

Sociological Theorization in Iran: A Study from the Perspective of Sociology of Sociology

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Abstract

In contrast to what is expected by the zealous Muslim intellectuals and students, indigenous or locally produced sociological theory in both pre and post-revolution Iran is not considerable in quality and quantity. The problem has been the center of debates within several disciplines and through different approaches. This “bitter” fact has been studied in this paper from the perspective of sociology of sociology using the insights of history of ideas, sociology of knowledge, and sociology of science. The method is qualitative and the data used are extracted from the expert group interviews and from the historical material. The outcome points at some important facts, parameters, norms, and relations existent within both the scientific community as well as the greater society, regarding the poor performance of sociological theorization in Iran.

Keywords: Iran, sociology, community, theory, tradition, culture.

Introduction

The reasons behind the weakness of scientific production in Iran are among the subjects that have been studied by researchers since the 1980s . But, despite the two decades of scientific activity and discussion, change in the scientific conditions of the country has not been seen. In the field of sociology, which has a history of seventy years in Iran, similar to other disciplines , Western theories were and still are the cornerstones for sociological research and studies. This matters because theories are foundations of scientific production , especially in the humanities . Principally, any science, sociology being an example, is meaningless without theory.

Sociological thought in Iran can be detected in the forms of social ideas independently or within philosophical, political, economic, religious, historical, or literal discussions (Biruni (1958), Avesina (1940), Ibn Khaldun (1969), Al-Farabi (1991), Toosi (1990) Motahhari (1996), Seddighi (1993), Tabatabaei (2008), Nezami (nd), Soroosh (1980)). But, that which can be seen under the title of sociology, in a scientific sense, does not have a long history. It was first, as a course, taught in Iran by the German sociologist W. Hass in 1313. It was taught with the title of Social Science in the Literature Faculty of University of Tehran. Therefore, at the beginning, it was a complete adaption of a foreign science. Then, in 1336 the discipline of social science was established in the same faculty; allowing sociology to set foot slowly in Iran (Mohseni, 1991: 118-122). With the expansion of sociology and the stabilization of its position, the possibility of retrospection and research into its achievements and failures by scholars was realized. After the victory of the Islamic revolution and the changes in political-social-cultural conditions, a tendency towards sociology of sociology in Iran gained strength (Naraghi (2000), Tavassoli(2001))

Nevertheless, despite the advantageous conditions for research into the state of sociology, it might be said that the inefficiency of sociology in Iran, especially after the victory of the Islamic Republic, has led to these types of studies. Most research on the subject tells us about the weakness of sociology in surveying social problems, the lack of production of theory, and nonexistence of scientific method and the like.

In this regard, the problem that has most engaged scholars’ minds is the weakness of sociology in theorization. This is due to the importance of theory in the growth of every science, especially in social sciences, and their applicability in the particular cultural and social conditions of the society to be studied.

In reality Iranian sociology these years produced nothing considerable, and the few theory-oriented publications that have appeared are essentially to introduce Western sociological theory rather than producing something new (Adibi (1979), Aryanpour (1975), Ashtyani(2004), Kardan(2008), Mohseni(2000, 2009), Mortezaei (1975), Naraghi (2000), Nezami & Esam (nd), Sarookhani(1991), Seddighi (nd), Tabibi(1973), Torabi (nd), Towfigh(2006, nd), Vosooghi(1987)).

Taking into consideration the rich history of philosophical thought in Iran and the fact that sociological theorization does not depend on large financial resources or foreign currency, or sophisticated imported technology, and also taking into consideration the society's expectations and demands from sociology, the fact of weak theorization in this field seems strange.

From another perspective, taking into consideration the fact that a) communal aspects, thought, and social thinking have been underlined in Islamic teachings and Quranic Interpretations, b) in meeting the West, Islamic and Iranian intellectual and cultural grounds were important areas of confrontation as well as exchange, c) the importance of social thought and exchange of ideas in this domain were felt in the twentieth century in greater Muslim countries like Egypt, Turkey, and Iran, d) social sciences and sociology are formed and established in many of the countries of the region for over half a century, and e) sociology covers issues which widely attracts the interests of the public and even the scholars of other scientific fields; it was expected that especially after the revolution it would grow and develop more quickly and substantially than other sciences. But, what has happened in practice is that it has not developed even to an extent equal to other scientific and technical realms in the country, and specifically in sociological theory, has not produced something that can be treated as a chapter in social thought or sociological literature.

The question as to what is the reason that the sociology in Iran has remained weak in theorization is a question seriously pondered over. The present article is going to examine the sociological reasons behind the weak theorization of sociology in Iran after the Islamic revolution.

Research Questions

Main question

Has the lack of development in the differentiation in social structure in Iran been an obstacle to theorization in sociology?

Secondary questions

1. Has the scientific community's weakness in the field of sociology in Iran led to a crisis in sociology and sociological theorization?
2. What effects have social and political conditions had on the growth of sociological theorization in Iran?
3. Has static retrospectivism / traditionalism and the lack of forward-looking dynamism prevented the growth of sociology and sociological theorization?
4. Does the nonexistence of a dynamic relationship between the society and sociology present a barrier for theorization in this field?
5. What effects does the scientific dependence of Iranian sociology on abroad have on theorization in this field?

Theoretical Framework

The explanation of the weakness of theorization in sociology in Iran can be presented through various perspectives. For example the lack of theoretical development can be attributed to the lack of inventive and intelligent sociologists in Iran, or the reason can be sought outside Iranian society; in the "hidden hands" of imperialism and colonialism (Alatas(2001), Alatas(2007), Embong(2007))! This is to emphasize that various results can be reached dependent on various outlooks. They show the complication and multi-dimensionality of social problems.

Choosing the most suitable theory out of the existing theories, or a theorization, is one of the important stages of a scientific research. Decision on the choice or on the disregard of a theory or theories would, in principle, be based on their ability to explain the fact. In this paper we use the theories of the sociology of science to explain the weakness of theorization in sociology in Iran, and in addition to examining the interaction of elements inside sociology, the interaction of elements outside, in society and internationally, will be taken into consideration.

It is evident, now, that the development of any science, including sociology, follows the conditions inside and outside of the realm of that science (Tavakol, 1991: 59) In sociology of science, theories which examine the social factors outside the realm of science mostly emphasize the role of the quantitative and qualitative growth level of the society in scientific production. Those theories which concentrate on factors within the realm of the science mostly emphasize the existence of a strong scientific community, dialogue, and scientific criticism. These parameters are considered important in scientific production. The theoretical framework of this present research, which is derived from the theories of Durkheim, Mannheim, Kuhn, and Mulkay, tries to explain the problem of weakness of theorization in Iranian sociology by using two cultural norms, namely universalism and particularism, inside and outside the realm of sociology.

Durkheim believes that the greater the structural and cultural differentiation, the better the conditions for scientific progress are (Durkheim, 1994: 232). The reason for this is that the more non-scientific values, ideologies, and ideas are differentiated from scientific values and ideas, the easier it is to recognize scientific problems and solutions (Tavakol, 1991:30). Therefore, the growth of a science and scientific production depends on a social change from «community» to that of «society», leading to realization of differentiation and specialization (Tavakol, 1990:43). Of course, the progress of a scientific mind occurs in the constant contact with other parts of the thought system of society. This means that a dynamic balance of the social institutions is observable while institutions in the larger framework of social-economic structure, in a given time and place, grow in interaction (Ibid:99). Therefore, the relationship between scientific institutions and other institutions is not severed along with the development of specialization. If it is severed the expectation of scientific production cannot be realized. The differentiation between institutions means independence of one institution with respect to other institutions, not a disruption or severance of communication between them. If it is stated that universalism and the nonexistence of differentiation of roles creates a barrier to scientific production, it does not mean that particularism and distance between institutions and societies lead to scientific production. Particularistic societies whose members consider that they need nothing from other societies and prevent cultural and scientific communication with each other distance themselves from scientific development. Therefore, following Mulkay's theory, it can be said: particularism and universalism, which seem to be two cultural norms at odds with each other, create the conditions for scientific growth when correctly juxtaposed next to each other.

Mulkay, criticizing the opinions of Merton and Mitroff, believes that scientists use both opposing norms in order to advance science (Mulkay, 1991: 62-78). In Durkheim's opinion also, science develops when the two cultural norms of universalism and particularism are combined. In fact, despite his emphasis on particularism, Durkheim was not indifferent towards universalism. Although he considered particularism and the differentiation of roles to be necessary for the growth of science, at the same time he considered universalism and a distance from tribal prejudice to be necessary for scientific production and theorization. The reason for this is that intellectual abstraction, enabling people to comprehend more facts, is one of the results of cultural universalism (Durkheim, 1994: 331-332)

Cultural universalism means the ability to develop broader horizons so that one considers foreigners inside one's own world. This leads to epistemological universalism. epistemological universalism not only increases the power of inclusiveness and extension of understanding, but considers universal criteria of thought , or a nonindividual criterion, to be the criterion for evaluating opinions. Reasoning with a universal criterion is congruent with the tendency to abstract thought. The reason for this is that according to this view the only truly objective form of knowledge will be one which is able to be understood by all and be transferred to all - - and it will include similar and common aspects of phenomena (Qane'i-Rad, 2005: 161-162).

Universalism is usually congruent with the making of concepts and categories that have common credibility. The promotion of science to such a level of credibility, equally understandable by various groups, necessitates using abstract and formal thought faculties while qualitative, historical, tangible, and irrelevant aspects are prevented (Ibid:160).Therefore, particularism and the independence of the institution of science on one hand, and universalism and the attention given to universal ideas on the other , create the conditions for scientific growth.

The particularist norm does not only include specialization and role differentiation. Mannheim believes that social particularism can create a motive for scientific activity and can even affect the intellectual structure of such activities. In addition, social particularism , by creating a connection between abstract concepts and categories having no specific content related specific and tangible circumstances, helps the understanding of concrete phenomena by means of abstract categories.

In this way, despite the fact that he considers the universal thought of the bourgeoisie to be a reason for the growth of science, Mannheim does not overlook unique circumstances. He believes that a thought is clarified when it impinges upon an objective situation; not only practically, but cognitively along with action (Mannheim, 1954: 113-114). The special condition of social science requires its scholars to participate in social life in order to be effective in that field. Therefore, he clearly states that participation in social life is a necessity for the understanding of the internal essences of this living entity (Ibid: 42). This sort of understanding is only accomplished by participating and living with one's partners. This means that a dynamic process exists where human qualities are manifested through concrete and objective actions and faced with real practical problems (Ibid: 150-151).

Extending Durkheim and Mulkay's views to another field, it can be said that if specialization reaches such a level in political thought that all institutions are completely differentiated, the society will take on a democratic form. But if the autonomy of institutions is limited the society will become conservative, authoritarian, or totalitarian. (Naqibzadeh, 2000:167) Therefore, the lack of cultural differentiation, under political domination, leads to the dependence of science institutions on the government, and then this dependence, in Mannheim's view, causes ideological thought and prevents scientific skepticism. This becomes a barrier to scientific growth and theorization.

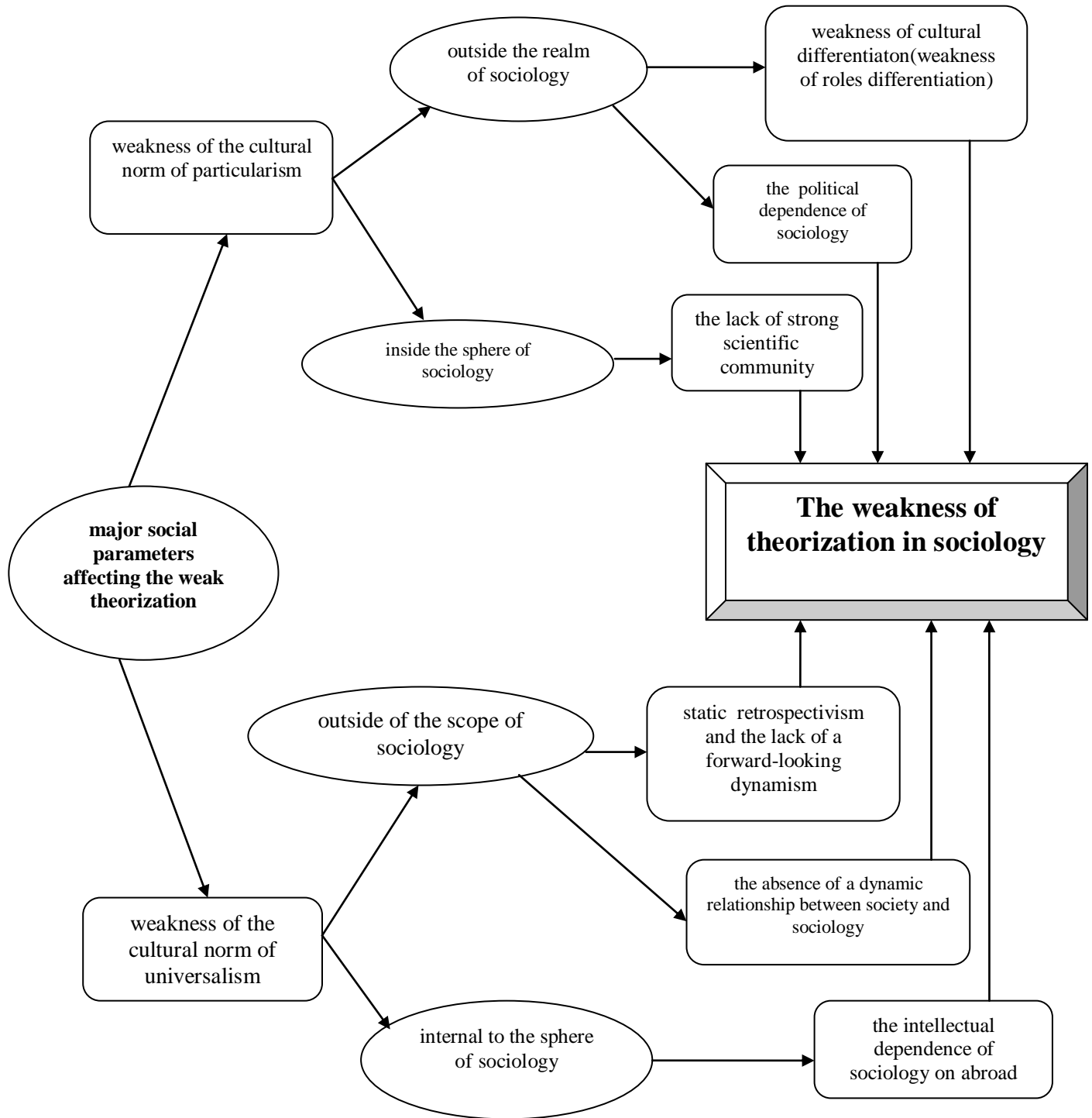
The extension of these two cultural norms, universalism and particularism, to the scientific sphere produces similar results. Kuhn believes that the scientific community, by paradigmic authority, has the power to facilitate interaction between the members of the scientific community and with the larger society. In the case where there is an absence of specialism, due to the nonexistence of a scientific community (as a center of specialization), not only research activities would not be differentiated from other activities, but furthermore, there would be no place for discussions and dialogue to promote scientific achievements. In these conditions, science would be constrained by external factors; it would become vulnerable and would easily develop reactionary tendencies. The reason for this is that the scientific and non-scientific territories have not yet been clearly differentiated, and scientists ask for help from groups outside any scientific field and from scholars of other fields, or non-scholars. (Hagstrum, 1975: 271-272). With a different approach, Mulkay analyzes the effects of domains outside science, for instance the forms of daily speech, understanding and action, theological, philosophical, and social discussions in the formation and transformation of scientific knowledge. He believes that there is a continuous cultural exchange between science and society and its interpretative resources through unofficial views entering the science. These resources are enhanced through the unofficial exchange of views and discussions.

They are only permitted to enter reports and scientific sources after they have been organized in a suitable form. Insufficiency of explanation creates the opportunity for external processes to influence science. When it is established that solving existing issues by using internal conceptual and methodological sources poses difficulties, scientists turn to exploring the potentialities of other cultures. Scientific change to some extent is affected by the cultural actions and products of non-scientists, and to some extent by the cultural actions of the scholars themselves in non-scientific areas (Mulkay, 1997: 175-198). In other words, if Kuhn considers the existence of a strong scientific community and the specification of the borders between scientific and non-scientific to be the reason for scientific progress, Mulkay introduces the existence of a dynamic relationship between science and society (and other cultural components such as theological and philosophical discussions) to be an effective factor behind scientific growth. (Ibid: 178)

Therefore, based on the theoretical framework of the present research, it can be said by way of summary: weakness of the cultural norm of particularism through the weakness of cultural differentiation, the political dependence of sociology (outside of the realm of sociology), weakness of specialization in sociology, and the absence of a strong scientific community in it (inside the sphere of sociology) are followed by the weakness of theorization in this field. The weakness of the cultural norm of universalism through the absence of a dynamic relationship between society and sociology, the intellectual dependence of sociology on abroad (internal to the sphere of sociology), static retrospectivism, and the nonexistence of a forward-looking dynamism (outside of the scope of sociology) results in theorization remaining stagnant in this field.

Basing ourselves on literature related to the development of science and scientific theorization, we provide, in what follows, an analytical model which delineates the integration between key components for theorization.

Analytic Model for Analyzing Poverty of Sociological Theorization in Iran



Research Method

The present research is based on the qualitative research method , using the hermeneutic approach where the meaning and latent concepts of a text or discourse will be discovered through interpretation. The text under study in this research was the outcome of interviews with 12 sociology faculty members of Universities in Tehran who have had recognized teaching and research experience, and one of whose main preoccupations had been working on or within theorization and the production of theory in sociology. Due to their direct involvement in the subject matter they had more awareness of the barriers and deterrents in this regard, and could better articulate the arguments and point to the reasons.

Therefore for data collection we used semistructured or deep interviews, and because there were no standard instruments or measurement techniques, we formulated questions based on the hypotheses and got experts to confirm their validity. At the end, the information and data resulting from the interviews, with the aid of categories derived from the hypotheses of this research, were codified. Then, they were examined and analyzed using the criterion of determining similarities and differences.

In this research, the presentation of data uses a story-like text, double variable matrix, and matrix entry. The coded data are analyzed according to the model of similarities and differences.

Research findings

Hypothesis 1:

Weakness in cultural differentiation and weakness of role-differentiation has led to weak theorization in sociology in Iran.

In order to examine this hypothesis, we classified the data obtained through interviews with regard to two concepts, namely weakness of cultural differentiation and the absence of specialism in scientific hierarchy in the field of sociology. These scholars’ agreement with both categories expressed confirmation of variable’s effect on the weakness of theorization in sociology. Analyzing the texts of the interviews show that nine people accepted both categories , one person was in opposition to both , and the two other people considered one of the categories to be positive - and the other to be negative (which is why they have been excluded from the final conclusion). This variable, directly or indirectly, through the following components, has affected the lack of theoretical progress in sociology in Iran.

Weakness of cultural differentiation (weakness of roles differentiation)	Internal to the field	The lack of concentration and dispersal in studies
		Superficiality and lack of insight
		The lack of theoretical specialization
		Teaching diversified courses by an individual lecturer
		Distance from social realities
		Holism
	External to the field	The dominance of political and religious domains on scientific domain
		Absence of expectations , needs , and cognitive norms in science
		Lack of recognition and support for specialization
		Lack of reliance upon and reference to specialists
		Lack of convergence between organizational changes with normative intellectual and value system
		Intervention rather than cooperation between domains and their members

Hypothesis 2:

The absence of a strong scientific community to make Iranian sociological studies normative and coherent through its paradigmic authority is a factor behind the lack of progress in theorization in sociology.

In examining the above hypothesis the following two concepts are used: scientific cooperation amongst the sociologists in the country, and the qualitative and quantitative roles that the scientific community plays in the process of progress in theorization in sociology. Agreeing with both concepts expresses confirmation of these variables’ effect upon the weakness of theorization in sociology in Iran, by scholars of this field. The analysis of the texts of the interviews shows the consensus of all interviewees on the effect of the variable of the scientific community. Therefore, the absence of a sustainable system of communication resulting from the scientific community was seen to be the main reason to delay sociological theorization in Iran.

The lack of strong scientific community	Lack of paradigmic authority	Lack of agreement about the discipline’s fundamental principles
		Shortage of scientific associations & academic journals
	Weakness of interaction	Weakness of cooperation & team work between members
		Weakness of interaction with the wider society
		Inattention to each other’s work & the lack of scientific critique
		Lack of formation of scientific ethics
Low level of skills & education & scientific ethos		

Hypothesis 3

The connection between politics on the one hand and academic circles and social studies on the other (political dependence of the institution of science) has created an obstacle to the progress of theorization in sociology Iran. In examining this hypothesis, the information obtained in the interviews was classified into two concepts: weak independence of scientific and academic institutions, and weakness in freedom of thought and expression. Agreement with both concepts depicted a confirmation of the effect of this variable upon weak theorization in sociology in Iran by scholars of the field. Analysis of the interviews showed ten people agreed with both concepts while one person disagreed with them (the other interviewee accepted the effects of one of the concepts to be positive and the other negative, therefore his opinion was not regarded in the evaluation). Therefore, this variable, the direct political dependence of sociology, through the following components, affected the weak theorization in sociology in Iran.

The political dependence of sociology	The objective dimension	Intervention of government in universities
		Financial dependence
		Seclusion, migration, and objection of elites
	The subjective dimension	The lack of feeling for security & freedom
		Formation of ideological & reactive thought
		The break between social thought & social theory
		Biased evaluation of social thought
		Conservatism
		Lack of enough access to information
		Prohibition against tackling some problems and worries in expressing the results of the research
		Low status for critique
		Lack of continuity in social thoughts

Hypothesis 4

Static traditionalism and retrospectivism, through national pride and arrogance, as well as an absence of forward-looking dynamism, are factors behind the weak theorization in sociology in Iran.

In examining this hypothesis, the information obtained in the interviews were classified into two concepts: a weakness in the connection between the past and the present, and the emphasis upon one’s self in opposition to others (fanatic nationalism). Agreement with both concepts would express a confirmation of the effect of this variable upon weak theorization in sociology in Iran by scholars of the field. According to the results extracted, seven people agreed with both concepts and two people disagreed with both concepts (the other three interviewees accepted the effects of one of the concepts to be positive and the other negative; therefore their opinions were not considered in the final conclusion). This variable indirectly and through the following components has caused the lack of development of theorization.

Static traditionalism & the lack of forward-looking dynamism	Historical dependence of thought (retrospectivism)	Lacking in self-esteem	Inattentiveness to past ideas
		Megalomania	Lack of critique of past ideas
	Local dependence of thought	Lack of attention to the ideas others	
		Disregard for universal commonalities of thought	
Lack of holism & lack of formation of abstract thought			
		Biased treatment with thoughts	

Hypothesis 5

The absence of a dynamic relationship between society and social changes on the one side and sociology and social studies on the other has caused theorization in sociology in Iran not to progress.

In examining the above mentioned variable, the information obtained from the interviews was classified into two concepts: reluctance to require of sociology that it should solve social problems , and inadequacy in sociology for explaining the social problems in Iran. Agreement expressed by scholars regarding the two concepts confirm the effect of this variable on weak theorization in sociology in Iran. Seven people agreed with both concepts and nobody disagreed with both of them (the other five interviewees accepted the effects of one of the concepts to be positive and the other, negative, therefore their opinions were not considered in the final conclusion). This variable directly and through the following components affects the weakness in theorization in sociology.

Lack of dynamic relation between society and sociology	Internal	lack of consensus between sociologists on social problems
		Inadequacy of analytical sociology
		Diffidence of sociologists in confronting social problems
		Deficiency of sociology
		"Importedness" of theories and conceptual frameworks
	External	Reference to theories by unspecialized persons
		Distrust towards sociology
		Lack of necessary support for sociology

Hypothesis 6

Intellectual dependence of sociology upon foreign sources created an obstacle for native theorization in this field. This hypothesis was examined by the help of two concepts: conceptual and theoretical imitation, and the weakness in international communication of sociologists in Iran. Agreement expressed by scholars regarding the two concepts confirms the effect of this variable on weak theorization in sociology in Iran. Ten people agreed with both concepts and nobody disagreed with the two concepts (the other two interviewees accepted the effects of one of the concepts to be positive and the other, negative , therefore, their opinions were not considered in the final conclusion). This variable directly and indirectly through the following components affects the weakness in theorization in sociology.

Dependence of sociology on foreign sources	Normative dimension	Lack of self- confidence
		Lack of confidence in native knowledge
		Insistence on following foreign patterns , their preservation and translation
	Practical dimension	Lack of critical attitude toward existing theories
		Separation between research, theory , and social reality

Discussion

The theme of this research was formed following various meetings by sociology circles in Iran on the situation of social sciences in Iran, and the confession of most scholars regarding the weakness of theorization in sociology in Iran. Therefore, the main purpose of the research is to recognize the major social parameters affecting the weak theorization of sociology in Iran, viewed as a problem in the sociology of knowledge and science. Special references are made to theories of Durkheim, Mannheim, Kuhn, and Mulkay. The theoretical stand of this research, by using Durkheim’s view about particularism and Mulkay’s view about universalism, stresses that the existence of one of these cultural norms (universalism and particularism) in the absence of the other, in any society, would create an obstacle to the progress of theorization.

In other words, the simultaneous existence of these two norms in all fields (external and internal to science) is a necessary precondition for the creation of thought and theory. Mannheim and Kuhn's theories, which refer to domains of politics and science, if not completed with these two cultural norms, are seen to be insufficient. They do not have the ability to provide a satisfactory analysis. The analysis of this research data confirms the theoretical stand mentioned above. The interviewees believed that the absence of a balance between the two cultural norms, universalism and particularism, in the internal and external spheres of the institution of science has created an obstacle for theorization in sociology in Iran. This is because theory is the product of efforts at connecting the particular and the general, and at exploring the relations between past, present, and future, also between here and there, and between self and other, also between local and the global. Otherwise, exaggerated particularism in some areas, due to the lack of unifying universals, will prevent a synthetic perspective, and theorization is then faced with a problem. Equally, exaggerated universalism prevents one from observing particulars and tracing the connection of ideas to the concrete realities.

This would prevent theorization in another way. Particularism, through the development of social differentiation, the distinction between the various intellectual systems within the society, and the specialization of roles in sociology, facilitates the conditions for theorization. In Iran, the weakness of the norm of particularism and the limited degree of social differentiation, through the domination of the natural sciences (the basic sciences, engineering, and medicine), political, and the domination of religion over social sciences, low expectations, insufficient confidence in sociology, and lack of recognition and support for specialization, lack of reliance upon and reference to specialists, lack of convergence between organizational changes and normative, intellectual, and value systems, interference rather than cooperation between domains and their members and lack of specialization of roles in sociology – all of these together have created a set of obstacles to theorization in sociology in Iran.

As has already been mentioned, the existence of particularism without universalism presents its own problems. Just as the weakness of particularism and the non-development of social differentiation cause weakness in theorization in sociology, the weakness in universalism and the lack of holism also prevents theoretical growth in sociology. Therefore, the failure to appreciate historical and geographical continuities between societies excused by reference to the value of particularism.

The weakness of universalism in Iran engenders historical and local dependence in a way that mirrors the problems created by one-sided particularism, that is, the failure to consider the historical roots of thought and the lack of a critical attitude towards past ideas. These problems stand in the way of the necessary dialectical connection between the past, present, and future. In addition, the weakness of universalism discourages the giving of due attention to the ideas of others and tends to blind one to themes of universal significance. It causes the weakness of holism and thus generates problems in the theoretical development of sociology.

In addition to this, if we consider particularism and universalism in a political context, by using the theories of Mannheim and Durkheim, it can be said that the development of social differentiation and particularism limits the danger that the political sphere may seek to control other institutions. Through the creation of freedom and independence, the suitable conditions of theorization are formed.

Due to the lack of particularism and differentiation, the institution of science has lost its independence and has become politically dependent. Political dependence has resulted in conservatism, lack of continuity in social ideas, and formation of ideological and reactive thought, through the control and intervention of government in universities and scientific institutions, biased evaluation of social thought, lack of enough access to data, hesitancy to publish the results of the research, financial dependence of academia, and the lack of respect for criticism.

The weakness of these two cultural norms in sociology has similar affects. According to Kuhn's views and Durkheim's particularism parameter, a strong scientific community, forged through paradigmatic authority and the delineation of a boundary between scientific and nonscientific realms, facilitates conditions for theory production. The lack of strong scientific community in Iran results in the lack of agreement about the discipline's fundamental principles, lack of formation of intellectual circles and academic journals, weakness in interaction with the wider society, poor cooperation and team work between members, lack of formation of scientific ethics and low level of skills and scientific ethos. In the shadow of these problems, theoretical development of sociology has faced great difficulties.

Moreover, with reference to Mulkey's view, universalism facilitates the production of theory along with the formation of a dynamic relationship between society and knowledge institutions. Therefore, in addition to the external sphere, the existence of the two cultural norms (universalism and particularism) together, in a scientific institution should result in theoretical development in sociology. In sociology in Iran, there is lack of consensus between sociologists on social problems. Sociologists are loath to confront social problems. The "importedness" of conceptual and theoretical frameworks, and the inadequacy of analytical sociology is due to lack of a norm of universalism which in turn results in deficiency of sociology. As a result, this field, with all of its conceptual richness, does not elicit appropriate theoretical analyses, due to this distance between sociologists and social realities and the dominance of theological and non-scientific discussions.

A further problem in Iran, over and above the existence of particularism that is not balanced by universalism and the non-involvement of sociologists in society and their non-participation in social life, is that, due to the weakness of communication and interaction of academic communities with one another and with other international communities, the growth of theorization in sociology is severely hampered. In sociology in Iran, a lack of self-confidence and a lack of confidence in locally generated ideas cause excessive trust in foreign patterns of thought and over-reliance on theories translated from other societies. Separation between social realities and the academic community prevents a suitably critical attitude to imported concepts and theories in such a way that sometimes theories that have not been modified so as to adapt them to existent conditions, cause misunderstanding of issues. In addition to this, sociology in Iran, due to the absence of comprehensive and updated relationships with sociology on an international level, cannot be informed of the latest applied and theoretical developments. In conclusion, it has not developed the ability to understand either global issues or local issues. Due to its impracticality and the absence of critical understanding of the imported ideas and theories, it cannot play a considerable role in theorization or the progression of universal sociological knowledge.

Thus, theoretical weakness in Iranian sociology can be explained as the consequence of a situation in which the norms of universalism and particularism do not fruitfully coexist. This basic failure is manifested in various aspects: weak cultural differentiation (universalism without particularism), lack of a strong scientific community (universalism without particularism), political dependence of scientific institutions (universalism without particularism), static traditionalism (particularism without universalism), lack of a dynamic relationship between society and sociology (particularism), and scientific dependence of sociology on foreigners (particularism without universalism). It can be said that Iranian society needs a specific chemical combination consisting of the due cultural norms: particularism and universalism.

In the end it can be said: since the advanced stage of theorization in any field, including sociology, demands prerequisites in the form of favourable scientific and extra-scientific conditions, these obstacles to scientific production will also prevent theorization. In Iran, the charge against sociology is that from its advent until the present, it has borrowed concepts and theories from Western sociology and performed surveys and processed information according to those concepts, theories, and methods. It is as if all the survey research performed over these decades were either to confirm or reject theories which stemmed from Western societies, and as a result, they have remained unable to understand and comprehend the Iranian social reality, to solve its problems, and analyse it theoretically. This criticism has been addressed not only fallen to empirical researchers and those who have carried out surveys, but also to sociologists who far from social realities have pursued the task of theorizing merely through philosophical and abstract thinking. It seems that the rift between thought and action, between theory and survey in Iranian sociology, which, in turn, is affected by historical, cultural, political and organizational factors, has caused weak theorization in sociology in Iran.

Conclusion and Suggestion

To escape the theoretical dead-end of sociology in Iran diagnosis and recovery have to differentiate and to grapple with two different domains; inside and outside the sphere of sociology. In the internal domain, improving the qualitative level of scientific associations, promotion of intellectual discussion, attracting greater talents, strengthening theoretical sociology and analytical models, while attending the social problems of the country can facilitate the conditions for progress in theorization. Outside the domain of sociology, the spread of freedom of speech, academic freedom, requesting the sociologists' involvement, presenting analysis and solution for social issues, and decreasing the rift between academia and politicians can improve the conditions for progress in theorization in Iranian sociology.

In addition, reference to the culture and history of Iran and Islam using the intellectual heritage of Iran and Islamic thought, can lead to a richer conceptual framework in Iranian sociology. But, looking back into the past must not mean merely a concern with national honor and pride still less must it mean stagnation in the past. Interaction with societies which are close to us culturally, for instance many of the Asian and Arabic societies, will lead us to know and use their achievements. Moreover sociological study of Islamic civilization, with its flourishings and decays, would provide a good playground to nourish theorization. And finally, a historical and comparative sociology in Iran would prepare a better ground for theoretical growth in sociology in Iran.

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