

Structure-agency and micro-macro integration

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The debate:

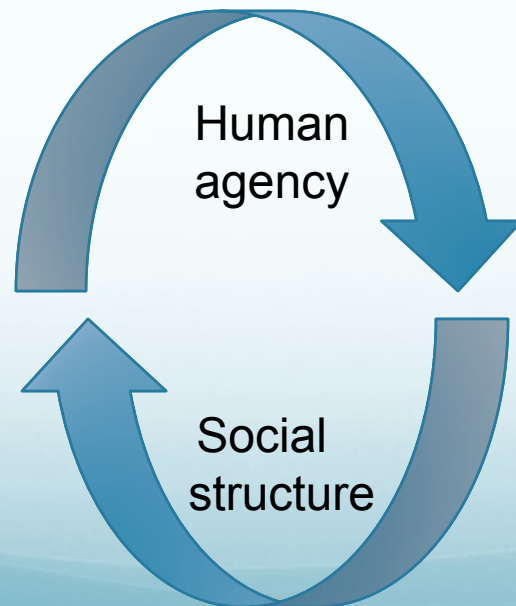
Social structure vs human agency

- Social structure determines social life; individual activities = outcome of structure.
- Individuals (re)construct and give meaning to their world.
- Social structure influences human actions and vice versa.

Theory of Structuration

Structuration theory aims to explain social practices across space and time by viewing action and social structure as linked by their interdependency

The duality of structure: human agency and social structure each act as an enabling condition of the other.



Key points

- Action is not equated with individual human activity(Weber);
- Structure is not identified with external constraint(Durkheim);
- Men make their own history but not in circumstances of their own choosing (Marx).
- **AGENT** is any social unit that is capable of making a difference.
- **AGENCY** is the continuous flow of conduct.

The agent-structure integration

- Anthony Giddens: Action and structure can not be isolated from each other.
- Margaret Archer: agency and structure may and need to be isolated.
- Pierre Bourdieu: the action-structure conflict is transformed into the relationship between habitus and field.
- Jurgen Habermas: the framework of the problem of "colonization of the life-world."

Giddens's theory

Structure is when the rules and resources are organized as properties of social systems.

Agency is when an individual is able to observe his/her own experience and then be able to give reasons for their action.

The relationship between structure and agency as **the duality of structure**, whereby individuals reflexively produce and reproduce their social life.



Micro- Macro Integration

Classic sociologist view as either Macro-Micro extremist : Marx, Durkeheim, Weber, Simmel

- **Marx** can be seen as being interested in the coercive and alienating effect of capitalist society on individual.
- **Weber** may be viewed as being focally concerned with the plight of the individual within the iron cage of a formally rational society.
- **Simmel** was interested primarily in the relationship between objective (macro) culture and subjective (or individual, micro) culture.
- **Durkheim** : concerned with the effect of macrolevel social facts on individuals and individual behavior

Micro-Macro Integration movement

2 major strands of work on Micro-Macro Integration:

- Theorists focus on integrating micro and macro *theories*
- Others concerned with developing a theory that deals with the linkage between micro and macro *levels*

Examples of Micro and Macro Integration

- All micro and macro social phenomena are also either objective or subjective. Focus on the interrelationship among these 4 levels.
 - The macro-objective level involves large-scale material realities such as society, bureaucracy, and technology.
 - The macro-subjective level encompasses large-scale nonmaterial phenomena such as norms and values.
 - The micro objectivity involves small-scale objective entities such as patterns of action and interaction, whereas
 - The micro subjectivity is concerned with the small-scale mental processes by which people construct social reality.

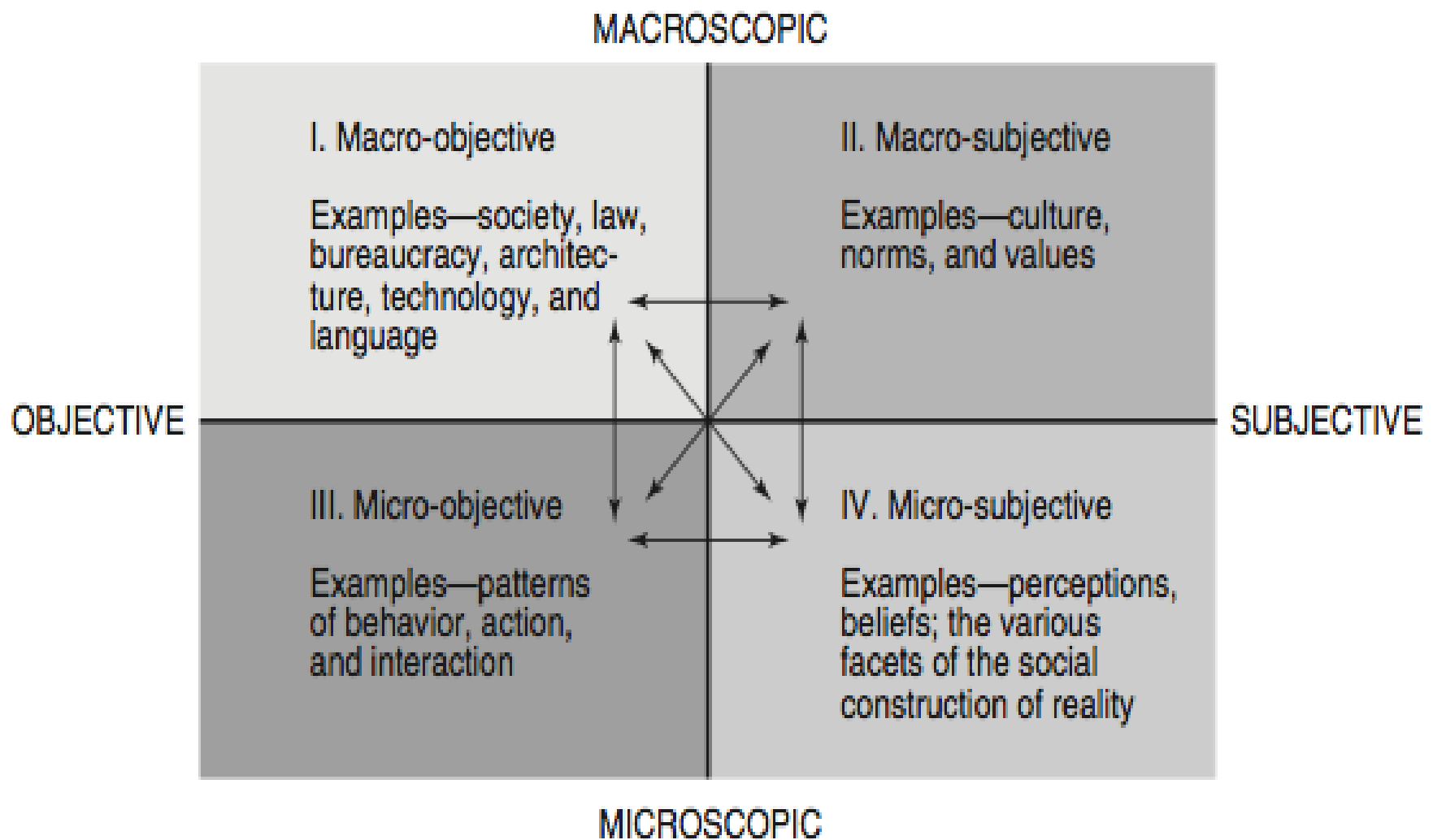


FIGURE 14.1 *Ritzer's Major Levels of Social Analysis*

Note that this is a “snapshot” in time. It is embedded in an ongoing historical process.

Microfoundations of macrosociology

- Randall Collins->focus of radical microsociology, is what he calls “interaction ritual chains,” or bundles of “individual chains of interactional experience, crisscrossing each other in space as they flow along in time”
- all macrophenomena” can be translated “into combinations of micro events”



Questions

It is possible to achieve an all unifying theory for Micro-Macro Sociology?

Do you think that structure and agency are sources of each other?

References:

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