

## COMMUNITY ACTION ANALYSIS: A COMPARISON AND EVALUATION OF SEVERAL SOCIOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS\*

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In the study of social phenomena and human life what we can immediately observe is social action. Although sociologists have long acknowledged that it is this action which provides us a clue for the study of social relationships, social structure, and organizational behavior, structural analysis rather than direct action analysis was predominant until recently.

Several writers have developed conceptual frameworks or theoretical models which are theoretically sound and empirically useful for understanding the process of action at either the community level or more broadly, the societal level. Examples are Green and Mayo's (1953) article, "A Framework for Research in the Actions of Community Groups," Sower and his associates' (1957) *Community Involvement*, Warren's (1963) *The Community in America*, and Sutton's (1953) "A Conceptual Scheme for the Sociological Analysis of Election Campaigns," and also his most recently developed model in an unpublished paper, "Toward a Conceptual Framework for the Sociological Analysis of Complex Action." (1973).

Three of these frameworks (those of Green and Mayo, Sower, et al., and Warren) may be characterized as "social systems" models—each of these models focuses on action or a series of actions as a system or quasi-system. Such a system is relatively static, with equilibrium and functional interdependence among the parts. This framework essentially may be located within the structural functionalist tradition. The remaining framework (Sutton) represents the interactionist perspective. Instead of a fixed system, this model focuses upon a dynamic, ongoing process or processes of action.

The purpose of this paper is to examine each of these two basic models and their theoretical and methodological differences. Further, each model's empirical usefulness in relation to its applicability to the different

\* This article is a revised version of the paper "Community Action Analysis: An Extension and Application of the Interactionist Perspective" presented at the annual meeting of the Illinois Sociological Association, 1977.

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scopes or levels and types of action process will be discussed.

### 1. Green and Mayo (1953), A Framework for Research in the Actions of Community Groups

In 1953, Green and Mayo, in their paper "A Framework for Research in the Actions of Community Groups," argued that most community studies in which the group or organization itself was the unit of analysis did not meet sufficiently the twin aims of understanding and predicting group actions under given conditions. Instead of structural analysis, Green and Mayo believed a more direct approach, i.e., focusing attention on action *per se*, would be preferable. Thus, the authors proposed a framework in which an "action" itself was the unit of analysis; this unit of analysis was believed to be more useful for understanding the process of action by which organized groups meet needs in the community. They organized their discussion into four parts: (1) a classification of action; (2) a technique for locating community group actions; (3) steps in the analysis of actions; and (4) some implications. Green and Mayo first present a scheme encompassing five independent variables which are claimed to be most crucial as criteria for classifying each action encountered. These are: (1) locale, (2) temporal limits, (3) action orientation, (4) action objects, and (5) the actor. Next, they suggest that community actions may be located by a community reconnaissance. The primary reason for making a reconnaissance is to locate the formal organizations which carry out the actions to be analyzed within the community area.

The authors note that since an action as a problem-solving process in time has a beginning and an end, their framework is essentially a sequential one which can be looked at in terms of four stages. These stages are:

1. The initiation of action of "idea"
2. Goal definition and planning for achievement
3. The implementation of plans
4. Goal achievement and consequences

Each of these stages, the authors further suggest, may be perceived by the observer in terms of the three traditionally designated modes or orientation of the actor: the cognitive—"what is it?"—the affective—"how does it affect us?"—and the conative—"what should we do about it?"

#### 1. The Stage of the Initiation of Action

An action begins with a recognition of a need external to the group. A simple recognition of a need, however, is not a sufficient condition to lead to an action. The authors argue that actions seldom follow from a simple intellectual perception of the need disposition; usually required is an emotional or optative reaction to the need by the initiator—liking, disliking, approval, disapproval, etc.

According to the authors, this initial phase of the analysis can be carried out step by step as follows. The first step is a search for the genesis of the action; that is, within the organization, who first becomes cognitively and affectively oriented toward need? In other terms, who is the initiator(s) of the action within the organization?

The second step is to find out the channels of communication; by what means was the proposal communicated by the initiator to the organization?

The third step in this phase can be posed as a question: In what manner was the proposal recongized and adopted by the group as an area for possible group action? Was the pattern of group action or method of decision-making democratic or authoritarian?

The fourth and final step is that of determining the affective orientation of both the proposing agency and receiving body. If a proposal was made by the higher echelon of the organization, proposing a particular type of action, may be, for example, a traditional means of maintaining control over the component units. If proposals were initiated by planning bodies of individuals within the organization, the affective orientation may be related to, for instance, a means of gaining prestige or gaining power.

## 2. The Stage of Goal Definition and Planning for Achievement

The authors here note that three questions need to be answered initially: (1) When did goal setting and planning take place? (2) By whom was it done? (3) How was it accomplished? The first question is concerned with the temporal aspect of when the goal was defined in concrete terms in detail and when a strategic plan of attack was adopted. For the second question, agents of the action may be the entire organization or a sub-unit within the organization. The third question refers to its mode of operation; for example, are the goal defining and planning a product of democratic group effort? The answers to these three questions, the when, by whom, and how done, give the essential structural-functional components of this stage of the action.

## 3. The Stage of Implementation of Plans

The major job in this stage is a recording of deviations both additions to and deletions from the plans made for goal achievement. In this connection, specifically, two questions should be answered: what changes were made—their nature and extent, and, why were they made?

## 4. The Stage of Goal Achievement Consequences

The focus of analysis in this stage is on deviations, that is, those differences between the goal originally defined and as actually achieved. Here again, some questions are asked: what are the deviations from the original definition, and, why was each made? Another focus of analysis concerns

consequential effects of the achieved goal on other areas of life or organized activities or on the future status of affairs.

## II. Sower et al. (1957), A Model for Community Action

In the early 1950s Sower and his associates developed a conceptual model by which they attempted to study the process of a self-survey in health which was undertaken by a midwestern community. For Sower, et. al. the "flow of action" is continuous from the time that the idea for a particular action is introduced into a social unit until it has been rejected, completed, or has failed. In other words, according to the authors the flow of action can be regarded as a natural history which may be placed upon a time line and understood in terms of the specific sequence of events. The authors conceive of the flow of action as a continuous process including a series of phases which are convenient markers along a time dimension. These phases of the flow of action can be briefly described as follows:

- phase I : Crisis or Problem stage—The regular processes which are occurring in the community.
- phase II : Effect of the problem on the process.
- phase III Resolution or Failure stage—Attempts at solution of the Problem.
- phase IV : Processes necessary to re-establish community equilibrium as a result of the resolution or failure to resolve the problem.
- phase V : Equilibrium or Disequilibrium stage—establishment of a new equilibrium, similar but also somewhat different from the equilibrium, which was obtained prior to the social processes which have not taken place.

Sower, et. al. raise the question of how to describe the relationships between "events" as they take place in the action process and as they lead into the development of different phases. For this problem, the authors propose an "analytical tool which freezes the action process long enough for some explanation to be made of it, even though in reality the process does not stop." (p. 307) This "analytical tool" consists of five analytical components by which the action process may be analyzed. These analytical components of the action sequence are: (1) convergence of interest; (2) establishment of an initiating set; (3) legitimation and sponsorship; (4) establishment of an execution set and mobilization of community resources; and (5) fulfillment of "charter."

### *Analytical Elements in the Action Sequence*

#### 1. Convergence of interest

In order for action to take place at all, first there must be some con-

vergence of interests of those *actors* in the social system who had appropriate sentiments, beliefs and/or purposes with reference to a problem.

## 2. Establishment of an initiating set

Through convergence of interests, a group is established which is concerned with initiation of an action process. The establishment of such an initiating set leads to the development of a common frame of reference which requires: (1) "that the relationships between actors whose interests converge are such that there is a basis for *internal organization*" and (2) "that common group *ends* or *goals* be established. The goals become the charter which formalizes the relationship established" (p. 310). This charter should be justifiable not only in terms of group goals but also individual goals and interest. Furthermore, agreement on the charter requires the groups believe it can be done.

## 3. Legitimation and Sponsorship

The next necessary condition for the flow of action is legitimation of the right to initiate action. In a special case, such rights may be contained wholly within the initiation set itself. But in the general case, *authorization* is diffused throughout the community. Hence, the initiation set must obtain access to groups, formal social structures, and influential persons whose sponsorship or approval can legitimate action (p. 310).

## 4. Establishment of an execution set

The personnel of the execution set become involved through the channels which exist in the community prior to the development of the action sequence. The channels which may be used are classified as follows: (1) organizations, (2) influentials (actors with prestige, social status, or good will throughout the community, or actors with specific positions within a formal organization), (3) cliques (based on friendship), (4) propinquity (the fact of residence or neighborhood relationships), (5) kinship, and (6) other channels (such as voluntary participants with special interests or idiosyncratic motives).

The authors further point out that the process of involvement requires more than appropriate channels. It may require *skills*, *strategies*, *appeals to sentiments*, and manipulation of appropriate *symbols* to justify the charter to the execution set. Also, the authors suggest that resources of the community such as skills and technology, and "fund of good will" etc. are necessary.

## 5. Fulfillment of charter

Fulfillment of the charter means "that the process of attaining the goal is made concrete." "Obviously, however, this element never appears in an action sequence which has been aborted."

## *Categories Used to Obtain Data*

Finally, the authors present several major categories which are used for the collection of appropriate data, although most of these categories are clearly indicated from the above action model. These are: (1) social actors, (2) relationships between actors, (3) relationships between actor and organizations, (4) relationships of other organizations to the self-survey system, (5) event, and (6) relevant symbols and sentiments.

## II. Warren (1963), Five Stage Model

Warren distinguishes "community action episodes" from other social processes occurring in the community. Unlike other social processes, community action episodes have *beginnings* and *endings* and some purposes to be accomplished. Such episodes involve a *process of organization* and *task performance* toward the achievement of the purposes, which in the process may be modified. Like Sower and his associates, Warren also sees community action as an "ad hoc system" comprising not the community but rather a "special system" within the community which arises out of a task to be performed and may disappear after the task performance has taken place. Furthermore, the special action systems involved in the community action episodes engage in both "task performance" and in "system-maintenance" behavior. Warren also suggests that the development of the action system can be analyzed in terms of a sequence of stages. Community action systems, according to Warren, pass through:

1. initial systemic environment
2. inception of the action system
3. expansion of the action system
4. operation of the expanded action system, and
5. transformation of the action system.

### 1. Initial Systematic Environment

In regard to this initiating stage, Warren raises a question: "In what ways can a new community action system be related to the existing systematic organization of the community?" (p. 315). He suggests that there are two primary foci of investigation: (a) the "conditions" of the existing system which are favorable to the inception of the particular community action system, and (b) the "systematic patterns" for community action which already exist in the community.

### 2. Inception of the Action System

In this stage of inception of the action system, Warren points out, several factors should be considered. The first concern is its "locus within the existing systematic environment." It may originate with a particular formal organization or the informal structure of the community. Likewise, the action system may arise primarily on the initiative of local people or under the stimulation of an outside agent.

The second problem to be considered is "the relation of the newly instituted action system to those other systems in the community which the action system must eventually involve in various ways in order for the action to be accomplished" (p. 317).

### 3. Expansion of the Action System

In this stage, Warren says, the principal question to be asked is: "For what purpose are additional individuals or groups to be brought into the action system?" For example, they may be brought in "to support or sustain or help carry out the necessary functions of the action system itself," or they may be brought in "to support or sustain the ultimate achievement toward which the action system is working" (p. 317).

### 4. Operation of the Expanded Action System

According to Warren, this phase includes, though not invariably, the carrying out of an extensive operation involving a large number of people or groups. For instance, it may actually constitute the stage in which the community action, as such, gets done, as in a community clean-up campaign. Or, it may be that the principal activity is the development of a set of plans for something which is yet to come, like a new organization (p. 319).

### 5. Transformation of the Action System

As the ad hoc community action ends, the action system may have various fates. It may have arisen to accomplish some task and then dissolve. It may have arisen to become transformed into a future action system. In any case, what Warren is concerned with here is the systematic residue or results of the community action (p. 319).

### *A Model of the Task Accomplishment Process*

Warren suggests that the "action system" should be distinguished from the task itself, or the "task accomplishment process." Warren's model of the task accomplishment process consists of five stages: (1) awareness of problem or goal; (2) gathering facts; (3) seeking possible solutions; (4) choosing a course of action; and (5) implementation. These stages do not correspond precisely to the stages in the development of the action system. For instance, though both the action system and the task action begin simultaneously at phase 1, phases 2,3,4, of the task process may be included in the stage 2, expansion of the action system or in the system 3, operational stage of the action system. This disparity is primarily related to the many possible purposes involved in the expansion of the action system or in the operation of the expanded system.

In relation to this, Warren mentions that both the action system and the task-accomplishment process may have subphases which in themselves constitute little cycles which may undergo one or more of the stages

of the large process. However, Warren does not discuss in detail about these subphases or little cycles (p. 320.)

#### IV. Sutton, Willis A., Jr. (1953, 1973), A Conceptual Framework for the Sociological Analysis of Complex Action

In 1953 Sutton devised a conceptual scheme for the sociological analysis of election campaigns. In this conceptual scheme, which was applied to the analysis of the Talmadge election campaigns, Sutton suggested that the campaign process or action may be analyzed in terms of three fundamental components: (1) key actors; (2) organizations; and (3) ideas. Thus, in the case of elections, campaign structures are viewed as configurations of candidates, organizations and appeals, each of which is in turn related to a personality structure, a social structure and a value structure on the societal level.

In his latest work, not yet published, Sutton (1972) presents a conceptual framework for the sociological analysis of complex action where the basic unit of analysis is the "action course." According to Sutton, an "action course" is conceived as "any series of interaction events integrated and bounded by a common close relevance to some question, problem, or item of collective interest to a relatively numerous set of persons and groups comprising the main decision makers in the events."

The aforementioned definition of "action course" as a unit of analysis contains several implications. First, it is defined as a series of events which has a temporal structure having a *beginning* and an *end*. This temporal structure can be clearly grasped by either actors or observers. The second implication is that the action or course is a sequence of *interaction* events integrated and bounded by a common close relevance. Interaction based on a common relevance may be understood as that which Alfred Schutz calls typification of human interaction derived from a common relevance. This means an action course possesses an internal structure or pattern which is recognizable by actors and analyzable by observers. Third, related to the second implication, a common close *relevance* may be derived from several factors. One is the geographical relevance, i.e., the *locality* or area which is shared by local citizens. Another may be a *historical* or *socio-cultural* relevance which is related to some specific problems or interests within the community. A fourth implication is that an action course starts with some question, problem or item of collective interest and thus the action course can be seen as a problem-solving or decision-making process concerning problems and interests which are carried out by a relatively numerous set of persons and groups of people through a certain period. Finally, as Sutton points out, the phrase "action course" is used to stress the fact that such streams of interaction consist of numerous *interrelated sequences of acts* which constitute several phases



or subphases. After all, his framework is formulated for analysis of “complex action.”

For the analysis and understanding of this action course, Sutton provides several different “dimensions” of description and analysis. These dimensions include:

1. The Phenomenal Stream
2. Analytical Elements: a. goals, b. procedural framework, c. cast, d. social organization, e. appeals, and f. temporal structure
3. The Encompassing Gestalt: a. The actioncycle as the dynamic whole including background, results, and action pattern, and b. social context as the structural whole
4. The Encompassed Units—micro action analysis
5. Comparisons and Strategic Analysis

### 1. The Phenomenal Stream

According to Sutton, the “Phenomenal Stream” is “a chronological listing of events developed as basic data. It is a record of the unfolding series of acts—from the *start* to the end of the action course.” This phenomenal stream is made up of “behavior units” and a series of events which can be used as the stuff or raw material for analysis of action courses.

### 2. Analytical Elements

#### a. Goals (the Goal Pattern)

Goals refer to “the purposes, objectives, ends, intended outcomes which constitute the main thrust of an action course.” An important point here is that goals are *intended outcomes* held by different major actors or sides in the action. In addition they may be viewed as the apparent “set of constraints” that are indeed in operation.

With regard to the goal pattern, Sutton suggests the following dimensions of variation:

- i) number of goals
- ii) the clarity, specificity, consistency aspect
- iii) the characteristics of goal patterns, that is,
  - a) are they “task” efforts or “identity-maintenance efforts?
  - b) are they developmental or remedial in nature?
  - c) what are the geographic scopes of the goal?
  - d) what are the substantive or functional character of the goals—welfare, education, economy, etc.?
- iv) Internal structure of goal relationships, that is,
  - a) is there any “goal contest?”
  - b) what is the structure of goal linkage?
- v) Changing aspects of the goals.
- b. Procedural Frame

“This aspect of the structure of action,” Sutton says, “refers to the de-

gree and type of 'given' framework of steps and procedures according to which a decision on the matter at issue will be reached." The following dimensions are suggested as aspects to be considered regarding frames or patterns:

- i) Institutionalization: whether institutionalized steps are present or not.
- ii) Locus of ultimate authority for decision: who has the ultimate authority for decision-making?
- iii) Temporal frame: is there any time limitation for the decision-making or problem-solving?
- iv) Geographical realm: the local, the local and outside, or nationwide-problem?
- v) The changing aspect of procedural frame.

c. Cast

"Cast" refers to the "set of active units." Cast consists of "keyactors" and "active participants" (next important actors). The following dimensions are relevant for analysis here:

- i) Are actors unified or polarized (two sides, three sides or multi-sided)?
- ii) From what level of "role representativeness" did the actors come?
- iii) What was the network of communication between them?
- iv) Change through time with regard to any of the above dimensions of cast.

d. Social Organization

This consists of "those units which are not likely to act corporately but which are significant because of being *targets, recipients, audiences, publics, constituencies*, etc. of any action." Several questions are relevant here. For example, what are relationships between actors, targets, recipients, constituents, and "unrepresented" groups? or, what is the level of public concern and general interest manifested or its level of influence on the action course?

e. Appeals

We are concerned here with values, beliefs, rationalizations, ideologies and symbol usages, etc., which are developed within the action course to "tie" social organizational elements to actors of positions. Some questions are significant with regard to appeals: such as were the appeals and values used in the action course mainly those characterized as "substantive" or as "procedural?" or were slogans used effectively or not in the action course?

f. The Temporal Pattern

With regard to this analytical element Sutton suggests that a complex phenomenal stream of interaction which is an ongoing process may be subdivided into events, episodes, stages or sub-courses in terms of the temporal pattern or structure. Two dimensions are particularly relevant

to this element. One is "duration," that is, how long does an action course last and when did it start and end? The other is the consideration of number of matters in terms of sequence or juxtaposition. Concepts of *stage*, *episode*, *event*, etc., are a part of this realm.

### 3. *The Encompassing Gestalt*

While it is possible to analyze the internal structure of pattern of the "action course" as an isolated system on an analytical level, in reality it is never isolated from surrounding environment or from the total social system. Thus, Sutton suggests that we need to see that the "background", the "action course" itself, and the "result" of the action course, all together, constitute a "dynamic whole" (the action cycle). Also, in order to understand the action course more realistically it should be looked at in relation to its social context. Thus, Sutton points out that it is important to understand the action course by means of which ultimately we can study the "action pattern" of the society and community on the macro-level.

### 4. *The Encompassing Units*

In this section Sutton suggests that there may be a use to direct analytical attention to micro-level analysis in order to understand complex action. Here it is pointed out that each "event" or "episode" or "stage" etc. could be taken as the focal unit of analysis.

## V. Comparison of the Frameworks

Since the models of action analysis serve as the frameworks for the study of action or interaction processes and determine, to a large degree, what kinds of data will be collected and even how a researcher will organize and interpret the collected data, it seems logical to examine the theoretical assumptions and propositions underlying each of the models before comparing the methodological aspects of the models. Among the four models previously outlined, the three by Green and Mayo, Sower and his associates, and Warren share very similar theoretical assumptions.

First, all of these three models are based on the assumption that the unit of analysis, either action (Green and Mayo) or a series of actions (the "flow of action" for Sower et. al. and "action episode" for Warren), is conceived as a *system* or *quasi-system* having an internal structure, and a temporal boundary, a beginning and an end. Thus, one may label each of these models as a "social system model," which assumes that the collectivity, or the collectivity's action as a social system, consists of identifiable parts and properties which are mutually interdependent, so that each part influences all the others and is in turn influenced by them; and together the several parts form the system. as a whole. Basically this approach is derived from structural-functionalism, which is mainly con-

cerned with the problem of how interdependent parts are integrated and how the equilibrium of the system is maintained.

Accordingly, the above three models further assume that the unit of action analysis is subject to regularities of human interaction common to all social systems. The authors believe that equilibrium and order in the social system are of an *a priori* nature, and any action system which starts with a problem or crisis in equilibrium is viewed as a process moving toward restoring the equilibrium and a new order. On the other hand, however, Sower et. al. and Warren recognize that the system of action is also subject to irregularities of interaction provoked by its temporary and relatively unstable nature. Thus Sower et al. and Warren deal with the action system as a *special* or *ad hoc* system which arises out of a task to be performed and may disappear as the task performance is done. The implication here is that Sower et al. and Warren believe there are two (or maybe more) kinds of social systems which can be grasped by observers. One is a stable system in which interdependent parts are well-integrated and which thus maintains certain regularities of human interaction. The other one, the so-called "quasi" or "special" system, is also a social system with stability and equilibrium. However, this special system is different from the general social system in the sense that the system of action is particularly subject to irregularities of interaction and is less stable in comparison with the larger social system because of its temporary nature.

In contrast to this systems approach, Sutton views social reality, which may be manifested as a society, as community phenomena, as a formal social organization, or as an informal social structure, in the light of the existence of articulated social action or interaction process rather than in terms of a static system based on the integration of functionally interdependent parts and equilibrium with an *a priori* order. Although Sutton also shares the idea that the "action course" has an internal structure or pattern which can be grasped by an observer in terms of its regularities of interaction processes, he does not believe this internal structure or interaction pattern has a form established *a priori*. Rather, as all other symbolic interactionists are inclined to believe, Sutton thinks that the internal structure of social action or the pattern of interaction processes is what it is as a result of processes of human interaction and social relationships which may be somewhat standardized and regularized by shared meaning, values, beliefs, and even sentiments through communication (or symbolic interaction) but which are also constantly subject to modifications as well as to renewal and revalidation.

Thus, to Sutton, a social system is never static although it may have a stable internal structure. Social reality is seen as a stream of action rather than as a fixed entity. This stream of action, or what is called the "phenomenal stream" turns out to be a real entity only when its meaning

is shared by actors in a given situation.

This difference in theoretical orientation and dominant assumptions between the "system model" and "interactional model" has significance for their methodological approach. As for the system approach, for example, the actor as a person who acts in terms of what Warriner (1970) calls the unique "internal or subjective mental processes" is not so important as the position the actor occupies in a particular system. This tendency is very explicit in the work of Green and Mayo and Sower et al. For example, Green and Mayo are concerned about whether a proposal was made by the higher echelon of the organization or by planning bodies in the first stage of the initiation of action. Sower et al. also posit their research problem as "how does a temporary social action system, utilize and rearticulate the *positions* within an existing social unit?" Warren is less explicit in regard to this approach. Nevertheless, Green and Mayo and Sower, et al. and Warren are also mainly concerned with organizational functions rather than individual attributes.

In contrast, Sutton seems to deal with actors as persons rather than as incumbents of positions and fonctionnaires. Almost by definition, this tendency is inherent in the symbolic interactionist approach. For example, in Sutton's framework one of the most important analytical elements is comprised of the actors (what he calls "cast"). For the analysis of action course in terms of cast, the "identity," "legitimacy," and "communication" etc. appear as important aspects to study, although he does not neglect the importance of the actor's positions or "functional alignments." Furthermore, whereas the system model focuses on organizational relationships in the action system, de-emphasizing the importance of individual actors, in Sutton's interactional model individual actors are seen as mediators of organizational relationships, one of the most important elements.

The theoretical difference between the above two approaches brings about another very important difference in their methodological approach. As already discussed, all writers of the system model approach attempt to describe the social phenomena or the action system in terms of phases or stages. The implicit assumption here is that each action or series of actions as a system begins with "crisis," "problem," or "felt need" which disturbs the existing order and equilibrium of the system. Since order or equilibrium is inherent in any system, the action system moves from this crisis, problem, or felt need which brings about disequilibrium toward solution of the crisis, problem or felt need in order to restore the system's equilibrium. Here the concrete individual actors are not so important because the action system itself is supposed to move from tension toward tension reduction, from a state of heightened motivation toward motivation reduction, or from disequilibrium toward equilibrium. Based on this implicit theoretical assumption, the system theorists are inclined to

view the action system in terms of phases or stages. Although each writer uses slightly different words or stages, the fundamental idea is the same: the action system starts off as crisis or disequilibrium and ends with solution of the crisis or equilibrium through the process of problem-solving.

Sutton, on the other hand, attacks the problem of action analysis in a quite different manner. Although he also sees the "action course" as having a temporal structure with a beginning and an end, his first step for the analysis of the action flow is to grasp the whole "phenomenal stream" as it is, having no presupposition that, for instance, the phenomenal stream by itself has an *a priori* "directionality." For Sutton, what is certain in any action course or episode is not a teleological order, equilibrium or directionality, but the actors "desired," "expected," or "projected" future states and "intended" outcomes or goals. Thus, in Sutton's framework, the most important elements for the action analysis are cast (actors), goals (desired outcomes) and various constraints and resources (appeals, procedural frame, and financial resources, etc.). In comparison with the systems model, in which phases or stages are the main elements for the action analysis, this is a very important difference. As a matter of fact, Sutton is not sure whether we have sufficient empirical support for building such a model as that of phases or stages and he suggests that postulation of different stages in the action flow can be more useful after more empirical work is done.

Another major dissimilarity between the aforementioned models is found in their methodological (of course, also theoretical) applicability to different types or levels of social phenomena. Although these words, "types" or "levels" of social reality may sound awkward or ambiguous, many theorists have been suggesting that there is a need to call analytical attention to the structural *level* "just below it" as well as upon the structural unit "just larger" (Sutton 1972). While this term "level" suggests that one can classify social reality up and down analytically, the term "types" of social reality is used here in a different way. By the types of social phenomena the writer means different kinds of action systems or action courses which move in their own way within the same level or between different levels. Green and Mayo's framework, for example, is not concerned with different types or levels of social action. Rather their model deals primarily with the fulfillment of "felt need" or task performance activity which arises in a community and is carried out by a specific organization or organizations.

On the other hand, Sower's or Warren's framework of action analysis provides actually two different models which can be applied to different types of action systems. Sower's model of "five-phases" or Warren's model of "five-stages" are mainly concerned with the analysis of community action in a total social organizational level whereas each of them have a second type of model which focuses on the task accomplishment or a speci-

fic goal achievement. These types of models in the framework of Sower or Warren may be applied to two different types of action systems which might be parallel to the same temporal structure or move together simultaneously between different levels of social reality. This is a significant distinction between the early work of Green and Mayo and the later models of Sower, et al. and Warren. Furthermore, Warren is concerned not only with different types of action systems in a given period of time, but also with different levels of social structure. This is explicit in his suggestion that both his "five-stages" model and task-accomplishment process have subphases which in themselves constitute a little cycle which may go through one or more of the stages of the larger processes.

Concerning the different levels of social phenomena, Sutton's model is most explicit and elaborates this problem further. According to Sutton, the phenomenal stream in a given period of time can be looked at analytically in three (or more) different ways in the context of different levels of social reality. First, one can, or should, look at what Marcel Mauss called the "total social phenomenon" in order to understand the social reality as it is. Sutton designates this total social reality as an "action cycle" in his framework. Here we need a holistic or macroscopic approach to understand the social phenomena. The second level of the social reality with which Sutton is concerned is called an "action course." This level of analysis is roughly equivalent to Warren's action system or "action episode" which is the immediate object of analysis. Finally, like Warren, Sutton also points out that there is a need to see the action flow at a micro-level. Here it is suggested that the action analysis in terms of "event," "episode," or "stage" is relevant.

Although the main focus thus far has been on the differences, there are many similarities between the models, too. Besides some of the major similarities which have been discussed already, here a few others will be briefly pointed out. Whereas Green and Mayo were mainly concerned with the analysis of action which was regarded as a problem-solving process by a specific organization(s), Sower et al., Warren, and Sutton think that their models are applicable to either task accomplishment or group maintenance process or both together. All of them assume that there is a goal(s) in the setting, however, and both Warren and Sutton suggest that the goal of action may be set up at the beginning of the action flow or emerge late in the development of the action system. Sutton, however, going one step further, suggests the possibility of a goal contest which may be a source of conflict.

Furthermore, while all of the authors seem concerned about the background and consequence of the action flow, this is made particularly explicit in Warren's and Sutton's framework. Thus, Warren discusses the relationship between the existing system of the community and a new community action system in the first stage of his model ("Initial systema-

tic environment"). Warren also gives attention to the consequences of the action system which may be related to the future action system ("Transformation of the action system"). In addition to this, he is also concerned with the posture of the action system toward the established power structure of the community. In a similar manner, Sutton also suggests that the background as well as results should be considered for a full understanding of the action course. In fact, Sutton is concerned with more than the prior-and post-phenomena of the action course. In the "encompassing Gestalt" of his framework, Sutton points out that one should look at action courses in terms of the whole social context at a macro-level, let alone the background and results. In relation to the background of the action system, Warren asks the question, what "systematic patterns" or "channels" for community action already exist in the community. This problem is also well discussed in Sutton's framework in terms of "procedural frame." Although there appear to be more similarities and differences among the models, more discussion in detail may not be necessary. However, one final comment, if necessary at all, can be made in regard to Warren's model. That is, Warren discusses the problem of a change agent's or consultant's intervention in the community action. Sutton, on the other hand, does not deal with this problem separately. This may be so because Sutton is more concerned with "pure sociology" whereas Warren is interested in community development. Thus Warren's framework appears to have the flavor of a "clinical model" for community action.

## VI. Final Comments

Thus far, the hidden or explicit theoretical as well as methodological assumptions on which each of the four models of action analysis is based have been discussed. Also, it has been shown that the major differences in methodological approaches were not made by accident but rather were derived from and logically related to the dominant assumptions or theoretical orientations which the authors seem to keep in mind.

One final comment seems necessary in regard to the "system model." As repeatedly mentioned, system theorists believe that the social order and equilibrium of the social system are *a priori* or self-determining. However, strictly speaking, there is no reason to believe that such an *a priori* self-determining order exists on the basis of "human nature" or "laws of sociology." If one believes the latter, it is a simple belief—metaphysical and beyond empirical verification, not a scientific fact. It should be kept in mind that it is dangerous to see social phenomena or the history of mankind in terms of a metaphysical presupposition which posits "the stages" of social phenomena or history. The risk here is that social reality can "readily become distorted into a trans-historical strait-



jacket into which the materials of human history are forced and out of which issue prophetic views (usually gloomy ones) of the future.” (Mills 1959, p. 22-23) Furthermore, a formal characteristic of systems theory based on a presupposition of “the nature of man and society” tends “to deal in conceptions intended to be of use in classifying all social relations and providing insight into their supposedly invariant features.” (Mills, *ibid*) This tendency is also risky because the tailor-made concept of systems theory does not necessarily fit all kinds of societies, in spite of its intention. Although the system models of action analysis discussed above can be viewed as an attempt to get away from a static and abstract view of the components of social structure on a quite high level of generality, the researcher who wants to apply these models to the study of the social phenomena should be very cautious about this problem. Furthermore, it should be noted that a deterministic bias which is inherent in system theory tends to de-emphasize the importance of the individual actors. In this regard, the interaction model may have advantages since it is less likely to suffer from this problem. Strictly speaking, however, more empirical studies are needed before making any further decision about the usefulness of each model.

Despite the problems related to the systems models, Sower and his associates and Warren’s contribution should not be underestimated. For example, as pointed out, they started to direct their attention to different types of action flows which may parallel some temporal structures. Furthermore, Warren’s insight into the action system in terms of different levels (macro-level of “the stages” and micro-level of “subphases”) is very suggestive. In this regard, Sutton’s framework of interactional approach also provides us with explicit and profound suggestions in terms of both macro-and micro-analysis. In particular, one significant methodological contribution in Sutton’s framework may be his starting point of action analysis in terms of the “phenomenal stream” which can be combined with temporal structure in various ways, depending on the purposes of the study. Perhaps it would be a good approach to study the action flow in terms of Sutton’s macro-analysis and, simultaneously, in the light of Sower’s and or Warren’s stage model, which seems to be a somewhat narrower scope of analysis than Sutton’s framework.

Finally, one more comment should be made regarding the above models. That is, the above three system models are mainly descriptive in nature, although Warren’s model suggests more than simple description. Sutton’s framework, however, is not only concerned with the description of action but explanation and prediction of the action courses. This seems true in both in his early as well as the later work. This explanatory power in his model is found in the classification of action courses in terms of the various combinations of the different elements. Although we need more empirical research in this regard, Sutton’s attempt to explain complex

action in terms of different elements is highly suggestive.

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