Positive Sociology

A new paradigm for the application of constructive social science

Viðar Halldórsson
Háskóli Íslands
vidarh@hi.is

Abstract

Sociology, as an academic discipline, has been preoccupied with the analysis of social problems. It has theoretically and empirically focused on the ills of human societies, often through a critical and pessimistic lens marked by pathological connotations. Yet much of what takes place in society, and much of what makes society possible, is positive, constructive, and generative. These productive dimensions of sociality, however, have received comparatively limited attention from sociologists, theoretically, empirically and practically. This epistemological imbalance in sociological inquiry calls for a theoretical and narrative corrective. This presentation seeks to challenge and extend current approaches within the positive social sciences, which have not yet adequately addressed the constructive dimensions of human sociality. It does so by re-developing the paradigm of positive sociology, introduced by Robert Stebbins in 2009. While Stebbins's version of positive sociology primarily focused on leisure and happiness, this presentation argues that a re-developed positive sociology must more importantly account for the everyday social mechanisms through which society is generated, sustained, repaired, and made meaningful. It proposes that these mechanisms can be theorized through a novel application of the concept of *social magic*, expanding positive sociology beyond leisure, happiness, and individualized well-being. The proposed paradigm of positive sociology can serve as a foundation for more applied sociology, in which sociologist can employ their expertise in various fields of action. This presention thus highlight the role of sociologial education to challenge current societal acceleration, indifference and contrieved dependancy on AI´s, by fostering *a sociological imagination* which promotes the skills, agency and craftsmanship needed to constructively build communities and address growing societal problems at important and challenging times. It accounts, in other words, for sociological application through learning-by-doing where the classroom becomes a craft-workshop forming attitudes and skills for constructive social work, not only theoretically but practically.

Key words: positive sociology, applied sociology, paradigm development, social magic.