. Resistance is only one possible response to hostile neighbors. Certain "men-o-bush" tribes of New Guinea make but little resistance to raids. These raids, however, do not threaten to extinguish the society. Only if they do can such a passive adaptation be said to be inadequate to meet the functional prerequisite.

The inclusion of such apparently disparate features as maintenance of the organism, defense, and provision for sexual reproduction under one heading is by no means arbitrary. From the point of view of a social system, the non-human environment, the biological nature of man, and the existence of other societies are all part of the situation of action. To none of these aspects of the situation is passive adaptation the only mode of adequate relationship. Thus the biological basis of society itself is molded. Individuals have constitutional differences, but the latter are variously evaluated and dealt with by societies. The biological birth-growth-death cycle is a dynamic process in its own right, yet societies both adapt to it and modify it in a number of ways. In noting the necessity for a society to meet certain biological prerequisites, we remark also upon the great plasticity of individuals. It is scarcely necessary to remark that, concretely, societies alter their modes of relationship to their situations; that technological changes occur, sometimes through loss, more often by invention and diffusion.

B. *Role differentiation and role assignment.*—This signifies the systematic and stable division of activities. We will treat under other headings role-learning and the sanctions perpetuating the role structure.

In any society there are activities which must be regularly performed if the society is to persist. If they are to be done dependably, these extensive and varied activities must be broken down and assigned to capable individuals trained and motivated to carry them out. Otherwise everyone would be doing everything or nothing—a state of indeterminacy which is the antithesis of a society and which precludes getting essential activities carried out. The universal problems of scarcity and order are insoluble without legitimized allocation of property rights and authority, and these, in turn, are unattainable without reasonably integrated role-differentiation. While a given individual is often the locus of several roles, he can never combine all the roles of his society in himself. Age and sex differences impose a degree of role-differentiation everywhere; in some societies class and occupation are additional bases of differentiation. Arguments for specialization based on differential ability, while of great force in complex societies, have no clear bearing on societies so simple that any technique can be learned by any individual who is not feeble-minded. Whatever the society, activities necessary to its survival must be worked out in predictable, determinate ways, or else apathy or the war of each against all must prevail. Without reliable provision for child-rearing activities and without their assignment to specific persons or groups, the society invites extinction, since children at birth are helpless. The absence of role-differentiation and of role-assignment thus makes for three of the conditions negating a society. A system of role-differentiation alone is useless without a system of selection for assigning individuals to those roles.

Mention should be made of one particular type of role-differentiation that is a requirement for any society, namely, stratification. Stratification is that particular type of role-differentiation which discriminates between higher and lower standings in terms of one or

more criteria. Given the universality of scarcity, some system of differential allocation of the scarce values of a society is essential. These values may consist of such desiderata as wealth, power, magic, women and ceremonial precedence. That conflict over scarce values may destroy a society will be shown in another connection below. Our present point is that the rank order must be legitimized and accepted by most of the members—at least by the important ones—of a society if stability is to be attained. Allocation of ranks may be on the basis of ascribed or achieved qualities or both.

Role-differentiation implies organization. Precedence in specialized activities must be correlated to some extent with rank order. Coercive sanctions and initiative must be vested in specified status-positions. Some individuals will thus receive more than others. These privileges are usually made acceptable to the rank and file by joining to the greater rights of the elite a larger share of responsibilities. The Brahmins stand closer to other-worldly non-existence than do the members of any other Hindu caste, but they also have to observe the most elaborate ritual obligations. The Trobriand chief enjoys a multiple share of wealth and wives; he must also finance community enterprises and exhibit at all times more generosity than anyone else.

Even the simplest societies have hierarchical sex and age grading. Modern societies are much more elaborately stratified. Symbolic activities or ritual must be carefully organized to effect successfully their latent functions of allaying anxiety and re-creating allegorically the basic meanings and affirmations of the society. In group enterprises some roles tend to rank others, though the individuals filling the roles may rotate freely, as in the case of the citizens of the Greek city-state. Regardless of the type of stratification and authority-system, a normative scale of priorities for allocating scarce values (precedence, property rights, power, etc.) is

always a vital part of the social structure. Roles in any society are learned and transmitted.

C. *Communication*. "Wolf child" studies show that speech, the most important form of communication, is possible without learned linguistic symbols. Symbolic communication is a general emotional response—in one form or another—appropriate responses may be conveyed.

No society, however simple, can exist without shared, learned communication, because communication maintains the community. Protective sanctions are of each against each. It is not conceivable if social relations are to function. Prerequisite conditions for other functional processes are logical prerequisites. Our argument so far shows that prerequisites are logically necessary. They cannot be empirically verified. The action-system may be a functional prerequisite.

In a simple society communication is exclusively face-to-face. In complex societies communication is more complex. In China, writing facilitated communication in a society despite local conditions. To permit oral communication, intermediaries were necessary. A society could survive without communication, and communication requires communication, and communication requires communication, and so on.

D. *Shared cognition*. In any society the members must have similar cognitive orientations which facilitate communication to and manipulation of the environment to make stable, meaningful

always a vital portion of the differentiation of roles in any society.

C. *Communication*.—Evidence from deaf-mutes, "wolf children," and bilinguals shows that speech, the basic form of communication, is learned and that only rudimentary communication is possible in the absence of shared, learned linguistic symbols. Without learned symbolic communication only a few highly general emotional states—e.g., anger, sexual passion—in one individual can evoke an appropriate response in another; only a few skills may be conveyed by imitation.

No society, however simple, can exist without shared, learned symbolic modes of communication, because without them it cannot maintain the common-value structure or the protective sanctions which hold back the war of each against all. Communication is indispensable if socialization and role-differentiation are to function effectively. That each functional prerequisite thus depends in part on other functional prerequisites does not vitiate our argument so long as the functional prerequisites are logically separable. But they need not be empirically distinct activities, since any action-system may contribute to several functional prerequisites.

In a simple society, where relationships are exclusively face-to-face, shared speech forms suffice. In complex societies, other than oral communication is necessary for the system as a whole, though not for subsystems. Thus, in China, writing facilitates the survival of the society despite local dialect differences too great to permit oral communication without bilingual intermediaries. Clearly, no modern society could survive without writing. Thus, communication requires language, a medium of communication, and channels.

D. *Shared cognitive orientations*.—In any society the members must share a body of cognitive orientations which (a) make possible adaptation to and manipulation of the situation; (b) make stable, *meaningful*, and predictable the so-

cial situations in which they are engaged; and (c) account for those significant aspects of the situation over which they do not have adequate prediction and control in such a way as to sustain and not to destroy motivation.

If the first criterion were not met, biological existence would be impossible. If the second were not, interpersonal and intergroup relations could not exist. Private definitions of social situations or the absence of such definitions could lead only to mutually incompatible actions and the war of each against all. In no society are all conditions predictable and controllable; so the frustration of expectations is a chronic feature of social life. Without a reasonable determinate explanation of such areas of existence, the individual would exist in an unstructured world and could not avoid psychological disorganization. In the absence of shared orientations, serious clashes would ensue.

Cognitive orientations must be shared, but only in so far as the actors are involved in the same situation of action. A housewife may not distinguish a colonel from a corporal; a soldier may not appreciate that he is using his hostess' "wedding silver." They must agree, however, that a foot is "so long" and that that gentleman is a "policeman." But though a farmer may pray for rain and an aviator rub a rabbit's foot for good weather with no resultant difficulties between them, both must define the American political system in a roughly similar fashion if they are to vote.

E. *A shared, articulated set of goals*.—To phrase this prerequisite in terms of ultimate ends of action produces a vague and not very useful formulation like Thomas' four wishes. It is equally difficult to operate in terms of motivations, since these are exceedingly diverse and are intricately articulated with the social structure. Our statement in terms of goals seeks a middle ground and is couched in the terms most suitable for considering a system of action.

Because there is role-differentiation in every society, we must consider a set of goals rather

than a common goal. The facts of scarcity and of differential individual endowment, features of all societies, also make it necessary to speak of a set of goals. It is the range of goals, however narrow, that provides alternatives for individuals and thus reduces one serious source of conflict in societies. (The possibility of universally sought goals in a society is not ruled out.)

The goals must be sufficiently articulated to insure the performance of socially necessary activities. They must not include too much action which threatens the existence of a society. A cult of sexual abstinence, if universalized, would terminate the society. The goals must be shared to some degree, though this will vary with the differentiation of the society. Finally, the goals of one individual must be meaningful to another in so far as they share a common structure of action.

There will be both empirical and non-empirical goals. Some goals may be mutually incompatible without being destructive to the society. Without an articulated set of goals the society would invite extinction, apathy, or the war of all against all.

F. *The normative regulation of means.*—This functional prerequisite is the prescription of means for attaining the socially formulated goals of a society and its subsystems. It complements but does not overlap the functional prerequisite of "effective control of disruptive behavior." The "normative regulation of means" defines positively the means (mostly noncoercive) to the society's goals.

That these means must be stated clearly for the sake of order and the effective functioning of the society follows from (a) the nature of other functional prerequisites and (b) the *anomie* that must result from the lack of recognized legitimized means. First, role-differentiation specifies *who* is to act, while the common articulated set of goals defines *what* is to be done. The normative regulation of means tells *how* those goals may be won. Second, the absence of normative regulation of means invites

apathy or the war of each against all. Without socially prescribed means, a goal must be either devalued or forcibly seized. As the loss of a bolt may cause a great machine to beat itself to pieces, so the absence of normatively regulated means operates cumulatively to destroy the social structure.

Especially in ritual and initiatory activities must procedures be normatively specified. The content of prescriptions may vary greatly among societies; what is indispensable is simply that socially accepted directives for ceremonial and symbolic action exist. This point emphasizes the necessity for the category of normative regulation of means, in addition to the effective control of disruptive behavior. Moreover, there are often alternative, non-coercive ways of realizing goals, and they must be differentially evaluated for the sake of order, or else some must be ruled out.

G. *The regulation of affective expression.*—In any society the affective states of the members must be mutually communicable and comprehensible. Furthermore, not every affect can be expressed in every situation. Some must be suppressed or repressed. Lastly, there are affects which must be produced in the members if the social structure is to survive. All these aspects are included in the regulation of affective expression.

In the absence of the first of these conditions, stability of expectations between individuals is destroyed, and apathetic or destructive reactions will occur. This is true alike of states of anger and of affection, of love, lust and the like.<sup>9</sup> Without comprehensibility and communicability, mutually inappropriate responses in affectively charged situations can only result in the destruction of the relationship. In a love affair, if one member's expression of affection has the intended meaning of a flirtation, while

<sup>9</sup>It may be that gross affective states are mutually communicable in the absence of regulation, but such communication is not sufficient to obviate all the problems dealt with here.

to the other it signifies the affair, the crisis. The same state the expression of a clearly incompatible that society. This shared cognitive conflicts are potential the emotional involvement affective expressions from obvious and posture, facial expression. Many of these recognized by the ac-

In the face of regulatory, and authoritative, which are entailed of role-allocation, to chances of expectation no society can survive latitude of affective expression. The ungoverned expression leads to the disruptive ultimately to the war of

Finally, a society may in which affects certain forms of emotion actively foster some the view that all relations can be rational and communication must take the position depend on regulated communication.<sup>10</sup> In the absence appropriate affects, the would not survive. Affects must regularly be a closely related to prerequisites are fulfilled the urban middle-class

<sup>10</sup>This argument is an extension of functional prerequisites. A theory which includes the actor's orientation can and is a prerequisite.



to the other it signifies willingness to consummate the affair, the relationship is headed for a crisis. The same state of affairs with respect to the expression of affect in an entire society is clearly incompatible with the continuation of that society. This is not a matter of a lack of a shared cognitive frame of reference; rather, the conflicts are potentially explosive because of the emotional involvement. The cues that make affective expression comprehensible range from obvious and subtle linguistic behavior to posture, facial expression, gesture, and tone of voice. Many of these cues are not consciously recognized by the actors themselves.

In the face of regulated competitive co-operative, and authority relationships, some of which are entailed in any conceivable system of role-allocation, taken together with disturbances of expectation and scarcity situations, no society can survive if it permits complete latitude of affective expression in all situations. The ungoverned expression of lust and rage leads to the disruption of relationships and ultimately to the war of all against all.

Finally, a society must not only structure the way in which affects are expressed and restrict certain forms of emotional expression; it must actively foster some affects. Unless we adopt the view that all relationships in all societies can be rational and contractual in character, we must take the position that some relationships depend on regulated affects for their perpetuation.<sup>10</sup> In the absence of the production of appropriate affects, the family, for example, would not survive. The question of what effects must regularly be produced in any society is closely related to the way other functional prerequisites are fulfilled. In American society the urban middle-class conjugal family de-

pends heavily on the establishment of strong affective ties between spouses. The American family system in meeting the demands of a highly mobile society is deprived of certain bases of stability which other family systems possess, and the mutual affection of spouses becomes of correspondingly greater importance.

H. *Socialization*.—A problem is posed for any society by the fact that its structure of action must be learned by new members. To each individual must be transmitted so much of the modes of dealing with the total situation—the modes of communication, the shared cognitive frame of reference, goal-system, attitudes involved in the regulation of means, modes of expression, and the like—as will render him capable of adequate performance in his several roles throughout life, both as respects skills and as respects attitudes. Socialization thus is a different concept from the maintenance of the child in a state of biological well-being.

Furthermore, socialization includes both the development of new adult members from infants and the induction of an individual of any age into any role of the society or its subsystems where new learning is required.

A society cannot persist unless it perpetuates a self-sufficient system of action—whether in changed or traditional form—through the socialization of new members, drawn, in part, from the maturing generation. Whatever the defects of any particular mode of socialization, a universal failure of socialization means the extinction of the society, through a combination of all four of the terminating conditions mentioned previously.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup>This argument is an example of the dependence of our system of functional prerequisites on a theory of action. A theory which includes an affective aspect in the actor's orientation can and must include this functional prerequisite.

<sup>11</sup>The complexities of personality development arising from the interaction of individuals of varying constitutional endowment with the modes of child care and socialization and various other aspects of the social situation, as well as with more random situations, cannot be dealt with in any way here. It is sufficient to say that no socialization system is ideally efficient, i.e., in no society are all individuals equally well socialized nor is any one individual perfectly socialized.

One individual cannot become equally familiar with all aspects of his society; indeed, he may remain completely ignorant of some. But he must acquire a working knowledge of the behavior and attitudes relevant to his various roles and identify to some degree with such values as are shared by the whole society or segments thereof wherever his behavior articulates with that of other members of the society. A Brahmin and an Untouchable learn some skills and attitudes unknown to each other. Both, however, must learn that the Hindu world is made up of castes and that this is the way things should be.

I. *The effective control of disruptive forms of behavior.*—Prominent among disruptive modes of behavior are force and fraud. The extent to which such behavior will occur is dependent on the way that various other functional prerequisites are met: role-allocation, goal-system, regulation of means and of expression, and socialization being the more obvious cases in point. All these functional prerequisites, it is clear from the preceding argument, tend to prevent the occurrence of disruptive behavior. In addition to, and separate from, these is the effective control of such behavior when it occurs. To understand why this functional prerequisite is necessary, we must ask: Why would not a perfectly integrated society exist in its absence?

The answer lies in three conditions inherent in any society: scarcity of means, frustrations of expectations, and imperfections of socialization. That many of the desiderata of life are ultimately scarce needs no emphasis. Since sexual objects are differentially evaluated by a society, those few at the top of the scale tend to be sought by a large number of the opposite sex. Wealth, however defined, is basically scarce for the mass of individuals everywhere. Force and fraud are often the most efficient methods of acquiring scarce values. Indeed, only scarce values can be objects of rationally directed coercive effort. To argue that society without co-

ercion and deceit can exist, one must first demonstrate the absence of scarcity. Frustration of expectations is inevitable for many individuals in any society so long as there are such universal realities as unexpected consequences of purposive behavior, scarcity, and uncertainty.

Imperfect socialization results, among other things, in evasions of the normatively prescribed paths of action. Together with frustrations of expectations, it results in explosive outbursts of anger and violence.<sup>12</sup> Thus, both rationally directed exercise of force and fraud and less rational outbursts of emotion continually press to disrupt stable social relationships. If resort to these disruptive behaviors is restricted only by opportunity, the war of all against all will ultimately result. (Some disruptive action may also tend in the direction of an apathetic breakdown. This does not alter the nature of the argument.)

The system of goals tells *what* must be done; the normative regulation of means prescribes *how*. It also includes pre- and proscriptions regarding the use of force and fraud. In addition, however, the society must have techniques for handling those who, for reasons outlined, use these disruptive means or are subject to these outbreaks. The form of control and the degree of efficiency may vary greatly. What type of action is directly destructive of a society depends on the nature of the society: patricide in a society founded on patriarchal clans, violation of property rights in a property-emphasizing society, and so on. Conversely, some societies can tolerate forms of these behaviors that others cannot. Chuckchee social structure, for example, withstands a high homicide rate.

<sup>12</sup>Other disruptive modes of behavior, including apathy, also may occur. But a refined analysis of the problem of deviancy is beyond the scope of this paper.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This treatment makes a list of functional prerequisites, and altered by explicit the elements present, a statement of sites of a society is a contribution to general sociology. This tool for analyzing social systems should be especially useful in a general system of sociology. It will tell us how things may be met, and it is a more comprehensive sociology.

Even at the present time, authors have found a point of reference for their subsystems, and it is in the analysis of empirical data available features of social systems and institutional structures that social change which is looked.

#### Talcott Parsons: A PARADIGM FOR THE SOCIAL SYSTEMS

Let us now turn to a new concept of interpenetration of our conception of the concept of interpenetration. It is an ever important logical and empirical ideal, empirically derived as open system.

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#### IV. CONCLUSION

This treatment makes no claim to be final. Our list of functional prerequisites can be elaborated and altered by the reader by making explicit the elements we have left implicit. At present, a statement of the functional prerequisites of a society is primarily useful as a contribution to general social theory rather than as a tool for analyzing individual societies. It should be especially useful for constructing a general system of structural prerequisites that will tell us how the functional prerequisites may be met, and this in turn may lead to a more comprehensive and precise comparative sociology.

Even at the present stage, however, the authors have found this approach useful as a point of reference for analyses of societies and their subsystems, and for suggesting inadequacies in the analysis of given societies and in the empirical data available. It directs attention to features of social systems, relationships among institutional structures, and implications for social change which might otherwise be overlooked.

### Talcott Parsons: The Social System

#### A PARADIGM FOR THE ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL SYSTEMS

Let us now turn to a more detailed discussion of our conception of a social system. First, the concept of interpenetration implies that, however important *logical* closure may be as a theoretical ideal, *empirically* social systems are conceived as *open* systems, engaged in complicated

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processes of interchange with envioning systems. The envioning systems include, in this case, cultural and personality systems, the behavioral and other subsystems of the organism, and, through the organism, the physical environment. The same logic applies internally to social systems, conceived as differentiated and segmented into a plurality of subsystems, each of which must be treated analytically as an open system interchanging with envioning subsystems of the larger system.

The concept of an open system interchanging with envioning systems also implies *boundaries* and their maintenance. When a set of interdependent phenomena shows sufficiently definite patterning and stability over time, then we can say that it has a "structure" and that it is fruitful to treat it as a "system." A boundary means simply that a theoretically and empirically significant difference between structures and processes internal to the system and those external to it exist and tends to be maintained. In so far as boundaries in this sense do not exist, it is not possible to identify a set of interdependent phenomena as a system; it is merged in some other, more extensive system. It is thus important to distinguish a set of phenomena not meant to constitute a system in the theoretically relevant sense—e.g., a certain type of statistical sample of a population—from a true system.

#### STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL MODES OF ANALYSIS

Besides identifying a system in terms of its patterns and boundaries, a social system can and should be analyzed in terms of three logically independent—i.e., cross-cutting—but also interdependent, bases or axes of variability, or as they may be called, bases of selective abstraction.

The first of these is best defined in relation to the distinction between "structural" and "functional" references for analysis. However relative these two concepts may be, the distinc-