

## Social Construction – A Study in Concept

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### Abstract:

The concept of social construction is considered a key concept in the field of sociology, rarely absent from any sociological work. It represents a meeting point between researchers in sociology and those in anthropology, who have produced successive studies on the subject. These studies have served as a tributary to all other social sciences with respect to this concept, thereby increasing its value, particularly at the level of sociological theory, as is made clear by the analytical view of this concept. This research paper seeks to carry out a sociological investigation into the concept of social construction by presenting the most important perspectives and approaches to its definition. It reviews numerous definitions put forward by French, British, German, and American scholars and pioneers, considering them as key stages in the development of the concept, with distinctions from one stage to another. All of this is aimed at identifying the epistemological connotations of a concept that is subject to a range of factors relating to different countries around the world.

A set of differences has been identified between definitions of social construction according to the adopted classification, which generally show that social construction is a central concept in socio-anthropological studies.

**Keywords:** society; construction; group; system; organisation.

### Introduction:

Many sociologists have addressed the concept of social construction and made it a central focus of their analyses. Although the British anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown was the first to use the term 'social construction', the concept was employed using other terms in the writings of Montesquieu, Condorcet, and Marx in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Montesquieu refers to the essence of the idea in his use of the theory of the total social system, particularly in his book *\*The Spirit of the Laws\**. He argues that there is regularity, consistency, cohesion, and harmony among the various manifestations of social life, to such an extent that it is difficult to understand the laws of any society except in light of its relationship with political, economic, and religious systems, customs and traditions, population size, people's temperaments, and the characteristics of the natural and geographical environment (Hamed, 2008).

The term acquires particular importance because of its connection to sociological theory specifically, which necessitates examining it, understanding its implications, and tracing it within an analytical context that includes many perspectives and interpretations subject to a

range of conditions and intellectual, social, and scientific influences. This has made the central concern of this article the determination of the concept of social construction in an analytical and in-depth manner, taking into account all the points of agreement and disagreement between its various definitions.

## 1. Definition of Social Construction

### 1.1. Linguistically:

**Al-Bina' (construction):** the built structure; plural "abniyah"; plural of the plural "abniyat" (Manzour, 2013).

The word 'structure' in foreign languages (e.g., French and English) refers to 'construction'. The origin of this word lies in the Latin word \*Struere\* and the French verb \*Construire\*, meaning 'built', 'arranged', and 'systematised' a certain set of elements. As for the linguistic meaning of the word 'construction', it refers to the manner in which the parts of a whole are organised in relation to each other. According to this meaning, we speak of the construction of a building, the construction of an organisation, the construction of a social group, and even the construction of behaviour. In a word, it is that which gives the whole its unity and the parts their value, forming an indivisible whole. In other words, construction is the form resulting from the organisation of its constituent elements, elements that mean nothing in themselves and have no significance except through their contribution to the whole (Al-Aqabi, 2008/2009).

### 1.2. Terminologically:

As for the terminological definition, some have defined social construction as: "the patterns of interaction between individuals or groups. Social life does not proceed in a holistic manner; rather, most of our activities are structurally determined, meaning they are organised in a precise and repetitive manner. Although the comparison may be misleading, it is easier to think of the social construction of society as if it were the solid beams upon which the building rests and that connect its parts to each other" (O'Donnell et al., 2002).

As for the \*Dictionary of the Social Sciences\*, it presents three definitions of social construction as follows:

a) The first definition: "It defines social construction as the stable model of the internal organisation of a group. That is, it includes a set of relationships existing between the members of a group with each other on the one hand, and the relationships existing between the members of a group and another group on the other hand" (Al-Shammas, 2004).

b) The second definition: "It is linked to the characteristics of groups and cultural models. It consists of parts that are mutually interdependent upon each other" (Al-Shammas, 2004).

c) The third definition: "It distinguishes between two types of social construction, dividing it into:

- Social groups: which are in turn divided into small sub-groups, and from these into even smaller units. These sub-groups (units) are divided into individuals or members, each distinguished from the others by social functions they work to achieve, and by a specific social position they occupy among other individuals.

- The cultural model: meaning that each cultural model is divided into its constituent elements, such as culture associated with folk customs, or cultural models associated with values, norms, and different modes of interaction" (Al-Shammas, 2004).

Sociological analyses of the concept of social construction have been numerous among the pioneers. Therefore, in this research paper, we will attempt to present these analyses by arranging them according to the approach taken by Ma'n Khalil Omar (1999) in his book "Social Construction: Its Systems and Orders":

- Social construction among the British.
- Social construction among the French.
- Social construction among the Germans.
- Social construction among the Americans.

This is because the variation in "determining the concept of social construction was subject to the country of the world and its intellectual, philosophical, and scientific influences, as well as the developmental stage of human society, social theory, and sociology. Consequently, its definition came to bear those influences, differing from one country to another. Thus, the British definition emerged different from the French, German, and American ones, and the German definition appeared different from the American and French ones" (Omar, 1999).

What will appear and become evident through reviewing the sociological analysis of the concept of social construction in each of these countries.

## **2. Social Construction among the British**

### **2.1. Herbert Spencer (1820-1903):**

Spencer contributed studies that laid the foundations for functionalist structuralism. He was the first to systematically use the concepts of structure and function, arguing that it is impossible to understand structure without understanding the function associated with it. He attempted to analyse how the various institutional structures in society (familial, political, economic, educational, professional, etc.) perform their functions to maintain society (Ja'nini, 2009). In general, Spencer was a pioneer of the biological (evolutionary) approach. He began by likening social construction to the organic system of the human body. Social construction begins with the family as a basic cell, and society grows through two fundamental processes: the division and union of family units, which lead to the growth and reproduction of the units constituting the social construction. This, in turn, leads to the increasing complexity of its composition, growing diversity, and the heterogeneity of its parts and functions, which begin with similarity and homogeneity and end with diversity and heterogeneity in the units of society. As this increasing growth continues, a huge number of diverse and heterogeneous social units is generated. Spencer then likened the division of labour in social construction to that in the animal kingdom, arguing that miners do not manufacture machines but extract ores from underground, and other workers manufacture them... the system of division of labour in the organic system (Omar, 1999).

This analysis by Herbert Spencer is fundamentally linked to functionalist structural theory and focuses on the transition from homogeneity to heterogeneity in societies, thereby revealing the structural image of society. As for the functional aspect, he demonstrated it through his

explanation of the division of labour, which is not unique to Spencer but also found in Émile Durkheim. However, his analogy to the animal system serves as a reminder of the biological analogy that distinguished Spencer.

## **2.2. Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955):**

He is credited with defining the concept of social construction in light of extensive theoretical analyses. Brown considered that the word 'structure' refers to the existence of a kind of coordination and arrangement among the parts that constitute the 'whole' we call structure. Accordingly, Brown considered that the 'partial units' entering into the formation of social construction are the persons, i.e., the members of society, each of whom occupies a certain position and plays a specific role in social life (Al-Aqabi, 2008/2009).

Radcliffe-Brown states that social construction is used with different meanings: "Although the choice and definition of terms ultimately depends on scientific agreement, one of the important characteristics of any science, after it has passed the initial stage of formation, is the existence of technical terms that everyone uses to denote a specific meaning. Unfortunately, I must say that by this criterion, social anthropology appears to be a science that has not yet taken a definitive shape. Hence, each researcher must choose from the definitions the terms he deems most suitable for scientific analysis" (Qabari, n.d.).

Radcliffe-Brown was influenced by the intellectual environment that dominated most social studies in the twentieth century, which considered sociology and anthropology as natural sciences to which the scientific method could be applied, given the prevailing holistic and integrated view of the subject of study. The researcher looks at the whole and studies the parts in relation to that whole (Hamed - Kh., 1429H-2008M).

Radcliffe-Brown used the term 'social construction' when studying the pattern of primitive social life in order to establish a fundamental basis that reveals the roots of early social life. In 1922, Brown studied tribes living in the Andaman Islands, where he used the term 'social construction' to denote inherited traditional controls, kinship relationship controls, and the force of religious customs that are directly observable. However, he later realised, specifically between 1935 and 1940, that the term 'construction' needed broader, more comprehensive, and deeper insight and analysis, like the terms 'function', 'institution', 'organisation', and 'role', which he used in his field analyses (Omar, 1999).

On this basis, Radcliffe-Brown says: "Direct observation shows us that these human beings are connected to each other by a complex network of social relationships. I use the term 'social construction' to express these actual relationships – and this social construction is what I consider the subject of my study" (Qabari, n.d.).

Radcliffe-Brown states: "First, I consider all social relationships that exist between one person and another as part of the social construction. For example, the kinship structure of any society consists of a number of such dyadic relationships, like the relationship between father and son or between maternal uncle and nephew. The entire social construction among Australian tribes is based on a network of such dyadic relationships arising from ties of descent and affinity" (Qabari, n.d.). "Second, I include under social construction the existing differentiation among individuals and classes according to their social roles. The difference in social position between man and woman, between chief and commoner, or between employer and workers and

employees, is no less important in determining social relationships than the clan or state to which a person belongs" (Qabari, n.d.).

Permanent and stable relationships might suggest that society remains in a static, unchanging state, which does not agree with the reality of society. Therefore, the study of social construction, in his view, necessitates distinguishing between what he called the 'structural form' and what he called the 'actual structure'. The actual structure is embodied in social life, behaviour, or the actual relationships existing among members of society as they occur in daily activity. That is, it represents a set of partial relationships and is thus a changing partial structure in which social life is renewed, just as the organic structure is renewed in the life of a living organism (Hamed - Kh., 1429H-2008M).

Social construction is a set of social systems, such as the religious system, the political system, the economic system, the kinship system... The social system, in turn, consists of a set of institutions related to it, such as the family system, which are intertwined and interact in an organised, regulated manner. The institution, in reality, expresses an organised rule or rules of behaviour imposed by the social group and agreed upon by persons as units of social construction.

American anthropologists studied the culture of the Red Indians, while British anthropologists studied the social structures of Australian tribes and African societies (Qabari, n.d.).

- The 'structural form' or the general picture of a relationship after abstracting it from various partial events but without neglecting the most important variables.
- Brown indicates that the continuity of social construction is not like the continuity of buildings; rather, it is a dynamic continuity resembling the continuity of the organic structure of a living organism, which is incessantly renewed as long as it is alive.

However, another point can be added here: that Brown distinguished between the 'person' and the 'individual'. The individual is a biological organic being, thus a subject for physiologists and psychologists. The person, on the other hand, is a set of social relationships. He is a citizen who speaks a language; he is a husband and a father who practises a certain profession; he is a member of a certain organisation. Within all these descriptions, Brown indicated through them a specific social relationship or a specific place in the social construction. Consequently, persons cannot be studied except within the limits of the social construction, nor can the social construction be studied except by reference to the persons who are units within that construction (Al-Aqabi, 2008/2009).

Through his definitions of social construction, Brown focuses on social relationships without exception, addressing them with extensive analysis. He also includes differentiations among individuals and classes, as well as the positions and roles that, in his view, have an impact on social relationships. Thus, the latter are the core of the study of social construction for Brown.

### **2.3. Evans-Pritchard:**

He defined the term 'social construction' through his study of the Nuer tribe in Sudan in the first half of the last century. In his study of the relationship between tribal groups that are separate from one another yet simultaneously connected, he defined the concept of social construction as the relationships that connect groups characterised by a high degree of stability and solidity (Omar, 1999). According to another source, it is: "a social system characterised by

a certain degree of stability and permanence... consisting of groups and clusters, such as clans, tribes, and nations, each of which organises the relationships of the individuals belonging to it" (Al-Shammas, 2004).

From the above, the reference here to relationships characterised by stability and permanence excludes transient, temporary, and incidental relationships that arise between people in specific situations and end with those situations. It also excludes small groups that last only for a short period.

The use of the concept of social construction as defined above by Pritchard implies a kind of cohesion and coherence among its parts, whether within the same group or between different groups. In addition, there must be a specific system upon which the gathering of these parts or social units is based. He clarified this by returning to the Nuer tribe he studied, taking into account its territorial distribution, which he argued was not random but was governed by the tribal political system. He defined its principle as 'fission and fusion', which refers to division, separation, and union. This is because it is difficult to understand any distinct social unit except in light of its relationship with other similar units on the one hand, and its relationship with the total structure on the other (Al-Aqabi, 2008/2009).

Pritchard's analyses are quite detailed regarding what constitutes a social construction or not, as well as his determination of the role of ecological factors in the union or division of the nuclear political unit. He pointed to the interdependence existing among the different social systems within a single society, considering that social construction is a system of distinct, differentiated structures linked by mutual relations, such as the kinship structure, the economic structure, the political structure, the family structure, etc. These partial structures include a number of social relationships that together form a cohesive, integrated unit (Al-Aqabi, 2008/2009).

Pritchard's analyses are valuable in terms of his precise study of the Nuer tribe and his reminder of the principle of interdependence in functionalist structural theory, which lends coherence among the different structures. Another point that did not appear in the analyses of his predecessors is the role of ecological factors concerning the political unit.

#### **2.4. Raymond Firth:**

Firth studied the Tikopia tribes and used the term 'social construction' to refer to social relationships and how they affect individuals (Omar, 1999).

In his view, social construction is based on: "professional specialisation as a fundamental principle in all societies. The second principle relates to class or rank differentiation. Privilege in rank may begin within the family itself, as occurs between the elder brother and the younger brother and the rights of one over the other. Rank by inheritance is also observed in most systems related to leadership. As for rank obtained by an individual through wealth, that is rare in traditional society" (<http://albahethoun.blogspot.com>, 2021).

He emphasised the relationships that exist between parts, provided they have a high degree of permanence and stability, which is similar to Evans-Pritchard's position in understanding the nature of social construction. Furthermore, Raymond Firth gathers all the features of social construction in those stable relationships revolving around sex, kinship, homeland, age, and the differences in ranks and classes arising from them according to the type of professional

specialisation. He viewed social values and ideal relationships as an essential part of social construction, because what allows individuals to assert their roles in social life is based on expected anticipations and ideal beliefs about what the individual should do in their relationships with others (<http://albahethoun.blogspot.com>, 2021). It can be added here that there is similarity with Brown's analyses in focusing on social relationships.

### **2.5. Nadel:**

He addressed social construction through his use of the concept of social role and the practice of its conditions and requirements by individuals. He defined social construction as: "a set of individuals interacting in roles, and these roles are the methods of action within the construction. The members of the construction are linked by social relationships determined by a set of systems within partial situations" (Omar, 1999).

This definition by Nadel refers us to the terminological definitions of the concept of social construction, which generally focus on social interaction. He focused on interaction between individuals in the context of their roles.

## **3. Social Construction among the French**

### **3.1. Émile Durkheim (1858-1917):**

Durkheim started from the angle of the division of labour in defining social construction, which he found to exist in all human societies. He revealed that the reason for its existence in industrial societies is the struggle for survival. He argued that individuals' struggle to specialise in a particular task, characterised by precision and skill, increases as work specialisations multiply and diversify with the growth and development of industrial society. This opens up branches within the division of labour system, forming a complex and intricate social construction. Here, the collective conscience does not have a significant impact on regulating and unifying the individual's behaviour and thought within the complex structure. If the individual deviates from the controls of the collective conscience (shared sentiments and common beliefs), they expose themselves to the penalties of restitutive law rather than repressive law (Omar, 1999).

"As for primitive and traditional societies, the division of labour system is simple and uncomplicated because the principle of struggle for survival is not strong due to the laziness and laxity of life in those societies and due to the dominance of mechanical social solidarity (which implies a unified collective conscience of beliefs, sentiments, and all the ideas of society)" (Omar, 1999). Durkheim used the concepts of taboos, contract, and thought to express the mechanisms of social control used to protect and maintain social construction.

Durkheim argued that societies are but social systems composed of social organisations and institutions, themselves composed of individuals and groups striving to achieve the goals of survival and continuity. The task of the sociologist is to study society and its various organisations, treating social facts as things. Society precedes the individual and controls their intellectual and moral paths. He considered the collective conscience to be the source of collective representations and ideas in the life and development of society; it is the basis of moral ideals, values, religion, and even knowledge and social development. It is what sets the moral standards and aesthetic measures in society, as well as all means of social control (Hamed - Kh., 1429H-2008M).

The above analysis by Durkheim, like that of Spencer, focuses on the division of labour. However, this analysis moves away from the biological approach and provides a sociological analysis of the division of labour in both simple and industrial societies.

### **3.2. Marcel Mauss:**

Mauss also studied social construction through his analyses of primitive social life, but from a different perspective, not because it represents the stages of early life, but because, in his view, it is uncontaminated by humanity and its selfishness, malice, and crimes. Among the topics he studied were: gift-giving and social organisation, magical rituals, sacrifices, and the religious and psychological aspects of Eskimo tribes. He broadened the scope to study what he called the 'total loan system', expressing the exchange of gifts and presents between families, clans, and tribes in Polynesia on various occasions, including: birth, circumcision, illness, funeral rituals, etc. (Omar, 1999).

Marcel Mauss's expression 'total loan system', which included the exchange of gifts and presents between families and clans in Polynesia on various occasions, is applicable not only to Polynesia but even in the present day in different societies according to the prevailing customs and traditions. Although his study was of primitive social life, which he described as uncontaminated by humanity, in contemporary life the influence of the gift remains apparent in social organisation, strengthening the bonds of social relationships.

### **3.3. Claude Lévi-Strauss**

In his work, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949), he utilized language, symbols, and reciprocal, isomorphic social relations as a foundation to express the concept of continuous agency in weaving social relations, enabling society to construct its structure. Elsewhere, he presented it as the mental level of a specific society that reflects the stage of development it is passing through.

Lévi-Strauss's definition implies a reflection of the properties of its constituent systems. That is, the social structure consists of several systems (social, political, economic, cultural, military, health, and educational) that possess shared and interconnected characteristics. These characteristics form the general properties of the structure, and each property is composed of multiple interconnected elements. Based on this, any change occurring in one of these elements leads to a change in the remaining elements associated with it (Omar, 1999).

Lévi-Strauss's definition of social structure focuses heavily on the structural aspect—namely, what is it composed of? It is composed of a group of systems with shared characteristics.

## **4. Social Structure According to the Germans**

### **4.1 Max Weber**

Weber's structural tendency manifested through his study of large-scale social organizations and their bureaucratic systems in modern industrial and capitalist societies, which are built on rational rather than emotional foundations (Omar, 1999).

Weber is considered the first to provide a systematic explanation for the emergence of modern organizations. He viewed them as inherently characterized by a system that is simultaneously hierarchical and ranked, with authority concentrated at its upper levels. He maintained a balanced and moderate stance toward bureaucracy, outlining both its advantages and

disadvantages. He considered it the foundation of rationality, progress, and modern capitalist prosperity, thereby defending the legitimate basis upon which it stands, as well as its modernity, professional competence, craftsmanship, and scientific nature (Hamdaoui, 2015).

Weber defined the tasks, roles, and powers of each individual within a hierarchical system. An individual within the organization reports to a single superior and is simultaneously followed by a group of subordinates who have specific tasks, roles, and powers defined in written regulations, procedures, and rules. This authority necessitates rigid relationships through:

[...] respecting formal organizational rules, observing the administrative hierarchy, adopting a top-down scalar chain from superior to subordinate (long or flat structure), or from the center to the periphery, and relying on expertise, competence, and merit without resorting to human and personal relations. (Hamdaoui, 2015)

Giddens pointed out that Weber believed bureaucratic organization existed in ancient civilizations, though its full development occurred in modern times. Weber provided examples of ancient civilizations (Egypt, China, India, and Rome) that he studied, deriving two historical models for the construction of bureaucratic organizations: (Omar, 1999).

- **The Individual Structure (Charismatic/Savior Bureaucracy):** The organizational structure is directed by a single individual who achieves only their personal goals. Examples include the Fascist structure during Mussolini's rule, the Nazi structure during Hitler's rule, and the Chinese structure during Mao Zedong's rule.
- **The Formal-Rational Structure:** This structure consists of administrative professional positions subject to written legal regulations. It is characterized by logic and rational intellect, aiming to achieve and develop the general goals of society.

In summary, Weber identified the components of organizational structure as follows (Omar, 1999):

- Specialized functional positions interconnected in a sequential hierarchy.
- Clearly defined responsibilities for each position, outlining duties and relationships to one another.
  - Selection of position holders subject to competitive examinations to determine the most suitable candidate.
- Strictly limited authority for each position that cannot be exceeded or bypassed.
- Formal communication among the occupants of the organizational structure's positions.
- Non-hereditary nature and non-ownership of organizational positions; instead, they are subject to selection/appointment by administrative or technical boards.
- Documentation of all decisions in official records.

#### 4.2 Ralf Dahrendorf

Dahrendorf focused on studying social conflict within the formal organizational structure of structuralists; hence, his works were categorized under the topic of social structure. He approached this subject from the perspective of the emergence of a group of hierarchical position-holders who exploit and blackmail their organizational positions, usurping authority to divert organizational policy away from achieving its intended goals and toward securing their personal objectives (Omar, 1999).

According to Dahrendorf's theory of society, the distribution of power is a decisive determinant of social structure. Power is necessary if large-scale organizations are to achieve their goals, particularly during specific times such as a defensive war. Furthermore, there is an inherent tendency for conflict in society because groups that possess power will struggle for their interests, as will groups that lack power. The interests of these two groups are necessarily divergent, and conflict represents the ultimate creative force of human history (Wallace & Wolf, 2011/2012).

Unlike the other scholars discussed in this article, Dahrendorf noted that the social role or position enjoys legitimacy by virtue of being recognized and defined by social norms, reinforced by sanctions inherently linked to those determinants. The structural requirements for people to form an effective "interest group" are "technical," "political," and "social" (Wallace & Wolf, 2011/2012).

## **5. Social Structure According to the Americans**

### **5.1 Talcott Parsons**

Following the publication of his book *The Structure of Social Action*, Parsons developed his concepts in a series of essays, establishing a research methodology for what he termed "structural functionalism." His goal was to identify specific structural parts of the social system, such as roles and institutions, that hold functional significance for the system. Parsons viewed structural functionalism as a first approximation toward a true general theory of social systems. This functional importance links the relationship between the system and its environment (adaptation) and the interrelations among the parts of the system itself (integration). He then began defining four dichotomies linked to what he called functional problems: adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latent pattern maintenance (Scott, 2009).

### **5.2 Amos Hawley**

Amos Hawley operated from a structural morphological perspective, through which he synthesized the dynamic and static dimensions of community structure by understanding its survival- and continuity-enhancing social organizations. His objective was to uncover the backbone of the community, which is the ecological system. This system encompasses the residents of a local area responding to the stimuli of their living habitat, manifested as integrated and solidary structural components. This is observable through the behavior of community members, which appears homogeneous and patterned by close-knit, solidary relationships. He also highlighted the unified symbols and signs individuals use to express their collective, evolving needs that interact with the influences of their local community (Omar, 1999).

### **5.3 Otis Dudley Duncan and Leo Schnore**

They identified four foundational pillars constituting the social structure: social organization, social environment, technology, and population. They viewed the structure as an integrated whole, treating systems as a mechanism that links and regulates the parts of the social system that reflects the structure of society, which they termed the ecological system.

Based on the aforementioned perspectives, studying social structure requires examining the following structural units:

- **Social Institutions:** These are the established forms of methods of action and behavior in social life, or everything that is socially prescribed, such as the familial system, political system, religious system, and economic system.
- **Social Groups:** Groups carrying significance within society, whether continuous (like the family group) or periodic/temporary (like professional groups). Even if the specific individuals making up these groups change, the roles and functions (statuses) they perform and occupy remain continuous and stable.
- **Social Relations:** The study of relationships characterized by importance and continuity in society. This includes the relationship between parents and children as the core of family relations, and the relationship between a worker and their colleague or a supervisor and their subordinates as the core of professional relations. (Al-Uqbi, 2008/2009)

### Conclusion

The sociological analysis of the concept of social structure has illuminated various analytical dimensions. These dimensions are linked to the specific conditions of societies on one hand, and to the development of sociological theory on the other.

Beginning with the British analyses, which were considered a foundational starting point, the focus relied heavily on the study of primitive tribes. Radcliffe-Brown's analysis centered on social groups capable of surviving for long periods, such as nations, tribes, and clans, distinguishing between two types of structure: actual structure and ideal structure (or the structural form). Meanwhile, Evans-Pritchard studied the Nuer tribe in Sudan. Like Radcliffe-Brown, he focused on social groups that possess a high capacity for survival and continuity. However, he diverged from Radcliffe-Brown by excluding dyadic (two-person) relationships from the formation of social structure, arguing that such relationships depend entirely on the presence of both individuals and dissolve upon the absence or death of either one.

In contrast, French analyses were described as more precise than their British counterparts. However, they were critiqued for focusing on primitive tribes under the pretext that they remained untainted by urbanization—as expressed by Marcel Mauss—and for failing to study their own native societies, opting instead to study tribes they had only heard about.

Regarding the definitions offered by German scholars, the focus shifted toward large-scale and bureaucratic organizations. These macro-organizations often far exceed tribes and clans in size. Weber pointed to the hierarchical ordering of specific positions that entail specialized functions governed by formal, written laws. Dahrendorf's framework accompanied this by introducing a focus on social conflict within the formal organizational structure—a critical dimension that had been overlooked by structuralists.

Finally, American conceptualizations were tied to a cohort of pioneers, including Talcott Parsons, Amos Hawley, Otis Dudley Duncan, Leo Schnore, and Anthony Giddens.

Ultimately, these analyses represent only a fraction of a broader discourse. They constitute a concise analytical and definitional series on social structure — a pivotal concept in socio-anthropological studies that underscores its rich cognitive and theoretical significance. This overview is by no means exhaustive; many seminal pioneers, such as Robert K. Merton, have

not been mentioned. Furthermore, the discussed frameworks contain far deeper analytical dimensions, making any attempt at brief summarization inherently challenging.

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