Strengths And Weakness Of Structural Functionalism

During this essay I will be discussing both the strengths and the weaknesses of structural functionalism, I will also be using academic reference in order to support some of the points that will be made throughout the essay.

The outlook functionalist has on sociology is that every aspect of society contributes to the stability and the functioning of society. For example, within the society we have laws in order to keep society a safe place to be in, the government also contributes a lot such as providing free education for children than other forms of education which offer financial support and a reasonable payback for individuals of all ages. The support of education provided by the government is what helps children to get jobs in the future and to eventually support the family, pay taxes and to become law-abiding citizens.

Functionalism focuses more on the purpose of consciousness as well as the behavior, it also focuses on the difference between individuals. Both structuralism and functionalism are approaches to psychology. Structuralism and functionalism are also psychological theories that understand human behavior in a variety of ways. Structuralism is one theory that was started first then functionalism theory was a reaction from that. Structuralism and functionalism are theories that were some of the first formal psychological theories. For example, structuralism is what influenced the process of exploratory psychology, the structuralism theory is was started in shaping psychology. The functionalism theory was a reaction in response to structuralism. Functionalism is also influenced in the process of behaviorism. One of the differences between structuralism and functionalism is within both their unique study. For example, structuralism study focuses on the human brain as well as the units that were identified through observation. Functionalism studies was more about the impartial forms of study and this theory also goes against that it is necessary to focus on every aspect of the human mind and behavior. Both structuralism and functionalism approaches are very useful because both of these theories had a part in the influence and development of psychology.

According to functionalism all areas of society has a purpose. For example, the government makes a huge difference in society such as, setting laws, ensuring they meet social needs, and amongst other things. When it comes to the government and politics functionalists see them as a solution to implement norms and to control any conflict that may occur. Functionalists focus on solidarity and structure in society. Structural functionalism believes that gender role was a way to see the separation of labor that maintains the structure within families and the stability of society. For example, both men and women are brought up differently, men are brought up to be providers, to support the families and to work, whereas women were brought up to be expressive, emotional, to be there for others and for their family. The functionalist outlook of gender equality was that women are allowed to have jobs and men are allowed to stay at home and take care of the children and both men and women can contribute to daily duties equally.

Structural functionalists express the social order and the relationship between certain areas within society by exploring the functionality of every aspect to dictate how it contributes to the structure and solidarity of society. There are some theorists that believe gender differentiation is not good for society especially for women, this is because it will put a stop from women

achieving their potential as women in society. From a functionalist outlook, gender differentiation is an advantage to society.

The Structural functionalism theory view society as a structure that has correlated areas that is produced to meet the biological and social needs of the people in society. Herbert Spencer from the 1820s to 1903 saw certain resemblances within society as well as within the human body, Herbert Spencer argued that the organs within the human body is a structure that needs each other in order to keep the body functioning and this similar to society because society is also viewed as a structure that has certain areas that work together to keep society functioning. When Spencer 1989, said that society has certain areas that work together he was referring to the social institutions as well as social behaviors that meet social needs. For example, the law, healthcare, education, the economy and beliefs.

When it comes to functionalism it is one of the real speculative perspectives in sociology. It has its inceptions in advance of Emile Durkheim, who was especially excited about how social demand is possible or how society remains decently relentless. In like manner, it is a theory that spotlights on the social structure, rather than the scaled-down level of regular daily existence. Outstanding scholars fuse Herbert Spencer, Talcott Parsons, and Robert K. Merton. Functionalists assume that society is held firmly together by social agreement, in which people from the overall population agree upon, and coordinate to achieve, what is best for society all things considered. This stands isolated from the other two fundamental sociological viewpoints, symbolic interactionalism, which revolves around how people act as per their interpretations of the significance of their world, and conflict theory, which bases on the antagonistic, conflicted, reliably changing nature of society. Functionalism has gotten input for neglecting the negative components of an event, for example, separation. critics additionally guarantee that the viewpoint legitimizes the purposes of perspectives that legitimize the standard and pomposity regarding society's people. Functionalism does not encourage people to have a dynamic impact in changing their social condition, despite when such change may benefit them. Or maybe, functionalism sees dynamic social change as unfortunate in light of the way that the various parts of society will remunerate routinely for any issues that may create.

Both Parsons and Durkheim who are functionalist sociologists were both worried about the search for functions that institutions could possibly have within society. One other functionalist sociologist R. Merton has adopted a concept of dysfunction such as the effects of an institution which diminishes from the discussion of society. One main function that contributes in maintaining society is by reproducing. Another function that contributes to society is religion, this is because religion functionalist sociologists believe that it encourages social solidarity, beliefs, and values.

Durkheim is a sociologist that believes education is what imparts society’s values, norms and brings about social solidarity. In 1961 Parsons stated that education leads to universalistic values. Durkheim believes that educating groomsmen and women from childhood all the way up to adulthood and figuring out their role in society. Durkheim reminds us that society also creates crime and deviance. Both crime and deviance within society are socially established. Durkheim on the other hand shows us how socially established both crimes and deviance are joined into a much larger social construction.

Emile Durkheim argued that there is a division within society with both religious and non-religious people. Durkheim believed social life was not possible to accomplish the shared values

and norms that were attained from the collective conscience. The religious individual has set rules and values that live by, from this it resolves in a better society. Parsons believed that religion is another function that helps groom an individual to morals, principles and as a result of this it maintains social order within society. Durkheim believed that us as individuals are what makes society, but it was important for sociologists to beyond people to social facts. There are many social facts that serve more than one function in society. For example, the set laws within society are there to protect us from each other and ourselves.

Structural functionalism views society as a complex system in which promotes solidarity and stability. Both Herbery Spencer and Robert Merton are major contributors to this perspective. Some of the main factors in functionalism include social function and social structure etc. Our lives are guided by social structures, in which are stable patterns of social behavior. Social structure is what shapes our life. For example, within our families, community or within religion etc. Every social structure has social functions, for example, there are a few functions within society such as, socialization, social placement and learning, etc.

Functionalism is what interprets each part of society in terms of how it contributes to the stability of society as a whole. Durkheim viewed society as an organism, and every organism within itself, each component has a purpose and a part to play and each function needs each other in order to function, if one of the parts within the organism fails then all the remaining parts within the organism has to come together and adapt in order to fill the void.

Functionalism highlights the solidarity and the structure that exists within society, it also focuses on both social stability and shared public values. In relation to this one of the main issues is the disorganization within the system for example, deviant behavior, this sort of change can have a major effect because societal components have to adapt in order to achieve stability. One important issue to understand is that when the system stops functioning in any way it will then begin to affect all the other connections in which will create a social problem, which will then lead to social change.

Parsons had a few things to say in addition to Durkheim’s work, the workings of the organs within the human body and how they function together in order to keep one alive, to institutions in society for example, both education and families shows how society is maintained traditionally and legally. Parsons said that the system also needs the two have such as nutrition and socialization. His analogy helps sociologists to maintain society in a healthy way, by which is viewed as one of the strengths of the functionalist’s approach.

In reference to parsons, he was able to identify four different needs of society. Parsons stated that society needs adaptation in order to meet the material needs of society. Parsons also stated that society needs goal attainment and in order for that to happen this will need to be achieved through politics who work towards in improving society. Integration is one of the main needs of society because it shows how the different institutions work together in order to permanently avoid conflict. Another need of society is latency and this is because it shows how people react and deal with problems by turning to institutions such as personal beliefs. These personal needs of society is seen as an advantage of the functionalist approach to society as it shows what society needs in order to function well.

From another viewpoint, Merton who is also a functionalist sociologist disagrees with the needs Parsons identified. Merton states that Parsons disregards dysfunctional institutions within

society such as education or religion and amongst other things that can cause division within society. Parsons reveals the functions within society as superficial as he does not show the differentiation between the latent and manifest functions. Merton disagrees that children are capable to be a part of a family the either just has a mum or just dad, disagreeing with Parsons concept that it is important a traditional family with both mum and dad is needed. Parsons's argument shows that certain areas of functionalism is viewed as a weakness to society.

There are a few disadvantages of functionalism such as it expresses the effects before its causes by stating that children need to be interactive in order for a family to exist. Marxists said that functionalists does-not acknowledge or talk about conflict and the changes that occur within society. Both feminists and Marxists say that ill-treatment and inequality can be seen in many ways and that functionalism does not acknowledge that in a result of this it can be seen as weakness. Another disadvantage of structural functionalism theory is that it does not show an understanding of social change. There are a few sociologists that believe that functionalism is not necessarily useful as a theory, but however, it still does serve a useful purpose within society.

Overall, to conclude, the Structural functionalist approach on the similarness of certain areas shows the change in one part of society, even if it is either intended or unintended in which affects other areas of society. Structural functionalists have shown us to view society as a whole. I have also explained that the approach of functionalist has both its advantages and disadvantages about the functions within society.