

STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM

[British]

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1. Origins:

- introduction of indirect colonial rule
- encounter with African tribes

2. Key Questions:

- how are societies organized? (parts-whole)
- how do societies function?
- synchronic analysis

3. Theory:

- focus on societies
- look at social structures
- see societies as organic wholes:
 - clearly bounded [social group, geographic territory, culture]
 - harmonious
 - healthy societies are stable---
change is pathological
 - parts serve different
functions
 - individuals subordinate to
society
- social determinism: culture
and religion seen as
epiphenomenal

4. Methodology:

- **ethnography:**
 - based on field work
 - start with outside analysis
 - move to *emic* insider views
- **ethnology:**
 - based on comparison of many different societies
 - develop an *etic* comparative analytical grid
 - formulate general social laws

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5. Major Proponents:

- Emile Durkheim
- A. R. Radcliffe-Brown
- Bronislaw Malinowski
- E. E. Evans-Pritchard
- Max Gluckman
- Meyer Fortes
- Fred Bailey

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6. Contribution to Missions:

- importance of studying social systems: tribes, peasant villages, cities, people groups, ethnicity, class, gender
- role of corporate identity: homogeneous unit principle
- understanding social processes:
 - minimum social dislocation-change destabilizes societies
 - group conversions
- importance of ethnographic research:
 - their and our *emic* views
 - developing *etic* analytical grids for comparative studies

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7. Dangers:

- **social reductionism**
 - does not see the need for the church to be one ... [HUP]
- **an engineering approach to missions:**
 - depend on humans, not God
 - look for formulas and strategies
 - focus on programs, not people
- **change is bad**
 - uncritical contextualization
 - minimizes the call to transform social structures
- **cultural relativism**
 - does not take cultures seriously
 - does not take religion seriously
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WEAKNESSES:

1. Treats all societies as the same:

- **works best in strong group-oriented societies such as tribes and castes**
- **works only partially in peasant societies**
- **does not fit mature urban societies [except immigrant communities and tribal and peasant pockets in the city]**
- **overlooks the importance of individuals**

2. Treats change as bad:

- **minimizes the need for Christians to form a new community**
- **minimizes the need for Christians to be socially and personally transformed**

3. Cultural relativism:

- **does not take cultures and religions seriously—so does not focus on transforming beliefs and practices**
- **sees cultures as relative to one another**

4. Makes missiology a science:

- **lacks theological critique of what constitutes the church, what constitutes church growth, and what methods are biblically legitimate**
 - **reduces missions to social engineering and strategies – to what humans do**
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**CULTURAL
EVOLUTIONISM**

**SOCIAL STRUCTURAL
FUNCTIONALISM**

CHANGE

PROGRESS

- * bring science to the people

PATHOLOGICAL

- * don't change the people

MISSIONS

COLONIAL ERA

- * Christianity = western civilizatz.
- * displace the old religion totally
- * bring medicine, education, and science
- * sender orient. com.

ANTI-COLONIAL ERA

- * Western Christianity is oppressive, people must develop their own Christianity
- * maximum contextualization.
- * receptor oriented com.

	CULTURAL EVOLUTIONISM	SOCIAL STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM
MODEL	DIACHRONIC * global human history	SYNCHRONIC * social structure * social dynamics
CULTURE / SOCIETY	CIVILIZATION * stages in devel. * tied to stages of mental develop. * primarily technological	CULTURES * bounded, autonomous groups * organic, supracultural wholes * integrated, stasis * functionally balanced