

**(Session-1)****Fundamentals of Social Policy and Social Policy Analysis****1.1. Definitions: Terminological Departure**

The term '*social policy*' always contains a certain ambiguity and it is hardly possible to get rid of this ambiguity. However, a detailed discussion of the concept, and the terms that constitute in it, would provide a better understanding of the term. Social policy consists of two terms: "*social*" and "*policy*." Hence, it is very important to begin the definition of these terms separately and move towards "*social policy*."

The term 'social' can be seen in different ways. It can be used very widely and has different meanings. We can group these various definitions into five categories.

A. *The word social is associated with entertainment or leisure*: for instance, we can talk about a person's social life or the need for social activities in a particular setting (music, sport, drama, theatre, etc).

B. *It is used as opposite of individual*: that is, the word social represents or describes a group of people, community, society, etc. In other words, it has the implication that a group is more than just the sum of the total number of individuals. What is good for the individual may not be necessarily good for the group as a whole. We have to work for the good of the society.

C. *The word social is used to indicate relationship or social relations*: in our everyday language we talk about sociable and non-sociable persons. A person who can mix easily with others is said to be extrovert (someone who is very confident, active and happy in social situations). On the other hand, a person who cannot mix easily with others can be called introvert person (a person who tends to concentrate on his/her own thoughts and feelings rather than communicating with other people

D. *The word social is used as antonym of economic*: here, social development is contrasted with economic development. However, both social and economic developments are complementary and essential for the overall development of a particular country.

E. *The word social is something which people have intrinsic rights*: it refers entitlements as members of society. For example, the right to speech, the right to get social services, etc.

The term 'policy,' on the other hand, is a *plan of action adopted or perceived by an individual, government, political party, organizations etc. Policies are guidelines that support a decision making process by the above listed actors*. Easton (1953) defines policy as 'the authoritative allocation through the political process, of values to groups or individuals in the society.' Hecllo (1972), states that a policy may usefully be considered as a course of action or inaction rather than specific decisions or actions. Hogwood and Gunn (1984) define policy as '*a series of patterns of related decisions to which many circumstances and personal, group and organizational influences have contributed*'. Starling (1979) defines policy as *a kind of guide that delimits action*. Baker, et al (1975) defines policy as '*a mechanism employed to realize societal goals and to allocate resources*'. Parsons (1997) defines it as 'a course of action or plan, a set of political purposes'. Anderson (2000) provides possibly the most succinct distillation of the above, defining policy as '*a relatively stable, purposive course of action followed by an actor or a set of actors in dealing with a problem or issue of concern*'.

What do you understand by a *policy, public policy, and social policy*? What relationships do you see among them?

You have seen how policy and social policy have been defined in the above paragraphs. But public policy, according to Kordesh (2001), is a decision that commits the government or an entity in government to an enduring course of action. It is also a statement that shows what the government

intends to do or not to do. Public policies are those developed by governmental bodies and officials. The special characteristics of public policies stem from their being formulated by the “authorities” in a political system. In short, public policies are those produced by government officials and agencies. Also as principles of action, policies translate governmental sense of responsibility to its citizens. Jansson (2008) has identified policies in their various forms. According to Jansson, policies can take a variety of forms like *regulations, laws, executive orders, court decisions, implementation plans, national plans, and amendments to laws and regulations, local plans and budgets.*

Social policy can be understood in two ways: *as an academic field of study and a social action in the real world.* As an academic field of inquiry, social policy is an interdisciplinary and applied subject which is concerned with the analysis of the distribution and delivery of resources in response to social needs. It is the term applied to the study of the development, implementation and impact of policies which influence the social situations of people. It studies the ways in which societies provide for the social needs of members through structures and systems of distribution, redistribution, regulation, provision and empowerment. Social policy is the study of the social services and the welfare state. The study of social policy used to be referred to as *social administration* and had as its central concern the impact of those policies connected to what used to be referred to as ‘*the big five*’. These were *health, education, the personal social services, social security, and housing.* Respectively, these interventions were designed to address what were perceived as the ‘*five giant ills*’ affecting society at that time; respectively *disease, ignorance, want, idleness and squalor.*

Social policy is a distinctive academic discipline-not only with a (re) defined subject matter and empirical agenda, but also having its own theoretical and conceptual frameworks. It is an intellectual discipline emerged out of a particular historical moment (of the postwar welfare states) and built a

theoretical and conceptual base from the assumptions that underpinned that moment. Like other social science disciplines, it has been challenged and reshaped by broader theoretical developments, such as feminism, postmodernism and post structuralism.

Studying social policy will involve you in thinking about:

- What social policies are: that is, what the content of specific government policies is, such as an education or health policy.
- How policies are developed, administered and implemented: for instance, how a new policy on tackling youth unemployment was conceived, what its stated and hidden aims are, how it is funded and how far it meets its objectives.
- Why policies exist (or do not exist). Why, for example, was a market approach to providing health and social services introduced in the 1980s and early 1990s?

## 1.2 The Link between Social Policy and Other Disciplines

Social policy is not working in vacuum or alone to overcome social problems rather it shares concepts and basic ideologies about social problems and their solution with different discipline. Some may include the following:

### **Discipline**

### **Examples of social policy relevance**

**Anthropology** Study of family, kinship and differences in household composition and living arrangements. Social security entitlements depend on official policy of ‘what counts’ as a recognized household unit.

**Economics** Looking at the economic costs and ‘payoffs’ of particular policies and social benefits, for example child benefit. Production, distribution and consumption of goods & services.

**Geography** Insights into the spatial patterns of the distribution and take-up of

services, for example maps of the boundaries of general practitioners' practices, numbers of patients and visits to the doctor.

- History Study of the development of social policies through time: comparing present-day services and attitudes to them with examples from the past, for example hostels for the homeless today could be compared with 'Poor Law' institutions in the past.
- Philosophy Examining the reasons or justifications for choosing one kind of policy rather than another; discussing ethical questions, such as the right of health authorities not to provide certain kinds of treatment, drugs or therapy.
- Politics Investigating the social policy aims of different political parties or, conversely, looking at the political impact of social policies, for example what have been the effects of council house sales on voting patterns?
- Psychology Studying personal perceptions of, and attitudes towards, welfare services. Psychological perspectives are important in investigating individual need and design of services, for example the way prostate cancer screening is advertised and provided, and men's perceptions of this service.
- Sociology Researching the norms, values and other social pressures that affect the relationship between the welfare system and different groups, for example reasons for gender inequalities in access to social services.

H. Lasswell, (1951) identified the characteristics of 'policy science' as multi-disciplinary, problem-solving and normative.

### 1.3. Social policy as social action

The term social policy is also used to refer to *social action in the real world*. Social policy is the term used to describe actions aimed at promoting wellbeing. Social policy can be regarded as referring to the actions taken within society to develop and deliver services for people in order to meet their needs for welfare and wellbeing. Social policy is a policy for dealing with social issues. Social policy is that part of public policy that has to do with issues more narrowly construed as social: *public welfare, public access to social programs* (also called residual/and/or incremental/safety net model of social welfare) or as broadly defined includes *social development issues* (affecting people's lives and livelihood-transformations).

Jansson (2008) defines social policy as a collective strategy that prevents prohibits and addresses social problems. Social policies are accepted guidelines for the changing, maintenance or creation of living conditions that are conducive to human welfare. Social policies are corrections of inequalities to improve the conditions of disadvantaged people. Social policy specifies the rules and regulations that govern developing and operating social programs. Social policies are devices of government to modify or offset (balance) the influence of market force. Social policy is seen as the set of systemic and deliberate interventions in social life to ensure the satisfaction of basic needs and the well-being of citizens. It is an expression of socially desirable goals through legislation, institutions and administrative programs and practices in accordance with specific development objectives.

In similar vein, Mkandawire, a pan African writer, argued social policy refers to collective interventions directly affecting transformation in social welfare, social institutions and social relations. It entails actions by governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) supportive of the right to the means of social participation. This right is underpinned by services and arrangements to ensure

an adequate income, a relevant education, affordable housing, a healthy existence and a sustainable livelihood. This formulation does not deny that social policies may be conceived and implemented with considerations other than the welfare of the public in mind, or that they may take on repressive, punitive and coercive forms, or that policies not conventionally identified as 'social policies' may make a comparable or even greater contribution to the realization of social welfare and social participation. On this latter point, the conventional definition of social policy excludes the important policy domains of environment, energy, water, transport, land, trade, investment and finance.

Hence, social policy refers to both the theoretical pursuit of norms about how we think society 'ought' to behave, and also the practical application and implementation of those policies that we consider to be 'social.' Social policy refers both to the process of developing and implementing measures to combat social problems in society, and to the academic study of these measures and their broader social context. Social policy can be also defined in different ways. In one sense it can be defined as the aims of a group of citizens in a particular problem. For example, we can talk about family policy, health policy, education policy, etc. It can also be defined as a set of programs developed either by government or private organizations to deliver particular welfare services.

Another view taken by Gil (1992) is that the term 'social policy' can be conceived of as having four distinct but interrelated uses: as a *philosophical, product, process and framework*.

As a *philosophical concept* representing the principle whereby political entities and large organizations (in this sense, society) *collectively* seek enduring solutions to the problems that affect them. In this sense, this notion would present itself as the polar opposite of *individualism*.

As a *product* referring to the conclusions reached by those who concern themselves with the betterment of community and social conditions and social life generally, along with the amelioration of deviance (as defined at any given time) and social disorganization by reference to the presence of an effective and efficient policy.

As a *process* which, through its *products* seeks to promote and maintain stability whilst improving conditions. Most extant (current) policies are developments or additions to pre-existing ones and have therefore not gone through the full policy formation process.

As a *framework for action* incorporating both *product* and *process issues*. In this sense, it assumes the presence of well developed policies implemented within a context which is flexible enough to respond effectively to changes in values, structures and the conditions of the so-called ‘target group.’

Generally, social policy includes;

1. Guidelines that support a decision making process,
2. Methods of explaining the people's action ,
3. Boundaries that define the relationships and obligations of government to citizens,
4. Processes that produce programs, services or interventions,
5. Responses to societal needs and political pressures, and
6. Corrections of inequalities to improve the conditions of disadvantaged people.

#### **1.4. The Scope of Social Policy**

Conceptualization and application of social policy in a development context has evolved significantly in recent years. In the 1980s and 1990s, the scope of social policy, focused on *delivery of limited services and welfare* which was insufficient to achieve balanced social and economic development. Social policy was considered as *residual, secondary* to the focus on growth as then mainstream development theory focused on “economic growth first.” As such, social policy was given *lesser*



*importance and funding*, and often was centered on mitigating the unintended consequences of economic change. Narrow, targeted interventions of a residual type have become popular since the 1980s as a short-term response to the poverty generated by structural adjustment, including safety net devices such as social funds. Yet in order to address long-term issues of poverty and social deprivation in the South, it is increasingly recognized that a more comprehensive, holistic and cross-sector livelihoods analysis is more appropriate. This residual approach was dominant for about two decades, and led to increasing social tensions and malaise. This minimalist vision of social development was not common in earlier times in the 20th century.

After having been pared to a minimum, social policies were reconsidered during the 1990s with the renewed attention of development policies to poverty reduction. Yet in order to address long-term issues of poverty and social deprivation in the South, it is increasingly recognized that a *more comprehensive, holistic and cross-sector livelihoods* analysis is more appropriate. Thus, the goals of social policy have broadened to include *poverty alleviation, social protection, social inclusion and the promotion of human rights*.

In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, a consensus has emerged that social policy is part of the primary function of the state, and that social policy is more than a limited set of safety nets and services to cover market failure. Well-designed and implemented social policies can powerfully shape countries, foster employment and development, eradicate marginalization and overcome conflict. They are an essential part of any National Development Strategy to achieve growth and equitable social outcomes.

There is now a consensus on the urgency to promote robust social and economic policies in parallel, in a complementary and mutually reinforcing manner. Economic growth permits sustained investments in social development; and human development raises the capacities of people to contribute to growth. Sustainable growth and poverty reduction require socially inclusive National Development Strategies.

Social policies are necessary because the benefits of economic growth do not automatically reach all. Inadequate social policies ultimately limit growth in the medium and long term. Social policies are justified not only from a humanitarian viewpoint; they are an economic and political need for future growth and political stability, minimally to maintain citizen support for their governments.

Therefore, economic and social policies need to be promoted in parallel, in a mutually reinforcing way, from an early development stage, as part of the country's national development strategy and the social contract between government and citizens. There is a two-way influence between economic growth and human development. Those countries which have leaned towards human development through a whole range of social policies affecting education, health and equity tend eventually to enjoy higher rates of growth. Macro-level studies also provide robust evidence that initial income inequality and subsequent growth are inversely related, and that better income and wealth distribution helps growth.

### **1.5. Objectives of Social Policies**

Generally, the main objective of social policy is the achievement of a good life to citizens through different services. Social policies can strive to achieve this general objective through one or more of the following specific interrelated objectives.

- To ***prevent*** or reduce suffering and pre-mature death or illness when and where it is possible.
- To ***protect*** the weak or vulnerable from danger or pressure which they cannot stand up against alone.
- To ***promote*** in the positive way the good of each and the society as a whole. (This promotion could lead to transformation).

Policies are established to prevent and address social problems such as victimization of persons by the rich; inability of citizens to meet their survival needs, obtain skills and knowledge to get employed;

discriminatory treatment of members of out-group by employers, schools, public facilities, transportation companies, and excessive inequality and insufficient resources.

On the other hand, Hall and Midgley (2004) argued that the goals of social policy have broadened to include poverty reduction/alleviation, social protection (service provisions, income generating activities, safety net, micro-credit), social inclusion (integrating marginalized groups), promotion of human rights (right based approaches), and conserving the natural resources.

The basic function of any policy, social or otherwise (for example economic policy, agricultural policy, defense policy) is to provide a *coherent and consistent response to particular (social) phenomena*. Briefly, that is what a social policy is and why it exists. Social policy is collective interventions in the economy to influence the *access to and the incidence of adequate and secure livelihoods and income*. As such, social policy has always played *redistributive, protective and transformative or development functions*

### **1.6. What is Policy Analysis?**

Policy analysis is a systematic evaluation of how effectively a policy addresses the targeted problem or issue, meets people's needs, and achieve its goals. Policy analysis is the systemic *investigation and inquiry* into the causes and consequences of public policies. It is carried out to provide *guidance and direction* to policy makers and to supply solutions to social problems. Policy analysis is essential part of policy practice/advocacy that leads to *concrete proposals* to address specific problems and issues.

**Policy analysis** is the systematic *evaluation of alternative means of achieving social goals*. It is frequently deployed in the public sector ... refers to the analysis of existing or prospective policies with the intention of improving social welfare (Wiki). [Planning, selecting] "Policy

analysis is the disciplined application of intellect to *the study of collective responses to public* (in our case social welfare) *problems* (Popple & Leighninger, 2004). Policy analysis can be defined as *determining which of various alternative public or governmental policies will most achieve a given set of goals* in light of the relations between the policies and the goals (Nagel, 1990). Policy analysis is concerned with facts, values, and actions. It is empirical as well as normative. Policy analysis is a systematic and data based alternative to intuitive judgments about the effects of policy and policy options. Policy analysis involves: a primary concern with explanation rather than prescription, a rigorous search for the causes and consequences of public policies, an effort to develop and test general propositions about the causes and consequences of public policy and to accumulate reliable research findings of general relevance. Policy analysis provides answers to questions that are **designative** (what are the causes and consequences of policies?), **evaluative** (of what value are policies?) and **advocative** (what policies should be adopted?) Policy analysis consists of not only examining and bringing improvements in formulating policies but also the evaluation of the choices and outcomes of the policies. Policy analysis as the knowledge of processes by which policy is formulated, implemented, and evaluated; strategies of optimization and selection of alternatives; and distinct attributes of policy relative to specific functional areas. The analysis can be used (as a purpose); to *assess* existing or previous policies, to *explain* public problems and social phenomena (establish a definition for the problem, investigate the causes, history and impacts and determine who the problem affects) and to *develop* policy alternatives for the future. The *goals* of policy analysis can range from *pure research* to providing information to legislators to *advocacy research*. A systematic analysis would reveal that a policy is/ is not *feasible*- economically, politically, or socially. Policy analysis can be done on *the agency* as well as on *statewide* or *national levels*. Unfortunately, policy analysis often occurs

only after a bill or policy is enacted. As a result, analysts are often asked to perform an *autopsy* (post-mortem) to determine why a specific bill or policy failed. But this shouldn't be the case; analysis should be made ahead of time.

Policy analysis is concerned with facts, values, and actions. It is empirical as well as normative.

Policy analysis has to answer these three questions:

- ❖ Values whose attainment is the main test of whether a problem has been resolved
  - Analysts choose the criteria to be used for examining laws and policies.
  - Often these criteria are based on value assumptions about how laws should work. The value assumptions are closely linked to ideology and political philosophy.
  - Policy analysts use values such as equity, equality, adequacy, efficiency, and constitutional rights (freedom of speech, freedom of the press, etc). Effectiveness or the ability of a policy to produce the intended outcome is also a criteria. Policy analysts must also consider whether a policy outcome is *feasible* (economically, politically, or likely to receive public support).
- ❖ Facts whose presence may limit or enhance the attainment of values
  - Analysts look at the current or potential impact of laws and policy
  - Policy analysts also try to determine externalities – who or what is likely to be affected by unintended side effects of the policy.
- ❖ Actions whose adoption may result in attainment of values and resolution of problems.

Aims of social policy analysis of social policy can be identified as to understand the nature and causes of social problems; and the origins, evolution, outcomes and effectiveness of policies that seek to address social problems in order to increase human knowledge, foster the study of social policy as a subject and inform the policy process.

## Chapter Three

### 2. Ideology, Values and Social Policy

The term 'Ideational turn' which has been made in political studies since the late 1980s has generated a profound implication for contemporary social policy research. 'Ideational turn' refers to an upturn of interest in the idea in the political and policy studies and it includes the significant extension of following various methodological trends (Finlayson, 2004d):

A). the revival of interest in 'language' in political process (see Carver, 2002; Hajer, 2002; Torfing, 2002);

B). there claim of the interpretative and hermeneutic approach that inherited the idealist thought in the late nineteenth century (Bevir & Rhodes, 2003); and

C). the emergence and spread of post structuralism and postmodernism, which, broadly, challenge the foundationalist assumption about objectivity in social science (Bevir & Rhodes, 2003; Hay, 2002).

An ideology is a more or less coherent set of ideas that provides the basis for organized political action, whether this is intended to preserve, modify or overthrow the existing system of power. All ideologies therefore ... offer an account of the existing order, usually in the form of a 'world view' (and) advance a model of a desired future, a vision of the 'good society' ... and explain how political change can and should be brought about .... (Heywood 2007: 11–12). Ideology refers to a set of underpinning ideas and values that inform thought, language and subsequent action. In relation to social policy, *such ideologies are indicative of the extent, to which the state should have a role in organizing.*

In modern European history, the development of ideologies and of political parties has been closely linked. Ideologies as belief systems on “the political and social organization of societies, or, more generally, of their destiny” (Boudon/Bourricaud 1989: 208) differ from theories by their unjustified claims of truth (Boudon 1988: 48) and are, therefore, useful for political parties to defend policies which gain credibility through ideological labeling. Because of the suitability of ideologies for political disputes, references to them are made in pairwise comparison, the one ideology standing for the “pro” position in a political conflict and another one standing for the “con” side. Political scientists have debated whether the adversarial character of politics leads to a multidimensional “superposition des dualismes” (Duverger 1967: 262) or whether the various ideological criteria can be compressed to a “unidimensional simplification” (Sartori 1976: 337).

Unidimensional simplifications are not self-evident, especially when two criteria are used to construct the left-right dimension. Applying only one criterion as “how much government intervention in the economy should there be?” (Downs 1957: 116) facilitates scale construction but creates the problem of classifying concrete ideologies or parties on this scale which may result in contradictions. Thus the fascists e.g. are publicly labeled as extreme right but favor “fascist control of the economy rather than free markets” to cite Down’s own example (1957: 116). A possible solution is a social class perspective postulating that ideologies are useful weapons for specific social classes in omnipresent class conflicts.

Hinich and Munger (1994, 1997) argue that ideology is more than a pure orientation device. A certain ideological position stands for certain types of policies so that the voters are able to extrapolate what a party will do in the future, even if the respective policy was not yet discussed in the election campaign. Thus, ideology helps to solve the commitment problem political

leaders have in mass democracies. With this additional argument it becomes the more important to investigate the relation of the parties' ideological positions to their perceived policy position.

In the past decade, coupled with the increasing attention on 'learning' and 'transfer' of policies, there has been growing interest in the role of the 'idea' in policy studies. Increasing attention on the 'learning' or 'transfer' of policies shows this change in the study of social policy (Barker, 2000a). Particularly, in terms of the Thatcher and New Labour governments, many studies attempted to define their ideologies through the policies they implemented.

### **2.1 Frame works to define Ideology/ Elements of Ideology**

The major ideologies of the governments from the 1960s to the 2000s are defined using an analytical framework with all-encompassing ideological elements including the major challenges to the contemporary society, ideological objectives, political philosophy, the role of major actors, major strategies, and the concept of citizenship. This framework was established through the review of the initial studies on New Labour, mostly based on a comparison to Old Labour and Thatcherism. Let's discuss those elements one by one:

#### *Challenges to contemporary society*

The interpretation of the challenges in contemporary society could be the starting point to define an ideology. The challenges could be problems and difficulties the society needs to tackle or overcome; an opportunity it should seize; or new orders it has to adapt to. These are the ground condition the ideology stands on to accomplish its objectives. Therefore, how the major challenges are determined influences other ideological fragments, such as the role of actors and major strategies to address them. So it would be one of the fundamental factors composing an ideology.



*Objectives*

Objectives of an ideology refer to the ultimate value it follows, maintain, or achieves. They reflect the fundamental philosophy and the moral ground of the ideology as they are the declaration of what is a 'good society'. These statements are usually collocated with the certain words such as 'aim', 'purpose', 'goal', and 'mission' but often these words are used to express the strategic direction of government to pursue the objectives. Therefore in order to define the objectives of an ideology, ultimate values are needed to be concentrated on such as prosperity, equality, freedom, and opportunity even though the actual meaning of these abstract concepts needs to be clarified.

*Political philosophy*

Political philosophy refers to the basic perspective to interpret and understand people and society that an ideology is based on. This could include some traditional form of ideology such as socialism and New Right. However, when political ideology in a particular study is associated with more practical level of ideas in real politics, these traditional forms of ideologies are distinguished as political philosophies which are placed at more fundamental dimensions of political thinking. Since this element in political text is often implicit and complex rather than straightforward, appropriate analysis requires more (Bevir & Rhodes' (2003, 2004b) 'historical forms of inquiry' besides 'ethnographic form of inquiry'. In other words, the philosophical terrains of the contemporary politics need to be investigated in order to find out the philosophical context of the political statements in the analysis.

*Role of actors*

The next question addressed in ideology could be what are the role of major actors in achieving the objectives. The primary actor in government ideology is obviously the state. However, the role of state could vary in different political ideologies depending on their understanding of the role of other major actors such as business sector, trade union and voluntary sectors. Therefore the discussion on the actors should not be limited to the state. The different recognition of the role of state has occupied the debate of the Left in modern politics (Driver & Martell, 2000) while on the other hand, the New Right has tried to minimize it (M. J. Smith, 1994). On the other side, these differences also reflect, for example, their different consideration of the role of business sector in the society and the relation of them with the state.

### *Citizenship*

In spite of its importance in ideological debate, it is hard to make explicit definition of the concept of citizenship as it is used in a multitude of different contexts (Heron & Dwyer, 1999). However, in the context of debate on ideology, it refers to the rights of the citizen relating to the welfare provision of the state for the fulfillment of citizens' needs, as well as the duties reasonably expected to citizen by the state. In other word, citizenship could be discussed as a question about what is the desirable relationship between the state and individual (Heron & Dwyer, 1999).

### *Major strategy*

The different kind of policies of the same government tends to be presented as a evidence for the different arguments about the political ideology. Therefore, the crucial point would be to determine the status of these policies in the ideology so that major strategic policies in the ideological context can be distinguished from others. In other words, among the list of policies

introduced by the government, the central policies and the strategic policy directions with them need to be primarily considered, in order to illuminate the ideology of the government.

These strategic policies or policy directions could be identified within the relationship with other components of ideology such as the interpretation of major challenges, the objectives, and the role of actors. For example, there could a particular measure to tackle major challenges defined by the government, or a strategic scheme specially designed to pursuit the ideological objective value. They would be recognized within multiple contexts of various ideological aspects rather than a single relationship with a certain ideological element. For example, a major strategy would be presented as a main method to tackle the challenges in order to follow the objectives, while defining the roles of major actors and the approach on citizenship under their philosophical thinking. These ideological frameworks can be summarized in the following diagram.

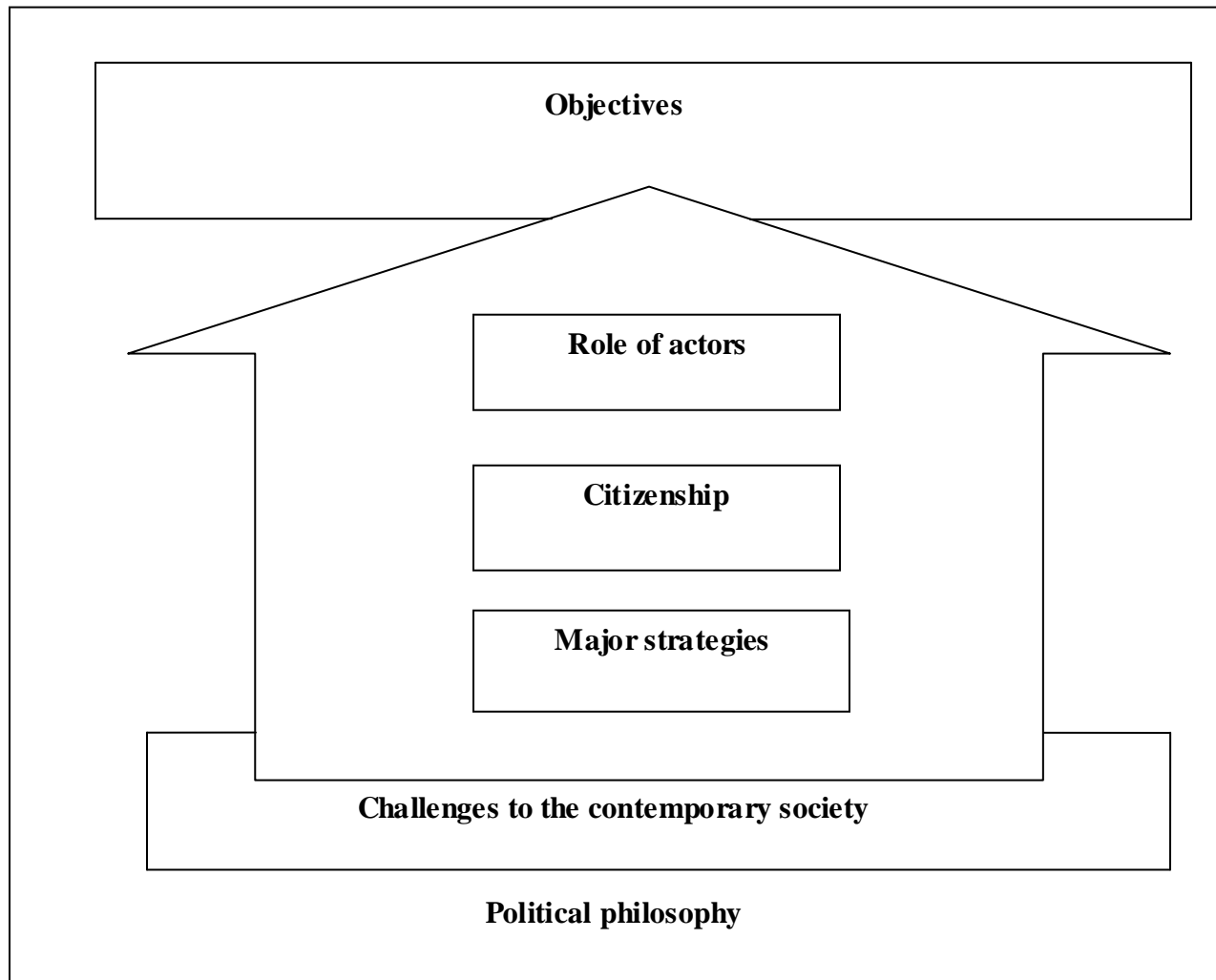


Figure 1 the analytical framework to define an ideology

Political scientists often classify parties in terms of the ideological stance they take on economic issues. Parties to the right on economic issues tend to emphasize a reduction of the economic role of the government; they want lower taxes, less regulation, privatization, reduced government spending, and a leaner welfare state that poses fewer burdens on employers. Parties to the left on economic issues want the government to retain an active role in the economy. Using these criteria, please indicate where the parties are located in terms of their economic ideology.

Political views on welfare are often divided into 'left' and 'right' wing views. The left wing is welfare for public provision and Collectivist. They are advocating for institutional welfare while right wing is against welfare and public provision. Right wing advocate for individualist and for residual provision welfare.

The positions people hold are not, however, straightforward. There is an individualistic left wing, and a collectivist right wing. Left-wingers favor social security (which enables people to buy food in the private market) rather than soup kitchens (which can be publicly provided). Many right-wingers accept the principle of institutional welfare, and many left wingers are uncomfortable about institutional measures, like earnings-related pensions or student grants, which favor richer people over poorer ones.

Another way parties are sometimes classified is in terms of their views of democratic freedoms and rights. "Libertarian" or "post-materialist" parties tend to favor expanded personal freedoms and rights. Such parties, for example, support abortion, doctorassisted suicide, same-sex marriages. They favor increased democratic participation and freedom of speech. At the same time, they oppose discrimination on ethnic, religious, political or sexual grounds. In sum, these parties want government to stay out of the life choices that people make and they promote widespread democracy. "Traditional" or "authoritarian" parties often reject these ideas. These parties believe that the government should be a firm authority that expresses moral voice. To these parties, order is preferable to unbridled participation and freedom.

On the other hand, Values are cognitive structures of knowledge and beliefs guiding peoples' attitudes and behavior regarding political issues (Campbell et al. 1960, Johnston Conover and Feldman 1983; Fuchs and Klingemann 1990). They are considered to be quite stable, and certainly more stable than opinions on concrete issues. Values therefore constitute a stable, long-

term factor underlying voting behavior. People acquire these values relatively early in their lives, through processes of political socialization.

## **2.3 Main political positions**

### **2.3.1 Marxism**

Marxists see society in terms of a conflict between economic classes. A dominant class (the bourgeoisie or 'capitalist' class) owns and controls the means of production; an industrial working class, the 'proletariat', is exploited by them. The Marxist analysis of welfare concentrates principally on its relationship to the exercise of power. The state can be seen either as an instrument of the ruling capitalist class or as a complex set of systems which reflect the contradictions of the society. It is often argued that welfare has been developed through the strength of working-class resistance to exploitation. Marxism is not a single doctrine; it has come to stand for a wide range of opinions within an analytical framework that is critical of 'capitalist' society.

Neo-Marxists argue that the state has two main functions.

1. to improve the conditions for the accumulation of capital-that is, the chance for industries to make profits.

2. to legitimate the capitalist system, by introducing measures (like welfare policies, pensions and health services) which lead people to accept the system as it stands. The requirements of accumulation and legitimation may be contradictory, and the costs of legitimation have led to a 'legitimation crisis'. The basic objections to Marxist analyses are that the description of 'capitalism' is false, that power in society is divided, and not based in ownership; and that states which promote the welfare of their citizens are not pretending to be more legitimate-they are more legitimate.

### 2.3.2 Socialism

Socialism is misrepresented in many popular texts. (Both the Encyclopedia Britannica and Wikipedia get it badly wrong.) - A set of political economic theories based on the belief that everyone has an equal right *to share of the countries wealth's and that the government should own the main industries ( oxford dictionary)* Marxists want to claim that socialism is just another name for Marxism; right-wing critics want it to stand for the state running everything. There is not one common thread, but many competing understandings. The main models, which can be found in many permutations, include representations of socialism as

- a general movement for the improvement of society by collective action (for example, in Fabianism)
- a set of methods and approaches linked with collective action, such as cooperatives, mutual aid, planning and social welfare services (e.g. the co-operative movement);
- a set of arguments for social and economic organization based on ownership and control by the community (e.g. in communism and anarchism)
- an ideal model of society based on cooperation and equality (e.g. Ownism);
- a critique of industrial society, opposing selfish individualism (e.g. Christian socialism); and a range of values, rather than a particular view of how society works (e.g. the position of the parti Socialist European in the European Union).

The key socialist values are collectivism, empowerment and egalitarianism-the 'liberty, equality, and fraternity' of the French revolution, interpreted in collective and social terms. Some socialists would add to that issue of rights and democracy.

Socialism is collectivist people have to be understood in social context, rather than as individuals. Socialism is often represented in Europe in terms of 'solidarity', which means not just only standing shoulder-to-shoulder but the creation of systems of mutual aid. Socialism calls for people to be enabled to do things through collective action, a principle variously referred to as 'freedom' and (in recent years) as 'empowerment'. This principle has been central to 'guild socialism' and trades unionism.

Socialism is egalitarian, in the sense that socialists are committed to the reduction or removal of disadvantages which arise in society. The 'Fabian' tradition, a reformist movement, attempted to achieve greater equality through spending on social services. Historically, socialism is strongly associated with working-class movements, and in much of Europe 'socialist' issues are closely linked with labour relations. It is not equivalent to Marxism: the Marxist analysis of society is irrelevant to much of the mainstream of European socialism, which grew from a range of religious, occupational and communal groups.

### **2.3.3 Social democracy**

Social democracy emerged as a powerful force in the early 20th century, basing its beliefs in the philosophy of Karl Marx. Marx, who wrote in the late 1800s, determined that capitalism resulted in the exploitation of the working class by those who owned the means of industry. Marx predicted that this would result in a revolution by the proletariat, establishing a social and economic system of communal ownership of economic production. The reformist socialists of the early 20th century, who would later evolve into the social democrats, believed that reform within the capitalist system, rather than revolution, would best form a sustainable democratic society. In the 1920s, the social democratic party in Sweden became the first major party of its



kind in Europe to take power through elections, implementing a series of policies to improve living conditions of their constituents. The Swedish economy recovered from the Great Depression by reinforcing these mechanisms, which influenced other nations to do the same.

Today, social democrats continue to pursue similar platforms, and consider redistribution of wealth through taxation and a welfare state a tenet of social justice.

Differences between social democrat and socialists are hazy; because their ideals may coincide in some aspects and not in others, but two are particularly important. First, many social democrats are individualists rather than collectivists; even if they accept arguments for mutual aid or the reduction of disadvantage, they think it important to stress the liberty of the individual, to develop individual rights (as liberals do), and often to restrict the role of the state. Second, some social democrats are not concerned to remove inequality, but only to mitigate its effects through social arrangements which protect people from the worst consequences of a market society.

#### **2.3.4 Conservatism**

The center right, or conservative, movement emerged from those who objected to the French Revolution and overthrow of the monarchy in France. Edmond Burke, a British politician, was one of the original leaders of the conservative movement. He had supported the American Revolution because the former British colonies had established their own traditions and social system apart from Britain's. However, he saw the French Revolution as the perverse destruction of long-established ideas based in religion, tradition, and aristocracy. Over time, conservative parties incorporated social and economic issues into their platforms in addition to promoting the importance of established institutions. During the 1970s, conservatives took a stance against government's involvement in the economy and the viewpoint that social degradation is a result

of social welfare policies reducing the responsibility individuals must have over their own lives. Center right ideology encompasses two modern day party families: Christian democrats and conservatives. Unlike their conservative counterparts, Christian democrats favor more social safety nets and promote non-government institutions, like the church, to provide social services.

Conservatives believe in the importance of social order. This is reflected in a respect for tradition, an emphasis on the importance of religion, and a stress on the importance of inequality as the basis for structured social relationships. Welfare is a secondary issue, but the kinds of concerns which conservatives have are likely to impose restraints on welfare, with a particular emphasis on traditional values in work, the family, and nationhood. Christian democratic thought is closely related to conservatism, but it also has important distinguishing features. Like conservatives, Christian Democrats place a strong emphasis on order; but order is to be achieved, not primarily through state action, but by moral restraints.

### **2.3.5 Liberal individualism**

Liberal ideology has its roots in the fight for greater individual rights within the framework of monarchy. Political philosophers such as John Locke put forth revolutionary ideas, including the notion that free individuals are the basis for a stable society and that the government exists to protect the inherent rights of individuals. Liberal movements within Europe during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century to push for representative democracy spurred calls for the spread of economic liberalism, led by Adam Smith. Smith argued against government intervention into the economy and trade, and felt that the “invisible hand” of the economy would correct any problems on its own. Despite experiencing reduced popularity during the two world wars and

the Great Depression, liberalism has regained strength once more, promoting a limited role of government in the provision of social services. For example, liberal platforms call for the privatization of health care and other formerly public sectors. While liberalism can be differently defined under a variety of categories including political, economic, social and cultural, modern European liberals maintain the idea that the government's role should be reduced and the economy should be decentralized.

Liberalism begins from the premise that everyone is an individual, and that individuals have rights. As a political position, liberalism has been important as a means of defending people from abuse by authority. Although liberalism was initially a radical doctrine, it has also been used since the 19th century to stand for a defence of property interests.

The central value of liberalism is freedom. All freedoms are not equally important; the main liberal values are concerned with certain particularly important freedoms, such as freedom of assembly, of speech, and of worship. Liberals mistrust the state and argue that society is likely to regulate itself if state interference is removed. Hayek argues that all state activity, whatever its intentions, is liable to undermine the freedom of the individual;

### **2.3.6 Fascism**

Fascism is often represented in the academic literature as a pseudo-ideology, lacking any coherence or system of thought. Fascist ideology is based in an authoritarian collectivism. The individual is meaningless; the collectivity (the state, the nation or the race) is paramount. Fascism has been characterized by a strong social agenda; in Nazi Germany, the desire to foster racial supremacy included extensive state intervention in society and the economy, with a stress on socialization (both through schooling and youth movements) and eugenic policies.

## 2.4 Ideologies- Ethiopia

### 2.4.1 Revolutionary Democracy (RD)

Seen by some as a *transition* for liberal democracy. Some argue that RD starts from the Leninist/Stalinist interpretation of democracy as a *pro-class administration system*. It is a pro-class movement. It thinks democracy on the basis of class. It thinks of a government that works for the benefit of a class (the majority). The ideology divides the citizens as *oppressors* and *the oppressed*. Hence, democracy is divided into this sense. Revolutionary democracy stands for *the democracy of the oppressed class*. In the Ethiopian case RD considers both *class* and *ethnicity*.

Hence, in the Ethiopian context RD stands for the following members of the society: farmers, proletarians, oppressed nations and nationalities, women, the lower investor and revolutionary intellectuals. On the other hand, RD fights against higher bourgeois, oppressive ethnic forces, anti-revolutionary intellectuals etc. It argues that though liberal democracy focuses on the *democratic process* and ultimately the majority are not benefiting from the political system (The few bourgeois are dominating). The critics argue that RD *focuses on the outcome* than on the process, i.e. the decision of the political party goes with the interest of the mass, they know what is good for the public. It is **pro-public** in its whole stand.

### 2.4.2 Different conceptualizations of Developmental states (DS)

Developmental states as those states whose successful economic and social development performance illustrates how their political purposes and institutional structures (especially their bureaucracies) have been developmentally-driven, while their developmental objectives have been politically-driven. Summary of the characteristics of DS in Routley (2012:8)

1. A capable, autonomous (but embedded) bureaucracy (Evans, 1995).

2. A political leadership oriented towards development (Musamba, 2010; Fritz and Menocal 2007).
3. A close, often mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship between some state agencies (often discussed as pilot agencies) and key industrial capitalists. (Johnson, 1982; 1987).
4. Successful policy interventions which promote growth (Wade, 1990; Beeson, 2004).

### **2.4.3 Other ideologies**

In its Election Manifesto (2005) the ex-CUD party stated that it is following a combination of values from Social Democracy and Consensus Democracy to the Ethiopian context. It can be considered ultimately standing for liberalism. Some of the current opposition political parties are expressing themselves as liberals (e.g. Ethiopian Democratic Party). Controversies on individual Vs group rights were evident in the political debates.

## **3. Social Problems**

### **3.1 Defining Social Problem as Policy Problems**

Answering what a social problem is can be approached from three approaches. The first is the traditional or objective approach which believes that social problems are real or objective realities. A social condition does not have to be personally experienced by every individual in order to be considered a social problem. The *objective reality* of a social problem comes from acknowledging that a particular social condition does negatively impact human lives. The objective condition reflects the very *real and measurable characteristics of the social problem* i.e. verifiable facts that most people believe to be true about the problem. Objective realities of a social problem can be confirmed by the collection of data. We do not have to be poor in order to recognize that some men, women, and children experience the consequences of living in poverty.

We might also notice that his/her family appears rather poor, at least judging from their clothing and their home and car, seen in the background. We could speculate on the causes of the family's poverty. We might conclude that their poverty is a result of laziness or a lack of ambition.

The subjective approach, on the other hand believed social problems are social constructions or subjective realities. The *subjective reality* of a social problem addresses how a problem becomes/defined as a problem. Social problems are highly subjective, and sometimes do not involve the entire public, or even a majority of citizens. It also explains why social problems generally change from year to year, and decade to decade. From this perspective, social problems are not objectively predetermined. They become real only when they are subjectively defined or perceived as problematic. Recognizing the subjective aspects of social problems allows us to understand how a social condition may be defined as a problem by one segment of society but be completely ignored by another. For example, do you believe poverty is a social problem? Some may argue that it is a problem only if you are the one who is poor. Or poverty is your problem if you are "lazy" or a "welfare mother." However, others would argue that it qualifies as society's problem. Sociologist Denise Loseke (2003) explains that "conditions might exist, people might be hurt by them, but conditions are not social problems until humans categorize them as troublesome and in need of repair". To frame their work, social constructionists ask a set of questions: what do people say or do to convince others that a troublesome condition exists that must be changed? What are the consequences of the typical ways that social problems attract concern? How do our subjective understandings of social problems change the objective characteristics of our world? How do these understandings change how we think about our own lives and the lives of those around us? The social constructionist perspective focuses on how a

problem becomes defined. In particular, it examines how powerful groups, like politicians, religious leaders, and the media, can influence our opinions and conceptions of what is a social problem. From the social constructionist perspective, problems are in the “eye of the beholder.” Definitions of what is a social problem may even come from grassroots efforts.

The ‘compromise’ approach stands for a view of social problems are socially defined, but also contain objective elements. With sometimes a heated debate going on among these approaches, there is *no consensus* as to what condition or behavior constitutes a social problem.

Beyond the debate, of course, social problems consist of phenomena that are *difficult to define* concisely and clearly. The reasons included because there is value judgment, cultural relativity and political contention in definitions of social problem. The temporal dimension of definition of social problem (what we consider as social problem today may seem “normal” after years and conversely) also makes all agreed universal definition of social problem a difficult one to come by. Hence, social problems are "time, place, and context bound."

However, there are common perceptions to characterize social problems like social problems are inappropriate, perplexing/confusing, undesirable, threatening, intolerable, and deleterious/harmful. They also exist as a fact of collective behavior--that is, poverty, juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, etc.--always exist in society to a greater or lesser degree.

These common perceptions serve as assumptions in defining social problems. Thus, basic assumptions in defining social problems include the following:

1. Social problems are undesirable and harmful
2. Social problems have social roots
3. Social problems have objective and subjective dimensions

### 3.2. Characteristics of a Social Problem

A social problem arises when *a significant number of people* or *a number of significant people* perceive a condition as problematic. Social problems are conditions that are *socially recognized* and *shared*. For a social condition to be considered a social problem it must be possible to *envision a solution*. *Collective action* is needed to solve social problems; the acts of an individual cannot resolve a social problem. Social problems are closely interrelated (intertwined) with *social change*. Those who possess more *power* determine not only how problems are defined but also what responses can be considered, adopted, and implemented. Passionate and compassionate *feelings* arise out of problems. The apparent *chasm/gap* between *social ideals* and *social reality*: a social problem represents a *discrepancy* between what is and what ought to be. Hence, it follows that social problems arise *when shared goals or expectations are threatened*.

Nowadays, problems related to *human rights* discourse are thought to be compelling. In today's society, *'moral entrepreneurs'* and *the mass media* have come to play important roles in defining what is acceptable and unacceptable. No permanent solutions: problems are "solved" when they are reduced or lessened by an "acceptable" degree. Social problems move in and out of *public consciousness*. Social problems ebb and flow crest and fall--analogy of waves and tides.

The basic explanations for social problem would fall on -Personal attribution – blame the victim and/or -*Structural/institutional attribution* – problem of the (economic, social, cultural) system. Social problems can be also explained in view of social pathology, social disorganization, value conflict, deviant behavior, labeling, and the critical perspective. We can also see the explanation of social problems from the two sociological perspectives.



### A. The Functionalist Perspective

This perspective tends to emphasize those social conditions that threaten the continuation of society as it is. Its major concerns are too much disorder in society too little consensus, and too few institutions that work well to uphold society as we know it. The questions here are "What are going to happen to us as we become less and less committed to society and as institutions fail to do what they have traditionally done?" Among the theorists most associated with the functionalist perspective is French sociologist Emile Durkheim. Durkheim proposed that the function of society was to civilize or control individual actions. He wrote, "it is civilization that has made man what he is; it is what distinguishes him from the animal: man is man only because he is civilized." The social order can be threatened during periods of rapid social change, such as industrialization or political upheaval, when social norms and values are likely to be in transition. During this state of normlessness or **anomie**, Durkheim believed society was particularly prone to social problems. As a result, social problems cannot be solved by changing the individual; rather the problem has to be solved at the societal level. The entire social structure or the affected part of the social structure needs to be repaired.

After World War II, social-disorganization theory became a more important theory for functionalist sociologists trying to understand social problems. Many sociologists believed that the social pathology viewpoint could not fully explain the widespread existence of these social problems. So, they developed a new concept that eventually became known as social disorganization theory. This theory viewed society as being organized by a set of expectations or rules. Social disorganization results when these expectations fail, and it is manifested in three major ways: 1) normlessness, which arises when people have no rules to tell them how to behave; 2) culture conflict, which occurs when people feel trapped by contradictory rules

(children of immigrant parents); and 3) breakdown, which takes place when obedience to a set of rules is not rewarded or is punished.

According to functionalists, social problems occur when society or some part of it becomes disorganized. *Social disorganization* occurs when a large organization or an entire society is imperfectly organized to achieve its goals and maintain its stability. When disorganization occurs, the organization loses control over its parts. Social problems are not analyzed in terms of how “bad” it is for parts of society. Rather, a functionalist asks: How does the social problem emerge from the society? Does the social problem serve a function?

According to Robert Merton (1957), social structures can have positive benefits as well as negative consequences, which he called **dysfunctions**. A social problem such as homelessness has a clear set of dysfunctions but can also have positive consequences or functions. One could argue that homelessness is clearly dysfunctional and unpleasant for the women, men, and children who experience it; and for a city or community, homelessness can serve as a public embarrassment. Yet, a functionalist would say that homelessness is beneficial for at least one part of society, or else it would cease to exist. Think of it, the population of the homeless supports an industry of social service agencies, religious organizations, and community groups and service workers. In addition, the homeless also serve to highlight problems in other parts of our social structure, namely the problems of the lack of a livable wage or affordable housing. Functionalism, with its emphasis on value consensus, social order, and stability, is rightly criticized for being too conservative and resistant to social change. Underlying any functionalist analysis is the premise that society consists of a structure of interrelated parts, such as institutions, statuses, norms, and roles, and that each has a function in maintaining the stability of society. In other words, dysfunction → social disorganization → social problems

## **B. The Conflict Perspective**

From this perspective, society is defined as a conflict of various interests, and whereas some people are able to meet their needs and desires in society, others are systematically excluded and harmed. In this view, social problems emerge from the continuing conflict between groups in our society-based on social class, gender, and ethnicity and in the conflict, the powerful groups usually win. As a result, this perspective offers no easy solutions to social problems. There could be a total overhaul of the system, but that is unlikely to happen. We could reform parts of the structure, but those in power would retain their control.

The conflict perspective rejects the idea that social problems can be corrected by reforming institutions that are not functioning well. The conflict perspective is based on the belief that social problems arise out of major contradictions in the way societies are organized, contradictions that lead to large-scale conflict between those who have access to the good life and those who do not. This perspective owes much to the writing of Karl Marx who wrote in the Communist Manifesto and other works that developed the ideas of modern socialism, which many countries of the world still practice. For conflict theorists, crime and other deviance is the result of differences in the power of different groups or classes in society.

This perspective emphasizes social conditions that cause harm to people, especially societal conditions that create poverty and inequality of class and power. Sexism and harmful economic conditions are especially singled out as problems and causes of other problems. *The biggest social problem from this perspective is the system itself and the inequality it creates.* The first to make this argument was German philosopher and activist Karl Marx. Conflict, according to Marx, emerged from the economic substructure of capitalism, which defined all other social

structures and social relations. He focused on the conflict based on social class, created by the tension between the *proletariat* (workers) and the *bourgeoisie* (owners). Capitalism did more than separate the haves and have-nots. Unlike Durkheim, who believed that society created a civilized man, Marx argued that a capitalist society created a man alienated from his species being, from his true self. *Alienation* occurred on multiple levels: Man would become increasingly alienated from his work, the product of his work, other workers and finally, his own human potential. For example, a salesperson could be so involved in the process of her work that she doesn't spend quality time with her coworkers, talk with her customers or stop and appreciate the merchandise. Each sale transaction is the same; all customers and workers are treated alike. According to Marx, workers needed to achieve a *class consciousness*, an awareness of their social position and oppression, in order to unite and overthrow capitalism, replacing it with a more egalitarian socialist/communist structure.

Different from the functionalist approach, a *conflict perspective* essentially assumes that many social problems are created and perpetuated by the action of interest groups working for their own advantage, often at the expense of others. *Hegemony*, in Gramsci's (1971) words, is achieved by persuading the population to accept the political and moral values of the ruling class, including their definition of what constitutes and causes social problems.

### **3.4. Values, Norms, Goals and Problems**

A problem depends, first of all, on people's values and goals. What are values and goals and how do they relate to problems? Values and goals are important in defining problems. Goals and values influence what we do and determine the problems that exist for us. Problems are either threats to or violations of values that the individual, group, or society believes in, or they are conditions that stand in the way of people achieving their goals. The individual holds values and

pursues goals; problems arise in relation to these. A group or society also holds values and pursues goals; social problems arise in relation to these. Any problem is therefore relative to the particular values and goals held by an individual, group, or society. People will ultimately disagree as to what constitutes a problem in large part because each has a different set of values and goals. Difficulties in identifying problems values and goals make a problem subjective. We disagree about what is and is not a problem in part because our values and goals are different. This is true for groups and societies as well as individuals. We cannot escape our values and goals when we examine problems.

For many people, the oppression of women constitutes a problem. This may be related to the fact that these people value equality and have as a goal the creation of equal rights for men and women. The intentional oppression of women may or may not be an important problem even if we believe in these goals or values. Instead, the real problem may be the traditions and institutions that define and divide labor in such a way as to prevent women from taking advantage of opportunities in society. In this case only changes in the division of labor will contribute to more equality. Simply saying that the problem is the intentional oppression of women does not make that the problem and may actually cause us to identify to inaccurate problem.

#### **2.4. Studying Social Problems**

To study social problems we have to have a broad *conceptual framework* for analyzing social problems. The study of social problems involves: *defining the problem*, understanding the *etiology* (cause) of the problem and *evaluating the social norms and values* in relation to the problem. In studying social problems, we examine meaning, nature, manifestations, characteristics, magnitude, determinants, and consequences of social problems. Social problems

need to be analyzed in the context of history, the social structures, processes, and relationships within which they develop.

### 3.4.1. Problem Definition

Problem definition makes a difference because the definition given to a social problem *suggests* what causes it and how it can be addressed. We want to be clear about the stance we are taking in our analysis so that the way we define social problems – identify their causes and solutions.

Analyzing the problem definition involves specifically looking in to:

- How is the problem identified by various interest groups? Competing?
- How problem is defined will drive the rest of the analysis
- Example: Is AIDS: (1) a social problem, (2) a medical condition, (3) a moral problem?

Answer to this question of definition will determine the direction of the response.

### Five Stages of Collective Definition

1. **Emergence:** Brings a social problem to the public's attention
2. **Legitimation:** Social endorsement
3. **Mobilization:** Forces mount to attack the problem.
4. **Development:** An official "solution" is determined.
5. **Implementation:** The plan to deal with the problem is implemented.

**Emergence:** Bringing a social problem to the public's attention depends on several factors or a combination of factors: agitation, violence, attention by politicians, interest groups, media, powerful organizations, charismatic leader, etc. Many dire social conditions go unnoticed or unattended to and even noticed problems sometimes fail to gain social recognition.

**Legitimation:** The nature of the problem is explained and some solutions are suggested. Important actors include such groups as the media, churches, schools, civic organizations,

legislative groups, etc. Groups can either enhance or block the problem from gaining legitimacy and respectable endorsements.

- Regarding the problem as insignificant
- Not viewing it as a true problem--something "normal"-- not in need of a solution
- Seeing it as distasteful, inappropriate for attention
- Sponsorship by "subversive" elements of society

**Mobilization:** There is discussion and controversy as different subgroups make diverse claims regarding how the problem is defined and eventual action needed to "solve" it. Immobilization can result from equal power balances--a standoff

**Development:** Developing an "official solution" includes processes of bargaining, accommodation, negotiation, etc. The problem is defined and redefined in ways that meet the needs of the power groups at work on the issue

**Implementation:** The plan to deal with the problem is implemented. The plan may be modified, interpreted, restructured, etc

### **Causes / Consequences**

- Need to understand two things after the problem has been defined to your satisfaction:
  - (1) What forces brought the problem about
  - (2) What are the results of this problem being in existence?
- Helps us understand better *the nature* of the problem – not to lay blame
- Understand the *order of events* leading to a problem
- Perhaps help us *predict* future trends or events

### **Ideology**

- What beliefs do the various concerned persons looking at the problem hold?

- How will those beliefs affect how solutions to the problem will be found?

### **Winners / Losers**

- Who profits by the existence of the problem?
  - These people may be a source of resistance
  - May also become allies
- Who suffers because of the continued existence of the problem?
  - Can they be mobilized to work toward a policy solution?

### **Measuring the Problem**

- Rate: the number of cases per unit of population
- Incidence: the number of new cases generated within a time frame – often one year
- Prevalence: the number of present cases

**Strategies** to mitigate social problems can be investigated on the following points

- The nature of the strategies
- The dynamics of the strategies
- Effectiveness of the strategies
- Repercussions of the strategies

General Questions for studying a social problem include;

- Is this a "new" problem?
- Why is (or is not) this concern being raised as a problem at this moment in history?
- What values, ideologies, etc. are being used to define the problem at this point in history?
- Who is currently defining this issue as a social problem? How is that different from the past?



- If the issue currently being raised has some historical precedent, what conditions exist now that suggest different outcomes or make society more vulnerable to change?

### **3.4.2. Why problem definition makes a difference**

The definition given to a social problem *suggests* what causes it and how it can be addressed. We want to be clear about the stance we are taking in our analysis so that the way we define social problems – identify their causes and solutions – is *consistent with the ethics and values of the social work profession*.

According to Jansson (2008, p 234-255), problems are caused by physiological, personal, familial, community, and societal factors. Welfare dependency is linked to such personal and familial factors as levels of education; job-related experiences; family size; whether a woman has been divorced or widowed or has had children out of wedlock; how much child support a woman receives; personal orientations toward welfare; the physical or mental disabilities of a head of household; and whether a woman has a child or children with disabilities. These personal factors operate not only singly but together to cause welfare dependency. A woman's risk of dependency increases, for example, if she is the single head of a household, does not receive child support, and has a child with disabilities.

Jansson also added that various personal, familial, and environmental factors often act together to place some people in higher risk categories than persons who are exposed to only one factor. A woman may experience short-term risk, for example, when her husband leaves, rendering her economically dependent on government programs. But her chances of securing employment that pays enough to allow her to leave the welfare rolls increase if she has prior work experience, has a college degree, lives in a neighborhood with expanding economic opportunities, and has access to affordable transportation and child care. By contrast, a woman who lacks all of these

advantages and who is also left by her husband is less likely to find employment that pays enough to make her economically independent.

Policy advocates use both quantitative and qualitative research to analyze the causes of specific problems. For Jansson the following four approaches are common: *First*, they compare persons with a social problem with persons who do not have it, to infer from their differences why certain persons develop the problem. Because welfare dependency is strongly associated with single-parent families, for example, we can infer that persons in families that are supported by a single wage are more vulnerable to poverty—and welfare—than persons in families with dual wages. *Second*, they follow people through time to discover why they develop a problem, such as following teen women to discern why some of them become pregnant and join welfare rolls. It is more difficult to conduct this second kind of research, because it requires gathering data at many intervals from participants who must agree to participate for an extended period.

*Third*, they evaluate existing programs to find clues to a problem's causes. If recipients who received ongoing and substantial day-care subsidies after they left the rolls have lower rates of recidivism than recipients who did not receive them, policy practitioners can surmise that day-care expenses force many women onto the rolls. *Fourth*, they get information directly from persons who are experiencing a specific problem, by observing them (as in anthropological studies) or by interviewing them.

When researchers examine the causes of social problems, their perspectives influence their work, such as whether they emphasize personal, psychological, economic, biological, or environmental causes. Researchers with *public health* or *ecological perspectives* emphasize occupational, economic, familial, peer, and neighborhood factors. When examining the causes of welfare, for

example, these researchers implicate low-wage industries, the sheer cost of day care, the lack of transportation, and the placement of many jobs in suburban areas that are distant from inner-city residents. They also cite discrimination against welfare recipients by many employers.

Persons with *radical perspectives* implicate economic and social inequalities, the reduced economic opportunities of certain populations, and the practices of corporations as causes of specific social problems. With the globalizing of the economy, for example, corporations often place their factories in low-wage nations in the developing world, thereby eliminating jobs in the United States that might have employed some welfare recipients.

In addition corporations have often relocated their plants to suburban sites, making it difficult for inner-city residents to get to them. Corporations stand to benefit, moreover, from welfare reforms that force hundreds of thousands of people into the competition for jobs, allowing them to depress wages even further for relatively unskilled persons.

Analysts who use *medical or disease models* explore the physiological factors associated with specific problems. Considerable numbers of welfare recipients are disabled or must care for children with disabilities. Medical or disease models dominate the medical and increasingly, the mental health fields, where physiological and pharmaceutical causes and solutions dominate.

Persons who emphasize *intrapsychic factors* explore personal and familial causes of social problems. Some researchers contend, for example, that teen pregnancy is often caused by a constellation of personal and familial dynamics, such as abusive parents, truancy, and poor school performance.

In a departure from traditional approaches, some persons adhere to *behavioral frameworks*, contending that certain social problems can be redressed only by providing rewards and disincentives that make welfare less attractive than employment. Persons who favor disincentives

advocate reducing the levels of welfare grants or requiring teen mothers to live with their parents except when they are abused by them. Persons who favor rewards often favor allowing recipients to retain some assistance from the government even after they leave welfare so their post-welfare income will exceed their welfare income.

Some people emphasize *deterrent strategies* that penalize persons with social problems.

Deterrents might include time limits for welfare or ending welfare altogether for certain groups of persons, like legal immigrants. These different approaches often cause vigorous debates among theorists, analysts, and researchers. Persons who implicate economic and environmental factors often contend that counseling is an ineffective strategy. Radicals contend that, without remedy in the inequalities in American society and the stress that poverty causes, many social problems cannot be significantly alleviated. Contending groups often selectively cite research evidence to support specific remedies and to attack the proposals of persons who use different paradigms.

These various frameworks and causal factors are not mutually exclusive, because various causes interact. Sophisticated policy practitioners and theorists believe that social problems are caused by an array of factors that combine the traditional approaches. The risk of dependency increases when someone has not completed high school, has had no prior work experience, lives in a geographic area with high unemployment, has been subjected to parental abuse, and is sexually victimized by an older male. Such theorists as William Julius Wilson analyze these kinds of intersecting factors that shape complex phenomena like welfare dependency. Indeed, policy advocates should take leading roles in critiquing social policies that are premised on simplistic analyses of social problems.

Having established a typology and analyzed causation, policy advocates devise interventions to solve specific social problems. They develop curative strategies and preventive programs, measure the prevalence of specific problems, and conduct research to locate persons with specific problems. But many preventive strategies have been shown to be effective at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels even though it has its own pitfalls.

Policy advocates often have to demonstrate that specific problems are sufficiently important to merit the attention of agency staff, funders, government officials, and legislators. Legislators, funders, and agency executives are likely to invest scarce resources in programs that they believe address widespread problems. Rates, prevalence, and incidence are commonly used to measure the relative magnitude of social problems.

Practitioners can use a variety of technical approaches when measuring the magnitude of social problems. When data are not available from government agencies or the research literature, policy practitioners measure social problems in other ways. Jonathan Bradshaw contrasts measures of felt need, expressed need, expert need, and comparative need. *Felt need* measures persons' belief that they have a problem. An agency might interview a sample of working mothers with preschool children, for example, to assess their belief that they cannot afford day care. Of course, persons sometimes exaggerate their actual needs or, in the case of stigmatized conditions such as substance abuse, underreport them.

*Expressed need* measures persons' actual search for specific services. A policy practitioner might examine the length of the waiting lists at drug treatment centers, for example, or the number of calls that a hot line receives about substance abuse. Although knowledge of clients' service-related behaviors is useful, these behaviors may not accurately reflect people's actual

needs. Some persons do not seek services, for example, because they believe they cannot afford them, do not like social agencies, are unaware of the services, think they will receive ineffective services, fear they will be prosecuted, or fear they will be subjected to punitive services because of their stigmatized condition.

Policy advocates sometimes assess *expert needs* by asking experts, such as social scientists, social work practitioners, local agency executives, or government officials, for their estimates of the severity of specific problems. Experts can draw convincing evidence from current research, such as the extent of alcoholism among women. Of course, experts' biases and values may influence their position and credibility; someone who defines alcoholism as consuming many drinks each day will provide a lower estimate of the problem's seriousness than someone who uses a more stringent standard, such as consuming only several drinks a day.

A *comparative need* approach measures unmet needs by comparing the services offered in different communities. Assume, for example, that certain neighborhoods have many drug treatment programs, but others with similar demographic characteristics have few. We can infer a larger unmet need for drug treatment services in the neighborhoods with fewer treatment programs. One should interpret comparative need measures with caution, however, because they rely on inference rather than a direct measure of need. For example, a neighborhood with few drug treatment programs will appear to have a shortage of services when compared with neighborhoods that have too many such programs.

Using several or all of these means of assessing needs helps us gauge the importance of specific social problems. If we were trying to promote drug treatment programs in a specific neighborhood, for example, we might look into the length of the existing programs' waiting lists (expressed need), ask high school students for their perceptions of the seriousness of adolescent

substance abuse (felt need), discover whether similar neighborhoods have more programs (comparative need), and get information from selected experts (expert need).

Measurements of social problems become more dramatic when they include trend data suggesting that a specific problem is becoming more serious. Such data may come from felt-need, expressed-need, comparative-need, or expert-need sources, or from rising rates, prevalence, or incidence of specific problems. A dramatic increase in a community's substance abuse problems, for example, would be documented by a rising rate of deaths from overdose and longer waiting lists for drug treatment programs (felt need)

Policy decision makers, however, do not spring into action merely because policy advocates present them with data about the prevalence of a problem or the need for specific services.

Legislators often ignore overwhelming data about a problem, particularly when they are not subjected to strong pressure by voters and interest groups or when powerful interests oppose ameliorating measures. By using economic, housing, demographic, and ethnic data, policy practitioners can infer high rates of certain social problems in specific geographic areas.

### **3.4.3. Social Problems as Slippery concepts**

Social problems are human constructs, not purely objective phenomena. Indeed, by referring to social phenomena as social problems, people define them as requiring human intervention to be solved. They invent terms and classification systems; sometimes even when demonstrable problems do not exist or when it is unclear how many people have them. The following are some *ambiguities* and *philosophical issues* that most social workers will confront during their careers.

#### **1. When are Social Problems real, and When Are They Invented?**

Some social conditions are so complex that it is difficult to know when they are problems

2. Many Social Problems Defy (challenge) Simple Solutions, But many People favor panacea (cure/solution). Most social problems are complex phenomena that do not lend themselves to simple solutions. Yet people frequently demand panaceas.

3. Priorities Are Not Chosen Rationally (rather it is politics that matters). The literature on policy analysts sometimes conveys the misleading impression that decision makers rely on research to shape public priorities. Policy analysts often try to gauge the costs to society of specific problems, such as the work absenteeism, death, and lost wages that derive from alcoholism. However, the reality that politics ultimately shapes the selection of priorities.

4. Solving One Problem Can Create Others (Because resources are scarce). Even if some problems can be solved; others often emerge in their wake, as in the case of welfare reform.

5. Variations in Problems (difference between groups: sex, ethnicity, approaches to deal with the problem). When pointing to the issues in defining, measuring, and conceptualizing social problems, many policy advocates stress the differences between groups in the population.

Policy advocates who help *oppressed populations* encounter particular challenges in policy arenas because their issues are frequently unpopular. Certain kinds of issues and populations have a relatively privileged position moreover; the broader population views the problems of stigmatized conditions.