1 Introduction: New Thinking on Exclusion and Integration
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The themes and theories of social differentiation and integration are back on the agenda. They are widely used at the policy level, for example within the European Commission and the European Union. At the same time, the classic sociological themes of Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim have been revisited in recent years by such key British sociologists as David Lockwood and Nicos Mouzelis. In both social science and the world of policy and politics, the categories of social integration and social exclusion have been widely used in the 1990s.

This book is an attempt to link the themes of social integration and social exclusion across sociological discourse and policy debate. Before we give an overview of its aims and the contributions of the different chapters we shall situate this widespread renewed interest in integration and differentiation within the social sciences of the 1990s.

THE CHANGING DEBATE IN SOCIOLOGY

The Emergence of Integration/Differentiation Theory

The emergence of differentiation/integration theories can be located in the last half of the nineteenth century, in the works of Karl Marx, Herbert Spencer and especially Emile Durkheim. The division of labour on the societal level (town-country, production-circulation) and within the labour process are key themes in the work of Marx. The same applies to his treatment of class struggle and social contradictions in general as well as to his theory of the tension between the forces of production and relations of production. Spencer saw societal evolution in a rather abstract and general way as being shaped by increasing social differentiation and the emergence of new forms of integration. Durkheim transformed Spencer’s suggestions and categories into concepts and articulated a specific theory of social development.

Durkheim analysed the forms and effects of social differentiation in his first major work, *Division of Labour*. He also developed a theory of social integration, not least by analysing the lack of integration leading to anomie in his work on *Suicide*. His focus was the transformation of a traditional social order grounded on status hierarchies to a society with an increasing division of labour, provoking...
class conflicts and lacking a natural, or easy-to-find, principle of integration. His fundamental and, in one sense, very modern question was: How is social integration, and a well-functioning society, possible in a differentiated and individualized social order? Spencer’s answer, a generalization of the view of economists, was that the problem would be solved by society’s own ‘invisible’ forces without political interference. Against that view Durkheim envisaged a new ‘organic solidarity’ grounded in the moral experiences deriving from the complementary work roles and supported by a development of law and state institutions. However, for Durkheim the question remained open how the division of labour, which was the basis of different interests and conflicts, could at the same time be the basis for a normative integration.

The Second Phase: Parsonian Sociology in Postwar America

During the ‘long 1950s’, spanning the period from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s, differentiation/integration theory was further developed by Talcott Parsons. Now there was a clear emphasis on the forms and mechanisms of integration. The complex work of Parsons can be seen as an attempt to mobilize different intellectual traditions to solve the Durkheimian dilemma of integration. This focus on cohesion and integration marked both Parsons and Durkheim as consensus theorists, and by implication as conservatives, for a couple of generations of sociologists.

The differentiation/integration theory reached its apogee in the 1950s and through the work of Parsons it set the tone for sociological theory, as well as giving orientation to a whole research programme, from the themes of societal integration to the forms of dysfunctional behaviour and social disintegration. The basic form of societal integration was seen as the system of norms, taking shape in a civic and political culture within the framework of stable institutions and a modern state (or at least a modernizing state, in the case of the ‘developing countries’).

The context for this second wave of differentiation/integration theories may be found in the postwar situation of Western countries, and especially the United States. These theories could be seen as a theoretically well-argued defence of liberal, capitalist and pluralist democracies. One kind of totalitarianism – fascism and Nazism – had been defeated, and another kind, Soviet communism, was seen as the major threat. Parsons’ theory may be seen as an argument for the integration of society based on a consensus about fundamental civil, political and social rights and an acceptance of pluralism in more specific values and norms. There is a link here with Durkheim, who argued that consensus in highly differentiated societies must rest on the only thing we all still have in common – our human-ness. Hence his belief that modern societies require for their cohesion a respect for human rights (cf. his role in the Dreyfus affair).