BEHAVIOUR PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

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ABSTRACT

Sociology is distinguished as a discipline by its focus on social structure: persisting patterns of behaviour and interaction between people or social positions. Thus, a major concern of sociological social psychology must be the relation of social structue to individual psychology and behaviour, or what has traditionally been termed the study of social structure and personality. During the formative years of modern sociology and social psychology, social structure and personality was a recognized and recognizable area of specialization; and toward the end of this period Inkeles provided several programmatic statements on the nature of and major issues in the study of social structure and personality. For a variety of reasons, however, social structure and personality, as a coherent body of substance and methods within sociology or the interdisciplinary field of social psychology, has more recently become somewhat dissipated.

INTRODUCTION

This state of affairs reflects larger patterns of development in the broad interdisciplinary field of social psychology and its parent disciplines of sociology and psychology. Social psychology has become fractionated into three increasingly distinct and isolated domains or faces, one of which is social structure and personality. Psychological social Psychology and symbolic interactionism are the other two more widely recognized faces, the former located within the discipline of psychology, the latter within sociology. Although very different in their methodological orentations and in many of their substantive concerns, Psychological social psychology and symbolic interactionism both pay scant attention to macro-social structures and processes and how these affect and are affected by individual psychology and behaviour. Psychological social psychology has increasingly focused on individual psychological Processes (perception, cognition, motivation, learning, and so forth) in relation

to social stimuli using laboratory experiemtns; symbolic interactionism, on face-to-face interaction processes using naturalistic observations.

The relation of macro-social structures or processes to individual psychological attributes and behaviour the essence of the study of social structure and personality has increasingly constitutted neither a field of its own nor a coherent subfield of social psychology or sociology The result has been that work on social structure and personality in one area or by one investigator has not contributed much to, or gained much, from, related work in other areas or by other investigators. Nor has the study of social structure and personality had much impact on or benefited much from developments in other domains of social psychology.

The study of social structure and personality attained some unity ant, coherence between the 1920s and 1960s by taking a very "mocro" or molar focus with respect to both social structure and personality. Research and theory attempted to relate the characteristics of total societies to holistic conceptions of the personalities of societal members. The comparative study of total societies was characteristic of sociology and anthropology during this early period, as was the comparative study of total personality or character types in psychology and psychiatry. It was natural, probably inevitable, that these two concerns would intersect in the study of society and personality, or what became known as "culture and personality" or "national character."

The evolution of research and theory in culture and personality and in sociology and psychology more generally has, however, moved in the direction of studying aspects of societies in relation to aspects of individual personality. As its interests have come to center on large and complex societies, sociology has increasingly consisted of as series of rather separate sociologies of work, family, religion, politics, medicine the arts, leisure, and so forth. Anthropology appears to this outside observer to exhibit similar, if less marked, trends. Within psychology, holistic study of personality has similarly given way to the separate study of motivation, cognition, learning, psychopathology, and so forth. And students of culture and personality have become concerned with variations in personality within societies as well as between societies.

The net result of all these trends was to move the study of social structure and personality away from topics such as the relation between an authoritarian personality structure and authoritarian societal structure toward more focused topics such as the impact of achievement motivation on entrepreneurial behaviour or the impact of occupational conditions on parental values Concerns with broad societal patterns and differences in values, attitudes, and behaviour have hardly disappeared. Explanation and understanding of such differences is increasingly sought, however, by attending to the component aspects and attributes of both societies and personality.

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In light of these developments, this chapter adopts an eclectic and catholic approach to conceptualization of social structure, personality, a rid the relationship between them. This is consistent with the broad and loose usage of these terms in the literature more generally. Social structure commonly refers to any or all aspects of social systems, especially more macro-social phenomena. Similarly, personality is used as a generic label for relatively stable and enduring individual psychological attributes. Thus, the relationship between any macro-social phenomena and any individual psychological attribute can be considered an aspect of the study of social structure and personality. Both social structure and personality, however, also have more specific connotations. As the chapter develops, I follow Inkeles; Inkeles and Levinson in distinguishing between social structure and culture as components of a social or sociocultural system. Social structure is defined in this more restricted sence in the opening sentence of the chapter and this conception is elaborated below. The latter part of the chapter focuses on the relation of this more restricted conception of social structure to individual psychological attributes and behaviour.

Similarly, personality often connotes something more distinctive than any or all persisting psychological attributes of an individual. Specifically, it suggests that these attributes have a structure or organization and some inherent dynamic properties or tendencies. From the 1920s through the 1950s, psychology and psychiatry were dominated by conceptions of personality as a coherent dynamic system, most notably that of Freud; the same was true of the study of culture and personality or national character. However, both cognitive and behaviourist research and theory have challenged the utility and validity of such a conception of personality, and the study of personality has increasingly evolved into the study of persisting individual differences in a variety of psychological attributes, each of which is generally assumed to be loosely, if at all, linked with most other attributes. Thus, we find little or no emphasis on personality or character "structures" or "types." Rather the concern is with establishing that stable individual traits do exist and have important behavioural consequences. Thus, I feel that using the term personality as a generic label for stable and persisting psychological attributes is quite consistent with current conceptions of personality.' Though conceptions of both social structure and personality have become increasingly loose and multidimensional, 1 would argue that the study of social structure and personality continues to constitute an important and potentially coherent domain of social psychology in general and Of sociological social psychology in particular. What gives the area coherence, however, is not a central substantive focus such as the holistic study of society and personality. Rather, the integrative foci of the study Of social structure and personality in the present and future must be a set of general theoretical and methodological principles that are applicable to the study of the relationship of any macro-social phenomenon to individual personality and behaviour. This chapter attempts to delineate those integrating theoretical and

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methodological principles and to illustrate their application to a varied, but necessarily select, set of substantive phenomena.

The chapter is divided into five major sections. The first briefly reviews the development of social structure and personality as an area of study from its early sociological origins through the heyday of research or, culture and personality or national character. The second traces the recent evolution of research and theory noted above, focusing especially on the work of Alex Inkeles on modernization and modernity, and states three basic analytical principles and related methodological considerations that should guide and integrate current and future work on social structure and personality. The third and fourth sections illustrate the application of these principles, first with respect to a general conceptual distinction between "cultural" and "structural" explanations of relationships between social systems and individual personality or behaviour, and second with respect to analyses of the impact of social class on personality. These four sections explore the impact of macro-social phenomena on personality and behaviour; the fifth considers when and how personality may affect social structure.

The study of social structure and personality is inherently interdisciplinary. Its modern origins trace to the great social analysts of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, whose work has formed the foundation of mush of modern social science 'most notably sociology. Auguste Comete, Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim were all centrally concerned with social psychology, especially problems of social structure and personality. This has not been sufficiently appreciated because of tendencies of these writers, often accentuated by later interpreteres, to stress the differences between their sociological approach and that of psychologists of their day.

In his classic chapter on the history of social psychology, Allport declared: "If it were possible to designate a single deliberate 'founder' of social psychology as a science, we should have to nominate Comte for this honour." Although Comte is more commonly considered the founder of sociology, Allport argues that toward the end of his life Comte was attempting to construct a "true final science" which integrated biology, sociology, and psychology. The focal question Comte posed for this final science is still central to Allport's and my conception of social psychology, and particularly to the study of social structure and personality:

How can the individual be both a cause and a consequence of society ? That is to say: How can his nature depend indisputably upon the prior existence of cultural designs and upon his role in a predetermined social structure while at the same time he is clearly a unique person, both selecting and rejecting influences from his cultural surrounding, and in turn creating new cultural forms for the guidance of future generations?

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Marx, Weber, and Durkheim also had primary interests in problems of social structure and personality, and their ideas directly influenced more recent work in the area. Two of Mark's earliest and most enduring concepts, alienation and class consciousness, inherently concerned the relationship of societal structure and institutions to individual beliefs, motivations, behaviours, and so forth. Specifically, Marx saw the structure of the capitalist economic system as not only economically exploitative but also incompatible with the realization of human beings' basic productive natures, at least in the case of workers who did not own or control the means of production. The initial consequence was that workers became alienated from their work, from themselves, and from each other. Marx's early writings focused on these problems of human self-realization and subjective quality of life. But Marx hoped and expected that workers would eventually recognize that their deprivation and alienation stemmed from their shared subordinate position in the economic system. That is, they would acquire a class consciousness that would be the foundation of revolutionary collective action to establish a new, nonalienating, social and economic order. Thus, Marx was centrally concerned with (1) the nature and consequences of the "fit" between social structure and the characteristics of individuals, and (2) with how position in the socioeconomic structure shaped values, motives, and beliefs.

Weber, the most explicityly social psychological of the "founders" of sociology, was similarly concerned with the relationship between position in the social structure and individual values, motives, and beliefs. In the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Weber turned Marx on his head, arguing that values, motives, and beliefs play an autonomous role in society and can indeed be major causes of dramatic changes in the social structure. Specifically, he posited that the secular ideology spawned by Calvinist theology was a major cause of the rise of capitalism in Western Europe. However, he also recognized that social structures and positions, once established, in turn shape values, attitudes, and beliefs.

Durkheim's concern with problems of social structure and personality was less overt but no less real. Inkeles also showed how a more explicitly social-psychological approach can clarify Durkheim's theory and data Lukes argues that Durkheim's concept of anomie, like Marx's alienation, involves the relationship between social phenomena" and individual "states of mind," or what are termed here, social structure and personality. Close reading of Suicide indicates that Durkheim himself recognized the social-psychological nature of his work, and adopted a militantly sociologistic stance mainly to combat the widespread psychological reductionism of his time. Much of Durkheim's work focused on the role of social systems in shaping values and of these values in maintaining social order.

In sum, the study of social structure and personality was a central concern of the founders of sociology, and their ideas have stimulated further research and theoretical development up to

the present. Yet their work, especially Durkheim's, had an anti-psychological component that emphasized the importance and distinctiveness of social phenomena and sociology as a discipline, as opposed to highly individualistic or psychological interpretations of social phenomena that were and continue to be quite prevalent. The subsequent development of sociology the first half of the twentieth century tended to reinforce this anit-psychological stance. The discipline most concerned with social structure phenomena regarded their relation to individual psychology and behaviour as a peripheral activity. This development, along with others, resulted in the study of social structure and personality taking on a peculiarly limited, yet expansive form-what has come to be best known under the rubrics of culture and personality and national character. In retrospect, this turn of events may have hindered more than it helped the development of the more general study of social structure and personality.

Early in this century, anthropologists and later psychoanalysts, psychologists, and psychiatrists became fascinated with the role that individual personality played in understanding the similarities and differences between societies and social systems. Joined subsequently by sociologists and political scientists, they developed the first major cumulative body of theory and research on social structure and personality. The initial impetus in this area came from the anthropologist Franz Boas at Columbia and his students, most notably Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict. As ethnographers dispersed themselves throughout the world in the early twentieth century, they were struck by the cultural relativity of human behaviour and social organization. That is, human customs and practices varied greatly, especially among primitive societies, yet most societies remained quite stable over time. Clearly, there was no universal human nature, nor could genetic or physiological factors explain the variations observed.

Although the validity of some of her ethnographic observations has been questioned, Mead's classic study of Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies revealed wide variations in the patterning of behaviour and feelings in men versus: women among different New Guinea tribes. From these observations Mead derived broad conclusions about the relationship between culture and personality, conclusions that were to be echoed and elaborated by others:

We are forced to concluede that human nature in almost unbelievably   malleable, responding accurately and contrastingly to contrasting cultural conditions. The differences between individuals who are members of different cultures, like the individuals within a culture, are almost entirely to be laid to differences in conditioning, especially during early childhood, and the form of this conditioning is culturally determined. Standardized personality differences between that sexes are of this order, cultural creations to which each generation, male and female, is trained to conform.

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Societal patterns, such as sex differences, remained stable over time in the face of constant turnover in societal membership because societies "conditioned" or "molded" individual personality to accord with these patterns. Mead felt this molding occurred especially, though riot exclusively, during childhood, but failed to specify the influence processes through which it occurred.

Developments in psychology, however, filled this theoretical gap. Despite their differences, the dominant psychological theories of the 1920-50 period, learning theory and psychoanalysis, both emphasized the primacy of child rearing and early experience in the development of personality. Psychoanalysis became central to the study of culture and personality, especially through the collaboration of a psychiatrist, Abram Kardiner, with anthropologists at Columbia. Kardiner saw the order, coherence, and stability of society stemming from members of society sharing a "basic personality structure" (BPS) which in turn was a product of the "primary" institutions of the society, most notably early child-rearing practices. These primary institutions not only transmitted social and cultural patterns from generation to generation, they were also determinants of these patterns. Social and cultural institutions developed and changed as expressions of the needs, tensions, and wishes that characterized the BPS. For Kardiner, the child was the father not only of the man but of many aspects of the society itself. Kardiner's ideas were adopted and elaborated in the later anthropological work on culture and personality by Whiting and Levine.

During and immediately after World War II, anthropologists, psychiatrists, and others, who until then had studied culture and personality largely in primitive societies, were enlisted by their governments in the name of national defence to make similar analyses of modern nations, especially enemy nations, but also allies. The goal was to identify what came to be termed "national character" but was essentially identical to what had been termed basic personality structure or cultural character the motives, beliefs, and other psychological attributes shared by the members of a given society.

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