

There are two main factors that come up when discussing social science outcomes that get attention:

1. Individuals (agency, choices, actions, etc.)
 - Viewed as lower-level / micro-factor
 - “Individualistic explanations”
2. Social Structures (public policy, economic systems, social hierarchies, etc.)
 - Viewed as higher-level / macro-factor
 - Structural explanations

Individuals are often playing a large role in social science explanations. However, social structure has been harder to show as an explanatory device (they are “mysterious”). Social structure is harder to understand because

- They are harder to “see”. They are less physical
- They are hard to define
- If causality is a connected process, then social structures are extremely difficult to pin down what is the physical connection and especially what “mark” is transmitted

The Trouble with Stories (Charles Tilly)

Stories to Tilly are a sequential, explanatory, recounting of connected, self-propelled people and events. *Standard stories* are sequential, explanatory accounts of self-motivated human action. Why do these stories matter?

- Explanations are stories

Standard Stories

- Standard stories are often preferred by humans when packing information in memory
- Sociologists however give explanations of social inequality that result from indirect, unintended, collective, and environmentally mediated effects and therefore fit badly with standard stories