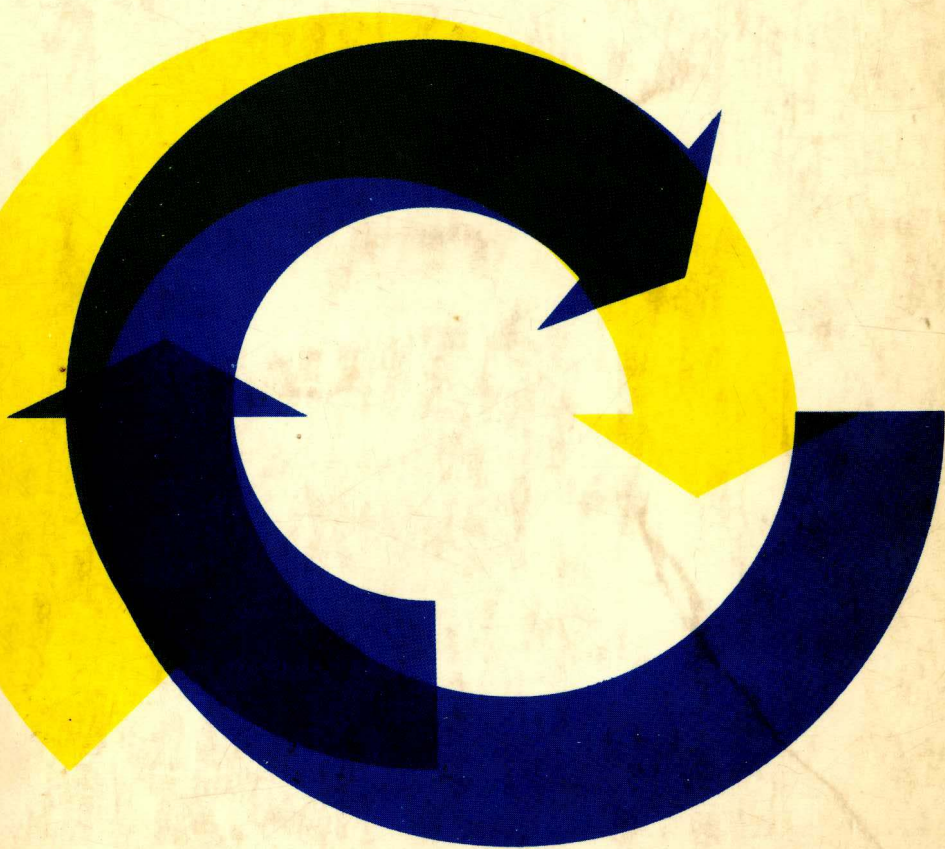


**STUDIES IN
SOCIAL
CHANGE**



AMITAI ETZIONI

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Columbia University

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STUDIES IN SOCIAL CHANGE



Other books by Amitai Etzioni

Political Unification: A Comparative Study of Leaders and Forces (1965); *The Moon-Doggle: Domestic and International Implications of the Space-Race* (1964); *Modern Organizations* (1964); *Winning without War* (1964); *The Hard Way to Peace: A New Strategy* (1962); *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations* (1961).

PREFACE

Theories of social change have received much increased attention in recent years. Even more than general theories of behavior, however, modern theories of change are, by and large, gradually assembled and pieced together from many theoretical contributions and numerous research papers. One approach is to move "downward," to attempt to derive the basis for a theory of change from general theoretical considerations. Talcott Parsons, who has been criticized for providing sociology with a theory that stressed equilibrium over process and left little room for change of the system, has made a major contribution to a functional analysis of change. The concept of differentiation is central to his formulation.* The first part of the present discussion builds on this functional approach to the study of change.

We augment the functional approach in two ways: by extension and by opposition. Extension involves the introduction of an analysis of control structures on top of the more common sociological models of action. To use a medical metaphor, sociological anatomy studies the relations between various segments of the social structure, such as classes, communities, ethnic groups, or ranks in an organization. Sociological neurology explores communication channels and their pathologies. But there are relatively few studies which focus on the "physiology" of units that control social processes. Few studies explore the relations of elites to the social units they lead, and the role elites play in changing the relationships among such units. We focus on the growth and differentiation of elites as related to differentiation on

* Talcott Parsons, "Some Considerations on the Theory of Social Change," *Rural Sociology*, vol. 26 (1961), pp. 219-239. Reprinted in Eve and Amitai Etzioni (eds.), *Social Change: Sources, Patterns, and Consequences* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1964).

the "anatomical" level, that of status-structures. We explore the proposition that as a system evolves a new "arm," its control center, or "brain," also develops a new subdivision, specializing in guidance of that "arm."

The second way we augment earlier work on differentiation is by setting up, in opposition, an alternative model for the study of the evolution of new social systems. Differentiation seems not to exhaust the ways in which fully differentiated systems emerge. Differentiation assumes a primitive unit in which all the basic functions are already fulfilled even though there are not as yet specifically designated structures devoted primarily to their respective services. In the process of differentiation, these structures emerge. We found, however, some systems of considerable importance that initially fulfill *autonomously* only *one* of the basic functions. These systems grow gradually in scope, adding new structures, and serve functions they did not serve before, broadening their control structure. The model for the study of this process is referred to as *epigenesis*. It is of particular relevance to the study of the evolution of new communities—whether nations out of tribes, regional communities out of nations, or metropolitan communities out of cities, suburbs, and townships.

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Structural-functional analysis is the conceptual approach which underlies our theoretical discussion. It has often been stated that functional approach is unable to deal with change. While this is not the case, we found it useful to introduce the concept of a *future-system*. Once the functional prerequisites of a future-system are spelled out, one might ask under what conditions, as the result of which processes, advanced to what degree, will these prerequisites be met. When these questions are answered, the conditions under which a system will change to a different one are known. This seems to us to provide a framework for a functional analysis of change.

One major line of development of sociological theory is, as Merton put it, from the "middle range." This has been interpreted as implying that, first, theories will be developed for specific areas such as for stratification, or religious or educational institutions, and when enough theoretical and empirical knowledge has been amassed, these middle-range theories will be interwoven and "roofed" to form a general theory. A second avenue along which

the growth of general theory might proceed, the present work suggests, is for the "middle range" level to include not only subfields, but also universal components of which none will constitute a general theory in itself, but when combined with each other and with subtheories oriented toward a subfield, might lead toward general sociological theory.*

Our study of elites and control structures (in Chapters 1 and 2) is one such study of a universal though limited component. A closely related one is that of strategies of change, to which the second part of this volume is devoted. Change almost invariably involves an element of conscious, deliberate effort by one or more elites, though these might not be of the "establishment" but rather "revolutionary." The scope of deliberate change as against change that is unplanned grows with modernization and is greater in the more politicized societies. Whatever the scope of guided change, the strategy followed by the elites that do the guiding significantly affects its extent and depth and therefore ought to be an integral part of the study of change. Chapter 3 explores one strategy that was particularly successful and the conditions that accounted for its success. Chapter 4 explores a different, though not unrelated, strategy which relied considerably more on symbols than on manipulation of power; it proved to be less successful, for reasons explored below.

The third part of this volume follows a different tract toward the construction of a theory of social change; models developed in other areas of study are applied to the analysis of change, in particular to the evolution of communities. The relationship is plain: unlimited conflict becomes contained when the parties to a conflict become involved in one and the same community. Less clearly known are the conditions under which such community ties grow out of unlimited conflict. Some tentative propositions dealing with this problem are the subject of Chapter 5. Chapter 6 pushes this analysis a few steps further; it applies theorems derived from the study of the ways consensus is reached in an existing community to a study of the conditions under which a new

* Cf. Robert K. Merton, "Introduction" to Allen H. Barton, *Social Organization under Stress: A Sociological Review of Disaster Studies*, Disaster Study No. 17, National Academy of Sciences—National Research Council, Publication 1032.

structure for the formation of such consensus might evolve. In that sense, a future-system is here explored.

The last part of this volume contains three case studies of change which attempt to induce "upward" some general insights from data, rather than using data to illustrate and explore some general conceptions, the procedure followed in earlier chapters. Three kinds of change are illustrated. The first kind are changes in the system, that is, changes which are themselves institutionalized. The system needs some of these changes in order to remain stable, the way a bicycle rider must continue to pedal to maintain his stability. The changes explored here are of the party in office in close relationship to changes in policy preferences of the population; that is, change of government in a democracy. (In this way this study also turns to the problems of consensus formation, explored in the preceding chapter.)

While changes in the system take place, the system itself changes too. We shall point out the hazards that exist in studying changes in the system without studying changes of the system, for the investigator is likely to perceive more stability than is actually present. While it is possible to study one kind of change at a time, the effect of changes of the system, it seems, are at least to be charted as background to the study of changes *in* the system. (The opposite might be less essential.)

Both kinds of changes, but in particular those of a system, are affected by and significantly affect the nature of societal values. The last chapter of this volume is devoted to a study of changes of a set of institutions as they are affected by and effect changes in values. As the systems under review are relatively small, a comparative approach is possible; three systems are compared from the same perspective—the dynamic relations between changing values and changing structure.

Data are used illustratively to varying degrees in each of the chapters of this volume. For some chapters, these data are incidental, qualitative, and exploratory. In others, they are somewhat more extensive, occasionally quantitative, and, to a degree, they support the propositions advanced. The data are, however, largely secondary to the theoretical points suggested. The same points could have been illustrated by different data; those included here represent the substantive fields in which the author has worked

more than any particular research strategy, so far as theory of change is concerned.

The work presented in this collection of essays benefited from discussion with students of Columbia University who have taken my classes in social change, both graduate and undergraduate, over a period of six years. Their stimulating questions and alert criticisms are much appreciated. In particular, I am indebted to the research assistance of Sarajane Heidt. In doing the work on which these studies are based, I benefited from the support of the Institute of War and Peace Studies and the Council for Research in the Social Sciences, both at Columbia University. The editing of the manuscript was completed during my fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. Miriam Gallaher composed the index.

While all the chapters but one were published previously as articles, all the articles have been somewhat revised for the purposes of this volume. Revision includes omissions to avoid minor repetitions, some updating of references and data, and a few elaborations of the argument. Also, the titles have been modified to enhance the integration of the volume. A brief general introduction and short section introductions have been provided to indicate some themes that run through the various materials.

A. E.

Los Altos, California
June 1966

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STUDIES IN SOCIAL CHANGE



Part One

DIFFERENTIATION VERSUS EPIGENESIS



Most studies of social change presuppose the existence of a unit, and ask: How does it change, why, and in what direction? The analytical framework frequently used for this analysis of social dynamics is the differentiation model,¹ which assumes that the "primitive" social unit contains, in embryonic form, fused together, all the basic modes of social relations that later become structurally differentiated. While relations originally fused gain their own subunits, no new functions are served. According to this viewpoint, every social unit, if it is to exist, must fulfill a given set of functions, those of adaptation, allocation, social and normative integration. On the individual level, the evolution from infancy to maturity can be analyzed in terms of the differentiation of the personality.² On the societal level, the evolution of a primitive society, from a traditional into a modern one, is also seen as a differentiation process. All societal functions are fulfilled by the primitive tribe; they merely become structurally differentiated; that is, they gain personnel, social units, and organizational structures of their own. Religious institutions gain churches, educational institutions gain schools, economic institutions gain corporations, and so forth.

¹ This model is applied to the study of small groups by Robert F. Bales and Philip E. Slater, "Role Differentiation in Small Decision-making Groups," in Talcott Parsons, Robert F. Bales, and Edward A. Shils, *Working Papers in the Theory of Action* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1953); to socialization process by Parsons, Bales, et al., *Family, Socialization and Interaction Process* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1955), chap. 4; to industrialization by Neil Smelser, *Social Change in the Industrial Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959); to the study of the family by Morris Zelditch, Jr., "Role Differentiation in the Nuclear Family: A Comparative Study," in *Family, Socialization . . .*, pp. 307-351, and by Smelser, *Social Change*, chaps. 8 to 10; to the study of elites by the author in Chapter 1; and to the study of underdeveloped countries by Neil Smelser, "Toward a Theory of Modernization," in Amitai and Eva Etzioni (eds.), *Social Change: Sources, Patterns and Consequences* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1964).

² Parsons, Bales, et al., *Family, Socialization . . .*, chap. 4.

Philosophers and biologists have long pointed out that there is an alternative model for the study of change. While Bonnet, Haller, and Malpighi represented the differentiation (or preformism) approach, according to which the first unit or seed possesses in miniature all the patterns of the mature plant, Harvey, Wolff, and Goethe advanced the epigenesis (or accumulation) approach, according to which "adult" units emerge through a process in which parts that carry out *new* functions are added to existing ones, until the entire unit is assembled. Earlier parts do not include the "representation" of later ones.

The two processes, differentiation and epigenesis, are mutually exclusive in the sense that new units are either institutional "embodiments" of old functions or serve new ones. They may occur at different times in the same social unit: for example, a unit may first follow a differentiation model, then shift to an epigenetic model (or the other way around); or it may simultaneously develop some subunits following one model and some following the other. But unlike the particle and wave theories, which are used to explain the same light phenomena, the change pattern of all sociological units of which we are aware follows at any given period either a differentiation or an epigenesis model.

Until now sociology has focused almost exclusively on differentiation models. There are, however, several social units whose development cannot be adequately accounted for by such a model.

Apart from this general consideration, the two studies that follow—one dealing with the internal structure of the kibbutz and the other with relations among states—share three major theoretical themes: the dynamic relations between action and power; the respective roles of parent-systems and dependent ones; and the relevance of the concept of future-systems for functional analysis of social change.

The principle of inertia, in terms of Parsons' theory of action, states: "A given process of action will continue unchanged in rate and direction unless impeded or deflected by opposing motivational forces."³ The student of social change might apply this

³ Parsons, Bales, and Shils, *Working Papers in the Theory of Action*, p. 102.

proposition in a structural context. Thus translated, it maintains that a given process will continue unchanged in rate and direction unless affected by the exercise of power by one or more units. The change might be brought about by either opposing or supporting units (the former impeding or deflecting the process which Parsons speaks of, the latter contributing to its acceleration). The changes are also likely to vary according to whether they are largely motivational in nature or are rather the result of a new conversion of assets (funds, for example) into power. (By assets we mean possessions that a unit or system has, regardless of those that other units may have. They might be economic, military, cultural, and so forth. By power we mean the actor's ability to induce another actor to carry out his directive or any other norms he supports.)⁴

Often, we suggest, a change in the course of action of a social unit will be primarily determined by the amount of assets or power the actors command and will involve motivational elements only marginally. Both the owners of the corner grocery and those of General Motors might decide (that is, be motivated) to raise their prices because of their irritation with a report of a falling income, but the consequences of these actions for Detroit's economy would be very different. A study of social change, therefore, invariably requires delineation of the action-units, the elite-units that initiated and guided the change, and the power employed by these units.

The exercise of power is invariably involved in overcoming resistance in the initiation of change, and the units that exercise this power are defined as elites. This definition would be correct but uninteresting if all units employed the same amount of power. As this is the case only in "limit" situations, however, the term "elite" reminds us to look for the *differentiation of power* among the units participating in any process of change. The use of the concept in this way does not introduce an "elitist" conception, for such a conception would tend to assume that there is one elite, and a relatively closed one. Since competition or conflict among a number of elites is common, and elites might remain both open

⁴ For a discussion of these concepts and the rules of conversion of assets into power, see Amitai Etzioni, *Political Unification* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965), pp. 38ff.