

encyclopedia of social theory

edited by
austin harrington
barbara I. marshall
hans-peter müller

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2006
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
By Routledge
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

© 2006 Routledge

Typeset in Bembo and Helvetica by Taylor & Francis Books
Printed and bound in Great Britain by MPG Books Ltd, Bodmin

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN10: 0-415-29046-5
ISBN13: 978-0-415-29046-3

T&F informa

Taylor & Francis Group is the Academic Division of T&F Informa plc.

encyclopedia of social theory

Social theory is the central terrain of ideas that links research in sociology to key problems in the philosophy of the human sciences. At the start of the twentieth century, social theory was the body of thought that sought to ground sociology as an independent discipline. At the start of the twenty-first century, social theory is the dynamic nexus of concepts and ideas that informs sociology's dialogue with a protean variety of approaches in neighbouring disciplines. In recent years social theory has stood at the forefront of the most exciting debates in fields ranging across sociology and anthropology, political theory and political economy, media and cultural studies, feminist theory and post-colonial studies.

The *Encyclopedia of Social Theory* provides a unique reference source for students and academics, embracing all major aspects of the field. Written by more than 200 internationally distinguished scholars, almost 500 entries cover core contemporary topics,

concepts, schools, debates, and personalities in the history of the discipline. Special attention is paid to leading schools and debates, with shorter entries reserved for biographies of key theorists and definitions of key terms. Entries are fully cross-referenced and contain concise listings for further reading. A comprehensive index guides the reader to further divisions of content.

Austin Harrington is Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Leeds, UK, and Research Fellow at the Max Weber Centre for Advanced Study at the University of Erfurt, Germany.

Barbara L. Marshall is Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies at Trent University, Canada.

Hans-Peter Müller is Professor of Sociology at the Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany.

STATUS

This simple use of probability distribution immediately yields theoretical results expressing the effects of *A* and *C* on the mean and inequality of the *J* distribution, including the result that as inequality in *A* increases, the mean of *J* decreases – putting on a firm footing the relation so often asserted between **inequality** and justice.

But much more is to come. Using the JEF as first postulate and a derivation technique called the macro-model yields numerous testable predictions for a wide array of disparate phenomena, underscoring the long reach of justice: (1) subgroup conflict is an increasing function of economic inequality, but the exact way that conflict depends on the proportions in the two subgroups depends on the shape of the income distribution; and (2) the proportions Selfista, Subgroupista, and Groupista in a society depend on the shape of the income distribution.

Once the true just rewards are estimated, it becomes possible to estimate the observer-specific principles of micro-justice, such as the just returns to school and experience and just **gender** effect, and the principles of macro-justice, such as the just inequality.

Further, the theory-based predictions and propositions are ready to test. These include such predictions as 'The rate of vocations to the **religious** life is an increasing function of economic inequality', 'Parents of two or more children will spend more of their toy budget at an annual gift-giving occasion rather than on the children's birthdays', and 'Blind people are less susceptible to eating disorders' (Jasso 2001).

Finally, development of justice indexes for entire societies enables two new lines of inquiry: (1) estimation of the decomposition of overall injustice into injustice attributable to poverty and injustice attributable to inequality; and (2) assessment and calibration of well-being based on inequality measures and well-being based on justice measures.

In all these activities to understand more deeply and more reliably the operation of the sense of justice, and more generally to develop and test sociological theory, statistical tools are our daily helpers.

References and further reading

- Jasso, G. (1978) 'On the Justice of Earnings: A New Specification of the Justice Evaluation Function', *American Journal of Sociology*, 83: 1398–419.
- Jasso, G. (1990) 'Methods for the Theoretical and Empirical Analysis of Comparison Processes', *Sociological Methodology*, 20: 369–419.
- Jasso, G. (1996) 'Exploring the Reciprocal Relations between Theoretical and Empirical Work: The Case of the Justice Evaluation Function', *Sociological Methods and Research*, 24: 253–303.
- Jasso, G. (2001) 'Comparison Theory', in J. H. Turner (ed.) *Handbook of Sociological Theory*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum, pp. 669–98.
- Jasso, G. and Liao, T. F. (2003) 'Distribution', in M. Lewis-Beck, A. Bryman and T. F. Liao (eds) *The Sage Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*, vol. 1. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 276–80.
- Wagner, D. and Berger, J. (1985) 'Do Sociological Theories Grow?' *American Journal of Sociology*, 90: 697–728.

GUILLEMINA JASSO

STATUS

Status is used as a synonym for social position and to refer to the relative ranking of individuals, **groups**, and **objects**. The Latin root *sta* or 'standing' is used in related words like stature, state, stage, station and estate. Until the nineteenth century, status referred primarily to the rights accorded to different feudal estates and implied both being in a given social position and the ranking of these positions.

Ralph Linton, Robert K. **Merton**, and others used 'status' to refer to a *social position* and linked this with **role** to refer to the set of cultural expectations relevant to a particular position (Clark 1999). *Status-set*

designated the array of positions a particular person held. *Status-sequence* referred to a set of linked social positions that a given individual moved through over time, for example, infant, child, adult, or freshman, sophomore, junior. 'Social position' has, however, become the more common usage to designate a condition, office or role, and status more commonly refers to ranking, though both uses are still found in the sociological literature.

Max Weber's (1968) essay 'Class, Status, and Party' played a crucial role in shaping the conceptualization of **inequality** in general and status in particular. He contrasted the *status situation* to the 'purely economically determined' *class situation*. He defined status as a 'positive or negative, social estimation of honour' (ibid.: IX: 932). While status is often associated with class position, it is based on and expressed by conformity to a particular *style of life*. This involves following the appropriate fashions and manners, and restricting social **interaction** with those who are not members of one's particular social circle. A social formation based on status honour is a *status group*, which is often tied to **kinship** and is more of a **community** than classes or political parties. Indian castes, feudal **aristocracies**, and outcast groups, are important examples (see **caste**). **Ethnic** groups are a closely related phenomenon. The concept of 'status group' is on the same analytical level as the notions of 'class' and 'political party.'

Weber's placement of status on a par with economic and political **power** had numerous impacts on sociology. It became the basis of a multidimensional concept of social inequality, which served as critique of what was seen as **Marx's** over-emphasis on economic power in general and control of the means of production in particular. This multidimensional concept of power became the basis of what was called **stratification** theory, which was sometimes contrasted to Marxian class analysis. Studies by W. L. Warner (1960), August Hollings-

head and many others placed individuals and **families** on various scales of socio-economic status. Reputation measures used panels of informants to rate people's standing in a local community. Subjective measures ask informants to rank themselves. Objective measures ranked people according to some combination of their education, occupation, income, etc. Extensive debates emerged about the virtues and vices of these various forms of **measurement**.

This multidimensional concept of inequality was a prerequisite to considering whether an individual's various statuses were inconsistent, for example, a high educational level but low occupational status and income, or vice versa. Gerhard Lenski, who conducted the first, careful quantitative study of this matter, used the term *status crystallization* to refer to individuals who have approximately the same levels on various dimensions of status. Lenski hypothesized that those who had crystallized statuses would experience less stress in social interaction and would be more politically conservative. Lenski's notions were intuitively appealing and have led to several hundreds of research articles testing the effects of *status inconsistency* on an array of factors from voting behavior to coronary disease. Extensive theoretical, methodological, and statistical issues emerged about which there is no conclusive agreement. In general, the empirical studies seem flawed in various respects and show little independent effect of such status inconsistency (Smith 1996).

Another important development known as *status attainment* models grew out of attempts to understand the placement of individuals in the stratification system. This had roots in earlier attempts to measure the rates of social mobility using tables that cross-tabulated a son's social strata, class, or occupation with those of his father. (Most studies ignored women.) The concern was to determine whether positions of privilege

(or under-privilege) were inherited or achieved. Status attainment models, first developed by Peter Blau and Otis Dudley Duncan (1967), specified some of the social processes – parent's occupation and **education**, child's education, child's first job – that accounted for adults' location in the structure of **inequality**. An important prerequisite for such analyses was the development of *occupational prestige* scales that assigned occupational categories a quantitative score indicating their relative prestige rank within the occupational structure. This made possible the use of regression techniques. Later analyses added a number of different variables including measures of IQ and personality. The *reproduction theory* of Pierre **Bourdieu** also deals with the issue of how social status and other privileges are reproduced across generations, though he focuses on a wide array of different forms of symbolic capital including styles, accent, credentials, and social contacts, and elaborates how these are means of inheriting privileges, even under conditions where direct control of economic capital may be less relevant.

Micro-sociology that focuses on the details of interpersonal **interaction** has also devoted much attention to people's status. This includes the ethnographic work of everyday life by Erving **Goffman**. *Status expectation theory*, developed by Joseph Berger and his colleagues (Wagner and Berger 2002) and based on small group experiments, focuses on how individuals use clues, e.g. **race** or **gender**, to develop expectations of others and how these expectations in turn shape their behavior toward those individuals. Jasso (2001) has suggested a mathematically oriented framework for studying status that distinguishes between the characteristics of individuals and groups and their relationship and links micro- and macro-levels of analysis.

A *theory of status relations*, developed by Milner, explains people's behavior when status is not simply a function of economic

or political power. Status is the accumulated expressions of approval and disapproval. The theory has been applied to the Indian **castes**, religious behavior, political **legitimacy**, and American teenagers (Milner 2004). Conformity to a group's norms is a key source of status. **Elites** defend group boundaries and their rank by elaborating and complicating the norms, e.g. the elaborate rules of purity in the Indian caste system and the arcane forms of conformity required by teenage crowds. In traditional societies copying the lifestyle of superiors is forbidden; in modern societies, superiors constantly change what is required to conform, and hence the importance of fashions. Association is the other source of status. Associating with high status people or objects improves one's status and with lower status people or objects degrades it – especially for intimate expressive relationships such as eating and sex. The caste system regulates who one can marry or eat with; teenagers are preoccupied with whom their peers are 'going with' and eat with in the lunchroom. In contrast to economic and political power, status is a relative rank and therefore is inflexible. For some to move up, others must move down, and vice versa. This is the source of the restricted mobility and put-downs common in status-conscious systems.

A considerable anthropological literature focuses on honor and shame (Peristiany 1966). Historical work on traditional social structures (e.g. Clark 1995) continues. Notions of honor and respect have been central to analyzing urban gangs (Horowitz 1983). Various movements including prohibition, the 1990s 'culture wars', ethnic and homosexual pride movements, and religious **fundamentalism** have been referred to as status politics and are closely related to issues of respect, honor, and **sacredness**. Increasing evidence indicates that in developed societies **health** and well-being are related as closely to relative status ranking as to absolute levels of wealth

(Marmot 2004). This calls into question whether the 'good society' can be based on opportunity and growth while ignoring inequality *per se*. All these issues are in large part rooted in concerns about social status.

References and further reading

- Blau, P. and Duncan, O. D. (1967) *American Occupational Structure*. New York: Wiley.
- Clark, J, Modgil, C. and Modgil, S. (1999) *Robert K. Merton: Consensus and Controversy*. Philadelphia, PA: Falmer, chaps 11–13.
- Clark, S. (1995) *State and Status*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Horowitz, R. (1983) *Honor and the American Dream*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Jasso, G. (2001) 'Studying Status: An Integrated Framework', *American Sociological Review*, 66(1): 96–124.
- Milner, M., Jr. (2004) *Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids*. New York: Routledge.
- Marmot, M. (2004) *The Status Syndrome*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Peristany, J. G. (ed.) (1966) *Honour and Shame*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Smith, R. D. (1996) 'The Career of Status Crystallization: A Sociological Odyssey', *Sociological Research Online*, 1(3) (<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/1/3/3.html>).
- Wagner, D. G. and Berger, J. (2002) 'Expectation States Theory...', in J. Berger and M. Zeldich, Jr. (eds) *New Directions in Contemporary Sociological Theory*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Warner, W. L. (1960) *Social Class in America*. New York: Harper.
- Weber, M. ([1925] 1968) *Economy and Society*. New York: Bedminster Press, IX(6): 926–40.

MURRAY MILNER, JR