INTEGRATION AND CONSENSUS: A TENTATIVE EXPLORATION

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August 9, 1963

The dimensions of the topic at hand are of a scope known on occasion to induce giddiness of mind and delusions of omniscience among those who treat with such words as consensus and "integration." Let us be warned; recognition of danger is the first stage of wisdom. It is necessary to severely limit our purview and to temper our aspirations. Established knowledge in this complex and elusive area of concern is scanty. Firm data are perhaps less conspicuous than firm opinions. Ideological convictions often are easier to come by than precise and valid evidence. The immediate moral is to expect something less than definitive knowledge, but to take the topic very seriously indeed, in the reasonable hope that some clarification may be achieved.

Robin M. Williams, Jr.
Oberlin Symposium, 1963
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One of the chief questions in sociology is the Hobbesian one, "How can there be social order?" or "What creates and continues that amount of social integration which does exist?" Almost all writers in sociology have dealt with the question at some point; the bulk of the writing of Talcott Parsons is an attempt to answer it. Many writers have made the assumption, often the ideological faith commitment, that consensus leads to integration and dissensus leads to disintegration. The major point of this paper is that consensus is only one of several mechanisms that can lead to integration.

The focal phenomenon of this paper is social integration. The second focal point is consensus. In one paper of this length it is impossible to develop a complete schema of integration; that longer road shall have to wait for another day. I shall concentrate on the effect, negative and positive, of various kinds of consensus on integration and only briefly suggest mechanisms other than consensus. Even with this narrowed purview, I cannot summarize, comment on, evaluate, nor even mention all of the writers who have broached the subject. My goal is to form an analytic schema of a limited nature and present tentative, albeit nondeductive, hypotheses.

What is needed now in the inquiry into integration is a series of "theories of the middle range" closely connected with empirical research. Unfortunately, like Parsons, I am an "incurable theorist." However, unlike Parsons, I am not married and have thus had to supply my own "balance-wheel" of "practical empiricism" ¹ I may not have always succeeded.

¹Talcott Parsons, The Social System, (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1951), p. v.;
"Integration" is one of the most frequently used words in sociological writing, but it is often not at all clear whether or not there is a reasonable explicit concept behind the word. Integration is a plastic, "slippery" word that can be conjured up when one is slushing through muddy swamps. However, it is also one of the most important words in social theory, pointing as it does to the heart of what makes a "social system" a reasonable abstraction of a society. The difficulty of the term arises because it is both important and abstract. Lack of agreement on such central terms as integration is an indication of the young and struggling nature of basic sociological theory, not of the need to give up on the terms.

The first step toward agreement on a clear concept is to catalog the various ways in which "integration" is used. The Social Science Research Council organized two conferences on social integration. Out of these two conferences came a list of ten different meanings for "integration". 1 Ten distinct meanings is an indication of the confusion.

Landecker cleared the air to some extent by trying to logically derive four different types of integration. 2 He chose not to define "integration" per se. Rather he started with what he considered the smallest units of group life: (1) culture and (2) behavior of individuals. There is integration of each unit and integration between them. Cultural integration is the consistency among the standards of a culture. The conformity of the behavior to the cultural standards is normative integration. Upon examination he discovered that integration of behavior actually was composed of two distinct types of integration: communication

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integration or the exchange of meeting throughout the group and functional integration or independence among group members through, as Durkheim pointed out, the division of labor.

Communicative integration is important to the functioning of the group in two ways. First, barriers to communication may lead to the isolation of the individual and his alienation from the group. Second, barriers may divide the group into various sub-division. The communication within each sub-group may be very good and the individual far from isolated. However, between sub-groups misunderstandings and distortions restrict communication and, on their part, are augmented by the very barriers to communication which they themselves foster. Thus prejudice bears a close relation to communicative integration. Thus, Landecker maintains that barriers to communication and the resultant alienation of individuals and sub-groups contributes to low morale. However, inherent in this proposal is the assumption that if there were "complete" communication, the members of the group would discover that they enjoy being in a group together. Underlying this assumption is the further assumption that, since it is a group, there will be consensus or agreement if only there is good communication. As we shall see later, this is a highly debatable assumption. Landecker's discussion of communicative integration is just one example of how easy it is to combine consensus and integration into one conceptual block.

Landecker adds a very important refinement to Durkheim's division of labor. Interdependence is not based merely upon the existence of labor specialization. Two men in a society may both fulfill specialized functions yet not be independent because they do not need each other's products or services. It would be hard to indicate any close interdependence between a worker on the fish market who likes

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1 Ibid., p. 337.
rock-and-roll music and the non-fish-eating symphony orchestra member. In other words, functional integration or interdependence has two facets: (1) the specialization of functions and (2) the interchange of functions based upon mutual fulfillment of needs or desires.  

Basic to all four types of integration developed by Landecker is the existence of units and the weaving of these units into some sort of consistent or observable network. Each cultural standard is a unit which is consistently related to other cultural standards. In normative integration, each unit of cultural standards is consistently, or at least not conflictfully, related to the various acts making up behavior. In both communicative and functional integration, individuals are related to other individuals in a systematic way, i.e., they comprise a system.

This linguistic analysis is the starting point for Williams in his definition of integration:

An integrated thing is a whole whose parts are necessary for completeness.... In mathematics, integration is the universe of differentiation. In neurology, says Funk and Wagnalls College Standard Dictionary, integration refers to the "combinations of different nervous processes or reflexes so that they co-operate in a larger activity and thus unite the bodily functions." In human societies, integration is the articulation of discernibly different components into meaningful wholes—"vertical integration" in industry, "racial integration" in the public schools, "integration of new weapon systems" in the military forces of the NATO forces," and so on.

As Williams well demonstrates, such a usage of integration in sociology closely approximates that in normal English usage. Since so much of sociology is based upon the biological model, the neurological definition is of particular interest. A paraphrase of it shall be useful later in

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1 Ibid., p. 338

our discussion of the measurement of integration: integration refers to the combination of different units so that they co-operate in a larger activity and thus fulfill the functions of the whole.

Basic to this conception of integration is the fact that an observer can distinguish the figure of a system made up of integrated units standing out against the field of the environment. In other words, there must be more order within the system than between the system and the rest of the field. This order must continue over time also, since we consider a system a continuing organization of action. In other words, an integrated system (and, as indicated above, no system would exist without some integration) maintains, relative to the field, equilibrium, that controversy-laden "fighting word."

By equilibrium I emphatically do not mean a steady, i.e., motionless, state. There is never a steady, non-dynamic state in a social system. There are continuing processes and built-in sources of conflict within and constant flux in the external situation demanding new adaptations. Rather, there is equilibrium in that there are mechanisms that can return the system (as an analytic abstraction of a group) to a status quo ante after a minor disturbance.

The writer is well aware of the danger of misplaced concreteness when speaking of a system. "System" is an abstraction used to order our observation of behavior. As with all sciences, sociology must deal in abstractions of reality, not reality directly. For instance, at no point do I mean to equate society and system. A society is a particular grouping of people; a social system, a model used to analytically describe the behavior and organization of the group. Unlike Dahrendorf, I believe that system is a useful and not merely metaphysical abstraction. Cf. "Out of Utopia: Toward a Reorientation of Sociological Analysis," American Journal of Sociology, 64 (September, 1958), pp. 115-127.

As Angell, following Homans, points out, in equilibrium, changes are self-limiting: the start processes in other sections of the system that decrease the effect of the change. Angell, who uses the term steady state as a synonym for equilibrium as developed above rather than a synonym for static state, makes some other pertinent observations about equilibrium:

The concept of a steady state does not imply, of course, that the social body can always resist successfully. When external pressures (or internal conflicts) pass beyond a threshold, defenses break down and readjustments of the system take place. Theoretically, only two results are possible: either the system, after appropriate reorganization, attains a new steady state, or else it disintegrates. Nor does a steady state mean that nothing new can be incorporated without breakdown and reorganization. In social wholes at least, traits can be added to an existing steady state so long as they are smoothly compatible with whatever is already there. There may even be a smooth replacement of one way of doing things by another.

While equilibrium is basic to our being able to call something a system, it is not something to be assumed, taken for granted, not explained. To heighten this point, let me quote two contrasting views. First, Devereux's excellent and accurate analysis of Parsons:

To this reviewer, it appears that Parsons' concern with equilibrium does not reflect the view that everything is automatically integrated and adjusted to everything else in this best of all possible worlds. It reflects instead the view that society represents a veritable powder keg of conflicting forces, pushing and hauling in all ways at once. That any sort of equilibrium is achieved at all as it evidently is in most societies most of the time,
thus represents for Parsons something both of miracle and challenge. Far from taking societal equilibrium for granted, he sees it as a central problem demanding detailed analysis and explanation.¹

Second, Angell:

The tentative manner of societal evolution makes it inevitable that in times of comparative stability Sumner's strain for consistency will have worked itself out pretty well, so that in fact institutions will then be helping to maintain a steady state: this is indeed their "natural" function. There is no need to explain why or how it is maintained. We are concerned here only with the processes that get in the way, only with the obstacle to its successful maintenance.²

The former seems to me to be a much more profitable heuristic position to take.

As developed above, integration has to do with systems. The sociologist is interested in integration of the personality system, of the cultural system, and of the social system (interaction system). Since all three are analytic ways of looking at the same behavior by the same individuals, we can also speak of integration between systems, as between the cultural and social, i.e., Landecker's normative integration. In this paper we will be primarily concerned with social integration and will touch upon the other types only as they effect social integration.

It should be noted at this point that "social system" is a "model", in a broad sense of word, that can be applied at various levels to various sizes of groups. The simplest would be a relatively small group in which the basic units were individual people. However, we can also apply the model to a corporation or an association in which the units making up the system are smaller groups or divisions, each consisting of several people and comprising a system itself. It must be remembered, on the other hand, that at each higher level, all the lower systems must be included. The basic

¹Devereux, op. cit., pp. 33f.
²Angell, op. cit., p. 88.
interaction, no matter how large and complex the system will still be between individuals. This is why social psychology may be the "root" behavioral science. At each level, the simplest system is naturally the dyas. In this tentative exploration, most of my discussion will concern dyatic relations between individuals. Nevertheless, the same approach should theoretically be applicable to higher levels without too great additional complications.

Williams makes the necessary observation that integration is not necessarily in inverse relation to complexity; indeed, added complexity may at times be necessary to increase integration.

There appears to be widespread in anthropological and sociological writings the implicit assumption that more complex societies are less highly integrated than the more simple systems. This assumption must be challenged. It is entirely possible, indeed, that, at a certain level of complexity, further complexity is necessary to maintain a functioning system at that level...We have evidence from study of social organization that specialized coordinating organs play an increased part as complexity increases in other respects. 1

We speak of more and less integration. We can say that system A is better integrated than system B or that A is better integrated now than it was or will be at time x or that M mechanism will increase the integration of system A. However, I do not think that we can accurately speak of integration as a continuum, for it is not at all clear that we are dealing with a uni-dimensional concept. Williams maintains that "integration" is what Blumer would call a 'sensitizing' concept; it represents a complex connotative network rather than a precise denotation of a unique thing. 2

This point leads us to the question of measurement. What sort of index of integration do we have? Quite simple, we have at this time no measurement even beginning to approach a quantitative measure. Such a measure is impossi-

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1 Williams, "Unity and Diversity...", p. 6.
2 Ibid., p. 4.
ble until we move beyond a "sensitizing" concept. At best we have descriptive comparative measures. How consistently and well-operating does a system appear to the outside, observing scientist? One criterion, and the chief one that is used by the members of a system, goes back to our paraphrasing of neurological integration. There we said that integration refers to the combination of different units so that they co-operate in a larger activity and thus fulfill the functions of the whole. Inherent in this is the assumptions that the functions of the whole (to be developed later) can only be met by some sort of co-operative interaction between units of the whole. Poor integration will lead to the failure to meet the functions of the whole. For instance, the cyclical anomie that Merton has noted results from the fact that there is poor integration between elements in the cultural system and elements in the social system which are necessary to meet the tension management functions for the individuals which are, because of the effect of dissociated individuals on the whole, also functions for the whole. This example shall become clearer as elements in it are more fully explained later. Unfortunately, the observe, i.e., that failure to meet the functions of the whole necessarily indicates lack of integration does not obtain, since such failure may also be caused by difficulties within the units, e.g., the personality system, or by changes in the environment that have not been adapted to. A more thorough analysis of the situation must occur before we can say that the failure is a result of poor integration.

Along this same line, Williams notes some important signs of the lack of perfect integration:

1. Interpersonal tension and conflict.
2. Conflicts among groups and collectivities.
3. Incapacity for coordinated action; lack of coordination; failure to concert.
4. Breakdown of goal-directed behavior, e.g., panic, apathy, "failure of nerve!"
5. Social unpredictability.
6. Breakdown of normative control over overt behavior.
7. Various types of massive psychological disturbances manifest in neuroses, psychoses, suicide, and other types of retreat from "the terror, agony, and absurdity of existence."

Thus, at this time, integration is an important and essential sensitizing and heuristic concept, but it cannot very easily be used as an explanatory variable.

Our second focal point, consensus, is a little less fraught with confusion; however, consensus is far from an easily indexed, precise concept. Horowitz reports on at least seven different shadings of meanings of consensus in sociology, ranging from the restraining of hedonistic impulses and instinct to accord between role behavior and role expectations. 2

Newcomb defines consensus quite simply: "I mean by the term nothing more or less than the existence, on the part of two or more persons, of similar orientations toward something." 3 However, in its simplicity, this definition leaves a number of unanswered questions. How similar must the orientations be before there is consensus? Orientation is itself ambiguous; it has at least three component parts:

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1 Williams, "Consensus and Integration..." p. 23.
cognitive, cathetic, and evaluative.

Williams' definition closely parallels that of Newcomb: "Consensus, then refers to agreement. It exists to the degree that there is agreement with regard to any object or to any aspect of human experience." Consensus may concern agreement on an object, on another person, on each other, on the state of an interaction, on the "modes of perception, the meaning of symbols, affective states, knowledge, beliefs, values, and social norms of many kinds." In other words, consensus refers to culture. It is the amount of agreement between or among two or more people about some aspect of the culture.

As stated above, there may be varying amounts of agreement or similarity among the cognitive, cathetic, and evaluative orientations. Two persons may agree about the facts concerning something, yet disagree about the value or attractiveness of it. These three aspects were first developed by Parsons. Max Black provides us with some excellent brief explanations:

At the crudest level of common sense I would try to translate "to cognize" as to perceive, believe, to think, in short to do anything with respect to which questions of truth or falsity may arise"; similarly, "to cathet" might be rendered as "to be attracted or repelled by, to like or dislike, to want or not to want, in short to do anything with respect to which questions of personal satisfaction or dissatisfaction can arise."

And it is worth pointing out that Parsons repeatedly thinks of evaluation as a problem of "allocation" of scarce resources among conflicting demands and interests.

1 Williams, "Consensus and Integration..." p. 4
2 Ibid.
Thus, cognitive refers to knowledge and perception, cathetic to liking and attractiveness, and evaluative to importance or desirability, both relative to that of other subjects or aspects of life and derived from generalized standards.

The opposite of consensus is dissensus. Dissensus is more limited in meaning than mere disagreement. In order for cognitive disagreement to be dissensus, the actors must have relatively strong cathetic and evaluative orientations, positive or negative. Further, the object or aspect of life must be seen as involved in the interaction between the actors in question. Angell refers to this as "common" values or objects or concerns. Angell points out the distinction quite well on the societal level: "Different people may without harm to society accept values and norms of subcultures that are inconsistent with one another, so long as they are not inconsistent with the overall societal moral order." They may disagree as long as the subject is not of "joint relevance" to the interaction of the societal level.

In human society, any consensus that is observable and that is expressed in interaction is of a quite limited nature. We never have one hundred percent consensus, or at least never are in a position to find out whether or not we have one hundred percent consensus. We only communicate fragments which are teleologically selected, reduced, reordered. Georg Simmel makes the point as follows:

We all communicate to another individual by means of words or perhaps in another fashion—even the most subjective, impulsive, intimate matters—is a selection from that psychological-real whole whose absolutely exact report (absolutely exact in terms of content and sequence) would drive everybody into insane asylum—is a paradoxical expression is permissible.

1Angell, op. cit., p. 20.
2Angell, op. cit., p 82.
It appears that consensus on each of the three aspects of an orientation is theoretically of a "continuum-like" nature, although probably not a simple continuum since there are several aspects to consensus. First, above the dyad level, we are faced with the question of how many people in a group have to agree before there is consensus. One more than half, as in most parliamentary decisions? Two-thirds? The total group, as in a Friends meeting? Further, does everyone have equal importance? Leaders, opinion-shapers, followers? Second, within the dyad even, there is a continuum between consensus and dissensus. Both Horowitz and Coser point out that the two are part of the same theory. Horowitz maintains that the one implies the other, that without one, we would not be aware of the other.¹ Coser, referring to Gestalt psychology, points out that deviants and dissensus provide the ground against which to see the figure of consensus.² Of course, there are a whole range of shades of gray between the field and the figure.

Nevertheless, we can in a "rough-and-ready" and yet quite accurate way speak of more and less consensus at the dyad level. In the cognitive area, we can measure with some accuracy what people know and believe. Theoretically, there could be measures of the strength of each actor's

¹Horowitz, op. cit., pp. 182f.
cathetic and evaluative orientation. These individual measures could then be compared. As we shall see later, the importance of the consensus-dissensus and the amount of strain produced by a given amount of low consensus depends upon at least three other variables, all three of which roughly fall in the cathetic-evaluative spheres.

III

Every individual has a multitude of needs and desires that he seeks to fulfill. In that he strives to fulfill his needs, we may call him goal-oriented. Groups also have needs that, to varying degrees, must be fulfilled for the maintenance of the group. At the group level we call these functional necessities. Most of the individual needs can only be met through interaction with other individuals. To a large extent, the functions of the group are derived from the needs of the individual. When some need or function is not being met, tension is created. As Parsons has maintained in all of his work, the seeking to attain goals is the source and cause of action and dynamics in an interaction system.

In this post-Freudian era, we cannot say that every tension is necessarily consciously perceived by the individual. He may repress or sublimate the need; he may attempt to decrease the importance of the need through such mechanisms as "sour-grapes." The tension exists and will initiate strivings to overcome it; whether or not the tensions are perceived
and corrective mechanisms _purposively_ employed are other matters.

One of the main cognitive needs of the individual is what Gestalt psychologists refer to as the need for closure. Man likes to live in an ordered and consistent universe, even though the order may be man-produced. One of the more important people working in this area is Heider. As Newcomb states:

_His central assumption (somewhat oversimplified) is that when an individual has attitudes toward two objects, cognitive imbalance exists for him if the two objects belong together (by any of several criteria) while his cathetic orientations toward them are opposed—e.g., if he "likes" one of the two related objects and "dislikes" the other._

Newcomb goes on to state that "hypotheically," the strain of perceived nonconsensus, or discrepancy, serves as an instigation to communication—the process by which, ordinarily consensus is increased." The instigation is predictable; but whether or not there will be communication is less predictable, according to Newcomb. The instigation occurs because it is the experience of the individual in the past that such instigation has generally decreased the tension; i.e., it has led to reward. Note that this mechanism operates whether or not the tension is consciously perceived. The tension exists even though the person may not be aware of it to the extent of being able to verbalize it.

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1 Newcomb, _op. cit._, p. 281.
2 Ibid., p. 282.
One of the central hypotheses of this paper is a modification of this position of Newcomb. Hypothetically, the strain of discrepancy serves as an instigation to some mechanism to overcome that tension. There will necessarily be instigation of communication only on those elements on which consensus is necessary for the functions of that particular interaction.

Tension and inconsistency can occur in any one of the three systems, personality, cultural, and social, and between them. It should be noted that there is a strong relation between tension and lack of integration. Lack of integration prevents closure; lack of integration prevents the fulfilling of the functions.

One example of tension resulting from lack of integration between systems is anomie or normative inconsistency as developed by Merton. There is a leakage of middle and upper class goals into the lower classes, while the social system does not allow the achievement of them by all members of the society, if they follow the societal norms. Here is one example of where too great a consensus by too many persons may lead to tension. The anomie thus arises because the culture and social structure are not well integrated.

The "affluent anomie" of Merton is closely related to the source of anomie as developed by Durkheim in his

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classic and awe-inspiring monograph on suicide.\(^1\) One need of man is to have some sure sense of his place in society. Under normal conditions each person is in a hierarchy of functions whose distribution he knows and deems just—at least he knows his and adjacent positions in it. When either society or the individual is disturbed by crisis, beneficency, or other relatively rapid change, the individual loses this support. Again, normlessness occurs because the old cultural system is no longer integrated with the new social system and/or the individual's position in it.

There are several inherent, built-in sources of conflict and dissensus in any social system. Since social systems can be and are integrated, these sources of conflict negate the assumption of consensus of the postulating of consensus as the one necessary source of integration. Let us look at some of these.

Williams cites some statistics that well demonstrate the complexity of even elementary social acts and relationships:

Any simple unit can combine with other simple units to generate great complexity, e.g., elementary unit-to-unit relations increase with increases in the number of units, \(N(N-1)/2\). The number of relationships between two people is one; the number of one-to-one relationships in a

there are already 1,225 relationships. We need go no farther just now.

Here are other examples. The possibilities for human diversity are suggested by Dunn and Dobzhansky's estimate that the number of theoretically possible gene combinations among human beings is approximately of the same order as that of the total number of electrons and protons in the known universe. Wallace's analysis of unique cognitive maps indicates that a bridge four-some may represent over a million unique combinations of even a very simple and limited set of cognitive expectations. Robert Dubin has calculated that the aspects of action caught up in Parsons's basic classification of social acts (in terms of "pattern-variables" and major kinds of objects and modes of orientation to these objects) give us 1024 different basic ways of acting. Since in any interaction, each of the two persons may use any of these modes, any dyad may create at least 1,048,586 (1024X1024) distinctive patterns of interaction.

The conjunct operation of genes, cognitive maps, social acts, and group relationships—not to mention other factors—evidently generates substantial potential variation and diversity in human society. It is indeed drastic literary license if we ever permit ourselves to speak loosely of "simple societies" or, save the mark, of "simple peoples."

Goode also presents a list of empirical facts that indicate the paucity of merely a theory of consensus:

1. Some individuals do not accept even supposedly central values of the society.
2. Individuals vary in their emotional commitment to both important and less important values.
3. This value commitment varies by class strata, and by other characteristics of social position...
4. Even when individuals accept a given value, some of them also have a strong or weak "latent commitment" to very different or contradictory values.
5. ...There may be value commitment without conformity or conformity without value commitment.
6. When individuals' social positions change, they may change both their behavior and their value orientations.
7. The values, ideals, and role obligations of every individual are at times in conflict.\footnote{1}


We can analyze such facts by seeing some of the causes at various levels in the social system: the personality systems, the interaction and role systems, and sub-groups. First, as Wrong has so well pointed out, we tend to have an "oversocialized" view of man.\(^1\) "I think we must start with the recognition that in the beginning there is the body."\(^2\)

Man is a social animal, but he has not been completely socialized. He still has drives and instincts that can be asocial. We have forgotten about the existence of the "id" and its conflict with the internalized norms. "Tendencies to deviant behavior are not seen as dialectically related to conformity. The presence in man of motivational forces bucking against the hold social discipline has over him is denied."\(^3\) Sociological theory neglects both the angel and the devil in the individual. "It neglects the other half of the model of human nature presupposed by current theory: moral man, guided by his built-in superego and beckoning ego ideal." It also overlooks the "desire for material and sensual satisfaction" and the quest for power in order to impose one's own normative definition of reality.\(^4\)

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\(^2\)Ibid., p. 191.

\(^3\)Ibid., pp. 187-88.

\(^4\)Ibid., pp. 190-91.
calls for a greater awareness of the personality variable in group behavior and dynamics.\(^1\) In the quote from Williams we saw the great inherited diversity between individuals.

At the second, or interaction, level there are also several sources of strain. Each person in a complex society plays several different roles and holds several different positions. Goode, after an analysis of a role system, comes to the conclusion that, for the individual, role strain is normal.\(^2\)  

\(1\) Role demands are required at specific times and places. "Virtually no role demand is such a spontaneous pleasure that conformity with it is always automatic." How often does a parent remain overjoyed about having to get up in the middle of the night to feed the baby?  

\(2\) Each individual is in many different role relations, often at the same time.  

\(3\) "Each role relationship demands several activities or responses." There are inconsistent, but "not quite contradictory" norms.  

\(4\) Role relations are combined in role sets. "In general, the individual's total role obligations are overdemanding." There just isn't enough time in one day to do everything I'm supposed to do! Goode is concerned with the strain on the individual, but it should also be pointed out that each role position views


\(^2\) Goode, op.cit., p. 485. The rest of the quotes in this paragraph are taken from the same page.
society and the environment from a different perspective. Each person sees society from various angles and no two persons see it in the same way. Can we wonder then that there is at times a lack of cognitive consensus?

Also at the interaction level and related to role conflict is the phenomenon of multiple references groups, each with its own expectations and demands. At times they all have legitimate authority and power. Angell gives the examples of the family life of a young executive being hurt by the demands of his corporate boss and of the farm family putting demands on a child to do his chores to the point that his school work is hindered. "Here the assertion of power in one area makes impossible satisfactory participation in another. Any complex society is bound to show imbalances of this kind."¹

Third, at the community and society level, we are faced with a myriad of sub-groups. This is especially true in a "melting pot" immigrant country such as the United States. Williams presents a fairly accurate inventory of these groups in the United States:² (1) We have six or seven regional or local sub-cultures. (2) There is the urban-rural continuum of differentiation. (3) There are "lines of differentiation of interests and values associated

¹Angell, op.cit., p. 100.
²Williams, "Unity and Diversity...", pp. 2-3.
with economic and power positions, status-rankings, and specific occupational subcultures.\(^1\) (4) We have national and ethnic differences; there can be cultural assimilation without full social incorporation. (5) There is the large and complex diversity of organized religion. (6) We have so-called racial groupings, which are not necessarily groups nor even collectivities. "They 'exist' only if, and precisely to the extent that, they are treated as real."\(^2\) Williams summarizes by saying:

\begin{quote}
We are able to sense the grid of invisible compartments into which the society is divided; if we know a person's racial category, religious affiliation or background, social class, rural or urban residence, and region of residence, we can make rough but very useful predictions about other aspects of his life station and behavior. We are aware also that the lines or walls between social compartments become dimmer and thinner from 9:00 to 5:00 on weekdays and increase in definiteness and solidity on weekends and evenings as American life flows into the underlying in-group structure.\(^3\)

If perception and cognition depend upon the role position, can we not expect even greater disagreement and conflict between sub-groups because of the limited perspective and biases of each? Various sub-groups will have different amounts and accuracy of perception of reality both within the society and between the society and the rest of the world. As Angell states:
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\(^1\)Williams, "Unity and Diversity...", p. 2.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 3.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 4.
Moral consensus arises from similarity of experience, either first-hand or communicated. In modern societies the opportunities for different socio-economic groups to have the same experiences are very limited, so that most incompatibilities caused by social differentiation have to be cured by a symbolic sharing of experience. Thus it is that only those in the same communication networks can have much hope of seeing issues alike—and even then they do not necessarily do so.

Newcomb with considerable cogency suggests that the very need for and existence of consensus among sub-groups create and maintain incomplete communication between groups. The individual needs the support of a group not filled with dissensus and inconsistency. However, as we have seen, such a group is virtually impossible at the society-wide level. "The one way in which it is possible for a population to satisfy both the individual-autistic demands and the demands of social reality is to sort itself into subgroups which are in fact characterized by this kind of consensus." Such splitting into sub-groups is heightened by "the circular tendency to exaggerate existing consensus with persons toward whom attraction is strongly positive, and to increase attraction when perception is perceived to increase; and the converse tendency for underestimation of consensus and declining attraction to proceed together."

Finally, the division into sub-groups is directly related to the individual need for supportive groups and

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1 Angell, op. cit., pp. 209f.
2 Newcomb, op. cit., p. 288.
3 Ibid., p. 289.
ego support and the social fact of class and opportunity.

With regard to nonperson objects, it would be possible, of course, to develop consensus on the part of the entire population with no sub-group differentiation. (As we have seen, this is a highly questionable assertion but does not negate what follows.) But with regard to consensus about members themselves, this presumably becomes more and more unlikely as population becomes progressively larger than two. One of the basic reasons for this (which I have not time to develop here) is that consensus about members themselves can be achieved only by making no differentiations at all (an unlikely event) or by obtaining the agreement of the members who are ranked lowest that they should in fact be ranked lowest—also improbable. Sub-group differentiation, among other advantages, makes possible a state of affairs in which each sub-group member can participate in consensus about himself.

We stated above that "hypothetically, the strain of discrepancy serves as an instigation to some mechanism to overcome that tension." We indicated that consensus is only one of several mechanisms, which both are instigated and are built into the system to prevent tension. While we cannot here provide a complete list, nor is that our chief purpose, let us enumerate some of them that have been observed by various sociologists.

First, Newcomb's argument that has just been presented can be advanced a little farther into an argument for one integrative function of conflict. As several political theorists have pointed out, a society that is split into two

1Newcomb, op.cit., p. 289.
well-delineated opposing camps is not a tenable society. There must be cross-cutting membership and allegiance. In the same way, stability is aided by several criss-crossing conflicts that prevent the lining up into two hostile, "consensus-ridden" and sharply divided camps.⁠¹ Coser quotes an example of Edward Alsworth. A body of water with two opposing sources of waves (disturbance) may become quite turbulent when the crests of the waves coincide. However, the greater the number of sources, the greater the possibility that the crests and troughs will cancel each other out. "The interdependence of conflicting groups and the multiplicity of noncumulative conflicts provide one, though not, of course, the only check against basic consensual breakdown in an open society."²

Goode was quoted above as indicating several sources of role strain. He also indicates various means of reducing these strains.³ The actor may compartmentalize his role obligations; he may delegate them, although the extent of delegation is controlled by the societal hierarchy of values; he may eliminate certain role relationships; he may extend certain role obligations as an excuse not to meet other demands or as a way to facilitate the meeting of other demands; or he may set up barriers against intrusion, i.e.,

²Ibid., p. 79.
insulate his activities from the view of others. Goode points out that there are limits to the indefinite extension of the number of role relationships. "After a possible initial reduction, role strain begins to increase more rapidly with a larger number of roles than do the corresponding role rewards or counter-payments from alter."\(^1\) Rose Coser's concept of insulation from observability closely parallels Goode's conception of barriers. As an extension of Merton, she points out that different people expect different types of conformity (attitudinal, behavioral, and doctrinal). As a result, a person may reveal different aspects and expressions of role fulfillment to various people and conceal others.\(^2\) "These differences in types of expected conformity make it possible for the status-occupant to maintain his reserve and to remain reasonably stable in the face of contradictory expectations."\(^3\)

Another sphere of mechanisms, perhaps the most important in a complex society, is that variously referred to as cooperation,\(^4\) symbiosis or the relation of interdependence\(^5\) and organic solidarity through division of labor.\(^6\)

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\(^1\)Goode, op.cit., pp. 487.


\(^3\)Ibid., p. 30.

\(^4\)Horowitz, op.cit., p. 187.


\(^6\)Emile Durkheim, The Division of Labor in Society, translated by George Simpson, (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1933), 70-229.
Perhaps the simplest form of solidarity through co-operation is that of a group unified because the member units all are in opposition to a common opponent. Both Simmel and Coser point to the unifying power of antagonism to an opponent. First, Simmel points out:

Discord, in fact, perhaps even more stringently than harmony, forces the group to "pull itself together." In general, common enmity is one of the most powerful means for motivating a number of individuals or groups to cling together. This common enmity is intensified if the common adversary is at the same time the common ruler.

Second, Coser goes on to delineate some of the results of such antagonism.

Antagonism against a common enemy may be a binding element in two ways. It may either lead to the formation of new groups with distinct boundary lines, ideologies, loyalties and common values, or, stopping short of this, it may result only in instrumental associations in the face of a common threat. The emergence of such associations of otherwise isolated individuals represents a "minimum" of unification.

As societies grow in size and complexity, it becomes more and more impossible for any one individual to meet all of his own needs. Further, as societies become more complex and industrialized with higher standards of living, the felt needs and desires of the members also increase in number and complexity. Need seems to fit the supply and even exceed it. At the same time, increased complexity means it is more and more impossible for there to be society-wide consensus and integration through common values.

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2. Lewis Coser, "The Functions...", p. 140.
Rather, as Durkheim shows, the source of integration becomes the interdependence of the division of labor and the fulfillment by members and units of each other's needs. Each unit is an entity organically combined into the whole—hence the term organic solidarity. Let me quote Durkheim at some length.

In sum, since mechanical solidarity progressively becomes enfeebled, life properly social must decrease or another solidity must slowly come in to take the place of that which has gone. The more we advance, the more profoundly do societies reveal the sentiment of self and of unity. (A somewhat questionable and value laden assertion) There must, then, be some other social link which produces this result; this cannot be any other than that which comes from the division of labor.

If, moreover, one recalls that even where it is most resistant, mechanical solidarity does not link men with the same force as the division of labor, and that, moreover, it leaves outside its scope the major part of phenomena actually social, it will become still more evident that social solidarity tends to become exclusively organic. It is the division of labor which, more and more, fills the role that was formerly filled by the common conscience. It is the principal bond of social aggregates of higher types.

The integration of a society through the division of labor is supported by several other factors. First, since it is made up of various units, each of which has its own task to perform, it is often the case that the more clearly delineated these units are the better. Turk makes this point in a study of the working relation between student doctors and student nurses.² There were less dysfunctional

¹ Durkheim, The Division of Labor..., p. 173.
dispute and disorganization if the doctors and nurses had different orientations toward the patients. If it had not been for these variations in values, there would have been a great increase in jurisdictional disputes. Lewis Coser makes much the same point when he states that conflict helps establish and maintain group boundaries and identities. However, he is probably over-stating the case for on-going, well-integrated groups.

In order to call a system integrated, one must be able to discern the smooth structuring and coordination of the units as well as being able to discern the units. Williams mentions the

\[\text{\textsuperscript{1}}\text{L. Coser, The Functions...}, pp. 33-38.\]
example of the chaos during the time of disasters. Common values are not enough; common information is not enough. Just these can often lead to a frantic call for aid and ten times as many beds as needed appearing. What is needed is coordination to prevent duplication of effort and to assure the highest possible efficiency. 1

In almost any system composed of more than the dyad, there is the need for some recognized and legitimate source of leadership. Angell, in his discussion of the stages in arriving at general consensus, mentions the need for prestigious courts and legislatures.2 New norms of behavior usually must be enforced by some agency before they will be internalized by the members of the society. The bargaining on the interpersonal level may often reach compromises and solutions that are dysfunctional for the larger system unless they are checked by some third power. If this third party is recognized as a legitimate source of constraint, all the better. Goode notes that "third parties interact with an individual and his alter to keep their bargain within institutional limits."3 Dahrendorf even sees the constraint of some by others as the main glue that holds a society together.4

One of the strengths of the symbiotic relationship is that it continues to meet the needs of the individual members.

1Williams, "Consensus and Integration . . .", pp. 34f.
3Goode, op. cit., p. 483.
4Dahrendorf, op. cit., p. 127.
Williams points out that "Often the most important basis for continuing interaction among individuals and other social units may not be generalized consensus but rather the fact that each party to the interaction facilitates the satisfaction of important needs of the other."¹ The gratitude for the fulfillment of needs by others is generalized into feelings of gratitude for the entire system. Morton Grodzins has argued that loyalty to a country is really made up of a person's total satisfaction with life as he has experienced it in that country.² However, this loyalty to the system has a gyroscopic nature. It does not depend upon a continued quid pro quo exchange nor upon the fulfillment of all needs—an impossibility anyway. Morse writes:

The identity (or integrity) of a system of action is embodied in the sense of solidarity that binds its members together, that gives them a sense of collective belonging, of mutual interdependence, so that they do not require an explicit quid for every pro quo but are prepared to accept a diffuse assurance of the general benefits of membership and to make their contributions accordingly.³ Simmel makes a similar point in his discussion of "gratitude."

Gratitude, as it were, is the moral memory of mankind. In this respect, it differs from faithfulness by being more practical and impulsive: although it may remain, of course, something purely internal, it may yet engender new actions. It is an ideal bridge which the soul comes across again and again, so to speak, and which, upon provocations too slight to throw, a new bridge to the other person, it uses to come closer to him.⁴

¹Williams, "Consensus and Integration . . .," p. 28.
²Angell, op. cit., pp. 65f.
⁴Simmel, op. cit., p. 388.
As mentioned before, an individual has a desire to live in a consistent world. Even though mechanisms other than consensus support integration, the individual still prefers a system in which there is consensus. For one thing, the appearance of agreement does not place in question his own views. However, as we have also seen, the possibility for such consensus on any wide scale is slight. The broader and more indefinite the values, the greater the possibility of wide acceptance. As Angell states:

The common values of a society are likely to be intangibles such as democracy and humanitarianism. It is in terms of them that responsible courses of action are justified. Societal members do not so much envision specific future events to work toward, as attributes of the good life as they see it.\(^1\)

Political parties base their pleas upon such general values. They must have society-wide support for their candidates. Too specific and strong stands tend to alienate some necessary voters. The very indefiniteness of these values is functional. We should be thankful that we can often complain, "But they just don't mean anything!" They can mean something different for each person without bringing to the surface all the various underlying disagreements. In a mass society there is great value in the "hollow, ringing phrase."

"Common values, whether sacred or secular, are strengthened by processes of symbolization, through ritual, myth or folklors, and heroic figures."\(^2\) The concrete and personal quality of symbols and heroes strengthens the group's unity. At the same time, the fact

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\(^1\) Angell, op.cit., p. 18.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 26.
that they are symbols rather than explicit statements allows for individual interpretation. The group can quickly become identified with its ritual. Attack the ritual symbol used in a church and "all hell will break loose," even though the majority of members probably do not know the official significance of the ritual or the symbol.

The final mechanism that I would like to mention in this brief survey is the "norm of reciprocity." Gouldner has written an excellent exploratory paper into what may very well be a major aspect of social relations. I can only hit a few of the relevant highlights and would refer the reader to his article. Gouldner posits that the norm of reciprocity is universal but not unconditional. While it is found in every society, its exact nature and strength depends both upon the status of the persons interacting and upon the culture of the society.

Specifically, I suggest that a norm of reciprocity, in its universal form, makes two interrelated, minimal demands: (1) people should help those who have helped them, and (2) people should not injure those who have helped them.

If one wants to be helped by others, one has to support the norm of reciprocity by helping others. Further, until one is repaid, it is not very strategic to harm the person in debt. In both ways egoistic motivation help support the norm. Outstanding obligations contribute as much or more to stability as do those obligations already met.

Once interaction is seen as taking place over time, we may note


\footnote{Ibid., p. 171.}
that the norm of reciprocity so structures social relations that, between the time of Ego's provision of a gratification and the time of Alter's repayment, falls the shadow of indebtedness. 1

Gouldner suggests that since indebtedness leads to stability, a rewarding situation, we should expect to find mechanisms that induce people to remain in debt or at least to confuse when repayment has been made. (Anyone familiar with the operation of loans and buying on credit in our society can quite easily agree with Gouldner.) For instance, since everyone is in a vast net of interactions, each of which at some time or another includes indebtedness, a network or cross obligations is set up that is very hard to unravel. Also, society provides no measure of when a debt of a non-economic nature is repaid. Because of differences in situation, difference in status between ego and alter, etc. there can only be a rough equivalence between two acts. Over time there is considerable ambiguity concerning who is in debt to whom. 2

Simmel, in certain sections of his discussion of gratitude makes many of the same points. He observes that indebtedness is often created by the presence of another person rather than by any specific act. We are grateful because the other person exists and we experience him. 3 Simmel also points out that in one respect it is never possible to repay a debt.

Once we have received something good from another person, once

1 Ibid., p. 174.
2 Ibid., p. 175.
3 Simmel, op.cit., p. 389.
he has preceded us with his action ["vorgeleistet"], we no longer can make up for it completely, no matter how much our own return gift or service may objectively or legally surpass his own. The reason is that his gift, because it was first, has a voluntary character which no return gift can have. For, to return the benefit we are obliged ethically; we operate under a coercion which, though neither social nor legal but moral, is still a coercion.

Because of the indeterminacy of the norm of reciprocity, it can step into many interaction situations in which there are few prescribed role rights and obligations. Also, it is a second line of defense in those situations where there are norms accepted by well-socialized actors. In this case, repayment is not only a role obligation but also a norm, a correct action, in and of itself. "The norm in this respect, is a kind of plastic filler, capable of being poured into the shifting crevices of social structures, and serving as a kind of all-purpose moral cement."²

The indefiniteness and continuation of indebtedness also looms large for Simmel.

This irredeemable nature of gratitude shows it as a bond between men which is as subtle as it is firm. Every human relationship of any duration produces a thousand occasions for it, and even the most ephemeral ones do not allow their increment to the reciprocal obligation to be lost. In fortunate cases, but sometimes even in cases abundantly provided with counter-instances, the sum of these increments produces an atmosphere of generalized obligation (the saying that one is "obliged" ["verbunden"] to somebody who has earned our thanks is quite apt), which can be redeemed by no accomplishments whatever. This atmosphere of obligation belongs among those "microscopic," but infinitely tough, threads which tie one element of society to another, and thus eventually all of them together in a stable collective life.³

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1Ibid., p. 392.
2Gouldner, op.cit., p. 175.
3Simmel, op.cit., p. 395.
Earlier we said that, when there is tension, "there will necessarily be instigation of communication only on those elements on which consensus is necessary for the functions of that particular interaction." Just what are these? It is interesting to note that almost every writer in the field, no matter how much conflict he likes, recognizes a need for a "core culture" on which there is relative consensus. Note for example the following range of quotes, ordered roughly by degree of consensus in their orientations.

First, Angell:

"[Moral integration] merely assumes that whatever conflict there is goes forward in terms of well-defined rules that the parties to the conflicts accept."¹

Williams:

Given some minimal consensus and interdependence, the modern nation is enabled to function as a system—to the extent it does—by the vast network of communication and organization, so familiar and so essential and so little to be taken for granted in sociological study.² (italics not in original)

Lewis Coser:

Conflicts arising within the same consensual framework are likely to have a very different impact upon the relationship than those which put the basic consensus in question."³

And Horowitz: Conflict, as well as consensus, operates within a social structure, "within the system of mutually established laws, norms, and values."⁴

¹Angell, op. cit., pp. 8f.
²Williams, "Unity and Diversity . . .," p. 7.
³L. Coser, The Functions . . ., p. 73.
⁴Horowitz, op. cit., p. 184.
What constitutes this "core culture"? First, I would definitely include the norm of reciprocity as a necessary "all-purpose moral cement." Beyond this, the one necessary item of consensus that all writers recognize is consensus on the rules and norms of procedure and interaction.

The dominant national pattern of fluid and overlapping allegiances and competing memberships and interests out of which emerge political decisions within a framework of agreement on procedure. The depth and significance of procedural agreement is not obvious in the ordered routine of those situations which are taken for granted, but is sharply brought out when it is lacking.1

People can do things for different reasons, hidden and stated, without greatly disrupting the system, as long as they agree on how they should and do go about their normal interactions. Probably the only time in which one, as a general rule, does not want the other to know what to expect from him is when they are in open conflict or battle with each trying to defeat the other. However, even in warfare there have been up to now, at least, rules of the game, e.g., the use of white flags, the Geneva Treaties, etc. In fact, if it weren't for some agreement on procedure, one would not known when the other were defeated except by complete annihilation of the other. In other words, daily interaction depends upon the possibility of the majority of times being able to predict and interpret the behavior of other individuals. In the concluding section of this paper we shall present some qualifications. Again, a quote from Williams will serve to summarize the importance of consensus on norms of

1Williams, "Unity and Diversity . . .," p. 7.
behavior:

The social structures of modern urban societies are possible only by the articulation of congruent expectations in the interactions of diversely motivated actors, organized into linkages among a very large number of diverse subsystems. During the past six months as a householder, citizen, father, and so on, I have paid taxes, bought goods, secured licenses, voted, petitioned, taught, been taught, consulted, been consulted—in relations with numerous individuals about whom I know little, and with whom in many cases probably share very little. For most of these interactions, it is enough if we know enough to synchronize actions in time and space, and to perform specific acts upon proper signals. But it is crucial that the coordination does take place.¹

In every interaction there are certain basic assumptions of a broad nature which are the very basis of the interaction and which allow it to continue. On these core values there must be consensus. Questioning of them brings into question the very existence of the interaction. Such questioning usually brings immediate, blind rejection, as Weber's ethic of ultimate demands points out.² For example, essential to an academic community is the value of truth and the necessity of never falsifying information. There can never be any discussion of whether or not one should create false "facts" to support an argument. Similarly, today in labor-management disputes there is a basic assumption of the value of collective bargaining. Who is to the government official who suggests that government intervention would be more efficient: the coalition of labor and management is a tough opponent! Before two people can argue over the possession of a tract of land, there must be agreement on the existence and inherent good of property rights. Basic to any democratic process is the right of the majority to prevail. This is one aspect of structure that can never be voted

¹Williams, "Consensus and Integration . . .," p. 35.
out of existence and the system as a whole still remain. Even in international relations such basics exist. The US and the U.S.S.R. must agree upon the basic need to prevent nuclear warfare. If they did not, there would be little to prevent the negotiations from coming to a quite fiery end. An idea of the centrality of the issue can be seen by the horror of both at the nuclear threatening of the People's Republic of China.

Another essential of an integrated system is agreement on the legitimacy of that system. Without the acceptance by the vast majority, that generalized allegiance Morse mentions could not exist. We would be faced with a situation in which the system was supported only to the extent that for every gun there was an equal or greater quid. One of the main difficulties standing in the way of the formation of an integrated nation in such countries as Nigeria and the Congo is that the people have not yet recognized it as a legitimate structure.

Closely related to the need to accept the legitimacy of the system is the need to accept the legitimacy of authority in any system above the very small group. This point was previously developed in our discussion of the mechanisms of integration.

Beyond this core culture, the amount and type of consensus on what will be determined by the nature of the interaction, the functions it is meeting, the cathatic and evaluative relation between the actors, the environmental situation, and the duration and extensiveness of the interaction. In the next section I shall propose an outline or skeleton for theory and research and try to provide
some flesh for some sections of it.

IV

Talcott Parsons has been the most influential sociologist in the formation of a systematic typology of the functions of an interaction. While I am indebted to his writing and to Morse's discussion of it, I am not necessarily following exactly Parsons' ideas—or rather what I think they are.

An interactional system has both an inside and an outside. The system must relate to the outside world. First, it must adapt to it in order to exist. Second, the system exists to a great extent in order to meet the needs of the individuals and units within it. It must relate to the outside world in order to achieve the goals set forth by the members. In addition, as an entity in itself the system also has certain goals that it must meet. Both the adaptation to the environment and the interaction with the environment to meet or attain goals can be termed instrumental functions of the system.

The system must also concern itself with its internal order. The conditions inside are as important to the continuation or dissolution of the system as whether or not it can meet its instrumental functions. Whether or not the units of the system operate smoothly is the problem of integration, the central subject of this paper. But before the units can be integrated, they must be members of the system and remain members. The members must be kept relatively.

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1 Parsons, The Social System, pp. 24-112.

2 Morse, op.cit., pp. 100-152.
satisfied with being members. Part of this comes from fulfilling the needs of the individual, i.e., success in goal attainment. But also the member must be psychologically supported by the other members. The problem is one of the individual and of the various small group units within a larger system (since great emotional dissatisfaction by members of a small group is likely to destroy the effective bonds of the unit). However, since the larger system depends upon the membership of the individual, these individual problems are also problems for the system. Parsons terms these activities supporting the individual as "expressive."

Within the expressive category, there are two main functions that must be met: pattern-maintenance and tension management.

The problem of pattern maintenance is essentially that faced by an actor in reconciling the various norms and demands imposed by his participation in any particular social system with those of other systems in which he also participates, or with the more general norms of the broader culture. . . . Tension management is defined as the problem of maintaining within the unit a level of motivational commitment sufficient for required role performances. The notion here is that there are continuous changes of state within the units, with rise and fall of tension, and unless suitable measures are taken, these changes may potentially serve as instigation to deviance from the patterns established for the system.1

Out of the study of roles has come the concept of role segment.2 A person lives a segmented life, playing various roles. He reveals various aspects of his personality in various roles. A doctor will not appear the same to a patient and his wife, for example. The more of himself he commits to a particular role relationship, the

1Devereux, op.cit., p. 57

the more emotionally involved in that relationship he is and the more concerned he is about the personality and nature of the other person. Those groups in which there is high emotional involvement and affectivity are those groups which can fulfill the expressive functions for the individual. The size of the group does not necessarily correlate with the amount of involvement. A religious sect may consist of several members, each with much involvement.

The interaction system between the tourist and the farmer at a road-side stand, on the other hand, only involves two individuals and yet little involvement. The question of what sort of group, i.e., what functions does it meet, is more important than size. It must be admitted in the same breath, however, that generally expressive groups will be of a fairly small size and, with few exceptions, the larger the group is, the less well it can fulfill the expressive function.

A starting point for the development of our skeleton is one suggested by Newcomb.\(^1\) Newcomb extends Heider's views into the quite standard A-B-X"formula." A and B, two actors, are in communication about object X. The object may be an actual object, another person, a value, concept, opinion, symbol, etc. A views B and X as belonging together, i.e., A "co-orients to B and X. B views A and X as belonging together, i.e., B co-orients to A and X. If there is a discrepancy between A's orientation (cognitive, cathetic, or evaluative) and A's perception of B's orientation to X, tension will arise. The important addition of Newcomb is the observation that there are three variables that determine the degree of tension:

\(^1\)Newcomb, op.cit., p. 281.
1. The strength of the attraction between A and B.

2. The degree of importance of X to A or B.

3. The degree of joint relevance of X to A and B, or the degree of importance to A and B.¹

I would add a fourth:

4. The degree of importance of X to the relation between A and B.

Keeping in mind these four variables, let us move on to a further extension of the scheme: one proposed by Williams, with the basic idea coming from John MacGregor.² First, he points out the three areas of possible consensus between A and B concerning X.

I. Orientations to any object X—when X is something other than the direct affective response of person B to person A:

   [A]. Cognitive similarity or dissimilarity (perception/conceptions of existential character of the object).

   [B]. Affective similarity or dissimilarity (positive or negative emotional attitudes of varying kinds and intensities).

   [C]. Evaluative similarity or dissimilarity (judgements [sic.] of the desirability of the object, made on the basis of some generalized standards).³

See section II of this paper for my own slight modifications of these three categories. Also, the same three variables can relate to X when X is the affective response of person B to person A. This I shall deal with in III B below. ⁴

Williams goes on to examine various types of X which B is instrumental to A in achieving.

¹Ibid., pp. 262ff.

²Williams, "Consensus and Integration . . .," pp. 45ff.

³Ibid., p. 45.
II. Orientations of A to B in terms of B's instrumentality in helping A to attain valued states—when the valued states are something other than the direct affective response of person B to person A.

[A] B helps A to attain generalized means to goals, e.g., money, power.

[B] B helps A to attain valued affective responses from third parties, e.g., approval from the boss, affection from a spouse, esteem from professional colleagues.¹

One of the questions we will be dealing with below is which of I, A, B, and C is of importance in II A and B.

Finally, Williams turns to the affective response of A and B to each other.

III. Orientations of A and B directly to the valued affective responses of the other.

[A]. Expressive aspects of I[A, B, C] and II [A and B]—any of these taken as "symbolic of A's basic attitude toward B, or vice versa.

[B]. Direct expressions of affect of A toward B (and B toward A).

1. Symetrical, e.g.
   a. Love-love
   b. Esteem-esteem
   c. Approval-approval
   d. Responsiveness-receptiveness and vice versa.

2. Non-symetrical: any combination not wanted by either party.²

In III A it does not particularly matter whether or not B is instrumental to A, although different variables may enter in. The object may be anything on which both A and B are oriented, as in I above. Also, as stated before, important in any analysis of III B is the fact that A and B may be non-symetrical, not just on the aesthetic implied by Williams in III B 2, but also on the cognitive and evalu-

¹Ibid., p. 46.
²Ibid.
tive orientation to the affective state.

From this scheme it is possible to develop the following rather simple basic component:

where $X_1$ is the affective relation between $A$ and $B$ and $X_2$ is any other valued state of object, for $A$. $B$ may or may not be instrumental to $A$ in achieving $X_2$. If the relationship between $A$ and $B$ fulfills expressive functions, then the emphasis is upon $X_1$, and $X_2$ may be any object (in its broad sense defined above) of value to $A$ or $B$. If $B$ is instrumental to $A$ in achieving $X_2$ and the relation is instrumental, then the center of analysis is $X_2$.

Needless to say, a relation may be both expressive and instrumental, in fact, most are. It is only for analytic purposes that we can separate them as much as we do.

A complication of this component arises from Newcomb's concept of joint relevance. If $X_2$ is a desired state for both $A$ and $B$ and $A$ is instrumental to $B$ and vice versa, then the following scheme evolves:

where $X_1$ and $X_2$ are defined as above.

Finally, in instrumental relation, there may be extraneous objects that enter in. If some object, not of relevance to the instrumentality of $B$ in achieving $X_2$ for $A$, but of such ultimate importance to $A$ or $B$, in other relations, they may bring it into
this instrumental relation. We shall define this extraneous object of concern as $X_3$. An example of this phenomena might be our insistence in bringing into discussions aimed at preventing war the fact that the U.S.S.R. is not a democracy. In this case the diagram would be

![Diagram](image)

I should make some further observations about the nature of the joint relevance diagram above. First, $X_2$ may be of three different natures:

1. It may be something that can only be obtained by $A$ if it is also obtained by $B$.

2. It may be something limited so that if $A$ obtains it, $B$ cannot.

3. It may be of an over-supply nature so that both $A$ and $B$ may obtain it, but they both do not have to obtain it in order for one of them to. (1) is the type that has most often been studied.

Within this category I would place those cases where $X_2$ is not the same for $A$ as it is for $B$, but they both must obtain their own $X_2$ in order for the other to obtain his. For example, ignoring the possibility of forced labor, $A$'s labor so that $B$, $A$'s employer, can sell his product is dependent upon $B$ paying $A$ his wages, and $B$'s paying $A$ wages is dependent upon $A$ laboring to produce the product. Most corporate and bureaucratic structures are of this nature.

The first type of joint relevance is the one that I will discuss below. I would suggest that the mechanisms involved in the second and third type would be similar to those in the case where $B$'s instru-
mentality is not reciprocal. Further, the second type is the type of interaction perhaps most open to dysfunctional conflict, subterfuge, and keeping this scheme in mind, let us turn to the expressive violence. relationships, those in which the emphasis in upon $X_1$ and $X_2$ may be any object of concern to $A$. Of course, the diagram works both ways by exchanging $A$ and $B$: $X_2$ may be of concern to $B$ as the starting point of analysis. Since one of the variables we are interested in is the degree of importance of $X_2$ to $A$ or $B$ and since we are speaking of a continuum, it is merely for convenience that one normally uses the persons for whom $X_2$ is of greatest importance as the focus of the analysis.

A group or interaction that meets the expressive functions must of necessity have high affectivity and consensus. In order for a group to overcome the conflicting norms and demands placed upon a person and achieve pattern-maintenance, that group must be in agreement about the norms that it is upholding. Further, motivation and commitment are supported by the affection and mutual attraction between individuals. Thus of the two, expressive and instrumental, the expressive requires more consensus.

Edward Gross did a study of the informal groupings among airmen based on a particular site.\(^1\) He discovered both consensual and symbiotic groups. He discovered that the consensual groups were composed of men of like characteristics, especially those related to adjustment to the Air Force as a whole and its group goals.\(^2\) In our terminology, the consensual groups were expressive oriented.

\(^1\)Ed Gross, \emph{op.cit.}, pp. 174-179.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 177.
Men find the Air Force and its goals touch more significant matters of values and long-range plans. On these matters, they do not seek help—they are not "gripe" or problem areas which can be handled by going to a buddy. Instead dissatisfaction or concern in these areas was handled by individual decision. On these matters, then, men were likely to find congenial others who had made similar decisions reflecting values similar to those held by themselves, and these were usually persons of similar background and personality characteristics to themselves. The neophyte who can scarcely wait to conclude his one-year "hitch" does not find the company of the old-soldier congenial.1

Newcomb's study of the processes of acquaintance among initial strangers in four college housing units points up the same relationship between expressive groups and consensus.2 Although Newcomb does not provide information for a firm conclusion, it is probably fairly safe to assume that most friendships developed within the same housing unit (on a college campus) would be of an expressive rather than symbiotic or instrumental nature. Newcomb measured three different types of consensus: (1) about other persons, (2) about a number of wid-ranging subjects, and (3) about highly generalized values.3 The results showed that "only pairs of persons who showed very high acquaintance agreement were likely to have very high indices of association and reciprocal preference much later."4 This was significant beyond the .001 level.

However, even in expressive relationships, there is evidence of considerable purposive ignorance and avoidance. If X2 is not of great importance to A, while his effective relation to B is of

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1Ibid., p. 177.
3Ibid., pp. 285f.
4Ibid., p. 286.
importance and A is aware of the fact that there may be dissensus between himself and B on X_2, he may never broach the subject. Probably in the vast majority of friendships there are certain subjects that are simply never discussed because both parties recognize the possible existence of dissensus.

Coser points out that, since in an expressive relationship the amount of personal involvement is quite high—a great deal of the personality is involved, such relations are more likely to produce both love and hate.\(^1\) Another factor is the fact that the high importance of B to A means that B is a very "significant other" whose judgments, good and bad, are of high importance to A.

If we return to our discussion of the organization of a system based upon the division of labor, we will remember that various units fulfill functions for other units. If one of the functions that must be filled by an integrated system is the expressive, then it seems reasonable to posit the possibility that some highly consensual and affective group may overcome low consensus and high conflict elsewhere in the system. Williams makes just this point.\(^2\) Goode recognizes the expressive functions of the family. The support of the family stays with the individual in his other activities. It is a "secure center" for gaining perspective on one's total role complex. One can relax in the well established


\(^2\) Williams, "Consensus and Integration . . .," pp. 29f.
roles within the family.\textsuperscript{1} Probably most people who find comfort and support from a loved one that gives them new vigor in their other roles and duties will recognize the phenomena being described by Williams and Goode.

It would be good to bear in mind that the expressive group is a relative term: there are groups that meet the function more fully than others. The greater the involvement of the personality, the greater the consensus on the greater number of objects, the greater the fulfilling of the expressive function. Simmel presents various points along the range, starting with the less expressive and moving to the more expressive: interest groups, confidence under more and less complex conditions, "acquaintance," friendship and love, and marriage.\textsuperscript{2}

Thus far we have been speaking of symmetrical expressive and affective relationships. What of the asymmetrical in which there is high disensus on the valuation and/or evaluation of the relation? Perhaps the most extreme case is that in which there is an imbalance in the cognitive sphere also. If B is not even aware of the high affective attitude of A, then A will probably initiate communication in order to increase consensus. On the other hand, if the affective relation is of a strong nature and is coupled with high insecurity, A may choose to try to repress or sublimate the affectivity. This problem of unrequited love has concerned the writer, poet, and songster

\textsuperscript{1}Goode, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 493f.

\textsuperscript{2}Simmel, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 317-329.
for centuries, yet there has been very little systematic scientific study. Let us now turn to the non-reciprocal instrumental relation, perhaps in number the most prevalent in modern society. It is this type of interaction that requires the least amount of consensus for integration and successful meeting of the function.

First, there probably must be cognitive consensus on the importance of $X_2$ to $A$—at least enough so that $B$ will concern himself with the problem. There need be little cognitive consensus on the actual nature of $X_2$ unless the particular circumstances of the relation demand it. The veterinarian need not see the dog in the same way that the master does. In fact, cognitive consensus might reduce the properly meeting of each one's role. $A$ may try to set up barriers to consensus on the valuation and cathetic response to $X_2$ for fear that $B$ may cease to help him attain it if $B$ finds it of equal worth to himself.

Joint relevance instrumental relations of the first type are of a multitude of types. The actual amount of consensus of what type on what depends to a great deal upon the particular circumstances. I can here only hope to demonstrate some of the range.

One type of joint relevance relation that requires very little consensus is that between underworld leaders and certain police and political officials. That such groups were very successful at achieving their goals is attested to by the wealth of some of the people involved. That they were very adaptable is apparent from the great difficulty in trying to crush the "rings." However, some of
major sources of the success lay in insulation and ignorance. No one was aware of the nature of the entire organization. Perhaps the chief thing that there had to be a fair amount of consensus on was cognition of the external world, both what should be acquired and what should be avoided. The cathetic, evaluative and motivational certainly varied from one person to another. If ever there were a symbiotic relation and nothing else, this is it.

The conditions and situation in a bureaucratic organization are considerably different. Here one thing that there must be consensus on is the nature of the organization and its hierarchy, at least that part of the hierarchy close to one's own level. Angell points out two functions of considerable consensus and communication: first, leaders can become aware of red-tape and bottlenecks and, second, the lower levels can act as a check on the leadership. However, it is interesting to note that often the possibility for subordinates to correct errors made by supervisors depends upon the supervisors ignorance of what actually is being done. Rose Coser points out some other functions of insulation. Too great an awareness by a supervisor of the fine details of the work of his subordinates may make the subordinates so concerned with pleasing him that their efficiency decreases. Also, insulation prevents the supervisor from becoming bogged-down in individualistic affective relations that would decrease his ability to supervise the bureaucratic whole in an efficient way. Insulation of the higher authorities also

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1 Angell, op.cit., pp. 93f.
2 R. Coser, op.cit., pp. 34-35.
protects him from rumor, hostilites of a personal nature, etc. The variables and fine distinctions concerning consensus in bureaucratic structures have just barely been toughed upon. Both high theory and empirical work are desperately needed. Rose Coser's article is an excellent start.

Edward Gross' study of symbiotic groups referred to earlier indicates that such relations are not dependent upon consensus on a wide variety of subjects or basic values, as was the case with the expressive groups studied by Newcomb. "When men became upset about their jobs or air site living conditions, they needed and sought help from others. The persons sought out were likely to be men who had solved those problems or could help the men in trouble solve the problems (e.g., the single man seeking out the married man), and as such were likely to be men unlike those who were seeking help." However, probably on a small group level such as that Gross studied there was considerable cognitive, cathetic, and evaluative consensus on the $X_2$ of the man in need. I am placing this example under reciprocal relations since the person sought out probably had needs of his met by the seeker, e.g., father-son surrogates. Whether this be true or not, Gross was studying groups that were groups over time to the extent that they comprised various types of informal groups. Thus, in terms of the extensiveness and stability of the system, these symbiotic groups were closer to joint relevance groups (the median of them) than to most one-way instrumental relations, the majority of which are probably of a very brief nature and to a great

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1E. Gross, *op.cit.*, p. 177.
extent act as temporary integrating links for the larger system.

Finally, let me turn to an ecological instrumental group: the neighborhood. In all of urban sociology there is probably no other area filled with as many biases and opinions and as little honest research and observation. I have explored these difficulties elsewhere. An inner-city neighborhood today is made up of a very heterogeneous group of people with diverse backgrounds, occupations, interests, values, etc. However, as Jane Jacobs has pointed out in her excellent book, many neighborhoods are highly integrated systems.

There is consensus on the cathetic and evaluative orientation to certain aspects of the neighborhood, such as the need for safety, community support, etc. There are multiple chains of communication to insure high cognitive consensus on facts about the neighborhood. Twenty-four people can be concerned about the safety of one girl. A store owner will do upwards of one hundred different services not connected with the profit making operation of his store in one day. There is enough consensus of all three types about these aspects of a neighborhood that there is a purposive building of barriers to prevent too complete contact between people that would involve too much of their personalities and bring in extraneous issues that might disrupt the instrumental functioning. In many housing developments one has to become completely involved with other people or not at all: most people chose the latter and the instrumental function is not met.

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The disruptive result of too great a knowledge about the other members of the neighborhood is one example of our $X_3$ diagram. Knowledge about the other persons private life, religion, values and attitudes on things other than the smooth integration of the neighborhood can be dysfunctional. And yet, unless there are special, quite severe, mechanisms set up, these extraneous issues of high importance to someone in the interaction are bound to enter in over time. Perhaps it is that desire for closure and the comfort of knowing that others think they way oneself does; perhaps it is just the natural curiosity; perhaps it is in the nature of interactions that there will be a tendency to spread into new areas of conversation over time—whatever the cause, $X_3$ is bound to enter in eventually.

The recent racial history of the United States provides a case in point. As long as the North and South were essentially different worlds only economically connected through impersonal chains, the two opposing racial systems continued. However, with increased travel and communication the inherent conflict between the views became apparent and of importance to each. Further, the increased interchange met that the Negroes of the South could become more aware of the deprivations they were living under. Such factors are admittedly only partial explanations for the present interest, but they are factors.

On the other hand, one of the best ways to bring about increased consensus is to include the actors in the same perceptual and communicative network, as we have seen. Hence, the very cause of the friction
is, over a longer time span, one of the chief ways of overcoming the tension. This analysis raises interesting procedural questions. Should one attempt to increase communication before it increases of its own accord and thereby attempt to speed up the process of arriving at consensus?

As the reader may have noticed, the above developed skeleton better fits goal-attainment instrumental activity that it does adaptive. How much consensus is needed in a rapidly changing environment? First, the solidarity of the group must be assured. There can be no question of loyalty in a time of crisis. The number of values basic to a system increases under stress: more issues are ruled out of bounds. They are ruled out, not because of any intrinsic aspect, but because the group must be assured of loyalty. The Jesuits are completely dedicated to faithful obedience to the Pope. There is no questioning of their loyalty. Because of this certainty, the Jesuits have probably had more free range of thought and criticism of the Church than any other group within the Church.

Once loyalty is assured, deviance may be tolerated, in fact, prescribed for certain roles such as "star," "stranger," or "fool." Such deviance is allowed because the individuals in the system have in the past been rewarded for wide searching to come up with new ways of meeting changed conditions.\(^1\) The more lax the society, chances are the greater its adaptability. Leaders must be given certain amounts of laxity, whether by consensus on the value or by mechanisms of insulation or ritual (the latter especially among non-literate groups), if they are going to be able to see the changed circumstances.

\(^1\) \text{L. Coser, "Some Functions . . .," pp. 176-81.}
with enough accuracy to be able to lead the people in their adaptation. Further, a society that allows deviance will be in a better position to accept any changes that are demanded by the changed circumstances. Even Angell says:

A loosely-structured society is marked by alternatives, by toleration, and by indeterminate associations. On the theory that ambiguity should make for easy entry of new traits, one would expect loosely structured societies to be less closed-minded than tightly structured ones.¹

In this last section I would like to briefly mention some other observations on consensus and conflict which, while they do not necessarily fit the scheme proposed above and in fact help show some of its limitation and "middle-range" nature, do provide interesting "food for thought."

First, several writers have pointed to the fact that too much consensus and mutual predictability may destroy a system through ennui. Homans refers to satiation; Yrjö Littunen, to social fatigue; Gouldner, to entropy because of habituation of con-forming responses.² Lewis Coser quotes Yrjö Littunen as saying:

"Persons who have to maintain a monotonous interaction pattern for a long period of time tend to become bored with each other. This phenomenon of social fatigue may be understood as a situation where there is no excitement in the interaction to maintain the cohesiveness, to increase liking."³

¹ Angell, op.cit., p. 141.
² L. Coser, "Some Functions . . .," pp. 178f.
³ Ibid., p. 179.
Simmel makes the same point as follows:

Concord, harmony, co-efficacy, which are unquestionably held to be socializing forces, must nevertheless be interspersed with distance, competition, repulsion, in order to yield the actual configuration of society. The solid, organizational forms which seem to constitute or create society, must constantly be disturbed, disbalanced, gnawed-at by individualistic, irregular forces, in order to gain their vital reaction and development through submission and resistance. Intimate relations, whose formal medium is physical and psychological nearness, lose their attractiveness, even the content of their intimacy, as soon as the close relationship does not also contain, simultaneously and alternatingly, distances and intermissions. Finally, and this is the decisive point: although reciprocal knowledge conditions relationships positively, after all, it does not do this by itself alone. Relationships being what they are, they also presuppose a certain ignorance and a measure of mutual concealment, even though this measure varies immensely to be sure.\(^1\)

Also, the lack of conflict may reflect an awareness of the basic instability of the system and of the fact that little is keeping it integrated. In reformulating and advancing an idea of Simmel's, Lewis Coser writes:

The absence of conflict cannot be taken as an index of the strength and stability of a relationship. Stable relationships may be characterized by conflicting behavior. Closeness gives rise to frequent occasions for conflict, but if the participants feel that their relationships are tenuous, they will avoid conflict, fearing that it might endanger the continuance of the relation. When close relationships are characterized by frequent conflicts rather than by the accumulation of hostile and ambivalent feelings, we may be justified, given that such conflicts are not likely to concern basic consensus, in taking these frequent conflicts as an index of the stability of those relationships.

In secondary relationships, where we are initially justified in expecting relatively less intense conflicts owing to the segmental involvement of the participants, the presence of conflict may be taken as an index of the operation of a balancing mechanism.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Simmel, *op. cit.*, pp. 315f.

Coser also points out that conflict is one way of acquiring knowledge about an initial stranger. The conflict provides a "test" of the other person and an opportunity to "know" him in a rather intimate way. How many fights does a new boy to a school have to engage in or avoid in the process of getting acquainted?

In conclusion I would like to quote an observation of Edward Gross. In his study of the Air Force man, he measured the degree of group cohesion: how well the members liked the informal small groups that they belonged to. He discovered that four out of the five highly cohesive groups were symbiotic and four out of five of the moderately cohesive were consensual. Gross concludes:

In terms of the family of concepts of which they are members, symbiosis is probably generally stronger than consensus. That distinguishes symbiosis most clearly is that it implies a segmented relation and is least dependent for its operation on positive feelings. The relation between the shoemaker and the customer is symbiotic; each has something that the other needs—service, on the one hand, and money, on the other. As long as those needs persist, and as long as each has no easy alternative way of satisfying those needs, then the two will be linked. This does not mean that they will necessarily like each other; it does mean that they will remain united whether they like each other or not. And therein lies the strength of the symbiotic tie. Consensus, by contrast, depends wholly on the strength of positive feelings. Anything, therefore, which produces disharmony or a conflict of views is likely to break up a consensual group. It is, potentially, more unstable.

Except for groups with very high cathetic and evaluative orientations toward each other that are in high consensus and are associated with consensus on broad issues and basic values, e.g., successful family life, I think Gross is close to the truth.

1 Ibid., pp. 122ff.
2 E. Gross, op.cit., p. 178.
3 Ibid., p. 179.


Pp. 64-99.

