

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-73630-5 - *Successful Societies: How Institutions and Culture Affect Health*

Edited by Peter A. Hall and Michele Lamont

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“This volume does an outstanding job crossing borders: disciplines, countries, time periods, types of evidence, modes of reasoning. It uses the voyage to great effect, as a model of outstanding interdisciplinary cooperation. It links people from anthropology and sociology to epidemiology, medical sociology, and political science and raises fascinating questions about what makes societies work. By comparing countries, the volume forces us to challenge common modes of reasoning. This book is a wonderful piece by a group of ‘collaborative public intellectuals.’ It should be read all over the academia and by the general public.”

– Peter Gourevitch, University of California at San Diego

“Hall and Lamont have assembled an insightful, provocative, and readable set of essays that challenge social scientists to consider the puzzle of what makes a successful, healthy society. The answer is: there is no one, universal answer; there are multiple models of well-being. Together the volume builds a powerful argument for the significance of culture. Economic resources and societal inequality are significant. Yet so are those diverse cultural practices and structures that provide meaning and a view of who am I, who are we, what is the good life, what is possible, what is just, who counts, and who doesn’t.”

– Hazel Rose Markus, Stanford University

“With an exquisite sense of timing this remarkable collection of uniformly excellent essays by a dazzling array of social scientists, historians, and epidemiologists arrives after an almost 70-year-long wait for a contemporary sequel to Karl Polanyi’s paradigm-changing critique of the ‘standard of living’ axiom that higher wages are enough to improve the well-being of a society torn apart by unfettered laissez-faire policies. Just as Polanyi demonstrated that the societal health of a people depends on market-embedding institutional arrangements and a cultural ethic of solidarity, so too *Successful Societies* represents nothing less than a paradigm-shifting challenge to prevailing market models of what counts as societal success and why some achieve this more than others. Deploying an enormous range of empirical data, the inspiration of thinkers from Amartya Sen to Pierre Bourdieu, and a newly humanized understanding of societal success, the volume is also an urgently needed normative manifesto for the indispensability of egalitarian and inclusive ‘social imaginaries’ in tandem with institutional foundations for democratic participation.”

– Margaret Somers, University of Michigan

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Successful Societies

How Institutions and Culture Affect Health

Why are some types of societies more successful than others at promoting individual and collective well-being? Focusing on population health as an indicator of social success, this book opens up new perspectives on the ways in which social relations condition health and the public policies that address it. Based on four years of dialogue among scholars from diverse disciplines, it offers social epidemiologists broader views of the social determinants of health and social scientists a sense of the fascinating puzzles of population health. The chapters consider health inequalities in the developing, as well as developed, worlds. They locate their roots not only in economic resources, but in the social resources provided by the institutions and cultural repertoires constitutive of social relations. They examine the AIDS epidemic in Africa, the sources of the health gradient, the role of collective imaginaries, destigmatization strategies, and the historical basis for effective health policies.

Peter A. Hall is Krupp Foundation Professor of European Studies at Harvard University and Co-Director of the Successful Societies Program for the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research. He is the author of *Governing the Economy* (1986) and more than seventy articles in comparative political economy. He is an editor of many books, including *Changing France: The Politics that Markets Make* (2006), *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage* (2001), and *The Political Power of Economic Ideas* (1989).

Michèle Lamont is Robert I. Goldman Professor of European Studies and Professor of Sociology and African and African American Studies at Harvard University and Co-Director of the Successful Societies Program. She is the author of *Money, Morals, and Manners* (1992); *The Dignity of Working Men* (2000); and *How Professors Think* (2009) and edited books such as *Cultivating Differences* (1992), *The Cultural Territories of Race* (1999), and *Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology* (2000). She served as Chair of the Council for European Studies from 2006 to 2009.

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Preface

This book is the result of an encounter between a heterogeneous group of social scientists and the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR). This innovative research organization has a well-established practice of supporting the work of researchers over several years so that they can engage in interdisciplinary exploration of new and important topics. Unlike other funding organizations, CIFAR gives its researchers *carte blanche*. It does not require a predefined plan with clear deliverables. It recognizes the open-ended nature of the research process and aims to facilitate and empower it. This highly original approach often leads to unexpected results.

In 2002, some of us were contacted by CIFAR and asked to come together to think about what defines successful societies and the social conditions that sustain them. After supporting research teams in the fields of population health and human development for a decade, CIFAR was turning its efforts in a new direction to consider a wider range of social factors affecting population health. It called upon us to bring to the table the analytical tools we had deployed in our respective research on a range of topics, including the impact of institutions and cultural frameworks on social relations. Thus an interdisciplinary team that included sociologists, political scientists, a historian, an epidemiologist, and a psychologist came together. We met several times a year in various locations to exchange papers, to learn from each others' work, and to interact with other scholars. From this experience emerged a common definition of the problems we wished to consider together.

Our joint effort began in January 2003 with a first meeting at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences in Palo Alto, California. We debated at length the meaning of "successful societies" and whether one could use the term while avoiding ethnocentrism. We agreed that health outcomes (low infant mortality, high life expectancy) are useful universal indicators of successful societies. We also agreed that our efforts should be concerned with "health plus," that is, with the wider correlates of positive health outcomes, such as greater equality, social inclusion, and democratic participation. We

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spent the following years analyzing how various aspects of social life might contribute to such outcomes. We developed empirical projects that build directly on a joint cognitive platform. This book is the product of the first four years of our collaboration, which is still ongoing.

At the outset, none of us claimed ownership of the term “successful societies.” Yet, slowly, we made it ours and attached to it the questions that became our common agenda. Exchange was possible because we interacted pragmatically around the concept of a successful society, while maintaining purposefully a certain ambiguity about the terms of the collaboration, including the full meaning of “successful societies.” We developed a complementary understanding of the contexts that sustain such societies. A complex picture emerges when the topics we study are considered in juxtaposition to one another.

Now the time has come to offer the product of our joint endeavors to the informed public and the critical eyes of our colleagues. We hope that the book will be read by a wide range of readers. Our goal is to generate new dialogues and to create new bridges between fields. *Alea jacta est . . .*

We are most grateful to the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research for the generous support that made our collaboration possible. We express our great appreciation to Chaviva Hosek, president of CIFAR, for her intellectual vision and her continuing engagement with our work. We also thank Penny Coddling for her wise guidance, Sue Schenk for her constant help as the project developed, and Susan Leclaire for the many ways in which she facilitated our work. The production of the book would not have been possible without the technical assistance of Heather Latham and Joe Cook, whom we gratefully acknowledge.

Within the Successful Societies Program, we have benefited enormously from continuous input from the members of our advisory committee, many of whom faithfully attended most of our meetings: Suzanne Berger, Natalie Zemon Davis, Danielle Juteau, Richard Simeon, and Wolfgang Streek, and in particular, Jonathan Arac, the chair of this committee. Our final formulations were improved by the comments of several new members joining the program: James Dunn, Ron Levi, and Leanne Son-Hing.

Finally, we thank the colleagues who took time to offer insightful comments on the book manuscript: Blair Wheaton, John Hagan, and the dedicated members of the program’s review committee, Marcel Fournier, Peter Gourevitch, Kathy Newman, Claus Offe, Stephen Toope, and Leonard Syme, its chair. During the years when we were working with these ideas, dozens of scholars took the time and trouble to present their work at meetings of this program. Our conversations with them were deeply stimulating and are reflected in many ways in the pages of this book. We dedicate the book to these scholars and to the power of intensive interdisciplinary exchange.