



**ability** The power to perform a mental or physical task—either before or after training. Social psychologists usually distinguish ability from aptitude, the natural ability to acquire or learn a body of knowledge, sometimes measured by an aptitude test. Sociologists would probably distinguish ability and \*skill, the former being relatively specialized and task-specific, the latter referring to a wider set of learned techniques which could be applied to a number of cognate tasks.

**abolitionism** A term associated with protest on grounds of inhumanity and a call for the abolition of slavery (see, for example, the arguments of William Wilberforce, 1759–1833). More recently extended to the abolition of prisons and imprisonment. The latter stance developed within Scandinavian criminology (see T. Mathiesen, *The Politics of Abolition*, 1974) but has since been taken up within wider \*critical criminology. Abolitionists argue that prisons are ineffective, their justification untenable, and their violations of human rights widespread. The abolitionist stance rejects reformism on the grounds that this perpetuates and legitimates the existing system. Abolitionism proposes new responses to crime, offending, and disputes—for example community-based alternatives to incarceration—and argues that the urge to punish and inflict pain must be challenged.

**absolute deprivation** *See* DEPRIVATION.

**absolute mobility** *See* MOBILITY, SOCIAL.

**absolute poverty** *See* POVERTY.

**absolutism (absolutist state)** A state-form typical of societies in the process of transition from \*feudalism to \*capitalism and in which power is concentrated in the person of a monarch, who has at his or her disposal a centralized administrative apparatus. Viewed thus, the label has been applied to a wide variety of \*states, ranging from that of the 16th-century English Tudors to that of 19th-century Meiji Japan. This definition is, however, not uncontroversial: the label has also been applied to Tsarist Russia, where the transition was from feudalism to \*communism, and some would deny that Japan was ever a feudal society in anything other than the loosest sense. A useful overview can be found in Perry Anderson's *Lineages of the Absolute State* (1974).

There has also been great controversy about the role that such states played in the transition to capitalism. Many historians have seen the absolutist state as a midwife of capitalism, an interpretation illustrated by the preference of some for the term 'enlightened despotism' rather than the (somewhat derogatory) alternative 'absolutism'. (Others, however, have used this term to describe the influence of Enlightenment

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rationalism on absolutism in Prussia, Austria, and so forth, rather than the relationship of absolutism to capitalism.) By comparison, Marxists have (at least until relatively recently) tended to see it as creating obstacles to the development of capitalism. The problem that both parties to this dispute have had to address is the variability in the historical outcomes. Within continental Europe, for example, the rise of absolutist states appears to have been associated with both a rapid transition to capitalism in the West, and an intensification of feudal domination in the East.

For Max \*Weber (*General Economic History*, 1919–20) and for non-Marxist scholars more generally, the explanation of the progressive role played by the absolutist or ‘rational state’ may be found in the immense contribution that these regimes made to the increasing predictability of action within their territorial boundaries, as they bureaucratized their own administrations, introduced elements of the rule of law, monopolized the legitimate use of force, and used this force to enforce their jurisdiction throughout society. Weber’s response to the divergent outcomes of absolutism in Eastern and Western Europe was to portray what happened in the East as a delay rather than a regression, and to explain it as the result of the state’s lack of allies in the wider society, which in turn reflected the more general economic and cultural backwardness of these societies.

The response of Marxists (such as Maurice Dobb, Eric Hobsbawm, and Perry Anderson) to this line of argument, has been to suggest that it owes more to the tendency amongst non-Marxists to accord a priori analytical privilege to the political realm, than it does to sound historical research. Given that the absolute monarchs and their most powerful supporters were always representatives of the feudal nobility, so Marxists have argued, it is the short-lived absolutisms of Western Europe (and especially of England and Holland) that require explanation, rather than the long-lasting ones of the East. The explanation that they provide revolves around the bold and controversial claim that the majority of continental states experienced a prolonged economic crisis during the 16th century, a crisis from which England and Holland were spared. The result was that in every society except those two, the feudal nobility was able to crush or constrain its capitalist rivals. For this reason, it was possible for the bourgeois classes of England and Holland to gain an early advantage over their potential competitors, an advantage which they enhanced still further by overturning their absolute monarchies in relatively short order. Putting to one side the many empirical objections that this thesis has encountered, it is important to note that it rests upon an analytical privileging of the economic realm that is arguably no more justified than the privileging of the political realm to which its proponents have rightly objected. Perhaps the most successful exception to both strictures is A. Lublinskaya’s, *French Absolutism: The Crucial Phase, 1620–1629* (1968).

**abstracted empiricism** A term coined by C. Wright \*Mills in *The Sociological Imagination* (1959) to refer to the work of those sociologists who equate \*empiricism with science and make a fetish of quantitative research techniques. Whilst Mills accepts that there is a place for numerical data and statistical analysis in sociological reasoning, he insisted that they are not sufficient for sociological analysis. Indeed, in the absence of the theoretical categories and comparative historical analyses that give such data their sociological meaning, he also insists that no conception of social \*structure is possible. This is because of the psychology that he regards as intrinsic

to all methodologies that restrict what is allowable as legitimate data to those which are produced by sociologists themselves by means of \*surveys and the like. A fascinating historical account of the origins of abstracted empiricism will be found in R. Bannister, *Sociology and Scientism: The American Quest for Objectivity, 1880–1949* (1987).

**accommodation** See ASSIMILATION.

**accounts** See VOCABULARIES OF MOTIVE.

**acculturation** See ASSIMILATION.

**accumulation** See CAPITAL ACCUMULATION.

**acephalous** A term used to describe the political system of societies without centralized state authority—such as, for example, traditional African lineage political systems (see J. Middleton and D. Tait, *Tribes without Rulers*, 1958). Authority is wielded at the level of the clan, lineage, or lineage segment. For this reason these ‘headless’ societies are often referred to by the alternative term ‘segmented’.

**achieved status** See STATUS, ACHIEVED.

**achievement** The successful accomplishment of, or performance in, a socially defined task or goal. Talcott \*Parsons (in *Social Theory and Modern Society*, 1967) suggests that modern societies use indices of achievement—examination credentials or performance in role-based tasks—rather than ascriptive criteria to recruit, select, and evaluate individuals for particular \*roles. However, research demonstrates the continued influence of \*ascription in social \*stratification, notably according to such factors as race and sex. There is an interesting cross-disciplinary discussion of the concept and interpretation of achievement, its relationship to creativity and innovation, and its role in explaining economic growth in England and Japan since the 17th century, in Penelope Gouk (ed.), *Wellsprings of Achievement* (1995). See also ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION; MERITOCRACY; STATUS, ACHIEVED.

**achievement motivation** Defined as the need to perform well or the striving for success, and evidenced by persistence and effort in the face of difficulties, achievement motivation is regarded as a central human motivation. Psychologist David McClelland (*The Achieving Society*, 1961) measured it by analysing respondents’ narratives; rather more controversially he hypothesized that it was related to economic growth. Lack of achievement motivation was, for a period during the 1950s and 1960s, a fashionable explanation for lack of economic development in the Third World—notably among certain American \*modernization theorists. This thesis was much criticized by \*dependency theorists such as Andre Gunder Frank (*Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution*, 1969). See also WORK ETHIC.

**act (action, social act)** See ACTION THEORY; MEANING; PARSONS; WEBER, MAX.

**action frame of reference** See ACTION THEORY.

**action research** A type of research in which the researcher is also a change agent, often used in local communities or by consultants working in companies, as

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part of the change process itself. The research subjects are invited to participate at various stages of a relatively fast-moving sequence of research–action–research–action. There is an iterative process of investigating a problem, using \*case-study methods, loosely defined; presenting the analysis, with one or more proposed solutions, to the subjects or group leaders; deciding which course of action to follow and implementing it; followed by further investigations to assess the outcomes, identifying unanticipated problems and possible solutions to them; followed by further action to refine and extend the new policies or activities. The process can be extended indefinitely, as the original focus of concern gradually moves to other related areas. The British community development programmes of the 1970s are an interesting example (see particularly the *Coventry CDP Final Report*, 1975).

**action theory (action frame of reference)** These terms are not interchangeable but are closely related and carry a number of implications about the way we regard sociology as a science. It has been common, for example, to juxtapose action to structure as alternative starting-points for sociological investigation. Action theories are those that start from or see the major object for sociology as human action. This group includes Weberian sociology, phenomenological sociology, symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, and structuration theory (all of which are dealt with under separate headings in this dictionary). A defining quality of action is that, unlike behaviour, it carries a subjective meaning for the actor. These approaches, therefore, concern themselves with the \*meaning of action and its \*interpretation. Sociology gives a rational, coherent account of people's actions, thoughts, and relationships.

The action frame of reference is associated with the name of Talcott \*Parsons, whose theory starts with a systematic analysis of action that sees the social actor as choosing between different means and ends, in an environment which limits choice both physically and socially. The most important social limitations on choice are \*norms and \*values. From this, Parsons built up an elaborate model of the \*social system, and his theory became more deterministic: the idea of the choosing actor disappears, in favour of a theory of structural determination in which norms and values play the determining role.

Apart from Parsons's theory, modern action theories in sociology have three different concerns. The first is the nature of \*rationality and rational action itself. This focus arises out of Weber's work and poses questions about the possibility of causal explanations of action. (Are the reasons for doing something a cause in the same way that heating a piece of metal causes it to expand?) It also addresses the issue of whether there are any absolute criteria of rationality, or whether sociological explanations are always in some sense relative. \*Rational choice theory takes up some of these problems in a more substantive way. The second concern is the taken-for-granted rules and stock of knowledge that underlie action—a theme pursued notably by ethnomethodology and phenomenology. The third, addressed by symbolic interactionism, is the learning and negotiation of \*meaning that goes on between actors. Many important approaches are reviewed in Ira Cohen, 'Theories of Action and Praxis' in Turner (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Social Theory* (2000).

**actionalism** A term generally associated with the name of French sociologist Alain Touraine, and not to be confused with the 'action frame of reference' (see

ACTION THEORY) proposed by Talcott Parsons. Beginning in the 1960s, Touraine developed a radical new theoretical framework, most fully described in *The Self-Production of Society* (1973). In his own words, Touraine aimed to 'replace a sociology of society with a sociology of actors'. His purpose has been to overcome what he sees as a false division in sociology between objective and subjective, or system and action approaches. Actionalism places the social actor at the centre of theoretical attention, including theories of structural and historical phenomena. Actors are not simply the components of social systems, but the agents of those systems.

Touraine's analysis does not exclude groups and collectivities such as social classes. However, these are treated not as categories, but as dynamic sets of relationships between social actors. This perspective involves an explicit critique of \*structuralism and \*post-structuralism (in which the individual subject is 'dead'), and of \*essentialism (which leaves history equally bereft of social actors).

The dynamic aspect of actionalism is what Touraine calls historicity (a term adapted from Jean-Paul \*Sartre); that is, the ability of society to act on itself, and the quality of history as a human activity. The sociologist is an agent of historicity—not a neutral observer—and has a stake in the conflicts of his or her society. This led Touraine to the method of '\*sociological interventionism', in which sociologists study social change movements by participating in them directly. This actionalist sociology, Touraine believes, will be diverse and full of conflicts, but more legitimate because of its active engagement in social change processes.

In concrete terms, the actionalist approach attempts to explain how social values are shaped, and thus how social \*change is accomplished, by identifying the 'historical subject' (collective actor) in each historical epoch which carries the capacity for accomplishing revolutionary change by organizing itself into a \*social movement. In his earlier studies, Touraine argued that historical subjects attain the necessary self-awareness through the experience of work, so that the social movement expressing the historical subject of capitalism becomes organized labour. However, in later studies, he broadened his conception of 'production' and extended the theory to other social movements, including those organized by women, students, nuclear protesters, and nationalists. Touraine's analysis of social movements can be found in his *The Voice and the Eye* (1978).

**actor (social actor)** See ACTION THEORY; AGENCY; SELF; SUBJECT.

**adaptation** A term widely used in evolutionary theory to describe the outcome of the process of natural selection. Genetic variations in biological species are seen as being selected on the basis of their capacity to promote or inhibit survival in a particular environment. Those variations that allow a species to survive do so by allowing them to adapt to the pressures and opportunities of their particular environment. In much social \*evolutionism a similar approach was adopted, with cultural innovations being seen as the objects of environmental selection and the means through which social groups may be able to adapt to their physical and social environment. Talcott \*Parsons took adaptation as one of the four functional prerequisites of any system of action—the others were goal attainment, \*integration, and latency, forming the so-called AGIL scheme. See also FUNCTIONALISM.

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**Addams, Jane** (1860–1935) Addams was an American sociologist of central importance to the work of the \*Chicago School in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A powerful influence on many other women in sociology, such as Charlotte Perkins \*Gilman and Emily Greene \*Balch, in 1889 she set up a social settlement in Chicago, Hull House, which was partly inspired by London's Toynbee Hall, but was more woman-influenced, more egalitarian, and less religious. She argued that one of the main problems for women was trying to manage the conflicting demands of family and society, and believed social settlements were one way to resolve the problem. Hull House was an important sociological centre for the University of Chicago, and also attracted other leading social theorists, Marxists, anarchists, and socialists of the time. A spokeswoman for women and working-class immigrants in particular, Addams was a cultural feminist who believed female values were inherently superior to those of men, and argued that a more productive and more peaceful society could be built by drawing on, and integrating, such values. Her commitment to pacifism made her a social pariah during the First World War, although in 1931 she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. See Emily Cooper Johnson (ed.), *Jane Addams: A Centennial Reader* (1960), and Mary Jo Deegan, *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School* (1989).



SEE WEB LINKS

- A classic article by Jane Addams on the idea of the social settlement: 'A Function of the Social Settlement.' (Subscription)

**addiction** See DRINKING AND ALCOHOLISM; DRUGS.

**additive overlapping clustering** See CLUSTER ANALYSIS.

**additive tree** See CLUSTER ANALYSIS.

**administrative theory (classical administrative theory)** An early form of \*organization theory, pioneered mainly by Henri Fayol (1841–1925), which was concerned principally with achieving the 'most rational' organization for co-ordinating the various tasks specified within a complex \*division of labour (see his *Administration industrielle et générale*, 1916). The translation of this book into English as *General and Industrial Management* (1949) implies that Fayol was concerned mainly with business management, although he himself makes it clear that his ideas about management were intended to apply to all formal organizations, including political and religious undertakings. Expressing the French 'administration' as 'management' has also led to the alternative designation of this approach as the 'classical school of scientific management'. More recent exponents include Lyndall Urwick and Peter F. Drucker.

Fayol, who is acknowledged to be the earliest advocate of a theoretical analysis of managerial activities, identified the key functions of management as being those of forecasting and planning. The most rational and efficient organizations were, in his view, those which implemented a plan that facilitated 'unity, continuity, flexibility, precision, command and control'. Universal principles of administration were then distilled from these objectives. These include the key elements of the scalar chain (authority and responsibility flowing in an unbroken line from the chief executive to the shop floor); unity of command (each person has only one supervisor with whom he or she communicates); a pyramid of prescribed control (first-line supervisors

have a limited number of functions and subordinates, with second-line supervisors controlling a prescribed number of first-line supervisors, and so on up to the chief executive); unity of direction (people engaged in similar activities must pursue a common objective in line with the overall plan); specialization of tasks (allowing individuals to build up a specific expertise and so be more productive); and, finally, subordination of individual interests to the general interest of the organization. This list is not exhaustive, but illustrates the key proposition of administrative theory, which is that a functionally specific and hierarchical structure offers the most efficient means of securing organizational objectives (see M. B. Brodie, *Fayol on Administration*, 1967).

Classical administrative theory, like its near-contemporary the \*scientific management approach, rests on the premises that organizations are unproblematically rational and (effectively) closed systems. In other words, organizations are assumed to have unambiguous and unitary objectives, which the individuals within them pursue routinely, by obeying the rules and fulfilling their role expectations, according to the prescribed blueprint and structure. Moreover, in the attempt to maximize efficiency, it is only variables within that structure that need to be considered and manipulated. The interaction of the organization with its environment, together with the various factors which are external to the organization but nevertheless have consequences for its internal functioning, are systematically ignored. Clearly, both perspectives take a rather deterministic view of social action, since each assumes that individuals will maximize organizational efficiency, independently of their own welfare, and with no thought for the relationship between the collective goal and their own particular purposes. \*Human Relations Theory in organizational analysis, an otherwise diverse group of writers and approaches, is united by its opposition to precisely this assumption. Despite such criticisms, the classical theory of administration has exerted considerable influence on the fields of business studies and public administration, and it still provides the basic concepts which many managers use in clarifying their objectives.

**adolescence** The term may be applied to the emotional and behavioural states supposedly associated with becoming adult; the phase in the \*life-cycle before the physical changes associated with puberty are socially recognized; or the transition in status from childhood to adulthood.

Typically, in modern industrial societies, young people are sexually mature well before society acknowledges them as adults in other respects; and, because of education and training, they remain dependent on parents and guardians. Consequently, adolescence has been seen as a time of peak emotional turbulence (see J. C. \*Coleman, *The Nature of Adolescence*, 1980). Although few sociologists would dismiss the idea that physical change may of itself bring about behavioural change, or that young people do face a tension between sexual and social maturity, the value of the term adolescence is questionable. Comparisons with even the recent past show that children frequently had to become adults as soon as they could do useful work.

Anthropologists too describe numerous examples (especially in \*age-set societies) where the transition to adulthood is abrupt, marked by clear \*rites of passage, and relatively free from alleged adolescent problems. Surveys and other field studies in the industrialized West itself have cast doubt on the ideas that adolescence is

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typically any more stressful than any other stage in life or that the majority of teenagers are rebellious. The treatment of adolescence as a social problem may say more about the stereotypes of youth in the adult world and indicate a \*moral panic about \*youth culture (a critique along these lines will be found in Frank Coffield *et al.*, *Growing Up at the Margins*, 1986). For an overview of the literature see Patricia Noller and Victor Callan, *The Adolescent in the Family* (1991).

**Adorno, Theodor Wiesengrund** (1903–69) A leading member of the Frankfurt School of Social Research, who worked in America during the Second World War, returning to West Germany after the allied victory. He was a man of immense learning, and complex, often obscure and difficult ideas. His work covered aesthetic theory, literary and musical theory, general cultural criticism, social psychology, and philosophy. A major work was (with numerous others) *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), a (much criticized) empirical and theoretical investigation into the psychological roots of authoritarianism.

In the face of modern culture, he was concerned at the outset to avoid the subjectivism of \*existentialism and easy objectivism of \*positivism, but this modified as he became more pessimistic about the modern world. His aesthetic and cultural criticism and his philosophy became increasingly concerned with form rather than content: the form of a work of art, or of a system of ideas, offered the clearest demonstration of the limits and contradictions imposed upon us by society, as well as of the possibilities it offers. He particularly developed this idea in relation to music and wider trends in artistic culture, which he saw as marking the development of mass culture and \*mass society (see R. Witkin, *Adorno on Music*, 1998; *Adorno on Popular Culture*, 2002). His own difficult writing style was allegedly an attempt to avoid what he saw as the false integration of modern industrial society. Perhaps his clearest statement of his view of modernity can be found in *Minima Moralia* (1951), a collection of aphorisms, which state that the notion of totality was once part of a liberating philosophy, but over the last century has been absorbed into a totalizing \*social system, a real or potentially \*totalitarian regime. Against this we must not seek knowledge, but emphasize paradox and ambiguity; temporarily, at least, truth might lie in the experience of the individual. For examples of his cultural criticism see *Prisms* (1955) and, with Max \*Horkheimer, *The Culture Industry Revisited*, ed. J. Bernstein (1992). Adorno's introductory lectures on sociology from 1968 have been published as *Introduction to Sociology* (published 2000). See also AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY; CRITICAL THEORY.

 SEE WEB LINKS

- A selection of extracts from works by Adorno on music and the culture industry.

**advocacy research** One kind of descriptive \*policy research, carried out by people who are deeply concerned about certain social problems, such as poverty or rape. Their studies seek to measure social problems with a view to heightening public awareness of them and providing a catalyst to policy proposals and other action to ameliorate the problem in question. Occasionally, advocacy research studies bend their research methods in order to inflate the magnitude of the social problem described, and thereby enhance the case for public action to address the issue. See Neil Gilbert's article: 'Advocacy Research and Social Policy', *Crime and Justice* (1997).

**affect (affective, affectivity)** An affect is an emotion. In sociology the use of the term generally implies that an action is being or has been carried out for emotional gratification. For example, in their discussion of *Class Awareness in the United States* (1983), Mary R. Jackman and Robert W. Jackman discuss 'affective class bonds'; namely, 'the issue of whether subjective social class encompasses a feeling of emotional attachment', rather than being merely a matter of nominal identification. 'Affectivity versus affective neutrality' is one of Talcott \*Parsons's so-called pattern variables for the classification and analysis of societies. *See also* AFFECTIVE INDIVIDUALISM.

**affective individualism** An alleged (though controversial) change in family life, said to have accompanied the demographic, industrial, and capitalist revolutions which occurred in 18th-century England, and since experienced widely in other modernized and modernizing countries. The term affective individualism is applied to this process, being the formation of \*marriage ties on the basis of personal attraction, guided by norms of romantic attachment.

A number of authorities (including L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800*, 1977) have argued that the 18th century saw a revolution in familial norms. Hitherto, families (even nuclear \*families) were deeply embedded in a wider network of community involvements (including close relationships with other kin), so that the family was not a major focus of emotional attachment and dependence for its members. Among other things, therefore, sex was instrumental (necessary to propagate children) rather than a source of pleasure; as indeed was marriage itself (which was undertaken for economic or political reasons, rather than feelings of romantic attraction). For reasons connected with \*industrialization (the precise causality varies between accounts), this form of family life gave way rapidly to the 'closed domesticated nuclear form', characterized by intimate emotional bonds, domestic privacy, a preoccupation with love and with the rearing of children for expressive rather than instrumental reasons. By extension, this process is alleged to have accompanied the spread of \*capitalism and industrialization throughout the globe, especially to the so-called traditional societies of the \*Third World.

The theory of affective individualism as an invention of modern societies has been strongly challenged—most notably by Alan Macfarlane (see *The Culture of Capitalism*, 1987)—mainly on the grounds that it posits as revolutionary a series of changes which were incremental and long pre-dated the processes of industrialization. *See also* FAMILY, SOCIOLOGY OF.

**affine (affinity)** *See* KINSHIP.

**affirmative action** *See* POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION.

**affluence** *See* EMBOURGEOISEMENT.

**affluent worker** *See* EMBOURGEOISEMENT.

**age-sets (age-grades)** Broad age-bands that define the social \*status, permitted \*roles, and activities of those belonging to them. Transitions from one age-grade to the next are often major collectively organized social events with \*rites of passage marking the change of social status and role. Although the term can be applied in the modern industrial context, it is more commonly used in reference to

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pre-industrial societies where an age-grade system of stratification (dividing members into youths, maidens, elders, and so forth) is superimposed on the organizing tribal, lineage, or clan structure.

**age stratification** A system of inequalities linked to age, often associated with age-sets. In Western societies, for example, both the old and the young are perceived and treated as relatively incompetent and excluded from much social life. See also AGEISM.

## ageing, sociology of

The physiological process of growing older has vital social and cultural dimensions which affect what is often seen as a purely biological inevitability. Age is also a cultural category and its meaning and significance vary both historically and cross-culturally. The sociology of ageing did not feature in standard sociology text-books until recently. Like sex or gender, age tended to be seen as a purely 'natural' division, or else as a 'problem' reserved for social policy. By contrast, considerable sociological attention has been paid to \*youth culture.

In Western capitalism, a wage-labour system means fixed retirement from external production, thus categorizing the aged as non-productive, and a burden. In research priorities, \*gerontology, with its medical model of ageing, has been influential. Sociological research in Britain has focused on the aged as isolates or in state institutions. Demographic changes—with increasing longevity, a declining birth-rate, and a greater proportion of the population over 65 in the West—have stimulated both a \*moral panic and new interest in the consumer and political potential of the elderly.

Stereotyping and an assumed homogeneity among the aged are to be challenged. Class, race, and gender, as well as culture, counter biological factors. For example, old age is not perceived as an impediment for males with supreme political power in either communist or capitalist states. In numerous articles on the social relations of old people, Ethel Shanas has criticized what has been termed the acquiescent functionalism of much writing on ageing and the family life of the elderly, a tradition which legitimates \*ageism by excluding the elderly from the \*labour-market and other significant social \*roles. By contrast, Shanas's own research seems to demonstrate that ageing is a process of \*deprivation, leading to what has been called 'structured dependency' (see Shanas *et al.*, *Old People in Three Industrialised Societies*, 1968, and Shanas and M. B. Sussman (eds.), *Family, Bureaucracy and the Elderly*, 1977).

There is growing research interest in this field, not only in the experience and ethnography of the aged, but also in the specific constructions of 'old age' across cultures and through time (see, for example, M. W. Riley's Presidential Address to the American Sociological Association, 'On the Significance of Age in Sociology', *American Sociological Review*, 1987).



## SEE WEB LINKS

- A portal site with links to numerous sites on aspects of ageing.