

Structural - Functionalism

Society

A society, then, is an organized aggregate of people, subdivided in certain ways so as to allocate rights and duties among the individuals and groups comprising it (Murphy 1989: 52).

Status

A status, as distinct from the individual who may occupy it, is simply a collection of rights and duties (Linton 1988:186).

Role

A *role* represents the dynamic aspect of status. The individual is socially assigned to a status and occupies it with relation to other statuses. When he puts the rights and duties which constitute the status into effect, he is performing a role (Linton 1988:186).

Function

To turn from organic life to social life, if we examine such a community as an African or Australian tribe we can recognize the existence of a social structure. Individual human beings, the essential units in this instance, are connected by a definite set of social relations into an integrated whole. The continuity of the social structure, like that of an organic structure, is not destroyed by changes in the units. Individuals may leave the society, but death or otherwise; others may enter it. The continuity of structure is maintained by the process of social life, which consists of the activities and interactions of individual human beings and of the organized groups into which they are united. The social life of the community is here defined as the functioning of the social structure. The *function* of any recurrent activity, such as the punishment of a crime, a funeral ceremony, is the part it plays in the social life as a whole and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of the structural continuity (Radcliffe-Brown 1988:298-299).

Bibliography

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