

PREFACE

With its grounding in the “guiding pillars of Access, Equity, Equality, Affordability and Accountability,” the New Education Policy (NEP 2020) envisions flexible curricular structures and creative combinations for studies across disciplines. Accordingly, the UGC has revised the CBCS with a new Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes (CCFUP) to further empower the flexible choice based credit system with a multidisciplinary approach and multiple/ lateral entry-exit options. It is held that this entire exercise shall leverage the potential of higher education in three-fold ways – learner’s personal enlightenment; her/his constructive public engagement; productive social contribution. Cumulatively therefore, all academic endeavours taken up under the NEP 2020 framework are aimed at synergising individual attainments towards the enhancement of our national goals.

In this epochal moment of a paradigmatic transformation in the higher education scenario, the role of an Open University is crucial, not just in terms of improving the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) but also in upholding the qualitative parameters. It is time to acknowledge that the implementation of the National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF), National Credit Framework (NCrF) and its syncing with the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) are best optimised in the arena of Open and Distance Learning that is truly seamless in its horizons. As one of the largest Open Universities in Eastern India that has been accredited with ‘A’ grade by NAAC in 2021, has ranked second among Open Universities in the NIRF in 2024, and attained the much required UGC 12B status, Netaji Subhas Open University is committed to both quantity and quality in its mission to spread higher education. It was therefore imperative upon us to embrace NEP 2020, bring in dynamic revisions to our Undergraduate syllabi, and formulate these Self Learning Materials anew. Our new offering is synchronised with the CCFUP in integrating domain specific knowledge with multidisciplinary fields, honing of skills that are relevant to each domain, enhancement of abilities, and of course deep-diving into Indian Knowledge Systems.

Self Learning Materials (SLM’s) are the mainstay of Student Support Services (SSS) of an Open University. It is with a futuristic thought that we now offer our learners the choice of print or e-slm’s. From our mandate of offering quality higher education in the mother tongue, and from the logistic viewpoint of balancing scholastic needs, we strive to bring out learning materials in Bengali and English. All our faculty members are constantly engaged in this academic exercise that combines subject specific academic research with educational pedagogy. We are privileged in that the expertise of academics across institutions on a national level also comes together to augment our own faculty strength in developing these learning materials. We look forward to proactive feedback from all stakeholders whose participatory zeal in the teaching-learning process based on these study materials will enable us to only get better. On the whole it has been a very challenging task, and I congratulate everyone in the preparation of these SLM’s.

I wish the venture all success.

Professor Indrajit Lahiri
Vice-Chancellor

Netaji Subhas Open University
Four Year Undergraduate Degree Programme
Under National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF) & Curriculum
and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes
Course Type: Honours in Sociology (NSO)
Course Title: Sociological Theories (Post-Classical Theories-II)
Course Code : 6CC - SO - 06

First Print : March, 2025

Printed in accordance with the regulations of the University Grant Commission –
Distance Education Bureau

Netaji Subhas Open University
Four Year Undergraduate Degree Programme
Under National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF) & Curriculum
and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes
Course Type: Honours in Sociology (NSO)
Course Title: Sociological Theories (Post-Classical Theories-II)
Course Code : 6CC - SO - 06

**: Board of Studies :
Members**

**Dr. Barnana Guha Thakurta
(Banerjee)**
*Director, Professor and Head
Department of Political Science
School of Social Sciences, NSOU*

Dr. Kumkum Sarkar
*Associate Professor of Sociology
NSOU*

Sri Ajit Kumar Mondal
*Associate Professor of Sociology
NSOU*

Dr. Srabanti Choudhuri
*Assistant Professor of Sociology
NSOU*

Sri Anupam Roy
*Assistant Professor of Sociology
NSOU*

Professor Sujata Sen
*Department of Sociology
Kalyani University*

Professor Suhrita Saha
*Department of Sociology
Presidency University*

Professor Piyali Sur
*Department of Sociology
Jadavpur University*

Professor Soumyajit Patra
*Department of Sociology
Sidhu Kanho Birsu University,*

: Editor :

Dr. Srabanti Choudhuri
*Assistant Professor in Sociology,
Netaji Subhas Open University*

: Format Editor :

Sri Ajit Kumar Mondal
*Associate Professor of Sociology
Netaji Subhas Open University*

Notification

All rights reserved. No part of this Self-Learning Material (SLM) may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from Netaji Subhas Open University.

Ananya Mitra
Registrar (Additional Charge)

: Course Writers :

- Units : **Dr. Papri Pal**
*Assistant Professor of Sociology,
Pandaveswar College, Pandaveswar,
Kazi Nazrul University, Asansol, West Bengal*
- Units 1,3 & 8 : **Dr. Debapriya Ganguly**
*Assistant Professor,
Department of Sociology,
Savitribai Phule Pune University*
- Units 4–5 : **Debottam Saha**
Research Scholar, IIT Delhi.
- Units 6–7 : **Dr. Rikhia Ghoshal**
*HOD and Assistant Professor,
Department of Arts,
Dr. N.S.A.M. First Grade College
Bangalore*
- Units 9–10 : **Dr. Nabamita De**
*Assistant professor,
Department of Sociology,
Sister Nivedita university.*
- Units 11–12 : **Priyakshi Pandey**
*Former M.Phil Research Scholar,
Department of Sociology,
Mumbai University
&
NET-JRF Sociology.*
- Units 13–14 : **Prof. Swapan Pramanik**
*Former Vice Chancellor,
Vidyasagar University.*
- Units : **Dr. Titir Chatterjee**
*Assistant professor of Sociology,
West Bengal State University.*



**Netaji Subhas
Open University**

**UG : Sociology
(NSO)**

**Course Title : Sociological Theories (Post-Classical Theories-II)
Course Code : 6CC - SO - 06**

Module I: Interactionism

Unit-1	<input type="checkbox"/> General Arguments	227-243
Unit-2	<input type="checkbox"/> Contributions of G. S. Mead	244-257
Unit-3	<input type="checkbox"/> Contributions of H. Blumer	258-267
Unit-4	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical Overview	268-279

Module II: Phenomenology & Ethnomethodology

Unit-5	<input type="checkbox"/> Phenomenology : Basic Arguments	69
Unit-6	<input type="checkbox"/> Ethnomethodology : Basic Arguments	86
Unit-7	<input type="checkbox"/> Contributions of Schutz	107
Unit-8	<input type="checkbox"/> Contributions of Garfinkel	122
Unit-9	<input type="checkbox"/> Contributions Goffman	138

Module III : Social Construction of Reality : Basic Arguments

Unit-10	<input type="checkbox"/> Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann	151
Unit-11	<input type="checkbox"/> Society as Objective and Subjective Reality	166

Module IV: Critical Social Theory

Unit-12	❑ General Arguments : Frankfurt School	188
Unit-13	❑ Max Horkheimer	207
Unit-14	❑ Theodor W. Adorno	229
Unit-15	❑ Herbert Marcuse	244
Unit-16	❑ Habermas	244

Module V: Feminist Perspective

Unit-17	❑ General Arguments	280-292
Unit-18	❑ The Stages of Development	293-304
Unit-19	❑ Varieties of Feminism	305-319

Module I: Interactionism

Unit-1 □ General Arguments

Structure

- 1.1 Learning Objectives**
- 1.2 Introduction**
- 1.3 The Significance of Social Interactionism**
- 1.4 Intellectual Roots**
- 1.5 The Basic Principles of Symbolic Interactionism**
 - 1.5.1 Major Areas of Contribution**
 - 1.5.2 Symbolic Interactionism – Three Approaches.**
- 1.6 Critical Appraisal**
- 1.7 The Future of Symbolic Interactionism**
- 1.8 Conclusion**
- 1.9 Summary**
- 1.10 Questions**
- 1.11 Reference**

1.1 Objectives

This Unit will enable the learners:

- To understand the basic principles of symbolic interactionist theory
- To know how social interactions help people learn the meanings and symbols help people to carry on their action and reaction
- To understand how society with its larger social structure can be understood with the help of symbols.
- To understand the importance of language, signs and symbols behind social interactions
- To know about the historical /intellectual roots of Interactionism.

1.2 Introduction

In sociology theory means “a systematic set of ideas and statements about the social world that aim to make sense of the social world.” Theories in sociology examine social phenomena from various perspectives and the symbolic interactionist theory is one of the perspectives that have enriched the discipline of sociology to a great extent. As a micro-level theory it focuses on meanings attached to all kinds of human interactions- verbal and non-verbal. By communicating with exchange of meaning through language and symbols people can make sense of their social worlds. It develops from practical considerations and man’s use of shared language to create common symbols and meanings for using language in people’s mutual interaction.

Symbolic interactionism is a very important and immensely popular micro-theoretical framework in sociological theory. In fact, Interactionist theory, one of the four major theories in Sociology has been developed with other sociological ideas like constructivism. It focuses on patterns of individual interactions from a micro-level perspective. Although sociologists who advocate social interactionism acknowledge the existence of larger social structures and their role in human lives, they attach greater importance to the study of different types of social interactions that are based on shared understandings, languages and symbols. Their argument is that, human interactions are possible because people create and learn to interpret those symbols for interaction among themselves; with common interpretation the meanings of the interactions also take shape. Doyle P. Johnson asserts that many of the core ideas of symbolic interaction theory are grounded in the pioneering efforts of George Herbert Mead; in addition, it also draws on Charles Horton Cooley’s analysis of how one’s self-perception gets shape through awareness of others’ perception. Here, we can cite his observations regarding the “looking-glass self” that suggests that one’s positive or negative self-perception depends, to a large extent, on the perception of others.

The term ‘symbolic interactionism’ was first used by Herbert Blumer, a student of Cooley, and then it became very popular. He used the term ‘symbolic interactionism’ to show the differences of opinion on human nature among social psychologists.

1.3 The Significance of Social Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a framework to understand society as the product of regular or everyday interactions of individuals. This theory helps us understand how individuals interact with one another to create symbolic worlds and these worlds shape individual behaviours. (Wikipedia). The shared understanding and interpretation of meaning affect the interaction between individuals who act on the premise of a shared understanding of meaning within their social context. For interactionism, social interaction is the foundation on which individuals develop their sense of self and understand the world around them. Interactions with others, known or unknown, meanings are created, social norms are established and 'self' or personal identities are formed. The theory of social interactionism has special importance in micro-sociology and social psychology. It is rooted in the American tradition of pragmatism, the approach, with support from late-nineteenth century thinkers like Charles Peirce, William James and John Dewey, challenged the findings of classical rationalism with its mechanistic world-view and other dominant philosophy of that period. Pragmatist American philosophy entered the fold of sociology directly through the influence of George Herbert Mead and his student Herbert Blumer. Both of them believe that human interactions help create and recreate meanings for interaction and communication; this shared understanding and interpretations of meaning help people to act on the premise of a shared understanding of meaning.

Symbolic interactionism believes that human world is socially constructed along with the identities and role of the participants and this world is often fragile if it is subjected to disruption. This theory is often applied to the micro level, it may also be applied to understand interdependent pattern of behavior at the meso and macro levels. According to symbolic interactionists people create symbols and learn to interpret the meaning and significance of those symbols to be able to communicate with each other in a far better way and for this reason it is also known as interpretive theory (Stolley.2005).

1.4 Intellectual Roots

Symbolic interactionism was conceived by George Herbert Mead and Charles Horton Cooley both American scholars and has emerged as a distinctively American tradition. It is also known as America's most original contribution to sociological thought. But it has its root, at least partly, in the writings of German sociologist Max Weber, who was concerned

with both large scale structural relationships and the ways of individuals' interactions. Through his concept of 'verstehen' or subjective understanding of situations he wanted to explore human behavior. Weber suggests that we need to put ourselves, at least mentally, in someone else's position to understand his/her behavior as we may not fully understand others' actions, perspectives or positions from our own standpoint. In some ways, symbolic interactionism can also be compared to Georg Simmel's ideas about the forms of interaction. He has put emphasis on both the symbolic medium of interaction as well as on the accompanying subjective mental process. Even though symbolic interactionism has roots in German thoughts, it is better known as a theory immersed in American philosophical tradition of pragmatism that took shape in the late nineteenth century by thinkers like Charles Peirce, William James and John Dewey. They challenged the mechanistic world-view and the dualistic rationalism, the most prominent philosophy of that time. For them reality was dynamic, individuals were active knowers, meanings remained linked to social actions and perspectives while knowledge was an instrumental force that could enable people to solve problems and rearrange the world (Ritzer & Smart, 2003:217).

Symbolic interactionism has also been enriched by contributions from Robert Park, William Isaac Thomas, and several other thinkers. Robert E. Park was intellectually mentored by Simmel and he (Park) adopted many of Simmel's ideas, such as, perception of society as a system of interaction, the geometry of social space, importance given to social process, etc. Park passed on his interests in all these matters to his students and colleagues at the University of Chicago and together with W.I. Thomas, he encouraged his students to study various aspects of social processes in their own city. Being encouraged by their teacher, the students, too, used moving cameras to capture different vibrant and interesting moments of life in the city of Chicago. The University of Chicago later turned out to be the birthplace of symbolic interactionism.

W. I. Thomas is another noted American thinker who contributed to symbolic interactionism with his concept of the 'definition of the situation' in a big way. Thomas believed that people can ignore a stimulus they reacted to at an earlier occasions. By definition of the situation he means a stage of examination and deliberation that precedes any self-determined act of behavior. Thomas also argued that for understanding human activity researchers need to pay attention to the subjective meanings or definitions of the situations. Thomas, known as a representative of symbolic interactionism, built a theory

of human motivation that could address interactions between individuals and the “social sources of behaviors”. (Wikipedia)

Two other thinkers who have influenced the theory of symbolic interaction are- Yrjo Engestrom and David Middleton. Both of them explained the usefulness of symbolic interactionism in the communication field in different work settings including courts of law, health care, computer software design, scientific laboratory, telephone sales, control, repair, maintenance of advanced manufacturing systems, etc. Among other theorists who influenced this theory we can name Znaniecki, Baldwin, Redfield and Wirth. Symbolic interactionism puts great emphasis on the ideas of action instead of culture, class and power (Wikipedia). Cooley, a forerunner of symbolic interactionism, made a very important contribution to the theory with his conception of the “looking-glass self” or one’s self-image built on information reflected back at one in the judgment of others with whom one interacts (Wallace & Wolf, 2006: 203). Cooley speaks of three elements of the looking – glass self; these are (i) the imagination of one’s own appearance to the other persons, (ii) the imagination of their judgment of that appearance and (iii) a self-feeling, like pride or mortification (Wallace & Wolf). Though Cooley understands that the looking-glass self does not exactly reflect the imagination of the other’s judgment regarding one’s appearance, yet he considers this as an essential element.

Though these fore-runners prepared the ground for symbolic interactionism, they did not fully develop the theory; that was done by two major theorists of the early-twentieth century like George Herbert Mead, a professor of Philosophy first at the University of Michigan and then at the University of Chicago, and his student Herbert Blumer. George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) brought pragmatic philosophy to sociology through his writings and teachings because he wanted to build up a theory and method of pragmatism for social sciences. For doing this, he took help from the ideas of the founders of pragmatism like Charles Peirce and William James as well as on the psychological insights of Wilhelm Wundt, the sociological observations of Charles Horton Cooley and James Mark and the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin; however, Mead’s greatest inspiration came from the philosophy of John Dewey, his colleague at the University of Chicago (Ritzer & Smart, 2013: 217). Mead’s greatest inspiration came from the philosophy of John Dewey, his colleague at the University of Chicago (Ritzer & Mead who taught the best minds in sociology at these universities, never compiled his deep understanding of the subjects in a book or any systematic treatise. His book *Mind, Self and Society* was published in 1931,

after his death, when his students successfully compiled together their class-notes and conversations with their highly respected teacher in the form of a book. Mead and Blumer systematized the concept of symbolic interactionism; with Mead as the most important influence on his thinking, Blumer later emerged as the intellectual leader of symbolic interactionism.

1.5 The Basic Principles of Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism, being developed by numerous influences from different disciplines and schools, is not free of debates and differences of opinion, but its advocates also share some common assumptions. In general, three assumptions frame symbolic interactionism. These are:

- a.) Individuals construct meaning via the communication process.
- b.) Self-control is a motivation for behavior.
- c.) A unique relationship exists between the individual and society. (Wikipedia).

These three premises serve as the cornerstones of symbolic interactionism; yet there are other implicit assumptions that inform and guide this perspective and provide its philosophical foundations. These assumptions can be discussed as the following:

1. People are unique creatures because of their ability to use symbols:

This insight, provided by Mead and other early pragmatists, helped symbolic interactionism emphasize the significance of people's symbolic capacities. Because people use and rely on symbols, they give meanings to the stimuli they confront and according to those meanings. Thus, human behavior differs from that of the other animals who act more instinctively or in a reflex-based manner. Through mutual interactions human beings come to learn of the meanings of things and in doing this, both language and communicative process come to be of great help to enable them to see and respond to realities that are socially constructed.

2. People become distinctively human through their interaction:

The advocates of symbolic interactionism believe that people become truly human when they interact with other fellow human beings. People are not born human, social interactions make them human; their biological organs that give them the potential to be fully human need involvement in society for realization of that potential. According to symbolic

interactionists, the uniquely human qualities and behavior include the ability to use symbols, to think, to make plans, to adopt the role of others, to develop a sense of self and to participate in complex forms of communication and social organization. (Ritzer & Smart: 218) Human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, signification, by interpretation or by ascertaining the meaning of one another's actions. Mead believed not in stimulus and response, but in stimulus- interpretation and then response. It shows that the meaning or interpretation we assign to our communication is rather important. Meaning does not come out automatically, it is ascribed through interaction.

3. People are conscious and self-reflexive beings who actively shape their own behavior :

Social interactions, communications, role-taking and involvement in society help people develop their 'mind' and their concept of 'self'. Mead (1934) observed that human beings form minds and selves through communication and role-taking. As people have the capacity to think, they have sufficient autonomy to behave according to their independent decision. In the opinion of Blumer, this human capacity of independent thinking gives men certain power to dictate terms to others and to determine their own courses of action. In this way, man's behavior is not determined by the stimuli or objects found in his environment, but by the stimuli and objects he takes into account and the way he determines them. From this assertion of interactionists, we find them embrace a voluntaristic image of human behavior. They also assert that even though people enjoy certain element of freedom in their mutual interactions, they remain constrained by certain social factors such as language, race, class, gender, etc. Therefore, people's actions are influenced, but not determined by social or biological forces or prior events.

4. People are purposive creatures who act in and toward situations:

Interactionists believe that human beings do not release their behavior all on a sudden, in response to biological drives, psychological needs, or social expectations; but they behave according to the meaning they attribute to a situation they find themselves in. People, in general, determine the meaning of a situation and act through it by assessing the intentions, actions and expressions of all others involved; people assume that by behaving in a certain way they will be able to achieve the desired goals. It is not that people are always right in their assumptions about the outcome of their chosen actions because in acting purposefully people do not always act wisely or correctly. Again, during interaction people do not always

select goals in an intelligent or single-minded way. Actions and interactions may face obstacles and issues of contingencies to block or distract people from their original goals and direct them towards newer goals (Ritzer & Smart: 219).

5. Human society consists of people engaging in symbolic interactions:

Interactionists differ from other sociologists in their view of the relationship between individual and society. They describe human beings as not passive but active beings in relation to their environment; they remain actively involved in what they do. They can modify or alter the meanings and symbols that they use in their interactions on the basis of their interpretation of the situation. Such modifications or alterations are made because people can interact with themselves, can examine their future courses of action, can assess their relative advantages and disadvantages and then finally can choose one.

Following Blumer, interactionists perceive society as a fluid but structured process which is rooted in people's ability to assume each other's perspectives, adjust and coordinate their act for symbolically communicating and interpreting these acts. Interactionists reject the views of the psychologists who perceive society as existing in the minds of individuals; at the same time, they also discard the other structuralist perspectives that suggest that society has an existence independently of individuals. They believe that society and its structures are human products, supported by the joint acts people mutually engage in (Ritzer & Smart). This intertwined patterns of mutual behavior make up groups and societies.

6. To understand people's social acts people need to use methods that enable them to discern the meanings that have been attributed to these acts:

For interactionists, it is of great significance that people act according to the meaning they attribute to things that surround their world. They also believe that it is essential to understand the worlds of meanings by seeing them from the perspectives of individuals or groups they study. For doing this, interactionists suggest that researchers must take the role of their subjects of study and also need to interact with them freely. This approach may give the researchers a deep understanding of the definition, construction and action of social actors and their everyday worlds.

1.5.1 Major Areas of Contribution

As a modern and influential theory of the 20th century interactionism has contributed greatly to the growth and development of sociological theory and research. In short, we can say

that this theory has made great contributions to six major areas of sociological analysis, such as, self and identity theory, emotions and emotion work, social coordination, social constructionism, culture and art, and macro-analysis.

In analyzing the a) Self and Identity Theory – Analysis of self has occupied a central position in interactionist sociology. Its eminent advocates like Blumer, Cooley, Mead and others have highlighted the social nature of self. According to these thinkers the ‘self’ emerges, sustains and grows through the processes of social interaction. Self is not inborn, nor it is an integral part of man’s biological development; the sense of self is acquired through the process of interaction with other members of society. Social interactions and relationships make a person aware of his/her distinct and meaningful self. In analyzing the self and its implications, interactionism has highlighted three themes, such as, the genesis and development of self, the self-concept and the presentation of self.

B) Emotions and Emotion Work

The study of emotion was traditionally treated as the subject-matter of psychology. But the analyses by symbolic interactionists brought it within the fold of sociology. Interactionists examine emotion by connecting it with man’s experience with his physical and social reality; and treat it as a ‘lived experience’, as a cognitive construction connected to meaning and identity. Drawing heavily from Goffman’s dramaturgical theory interactionists try to understand how people manage and display their feelings in the identity work.(Ritzer & Smart: 222).

C) Social Coordination

Interactionism has encouraged the search for universal principles of coordinated action. Since the early 1970s the interactionist researchers like Karl Couch and his students have worked on the processes and conditions through people coordinate their conduct and create social order. They have searched for generic principles of social coordination while others have focused on the strategies people use to align their actions in everyday interactions.

D) Construction of Deviance and Social Problems

From the very beginning, symbolic interactionism has been linked to the study of deviance and social problems. According to Fisher and Strauss, interactionism emerged out of sociologists’ desires to effect social and political reforms in Chicago during the early twentieth century. Interactionist researchers have focused on many social and political

problems, informed by labeling theory and the ‘construction of social problems’ perspectives (Ritzer & Smart). Labeling theory, and the constructionist approach are two other areas in which interactionism has left valuable contributions.

E) Culture and Art

As culture and art are symbolic productions with meaning, symbolic interactionism has always played important roles in their study. In fact, Blumer initiated his empirical investigation by studying movies and then he proceeded towards the world of fashion. Both movies and fashion are parts of the reality that represents forms of symbolic interaction and social organization of the symbolic world. Following Blumer’s pioneering role in ushering interactionist investigations of culture and art, Howard Becker and others, too, focused on the art world and production of culture because they believed that the art world should be considered as a producer of product like any other industry.

F) Macro Analysis: Organizations and Collective Action

Though symbolic interactionism is often criticized for having micro-sociological approach without any concern for structure and organizational and institutional power, interactionists like Blumer have written extensively on industrialization, power conflicts, race relations and collective actions. While examining social organization they have focused on the level of mesostructure, network, organizational culture, symbolic meaning, etc. All these provide symbolic interactionism with tools to engage in macro-level analysis. Interactionists have also shared concerns with feminism and post modernism (Ritzer & Smart).

1.5.2 Symbolic Interactionism – Three Approaches

Theory and research in symbolic interactionism has developed along three main areas of emphasis following the work of Herbert Blumer (the Chicago School), Manford Kuhn (the Iowa School) and Sheldon Stryker (the Indiana School) and these Schools introduced certain variations in methods and approaches to the theory. Blumer was the first theorist to coin the term ‘symbolic interactionism’ and to formulate his teacher Mead’s ideas into a cohesive theory with specific methodological implications for study. Kuhn and Stryker are methodologically at odds with Blumer, yet they share much of his and Mead’s theoretical orientation.

The Chicago School: The principal concept of symbolic interactionism was developed by Herbert Blumer at the University of Chicago in the 1950s. It is well established that he was

greatly influenced by Mead's philosophically based approach to social behaviorism to introduce it in sociology; but it has also been observed by many that his concept of symbolic interactionism is closer to W.I. Thomas's concept of 'definition of the situation'. Blumer not only prepared the ground for a new theoretical paradigm, but also challenged the prevailing forms of sociology's methodology and epistemology. Soon it emerged as the most influential brand of symbolic interactionism in sociology. Like Mead, Blumer also believed that individuals remain engaged in mindful action to manipulate symbols and negotiate the situation. Following Mead Blumer assumed that the study of human behavior must begin with human association. In the early American sociology such a notion was quite novel because the then prevailing view was that society and individuals were two separate entities.

Blumer's theoretical orientation towards symbolic interactionism can be summarized through three premises; (1) Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. (2) The meaning of things is derived from or arises out of the social interaction that one has with others. (3) Meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process used by a person in dealing with the things he/she encounters. Though these three premises commonly remain the core tenets of symbolic interactionism, some other scholars like Snow believe that symbolic interactionism is formed around four principles, such as, the principle of interactive determination, the principle of symbolization, the principle of emergence and the principle of human agency.

To summarize Blumer's methodological approach, we can say that an understanding of social life requires a clear understanding of the processes people use to interpret situations and experiences, and also the way they construct the actions among other individuals in society.

The Iowa School – Though Blumer asserted that for understanding the nature of human behavior qualitative methods of study are the only way, some other symbolic interactionists differed from him and used other methods in their analysis of human behavior. Manfred Kuhn (1964) and Sheldon Stryker (1980) are two such sociologists belonging to two different universities, who applied positivist methods in their studies of the relationship between the self and social structure. Kuhn's positivism stemming from his work in the mid-twentieth century gave birth to a new sociological tradition termed the "Iowa School" of symbolic interactionism.

Kuhn, as the pioneer of a prominent school of symbolic interactionism initiated a new sociological tradition. Though Kuhn and his fellow sociologists from the same school follow a symbolic interactionist framework consistent with Mead, they adopt a methodology that is completely different from that of Blumer. For Kuhn the study of the complexity of social life and of selfhood is a scientific endeavor that requires sociological analysis. Believing that Mead's theoretical principles can be tested by using quantitative methods, he developed test methods to assess attitudes towards self, such as 'Twenty Statement Test' (TST) and found no discord between social science and quantitative study of the self (Carter & Fuller, 2016:935-936). After Kuhn, his student and successor Carl Couch continued this symbolic interactionist tradition at Iowa.

Indiana School – Sheldon Stryker introduced this new tradition at Indiana University. His work is quite similar to Kuhn's, both in its scope and methods; but he expanded Mead's concept of role-taking in order to demonstrate the structural aspect of interaction. Stryker views socialization as the process through which individuals learn normative expectations for actions as they relate to role relationships. By building up from the person to the situation within the larger social structure, he showed the reciprocity of the individual and society. His structural approach to symbolic interactionism is an attempt to bridge the gap between micro- and macro- sociological and social psychological theories and provides significant theoretical insights to social roles in expanding symbolic interactionist concepts. (Carter & Fuller: 937)

1.6 Critical Appraisal

Symbolic interactionism has influenced modern sociological research to a large extent, at the same time, it has faced criticisms from many quarters. Most of its criticisms arose during the 1970s in America when quantitative approaches to sociology occupied a dominant position. Its exponents were criticized for being overly impressionistic in their research methods and to some extent unsystematic in their theories. It has also been argued that it is not a single theory, but is the framework for several different theories. Critics also feel that it lacks testability, has a narrow focus on small-group interactions and other social psychological issues.

The first and foremost criticism against the mainstream symbolic interactionism was that it rejected conventional scientific techniques. Critics like Eugene Weinstein and Judith

Tanur have pointed out that just because the contents of consciousness are qualitative, it cannot be said that their exterior expression cannot be examined quantitatively.

Second, many thinkers like Manifold Kuhn, William Kolb, Bernard Meltzer, James Petras and Larry Reynolds have criticized the theory for vagueness of some of Mead's concepts like mind, self, I, me, etc. Many other basic symbolic-interactionist concepts are criticized for being confused and imprecise as well as for being incapable of having a firm basis for theory and research.

Third, symbolic interactionism has also been criticized by thinkers like Weinstein and Tanur for ignoring the connectedness of outcomes to each other and in this way it downplays the large-scale social structures. They argue, "The concept of social structure is necessary to deal with the incredible density and complexity of relations through which episodes of interaction are interconnected. According to Sheldon Stryker, symbolic interactionism minimizes or denies 'the facts of social structure and the impact of the macro-organizational features of a society on behavior.

Fourth, many other critics of interactionism believe that this theory is not sufficiently microscopic and it ignores the importance of factors like unconscious and emotions. It also ignores many psychological factors like needs, motives, aspirations and intentions to focus on the meanings, symbols, action and interaction. Interactionists are also accused of making a fetish out of everyday life.(Ritzer,2011: 371-372)

There are other criticisms as well. For example, some critics find the symbolic interactionist framework is too broad and general to qualify as a specific theory. Symbolic interactionism may better be described as a theoretical framework rather than a theory and many scholars find this framework quite difficult to use.

1.7 The Future of Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic Interactionism has won appreciation from many quarters and though, for long, it was not considered a part of the mainstream sociology by many, gradually it grew to be less marginal and many of its central ideas have been accepted. In 1978 the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interactionism was established and it started to publish its journal-Symbolic Interaction. Since then symbolic interactionism has experienced a resurgence. Leading sociological journals now invite symbolic interactionists on their editorial boards; as a consequence, these journals are publishing more research articles of this genre.

Garry Fine (1993) points out that in the recent years symbolic interactionism has gone through dramatic changes; for example, it has witnessed considerable fragmentation since its Chicago School days and a great diversity of work has now come under its broad heading. Moreover, its scope has been widened, even far beyond its traditional concern with micro-relations. A third point to note is that this theory has incorporated ideas from many other theoretical perspectives and in turn, other theoretical perspectives have also absorbed many ideas of symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionists have been deeply involved with issues like macro-micro, agency- structure, etc. As a result, the fine dividing line between symbolic interactionism and other theoretical perspectives are getting blurred. (Ritzer, 2011:378).

1.8 Conclusion

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical perspective in sociology that emerged in America in mid-twentieth century to address the manner in which society is created and maintained through face-to-face, repeated, meaningful interactions among individuals. This perspective is the product of a variety of influences including the Scottish Moralist and American Pragmatist philosophy. However, the greatest of its influence came from American philosopher George Herbert Mead and his theories about the relationship between self and society. The emergence of symbolic interactionism was a response to the mainstream perspectives on society, such as structural functionalism, that was the most dominant theory in sociology at that time. The then dominant positivist approaches tended to examine society from the 'top down', focusing on the impact of macro-level institutions and structures and how they impose on and constrain individuals. Moving away from this tradition, symbolic interactionism was developed to understand the operations of society from 'bottom up', shifting the focus to micro-level processes that emerge during face-to-face encounters, in order to explain the operations of society. While the structuralist perspectives reify society as a constraining entity that defines individual, symbolic interactionism conceived the individual as agentic, autonomous and integral in creating their world.

Central to symbolic interactionist thought is the idea that individuals use language and significant symbols in their communication with others. Rather than addressing how common social institutions define and impact individuals symbolic interactionists shift their attendance to the interpretation of subjective viewpoints and how individuals make sense of their world from their unique perspectives. The basic tenets of symbolic

interactionism state that : (1) individuals act on the basis of the meanings objects have for them; (2) interaction occurs within a particular social and cultural context in which physical and social objects /persons or situations need to be defined or categorized based on individual meanings; (3) meanings are continuously created and recreated through interpreting processes during interaction with others. (Carter & Fuller,2016).

1.9 Summary

This unit has tracked the origin and development of symbolic interactionism, how it has been influenced by different viewpoints that emerged in America's sociological scenario in the early to late twentieth century period. Its differences with other powerful perspectives have also been discussed. This unit contains critical analysis of symbolic interactionist perspective as well as an assessment of its future trends.

1.10 Questions

A. Answer in brief: 5 Marks Each.

1. What is the essence of the theory of social interactionism?
2. What are the basic principles of symbolic interactionism?
3. Write a note on the role of the Iowa School in enriching symbolic interactionism.
4. Discuss, in brief, the contribution of the Indiana School in symbolic interactionism.

B. Answer in detail: 10 Marks Each.

1. Discuss, in detail, the importance of symbolic interactionism in sociological analysis.
2. Discuss, in detail, the different approaches and their contributions in symbolic interactionism.
3. Make a critical assessment of the role symbolic interactionism has played in sociology and shed some light on its future possibilities in sociological analysis.

1.11 References

Ritzer, George. 2011. Sociological Theory. Tata-McGraw-Hill Edition. New Delhi.

Ritzer, George & Smart, Barry. (Ed.) .2003. Handbook of Social Theory Sage

Publications.Part Two, Chapter-17.Pp.217-231.

Wallace, Ruth A. & Wolf, Alison. 2006. Contemporary Sociological Theory. PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd. N.D. Chapter Five.Pp.197-260.

Johnson, Doyle P. 2008. Contemporary Sociological Theory. Springer. Part II, Chap.5.Pp.109-136.

Henslin, James M. 2017. Essentials of Sociology : A Down-to-Earth Approach. Pearson. Chap.1

Stolley, Kathy S. 2005.The Basics of Sociology. Greenwood Press. Chap.2

[https:// en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Symbolic Interactionism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symbolic_Interactionism).

Symbols, Meaning and Action: The past, present and future of symbolic interactionism. Michael J. Carter and Celene Fuller. Current Sociology Review, 2016, Vol.64 (6) 931-961. Sage Journal.

Unit : 2 □ Contributions of G. H. Mead

Structure

- 2.1 Objectives**
- 2.2 Introduction**
- 2.3 G. H. Mead's Contribution**
- 2.4 The Mind**
- 2.5 The Self**
- 2.6 Development of the Self**
- 2.7 The phases in the development of self**
- 2.8 The Society**
- 2.9 The ideas of 'Generalized Other' and 'Significant Other'**
- 2.10 The ideas of meaning and interpretation for Mead**
- 2.11 Criticism of Mead**
- 2.12 Conclusion**
- 2.13 Summary**
- 2.14 Questions**
- 2.15 References**
- 2.16 Glossary**

2.1 Objectives

- To understand the concepts of mind and self.
- To understand idea of society.
- To learn the overall contributions of Mead.

2.2 Introduction:

There have been contributions from G. H. Mead, C. H. Cooley, W. I. Thomas, H. Blumer, E. Goffman who have made symbolic interactionism rich as a form of theorizing in sociology. The most prominent of all symbolic interactionist theorists is George Herbert Mead (1863-1931). The two most significant influences on Mead were the philosophy of pragmatism, more specifically the realist branch of pragmatism and psychological

behaviorism. The pragmatists believed that the reality does not exist independent of the actor but is actively created by them (social construction of reality). So in order to understand the actors we need to understand what they do in the world. To the pragmatists therefore it is important to focus on the interaction between actor and the world, both the actor and the world as dynamic processes and the actor's ability to interpret the world. The influence over Mead of psychological behaviorism was that he was directed towards an empirical and realist way. He differed from the radical behaviorists and prioritized the social world in understanding social experience. The three important sources from where Mead had borrowed heavily were William James' concept of 'self', Dewey's concept of pragmatism and Charles Cooley's ideas on self and the social process. James recognized that humans have the capacity to look at themselves as objects and can develop self-feelings towards themselves. James called those capacities as self by which humans could denote symbolically other people and aspects of the world, develop attitudes and feelings about them and construct typical responses towards objects. Dewey stressed on the process of human adjustment to the world in which the individual continuously seek to master the conditions of the environment. Cooley on the other hand, presented a refined idea of self, viewing it as the process in which individuals see themselves as objects in their social environment and also recognizes the fact that self of individuals emerges out of interaction with others. Thus, Cooley stressed on the importance of 'primary group' in front of which the individual evaluates others' opinion of him/her. Cooley's ideas crystallized through a concept, 'looking glass self' in which gestures of others act as a mirror in which individual sees and evaluates themselves as objects in the social environment.

George Herbert Mead synthesized James', Cooley's and Dewey's concepts together in a coherent theoretical perspective that linked emergence of mind (thinking mind) to self (capable of interacting with others) and society through the process of interaction. In his book, *Mind, Self and Society* (published in 1950 by his students) Mead had noted his ideas on the social self. Though he had put 'mind' first in the title of the book, he preferred to put the study of individuals in the context of the society. That is, in his theory a self-conscious individual is impossible without a social group.

2.3 G. H. Mead's Contribution

The social group comes first and it leads to the development of self-conscious mental states. The states and the source in the development of the conscious self are mentioned below. Mead synthesized the ideas well into his conceptual schema where he firstly recognized two important aspects of the rise of self in society. These were: the biological weakness of humans leads them to cooperate with other humans; this compulsive cooperation helps in both the survival and adjustment of the individuals. This compulsion and adjustment makes the survival of the society possible.

2.4 The Mind

Mind, to Mead is a process and not a thing. It arises in individual as an inner conversation and it arises and develops within the social process and becomes an integral part of the process. The social process precedes the mind and is not a product of the mind. The distinctiveness of the mind is in its ability to respond to not only himself but also to the community. So to Mead the mind is an ability to respond to the overall community and put forth an organized response. Besides this the mind is also capable of solving problems. In this way the mind tries to solve problems and permit people to operate more effectively in the world. This is the ability to respond to gestures. By perceiving, interpreting and using gestures humans can assume the perspectives of others with whom they cooperate in order to survive. By this they can imaginatively rehearse the lines along which their actions will facilitate their adjustments in society. Thus being able to put them in another's place is called by Mead 'taking the role of others'. So to Mead mind develops only when humans develop the capacity to understand conventional gestures, employ those gestures to take the role of others and imaginatively rehearse lines of action.

2.5 The Self

The self arises with the development and through social activity and social relationships. To Mead, it is impossible to imagine of a self arising in the absence of social experiences. However once it is developed it is possible for it to continue to exist without social contact. The self is dialectically related to the mind. It is important to remember that the body is not a self but it becomes a self only when a mind has developed. On the other hand, the self, and its reflexiveness is essential to the development of the mind. The

development of the mind is a social process. The mechanism through which the self develops is reflexivity or the ability to put ourselves unconsciously into others' place and to act as they act. As a result people are able to examine themselves as others examine them. The self allows people to take part in their conversation with others. That is one is aware of what one is saying and as a result is able to monitor what is being said and to determine what is going to be said next.

The self is active and creative. It is not determined by any social, cultural or psychological variables. Functionalists like Parsons, often looked at humans as passive agents interrupted by the social and psychological forces. Mead posits that individuals act on their own environment and in doing so they create the objects that people it. He distinguishes between things and objects. Things according to Mead are stimulus that exist prior to and independent of the individual and objects are which exist only in relation to acts. The thing becomes an object when the individual by acting on it designates the thing with an expression.

2.6 Development of the Self

Mead outlines two phases of the development of the self. One phase is 'I' and the other is 'me'. 'I' is the unorganized response of the organism to the attitudes of others, the natural disposition or the urge to act. The 'me' is set of organized attitudes that the self learns from others. The 'me' guides the behavior of the socialized person and in this aspect brings in the influences of others into the individual's consciousness. The 'I' allows for a certain degree of innovation and creativity as well as degree of freedom from control by others. The self consists of the acting of 'I' when the self is considered to be subject and when acted upon as 'me' is considered to be an object. The self is a social process going on in these two phases.

Mead conceived the 'conversation of gestures' as the background for the development of self. The first stage is the *imitative stage* where a child first imitates the gestures of the mother or a primary care-giver. The 'conversation of gestures' does not involve a self since in this conversation people do not see themselves as objects. The second stage is the *play stage*. In this stage children start learning to take the attitude of others to themselves. The children start to learn this by playing the role of someone in their plays. As a result the child learns to become both subject and object and starts to build up a self. But this is an initial stage because here the child lacks general and organized

sense of themselves. The third stage is the *game stage*. Here the sense of self develops in full form. Here the child starts taking up the role of those who are not only close to the child. Through taking up the roles of discrete others he/she starts to learn how to respond to the actions of others. The child can anticipate the moves of others involved in the interaction and act accordingly. A definite personality of the child starts to evolve at this stage.

The self by emulating and taking the role of the organized other reflects the general systematic pattern of social group behavior in which it and others are involved (Mead, 1934/1962: 158). The idea of the development of self in this stage gives us a concept developed by Mead called the *generalized other*. The *generalized other* is the attitude of the entire community. The ability to take the role of the *generalized other* is essential to the self. It is also essential at this stage that child learns to evaluate themselves from the point of view of the generalized other. This is not essential for the development of the self only but also for the perpetuation of the society in general. A group requires that individuals direct their activities in accordance to the attitudes of the generalized other. Mead bestows importance to the social since it is through the generalized other that the group influences the behavior of individuals.

At the individual level, the self allows the individual to be more efficient member of the larger society. It is for the self that people are more likely to do what is expected of them in a given situation. Since people try to live up to the expectations and demands of the society, they are more likely to avoid the influences that come from failing to do what the group expects. The self allows for more coordination in society as a whole. Because individuals can be counted on to do what is expected of them, the group can operate more effectively (Ritzer, 2011: 354).

2.7 The Phases in the Development of Self

Mead identifies two aspects of the development of self. He distinguishes between ‘I’ and ‘me’. To him the self is essentially a social process going on with these two distinguishable processes. ‘I’ is the immediate response of an individual to others. It is incalculable, unpredictable, creative aspect of self. In this stage the actions are ‘meaningless’ because the child in this stage lacks the ability to take the attitude of others. This ability to take the attitude of others develops gradually. In the second stage, the play stage, the child can put himself in the position of another person but cannot relate the role of other

players. The connection between play and the development of 'me' and the ability to take on the role of the other is apparent in the dolls' plays the child participates in. At the game stage, several actors play together. This happens in a complex, organized game such as football, in which there are team members who anticipate the attitudes and roles of all other players. A mature self emerges when a generalized other is internalized so that the community starts to control over acts and conducts of its individuals. The 'me', according to Mead, is the adoption of the generalized other. In contrast to the 'I, people in this phase are conscious, or as Mead calls it has a conscious responsibility. As Mead says, the 'me' is a conventional, habitual individual (1934/1962: 197).

2.8 The Society

At the general level, society according to Mead is an ongoing social process that precedes both mind and self. At another level, society to Mead represents the organized set of responses that are taken over by the individual in the form of 'me'. Thus in this sense the individual carries society around with him giving him the ability through self-criticism to control himself. The usual way of depicting a society till then was in a macro model, a system enmeshed with social institutions, groups and organizations. The macro components of the study of society are not well developed in Mead's analysis. To him, the whole community acts towards the individual under certain circumstances in an identical way. This is the basis of the formation of an institution. We as individuals carry this organized set of attitudes with us and these serve as mechanisms of control of our actions through the socialized expression of our self, that is, 'me'. He is cautious in identifying that institutions need not destroy individuality or creativity, though there are such institutions which aim at such control. Mead demonstrates a very contemporary notion of society, very different from Weber or Durkheim's concept of it. He on the other hand emphasizes on the emergence of mind and self from and within the society.

He viewed society as a constructed phenomenon that arises out of interactions among adjusting individuals. Society can be reconstructed through the process that helps in the rise of mind and self. The ways are by the use of two concepts: 'I' and 'me' discussed earlier. In short, Mead represents society as a constructed pattern of coordinated activity that are maintained by and changed through symbolic interactions among and within actors. Both the maintenance and change of society occur through the processes of the development of mind and self. The possibility of spontaneous and unpredictable action has the capacity to alter the existing patterns of interactions.

2.9 The ideas of ‘Generalized Other’ and ‘Significant Other’

When an actor tries to imagine what is expected of him, he is taking on the perspective of the generalized other. George Herbert Mead’s concept of the Generalized Other is that in their behavior and social interaction individuals react to the expectations of others, orienting themselves to the norms and values of their community or group. The term Generalized Other was used by George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) to refer to an individual’s recognition that other members of their society hold specific values and expectations about behavior. Mead’s concept of the Generalized Other gives an account of the social origin of self-consciousness while retaining the transforming function of the personal. Contextualized in Mead’s theory of intersubjectivity, the Generalized Other is a special case of role-taking in which the individual responds to social gestures, and takes up and adjusts common attitudes.

The development of the Generalized Other is a concept in Mead’s published and unpublished work, locating it within the framework of intersubjectivity and role-taking. A theoretically and historically embedded interpretation of the Generalized Other reveals that both the personal and the social evolve and that it is a process. The self and the social each is open to activities that bring about change. Grounded in Mead’s refusal to reduce the part played by the social or the personal in the development of the self, the Generalized Other is a concept of continuing usefulness to development psychologists.

Significant others imply people who play significant role in the development of the child into an individual. The child first learns to imitate from people such as these. The people involved are important for this first step. In the imitative stage the child learns gestures. This is the first step towards understanding and giving meaning to interactions that take place around the child. In the play stage, the child rehearses his or her different role plays in their play. To repeat an example often taken to show how doll-playing for girls help them to rehearse the role-playing of their parents. The girl rehearses the roles her parents play and how they react to her actions. This rehearsals help individuals to gear up for actions with strangers. In its first steps in the outer world (outside family) the child learns through interactions about what is expected of her or him, how s/he is ought to behave and what is accepted in society. Through time the child matures to interact with strangers, understand what is expected, what is the desired behavior and what can be one’s reaction towards certain actions. Though the generalized other play a

vital role here, the importance of the significant others is not strictly limited to the early stages of self development.

2.10 The ideas of meaning and interpretation for Mead

The word 'meaning' to Mead has importance in the word 'gesture', which he calls as the sign of a whole act. For example if a host opens the television while talking with his guests it is a gesture which signals a whole lot of actions that can follow. In this situation the gesture the first component of the act can be enough to signify that the host does not like to talk and calls out through the use of the gesture the beginning of the guests' adjustments to it. Gestures are therefore important internalized symbols because they have the same meaning for all individuals of a given society. Mead defines symbols as the stimulus whose response is given in advance. For example if someone insults you, what do you want to do? You may want to knock him down. A key element in the word becomes a stimulus whose response is given in advance in the community in question by the connotations of that word and intentions implied by its use evoke a blow as an appropriate response from a person so addressed. You should remember here that the gesture in question occurs in a process, through the conversation of gestures that goes on in the mind of the actor. So gestures are those that possess meaning. A significant symbol is that part of the act that calls out the response of the other. This assumes the interpretation of symbols as in the case of the example of insult.

2.11 Criticism of Mead

Mead's theory is criticized for giving up mainstream scientific techniques. The critics argue that scientism and subjectivity are mutually exclusive. Critics also point out that many of Mead's concepts are confusing and vague. They critique the concepts used by Mead as incapable of providing a firm basis for any theory or research. Because the concepts are imprecise and vague it is difficult to operationalize them resulting in untestable propositions. The primary spotlight of symbolic interactionism on micro- contexts drop from its focus the sight of the social structure and the impact of macro-structures on society and behavior. The perspective ignores psychological factors that might impel actors in a particular way, instead they focus on meanings, symbols and interaction diminishing the value of all these. The result being that the symbolic interactionism of Mead makes a fetish of everyday life, reducing it to the study of immediate situations.

2.12 Conclusion

Mead's major contribution to the field of social psychology was his attempt to show how the human self arises in the process of social interaction, especially by way of linguistic communication ("symbolic interaction"). In philosophy, as already mentioned, Mead was one of the major American pragmatists. Mead believed that people develop self-images through interactions with other people. He argued that the self, which is the part of a person's personality consisting of self-awareness and self-image, is a product of social experience. The two most important roots of Mead's work, and of symbolic interactionism in general, are the philosophy of pragmatism and social (as opposed to psychological) behaviorism (i.e.: Mead was concerned with the stimuli of gestures and social objects with rich meanings rather than bare physical objects which psychological behaviorists considered stimuli). Mead develops William James' distinction between the concepts "I" and the "me." The "me" is the accumulated understanding of "the generalized other" i.e. how one thinks one's group perceives oneself etc. The "I" is the individual's impulses. The "I" is self as subject; the "me" is self as object. The "I" is the *knower*, the "me" is the *known*. The mind, or stream of thought, is the self-reflective movements of the interaction between the "I" and the "me." There is neither "I" nor "me" in the conversation of gestures; the whole act is not yet carried out, but the preparation takes place in this field of gesture. These dynamics go beyond selfhood in a narrow sense, and form the basis of a theory of human cognition. For Mead the thinking process is the internalized dialogue between the "I" and the "me." Mead rooted the self's "perception and meaning" deeply and sociologically in "a common praxis of subjects" (Joas 1985: 166) found specifically in social encounters. Understood as a combination of the 'I' and the 'me', Mead's self proves to be noticeably tangled within a sociological existence. For Mead, existence in community comes before individual consciousness. First one must participate in the different social positions within society and only subsequently can one use that experience to take the perspective of others and thus become 'conscious'.

2.13 Summary

For Mead, the development of the self is intimately tied to the development of language. For example, a dog barks, and a second dog either barks back or runs away. The "meaning"

of the “barking gesture” is found in the response of the second organism to the first. But dogs do not understand the “meaning” of their gestures. They simply respond, that is, they use symbols without what Mead refers to as “significance.” For a gesture to have significance, it must call out in a second organism a response that is functionally identical to the response that the first organism anticipates. In other words, for a gesture to be significant it must “mean” the same thing to both organisms, and “meaning” involves the capacity to consciously anticipate how other organisms will respond to symbols or gestures. According to Mead, through the use of vocal gestures one can turn “experience” back on itself through the loop of speaking and hearing at relatively the same instant. And when one is part of a complex network of language users, Mead argues that this reflexivity, the “turning back” of experience on itself, allows mind to develop. Mind is developed not only through the use of vocal gestures, but through the taking of roles, which will be addressed below. Here it is worth noting that although we often employ our capacity for reflexivity to engage in reflection or deliberation, both Dewey and Mead argue that habitual, non-deliberative, experience constitutes the most common way that we engage the world. The habitual involves a host of background beliefs and assumptions that are not raised to the level of (self) conscious reflection unless problems occur that warrant addressing. For Mead, if we were simply to take the roles of others, we would never develop selves or self-consciousness. We would have a nascent form of self-consciousness that parallels the sort of reflexive awareness that is required for the use of significant symbols. A role-taking (self) consciousness of this sort makes possible what might be called a proto-self, but not a self, because it doesn’t have the complexity necessary to give rise to a self. How then does a self arise? Here Mead introduces his well-known neologism, *the generalized other*. When children or adults take roles, they can be said to be playing these roles in dyads. However, this sort of exchange is quite different from the more complex sets of behaviors that are required to participate in games. In the latter, we are required to learn not only the responses of specific others, but behaviors associated with every position on the field. These can be internalized, and when we succeed in doing so we come to “view” our own behaviors from the perspective of the game as a whole, which is a system of organized actions. The self that arises in relationship to a specific generalized other is referred to as the “Me.” The “Me” is a cognitive object, which is only known retrospectively, that is, on reflection. When we act in habitual ways we are not typically self-conscious. We are engaged in actions at a non-reflective level. However, when we take the perspective of the generalized other,

we are both “watching” and forming a self in relationship to the system of behaviors that constitute this generalized other. So, for example, if I am playing second base, I may reflect on my position as a second baseman, but to do so I have to be able to think of “myself” in relationship to the whole game, namely, the other actors and the rules of the game. We might refer to this cognitive object as my (second baseman) baseball self or “Me.” Perhaps a better example might be to think of the self in relationship to one’s family of origin. In this situation, one views oneself from the perspective of the various sets of behaviors that constitute the family system. Mead is a systemic thinker who speaks of taking the perspectives of others and of generalized others. These perspectives are not “subjective” for Mead. They are “objective” in the sense that they provide frames of reference and shared patterns of behavior for members of communities. (This is not to say that every human community has an equally viable account of the natural world. This is in part why we have science for Mead.)

However, it is not only human perspectives that are objective for Mead. While it is true that only human beings share perspectives in a manner that allows them to be (self) conscious about the perspectives of others, there is an objective reality to non-human perspectives. How can a non-human perspective be objective? In order to answer this question, a few general remarks about Mead’s notion of “perspective” are in order. First, it is important to note that perspectives are not primarily visual for Mead. Mead’s account of the “Me” and the generalized other has often led commentators to assume that he is a determinist. It is certainly the case that if one were to emphasize Mead’s concern with social systems and the social development of the self, one might be led to conclude that Mead is a theorist of the processes of socialization. And the latter, nested as they are within social systems, are beyond the control of individuals. However, when one considers the role of the “I” and novelty in his thinking, it becomes more difficult to view him as a determinist. But his emphasis on novelty only seems to counter determinism with spontaneity. This counter to determinism in itself doesn’t supply a notion of autonomy—self-governance and self-determination—which is often viewed as crucial to the modern Western notion of the subject. However, Mead was a firm booster of the scientific method, which he viewed as an activity that was at its heart democratic. For him, science is tied to the manner in which human beings have managed from pre-recorded times to solve problems and transform their worlds.

2.14 Questions

1. Answer briefly the following questions: (6 marks)

- a. What is the 'conversation of gestures'?
- b. What is the implication of the concept 'significant others' in Mead's theorizing?

2. Answer in detail the following: (12 marks)

- a. Write in brief on the development of Mead's arguments on the development of self.
- b. What did Mead mean by 'generalized others'? Discuss in this context the importance Mead gave to the idea of society.

3. Write essay-type answers to the following: (20 marks)

- a. Analyze Mead's contribution to symbolic Interactionist perspective.
- b. Discuss how Mead develops his ideas on the relation between individual and society.

2.15 References

- Blumer, H. (1962/1969), *Symbolic Interactionism*, Englewood Cliff, N. J. Prentice-Hall
- Brittan, A. (1973), *Meanings and situations*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Collins R (1994) The microinteractionist tradition. In Collins R (ed.) *Four Sociological Traditions*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 242–89.
- Cook, Gary A. (1993). *George Herbert Mead: the making of a social pragmatist*. University of Illinois Press
- Coser, Lewis A. (1977). *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in the Historical and Sociological Context*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jonanovich
- Couch, C., S. Saxton, & M. Katovich (1986). *Studies in symbolic interaction: The Iowa school*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Denzin, K., (2000) Symbolic Interactionism in Flick U., et al (ed) *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, London, Sage (81-87)
- Hall, Peter M. (2007). *Symbolic Interaction*. *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*
- Herman-Kinney, N. J., & Verschaeve, J. M. (2003). *Methods of Symbolic Interactionism*.

- In L. T. Reynolds & N. J. Herman-Kinney (Eds.), *Handbook of symbolic interactionism* (p. 213–252). Alta Mira Press.
- Holstein, J. A. and Gubrium, J. F. (2000) *The Self We Live By: Narrative Identity in a Postmodern World*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Katovich, Michael and David R. Maines (2003) ‘Society’, in Larry T. Reynolds and Nancy Herman-Kinney (eds), *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Krotz, Friedrich (2007). Mediatisierung: Fallstudien zum Wandel von Kommunikation. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. As in Fusun Alver and Sebnem Caglar, ‘The Impact of Symbolic Interactionism on Research Studies About Communication Science’, *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, ISSN: 1944-6934 :: 08(07):479–484 (2015).
- Maines, D. (1977). Social organization and social structure in symbolic interactionist thought. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 3:235-59.
- Maines, D. (1988). Myth, text and interactionist complicity in the neglect of Blumer’s macrosociology. *Symbolic Interaction*. 11:43-58.
- Mead, G. H. (1934/64) *Mind, Self and Society: From the Standpoint of Social Behaviourist*, Chicago, Chicago University Press.
- Meltzer, B. (1975), *Symbolic Interactionism: Genesis, Varieties and Criticisms*, London, Kegan Paul.
- Morrione, Thomas (Spring 1988). “Herbert G. Blumer (1900–1987): A Legacy of Concepts, Criticisms, and Contributions”. *Symbolic Interaction*. 1 Special Issue on Herbert Blumer’s Legacy: 1–12.
- Morrione, Thomas. “Herbert George Blumer (1900–1987)”. *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*.
- O’Shaughnessy, J. (1992). *Explaining buyer behaviour: central concepts and philosophy of science issues*. Oxford University Press.
- Overington, M. A., Mangham, (1982). The theatrical perspective in organizational analysis. *Symbolic Interaction* 5:173-85.
- Ritzer, G., (2011), *Sociological theory*, New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Education Private

Limited.

Shibutani, T. (1988), *Society and Personality : Interactionist Approach to Social Psychology*, Somerset, United Kingdom, Taylor and Francis.

Slattery, Martin (2007). Sosyolojide Temel Fikirler. Ümit Tatlıoğlu; Gülhan Demiriz (Trans.). Bursa: Sentez Yayınları as in Fusun Alver Kocaeli and Sebnem Caglar The Impact of Symbolic Interactionism on Research Studies About Communication Science, *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, ISSN: 1944-6934 : 08(07):479–484 (2015).

Stryker S., (1987), The Vitalization of Symbolic Interactionism, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 1. (Mar., 1987), pp. 83-94.

Stryker, S., (1980), *Symbolic Interactionism: a Social Structural Version*, Menlo Park, California Press.

Turner, J. (1995), *The Structure of Sociological Theory*, Jaipur, Rawat Publication.

Udehn, L. (2001). *Methodological Individualism: Background, History and Meaning*. London and New York: Routledge.

Wallace, R., and Wolf, A., (2005), *Contemporary Sociological theory*, New Delhi, Prentice Hall.

Weinstein, E. A., & Tanur, J. M. (1976). Meanings, purposes, and structural resources in social interaction. *Cornell Journal of Social Relations*, 11(1), 105–110.

2.16 Glossary

Generalized Other: "The generalized other" is a concept developed by G. H. Mead which can be thought of as understanding the given activity and the actors' place within the activity from the perspective of all the others engaged in the activity. Through understanding "the generalized other" the individual understands what kind of behavior is expected, appropriate and so on, in different social settings.

'Significant Other': A term used by George Herbert Mead to refer to those individuals who are most important in the development of the self, such as parents, friends, and teachers.

'Conversation of gestures': The 'conversation of gestures' formed the basis of George Herbert Mead's ideas of social behaviorism, a variant of pragmatism. Mead distinguished

between non-significant conversation of gestures, conversation of significant gestures, and conversation of significant symbols. They correspond to the successive stages of the evolution of language and the mind. A gesture gains significance when it elicits a response in an individual that resembles the response elicited by this individual's gesture in another individual, that is, when a symbol bears the same meaning to different actors. The mind emerges in language communication and is social in character, since thinking consists in the internalization of external conversations. The self of an individual forms through the internalization of interpersonal conversations. Like the conversation of significant gestures and symbols, the self is reflexive.

Unit : 3 □ Contributions of H. Blumer

Structure

- 3.1 Objectives**
- 3.2 Introduction**
- 3.3 Blumer's ideas on Meaning and Interpretation**
- 3.4 Blumer's ideas on Structure and Process**
- 3.5 Blumer's Methodology**
- 3.6 Blumer's Ideas on 'Sensitizing Concepts'**
- 3.7 Criticism against Blumer**
- 3.8 Conclusion**
- 3.9 Summary**
- 3.10 Questions**
- 3.11 References**
- 3.12 Glossarys**

3.1 Objectives

- To understand Blumer's ideas on Meaning and Interpretation.
- To explain Blumer's ideas on structure and process.
- To have an idea of the overall theory and methodology of Blumer.

3.2 Introduction

Herbert Blumer was an American sociologist of the Chicago School who wrote extensively on a series on symbolic interaction. Blumer's contribution to symbolic interactionism is his work on interpretation, ideas of structure and process and methodology. Blumer focused on the ways humans take control of their lives. The two parts that are significant in Blumer's contribution are symbols and interaction. Both produce meaningful interaction.

3.3 Blumer's ideas on Meaning and Interpretation

Unlike Mead, Blumer illustrated that interaction was not a simple stimuli-response sequence. Like Mead, he too, argued for the necessity of including subjective experience in explaining human interactions. He wanted to include a middle term in the couplet so that it becomes stimuli-interpretation-response. It means that two actors involved in an interaction interprets each others' actions or 'gives meaning' to them and responds to those. Thus the action of one is definitely a stimulus but it alone does not evoke response in the other. Therefore instead of merely acting to each others' actions in an automatic way (reaction) humans interpret or define each others' actions and they perform this interpretation on the basis of symbols. It means that the meaning attached to an action makes it not only meaningful to the reactor but also acts as a stimulus to his/her response. Thus the stimulus-interpretation-response process could be translated as a process of meaningful interaction. In order to understand fully the premises of Blumer's understanding of human action it is important to carefully look into the three premises as outlined by Wallace and Wolf (2006, 217-20).

1. Humans act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them.

It means the individual designates different objects to himself, giving them meaning, judging their suitability to his actions and making decisions on the basis of that judgment. For example if a boy sneezes at class, first he feels embarrassed about it for which he excuses himself even if no one express their dissatisfaction to the act.

2. The meaning of things arises out of the social interaction one has with one's fellows.

It means that 'meaning' is socially constructed. It is not inherent in things. It is out of social interactions that individuals construct meanings of the objects (things) in question. For instance, in the example stated above the sneezing in public is considered a disturbance and a part of bad manners. It is an outcome of previous interactions. It is for this the boy has learnt to excuse himself in public whenever he sneezes.

3. The meanings of things are handled in and modified through an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with things he encounters.

Blumer says that individuals first communicate the meanings of things to them through

talking. For example, when one talks about his worries he does so to interpret how he feels of the thing as disturbing to him.

Taken together the premises stated above indicate that symbolic interactionism emerges from an individual's ability to confer meaning to a situation.

3.4 Blumer's ideas on Structure and Process

Blumer emphasized on an ever-active interacting people as unit of interest in sociology. But he was skeptical of the way sociology conceptualized a society as a structure. In emphasizing on interacting individuals Blumer did not underestimate the importance of structure but does not consider it a determinant of behavior. When he speaks of role playing he does not consider the cultural dictate behind the enactment of the role but considers it to be flexible and a space for improvisation for the actor. He believes that an individual possess self which is an object to itself. This means that the individual can act towards himself as he confronts the world. Action is pieced together as individual takes the setting of the act into account in making decisions. As acting humans, people do not simply respond to others in a structured manner. Blumer says that human action is preceded by the individual briefly sketching out plans and intentions. Human action for him in the most part is constructed by people making indications to themselves of what confronts them.

Mead and Blumer does not deny structured action but only seeks to find and acknowledge that individuals can act in many unstructured and undefined situations in which humans devise their own conduct.

Blumer emphasized on the ability of humans to use symbols and develop capacities for thinking and self-reflection. Blumer emphasized that humans have the capacity to view themselves as objects and are active creators of the world to which they respond. Blumer stressed on the process of role taking which humans mutually produce and construe each others' gestures. Actors are able to rehearse covertly various lines of activity and then express those behaviors that allow cooperative and organized activity. Blumer stressed on the creative, evaluating, defining and mapping processes that individuals undertake in order to continue their interactions with one and another. The symbolic nature of interaction keeps an assurance of its changeable characteristic through shifting the definitions of behaviors of humans. Blumer had consistently advocated a view of

the social organization as temporary and constantly changing. To him, as behavior is interpretative, evaluational and definitional, social organization represents an active and fitting together of action by those interactions. Social organization therefore must be viewed as a process and not a structure. The social structure is an emergent phenomenon and not reducible in its constituent actions of individuals. Although the interactions are repetitive and structured by commonly shared definitions, it's symbolic nature reveals the potential for new objects to be inserted or old ones to be altered. The result is a re-evaluational, recreation or remapping of behaviors. The patterns of social organization represent emergent phenomenon that can serve as objects that define situations for actors. However the symbolic processes that give rise and sustain these patterns can also operate to change and revise them.

3.5 Blumer's methodology

Blumer mounted a constant and determined attack on sociological theory and research. His critical questions were aimed at the utility of contemporary research procedures for finding the symbolic processes from which social structures and personality are built and sustained. Rather than the empirical world dictates the kind of research strategies to be used Blumer argued for research strategies to find out what is to be studied.

Blumer shows that unlike functionalism, symbolic interactionism is committed to inductive approach. In this method the understanding or explanations are induced from the data. It states that the researcher does not begin with a theory rather ends up with one. The approach takes into account the process by which individuals define the world from their perspective and at the same time identify their world of objects. He sketches two methods by which the researcher can get closer to the empirical social world and delve deep into it. He refers to these as exploration and inspection.

The exploratory phase has two purposes: first, to provide the researcher with a close acquaintance with the sphere of social life which is unfamiliar and second, it helps to develop a focus or sharpens the researcher's investigation so that the research is grounded in the empirical world. The techniques involved are observing, interviewing, listening, reading and consulting.

Inspection is intensive and focused examination of the content which is empirical in nature and involves analysis of the analytical elements used for the purpose of research.

He introduces the term ‘sensitizing concepts’ to understand this further. A sensitizing concept lacks specification of attributes, gives the researcher a sense of reference in understanding empirical instances. It gives the researcher a sense of direction along which way to look.

3.5 Blumer’s ideas on ‘Sensitizing Concepts’

A major area of controversy over Blumer’s methodological position is the issue of operationalization of concepts. Blumer had consistently triggered his criticism against current deficiencies in research strategies while linking actual events to the empirical world. Blumer argues that it is only through the methodological processes of exploration and inspection that concepts can be attached to the empirical world. Rather than seeking false and grand scientific security in research objectives the investigators must explore and inspect events in the empirical world.

He recognizes that sociological concepts do not link the empirical world to the actual. Since the world is composed of constantly shifting processes of symbolic interaction among actors in various contexts it is important to capture the contextual nature of the social world. More important is the fact that social reality is constructed from the symbolic processes among individuals stressing on the importance of looking at how this world is constructed in such a way. This is the requirement for ‘sensitizing concepts’. The progressive refinement (by the process of induction) of these concepts used and by a careful and imaginative study of the world will help in understanding how this world is created through communication. Blumer discerns the use of rigid classification of concepts in a definitive form and rather proposes to see how far such concepts already in use can be molded to be more appropriate, sensitizing and explicitly communicable through description.

With careful formulation and constant refinement these concepts can be used as building blocks for sociological theories. They can be used, incorporated into provisional theoretical statements that specify the conditions under which various types of interaction are likely to occur. In this way, the concepts of theory will recognize the shifting nature of the social world and provide a more accurate set of statements about a social organization.

3.7 Criticism against Blumer

Blumer was criticized as unscientific, subjectivist and astructural. The critics have argued

that Blumer is very limited as he conceptualizes the idea of macro and any objective phenomenon. They point out that he is merely adopting a position with existing ideas on human agency. Further the critics point out that Blumer adopts collective entities such as organizations, institutions etc as acts and as characterized by subjective processes.

3.8 Conclusion

Blumer came up with three core principles to his theory. They are meaning, language, and thought. These core principles lead to conclusions about the creation of a person's self and socialization into a larger community (Griffin, 1997). The first core principle of meaning states that humans act toward people and things based upon the meanings that they have given to those people or things. *Symbolic Interactionism* holds the principal of meaning as central in human behavior. The second core principle is language. Language gives humans a means by which to negotiate meaning through symbols. Mead's influence on Blumer becomes apparent here because Mead believed that naming assigned meaning, thus naming was the basis for human society and the extent of knowledge. It is by engaging in speech acts with others, *symbolic interaction*, that humans come to identify meaning, or naming, and develop discourse. The third core principle is that of thought. Thought modifies each individual's interpretation of symbols. Thought, based-on language, is a mental conversation or dialogue that requires role taking, or imagining different points of view.

According to Blumer's theory, interaction between individuals is based on autonomous action, which in turn is based on the subjective meaning actors attribute to social objects and/or symbols. Thus individual actors regulate their behaviour based on the meaning they attribute to objects and symbols in their relevant situation. Blumer theorized that assigning objects meaning is an ongoing, two-fold process. First, does the identification of the objects have situational meaning? Second, is the process of internal communication to decide which meaningful object to respond to? Acknowledging that others are equally autonomous, individuals use their subjectively derived interpretations of others (as social objects) to predict the outcome of certain behaviours, and use such predictive insight to make decisions about their own behaviour in the hopes of reaching their goal. Thus, when there is consensus among individual actors about the meaning of the objects that make up their situation, social coordination ensues. Social structures are determined as much by the action of individual actors as they determine the action of those individuals. Based on this, Blumer believed that society exists only as a set of potentials, or ideas that people could possibly use in the future.

This complex interaction between meanings, objects, and behaviours, Blumer reiterated, is a uniquely human process because it requires behavioural responses based on the interpretation of symbols, rather than behavioural responses based on environmental stimuli. As social life is a “fluid and negotiated process,” to understand each other, humans must intrinsically engage in symbolic interaction. Blumer criticized the contemporary social science of his day because instead of using symbolic interactionism they made false conclusions about humans by reducing human decisions to social pressures like social positions and roles. Blumer was more invested in psychical interactionism that holds that the meanings of symbols are not universal, but are rather subjective and are “attached” to the symbols and the receiver depending on how they choose to interpret them.

3.9 Summary

Blumer synthesized the pragmatist philosophy of George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) with Charles Horton Cooley’s (1864–1929) notion of sympathetic introspection, particularly as it informs contemporary ethnography, to develop a sociologically focused approach to the study of human lived experience. In opposition to behaviorist, structuralist, and positivist views that have dominated the social sciences, Blumer championed using an interpretivist perspective when examining social life. He contended that theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of human behavior must recognize human beings as thinking, acting, and interacting entities and must, therefore, employ concepts that authentically represent the humanly known, socially created, and experienced world.

Blumer’s pioneering sociological perspective informed his analysis of a broad array of subjects including collective behavior, social movements, fashion, social change, social problems, industrial and labor relations, public opinion, morale, industrialization, public sector social science research, social psychology, and race relations. And, because his rendition of symbolic interactionism invariably portrays people as possessing agency, as reflective interactive participants in community life, he routinely called into question analyses of social life that rely on more stereotypical factors-oriented approaches.

Although Blumer’s 1958 article “Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position” challenges psychological and psychoanalytic explanations of race relations by emphasizing social processes entailed in conflict, institutionalized power relations, and collective definitions of the situation, his most consequential contribution to the study of intergroup relations was his 1971 article “Social Problems as Collective Behavior.”

3.10 Questions

1. Answer briefly the following questions: (6 marks)

- a. What are 'sensitizing concepts'?
- b. What is inspection?

2. Answer in detail the following: (12 marks)

- a. What is the special contribution of Blumer in symbolic interpretation?
- b. What is the methodology that Blumer developed necessary for sociological investigation?

3. Write essay-type answers to the following: (20 marks)

- a. What is the fundamental difference between Mead and Blumer's approaches to Interaction?
 - b. What are the criticisms leveled against Blumer? Discuss.
-

3.11 References

- Blumer, H. (1962/1969), *Symbolic Interactionism*, Englewood Cliff, N. J. Prentice-Hall
- Brittan, A. (1973), *Meanings and situations*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Collins R (1994) The microinteractionist tradition. In Collins R (ed.) *Four Sociological Traditions*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 242–89.
- Cook, Gary A. (1993). *George Herbert Mead: the making of a social pragmatist*. University of Illinois Press.
- Coser, Lewis A. (1977). *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in the Historical and Sociological Context*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jonanovich.
- Couch, C., S. Saxton, & M. Katovich (1986). *Studies in symbolic interaction: The Iowa school*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Denzin, K., (2000) Symbolic Interactionism in Flick U., et al (ed) *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, London, Sage (81-87).
- Hall, Peter M. (2007). Symbolic Interaction. *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*.

- Herman-Kinney, N. J., & Verschaeve, J. M. (2003). Methods of Symbolic Interactionism. In L. T. Reynolds & N. J. Herman-Kinney (Eds.), *Handbook of symbolic interactionism* (p. 213–252). Alta Mira Press.
- Holstein, J. A. and Gubrium, J. F. (2000) *The Self We Live By: Narrative Identity in a Postmodern World*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Katovich, Michael and David R. Maines (2003) 'Society', in Larry T. Reynolds and Nancy Herman-Kinney (eds), *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Krotz, Friedrich (2007). Mediatisierung: Fallstudien zum Wandel von Kommunikation. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. As in Fusun Alver and Sebnem Caglar, The Impact of Symbolic Interactionism on Research Studies About Communication Science, *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, ISSN: 1944-6934 :: 08(07):479–484 (2015).
- Maines, D. (1977). Social organization and social structure in symbolic interactionist thought. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 3:235-59.
- Maines. D. (1988). Myth, text and interactionist complicity in the neglect of Blumer's macrosociology. *Symbolic Interaction*. 11:43-58.
- Mead, G. H. (1934/64) *Mind, Self and Society: From the Standpoint of Social Behaviourist*, Chicago, Chicago University Press.
- Meltzer, B. (1975), *Symbolic Interactionism: Genesis, Varieties and Criticisms*, London, Kegan Paul.
- Morrione, Thomas (Spring 1988). "Herbert G. Blumer (1900–1987): A Legacy of Concepts, Criticisms, and Contributions". *Symbolic Interaction*. 1 Special Issue on Herbert Blumer's Legacy: 1–12.
- Morrione, Thomas. "Herbert George Blumer (1900–1987)". *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*.
- O'Shaughnessy, J. (1992). *Explaining buyer behaviour: central concepts and philosophy of science issues*. Oxford University Press.
- Overington, M. A., Mangham, (1982). The theatrical perspective in organizational analysis. *Symbolic Interaction* 5:173-85.

- Ritzer, G., (2011), *Sociological theory*, New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Education Private Limited.
- Shibutani, T. (1988), *Society and Personality : Interactionist Approach to Social Psychology*, Somerset, United Kingdom, Taylor and Francis.
- Slattery, Martin (2007). Sosyolojide Temel Fikirler. Ümit Tatlıoğlu; Gülhan Demiriz (Trans.). Bursa: Sentez Yayınları as in Fusun Alver Kocaeli and Sebnem Caglar The Impact of Symbolic Interactionism on Research Studies About Communication Science, *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, ISSN: 1944-6934 :: 08(07):479–484 (2015).
- Stryker S., (1987), The Vitalization of Symbolic Interactionism, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 1. (Mar., 1987), pp. 83-94.
- Stryker, S., (1980), *Symbolic Interactionism: a Social Structural Version*, Menlo Park, California Press.
- Turner, J. (1995), *The Structure of Sociological Theory*, Jaipur, Rawat Publication.
- Udehn, L. (2001). *Methodological Individualism: Background, History and Meaning*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Wallace, R., and Wolf, A., (2005), *Contemporary Sociological theory*, New Delhi, Prentice Hall
- Weinstein, E. A., & Tanur, J. M. (1976). Meanings, purposes, and structural resources in social interaction. *Cornell Journal of Social Relations*, 11(1), 105–110.

3.12 Glossary

Sensitizing Concepts: It is a concept of a construct developed by Blumer in opposition to Kuhn's ideas of definitive concept. It can be any sociological concept which, in contrast to fully operationalized or 'definitive concepts', 'merely suggests directions along which to look'. Whereas 'definitive concepts have specified empirical referents which can be readily operationalized, e.g. 'social class' operationalized in terms of income level or years of schooling, sensitizing concepts are less precise. They alert sociologists to certain aspects of social phenomena. (Ref: Herbert Blumer. "What is Wrong with Social Theory." *American Sociological Review* 18 (1954): 3-10.)

Exploration: This idea is basically about the value of exploratory studies, with an initial broad focus that is sharpened as the inquiry proceeds. It is not dependent on particular sets of techniques, the importance of seeking participants with knowledge on the area of study.

Inspection: Blumer had developed two ways in which social phenomenon ought to be studied: Exploration and Inspection. Inspection is the examination of the empirical world which needs to be cast in a theoretical form. But there should be no conventional protocol, which would only serve to limit the empirical analysis. The procedure may be to examine analytical elements from different angles. The process should be flexible, creative and imaginative.

Unit : 4 □ Critical Overview

Structure

- 4.1 Objectives**
- 4.2 Introduction**
- 4.3 Criticism**
- 4.4 Contemporary Symbolic Interactionism**
- 4.5 Conclusion**
- 4.6 Summary**
- 4.7 Questions**
- 4.8 Referencess**

4.1 Objectives

- To understand the criticism of symbolic interactionism.
- To understand the nature of contemporary symbolic interactionism.
- To understand the relevance of this theory.

4.2 Introductions

Critical attacks came from all sides. Psychologists interested in some of the same topics as Symbolic Interactionists tended to regard both the ideas and such methods as they saw in the work of the latter as lacking rigor and a sense of evidence, not to speak of replicable procedures by which evidence could be developed or produced committed to a behaviorist metaphysics, with occasional but comparatively rare exception they tended to deride the emphases of symbolic interactionism on minded processes, on thought, on symbols and meanings and definitions of the situation, and on the person as independent causal agent in the production of his/her own behavior. And they tended to deprecate such research as Symbolic Interactionists did accomplish to the extent that it departed (and, of course, virtually all of it did) from an experimental methodology and format (Stryker, 1987).

Symbolic Interactionism as a theoretical perspective was not appreciated or recognized by the mainstream theorizing. Though it had a lasting effect on subsequent perspectives it was limited in scope for its deliberations on micro-understanding of life and social factors. The easy charge had always been that symbolic interaction was a micro sociological perspective, with no interest in structure, no belief in the power of organizations and institutions, and no constructs to examine such issues (Maines 1988). As noted earlier when considering the macro-micro debate, such a charge had always been misleading, as Blumer (1969), for instance, regularly wrote about “acting units,” rather than actors. Yet, in recent years, Interactionists have more self-consciously addressed macro-sociological issues, using the intermediate level of *meso*-structure. This emphasis received prominence in the influential survey article by David Maines (1977) in the *Annual Review of Sociology*, titled “Social Organization and Social Structure in Symbolic Interactionist Thought,” emphasizing the interactionist tradition of concern with structure, institutions, and organizations (see Overington and Mangham 1982).

4.2 Criticism

There are certain criticisms directed towards symbolic interactionist paradigm. One of these criticisms is that symbolic interactionism is largely deprived of a real social envision. In other words, symbolic interactionism does not put forward a complete picture of a society since it sometimes describes society as a thing only in the minds of people (Slattery, 2007). This theory, as also stated by Udehn (2001), is an “American” idea that stresses the freedom of the individual and limited role of the society. The second one of the problems of the symbolic interactionist paradigm is stressed especially and clearly: (i) not taking into account human emotions very much and (ii) getting interested in social structure to a limited extent. In fact, the first one of these two incompetencies imply that symbolic interaction is not completely psychological and the second one implies that symbolic interaction is not completely sociological (Meltzer et al, 1975: 120; Akt: Slattery, 2007: 338). This theory pictures ‘meaning’ as something emerging by itself during interaction under a certain condition. It does not take into account the basic social context in which the interaction is positioned. Consequently, it does not produce the sources of meaning. Moreover, symbolic interactionism does not perceive any social reality beyond the one that humans create with their interpretations and for that reason it denies explaining society on a more general level (Slattery, 2007: 338). In

summary, the principal condition for the formation of a meaning is the existence of an event. The following condition is the experience of these events. As Blumer points out; “the meaning of things directs action” (O’Shaughnessy, 1992: 158). In order to understand human behaviors, it is necessary to understand definitions, meaning and processes formed by humans first. Elements such as social roles, traditional structures, rules, laws, purposes, etc. provide raw material to the individuals for forming definitions. In this context, symbolic interaction stresses social interaction, debate of definitions and taking emphatic role between people.

B. N. Meltzer (1959; 1972) and A. Brittan (1973) had presented criticisms against symbolic Interactionism in a systematic fashion. Meltzer has criticized Mead’s ideas on social psychology. He contends that Mead’s framework is either fuzzy or vague for providing consistency required in scientific explanation. He criticizes Mead for using improperly defined concepts such as ‘mind’, role-taking, ‘I’ etc in his presentation of his perspective.

It is criticized that symbolic Interactionism has readily given up scientific techniques for qualitative analysis as if these qualitative expressions cannot be counted, enumerated and codified. These criticisms have been forwarded by Eugene Weinstein and Judith Tanur (1976) saying that science and subjectivism are not mutually exclusive. It means science can also be possible using subjective analysis. The traditional way of thinking states the opposite. It proposes science to be objective and symbolic interactionist theorizes just that which is applicable for a subjective analysis traditionally. The critics state that quantitative analysis can also be used in subjective interpretations.

Manford Kuhn, William Kolb, Bernard Meltzer, James Petras and Larry Reynolds have criticized the vagueness of symbolic interactionism (Ritzer: 2011). They say that the theory in question has puzzling and inaccurate concepts incapable for a compact basis for research. Because these concepts are imprecise they are difficult to operationalize and therefore propositions from the theory cannot be generated for testing.

Weinstein and Tanur (1970) have put forward the third major criticism against symbolic interactionism. They argue that symbolic interactionism has ignored the importance of large-scale social structure. It in most cases denies the importance or the impact of social structure on micro-level communication and behavior. At the same time symbolic interactionism has been criticized for denying or ignoring psychological factors as needs,

motives, intentions etc. In both cases symbolic interactionism has been accused of making a 'fetish' of the everyday life marking an over importance on the immediate situation and a fanatical concern with the periodic image of life.

Turner (1995) criticizes symbolic interactionism as a vague attempt to link between the interaction processes and its social structural products leaving the perspective with few statements about how, when, where and with what probability interaction processes operate to create, sustain and change varying patterns of social organizations.

Symbolic interactionism considers the individual as a subject with a social position on the one hand. It defines the individual as the designer of a contextual and communicative identity on the other hand. However, cultural studies emphasize constantly changing social descriptions, reproduction of culture and society, and power and hegemony. The structural and cognitive approach of cultural studies are harshly criticized, while symbolic interactionism is regarded as ignoring social power structures and excessively emphasizing context. Moreover, it is possible to combine action and context oriented approach of symbolic interactionism and structure oriented communication approach of cultural studies in a complementary fashion (Krotz, 2007: 81-82).

Ultimately Interactionists, like others in the debate, concluded that a fixed distinction between levels is misleading (Wiley 1988, Law 1984), suggesting that institutions of all sizes can be analyzed using similar analytical tools. Some argue for a seamless sociology which recognizes that "separate" levels are actually intertwined and indivisible, with micro analyses implicated in macro ones, and vice versa (Fine 1990b). The debate has been important in its attempt to bridge theory groups, bringing micro-sociologists into intellectual and personal contact with macro-sociologists, breaching sub-disciplinary isolation. One reason it can plausibly be claimed that symbolic interaction has disappeared, although not by name, is the success of the argument that all levels of analysis must be considered in an adequate analysis. The micro-sociologist whether in exchange theory, ethnomethodology, or symbolic interaction disdains any interest in questions of larger institutions. In turn, most macro-sociologists (Structuralist, Marxist, or Institutional) now accept a vision of structures ultimately grounded on the actions of participants, even if they do not emphasize the power of the actor as much as Interactionists.

If the goal of symbolic interaction is to maintain itself as a distinctive oppositional movement, then it has failed, with more and more outsiders addressing central issues

and more and more insiders stepping outside the boundaries, not caring about their badges of courage. Yet, if the ultimate goal is to develop the pragmatic approach to social life into a view of the power of symbol creation and interaction— then symbolic interaction has triumphed gloriously.

4.4 Contemporary Symbolic Interactionism

Contemporary symbolic interactionists emphasize the reflexive, gendered, and situated nature of human experience. They examine the place of language and multiple meanings in interactional contexts (see Holstein and Gubrium 2000). This reflexive or narrative concern is also evidenced in other points of view, from phenomenology to hermeneutics, semiotics, psychoanalysis, feminism, narratology, cultural, discursive and dialogical psychology, interpretive sociology and cultural studies. This narrative turn moves in two directions at the same time. First, symbolic Interactionists (and other theorists) formulate and offer various narrative versions, or stories about how the social world operates. This form of narrative is usually called a theory, for example, Freud's theory of psychosexual development. Second, symbolic Interactionists study narratives and systems of discourse, suggesting that these structures give coherence and meaning to everyday life. (A system of discourse is a way of representing the world.) Systems of discourse both summarize and produce knowledge about the world (Foucault 1980: 27). There are many in the interactionist community who reject the narrative turn (as outlined above) and what it implies for interpretive work. These critics base their arguments on six beliefs:

1. The new writing is not scientific; therefore it cannot be part of the ethnographic project.
2. The new writers are moralists; moral judgments are not part of science.
3. The new writers have a faulty epistemology; they do not believe in disinterested observers who study a reality that is independent of human action.
4. The new writing uses fiction; this is not science, it is art.
5. The new writers do not study lived experience which is the true province of ethnography. Hence, the new writers are not participant observers.
6. The new writers are postmodernists, and this is irrational, because postmodernism is fatalistic, nativistic, radical, absurd and nihilistic.

These six beliefs constitute complex discursive systems; separate literatures are attached to each. Taken together, they represent a formidable, yet dubious critique of the new interactionist project. They make it clear that there are no problems with the old ways of doing research. Indeed, the new ways create more problems than they solve. These beliefs serve to place the new work outside science, perhaps in the humanities, or the arts. Some would ban these persons from academia altogether. Others would merely exclude them from certain theoretical group that is from symbolic interactionism (Denzin, 2000).

The criticisms against Symbolic Interactionism can be summarized as follows: The primary evolution and amendment of the theory is primarily in terms of its focus, application, and interpretations. • Symbolic Interactionism has been criticized for failing to apply to the macro level issues of social structure, politics and history; and for missing the micro level of issues such as emotions and the unconscious. • Other criticisms include a lack of clarity about the concepts and a failure to create a systematic set of principles or propositions that can be said to truly constitute a theory. • Despite or perhaps even because of the lack of precision in the theory, there are few if any areas of human interaction to which symbolic interaction has not been applied.

4.5 Conclusion

Sociological social psychology, marginalized in the 1970s, has reemerged to contribute to the broadening of the discipline. Nowhere is this more evident than in the rejuvenation of the sociological study of the self, identity, and social role. The development of the social and symbolic self, a root issue of symbolic interaction from James, Cooley, and Mead, is central to interactionist research and theory and includes such issues as self-esteem, self-feeling, self-concept, identity work, and self-presentation. Symbolic interactionism, as practiced by those sociologists trained by Everett Hughes at the University of Chicago in the late 1940s and early 1950s, tended to deemphasize self in favor of situation; the sociology of Erving Goffman, implying that there was no deeply held “real” self, only a set of masks, was a prototype for this view. Yet, despite the attention to situation, Interactionists such as Ralph Turner (1976, 1978) emphasized that the creation of the self results from social and cultural trends. Hewitt (1989), for instance, argues that a basic conflict appears in American selves between individualism (independence) and community participation (interdependence). While Interactionists hold that no “real,

true, core” self can be found, analyses of how selves develop are part of interactionist analysis— both by Interpretivist theorists associated with a post-modern literary analysis, and by social realists who are more closely connected to experimentation and hypothesis testing. Interactionism pictures the self as symbolic, situationally contingent, and structured. Symbolic interactionism was not considered as a mainstream sociological theory in less than two decades ago. Slowly, this theorizing has gained popularity and many of its concepts are now accepted.

The way Blumer emphasized the role of Mead in the development of the Chicago School could be seen as a process of myth making, as Mead clearly had much less influence in his lifetime than Blumer supposes. One might argue that Blumer’s emphasis of the role of George Herbert Mead in the ‘Chicago School’ was a mythical construction aimed ultimately at his own self-exaggeration. However, even if there is some actuality in this interpretation, does it tell us anything other than that the myth of Mead’s importance in the school, through the construction of a heritage, is a legitimation of particular work practices? Does such an analysis lead on to a critique, or even the identification, of ideological frameworks within which (in this case) an academic discipline operates. The answer is that it can. If we leave the analysis at the level of ‘Blumer legitimated his work through the creation of a spurious heritage’, we have not, from a metascientific point of view, progressed beyond the taken-for-granted of the myth, other than to suggest a motivator for its genesis. And this is quite insufficient as it merely leads to the danger of replacing one myth with another. In the example, Mead’s assumed centrality is due to far more than Blumer attempting to legitimate his position. Blumer did not act deliberately to lay a false trail. Genuinely, Blumer (who taught Mead’s social psychology courses after the latter’s death in 1931) believed he had grasped the essence of Mead’s thought and applied it to developing a more ‘critical’ form of interactionism, which he called symbolic interactionism. Many subsequent scholars have tended to take the Mead-Blumer heritage for granted. They, too, view the ‘Chicago School’ as bound up with symbolic interactionism and make Mead (often through Blumer) the provider of a theoretical context and a direct influence on the sociological practitioners of symbolic interactionism.

However, an uncritical acceptance of a Mead-Blumer tradition as indicative of ‘Chicago School’ sociology still begs a number of questions. Why did the critique of this view take so long to emerge? How was Blumer able to gain credibility for his Meadian view of the Chicago School? While it served Blumer’s perspective, did he deliberately set out to create a view of the ‘School’ that saw Mead as the key founding father, or did

other circumstances operate to facilitate or generate this myth? Are these other circumstances ‘fortuitous’ and random or are they indicative of an ideology of sociology? And what relation does that ideology have with a more general ideology of science or wider social ideology?

Symbolic interactionism recognizes that the genuine mark of an empirical science is to respect the nature of its empirical world — to fit its problems, its guiding procedures of inquiry, the techniques of study, its concepts, and its theories to that world. It believes that this determination of problems, concepts, research techniques, and theoretical schemes should be done by direct examination of the actual empirical social world rather than by working with a simulation of that world derived from a few scattered observations of it, or with a picture of that world fashioned in advance to meet the dictates of some scheme of ‘scientific’ procedure, or with a picture of the world built up from partial or untested accounts of that world (Coser: 1977).

One of the principal characteristics of Blumer’s writing is its critical attack. There is an overarching tendency in Blumer’s accounts of his theories to attack his detractors in the midst of explaining his own point of view. No attention is given in his discussion of the faults of other methods of inquiry to the danger that direct, interpersonal observation may also skew the data collected by the presence of the researcher, for instance, but each time he seeks to describe an aspect of Social Interactionism, he includes an assertion as to why that viewpoint is superior to one not in agreement with it. He cautions us to the dangers of forming theoretical models from incomplete data. He says that it deserves careful consideration and serves to point to one of the chief difficulties of engaging in social research (Wallace and Wolf: 2005).

4.6 Summary

Social Interactionism, then, comprises a micro-level framework for studying social phenomenon not afforded by other major schools of sociological thought. Blumer places his principal emphasis on the process of interaction in the formation of meanings to the individual. He proceeds to place those meanings in the central role in explaining and accounting for human behavior (Coser: 1977). Resting on this theoretical foundation are several “root images” of the nature of human social action and their relationship to the process of meaning formation. Out of these “images” derives a natural and useful research methodology — which, it must be noted, is not entirely free of potential to

distort the data collected by means of it — that involves personal immersion into the world the researcher wishes to study in order to assure that the most direct possible observation of that world can be made.

Many Interactionists such as Stryker (1980) have tried to connect to the macro and structural components of sociology. It is a perspective that primarily values subjective meaning and an opposition to structure and deal with a methodology that views the world of the other as seen by them did question some important mainstream sociological concepts. It is seen now as an alternative which provides some important theoretical tools missing in mainstream sociology. As a theoretical perspective it has undergone expansion beyond the limits of micro-sociology. At present the Symbolic Interactionists are increasingly involved in major issues confronting sociological theory, such as micro-macro, agency-structure etc.

Once interactionism may have had a partially deserved reputation as parochial and in-bred, but this is no longer deserved. In its post-Blumerian age, interactionism might be called intellectually promiscuous. Contemporary “Interactionists” blend their interest in “classical” interactionism (micro-sociological, nonstatistical, robustly relativistic, and proudly anti-positivistic) with virtually all sociological traditions. As a result, Interactionists have integrated a “Blumerian” approach with theoretical approaches linked to Durkheim, Simmel, Weber, Freud, Habermas, Baudrillard, Wittgenstein, Marx, Schutz, phenomenology, post-modern theory, feminism, semiotics, and behaviorism. What used to be a fairly narrow, tightly focused perspective now might be faulted for deemphasizing the traditional problems of situational definition, negotiation, impression management, and meaning creation that once animated symbolic interactionism? In its fragmentation, symbolic interactionism seems bound mainly by a few broad tenets, an effective organizational infrastructure, and some active publication outlets. Of course, this may be all that many perspectives share. The post-modern, post-structural textual readings and cultural studies of Norman Denzin (1986) and Patricia Clough (1992) seem light-years from the precise experimentation and theory construction of Peter Burke (1980) and David Heise (1979). It is symptomatic of the degree of fragmentation that some of the Blumerian “old guard” would question whether any of these are “real” Interactionists. Similarly the realist, descriptive ethnographies of Ruth Horowitz (1983) and Elijah Anderson (1978) are entirely dissimilar from the intensely personal and self-reflexive accounts of Carolyn Ellis (1991) and John Van Maanen (1988).

Symbolic interactionism in the 1990s has a diversity that may vitiate its center. This splintering, of course, has benefits, in that diversity produces intellectual ferment. Yet, such broadness raises the question of what, if anything, post-Blumerian symbolic Interactionists share. Does a dominant model of symbolic interaction exist? Do the theorists who label themselves (or who are labeled) Interactionists, belong to the same school? One response is that if a sufficient number of individuals label them or joins an organization (like The Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction) then such a perspective exists. Yet, this degree of semi-coherence may raise questions about its justification as a perspective.

4.7 Questions

1. Answer briefly the following questions: (6 marks)

- a. What is symbolic interactionism?
- b. Who are main proponents of symbolic interactionism?
- c. What is the importance of Symbolic Interactionism as a perspective?

2. Answer in detail the following: (12 marks)

- a. Give an account of any two major criticisms against Symbolic Interactionism.
- b. Discuss following Mead the relationship between individual and society.
- c. Discuss after Blumer on 'sensitizing concepts' and its importance in sociology.
- d. Elucidate on Blumer's ideas on symbolic interactionism.

3. Write essay-type answers to the following: (20 marks)

- a. Discuss Mead's ideas on society and how it is formed through interaction.
- b. Discuss Blumer's insistence on meaning in symbolic interaction.

4.8 References

Blumer, H. (1962/1969), *Symbolic Interactionism*, Englewood Cliff, N. J. Prentice-Hall

Brittan, A. (1973), *Meanings and situations*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

- Collins R (1994) The microinteractionist tradition. In Collins R (ed.) *Four Sociological Traditions*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 242–89.
- Cook, Gary A. (1993). *George Herbert Mead: the making of a social pragmatist*. University of Illinois Press
- Coser, Lewis A. (1977). *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in the Historical and Sociological Context*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jonanovich
- Couch, C., S. Saxton, & M. Katovich (1986). *Studies in symbolic interaction: The Iowa school*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Denzin, K., (2000) Symbolic Interactionism in Flick U., et al (ed) *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, London, Sage (81-87)
- Hall, Peter M. (2007). *Symbolic Interaction*. *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*
- Herman-Kinney, N. J., & Verschaeve, J. M. (2003). Methods of Symbolic Interactionism. In L. T. Reynolds & N. J. Herman-Kinney (Eds.), *Handbook of symbolic interactionism* (p. 213–252). Alta Mira Press.
- Holstein, J. A. and Gubrium, J. F. (2000) *The Self We Live By: Narrative Identity in a Postmodern World*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Katovich, Michael and David R. Maines (2003) ‘Society’, in Larry T. Reynolds and Nancy Herman-Kinney (eds), *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield
- Krotz, Friedrich (2007). Mediatisierung: Fallstudien zum Wandel von Kommunikation. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. As in Fusun Alver and Sebnem Caglar, The Impact of Symbolic Interactionism on Research Studies About Communication Science, *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, ISSN: 1944-6934 :: 08(07):479–484 (2015)
- Maines, D. (1977). Social organization and social structure in symbolic interactionist thought. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 3:235-59
- Maines. D. (1988). Myth, text and interactionist complicity in the neglect of Blumer’s macrosociology. *Symbolic Interaction*. 11:43-58
- Mead, G. H. (1934/64) *Mind, Self and Society: From the Standpoint of Social Behaviourist*, Chicago, Chicago University Press
- Meltzer, B. (1975), *Symbolic Interactionism: Genesis, Varieties and Criticisms*, London,

Kegan Paul

- Morrione, Thomas (Spring 1988). "Herbert G. Blumer (1900–1987): A Legacy of Concepts, Criticisms, and Contributions". *Symbolic Interaction*. 1 Special Issue on Herbert Blumer's Legacy: 1–12.
- Morrione, Thomas. "Herbert George Blumer (1900–1987)". *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*
- O'Shaughnessy, J. (1992). *Explaining buyer behaviour: central concepts and philosophy of science issues*. Oxford University Press.
- Overington, M. A., Mangham, (1982). The theatrical perspective in organizational analysis. *Symbolic Interaction* 5:173-85
- Ritzer, G., (2011), *Sociological theory*, New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Education Private Limited
- Shibutani, T. (1988), *Society and Personality : Interactionist Approach to Social Psychology*, Somerset, United Kingdom, Taylor and Francis
- Slattey, Martin (2007). Sosyolojide Temel Fikirler. Ümit Tatlıoğlu; Gülhan Demiriz (Trans.). Bursa: Sentez Yayınları as in Fusun Alver Kocaeli and Sebnem Caglar The Impact of Symbolic Interactionism on Research Studies About Communication Science, *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, ISSN: 1944-6934 :: 08(07):479–484 (2015)
- Stryker S., (1987), The Vitalization of Symbolic Interactionism, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 1. (Mar., 1987), pp. 83-94
- Stryker, S., (1980), *Symbolic Interactionism: a Social Structural Version*, Menlo Park, California Press
- Turner, J. (1995), *The Structure of Sociological Theory*, Jaipur, Rawat Publication
- Udehn, L. (2001). *Methodological Individualism: Background, History and Meaning*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Wallace, R., and Wolf, A., (2005), *Contemporary Sociological theory*, New Delhi, Prentice Hall
- Weinstein, E. A., & Tanur, J. M. (1976). Meanings, purposes, and structural resources in social interaction. *Cornell Journal of Social Relations*, 11(1), 105–110.

MODULE-II

Phenomenology & Ethnomethodology

Unit : 5 □ Phenomenology : Basic Arguments

Structure

5.1 Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.2.1 Etymological Roots

5.3 Basic Tenets of Phenomenology

5.3.1 Empathy and Sympathy

5.3.2 Empathy and Phenomenology

5.4 The Rise of Phenomenological Sociology

5.5 Alfred Schultz : Phenomenological Sociology

5.5.1 'Life-World' : Experience, Empathy, Interpretation, Meaning and Empiricism

5.6 Relevance of Phenomenological Methods In Sociology

5.7 Conclusion : Criticisms and Take Aways

5.8 Questions

5.9 References

5.1 Objectives

- The historical roots of phenomenology in philosophy
- The etymological analysis of phenomenology
- The basic tenets of phenomenology
- The rise of phenomenological sociology
- The relevance of phenomenological methods in sociology
- Criticisms and the way forward

5.2 Introduction

Historically speaking, phenomenology, as an established philosophical school of thought, began its journey in 1890s, under the influence of German philosopher Edmund Husserl (Kaufer and Chemero 2015). However, phenomenology does have roots in early modern philosophical thought, beginning from Kant, where experiences and human subjectivities considered to be legitimate and valid source of knowledge production, opposed to the established Cartesian dualism influenced by Enlightenment paradigm, where social world was viewed like physical world under the lens of scientific objectivity and value-neutrality (Ferguson 2006). World is detached from human experiences. Phenomenology criticizes Cartesian proposition of seeing world as detached from experiences. Human consciousness and experiences were central to the phenomenological thought (Kaufer and Chemero 2015). Knowledge about the social world is constituted through shared values, meanings and subjectivities, drawn from human experiences unlike the Enlightenment thought, where social world is understood objectively, standing out there (ibid.).

5.2.1 Etymological Roots

The word phenomenology has its root in the Greek word 'phenomena', which means appearances (Gallagher 2012). According to some scholars, phenomenology refers to the 'way of seeing' or 'method of seeing' (ibid: 8). Husserl described phenomenology as a method which attempts to give description of the way things appear in our conscious experience (ibid.). Understanding human consciousness is central to the phenomenological thought because human makes sense of the world through the medium of consciousness (ibid.). Human beings experience the world around her/him through consciousness and produce knowledge about the world. Phenomenology puts more emphasis on how the world is experienced rather than 'how things are actually in reality' (ibid.).

5.3 Basic Tenets of Phenomenology

First, according to Maurice Merleau Ponty (1956), phenomenological philosopher from France, influenced by Husserl, phenomenology is a scientific study of the world from how it is being lived rather than a mere objective and factual description of how the world is. One needs to engage with the specific context of human beings, from where

the world is experienced and viewed rather than declaring universal traits about the world devoid of particular context (ibid: 59). The world cannot exist simply out there, until and unless human perceives it through senses and constructs certain meanings about the world. Processes of knowledge construction take place from the specific location humans are bound by (ibid: 60). Hence, knowledge is bounded by specific time and space.

Second, experience gives meanings to the world, from where we construct our knowledge about the world. Within the disciplinary enquiry of phenomenology, humans are conscious subjects. The world is not necessarily external to human subjects; it comes as a representation to us (ibid: 63). We see the world from our respective location in the world. The understanding of the world would differ based on our location in the world and the way we experience the world. For example, our social identities shape our experiences in the world. At the same time, being a conscious human subject, I also become conscious of my own identity. This is what we can refer as subjectivity (Hall 2004).

Third, Husserl in his phenomenological enquiry necessarily transcends the human subject from 'I' to 'We', what he calls as intersubjectivity or transcendental subjectivity (Gallagher 2012). By which, Husserl refers to the emotion of empathy, when we start to understand the experience of others by transcending the experience of mine in the world (ibid: 183). I, being a human subject, begin to connect with others. This can happen in different ways. One way would be what Husserl calls as 'apperception' (Husserl 1960; Gallagher 2012). By which he means, experiencing something, which may not be said in an explicit manner but we still try to perceive it. Apperception is a methodological tool, which enables us to experience others' experiences which might be starkly different from how I may see the world (Gallagher 2012:183). The other is not simply an organism, doing its functions, as functionalists may say, but the other is conscious individual, whose understanding of world is different from my understanding of the world (ibid: 184). I need to address the existing differences between the ways I see the world and others see the world.

Fourth, while acknowledging the dissimilarity between mine and others' view of the world, methodologically, there is a need to make constant effort to bridge the gap between me and others. This is where Husserl talks about the notion of pairing and empathy (ibid: 184). It is hardly impossible to dissolve the distinctive nature of worldviews

between me and others. But at the same time, I can pair with others by using the tool of empathy. In the literal sense of the word, the word empathy refers to the act of putting oneself in shoes of others. One can describe empathy as an 'act of understanding' or being aware and sensitive to other persons' thoughts, experiences and feelings¹. Usually, the other persons' thoughts, experiences and feelings are not said explicitly, one has to consciously interpret their thoughts, experiences and feelings² while acknowledging the point of differences that I and others have in viewing the world as well as the points at which we can connect with each other. The connection can only happen when I am equally conscious about my social location and the location of others in the society.

5.3.1 Empathy and Sympathy

Empathy refers to the emotional efforts we make in order to understand the others' feeling without a necessary desire to help others (Chismar 1988: 258). Empathy is an act 'of coming to experience the world as you think someone else does' (Bloom 2016: 13). Methodologically speaking, being an empathetic researcher, I may constantly make an effort to understand my participants' view about the world by putting myself in h/er/is shoes. There could be both moments of agreement and disagreement between my personal views and other participants' views on something. (My personal view can be my personal ideological baggage too, the worldview I might have framed from my own social location in society without taking into account my participants' experiences of the world.) But disagreement doesn't necessarily mean I would replace the participants' views with my views, empathy is what I may require in order to understand the location of my participants and how h/er/is location determines h/er/is view of the world. The purpose is not necessarily 'giving voice' to participants, which one usually does out of sympathy driven by the intension of 'helping others'. Instead of giving voice, the purpose of empathy is to understand the voice, so that my voice doesn't supersede my participants' voice. While understanding the voice of participants, I need to be reflexive and critically reflect upon my own baggage and prejudices. Being reflexive also means my own acknowledgement of my inability of not understanding everything, my participants might have expressed to me.

Having said so, one may argue that there is a blurring line between empathy and sympathy. Historically, the concept 'empathy' has its root in aesthetics of late nineteenth century Germany (Harris 2010: 1).

‘What is it Like to be a Bat?’

Thomas Nagel, an American Philosopher wrote an essay called, '*What is it Like to be a Bat?*' in 1974. As you can see, the title of the essay is both fascinating and provocative too.

- Scientific reductionism reduces mind and body similar to physical elements almost like oxygen and hydrogen. Can we really understand consciousness simply like physical elements?
- Subjective experience is central in the understanding of consciousness. One cannot deny the importance of physicality but without looking at subjective experience of the specific body, one is unable to understand 'what is it like to be me', 'what is it like to be others'. Here comes the question of phenomenology. For example, by birth I may have been identified as male based on my biological sexual identity. But with passing years, I always felt, I am in the wrong skin. My so-called body may carry the biological identification of male but I always felt like a girl. Can physicality solely understand what I may feel?
- Bat is a nocturnal creature, with specific sensory organs different from humans. The experience of bat would be very different from what human experiences. Humans may not experience the same what bats experience and vice-versa. Worldviews are starkly different for bats and humans because their visions differ. But is there still a possibility for humans to transcend their experiences and try to understand what bats may experience. As the title goes, 'What is it Like to be a Bat?', the word 'like' becomes crucial over here. While acknowledging, the difference between experiences of bats and humans, there still remains an attempt to understand the worldview, starkly different from one's own experiences and worldview. Here again comes the question of empathy.

With time, empathy as a methodological tool went beyond the domain of aesthetics. Disciplines like psychology, literary studies, anthropology and sociology began to engage with the method of empathy (ibid: 2). In 1900s, with the contribution of Wilhelm Dilthey empathy became an established methodological tool to understand the history as well (Harrington 2001: 311). Later on, Max Weber, a harbinger of interpretative sociology drew ideas from Dilthey in his framing of the idea of Verstehen. Dilthey in his essay '*The Rise of Hermeneutics*' (1900) defines Verstehen as a process by which we look into the interior meanings of signs exposed to our senses (ibid: 317). Verstehen as a methodological tool enables us to go beyond the exteriority of signs and attempts to understand different layers of meanings remaining behind those signs. For example, lights put at the traffic signal are simply a set of different colours like red, green and yellow. Until and unless one goes beyond the exteriority of these colours and tries to understand different sets of meanings associated with these colours, the purpose of these colours put in the traffic signal would be futile and unnecessary. Indeed a consensus is made among individuals about the specific colour and what specific meanings that particular colour stands for.

Adding to that, for Weber, *verstehen* becomes a way to recapture an experience for the purpose of understanding something different from what we are more familiar with (ibid: 314). For him sociology is the science of interpretative understanding of social action and the cause and explanation of social action (Weber 1978: 4). Social action differs from the usual understanding of action. In order to understand social action methodologically there is a need to understand the social behavior of others and try to interpret the subjective meanings behind their actions (ibid.). For Weber, rationality is central to the meaningful social action as opposed to 'irrational actions'.

Understanding and interpretation are central to the Weberian thought. Empathy bridges between the gap between understanding and interpretation. Drawing from Weberian framework, I may argue that empathy is a method to understand something unfamiliar by putting myself in the position of Something, which is unusual for me. However but at the same time, I do look at myself and try to understand how am I looking at the event and how I am describing the unfamiliar too.

While talking about the method of interpreting meanings, Weber points out that interpretation like other scientific observations 'strives for clarity, certainty and accuracy' (ibid: 5). The basic criteria of having certain and accurate understanding of social action, one needs to be either rational or empathetic (ibid.). By rational, he means a '*completely clear intellectual grasp of the action elements in their intended context of meaning*' (ibid.). On the other hand, the empathetic understanding refers to the accuracy one attains through 'sympathetic participation' where we can '*adequately grasp the emotional context in which the action took place*' (ibid.). Rational and empathetic understanding may not be binary to each other. But any kind of social action grasped intellectually, necessarily becomes the marker of rational action, whereas empathy pervades both rational as well as irrational actions. By irrational actions he means range of emotional reactions like '*anxiety, anger, ambition, envy, jealousy, love, enthusiasm, pride, vengefulness, loyalty, devotion, and appetites of all sorts*' (ibid: 6) guiding the course of action. Irrational actions are deviant from the pure course of rational social action or what he calls as ideal type³ (ibid.).

The slight difference existing between the rational and empathetic understanding of social action points out to the limitation of empathy that Weber was hinting at. In the following passage, he argues that human actions are oriented towards diverse ends or values, which we cannot understand completely with the help of empathy because the

more culturally different the values are from our own values, the more difficult it is to understand them (ibid: 5). Even though we can intellectually be able to grasp starkly dissimilar values from us but it is equally challenging for us to empathize or emotionally understand those values (ibid: 6). Having said so, empathy is still crucial to understand the range of emotions guiding the course of irrational actions. The observer may not always understand the intensity through which these emotions might have expressed but that doesn't restrict the observer to understand the meanings behind these irrational course of actions and intellectually interpret them (ibid: 6).

Finally, despite of differences existing between sympathy and empathy as methods described before, there is a connection between sympathy and empathy. Even Weber points out that psychological element like sympathy and imagination pave the way for observer to understand the artistic and emotional context of the action (Harrington 2001: 314). Empathic accuracy in the understanding of action can only come through the sympathetic participation of observer in the action (Weber 1978: 5). Hence, for an observer, the emotional engagement or sympathetic participation, as Weber calls it, with participants while keeping in mind both difficulties and limitation of it, becomes the prerequisite for empathic understanding. Sympathy and empathy may go hand-in-hand and methodologically complement each other in spite of differences between them.

5.3.2 Empathy and Phenomenology

In order to understand the relationship between empathy and phenomenology, one has to begin with works of Theodor Lipps (1851-1914), a German philosopher and psychologist. He was a prominent theoretician in the field of aesthetics and known to be a significant contributor in theorizing the idea of empathy, translating from the German word *Einfühlung* (Jardine et. al. 2017: 86). For Lipps, there remain three processes of knowledge making. First, one gains knowledge of things through sensuous perception of the outer world, second, the self-knowledge is achieved through inner perception and finally, the knowledge of other selves is anchored in empathy. For Lipps, the expression of empathy is unique, irreducible and immediate (i.e. non-inferential in nature (ibid: 87). By which, we mean that empathy as an expression cannot be reduced to simple objectives like facts. One cannot simply construct a one universal law of empathy. The nature of empathy differs based on specific subjective experiences of

different individuals.

However, what Lipps misses out in his idea about empathy, pointed out by Edith Stein (1891-1942), a Jewish German philosopher and Husserl, the question of continuous dialogue between self and others in the domain of empathy (ibid.). Here lie the contributions of phenomenologist like Stein and Husserl. Empathetic connection cannot happen solely at the level of others, self is equally important. As discussed before, Husserl clearly mentions the basic tenet of phenomenology has to do with transcendental subjectivity or intersubjectivity, a shift from I to We, where We cannot be understood exclusively of I.

Secondly, when we are trying to understand others, we necessarily need to have some backdrop in our hand to understand what exactly others are going through (ibid: 88). What similar experiences we can share with others and what would be the exact point of connection I am trying to make emotionally with others. The empathetic understanding cannot be random and devoid of self-realization. The empathetic connection is not happening only at the level of spatiotemporality rather in the phenomenological analysis, a connection is taking place with another person, an embodied one (Jardine 2014: 280).

Finally, for Husserl empathy is precisely 'the intentionality leading from one's own to the foreign ego' (Husserl 1962: 322; Jardine 2014.: 275). Therefore, empathetic connection depends on the intention of self to transcend beyond one's own experience to the experience of others. Until and unless we clearly chart out our own intensions about what drives us to understand others and how we are doing so, the empathetic exercise becomes and the purpose of phenomenological method is not only enquiring how others see the world but at the same how do I myself see the world and from where.

5.4 The Rise of Phenomenological Sociology

The phenomenological turn in sociology goes back to the period of 1950s and 60s, the period just after the Second World War. This was the period when discussion began around the question of globalization and internationalism after a relative isolationism in the 1950s (Calhoun et. al. 2002: 3). There was a turn in the process of sociological theorization beyond the European and American context. Theories came from South Asian context. This was also the time when world witnessed in the upheaval of different identity based movements, particularly in the context of America like women's movement,

black panther movement and queer movement (ibid.). These movements led to the development of new kind of sociological theories. Unlike the typical Parsonian framework of understanding social structure simply as a functional unit in the society or the worshipping of typical American values, people began to question against the existing values (ibid.). Issues like change, conflict and resistance began to take central stage in sociological theories (ibid.). For a long time, these issues were necessarily understood as deviance to the normalcy, particularly in the Parsonian framework of doing sociology.

Second, for a long time the superior claim of scientific knowledge dismissed the importance of knowledge either formed through everyday course of action or drawn from the everyday experience of individuals. The more divide drawn between scientific knowledge and common sense knowledge, the lesser was the potentiality to have dialogue between them, hence, leading to the crisis of common sense knowledge (Rogers 1983: 9). In a way, the superior complex of objective scientific knowledge completely ignored the importance of everyday experiential knowledge. But with the World War taking place and a crisis was felt in the production of so-called objective and value-neutral scientific knowledge. The rise of fascism in Germany and eugenics, ideas like scientific reason and rationality came under strong criticism (Rogers 1983: 8-9; Calhoun et.al. 2002: 5-6). Adding to that, the occurrence of Great Depression in 1930s, ideas like free market, choices and capitalist structure of production, came under scrutiny (Calhoun et. al. 2002: 6). Thinkers began to question about individual choices and freedom.

Third, thinkers began to think and redefine the relationship between individual and society beyond the conventional Parsonian framework of looking at individuals conforming to societal norms, value and rules (ibid: 4-5). The publication of C.W. Mills *'The Sociological Imagination'* (1959) put new light on the relationship between individual and society (Rogers 1983: 10). Mills methodology redefined the task of sociology itself. Unlike grand theorization and abstraction, the language of sociology should be clear and vibrant, engaging with everyday human experiences as part of larger historical process (ibid: 11). The individual biography is connected with larger institutional processes, where history plays a significant role in shaping individual lives (Mills 1959). Sociological imagination comes as a critique to the ahistorical approach in sociology (ibid.).

There was a shift from establishmentarian sociology to more reflexive sociology, where the thrust was to critically understand everyday social processes of control over individuals and how they conform to societal norms and structure instead of mere

objective description of humans carrying out specific roles in making structures function normally (Rogers 1983: 11). Contemporary to Mills, Gouldner in his work '*For Sociology*' criticizes the conventional practice of sociology and the method of value-neutrality. Sociological knowledge is often understood as distanced from sociologist. Similarly, the old claim among sociologists in terms of their disciplinary practices does delink them from other fields of social sciences particularly history and philosophy (ibid: 12). Hence, the phenomenological turn in sociology pushes for the connection between philosophy and sociology (ibid: 13).

Finally, in a broader sense, Husserl's phenomenology emphasizes on the connection between knowledge and experience (ibid: 13-14). The purpose here is to debunk the taken-for-granted reality, as given to us. Phenomenological enquiry talks about how is knowledge constituted and disclosing experiences in the making of knowledge (ibid.). No system of knowledge exists without experiences. Any form of knowledge is value-laden. Unlike describing macro-structures functioning independent of individuals, there was a shift towards understanding the everyday micro-social processes constituting the structures, broadly known as the field of micro-sociology (Calhoun et. al. 2002: 7). Having said so, the theoretical trajectory of micro-sociology goes back to as early mid-nineteenth century with the coming of symbolic interactionism by George Herbert Mead and his followers. In 1950s the writings of Erving Goffman and his method of dramaturgy⁴ created an edifice to understand the everyday social interaction. Gradually the trajectory took the phenomenological move in sociology. Each of these theoretical schools is different in the way they looked at everyday social interaction but themes like self, others, meaning, experience and everyday life make them distinct as the school of micro-sociology unlike the macro-sociological school of theory. These topics were fundamental in the domain of phenomenological sociology too (Rogers 1986: 15).

5.5 Alfred Schultz : Phenomenological Sociology

The backdrop described earlier discredits the idea of identifying one singular thinker to develop the field of phenomenological sociology. Every thinker shares a distinctive perspective of her/his own while modifying the previous one or challenging them completely. Historically speaking, there was no one specific thinker proposing the merger between phenomenology and sociology. However among them But Alfred Schutz was the one who did the task systematically both as a philosopher and sociologist (Wagner

1970: 1). He drew largely from Husserl ideas of phenomenology. Which can be traced back to as early as Kant. Eventually, the field got fertile through contributions of Dilthey, Weber, Lipps and Edith Stein, discussed before.

Alfred Schütz, an Austrian philosopher and sociologist coherently lays out the basic foundation of phenomenological sociology since the publication of his first work *The Meaningful structure of the Social World* in 1932 (ibid.). From his first work itself he made a systematic synthesis between Husserl and Weber (ibid: 9). Appreciating Husserl's contribution, Schütz does take a critical departure from him by pointing out how transcendental phenomenology fails in capturing the idea of intersubjectivity in the context of everyday life or in the dealing of real life problems (ibid.). Methodologically, Husserl's concepts are too abstract and unable to understand the nuances of everyday social interaction. Similarly while pointing out the brilliance of Weber's contribution, Schütz talks about the inherent problems Weber had. He pointed out Weber's inability to pursue his 'general methodological and theoretical problems further than the actual requirements of his substantive work demanded' (ibid: 10). In a way, Weber made couple of tacit assumptions while formulating his concepts like social action or *verstehen*, without taking into consideration how the analysis of these concepts can have different applications based on different kinds of context. Henceforth, the sociological reasoning would be different too (ibid.). There can't be a singular way to understand what constitutes as rationality or the idea of rational social action. But he appreciated both Husserl and Weber, while making an inner-dialogue between them.

5.5.1 'Life-World' : Experience, Empathy, Interpretation, Meaning and Empiricism

Methodologically, Schütz develops the idea called *life-world* while making synthesis between Husserl and Weber. Drawing from Husserl, experience is central to the conceptualization of life-world (ibid: 16). Largely, phenomenology talks about how individuals construct her/his own world (ibid.). Schütz adds to the argument by pointing out that individuals can only construct the world with the help of 'building blocks and methods' given to them (ibid.). Life-world indicates the interplay between individuals making sense of the world around her/him and the world she/he is trying to construct gradually based on her/his own experience in the world (ibid: 17).

In a way, for Schütz. Schütz identifies three stages of the development of life-world,

first the stage when individuals simply absorb the meanings given to them from the outside world, second, they try to make sense of these meanings by constantly interpreting them from their own 'life-situation' and finally, they do give their own personal touch in the world or they construct a worldview of their own (ibid.). Individuals are necessarily born in the world, where the world is almost given to them. Gradually, they absorb the existing values and norms of the world by being part of different institutions like family, peer group, neighborhood and school. They interpret these values and try to understand the meanings of these existing values. But at the same time, individuals construct a personal worldview of their own based on the prior experience in the world.

Second, even though individuals do construct a world-view of their own but at same time, there is a specific moment when the respective worldviews of different individuals combine into a common worldview of a specific community. How does that happen? According to Schultz, the construction of common worldview takes place at two levels. First, the community as a whole comes to believe that they share certain common values cutting across different individuals in the community (ibid: 18). This happens when individuals start to absorb certain values as given to them, drawing from the shared worldview of others. Second, the commonality gets constructed through their absorption of certain 'standardized expressions and formulations' and using them for their own interpretation of the world (ibid.). Interpretation takes place both at the level self as well as collective and there is always an inter-connection between these two kinds of interpretations (ibid.).

However, Schultz showed in his work called 'The Stranger', how it becomes difficult for individuals when they leave their host community to the community of others. The apriorized knowledge absorbed from their participation in their host community may turn out to be useless in the community, where she/he is completely stranger to them (ibid.). Thus, to say something like world exists objectively, outside individuals' subjective experiences, is simply an arrogant claim to make. The world can only become meaningful when individuals are able to interpret it based on their subjective experiences, like the way one can understand the world familiar to her/him because a commonality exists between individuals' subjective experience by virtue of belonging to that community unlike for the stranger in the new community. The new community may not welcome her/him in their community too (ibid: 19-20).

Third, but the researcher still cannot do away with the question of empathy, a process

of understanding the unfamiliar, discussed in length before. In his work, 'The Phenomenology of Social World' (1967), Schultz both appreciates as well as criticizes the existing Weberian framework of analyzing empathy in sociological research. He points out that typically empathy tries to locate the 'constitution of other self in ego's consciousness' (Schultz 1967/ 2002: 33). In simple words, while empathizing with other, I can't ever transcend myself into other because it is still me coming from a specific location, trying to empathize with others, not the other way around. Second, even though empathy pretends to be analyzing the other minds' knowledge, but the very constitution of me and other are starkly different. So the attempt of empathizing is beyond the capacity of building a structure parallel between me and others (ibid.). I and other are impossible to come on the same plain, because of our belonging to two different worlds. Having said so, Schultz does talk about the possibility that empathy holds despite of the limitation it might have. He, therefore, tries to redefine the idea of empathy by talking about 'being reflexive' (ibid: 34). I did mention about this before but what Schultz specifically means is that there should be a continuous scrutiny between what I might have understood and others might have conveyed to me (ibid.).

One way of doing away with misunderstanding is that not to go with what looks most obvious and given to me as being an observer in the field rather my attempt would be to understand what hasn't been told to me and unfolding the processes of construction made by which the world view got stabilized apparently.

5.6 Relevance of Phenomenological Methods In Sociology

The best way to understand the relevance of phenomenological methods in sociology would be to understand the following development in sociological theories using the method of phenomenological sociology. The rise of social constructivist school in mid-twentieth century clearly shows how phenomenological turn in sociology has redefined the relationship between experience and knowledge (Calhoun et. al. 2002: 5-7). The constructivist methodology began to look at structures and institutions critically and ways through which knowledge was produced rather than knowledge as given to individuals (ibid.). Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's work, '*The Social Construction of Reality; A Treatise in Sociology of Knowledge*' (1966) opened a new door in the field of sociology of knowledge, drawing ideas from phenomenological sociology, as well as other schools of thought. Broadly speaking, the work challenges the age-old conviction

of understanding knowledge system devoid of experiences and everyday life (ibid.). Drawing from phenomenological sociology, particularly the idea of Schultz 'life-world', they argue that subjects do create and construct the social reality and gradually the reality turns into an objective reality which again create subjects in turn (Garcia 2015: 22).

Luckmann and Schultz jointly published a work '*The Structures of Life-World*' (1974), while Schultz died suddenly and Luckmann finished the work. The work hints upon the plurality of life-world and how through inter subjectivity a common life-world is constitute. In Chapter 2, the work makes a shift while talking about the existing stratification in the society, where life-world is not simply constituted from the specific subjective location but life-worlds are arranged in a hierarchy, not all life-worlds share same subjective experiences.

5.7 Colclusion : Criticisms and Take Aways

John R. Hall (1977) comes with an interesting criticism both against the school of phenomenology in large and the Schultz' idea of phenomenological sociology. He argues that the school of phenomenology also began with an apriorized notion of seeing 'world given to me as being there' (ibid: 266). As if, the construction only happens at the level of social reality but what about my own construction of being. I do constitute myself too and both conform and challenge to the existing values laid upon me, Similarly, Schultz' idea of life-world already assumed that the life-world of individuals is already natural to them (ibid: 276). There is no scope to understand the possibility of changing life-world or redefining it in completely in different way than what was being expected of me. For instance, in a society where heterosexuality is a norm. Hence despite of me being a homosexual living in closet constituted my life-world based on heterosexual norms, as expected of me. The heterosexual norms are almost given to me. But gradually, after a long suffocation in my existing life-world, I began to change and transform my being and life-world too. I can create entirely a new-life world of my own, a world starkly different from the heterosexual norms of the social world.

Take Aways

- Subjective experience is central to the phenomenological thought unlike the positivist school, where the claim for objectivity denies the importance of how experiences play significant role in the making of knowledge.

- Being a researcher, the critical tool for you to understand the world beyond your familiar one, empathy and reflexivity are equally crucial. One cannot empathize without being reflexive and a continuous scrutiny over my privilege and position in the society.
- No knowledge, including the value-neutral scientific knowledge as it claims to be cannot exist without someone constituting the knowledge from specific subjective location. There is a need to dissolve the dichotomy between the empirical scientific knowledge and experiential subjective knowledge. Adding to that, even empirical scientific knowledge does come from specific subjective location in the society.
- There is no one structure of life-world. There are diverse and multiple structures of life-world and there is an established hierarchy between them.
- Life worlds are not stagnant, they do change and individuals can create new life-world of their own.

5.8 Questions

1. Answer in Detail:
 - a. State the etymological roots of Phenomenology.
 - b. Explain the general tenets of Phenomenology.
2. Answer in brief.
 - a. Write a brief note on Alfred Schutz's contribution to Phenomenology.
What is 'Life World'?
 - b. What do you know by 'empathy'?

5.9 References

- The Rise of Hermeneutics (1900)." Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Works, Volume IV, 1996, 235-258. doi:10.1515/9780691188706-006.
- Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge. New York: Anchor Books, 1966.
- Bloom, Paul. Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion. New York: HarperCollins, 2016.
- Chismar, Douglas. "Empathy and sympathy: The important difference. "The Journal of

- Value Inquiry 22, no. 4 (1988), 257-266. doi:10.1007/bf00136928.
- Ferguson, Harvie. *Phenomenological Sociology: Experience and Insight in Modern Society*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2006.
- Gallagher, Shaun. *Phenomenology*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Garcia, Marta R. "Reality construction, Communication and daily life - An approach to Thomas Lukmann work." *Sao Paulo* 38, no. 2 (2015), 19-36. doi:10.1590/1809-5844201522.
- Hall, Donald E. *Subjectivity*. London: Psychology Press, 2004.
- Hall, John R. "Alfred Schutz, His Critics, and Applied Phenomenology." *Cultural Hermeneutics* 4, no. 3 (1977), 265-279. doi:10.1177/019145377700400303.
- Harrington, Austin. "Dilthey, Empathy and Verstehen A Contemporary Reappraisal." *European Journal of Social Theory* 4, no. 3 (2001), 311-329. doi:10.1177/13684310122225145.
- Harris, William V. "History, Empathy and Emotions." *Antike und Abendland* 56, no. 1 (2010), 1-23. doi:10.1515/9783110222685.1.
- Husserl, Edmund. *Husserliana: Phänomenologische Psychologie*. 1962.
- Husserl, Edmund. *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*. Edited by D. Cairns. The Hague: Springer, 1960.
- "Introduction and The Phenomenology of Social World by Alfred Schultz." In *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk. Malden: Blackwell, 2002.
- Jardin, James, and Thomas Szanto. "Empathy in the Phenomenological Tradition." In *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Empathy*, edited by Heidi Maibom. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Jardine, James. "Husserl and Stein on the Phenomenology of Empathy: Perception and Explication." *SYNTHESIS PHILOSOPHICA* 58 (2014), 273-288. UDC 165.62:165.242.2Husserl, E., Stein, E.
- Kaufer, Stephan, and Anthony Chemero. *Phenomenology: An Introduction*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2015.
- Mills, C. W. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959.
- Nagel, Thomas. "What is it like to be a bat?" *Mortal Questions*, 1974, 165-180. doi:10.1017/cbo9781107341050.014.

- Ponty, Maurice M., and John F. Bannan. "What is Phenomenology?" *Crosscurrent* 6, no. 1 (Winter 1956), 59-70. Accessed May 1, 2019. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24456652>.
- Rogers, Mary F. *Sociology, Ethnomethodology and Experience*. Cambridge: CUP Archive, 1983.
- Schutz, Alfred. *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967.
- Schutz, Alfred. "Introduction by Helmut Wagner." In *Alfred Schutz on Phenomenology and Social Relations*, edited by Helmut Wagner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.
- Schutz, Alfred, and Thomas Luckmann. *The Structures of the Life-world*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974.
- Weber, Max. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Oakland: University of California Press, 1978.

Unit : 6 □ Ethnomethodology : Basic Arguments

Structure:

- 6.1 Objectives**
- 6.2 Introduction**
 - 6.2.1 Origins of Ethnomethodology**
 - 6.2.2 Phenomenological Sociology And Ethnomethodology**
- 6.3 Etymological Rootsof Ethnomethodology**
 - 6.3.1 Ethnoscience, Ethnomethdology And Ethnosociology**
 - 6.3.2 Illustration of Ethnosociology**
- 6.4 Understanding Everyday: Garfinkel And Goffman**
 - 6.4.1 Historical Overview of Everyday as A Concept : Garfinkel ann Goffman**
- 6.5 Ethnography And Ethnomethodology**
 - 6.5.1 Connection Between Ethnography and Ethnomethodology**
- 6.6 Being Subjective Or Objective?**
 - 6.6.1 Stages of Ethnomethodology's Methods**
- 6.7 CriticismsAnd Way Forward**
- 6.8 Conclusion**
- 6.9 Summary**
- 6.10 Questions**
- 6.11 References**
- 6.12 Glossary**

6.1 Objectives

- The historical roots of ethnomethodology in philosophy
- The etymological analysis of ethnomethodology
- The basic tenets of ethnomethodology
- The rise of ethnomethodical sociology
- The relevance of ethnomethodical methods in sociology
- Criticisms and the way forward

6.2 Introduction

Ethnomethodology is the empirical study of 'micro-social' phenomena while analyzing the structure of everyday 'face-to-face' interactions taking place in different contexts like street corners, families, shops and offices (Hilbert 1992; Lynch 1993: xii). Ethnomethodology makes a shift from the conventional sociological study, where the emphasis was given on the analysis of larger social order and processes instead of looking at the micro-social everyday processes (Lynch 1994: xii). In other words, ethnomethodology argues for the departure in sociological study of macro-structures to everyday micro-social processes. There was a demand to move away from the abstract theorization to the study of real and empirical practices (Garfinkel 1991). The disciplinary roots of ethnomethodology can be traced back to the field of phenomenology, advocated by Husserl and then applied it in the domain of sociology by Alfred Schultz (Rogers 1983: 83). Along with there were other theoretical influences that Harold Garfinkel, American sociologist, the major figure in ethnomethodology, had on him. Garfinkel, as the key figure in the domain of ethnomethodology, was the student of Talcott Parsons too (Hilbert 1992: 4).

6.2.1 Origins of Ethnomethodology

In order to understand the historical roots of ethnomethodology, one needs to begin with the emergence of functionalism in the domain of American sociology in the 1930s (ibid: 2). With the publication of '*Structure of Social Action*' in 1930s by Talcott Parsons, on one hand, American audience was introduced to the developed his own works of Durkheim and Weber, on the other hand, Parsons' theory of action from his textual analysis of the works of Durkheim and Weber. This created the foundation of functionalist theory in the following decades (ibid.). Parsons work became the hegemonic model of practicing sociology in United States for a long period of time (ibid.). Garfinkel's contribution is a unique shift from the Parsonian practice of sociology. His theorization of ethnomethodology puts emphasis on empirical studies unlike the Parsonian framework of theorizing about larger social structures only based on textual sources (ibid: 3). His methodology of look and see in the field changes the course of mainstream sociological exercise of abstract theorization based on textual references only. However, Garfinkel's ethnomethodology was equally rooted in Parsonian themes like 'social structure,

normative prescriptions and shared understandings' (ibid.). One cannot understand the idea of ethnomethodology without looking at diverse sociological traditions like Parsonian sociology combining Durkheim and Weber on one part of the theoretical spectrum to the phenomenological sociology from Husserl to Schultz of the other. Apart from Parsonian sociology and Schotz's phenomenological sociology, ethnomethodology being a subfield in the domain of micro-sociological theories also owes the debt to symbolic interactionism as well (McNall and Johnson 1975).

The development of any theory may not always be a necessary outcome of lacunas in the existing-old theories but at the same time the specific historical moment is often responsible for the development of that specific theory. (ibid: 50). In the same fashion, during twentieth century in West, with the Second World War happening and the rise of Nazism and eugenics in Germany, the new generation sociologists could feel the crisis of so-called scientific rationality and the trend of grand theorization in sociology without looking at 'real everyday experience' (Calhoun *et.al.* 2002:3; Rogers 1983). One began to become skeptical of the legitimacy that scientific knowledge used to enjoy for the grand and abstract theorization unknown to everyday human experiences (Rogers 1983). New generation of sociologists began to question the dichotomy between the scientific knowledge production and everyday experiences constructing knowledge systems specific to the local context. The questioning led to the change in the thinking about the relationship between individual and society (Calhoun *et.al.* 2002: 4). Sociology began to look at the everyday micro-social processes fundamental to human experiences unlike the larger than life theoretical exercise sociology was trying to do for a long period of time. Parsonian sociology can be example of it. The turning point was to engage with symbolic interactionism and then phenomenological sociology. This evolved into the practice of ethnomethodology.

Having said so, one needs to be careful in locating the entire micro and macro sociology debate specifically to the twentieth century only (Hilbert 1990: 495). The debate is much older than what it seems, but the debate came into prominence among theorists belonging to that century because of the changing relationship between individual and society (ibid.). The historical location of ethnomethodology is unique because unlike seeing macro and micro analysis being binary to each other, ethnomethodology argued for bridging the gap between the macro-structures and micro-social processes. Hence

macro-structures are either produced by everyday micro-social processes or these processes are simply identical to the macro-structures (ibid: 795). But at the same time, ethnomethodological analysis is skeptical of analysis solely from the macro-structural point of view. Therefore, the emphasis remains on the micro-social practices and processes (ibid.).

Second, ethnomethodology being the micro-sociological field fundamentally gains its popularity for making personal experience relevant (McNall and Johnson 1975: 50). In a way, ethnomethodology is a logical conclusion of the long intellectual tradition beginning from Weber's *verstehen*, Husserl's phenomenology and finally Schultz idea of life-world in phenomenological sociology (ibid. 51-55). To engage with everyday reality is central to the ethnomethodological enquiry unlike the scientific abstraction. The engagement with everyday reality largely has its root in Schultz methodological position to sociology (ibid: 53). We will now see the possible connection between phenomenological sociology, proposed by Schultz and the impact it has on Garfinkel's ethnomethodology.

6.2.2 Phenomenological Sociology And Ethnomethodology

For Schultz, 'the methodology of sociology must be distinct from that of the natural sciences' because natural sciences only deal with the 'first order' knowledge about everyday life (ibid: 53). By that Schultz refers to the conventional objective kind of understanding the social reality. The first order of knowledge necessarily assumes that everyday life of individuals is almost like their natural attitude, the reality, as if hangs objectively in front of them and they only participate in it. According to him, the abstract theorization based on objective reality is simply a social fiction ignoring the unique perspective of individuals located in their everyday experiences (ibid.). In other words, the typical generalized scientific theorization remains blind to the specific everyday experience of individuals.

Second, even for Weber, the subjective world is similar to that of like a concrete event, similar to the so-called absolute scientific fact. There is a stark departure in Schultz understanding of subjective world. For him, subjective world is constituted (ibid: 54). There is no concreteness in the way subjective world is constituted. The subjective world differs based on individuals' experiences. Individuals are both part of the subjective world and construct the world as well (Wagner 1970). Along with that, in the Weberian scheme the concreteness of the social world doesn't look at the inherent problems individuals might face in their everyday life (McNall and Johnson

1975: 54). Hence, one may argue that Schultz was largely talking about the inherent messiness, conflict, problems and fluidity existing in the subjective world. The social world is not permanent and absolute like the way scientific knowledge claims it to be.

However, the problem with Schultz was he that may have proposed a 'gross description' of Everyman's reality without taking into consideration the specific ways of assessing reality of every particular individual (ibid.). There is no one way of interpreting reality and interacting with other individuals (ibid.). Schultz did talk about the constituting and flexible nature of reality. But he overlooked the fact that evaluating reality varies according to the specific context individuals are part of. Ethnomethodology therefore becomes a logical succession of scientific phenomenological sociology (ibid.).

6.3 Etymological Rootsof Ethnomethodology

Literally ethnomethodology simply means people's methodology (See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2011/jul/13/harold-garfinkel-obituary>).

Following Garfinkel, methodologically ethnomethodologists use systemic techniques to collect data from everyday activities using ordinary abilities like taking part in conversational exchanges, navigating through traffic situations and recognizing what is happening in specific social environments' (ibid.). The driving idea here is to understand the array of practices cumulatively producing the social order or what we may refer as the society, while these practices are bound by immediate circumstances (ibid.).

6.3.1 Ethnoscience, Ethnomethodology and Ethnosociology

The term ethnomethodology is derived from the concept called ethnoscience in the field of anthropology (McNall and Johnson 1975: 54). Following the work of W.C. Strutevant (1964) ethnoscience refers to the system of knowledge and cognition typical of a given culture (Cited in Psathas 1968:500; McNall and Johnson 1975: 54). The ethnoscientific study entails how the specific culture is the culmination of people classifying material sources and the social universe around them (Psathas 1968: 500). The ethnoscience of culture describes different specific processes through which the people of that culture categorize, classify, perceive and define the social and material world around them (McNall and Johnson 1975: 54). In the initial phase of ethnoscience, ethnoscientists believe that knowledge systems about society within the specific cultural context are analogous to knowledge systems of science (Wieder 1977: 2).

Even in Garfinkel's idea of ethnomethodology, there is a similarity that he tries to draw between methods of chemistry, botany, biology and ethnomethods to understand the society. But at the same time, ethnomethodology does point out science is also being a social activity as well (ibid.). Having said so, there remains difference between the way ethnosociologists view the society and the way ethnomethodologists do (McNall and Johnson 1975: 54). The general assumption of ethnosociology is that it tries to understand the society in an unchanging way (ibid.). The idea of society seems similar to that of Schultz where reality of every non is perceived without taking into consideration the issues of conflict and problems in society. In the view of ethnosociology, society is still static and the objective reality out there (ibid.). However ethnomethodologists claim that society is dynamic in nature and they try to understand processes contributing to the dynamism of society (ibid.). Understanding the dynamic processes behind the making of society paved the way for the emergence of a new kind of sociology. Here lies the contribution of ethnomethodology to the larger sociological pool of theories (Linstead 2006: 400). In a way, the conventional methodological gap between micro and macro sociology was bridged through exploring the 'artful ways' by which people engage with everyday practices resulting in the making of social order (ibid.).

Ethnosociology is a discipline developed out of the combination between the classical sociological method and the ethnomethodological tools proposed by Garfinkel, having roots in the phenomenological tradition in sociology (Dugin 2019). But at the same time, we need to keep in mind there are different sociological traditions impacting on the development of ethnosociology because in the European scientific tradition the subject matter of ethnosociology is to study ethnos or people using sociological methods similar to ethnomethodology (ibid.). But this is different with Russian scientific tradition where the object of study is society and the subject-matter is ethnos as a form of society (ibid.). Nevertheless, the connection between ethnomethodology and ethnosociology has to do with the use of method of storytelling about people (Wieder 1977: 3). Storytelling happens at two levels, when as a passionate observer we listen to stories told by the people in the given cultural context. At the same time, the passionate observer rewrites the story about the people she/he has heard to while including the story of her/his own (ibid: 3-4). Largely stories concerning social scientists are stories about different actions and situation of actions everyday folks are part of (ibid.). However when social scientists rewrite these stories, they have to be 'diligent, careful, precise in gathering evidence and

in their analysis' (ibid: 3). Social scientists codify similar stories using different concepts (ibid.). In all these exercises of storytelling, first and foremost, language plays an important role (ibid: 4). The more there is sophistication in the usage of language, there is more possibility of drawing logical connections between different stories and gradually the stories do provide a coherent theoretical structure (ibid: 5). Second, as a social scientist and storyhearer too, one needs to be aware of the surrounding of her/his subjects of study (ibid.). Without being aware of the context of the people one is engaging with, it is difficult to provide a coherent structure to their told stories (ibid.).

One may argue that ethnosociology is the study of storytelling by humans about humans (ibid.). Ethnomethodology as a methodological tool tries to give a coherent structure to these stories using tools of logic, fact, objectivity and rationality (ibid.). Social scientists have to verify these stories by hearing out to multiple subjects bounded in the specific context, try to find a common thread of connection between these stories and illustrate those using concepts.

6.3.2 Illustration of Ethnosociology

Let me explain it through an illustration from McKim Marriott's (1989) work on '*Constructing an Indian ethnosociology*'. First, Marriott argues for the need to develop an Indian ethnosociology. Historically, much of the development in social science always has to do with the West, as if West gives an universal worldview about social reality applicable to all corners of the globe (ibid: 2). But the paradox is the universal worldview that West thrusts upon others and is actually an ethnosociological account derived from their own experiences of social world. The experiences may not match with how Indians may experience their own social reality. Even major chunk of concepts used in the academia of Western social science come from their experiences in the social world (ibid: 4). For instance, Durkheim's idea of sacred and profane or the idea of purity associated with soul opposed to the flesh are of little use to understand dharmas of Hindu (ibid.). There is no binary as such between the soul and flesh rather they are connected with each other (ibid.). Hence, one needs to develop ethnosociological view from Indian context, a social science born out of experiences of Indian social reality.

Having said so, Marriott points out that there can't be one singular ethnosociological thought about India. There are multiple stories that need to be told from different accounts of people experiencing social realities in diverse way. Likewise even there is

no one universal thought about West too, as social science from West claims to be.

Second, drawing from different Hindu philosophical traditions, he argues that there is no one singular concept that can analyze the entire worldview about Indian society. Similarly the typical binary model usually found in Western thought like materialism versus idealism is hardly applicable to Indian society. Drawing from Samkhya philosophy he argues that how moral and physical would be equally translatable to each other. The pure consciousness or the *purusha* connects with the *prakriti* the material world. They are mutually exclusive rather connected with each other (ibid: 8).

Finally, according to him, so far the concepts used for analyzing the India society are largely borrowed from Western thought. Therefore, in order to develop an Indian sociology of its own, social scientists need to engage with different concepts prevalent among India philosophical tradition itself. This would eventually give rise to ethnosociological thought about India, being sensitive to Indian context. There will be an 'alternative' view of social sciences contrary to claims of Western thought being universal and functional in every kind of context across the globe.

Critics did mention about how Marriott's still suffers from a comparativist model where Indian society is simply juxtaposed with West where East is still a 'spiritual' domain as opposed to the materialistic West (Gerow 2000).

Nevertheless, the major take away from this illustration is to understand how ethnosociology drawing from ethnomethodology gives importance to the context of theory. The location from where the story been told is important and the idea of local is opposed to the claim for one universal thought and is applicable to diverse situations. It is not to say there can't be a common thread of connection between different experiences in different context, discussed earlier. But whoever is rewriting the story of people needs to be equally sensitive to the diverse context because experiencing the similar phenomena can have both similar and different consequences across multiple contexts.

6.4 Understanding Everyday: Garfinkel And Goffman

The understanding of everyday events is central to ethnomethodology. The central focus lies on how people through their everyday course of actions construct a meaningful world (McNall and Johnson 1975). Everyday as a sociological concept has its root in

different theoretical schools like 'symbolic interactionism, dramaturgy, labeling theory, phenomenology, ethnomethodology and existential sociology' (Adler *et.al.* 1987: 217). All these theoretical school are unique and different from each other (ibid.). Having said so, these theoretical schools are also somewhat part of micro sociological thought critical to trend of abstract theorization in macro sociological thought.

First, the issue of contextuality is central to all these theoretical schools because context is fundamental in the understanding of everyday (ibid: 219). One who engages with context can able to understand and enterpret people's perception, feelings and existing meanings people experience as well as construct meanings through their everyday courses of action (ibid.).

Second, along with explaining the context, it is important to see who the actors really are and how do they interact with each other in the everyday setting (ibid.). However, different theoretical schools describe actors in different ways. For instance, symbolic interactionism stresses on the importance of self and how self organizes her/himself based on the structural stimuli outside. But for ethnomethodologists cognitive structure becomes important. By which we mean along with the constitution of self one also looks at the reciprocal relationship between structure and self (ibid.). In other words, social interactions do have impact on people's consciousness but at the same time people do decide the course of interaction as well. People do reflect and organize themselves while interacting with others. This shows how social interactions are reflexive in nature.

Ethnomethodological practices entail unsettling of the most obvious social order. They deconstruct the social order in order to look at micro-social processes working behind it (Pollner 1991). Reflexivity does play important role in these processes, fundamentally taking place at two levels. First, endogenous reflexivity refers to what members really do in the making of social reality (ibid: 372). The specific language actors use and actions actors do are not apriori rather they are outcome of their own reflection to themselves. While reflecting towards themselves actors organize and construct their own actions and language (ibid.). Second, reflexivity happens at the level of narrator or one who rewrites the story. Along with giving the reflexive account of the people in a specific setting, narrator does reflect upon her/his account in that setting too. What role the narrator was playing in that specific setting while listening to the people. This is what is referred as referential reflexivity (ibid.). Hence the ethnomethodological account of an everyday setting should go back and forth between these two forms of

reflexivity.

Finally, in order to grasp the nature of interaction in an everyday setting, there is need to understand the structure along with context and actors. There is a continuous reciprocity between the interactions people make and the structure they are part of (Adler et.al. 1987: 218). Interactions constitute the structure endogenously (Garfinkel 1967 cited in Adler et.al. 1987: 218). Any form of social structure or order cannot exist on its own. Through everyday interactions with one another people reproduce the social structure and order. Having said so, what Goffman points out in his work 'Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face to Face Interaction' (1967) takes slight departure from Garfinkel's work. He points out interactions not simply constitute institutional norms and rituals but institutional norms and rituals do govern the course of everyday interactions as well (cited in Adler et. al. 1987: 218). Hence, there is a dialectical relationship between the structure and everyday interaction.

6.4.1 Historical Overview of Everyday as A Concept : Garfinkel and Goffman

The philosophical foundation for the conceptual development of everyday in the domain of sociology goes back to 1920s and 1930s. The school of symbolic interactionism proposed by George Herbert Mead laid the base rock for it (Adler et. al. 1987: 220). Gradually in 60s the idea was nourished by Alfred Schultz in his proposition for phenomenological sociology. During the same time, Herbert Blumer from California and Harold Garfinkel and Erving Goffman from America engaged with the concept of everyday through their respective theoretical contribution in sociology (ibid.).

In the domain of ethnomethodology specifically, contributions of Garfinkel and Goffman become significantly important. Goffman through his method of dramaturgy in his work '*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*' (1959) (cited in Adler et. al. 1987: 220) gave a new direction to the concept of everyday. He was largely influenced by works of Durkheim, Blumer and Peter J. Burke. For him, the analysis of individuals in the society should begin from analyzing the different forms of interaction individuals have in a given context. Analyzing interactions would be the entry point to understand the constituting nature of reality, how socialization works and how different norms and rules are regenerated socially (ibid.). His work talks about both roles (individuals take different roles while interacting with each other) and rules (societal norms) and the reciprocity exists between them (ibid.). Unlike the Parsonian view of individuals simply adapting to the expected

roles in a given social structure, Goffman argues that actors deliberately choose their roles based upon the setting they are part of and regulate their actions accordingly (ibid.). While being part of different interaction rituals of everyday people get to know the societal norms and rules. These norms and rules do have imprint on individuals' actions and they do regulate themselves (ibid.). Through self-regulation they again do reproduce these norms and rules (ibid.).

As discussed earlier, for Garfinkel, slightly different from Goffman, ethnomethodological account should focus on how people in a given setting apply and negotiate with rules that result in the reproduction of larger social order and structure (ibid.). Even though ethnomethodology talks about diverse and different stories of people from different setting, the more focus lies on the common thread of connection between these stories and how that commonality construct a common structure and social order regulating everyday courses of actions (ibid.).

Drawing from Goffman and Garfinkel's conceptualization of everyday, I argue that for both of them the idea of contextuality is equally important. However when it comes to the question of actors and structure, Goffman stresses more importance on the role of actors whereas Garfinkel puts more emphasis on structure and the constitution of structure.

With this being said, one can also find other possible connections between them. For both Goffman's dramaturgy and Garfinkel's ethnomethodology, the mundane, ordinary and everyday human actions became the central focus of study unlike the long sociological tradition of grand theories and abstraction (Maynard 1991). Second, the temporality of everyday was equally relevant for both of them. Temporality refers to the time and spatially bound setting unfolding the everyday course of actions (ibid.). For long period of time, the question of temporality was completely missing from the social theory. Hence, the beauty of everydayness manifests through its ordinariness and temporality but equally complex in nature, analyzed by Goffman and Garfinkel.

6.5 Ethnography And Ethnomethodology

Ethnography is typically a qualitative method of research studying people in their naturally occurring stalties settings or 'fields' by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but

without meaning being imposed on them externally (Brewer 2000: 10). Drawing from this definition of ethnography, one may find four fundamental principles in an ethnographic research.

First, ethnography necessarily means engaging with people, even though we may talk about the relationship between objects and people (see <https://www.hsozkult.de/event/id/termine-30277>). In recent times, there are different ethnographic studies of objects, particularly in the domain of science and technology studies (ibid.). But still they try to understand the relational aspect between humans and objects.

Second, the setting is crucial for ethnographic research. Without the idea about the setting people are part of, ethnographic research is hardly possible.

Third, after the understanding of setting, ethnographer needs to analyze the nature of interactions taking place in the setting and what meanings do they reproduce through their actions.

And finally, the role of researcher becomes crucial in the ethnographic research. Not being an objective and distant observer, ethnographer does participate in the setting while clearing her/his position in the setting to the people she/he is studying. There is a need to be reflexive in the ethnographic research. Apart from clearing out her/his position in the setting, the researcher has to be cautious during the time of writing her/his ethnographic research, so that her/his meanings about the world don't get imposed on stories of people.

6.5.1 Connection Between Ethnography and Ethnomethodology

Continuing from the previous discussion about ethnography, the possible connection one may draw between ethnography and ethnomethodology has to do with the nature of study both do. Both these perspectives have roots in the interpretative tradition of sociology, studying people or ethno in their settings, concerning with life world drawn from phenomenological sociology and skeptical of grand theorization and quantitative approach (Pollner and Emerson 2007:118).

Discussed earlier, methodologically speaking, the key aspect of ethnomethodology was to inform social scientists that no social order, system or structure is apriori to individuals. For the purpose studying society one cannot begin from the point that society is independent of individuals. As if society would survive even though individuals cease to exist (ibid: 119). Instead of that, the entry point should be to understand society

consists of 'ceaseless, ever-unfolding transactions through which members engage one another and the objects, topics and concerns that they find relevant' (ibid.). Society cannot survive without people and not external to them. Any form of social order is endogenous in nature. By which we mean the origin of order is internal in nature not externally thrust upon people (ibid.).

Even in conventional ethnographic practices, the assumption was as if the social order is external to people without taking into consideration how the order survives internally through voluntary participation of people in micro social processes. However ethnomethodologically informed ethnography talks about the empirical examination of the 'detailed and observable practices which make up the incarnate production of ordinary social facts' (ibid.). Instead of assuming the social order external to people or drawing external categories to explain the endogenous order, ethnographer needs to understand the ordinary and mundane processes taking place internally to sustain the order.

Second, while talking about the endogenous order, ethnomethodologists talk about accountable feature of the setting (ibid.). By which they mean as a researcher one needs to take complete account of the setting where practices are taking place (ibid.). Similarly ethnomethodologically informed ethnographic accounts provide an accountable description of the setting without drawing a preconceived notion about the setting. The more accountability is there in the description of the setting greater the chance is there to understand how members of the specific setting assess and evaluate each other's recognition and assessment. Based on this, they make use of information about each and other (ibid.).

Third one of the crucial aspects to understand the internal mechanism of social order is to unsettle the familiar or obvious order (ibid: 121). By unsettling the familiar world one can understand series of micro social processes functioning behind the making of the stable order. These processes usually take place in the backdrop without getting noticed. Garfinkel argues that usually people involved in practices are may not always be interested in doing so (ibid.). With time these practices almost become habit to them because of the competence they acquire (ibid.). In other words, they may not have to be conscious in executing these practices like the way they usually do when there is something new happening in the setting. Their uninterestedness is the marker of their competence. For ethnomethodologists, debunking the most obvious and 'taken-for-granted' order becomes the critical task to do instead of drawing foreign categories to explain the inward mechanism of a particular setting (ibid.).

For example, Garfinkel (1967) in his study of Agnes, who was born a biological male but represented and conducted as woman, makes a distinction between empirical Agnes and the analytic Agnes (cited in Schilt 2016: 288). According to Garfinkel, the empirical Agnes is easily accessible to readers because anyone can easily summarize the life-story of her (ibid.). But ethnomethodologically to understand the analytic Agnes, the study would be unique to see how Agnes navigates through her everyday interaction of being woman in the social world without 'the biographical and biological credentials others assumed her to have on the basis of her appearance' (ibid.). In other words, drawing from other studies too, Garfinkel's interest was to understand the role of body in the lived order (Pollner and Emerson 2007: 121). There remains a specific image about the normal body in a lived social order. But everyday practices show that in most cases people don't conform to this specific image about the normal body, they try to navigate it even though the image about the normal body doesn't get dissolved too (ibid.). Though the existing typical biological and biographical image of womanhood may not conform to Agnes expression but still she manages to continue her expression of being a woman. But at the same time, the typical image of womanhood doesn't completely dissolve too in the lived order.

Therefore, ethnographic research should see both how the stable order is established in the specific setting and how people navigate through it in their everyday interactions. Ethnomethodologically one may find people may not always conform to the stable order but negotiate through it.

6.6 Being Subjective Or Objective?

In continuation with the previous discussion itself under this section we will try to engage with the issue of reflexivity in relation to two fundamental debates in social science research-subjectivity and objectivity. As discussed before, reflexivity becomes one of the key aspects in the field of ethnomethodological research (pp. 9-10). But the discussion on reflexivity remains incomplete until and unless we discuss about subjectivity and objectivity in social science research, particularly in ethnographic studies.

In the domain of qualitative research particularly, including ethnographic studies, the idea of subjectivity guides everything starting from the choice researchers make to study a particular topic, formulating hypothesis, selecting methodologies till the interpretation

and analysis of data (Ratner 2002). Subjectivity talks about the continuous reflection researcher makes by looking at her/his subjective location in the field and what values do guide her/his research.

Objectivity on the other hand is said to negate subjectivity because it renders the observer being passive recipient of the external information, without contributing any agency to the researcher (ibid.). Objectivity talks about the unengaged and distant observer unlike the researcher being subjective, continuously engaging with her/his participants in the field.

Ethnomethodologists do point out something midway of not being too objective and subjective rather. In both ethnomethodological and ethnographic practices, it is important to get involved with the particular setting and the people and the form of life of particular group in that setting (Pollner and Emerson 2007: 123). Until and unless researchers do so, it is difficult for them to understand the local meaning and action happening in the setting (ibid.). Being subjective is necessary for ethnomethodologically informed ethnographic research.

Having said so, ethnomethodologists did criticize the conventional ethnographic practices for being too subjective. First ethnographers often have the trend of 'going native' in the foreign culture to prove their passionate involvement in the setting (ibid: 124). In doing so, they used to get engrossed in the setting without a critical outlook towards participants actions and interactions (ibid.). Being critical means the researcher has to understand subtly the inherent problems in the lived order apart from describing how it is constituted and practiced through everyday interaction (ibid.). At times, therefore, the researcher needs to distance herself/himself from her/his participants in the study.

Second this issue crops up when the researcher chose to study her/his familiar world. It happens when ethnographers' personal biases precede over what subjects might have pointed out to her/him. Along with that, researcher being a member of larger common culture the researcher may fail to attend to the problematic character of subjects assumptions and practices, in this way presupposing and treating as factual and immutable what might otherwise be understood as contingent, artful interactional productions (ibid: 124).

So while interpreting the data, the ethnographer needs to prioritize the voice of participants instead of propelling her/his voice over participants and to be careful in bringing her/his preconceived notions drawn from her/his own cultural experience while

analyzing the narrative of her/his participants. Hence, the ethnographic account should objectively distinguish between participants' voice and researchers' voice. But at the same time, there should be an intersubjective¹ connection between researcher and participants.

Therefore, the take away from this discussion would be being reflexive in ethnographic practices necessarily mean charting out the midway between not being too objective or the unengaged observer in the field and the 'going native' ethnographer, too closed with participants in the setting.

6.6.1 Stages of Ethnomethodology's Methods

Conversation Analysis

Conversation analysis is fundamental to ethnomethodological methods for analyzing a social situation. By challenging the so called fixation of social world, conversation becomes crucial to understand the processes of interaction people make between each other based on their specific personal experiences vis-à-vis the common shared knowledge about the specific cultural setting they are part of (Payne and Payne 2004: 77). The purpose is to understand how people negotiate or navigate in the existing lived social order. There are different sets of skills individuals undertake drawing from their own experiences in order to interact with others while exploring and navigating through the existing order (ibid). Analyzing conversation becomes critical in order to understand both the setting and how people strategize with each other in order to thrive in the setting and the setting survives through their interaction.

Garfinkel propose something called breaching experiments for researchers involved in conversation analysis. He asked his students to behave unconventional way in the conventional setting (ibid: 78). Like for instance, if someone wishes Have a nice day. The researcher may bombard the person with other sets of queries like 'nice for how long?', 'how do you know I am going to have the day nice' etc. This may cause an anger or frustration on the speaker's part while the researcher may understand how common meanings are established (ibid.). What are the different sets of expectations people construct for each other in order to establish a *normal accepted* order of behaviour. However, this may is not be ethically appropriate too (ibid.). Hence, a polite way of doing would be to verify conversations by talking to different stakeholders holding various power positions in the setting unlike only listening to one person and what she/

he has to say about others. There could be both moments of agreement and disagreement in the conversation. This would enable the researcher to understand whose account becomes important in establishing the order vis-à-vis whose not and why so.

Recordings and Transcripts

There are two ways of taking into account of conversation. One way would be to listen carefully and write down notes either speaking to participants or listening them talking among themselves. However, the other convenient way would be to record the conversation and listen to it again and again even when the researcher is out of the field (Have 2004: 42). But recording should precede taking consent from participants. The benefit of recording is that as a researcher, I might have missed something in the conversation to take down in my field-notes but the recorded version of the conversation enables me to rectify and add to my field-notes. The second stage of conversation analysis involves transcribing the data while listening again and again to recordings (ibid.). Finally, the task of transcription involves transcribing the data pointing out the details of turn taking in the narrative and sequencing different practices studied in the field (ibid.). Following that researcher arranges the data thematically based on her/his research enquiry (ibid.).

6.7 Criticisms And Way Forward

Z. Bauman (1973) in his essay *On the Philosophical Status of Ethnomethodology*, challenges the very fundamental philosophical argument of showing ethnomethodology being anti-positivist in its practice. Even though ethnomethodology tries to claim of not being objective like natural science and dissociates from arguing social sciences similar to natural sciences, the trap still exists. Ethnomethodologists failed to understand that one cannot understand the subjective experiences of individuals simply by looking at practices in the existing social order because subjectivity always exists within individuals and not in the outside world of individuals (ibid: 14). As soon as, we try to understand subjectivity in the outer world beyond individuals' internal experiences, we get into the same old trap of so-called scientific objectivity, where objects are simply located out there, completely distanced from scientists' personal experiences.

Second, any form of knowledge of the human reality ultimately boils down to 'self-reflection'. It is the individual who finally makes the decision of how much she/he will

open to others. Hence simply by looking at shared experience in the given setting doesn't hint at all to what individuals really think about others and express towards others (ibid: 15).

Third, theoretically it is easy to talk about intersubjectivity or transcending my subjective world to understand others. But Bauman rightfully points there can't any no match between the subjective universe between us and them. Until and unless we talk about the power in social hierarchy or unequal social location between me and others, it is a futile exercise to even talk about subjective experiences of others with whom, I don't have any match at all (ibid: 16).

Finally, field can be limiting too. The ethnomethodology begins from the assumption that studying the field extensively one can understand everything about everyday in that specific field-setting. However Bauman argues that the specific field-setting cannot give answer to all queries at the same time (ibid: 19). Field cannot always be sufficient to understand the making of order and how people negotiate with the order. I do, therefore, argue that history becomes important to understand the *immediate* time-frame of the field and may be engaging with multiple field-sites beyond the one specific field-setting. This would be more eye-opening for researcher. But one has to keep in mind a particular field setting is unable to give answers to all my research queries.

6.8 Conclusion

One most significant contribution of ethnomethodology in the domain of social research is to originate the field-work approach in social sciences, particularly in sociology. Historically the large chunk of sociological literature has formulated abstract theories without validating them with proper empirical evidence. Adding to that, the West originated sociological theories claimed to be universal in terms of their concepts and categories without understanding the everyday life of workers in industrial Britain is very different from the weavers in Bengal. There can be different moments of similarity in terms of their experience of exploitation and alienation but still the context is important. Without understanding the context, large theoretical models are of no purpose. This is another major contribution of ethnomethodology. Finally, the very claim of constructing knowledge about social reality without dealing with reflexivity or the reflection on behalf of the person who creates the knowledge, is simply an audacious task to do. Ethnomethodologists

made it very clear reflected in their argument.

6.9 Summary

- Ethnomethodology simply means peoples' methodology. The prime focus of ethnomethodology is to understand everyday peoples' practices in the specific social and cultural setting. Understanding interaction is central to ethnomethodological methods.
- Ethnomethodology is the logical succession of long interpretative tradition in sociology. As a methodology, it combines both Parsonian notice of sociology and Schutz's phenomenological sociological. Having said so, there is a need to argue that it was equally critical of Parsonian model of sociology because of its large theoretical abstractions without empirical evidence.
- Ethnomethodologically informed ethnographic practices emphasize both on the internal mechanism of lived social order or how the order thrives through everyday practices of individuals and how individuals navigate or negotiate through the order.
- Reflexivity is central to the ethnographic account drawn from ethnomethodological tradition in sociology. Reflexivity happens at two level first at the level of understanding participants in the field and second at the level of narrator researcher.

6.10 Questions

1. Answer in Detail :
 - a. Explain the origins of Ethnomethodology.
 - b. Elaborate on the contributions of Garfinkel to Ethnomethodology.
2. Answer in Brief.
 - a. How will you connect ethnography with Ethnomethodology.
 - b. Write a critique of Ethnomethodology.

6.11 References

Adler, Patricia A., Peter Adler, and Andrea Fontana. "Everyday Life Sociology." *Annual Review Sociology* 13 (1987), 217-35. doi:139.5.230.68.

- Bauman, Z. "On the Philosophical Status of Ethnomethodology." *The Sociological Review* 21, no. 1 (1973), 5-23. doi:10.1111/j.1467-954x.1973.tb00477.x.
- Brewer, John D. *Ethnography*. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000.
- Calhoun, Craig, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk. "Introduction." In *Contemporary Sociological Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2002.
- Dugin, Alexander. *Ethnosociology: The Foundations*. Budapest: Arktos Media, 2019.
- Gallagher, Shaun. *Phenomenology*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Garfinkel, Harold. "Respecification: evidence for locally produced, naturally accountable phenomena of order, logic, reason, meaning, method, etc. in and as of the essential haecceity of immortal ordinary society (I): an announcement of studies." In *Ethnomethodology and the Human Sciences*, edited by Graham Button. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Gerow, Edwin. "Review: India as a Philosophical Problem: Mckim Marriott and the Comparative Enterprise." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120, no. 3 (July/August 2000), 410. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/606012>.
- Goffman, Erving. *Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face to Face Behavior*. AldineTransaction, 1967.
- Have, Paul T. "Ethnomethodology's Methods." In *Understanding Qualitative Research and Ethnomethodology*, 31-45. Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2004.
- Hilbert, Richard A. *The Classical Roots of Ethnomethodology: Durkheim, Weber, and Garfinkel*. United States of America: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992.
- Hilbert, Richard A. "Ethnomethodology and the Micro-Macro Order." *American Sociological Review* 55, no. 6 (1990), 794. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2095746>.
- Linstead, Stephen. "Ethnomethodology and Sociology: An Introduction." *The Sociological Review* 54, no. 3 (August 2006), 399-404. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2006.00622.x>.
- Lynch, Michael. *Scientific Practice and Ordinary Action: Ethnomethodology and Social Studies of Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Marriott, McKim. "Constructing an Indian Ethnosociology." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 23, no. 1 (1989), 1-39. doi:10.1177/006996689023001003.

- Maynard, Douglas W. "Goffman, Garfinkel, and Games." *Sociological Theory* 9, no. 2 (Fall 1991), 277-279. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/202090>.
- McNall, Scott G., and James C. Johnson. "The New Conservatives: Ethnomethodologists, Phenomenologists, and Symbolic Interactionists." *Insurgent Sociologist* 5, no. 4 (1975), 49-65. doi:10.1177/089692057500500403.
- Payne, Geoff, and Judy Payne. "Ethnomethodology and Conversational Analysis." In *Key Concepts in Social Research*, 76-79. Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2004.
- Pollner, Melvin, and Robert M. Emerson. "Ethnomethodology and Ethnography." In *Handbook of Ethnography*, edited by Paul Atkinson, Sara Delamont, Amanda Coffey, John Lofland, and Lyn Lofland, 118-135. Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2007.
- Pollner, Melvin. "Left of Ethnomethodology: The Rise and Decline of Radical Reflexivity." *American Sociological Review* 56, no. 3 (June 1991), 370-380. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2096110>.
- Psathas, George. "Ethnomethods and Phenomenology." *Social Research* 35, no. 3 (Fall 1968), 500-520. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40969922>.
- Ratner, Carl. "Subjectivity and Objectivity in Qualitative methodology." *Qualitative Social Research* 3, no. 3 (September 2002), 1-6. www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/rt/prINTERfriendly/829/1800.
- Rogers, Mary F. *Sociology, Ethnomethodology and Experience*. Cambridge: CUP Archive, 1983.
- Schilt, Kristen. "The Importance of Being AgnesAuthors." *Symbolic Interaction* 39, no. 2 (May 2016), 287-294. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/symbinte.39.2.287>.
- Schutz, Alfred. "'Introduction' by Helmut R. Wagner." In *Alfred Schutz on Phenomenology and Social Relations*, edited by Helmut R. Wagner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.
- Wieder, D. L. "Ethnomethodology and Ethnology." *Mid-American Review of Sociology* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1977), 1-18. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23252569>.

6.12 Glossary

- a. Hegemony-Hegemony is the political, economic, or military predominance or control of one state over others. In ancient Greece, hegemony denoted the politico-military

dominance of a city-state over other city-states. The dominant state is known as the hegemon.

- b. Micro-Sociology- Microsociology is one of the main levels of analysis of sociology, concerning the nature of everyday human social interactions and agency on a small scale: face to face.
- c. Grand Theory- Grand theory is a term coined by the American sociologist C. Wright Mills in *The Sociological Imagination* to refer to the form of highly abstract theorizing in which the formal organization and arrangement of concepts takes priority over understanding the social reality.
- d. Rationality-Rationality is the quality or state of being rational - that is, being based on or agreeable to reason. Rationality implies the conformity of one's beliefs with one's reasons to believe, and of one's actions with one's reasons for action.

Unit : 7 □ Contributions of Schutz

Structure :

- 7.1 Objectives**
- 7.2 Introduction**
- 7.3 The Influences on Schutz's Phenomenology**
 - 7.3.1 The Influence of Edmund Husserl**
 - 7.3.2 A Critique of Max Weber**
 - 7.3.3 The Importance of American Interactionism**
- 7.4 Questions**
 - 7.4.1 Answer in Detail**
 - 7.4.2 Answer Briefly**
- 7.5 Understanding Science and the Social World**
- 7.6 Knowledge of Typifications and Recipes**
- 7.7 Schutz's Concept of the Lifeworld**
 - 7.7.1 Stock Knowledge at Hand**
- 7.8 Intersubjectivity**
- 7.9 Conclusion**
- 7.10 Summary**
- 7.11 Questions**
 - 7.11.1 Answer in Detail**
 - 7.11.2 Answer Briefly**
- 7.12 References and Suggested Readings**

7.1 Objectives

- To understand the meaning of phenomenology.
- To understand the influences that led to the development of Schutz's phenomenology.
- To understand how Schutz took forward the philosophy of phenomenology based on the influences he had on his intellectual development.
- To be able to grasp how phenomenology looks at and analyses the social world.

7.2 Introduction

The project of a phenomenological understanding of the social world was begun by a German philosopher named Edmund Husserl (1859 - 1938). The basic thrust of the philosophy of phenomenology is a subjective understanding of the social world by studying the human social psyche abstracted from the physical and material reality in which it exists. It is essentially a study of the structure of human consciousness and experiences. Alfred Schutz built upon the phenomenology developed by Husserl and added to it the further influences from Max Weber's ideas of *verstehen* or empathetic understanding and American interactionism.

Schutz was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1899 and was trained at the University of Vienna in law. He worked as a banker rather than an academician and gradually turned to the sociological discipline of phenomenology since he did not find meaning in the work that he was doing. He was highly influenced by Weber, especially his ideas of ideal types and *verstehen* and by Husserl's phenomenology. These influences led to the work *The Phenomenology of the Social World* which was published in 1932 and was translated into English much later in 1967, thereby limiting his readership at the time of publication.

He moved to the United States of America during the Second World War and engaged himself in both, legal counsel to banking as well as teaching phenomenological sociology at the New School for Social Research in New York. He began teaching and working on his phenomenological sociology full time only in 1956 and passed away in 1959, leaving very few years for him to properly develop as well as spread his work. Moreover, Schutz's area of interest, i.e., phenomenology, was rather uncommon at the time that he was working on his version of phenomenology. These two reasons caused him to remain under the radar of fame at that time that he was most active in his writing and teaching. His work received its due fame and recognition only after his death, especially with the translation of his work.

The most important contribution of Schutz in the field of phenomenology was to comprehensively bring together the phenomenology of Husserl, the ideas of American symbolic interactionism and the Weberian theory of social action.

7.3 The Influences on Schutz's Phenomenology

There are three distinct influences that aided Schutz in his project of the development of phenomenology as already mentioned. In what follows, we will go through these three influences beginning with the most important influence—Edmund Husserl.

7.3.1 The Influence of Edmund Husserl

Edmund Husserl was the originator of the idea of phenomenology. His intellectual intention was to uncover the structure of human consciousness or the transcendental ego since it is central to understanding the world around us and to the creation of knowledge. Being able to uncover the transcendental ego will help us to understand the most fundamental and invariable properties of the human consciousness. It is this human consciousness or the senses that help in making sense of the external world by acting as a mediator. Anything that exists in the external world or "out there", whether concrete such as people and things or abstract such as norms and values, is realized through human beings' experiences of them. It is these experiences that make an impact on the human consciousness or the human senses to make us aware about the existence of those things. Thus, any contact with the physical reality around us is mediated through and aided by our senses rather than being direct. Phenomenology, according to Husserl, was about the study of the processes of consciousness or how the human mind and experiences create for the human beings a sense of what is out there, external to them.

It was Husserl who came up with the concept of *lifeworld* which was later on used by Schutz as well. The lifeworld, put simply, is the world that is external to the human being that the human being is perceiving indirectly through senses and experiences. The lifeworld is the world of natural attitude and is considered as reality by human beings. There are two basic features of the lifeworld in Husserl's understanding of the concept - a) it is taken for granted. Human beings rarely, if ever, consciously think about what is out there in their realities. In spite of rarely being a matter of conscious reflection and thought, it plays a great role in shaping how human beings behave or how they think b) human beings presume that they are all experiencing the same lifeworld around them. However, it is difficult to say whether the lifeworld of each individual human being is really the same since the lifeworld is perceived at the level of human consciousness and therefore one cannot say for sure that one human being's consciousness perceives

something in the exact same way that another human being's consciousness does. In spite of that, human beings behave with each other and operate in the social world as if they are experiencing the same lifeworld with all its associated implications.

On the basis of this understanding of the lifeworld, Husserl asked how human beings ascertain what is real or objective by breaking away from the experience-mediated understanding that is prevalent in the lifeworld. He wanted to understand how human beings come to an objective understanding of their surroundings and create naturalistic sciences of human behaviour and organization when everything that is surrounding them is perceived indirectly and subjectively. This question led Husserl to challenge the basic philosophy and methodology of the naturalistic sciences. Natural sciences or naturalistic sciences look at the world in an objective manner that exists irrespective of the human being and can be directly known through specific methods of measurement. Husserl challenged this idea of direct understanding of the external world by saying that if we are perceiving everything only via the medium of our experiences or our senses then it is not possible to objectively and directly understand this external world unlike what the naturalistic sciences claim to do. He asked how something can be measured objectively and directly when everything out there is connected to us indirectly by our subjectivities.

Husserl also gave an answer to this question. His answer was that in order to be able to properly understand the social world and events we need to get to the essence of consciousness. The content of the consciousness is not that important in trying to make sense of the external world. What is actually important is to understand the processes of the consciousness that determine how various things and events are understood by individuals experiencing them. This task of getting to the essence of consciousness is a philosophical endeavour.

To get to the essence of consciousness, one needs to radically abstract the individual from the interpersonal experiences and discover the "pure mind", or the fundamental processes going on in the individual mind, by suspending the substance of life world, i.e., those events and things that are being experienced. Once the particular contents of human experience are abstracted and then suspended, only then can the processes of human consciousness or the essence of human consciousness be achieved.

This kind of philosophical enterprise was too complex and vague to be able to come to an abstracted theory of consciousness. However, his concepts of lifeworld, radical

abstraction, etc. were able to influence Schutz in his development of a theory of phenomenological-interactionism.

7.3.2 A Critique of Max Weber

Schutz began his phenomenological writings with a criticism of Max Weber, specifically his conception of social action. As per the theory of social action, Weber said, social action is that human behaviour which is subjectively meaningful to the actor and to those to whom it is oriented. Social action takes place when human actors are aware of each other's presence and actions and attribute certain common meanings to those actions or the contexts in which the actions take place. Therefore, according to Weber, to be able to understand social reality one must look into the realm of meanings. For a science of society such as sociology to understand the social world and social action, it must be able to reach into human consciousness or subjectivity and uncover how each human being defines and perceives the world around him or her. This can be done through the method of sympathetic introspection, or what Weber called *verstehen*. *Verstehen* requires researchers to adequately penetrate a situation to the point that they reach the subjective realm of the actors that they are studying. It is only through *verstehen* that social action can be properly understood and analysed.

Weber, however, stops at prescribing *verstehen* to understand human consciousness and does not go into further explanations regarding why or how actors can share common meanings about the world that they are experiencing. According to Schutz, Weber simplistically assumes that actors share common meanings in a social situation but does not think about how those meanings are being created in the first place. Schutz himself answers this question by coming up with the idea of intersubjectivity which shall be discussed later.

Another Weberian concept that influenced Schutz was that of ideal types which was used in Schutz's analysis as second-order constructs which are created by the social scientist based on first-order constructs or typifications (to be discussed later) that are used in the lifeworld.

In any case, Schutz was positively influenced by Weber's ideas of ideal type as well as sympathetic introspection. While he accepts, following Husserl, that human beings have a taken-for-granted and commonly shared lifeworld which shapes their thought and action, he moves to Weber to suggest how to understand that lifeworld or people's

consciousness. The method of *verstehen* or sympathetic introspection is what should be employed in entering into and understanding the consciousness of individual human beings according to Weber and this is what Schutz advocated too if one wished to understand the lifeworld.

7.3.3 The Importance of American Interactionism

While Husserl and Weber were the early influences on Schutz's phenomenology, American interactionist theorists such as George Herbert Mead and William I. Thomas influenced Schutz in the later part of his intellectual trajectory. The influence of interactionism was seen the most in the concept of intersubjectivity. Two interactionist concepts in particular were of the greatest influence - Mead's concept of role-taking and Thomas's concept of definition of the situation. Both these concepts were used to understand how shared meanings are arrived at by individuals interacting in a particular context which is what intersubjectivity also tries to understand.

Thomas's concept of definition of the situation is something that is used by actors in a situation of interaction to explain what is expected of each of them in that situation. Roles, statuses and orientation to them are attained by defining the situation thus helping actors understand how to behave in particular interaction situations. The definitions of situations are created through past experiences but are also altered to match each particular interaction situation as it arises in the present time. These two ideas point to the development of shared meanings about interaction situations among those involved and therefore was of interest to Schutz in developing his concept of intersubjectivity.

Mead's idea of the mind being a social process since it arises through interaction was appealing to Schutz. What was even more appealing to Schutz was Mead's concept of role-taking, i.e., assuming the perspectives of each other in an interaction situation and orienting action and behaviour accordingly. Schutz became very interested in trying to understand how actors take each other's roles in an interaction situation and anticipate and typify how each actor would behave in particular interaction situations. The generalized other concept of sharing meanings with a large number of people was also an important influence of Mead on Schutz. In the end, however, Schutz's phenomenology often challenges Mead's interactionist ideas.

7.4 Questions

7.4.1 Answer in Detail :

- (a) Discuss Edmund Husserl's phenomenological project.
- (b) How did symbolic interactionism of the early years affect Schutz's understanding of the creation of meaning?
- (c) Was Weber a negative or positive influence on Schutz? Explain how.

7.4.2 Answer Briefly :

- (a) What is the lifeworld?
- (a) What do you understand by the essence of consciousness?
- (c) What is meant by social action? How is it important in the phenomenological project?

7.5 Understanding Science and the Social World

Schutz viewed science as one of multiple realities instead of as the only reality, or rather the indicator of a singular reality. Dreams, art, religion, culture, etc. are all equally important realities in their own right even though they might not have a physical or material existence. However, according to Schutz, the highest form of reality or the one of the greatest importance, is the reality that is experienced in the intersubjective lifeworld in everyday life. It is this importance of the lifeworld in the development of phenomenological sociology that Schutz tried to incorporate into a more rigorous and objectivity-based conception of science. Schutz wanted to create social constructs or ideal types of the subjective world as experienced in the lifeworld as well as of the objective world which are to be abstracted from the subjective social constructs. Thus, social scientists are to create ideal types of both actors as well as actions to which can be used as tools to understand the social world.

Schutz was more interested in the construction of second-order ideal types by social scientists which are to act as dummies for first-order constructs that are ideal types for the real experiences of actors in the lifeworld. In the ideal typical puppet or dummy, the social scientist can control how the consciousness will act in a particular situation. Thus, it might be understood as a form of controlled and imaginative experimentation based on the constructs known as ideal types.

Schutz gave five postulates that were deemed necessary for the proper construction of ideal types. They are :

1. Postulate of Relevance: the approach to studying the social phenomenon or thing as employed by the social scientist must be relevant to the thing or phenomenon that is being studied in the lifeworld.
2. Postulate of Adequacy: social scientists should construct ideal types in such a manner that the typifications of actors' actions and behaviours, or the first-order constructs, in the lifeworld make sense not only to the actors themselves but also to others around them.
3. Postulate of Logical Consistency: it is only when the ideal types have high degrees of consistency, clarity and formal logic that they can be deemed to be objectively valid.
4. Postulate of Compatibility: the ideal types formulated by the social scientist must be compatible with the existing body of knowledge in the discipline concerned so that it can be subsumed under scientific knowledge and fill in the gaps.
5. Postulate of Subjective Interpretation: the ideal types constructed by the social scientist must be true to the real subjective meanings given to actions, contexts and phenomena by the real human beings.

If a social scientist is able to create ideal types based on these postulates, then, according to Schutz, these models or constructs will not only properly reflect the subjectivities regarding the lifeworld of the actors involved but also be true to the rigours of science as we know it.

7.6 Knowledge of Typifications and Recipes

Typifications are the first-order social constructs that people create and use in their everyday interactions on the basis of homogenous human characteristics. All the labels given to things that exist and we perceive of are first-order constructs or typifications. Language is the best medium through which the process of typification takes place. Any time that we are labelling something, we are using language and therefore typification depends upon the use of language. Language helps in not only typifying the world around

us but also helps in typifying ourselves and conceptions about ourselves - an idea that is directly related to the symbolic interactionist ideas. Additionally, these typifications must be socially approved so that everyone can use them to arrive at same meanings of the world around them.

Typifications are used generally by the society at large and people learn them and store them in their memories to be used as occasions demand. Typifications have been used since ages and therefore they have been etched into traditions and cultures and have become 'habitual tools for dealing with social life' (Ritzer 1996: 395). Thus, typifications are usually not created by each individual for each thing or situation but are preconstructed and individuals learn them through socialization and simply retrieve from memory a typification necessary for a particular thing or situation.

While typifications are first-order constructs that label the world that we live in, recipes are ways of dealing with various things or situations in that world. They are ways of figuring out or trying to control different aspects of our day-to-day experiences. Recipes are used to deal with simple everyday life situations such as how to greet someone. For example, if someone we meet greets us with the recipe "how are you doing?" we will handle that situation by greeting them back with a recipe such as "I am doing well. What about you?" or "I am fine and you?". Thus, recipes are methods of dealing with a variety of social and interactional situations that we encounter every day.

All our daily activities, carried out so nonchalantly, as if without any predetermination whatsoever, are actually done with the help of recipes which have also become culturally etched into our everyday lives just like typifications have. Therefore, right from waking up in the morning till going to bed at night, all the things that we do and the way we do them are part of recipes. Only when such situations arise where the already existing typifications and recipes do not work do we actively try to create new ones. Problematic situations arise all the time and therefore one cannot solely rely on the pre-existing typifications and recipes and need to be able to think for themselves and create new ways of labelling and handling the situations they find themselves in. Thus, typifications are recipes that are essentially methods of making sense of and dealing with our lifeworlds.

7.7 Schutz's Concept of the Lifeworld

This concept was derived from Husserl's phenomenology. Schutz defines the lifeworld

as the world where all the taken-for-granted and mundane activities take place. There are a variety of terms that Schutz used to describe the lifeworld such as a common-sense world, the world of everyday life, etc. (Ritzer 1996). In the lifeworld, since it is taken for granted, people behave in what Schutz called their natural attitude, or in a manner where they do not doubt the typifications, recipes and their applicability to deal with situations. According to Schutz, there are six basic features of a lifeworld which will be discussed in the next few lines following Ritzer (1996: 397-397).

- (a) There is a sense of what Schutz called wide-awakeness or a sense of attention towards the life one is living and all the requirements of that life.
- (b) There is a suspension of doubts related to the existence of the lifeworld, hence it has taken for granted character.
- (c) The lifeworld is defined by work being carried out by the people in it.
- (d) The entire self is experienced in the lifeworld as the working self.
- (e) The lifeworld is also characterised by a specific form of sociality which is based on a common intersubjectivity related to all communication and social action being carried out in the lifeworld.
- f) Time is put in a very specific perspective in the lifeworld as an intersection between an individual's own flow of time and the flow of time in the larger society.

Ritzer (1996), points out an important observation. He says that even though reading Schutz's works one might think that there is only one lifeworld but in reality there are multiple lifeworlds, one belonging to each individual and every person in a society is part of not only one's own lifeworld but also of the lifeworlds of others. This lifeworld, although intersubjective, is pre-existent since the lifeworlds existed right from the beginning of human civilization. We interact with the lifeworld through experiences in it and our interpretation of those experiences. There is, thus, a dialectical relationship between the lifeworlds and people inhabiting them, i.e., there is a birth of a structure vs. agency perspective in his work.

The lifeworld is characterized by taken-for-granted, habitual action. Schutz wanted to understand how the meanings of these habitual actions are commonly arrived at by the actors and the answer to this was derived through sharing stock knowledge at hand.

7.7.1 Stock Knowledge at Hand

The stock of knowledge is all that knowledge that is related to a situation that existed in the past and therefore is based on pre-existing experiences and the knowledge coming out of it. It is also the knowledge that comes out as a result of an individuals' own experiences of situations in the present time. Thus, stock knowledge at hand of an individual is that knowledge related to the past and present experiences of understanding and dealing with various situations in everyday interaction. It acts as a frame of reference. Therefore, 'each situation is defined and mastered with the help of the stock knowledge' (Schutz & Luckmann 1973 : 100). The stock of knowledge at hand has a given character in that it is predetermined. The stock knowledge at hand includes 'rules, social recipes, conceptions of appropriate conduct, and other information that allows them to act in their social world' (Turner 2012: 327). As such, typifications and recipes are important components of the stock knowledge at hand. Schutz emphasised the following features of the stock knowledge at hand, as comprehensively put by Turner (2012) :

1. The everyday world of reality around a person is his or her stock of knowledge at hand. This reality that is shaped by the stock knowledge at hand is the paramount reality according to Schutz or the ultimate reality of a person and helps people in dealing with their realities.
2. The stock knowledge at hand has a taken for granted character just like the lifeworld and is rarely an object or matter of conscious thought and reflection by the people using and creating that knowledge.
3. The stock knowledge is learnt by each new member of a society through a process of socialization.
4. The actors in the social world assume that they share the same lifeworlds and stock of knowledge at hand, at least in part, which leads to a sense of what Schutz called reciprocity of perspectives, i.e., people in a situation of interaction are able to reciprocate each other's points and perspectives on the basis of this assumption of shared stock knowledge which enables a smooth interaction situation.
5. On the basis of the shared stocks of knowledge learnt through socialization and the capacity for reciprocity of perspectives by individuals in a situation of interaction as a result of that knowledge, actors or individuals presume that

they all live and interact in the same world with the same properties everywhere. It is this knowledge of living in a common world that holds society together.

6. Since actors presume that they live in a common world with common properties, they engage in typification. Most situations of interaction except the ones that are very intimate or personal are carried out with the help of typification based on the stock knowledge at hand regarding the various situations cropping up in everyday interactions and the appropriate and typical reactions to them. Even actors are put into typical categories so as to decide their orientations towards one another and the appropriate line of response in a situation of interaction.

Thus, Schutz's understanding of the stock knowledge at hand represents a mix between European phenomenology and American interactionist tradition. For example, the concept of stock of knowledge at hand is influenced by both Husserl as well as Mead's concept of the "generalized other". The idea of reciprocity of perspectives is close to Husserl's phenomenology and Weber's *verstehen* as also to Mead's concept of "role taking". However, what is most important in Schutz's thesis and is also a departure from the interactionist tradition, is that according to Schutz's phenomenology, actors in a situation of interaction orient towards each other based on an assumption - an assumption of a commonly shared stock knowledge at hand, typifications and recipes and reciprocity of perspectives or an assumption of intersubjectivity. This assumption of intersubjectivity is, of course, unverifiable but it is what holds society together as per phenomenological analysis.

7.8 Intersubjectivity

As Ritzer (1996) explains, Schutz gave a lot of attention to developing the idea of intersubjectivity not only because Husserl did not give it enough attention in his phenomenological endeavour but also because other social scientists too have tended to ignore the processes of intersubjectivity and taken it for granted. Intersubjectivity seeks to shed light on such questions as 'How do we know other motives, interests, and meanings? Other selves? How is a reciprocity of perspectives possible? How is mutual understanding and communication possible?' (Ritzer 1996: 398). An intersubjective world is a commonly shared world at the present time and context where interaction is taking place. According to Schutz, it is this commonly experienced subjectivity in both time and space that is the essence of the concept of intersubjectivity. It is because something

is being commonly experienced that all actors involved in that situation are able to grasp each other's subjective states of being and meanings attached to those states. There is a reciprocal grasping of the subjective states of each individual and this is what intersubjectivity is.

Intersubjectivity is not only about sharing common subjective states between actors in a process of interaction but is also anything that is social in nature according to Schutz. In Schutz's analysis, there are three ways in which knowledge can be intersubjective.

1. Knowledge is intersubjective through a reciprocity of perspectives. It is assumed by actors in an interaction situation that they are sharing the same knowledge or views regarding things that exist around them. However, there is also a chance that views might be different for the same thing among different people. In such a situation, the actors will take resort to two forms of idealizations -
 - (a) Idealizations about the interchangeability of standpoints, i.e., the assumption that if we stood in the other person's shoes, we would have the same standpoint about the thing or situation as that person.
 - (b) Idealization about the congruency of the system of relevance, i.e., the assumption that the differences in standpoints can be ignored and that the 'objects are defined sufficiently alike to allow us to proceed on a practical basis as if the definitions were identical' (Ritzer 1996: 399).
2. Knowledge is intersubjective also because of the fact that its origins are social. Most knowledge used in everyday interaction to define objects and events is already a part of the existing stock of knowledge and only a small portion of the knowledge used by individuals are created by them on their own depending upon particular situations. Individuals learn the shared stock knowledge at hand through childhood socialization and interaction with parents, teachers, friends, etc.
3. The feature of social distribution of knowledge makes it intersubjective. The amount or even nature of knowledge will vary depending upon the social position of the individual. Thus, stock of knowledge at hand is differentially distributed between different social positions and interactions have to be oriented keeping in mind these differences.

However, Schutz also mentions that the stock knowledge at hand is also personal,

based on individual experiences and cultural realms of each actor. These private stocks of knowledge, being actor-specific, are not a part of the lifeworld since they cannot be scientifically studied. Even so, the individualistic, unique and private aspects of knowledge are important for other analyses.

7.9 Conclusion

Schutz, therefore, took from Husserl's phenomenology and propelled the philosophy much ahead in a more precise direction taking from Weber as well as the American interactionists. He turned the Husserlian phenomenological project outward to try and understand how common meanings and shared knowledge are at all created in the first place. Schutz was able to bring together Husserl's idea of the lifeworld and the process of interaction and show that one's lifeworld will always influence one's interactions. In trying to understand how the lifeworld affects the process of interaction, he went on to the idea of intersubjectivity, i.e., the sharing of or at least the presumption that there is a sharing of common subjective understandings of situations and objects which is realized through the processes of interaction.

7.10 Summary

The main ideas of Schutz that are of importance in his phenomenology are - his idea of science, the construction of social constructs to denote the social world around oneself and also operate successfully in it, the ideas of typifications and recipes as important constructs to operate in the social world, the issue of intersubjectivity and the relations between the lifeworld and intersubjective states regarding that lifeworld.

The basic concern of Schutz was how human beings negotiate the reality that is already present in the cultural realm and learnt through socialization with the realities that they themselves produce depending upon unique situations and demands. There is a dialectical relationship between the social and cultural worlds in which people exist and the worlds that people create as a result of personal experiences and specific situations. Intersubjectivity, typifications, recipes, reciprocity of perspectives, stock knowledge at hand, etc. are all the concepts and ideas that Schutz created or enlarged in order to understand this dialectical relationship.

7.11 Questions

7.11.1. Answer in Detail

1. Describe the concept of the lifeworld and list its features.
2. How did Weber's idea of ideal types influence Schutzian phenomenology?
3. How do typifications and recipes help in dealing with the social world around us?
4. According to Schutz, how can we scientifically understand the social world around us? What are the scientific postulates that he proposed in this endeavour?
5. After Schutz, explain in detail the idea of intersubjectivity with special reference to the intersubjectivity of knowledge.
6. Listing the features of stock knowledge at hand show how it helps in an interaction situation.

7.11.2 Answer in Brief

1. What is meant by reciprocity of perspectives?
2. What is meant by interchangeability of standpoints?
3. Describe the concept of intersubjectivity.
4. What does Schutz mean by the interchangeability of standpoints?

7.12 References

- Dreher, J., (2011). 'Alfred Schutz' in G. Ritzer & J. Stepniskyed. The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Major Social Theorists, Volume 1: Classical Social Theorists. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell. 489-510.
- Embree, L.E. ed. (2011). Collected Papers V. Phenomenology and the Social Sciences. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Ritzer, G. (1996). Classical Sociological Theory. New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies Inc.
- Schutz, A. & Thomas Luckmann (1973). The Structures of the Lifeworld. R.M. Zaner & T. Engelhardt (trans.). Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

- Schutz, A. (1967). *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. G. Walsh & F. Lehnert (trans.). Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Swingewood, A. (1984). *A Short History of Sociological Thought*. New York: Macmillan Education.
- Turner, J.H (1987). *The Structure of Sociological Theory*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
- Turner, J.H. (2012). *Contemporary Sociological Theory*. USA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Wagner, H. ed. (1970). *On Phenomenology and Social Relations: Selected Writings*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wolff, K. H. (1978). 'Phenomenology and Sociology' in T. Bottomore& R. Nisbet ed. *A History of Sociological Analysis*. New York: Basic Books, Inc. 499-556.

Unit : 8 □ Contributions of Garfinkel

Structure :

- 8.1 Objectives**
- 8.2 Introduction**
 - 8.2.1 Origins**
 - 8.2.2 Nature**
- 8.3 Garfinkel's Ethnomethodology**
 - 8.3.1 The "Jury Project"**
- 8.4 Questions**
 - 8.4.1 Answer in Detail**
 - 8.4.2 Answer Briefly**
- 8.5 Garfinkel's Principles of Ethnomethodology**
- 8.6 Garfinkel's Methods of Enquiry**
 - 8.6.1 Breaching Experiments**
 - 8.6.2 Decision Rules**
- 8.7 Conclusion**
- 8.8 Summary**
- 8.9 Questions**
 - 8.9.1 Answer in Detail**
 - 8.9.2 Answer Briefly**
- 8.10 References and Suggested Readings**

8.1 Objectives

- To understand the concept of ethnomethodology and its importance in understanding social interaction and social reality.
- To learn about the origin and nature of ethnomethodology.
- To understand Garfinkel's role and influences on him in creating the program of

ethnomethodology.

- To learn about the principles that Garfinkel laid out in ethnomethodology.
- To learn about some of the experiments that he and his associates conducted in the field of ethnomethodological inquiry.
- To be able to, finally, understand how to use the ethnomethodological principles and methods of inquiry to study social interaction and through that arrive at an understanding of social reality.

8.2 Introduction

The term ethnomethodology is derivative of three terms - ethno, meaning folk or people; ology, meaning the study of; and methods. Thus, it essentially denotes the study of methods that people use in the process of everyday interactions. The basic question underlying ethnomethodology is one derived from Husserl and Schutz's phenomenological projects—how do phenomenologists and sociologists in general assume or presume that the world they live in is at all real? For ethnomethodologists, more than the social world being a real one, what is more important for analysis is the ways in which people in the social world go about creating, altering or maintaining a sense of an external social reality. This sense is created, altered or maintained by people using certain regular, well-known and accepted methods of interaction in their everyday lives. Thus, ethnomethodology is the study of the methods that people use in their everyday lives to create the presumption that they live in a particular kind of social world with a specific order and structure to it.

For the longest time, ethnomethodology did not get a place as a proper part of sociology and was only on the fringes of the discipline until Harold Garfinkel and his colleagues began to push for the importance of ethnomethodology in their work *Ethnomethodology's Program* (1996). The importance that ethnomethodology subsequently gained was largely a result of the astounding success of this method used in conversation analysis. Thus, ethnomethodology began to be taken seriously as a part of sociology only with Garfinkel's contributions which shall be discussed in detail subsequently.

8.1.1 Origins

Although ethnomethodology derives most of its influence from a phenomenological

philosophy, yet, interactionist ideas also played a role in the process of the development of ethnomethodology. Following Turner (1987), the following main influences of ethnomethodology can be seen.

Just as Blumer's interactionism tried to understand the actual process of interaction and the processes through which common meanings are created by actors during the process of interaction, so too do ethnomethodologists try to understand how common meanings are being created during interaction. The only and major difference is that ethnomethodologists try to study how people create a sense of sharing common views and meanings about the external social reality and that they try to understand how the presumption about a common external, objective world arises.

Goffman's dramaturgical method of interaction, especially the idea of impression management, is another important influence on ethnomethodology. Goffman said that just like in a real drama people manage their gestures in such a way so as to create a particular form of impression on the audience, in real-life interaction too the same goes on. People interact in a way so as to create certain types of impressions of themselves on their audience. Ethnomethodologists, while being interested to know about the techniques of impression management in social interaction, are more interested to know how these techniques help in the creation of a sense of an external social reality.

Schutz's ideas of a paramount reality and the taken-for-granted character of the lifeworld are important concerns for ethnomethodologists. Starting from understanding the social world in a phenomenological manner, ethnomethodologists go on to analyse how actors create a sense of social reality and social order, i.e., the methods or practices involved in the process of creating, maintaining or changing a commonly shared social reality.

Thus, the essential question for ethnomethodologists is not how is order possible in society and social interaction but rather how actors create a sense of a presumption that there is order in the social world, i.e., how a sense of order is possible.

8.2.2 Nature

The basic outlook of ethnomethodology is the study of processes of interaction as observed among people rather than aiming for arriving at valid and reliable observations. The search, thus, is not for rigorous, scientific knowledge but for the common, everyday processes among the people in a society that create, maintain or alter a sense of commonly shared reality.

Main Elements : Ethnomethodology can be defined by certain basic principles as put forward by Garfinkel. They are listed briefly as follows and will be elaborated upon further.

- (a) **Reflexivity**—The concept of reflexivity focuses attention on how people in interaction go about maintaining the presumption that they are guided by a particular reality' (Turner 1987: 395). Human interaction is carried out in such a manner so as to maintain a certain vision of the social reality, even when visions seem contradictory.
- (b) **Indexicality of Meanings**—The concept of indexicality of meanings denotes the fact that certain words, gestures, cues, etc. are tied to particular contexts. Ethnomethodologists, therefore, try to uncover the indexicalities of meanings to be able to figure out how common meanings are constructed in particular contexts and therefore a particular sense of reality is created.
- (c) **Unique Adequacy**—This concept refers to the fact that researchers have to analyse what goes on in a specific context based upon their understanding of only that context without the use of theoretical knowledge or resource that was created based on research in a different context. This will ensure that the ethnomethodologist gets the most accurate account and analysis of what he or she is studying.
- (d) **Accountability**—Accounts are the ways in which members describe something such as events, situations or behaviours that they have witnessed or experienced. Accountability is the process by which the account is described. Actors in a particular situation need to be accountable or responsible for the way they are behaving so that it is objective, verifiable and reportable.

General Interactive Methods: While the above are the main elements or principles of ethnomethodology, there are certain methods that are used by different ethnomethodologists in different situations. Aaron Cicourel (Turner 1987) has comprehensively brought together some of the ethnomethods that are most commonly used in a process of interaction and studied by ethnomethodologists. They are as follows.

- (a) **Searching for the Normal Form**— in a situation of interaction, if the interacting parties feel that there is a sense of confusion or ambiguity in what is being considered real then they will omit all such gestures that might lead to ambiguity

and try to return to those gestures and methods of interaction that are considered normal for that particular context of interaction.

- (b) **Doing a Reciprocity of Perspectives**— actors tend to operate under the presumption that were they to exchange positions with each other, they would experience the same versions of reality as each other. Actors can ignore the meanings and views that arise in their own specific contexts when exchanging positions with each other and therefore engage successfully in a reciprocity of perspectives.
- (c) **Etcetera Principle**— actors usually do not always verbalise everything they are meaning to say and use certain words and gestures to fill in those gaps. The use of such words or gestures indicates using the etcetera principle as named by ethnomethodologists. By the use of such words or gestures like a shrug, or saying "you know" when trying to explain something the sense of reality is maintained without having the interaction interrupted.

Ethnomethodology as a distinctive theoretical perspective was established by Harold Garfinkel in his book *Studies in Ethnomethodology* published in 1967. In what follows, we will look specifically into Garfinkel's ethnomethodology.

8.3 Garfinkel's Ethnomethodology

Garfinkel was born in New Jersey in the USA on 29th October, 1917. He had quite the theoretical college experience studying accounting that laid the foundations for his interest in theoretical knowledge. While volunteering at a Quaker work camp in Georgia, he got to work with students from a variety of backgrounds which was an eye-opening experience for him that led him to take up the study of sociology later on. He did his Masters course from the University of North Carolina in 1942 and submitted a thesis on inter-racial homicide. At Harvard University, while doing his PhD, Garfinkel met Talcott Parsons and was influenced by his sociology although Garfinkel set his work apart from that of Parson's by making it more empirically based rather than abstract categories like Parson's'. Garfinkel was invited to Princeton University by Wilbert. E. Moore to work on an Organizational Behaviour Project during which he met some of the stalwarts in the fields of behavioural and social sciences such as Paul Lazarsfeld, Herbert A. Simon and many others. In 1952 he completed his doctoral thesis entitled

"The Perception of the Other: A Study in Social Order". In 1954, he was invited to talk at the American Sociological Association where he used the term ethnomethodology for the first time. In the same year, he joined the University of California, Los Angeles and worked in different departments throughout his career there. In 1995 he was awarded the Cooley-Mead Award by the American Sociological Association for his significant contributions to sociology and ethnomethodology and received an honorary doctorate from the University of Nottingham in 1996. He officially retired as a faculty from UCLA in 1987 but continued to work there until his death on 21st April, 2011 at the age of 93.

8.3.1 The "Jury Project"

At the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association (ASA) in the year 1954, Garfinkel along with Saul Mendlovitz gave a talk on the basis of their research Jury Project. It was in this talk that the ethnomethodological tradition was formally unveiled by Garfinkel. In this project, they analysed audio recordings of jury proceedings to uncover the methods that the participants in the jury, known as the jurors, used to deliberate amongst each other as members of a particular social group called the jury rather than of any other group. They had their own specific methodological techniques and things such as words, ways of viewing events, etc. as factual evidence of what really happened rather than simply as assumptions about the reality. These methodological techniques were unique to their particular context where they were acting as jurors. Their decisions were also tied to the specific contexts.

Garfinkel did find a little inspiration to name his type of research methodology and the principle behind it as ethnomethodology. As Maynard (2012) mentions, while Garfinkel was writing on the recordings of the jury proceedings, he came upon terms such as ethnobotany, ethnophysiology, etc. which imply folk or localised ways of looking at matters related to botany, physiology, etc. It is by reading these that it came to Garfinkel that the name of the sociological enterprise that he was building could be named ethnomethodology, implying the study of folk methods. Thus, it was through the study of folk methods that Garfinkel was interested in uncovering the characteristic features of social interactions and the social world in general. The label given to such an exercise was ethnomethodology because the authors wanted to emphasise on the ethno or folk methods that were used within specific contexts of events and knowledge associated with those events and contexts.

While phenomenology also studies interactions tied to specific contexts, there is a difference between Garfinkel's ethnomethodology and phenomenology. Rather than depend on second-order constructs like phenomenology does, Garfinkel wanted to create an approach to studying the human world and interaction in a more first-hand manner by adopting a perspective that would reflect the actual lived experiences of those involved in the interaction process. Thus, with the talk at the ASA began Garfinkel's project of ethnomethodology and he set out to delineate the principles of ethnomethodology.

8.4 Questions

8.4.1 Answer in Detail :

1. Write a note on the origins and general nature of ethnomethodology.
2. Write a note on the development of ethnomethodology in the hands of Garfinkel and his associates with specific reference to the Jury Project.

8.4.2 Answer Briefly

1. List the general interactive methods used by actors in a situation of interaction as per ethnomethodologists.
2. Explain briefly the difference between reflexive action or interaction and reciprocity of perspectives.

8.5 Garfinkel's Principles of Ethnomethodology

Since Garfinkel was concerned with the creation of a sense of commonly held reality through interaction, therefore we will discuss specifically those principles that are of importance from an interactionist perspective. They are listed below.

- (a) **Unique Adequacy :** Uniquely adequate descriptions are meant to be exact descriptions of the phenomena and behaviours being observed in a particular context. There are two forms of unique adequacy - a weak form and a strong form. The weak form of unique adequacy is the basic level of competence required from the researcher when he or she is studying a particular setting or context. It implies that in its weak form, unique adequacy requires the researcher to have the basic knowledge about the setting that would enable him or her to perform as a natural member of that setting adequately without censure from

others. The strong form of unique adequacy requires the researcher to engage in rigorous analysis of events and interactions based on their settings rather than use any resources that are not relevant to that setting or derived directly from it. To be able to practice unique adequacy in its strong form, the researcher needs to practice ethnomethodological indifference wherein the researcher is indifferent to any kind of information that has arisen from a different context assuming that might help explain what goes on in the setting currently being studied. If sociologists are able to adopt a method or perspective wherein they would be able to reflect the social actors' own lived experiences directly rather than typifying them through second-order constructs, then they will be able to create uniquely adequate descriptions of the social world that they would be studying. This approach is in direct contradiction to the interactionists' tendencies to simply imagine the actors' perspectives about the social world in which they are operating.

- (b) **Accountability** : Accountability, in Garfinkel's works, describes the situation where actions and behaviours of actors are directly visible and/or audible to observers and therefore rational in nature and objectively reportable. Thus, participants in a social situation can be held responsible for their actions if these actions are accountable, i.e., rational, observable and reportable. This means that the actors' actions can be assessed regarding how and why they were created as per observable evidence. According to the thesis of ethnomethodology, order in a society is created through action rather than imposed upon action. It is because actions are premised on the principle of accountability that accountability becomes the basis of the organization of action in different contexts and situations according to ethnomethodology. The underlying rationalities of any action can be interpreted as documents that help explain the actions taken by the actors. The actual event or interaction is seen as a document that is a proof of the underlying pattern of interactions in specific contexts and therefore are helpful in understanding the organization of action and behaviour in the everyday social reality. Order is maintained in a situation of interaction because the actors bear responsibility for their actions by taking the meanings of actions and gestures for granted and allowing the interaction to flow on its own without any hindrances until they are asked to explain themselves for an anomalous word, gesture or cue that undermines the taken-for-granted character of an interaction situation. In order to show this, Garfinkel used breaching experiments where he deliberately disrupted the natural

flow of conversation by putting in words and questions that threw off the taken-for-granted character of what he called the background expectancies in a particular context of interaction. Such disruptions would force the actors involved in the interaction to look for means to once again normalize the situation by giving the other accounts as explanations of the unanticipated disruptions.

- (c) **Indexicality of Meaning :** Indexicality is the idea that actors' accounts are linked to certain contexts and derive meaning from those contexts. The concept of indexicality of meanings denotes the fact that certain words, gestures, cues, etc. are tied to particular contexts. Therefore, if we try to understand these gestures, words, cues, etc. in an abstracted form, i.e., taking them out of their context and studying them in a different, even in neutral setting, we will not be able to arrive at the proper vision of the reality that has been created through those particular words, gestures or cues. Going against the generally used approach in sociology where pre-built concepts and categories are used to make sense of what is going on in a particular social situation, Garfinkel and his associates advocated the approach where the researcher is a participant in that particular setting so that he or she is able to experience for himself or herself how other participants in a situation create order and meanings with the help of symbolic methods of communication that are intricately tied to their settings. Ethnomethodology should try to understand how actors are acting in certain manners in certain moments within certain contexts. Thus, the aim is to study indexical action. It is through indexicality that actors are able to create a commonly held vision of their social reality. By using this principle, researchers can see for themselves the actual ways in which actors create indexical expressions such as words, gestures, cues, etc. and use them to create and maintain a sense of a reality that is being commonly experienced by everybody. Not only are meanings of actions tied to particular contexts but the actions are also sequential in nature in any context of interaction. Actors do not come to a situation of interaction with premeditated strategies and ideas about how they will act and react to each situation that arises in the course of the interaction. It is impossible to know from beforehand how an interaction situation is going to pan out and therefore no social norms or conventions can be employed to understand social interaction. The only way in which we can truly understand social interaction and how it creates and sustains social order is by looking at the minute actions involved in

the process of interaction. Thus, action emerges with each previous action and therefore it is sequentially organized.

- (d) **Reflexivity** : It refers to the idea that members in a situation of interaction shape their actions depending upon the context in which that interaction is taking place and at the same time the members' actions also shape the context. Thus, agency shapes structure and vice versa according to the idea of reflexivity. This reflexive relationship is a central feature of ethnomethodology according to Garfinkel. Since human beings in a situation of interaction are interpreting the cues, words, gestures, etc. that each is putting out in the process of interaction, therefore, Garfinkel says, human interaction is reflexive in nature. Garfinkel elaborated upon the idea of reflexivity through his "breaching experiments" which shall be discussed later. Most of human interaction is reflexive in nature, i.e., we 'interpret cues, gestures, words, and other information from each other in a way that sustains a particular vision of reality. Even contradictory evidence is reflexively interpreted to maintain a body of belief and knowledge. The concept of reflexivity thus focuses attention on how people in interaction go about maintaining and presuming the presumption that they are guided by a particular reality' (Turner 1987: 395).

The most important tool in trying to uncover the lived realities of people in a situation of interaction and understanding how they come to presume that they are interacting in a commonly shared world of meanings is language. Since ethnomethodology studies interaction, therefore language is an important aspect of the discipline. The stability of social life is achieved through particular uses of language more than through anything else as per the ethnomethodologists. Ethnomethodologists believe that the social world cannot be studied through pre-existing normative categories and the meanings of actions and interactions cannot be realized adequately simply by the use of shared symbols. Rather, meanings of situations, actions and interactions are created, understood and altered through the use of language. The concept of indexicality of meaning is firmly rooted in the study of language. It is through language that social roles and social reality are constituted according to Garfinkel. All features of social settings are designated through the use of language. Language is a tool in both indexicality as well as reflexivity. Verbal interaction through the medium of language is the primary way through which people use their accounts to construct their sense of a world out there.

Thus, these four elements of ethnomethodology are derived from phenomenological and interactionist backgrounds and have been used to make the study of interaction and the philosophy behind it more empirical and based on actual lived realities rather than on thoughts and assumptions.

8.6 Garfinkel's Methods of Enquiry

Garfinkel, in his ethnomethodological project, was not interested in finding out causes behind certain actions or behaviours. Instead, he was interested in finding out how actors in a situation of interaction operate on the basis of taken for granted sense of reality and knowledge. The work that put ethnomethodology on the theoretical map of sociology was his book *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967). Ethnomethodological projects tend to begin with Garfinkel's methods of enquiry as found in this book and are then taken forward. In order to validate something as real (or not), Garfinkel and his team used a variety of social experiments as well as minute observations and analyses of conversations in various settings. Let us go through some of the most well-known methods used by Garfinkel and his associates briefly.

8.6.1. Breaching Experiments

In the breaching experiment, Garfinkel (1963) and his associates deliberately broke down the normal course of interaction to uncover the implicitly used ethnomethods in different situations of interaction. The experimenters behaved in a socially awkward manner so as to be able to elicit certain responses from the subjects that would help the experimenters understand what norms are applied in different situations of interaction that ensure smooth and continuous interaction. The background expectancies of each party in a situation of interaction are thus recognizable. For example, Garfinkel (1967), in his book, shows a situation where student experimenters interrupt and challenge every sentence uttered by their subjects. The subjects were of course not aware that such an experiment was going on. Turner (1987) quotes Garfinkel's reported conversation as follows.

Subject : I had a flat tire.

Experimenter : What do you mean, you had a flat tire?

Subject : (appears momentarily stunned and then replies in a hostile manner): What

do you mean, "What do you mean?" A flat tire is a flat tire. That is what I meant. Nothing special. What a crazy question!

The experimenter was violating the implicit rules or etiquettes of normal conversation in this scenario which would ensure the smooth flow of the conversation and this is why the subject had a hostile reaction to the experimenter - his/her idea of normalcy in a conversation was shaken up. In every situation of interaction, it seemed therefore, there are certain things that are assumed to be true, known or taken for granted on the basis of which the interactions are carried out smoothly. When anything happens that undermines the taken for granted knowledge or assumptions about a commonly shared external social reality, then the interaction can potentially break down or the other party in the interaction might become displeased or even hostile as was the case in the above example. Thus, things like the etcetera principle or reciprocity of perspectives are used so that the vision of a commonly experienced social reality does not break down during conversation.

Another example, as Maynard (2012) points out, is the game of tic-tac-toe where one of the players deliberately breaks the rules of the game. If the rules of the game that are assumed to be commonly known by all players are not being followed by one, it is only then that these rules are made explicit and talked about. If every player plays according to the rules then the rules are no longer a topic of conversation. The rules are then generally taken-for-granted by all parties to the game.

Thus, by using the breaching experiment, Garfinkel wanted to uncover the implicit rules and norms in different situations of conversation through which actors construct a sense of reality by basically forcing the subjects in the experiments to actively reconstruct their realities once broken down by the experimenters. The breaching experiments also show that there are accounting practices involved in each situation of interaction to ensure that whatever each party says is intelligible or meaningful to the other and warranted or appropriate and expected in that particular situation or context. Whenever either party in a situation of interaction are not maintaining the warranted behaviours or appropriate and intelligible meanings of what they are saying or doing, there is a 'violation of trust or the deep moral order undergirding everyday life and experience. The violation is extremely disorienting, and immediately other accounting practices must be brought to bear on the situation, such as calling a questioner or the question...as "crazy"' (Maynard 2012: 92). As Turner (1987) points out, by using breaching experiments, 'Garfinkel

hoped to discover implicit ethnomethods by forcing actors to actively engage in the process of reality reconstruction after the situation has been disrupted' (399).

Breaches can also happen naturally without experimenters making any attempts at consciously disrupting interaction situations. As an example of this, Garfinkel pointed out the case of Agnes, a biological male who looked like and sounded like a female and also identified as a female. In situations of interaction, she needed to pass as a female by going by the rules of femininity in the society and cope with the demands of her boyfriend before and after her sex-change operation and of her altered appearance. Since she wanted to keep her real identity (that of being born a male) under the covers therefore she had to take special care in how she dressed, looked and behaved around other people. It involved a lot of planning and strategizing, stamina to continue it in spite of adverse situations and also the use of intelligence to be able to come up with quick answers and reasons good enough to pass in particular situations. For example, at a job interview that required a physical examination of candidates, she managed the situation by forbidding to get a genital examination done thereby securing her identity. In this endeavour of sustaining a particular view of herself to others, Garfinkel sometimes likened her strategies to games played at specific times and situations in order to cope such as deciding never to overindulge in alcohol and lose her wits which might end up in her image of a female being destroyed and the reality exposed. However, later on Garfinkel realized that her strategies were often more serious and long-lasting in nature and impact to be likened to a game. For instance, she had to learn or socialize herself to become a proper lady with the correct mannerisms and behaviours. She had to learn from her boyfriend's reactions to things she did about what was appropriately lady like and what was not. As Maynard (2012) pointed out, there are certain "structural incongruities" between playing a game and sexual passing. Unlike a game, there are no "time outs" and no exits from the work of passing, and only limited capacity for planning one's strategies because of the ubiquity of unanticipated happenings' (92). Agnes never knew beforehand what problems she might be facing in a particular situation of interaction and therefore had to continuously strategize along the way in the interaction to be able to come off as a real female. Thus, while she was acting as a natural, biologically unproblematic female she was at the same time also learning how to be a proper female given that she was born and socialized as a male.

Thus, the case of Agnes is one of breach in the normalities of gender that has come

about naturally without the intervention of the researcher. It shows how the appropriate playing of gender roles is not a matter of thought and reflection for most natural males or females but is actually a matter of deliberate thought, planning and action for those who are not naturally females or males but identify as such. Agnes' deliberations go on to show, therefore, the everyday methods used by individuals, quite unwittingly for the most part, to portray themselves as members of a particular gender and not the other.

8.6.2 Decision Rules

In this case, which was a more observation-based strategy rather than an actually conducted experiment, Garfinkel and his team of associates studied how jurors use "decision rules" to arrive at their verdicts related to cases. According to Garfinkel, when a person is selected as a juror, he or she is given a set of instructions from the court regarding their methods of reaching a verdict. They use these instructions as well as their experiences from participating in other social situations and contexts and accept these as "official rules" that they must employ to reach their verdicts. By using these experiences and instructions or these "official rules", the jurors reconstruct a sense of reality based on their understanding of the evidence presented, which they have all implicitly accepted as facts.

However, in spite of the official rules of being members of a jury being known and accepted by the jurors, when the jurors all come together in the courtroom as participants in a jury and begin to assemble the evidence to recreate a sense of reality, their methods of working and operation are not always used exactly how they are supposed to be as per the official rules. The decisions of the jurors are arrived at in ways that are altered slightly from the official rules. Based on the evidence presented or certain specificities or peculiarities of certain cases, the already known rules to arrive at decisions cannot always be employed. Thus, there come about situations where new decision rules need to be created and used so that jurors are able to arrive at a correct view of the situation and give their verdicts.

When these jurors were asked by Garfinkel and his investigators about how they arrive at decisions or verdicts, the jurors pointed to the official rules that are specified to them that they are supposed to use to make decisions. However, when the investigators pointed out to the jurors that they did not use the official rules at all times in their process of giving a verdict, the 'jurors became anxious, indicating that somewhat different rules

had been used to construct the corpus of what really happened' (Turner 1987: 399-400).

Thus, Garfinkel tried to arrive at answers to one basic question - how and why society is possible—through his methods of enquiry that he used in the ethnomethodological tradition.

8.7 Conclusion

Garfinkel is now a most well-known name in various fields within the discipline of sociology such as genders studies, conversation analysis, etc. The field of sociology of social problems where the social construction of social problems is studied is also highly influenced by the principles and philosophies of ethnomethodology. His influence and contributions in the field of social psychology was so widely appreciated that he was even given the Cooley-Mead Award by the American Sociological Association Social Psychology Section in 1995 and his address was even published in its journal the Social Psychology Quarterly in 1996 under the title of Ethnomethodology's Program.

8.8 Summary

Ethnomethodology has become important because it uncovers the minute interpersonal processes which people in a situation of interaction create and use. The symbolic interactionists could not conceptualize of such a process underdoing in the process of interaction and therefore ethnomethodology has supplemented the field of symbolic interactionism rather substantially. However, as Turner (1987) points out, 'people's sense of sharing a common world is an important property of interaction and organization, but it is not the only interactive dynamic. And to the degree that ethnomethodologists assert that their domain of inquiry is the only reality, they make themselves look foolish... too much effort has been spent in challenging and attacking "normal sociology"; the goals of theoretical cumulation would be better served if there was a conscious and concerted attempt by ethnomethodologists to integrate their ideas with those of mainstream interactionism' (403-404). Criticisms notwithstanding, Garfinkel's ethnomethodology is actually able to come up with an interesting and relevant way to find out how social reality is made possible by focusing on the process of reality construction through contextually situated interaction routines.

8.9 Questions

8.9.1 Answer in Detail :

1. Describe one of the most well-known experiments conducted by Garfinkel and his associates in their development of ethnomethodology.
2. Using the example of rules of arriving at decisions by jurors, show how meanings are indexical in nature in a situation of interaction.
3. Explain the role of language in the ethnomethodological endeavour.

8.9.2 Answer Briefly

1. What is the difference between weak and strong forms of unique adequacy?
2. Explain briefly the idea of accountability.
3. What is the sequential organization of action?

8.10 References and Suggested Readings

- Francis, D. & S. Hester (2004). *An Invitation to Ethnomethodology: Language, Society and Interaction*. London: Sage.
- Garfinkel, H. & H. Sacks. 1970. 'On Formal Structures of Practical Actions.' in eds. J. D. McKinney & E. A. Tiryakian *Theoretical Sociology*. New York: Appleton-Century Crofts. 337-366.
- Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Heritage, J. (1984). *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.
- Lehn, D. von (2017). 'Harold Garfinkel: Experimenting with Social Order' in M. Jacobson *The Interactionist Imagination: Studying Meaning, Situation and the Micro-Social Order*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 233-261.
- Maynard, D. (2012). 'Memorial Essay: Harold Garfinkel (1917-2011): A Sociologist for the Ages'. *Symbolic Interaction*, 35(1), 88-96.
- Mehan, H. & H. Wood (1975). *The Reality of Ethnomethodology*. Chichester: Wiley.

Richards, D.S. (2001). 'Talking Sense: Ethnomethodology, Postmodernism and Practical Action' in R. Westwood & S. Linstead eds. *The Language of Organization*. London: Sage Publications. 20-46.

Rooke, C. N. & J. Rooke (2015). 'An Introduction to Unique Adequacy'. *Nurse Researcher*, 22(6), 35-39.

Turner, J.H (1987). *The Structure of Sociological Theory*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications.

Turner, R. ed. (1974). *Ethnomethodology*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Unit : 9 □ Erving Goffman

Structure :

- 9.1 Objectives**
- 9.2 Introduction : Know the Theorist**
- 9.3 Symbolic Interactionism and Erving Goffman**
- 9.4 Dramaturgy**
- 9.5 Impression Management**
- 9.6 Front Stage**
- 9.7 Teams**
- 9.8 Social Roles**
- 9.9 Role Distance**
- 9.10 Stigma**
- 9.11 Total Institutions**
- 9.12 Frame Analysis**
- 9.13 Conclusion**
- 9.14 Summary**
- 9.15 Questions**
- 9.16 References**
- 9.17 Suggested Readings**
- 9.18 Glossory**

9.1 Objectives

The study is designed to meet the following objectives :

- To familiarize the students with the contributions of Erving Goffman in the development of the school of Symbolic Interactionism in particular, and Sociological Theory in general.

- To help the students in understanding the key concepts, theories and ideas of the thinker.

9.2 Introduction : Know the Theorist

Erving Goffman was a Canadian-American Sociologist, born in the year 1922, to Ukrainian Jewish parents, in Manville, Alberta (Canada). He completed his under graduation in Sociology from the University of Toronto. He received his graduate degree from the University of Chicago and his dissertation focused on the observation of everyday life practices on the island of Unst in the Shetland Islands (Scotland). This research came to inform his theory of face-to-face interaction and resulted in the publication of one of his main works 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life' (1956). Goffman joined the University of California, Berkeley, upon Herbert Blumer's request and worked there for almost a decade. In the year 1968, he shifted to the University of Pennsylvania. He was the co-founder of the American Association for the Abolition of Involuntary Mental Hospitalisation. During the course of his academic career, Goffman significantly contributed to the discipline of Sociology and published a number of works which became an essential part of the Symbolic Interactionist school of thought.

9.3 Symbolic Interactionism and Erving Goffman

Erving Goffman became prominent in the 1960s and 1970s, and his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) assumed significance in academic discussions. He was inspired by the works of the Chicago School, Durkheim and Simmel. He was particularly influenced by Durkheim's ideas regarding the role of rituals in social life, and Simmel's discussion on formal sociology, where emphasis was more on the forms of social relations rather than their content. Goffman's own ideas were highly motivated by the works of the Interactionists and the studies undertaken by the Chicago School. His main interest was in interpersonal interaction, and the general relational patterns within face-to-face exchanges, which was not given adequate importance within the discipline of sociology. Goffman aimed to focus on the role that these face-to-face encounters play in social life. He attempted to establish an area of study which would offer general theories on social structure and social order. He started by focusing on how face-to-face interactions shape social relationships while regarding the setting where these interactions took place. His main objective throughout his career was to formulate a common analytical frame to

study face-to-face exchanges.

Besides, his most celebrated work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, he also produced many other works, namely, *Stigma* (1963), *Asylums* (1961), *Encounters* (1961) and so on, all of which concentrated on the question of personal identity.

9.4 Dramaturgy

When Goffman develops his concept of the self he relies on the dramaturgical approach. Like Mead, and other Symbolic Interactionists, Goffman also did not believe in the organic development of the 'self'. For Goffman, the actor does not 'own' the self and it actually originates from the dramatic interaction between the actor and the audience. As the self develops in response to a dramatic interaction, it is susceptible to 'disruptions' at the time of the performance. Goffman's dramaturgy discusses how these disruptions could be handled and addressed. Even if Goffman largely talks about how to deal with such 'contingencies' he also notes that, most performances, tend to be successful. Consequently, owing to these successful performances, it so 'appears' that the performers have a stable self. Goffman argues that during the process of interaction, individuals want to highlight on a particular sense of self which is considered to be acceptable by the others. Despite this, actors are conscious of the fact that the audience can disrupt their performance. Therefore, the actors have to exercise some level of control over the audience to avoid any disruptions. The actors expect that the self that they are presenting would be resilient in a way that it helps the audience to perceive them the way actors want them to. Goffman terms this as 'impression management'.

9.5 Impression Management

Impression Management basically helps towards coping with any unexpected situation, actions, unintentional gestures, untimely interruptions, faux pas, and also unintended actions which might create a scene. Goffman was eager to study the different methods that are used to handle such issues.

First, there are some mechanisms with the help of which actors develop a dramaturgical loyalty, which may include maintaining the distance between the performer and the audience, shuffling sets of audiences systematically, so that they do not become well aware of the performance.

Second, Goffman refers to the performer and the audience as part of a team in some instances (further discussed in the following section). However, he also states that a group of performers can be one team and the audience can be the other. Goffman also points out that an individual can be one team, believing that actors can act as their own audience. The actor requires the presence of mind to evade any blunder, possess self-control, and also manipulate their facial expressions and the verbal tone of their performance.

Third, Goffman also talked about forms of dramaturgical circumspection. This involves estimating how the performance will get played out- preparing for contingencies, choosing trustworthy team mates and reliable audiences, becoming part of smaller groups where disagreements would be less, making short appearances, not allowing the audience any access to private information, and developing a well-defined plan to avert any unanticipated consequences.

The audience also participates in the process of impression management to provide the opportunity for a successful performance. They are attentive, prevent any kinds of emotional outbreaks, ignore mistakes and show much consideration to a novice performer.

9.6 Front Stage

Impression management consists of strategies which the actors deploy to create and continue with impressions during challenging situations which they might face. Relying on a theatrical analogy, Goffman talks about a *front stage*. (Ritzer, 2008)

The front stage constitutes that element of the performance which is to a large extent stable and is used for those who are 'observing' the performance. Here, Goffman makes a further demarcation between *setting* and *personal front*.

The *setting* is the physical set up/context which should be present for the actors' performance. For instance, a teacher would need a classroom setting (physical or virtual) to deliver the lectures; a pilot needs a plane, and so on. The *personal front* on the other hand, refers to those equipment which help the audience in understanding the performance, tools which assist the audience in making the connection between the actor and the act. For example, a pilot is expected to be in his particular uniform which helps towards his identification. Goffman here further divides the personal front into *appearance* and *manner*. While appearance involves those tools which inform us about a performer's

social status. **Manner** helps the audience in understanding what kind of a role the performer is about to play. A harsh manner and a submissive manner are quite different from each other and would thereby showcase very different performances. At a larger level, there is an expectation of consistency with respect to appearance and manner.

Despite talking about the front from a Symbolic Interactionist point of view, Goffman also highlights on the structural aspects of it. He argues that fronts are often chosen and not created because of their institutionalization. However, Goffman's main focus is still on the question of interaction and here he raises some interesting points. He claims that because the performers are constantly attempting to present an idealized picture of themselves in the front-stage, they feel pressurized to conceal certain aspects of their performances.

Firstly, the actors may feel the need to hide their 'secret pleasures' (for instance, smoking cigarettes) which they enjoyed before the performance or in their early lives which they may consider as being 'incompatible' with their present performance.

Secondly, the actors may like to hide any mistakes they had possibly made during the preparation of their performances, as well as the strategies they had previously used to rectify those mistakes. For example, a dancer may want to conceal the fact that they started with a wrong step.

Third, the actors may want to only bring into focus the final outcome instead of the process and the 'behind-the-scenes' activities. For example, a singer may want to show that she is a natural performer instead of discussing about the long hours of practice and rehearsals have contributed to her delivery.

Fourth, the actors may also want to hide any 'dirty work' that might have been a part of the performance. By 'dirty work', Goffman refers to activities which could be 'physically unclean', 'semi-legal', 'cruel', and 'degrading' in some respects (Goffman, 1959:44).

Fifth, actors may have to forego their idea of certain standards while delivering a performance.

Sixth, actors might want to conceal any insults, humiliations, or arrangements that were involved in making a smooth delivery of the performance.

Another important aspect of the front stage is where, the performers try to offer the impression of being close to the audience than what they really are (Ritzer, 2008). For example, a dancer may give the impression to the audience that her present performance

is the most significant one. For this purpose, the actors need their audiences to be 'segregated' in order to keep the deceptiveness of their performance intact. Goffman here also points out that even if this falsity is found out, often the audiences themselves might want it to remain concealed so that the 'idealized image' of the actor does not get disrupted. This brings into focus the interactional nature of performances and it clearly reveals how a successful performance relies on the participation of all groups. While actors highlight on the uniqueness of their performance and their relationship with the audience, the audience, also want to believe that they are witnessing a unique performance. Actors want to ensure that all aspects are merging well because even a small conflicting element can disturb the entire performance. However, depending on the context, certain discrepancies could be tolerated. For example, if a surgeon makes a mistake during surgery it would lead to serious consequences, however, if a dancer misses a step during the performance it is not as damaging.

A strategy which the actors use to maintain a distance between themselves and the audience is mystification. This 'social distance' is created to impart a sense of awe amongst the audiences and this prevents the audience from 'questioning' the performance. Here, Goffman also mentions that the audience themselves also maintain the distance to preserve the believability of the performance. This point could be taken forward by Goffman's discussion on Teams. (Ritzer, 2008)

9.7 Teams

For Goffman, too much emphasis on the individual overshadowed the question of interaction and therefore his primary unit of analysis was the team. A team comprises sets of individuals who participate in performing a single routine. Each individual in that team is dependent on the other, and are conscious of the fact that these performances are 'acts' and therefore can be disrupted by any of them. Goffman argued that this team is akin to a 'secret society'. Here he talks about a back stage which helps in concealing the specifics from the front stage and different forms of 'informal' actions take place here. A back stage is frequently attached to the front stage but is also separated from it. Performers can depend on the members in the sense that those who work in the back will not be present in the front. Here also strategies pertaining to impression management are undertaken. Performances will get jeopardized if the front audience appears at the back stage.

Additionally, there is also another area which Goffman talks about, which is known as the out side. This area neither belongs to the front nor the back. While no area will consistently become a part of these three domains-front, back and outside; at the same it must be remembered that a particular area can become part of all the three domains under different contexts. A doctor's chamber is the front stage when there are patients, a back stage when there are no patients and the outside when the doctor leaves the clinic.

9.8 Social Roles

Social roles are shaped by our socialization and are pre-defined, helping us in fulfilling the various 'duties' and 'obligations' which are expected of us from the society. Therefore each individual carries out multiple social roles. For instance, as a son/daughter, brother/sister, husband/wife, student, friend, employer/employee and so on. We learn to behave in particular ways while playing out each of these roles For example, as students we sometimes play the role of an 'obedient' pupil, while on different occasions we can act 'unruly'. Although these patterns of behavior are largely 'socially scripted', our '**role-playing**' should not be misconstrued as being artificial or inauthentic (Dillon, 2014:282). It is important to remember here that all social behavior involves role-playing, even if we may prefer playing certain roles more than the others. It is the social roles which organize and structure our social interactions on a daily basis. In the context of symbolic interactionism, it should be mentioned that, without these social roles, social life and society per se, cannot function effectively. While talking about social roles, Goffman (1959: 35-75) presents an understanding of the 'generalized other' like Mead, whereby the notion of **appropriate conduct** which helps in preserving the social order is constituted by the 'officially accredited values of the society'. Although Goffman acknowledges that individuals can divert from these pre-determined social roles by amplifying or disturbing them, however, he does not explore situations where these roles may get challenged and questioned or even altered. For example, a male nanny.

One of the most significant aspects of a social role is that it is 'relational' which is similar to Mead and Blumer's argument about the 'relational self'. A social role cannot exist independently. Therefore, it is important to remember that

- a) A 'self' consists of multiple social roles.
- b) Our role performance is always in response to another persons' role performance and

therefore, reciprocal.

- c) Even in the absence of a physical audience for whom we can perform our roles, we are socially conditioned to construct an 'imaginary other' towards whom we direct our role-playing.

Therefore as Goffman (1959: 16) claims, "when an individual or performer plays the same part to the same audience on different occasions, a social relationship is likely to arise".

9.9 Role Distance

Goffman enquired into the extent to which an individual is involved in playing a particular role. The abundant nature of roles often leads to the complete immersion of individuals in a specific role. **Role distance** therefore shows the degree of separation between an individual and a role. For example, if little children are given household chores which are beyond their ability to carry out, they often do it in a negligent manner or in an improper way. By doing so, the little child is communicating to the audience that the act is not suited for him/her and not as enjoyable as it maybe for an adult with better capabilities. Here, Goffman notes that an individual's role distance is related to their social status. Individuals belonging to higher-status groups display role distance for different causes than those belonging to lower-status groups.

9.10 Stigma

Goffman discusses the difference between 'virtual social identity' (what an individual should be) and 'actual social identity'(what an individual really is). Individuals who have a 'gap' between these two identities experience stigma. Interaction with a stigmatized person is reliant on what is the nature of stigma that a person is facing. If he/she has **discredited stigma**, then the actor already expects the audience to be aware of the concerns. For example, a convict who has stayed in a prison for several years is likely to be well known as an offender. The second one, which is a **discreditable stigma**, refers to one where the audience is not aware of the differences between the two identities. For example, a petty thief, who has never been caught. People who belong to the first category, discredited stigma, for them the crucial dramaturgical issue is, handling the challenge generated by the fact that audiences are already aware. For those with

discreditable stigma, the dramaturgical question is to control the knowledge so that the concerns remain concealed from the audiences.

9.11 Total Institutions

In his work, like *Asylums* (1961), Goffman demonstrated how those who are stigmatized have the ability to challenge these forms of labeling. He calls places like asylums, prisons, concentration camps, monasteries and so on, as total institutions. These total institutions are completely or almost completely, shut from the outside world and the ways in which everyday life is regulated in these institutions, weakens the sense of 'self' and identity of the inmates. When a new inmate enters the institutions, he/she is faced with humiliations of the self, such that the institutions are able to exert power over them. The inmates experience mortifications of the self, where they have to seek approval to carry out even the ordinary, everyday tasks. While individuals can become 'normal' inhabitants of the institutions, some can even refuse to acquire this new self or fulfill the role which the institution demands of him/her. These individuals can even take recourse to the means available to them within the institutions, to preserve their selves. Goffman claims that this is the 'underlife' of the total institutions, where the inmates challenge or even bypass the authority and their understanding of what self they should have and also stands for a 'movement of liberty'. He gave instances from his observations of mental hospitals where the inmates established 'free places' like the woods within the hospital premises which they used covertly for drinking. These free places allow the inmates to get away from the strict surveillance of these institutions and the people in authority, even if it is for a short while and helps them to reclaim their personal sense of self. This question related to the creation and structuring of self in total institutions also captures the main area of focus in Goffman's work, that is, the dramatic performance of the self which gets affected by the expectations of social life.

9.12 Frame Analysis

While discussing *Frame Analysis* Goffman focuses on the micro structures of social life. Although he did believe that individuals 'defined' situations but he argued that they did not single handedly create those definitions. (Snow 2007) Action is a result of compliance to pre-defined rules rather than being a part of a creative process. Goffman's focus was

on structures which control everyday situations. These situations gain meaning with the help of '*frames*'. Frames are 'principles of organization' and help in explaining our experiences. They provide us with a lens to view the social world and the absence of frames could lead to disordered sets of events and interactions. From Goffman's analyses of particular framed activities, we can derive certain principal characteristics of frames. Frames are 'definite' and 'stable' and not a mere collection of components fused together randomly. The different elements of the frames are a part of a system, and have similarities with 'structures' in their composition. The frames provide the premise and basis for interactions and are mostly 'unconscious' and 'non-negotiable'. These frames might appear to be similar to previously established structures, within the context of a broad culture, however, they are also open to interpretations by the actors. The actors should choose which frame is suitable for a particular situation and they can also modify these frames. Frames are also open to changes over periods of time and are not 'fixed' in that sense. Particular social movements often challenge and obliterate existing frames and offer alternatives.

Scholars like Snow (2007), argue that frames have three specific functions. First, they help us decipher what is important and what is unimportant in our immediate environments, thus telling us what is "in-frame" and what is "out-of-frame." Second, they aid in making linkages between the important elements so that interactions take a particular course and not another. Third, they also have a 'transformative' function whereby it helps in alterations in the ways certain things are understood in relation to other things or the actor.

Different frames can actually attribute different meanings to the same event. For example, a teacher slapping a student on grounds of disciplining the child might be considered to be a rightful action on her part. On the other hand, from the frame of the students or the parents it is definitely a cruel act and a punishable offense.

Goffman argues that two kinds of frames exist, *natural* and *social*. While the natural frames are pertaining to natural events or the physical world over which humans do not have control, social frames refer to the common understandings which are a part of interactions and help in making sense of the purposes and requirements of the others. Additionally, these social frameworks guide one to make assessment about others' actions. Frames are critical for social life and are correctly anticipated most of the time. However, when these frames are neglected or are absent one becomes conscious of their existence. Everyday life appears to be predictable owing to these frames, but this expectable

characteristic of the frames can be unstable. These frames can be '*keyed*'; where the key stands for practices which change the already ascribed meanings of particular activity into something else. For example, in a competition, the element of 'fight' is keyed into something more controlled. The process of keying does not always suggest changes of a restrained character, it can lead to constructions like illusions, 'frame-ups', cons; where only few participants are aware but the others are being deceived. The direct constructions if proven to be detrimental to those who are getting misled can be challenged, but indirect ones can be concerning. These indirect fabrications take place when a person argues that the rumour which has been spread is false, but the person who heard the rumour is convinced of its authenticity.

9.13 Conclusion

Goffman's theatrical metaphor while revealing some very significant aspects of human interactions also hides some crucial elements, for example, rituals. Goffman considers rituals as important as they help maintain social statuses and hierarchies and therefore legitimize the roles attached to them. Here, Goffman understood Durkheim's ideas of social facts and discovered the questions of externality and constraint that dominate rules. However, rules are both 'used' and 'abused' by individuals and their interaction patterns. Therefore, they could be interpreted both as a constraint and as means of facilitating social interactions.

9.14 Summary

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Goffman's ideas pertaining to the 'self' is clearly captured. Here, the strong influence of Mead's conceptions, especially the distinction between 'I' and 'Me' can be seen, where Goffman creates a demarcation between what we 'spontaneously' do, and what we are 'expected' to do. He argues that we try to put forward this idea of a steady self, with lesser imbalances. This 'putting forward' of the image of a steady self is like a performance to the social audiences. This focus on performance led Goffman to develop his concept of dramaturgy- how we partake in social life with the help of different performances which can be compared to dramatic acts on the stage.

9.15 Questions

Writing Exercises

- What is dramaturgy? How does impression management help towards human interaction?
- Explain the concepts of front stage, back stage and outside with the help of examples.
- How does Goffman discuss the role of the audience in carrying out a performance?
- Discuss Goffman's contribution to the Symbolic Interactionist school of thought.
- What are the functions of a frame according to Goffman?

9.16 References

- Adams, Bert. N. and Sydie, R.A. 2001. Sociological Theory. Pine Forge Press: California
- Cuff, E.C., Sharrock, W.W. and Francis, D.W. 1998. Perspectives in Sociology, Fourth Edition, London: Routledge.
- Dillon, Michelle. 2014. Introduction to Sociological Theory: Theorists, Concepts and their Applicability in the Twenty First Century. Wiley-Blackwell: Sussex.
- Erving Goffman. 1959. Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. Anchor: New York.
- Ritzer, George. 2008. Sociological Theory. McGraw-Hill: New York.
- Sharrock, W.W., Hughes, John. A. and Martin, Peter J. 2003. Understanding Modern Sociology, London: Sage.
- Snow, David A. 2007. 'Frame'. In George Ritzer (ed.), The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology (pp.1778-1780). Blackwell: Oxford.

9.17 Suggested Readings

- Adams, Bert. N. and Sydie, R.A. 2001. Sociological Theory. Pine Forge Press : California.
- Cuff, E.C., Sharrock, W.W. and Francis, D.W. 1998. Perspectives in Sociology, Fourth Edition, Routledge : London.

- Dillon Michelle. 2014. *Introduction to Sociological Theory : Theorists, Concepts and Their Applicability in the Twenty First Century*. Wiley-Blackwell : Sussex.
- RitZer, Gworge. 2008. *Sociological theory*. McGraw-Hill : New York.
- Sharrock, W.W., Hughes, John. A. and Martin, Peter J. 2003. *Understanding Modern Sociology*, London : Sage.
- Wallace, A. Tuth and Wolf, Alison. 1990. *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, Prentice Hall : New Delhi.

9.18 Glossory

- **Back stage** : a space where ‘informal’ actions take place which helps towards the preparation of the performance.
- **Dramaturgy** : the ways in which individuals participate in social life through different performances which have similarities with the dramatic acts on the stage.
- **Manner** : refers to demeanors which offer clues to the audience regarding the role which is going to be performed by the actor.
- **Natural Frames** : relates to natural phenomenon over which individuals have no control.
- **Personal Front** : tools which help the audience to drawing linkages between the actor and the performance.
- **Role distance** : tools which help the audience to drawing linkages between the actor and the performance.
- **Role distance** : the degree of separation between an individual and a role.
- **Role Playing** : in order to participate in the society, individuals play different roles.
- **Setting** : the physical context necessary for the actors’ performance.
- **Social Frames** : related to shared understandings which give meanings to social interactions.
- **Stigma** : the gap between what an individual should be and what an individual is leads to the experience of stigma.
- **Social Roles** : roles which are framed by the process of socialization and help in participating in the society.

- **Teams** : groups of individuals who contribute towards the performance of a single routine.
- **Total Institutions** : where there are strict regulations on the lives of the inmates and participation in the outside world is highly limited, thus strongly affecting their sense of self and identity.

Module III
Social Construction of Reality : Basic Arguments

Unit : 10 □ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann

Structure of the Unit :

10.1 Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 Peter L. Berger

10.4 Sociological thought

10.4.1 Religion & society

10.4.2 Modern Pluralization

10.4.3 Berger's belief on modernity

10.5 Conclusion

10.6 Summary

10.7 Questions

10.8 References

10.9 Glossary

10.1 Objectives

- To know their biography and understand the basis of their work.
- To learn the nature and types of the work of both Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann
- To develop acquaintance with their noteworthy work of Social Construction of Reality.

10.2 Introduction

The idea that the reality is socially constructed is supported with many concepts discussed by Berger and Luckmann in their work *The Social Construction of Reality*. Berger and

Luckmann's view is based on the analysis of the notions of knowledge and recipe knowledge along with the reciprocal roles, on the concepts and constructs, language as the necessary aspect of the objectification, the processes and phenomena of institutionalisation, habituation, socialisation, internalisation, and externalisation. According to Berger and Luckmann, reality is socially constructed because it is formed with references to the social knowledge and developed concepts which are distributed because of the people's interactions. Thus, people operate the common concepts in which the definite knowledge is reflected (Calhoun et al. 2002). People form their reality with references to the common sense, customs, and habits.

10.3 Peter L. Berger

Peter Ludwig Berger (March 17, 1929 - June 27, 2017) was an Austrian-born American sociologist and Protestant theologian. Berger became known for his work in the sociology of knowledge, the sociology of religion, study of modernization, and theoretical contributions to sociological theory.

Berger is arguably best known for his book, co-authored with Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York, 1966), which is considered one of the most influential texts in the sociology of knowledge and played a central role in the development of social constructionism. In 1998, the International Sociological Association named this book as the fifth most-influential book written in the field of sociology during the 20th century. In addition to this book, some of the other books that Berger has written include : *Invitation to Sociology : A Humanistic Perspective* (1963); *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (1969); and *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Social Theory of Religion* (1967).

Peter Ludwig Berger was born on March 17, 1929, in Vienna, Austria, to George William and Jelka (Loew) Berger, who were Jewish converts to Christianity. He died on June 27, 2017, in his Brookline, Massachusetts, home after a prolonged illness. He emigrated to the United States shortly after World War II in 1946 at the age of 17 and in 1952 he became a naturalized citizen.

On September 28, 1959, he married Brigitte Kellner, herself an eminent sociologist who was on the faculty at Wellesley College and Boston University where she was the

chair of the sociology department at both schools. Brigitte was born in Eastern Germany in 1928. She moved to the United States in the mid-1950s. She was a sociologist who focused on the sociology of the family, arguing that the nuclear family was one of the main causes of modernization. Although she studied traditional families, she supported same-sex relationships.

After the Nazi takeover of Austria in 1938, Berger and his family emigrated to Palestine, then under British rule. He attended a British High school, St. Luke's. Following the German bombings of Haifa, he was evacuated to Mt. Carmel, where he developed his life-long interest in religion. In 1947 Berger and his family emigrated again, this time to the United States, where they settled in New York City. Berger attended Wagner College for his Bachelor of Arts and received his M.A. and Ph.D. from the New School for Social Research in New York in 1954. Berger, in his memoir, described himself as an "accidental sociologist", enrolling here in an effort to learn about American society and help become a Lutheran minister, and learning under Alfred Schütz. In 1955 and 1956 he worked at the Evangelische Akademie in Bad Boll, West Germany. From 1956 to 1958 Berger was an assistant professor at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro; from 1958 to 1963 he was an associate professor at Hartford Theological Seminary. The next stations in his career were professorships at the New School for Social Research, Rutgers University, and Boston College. Since 1981 Berger was the University Professor of Sociology and Theology at Boston University. He retired from BU in 2009. In 1985 he founded the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture, which later transformed into the Institute on Culture, Religion and World Affairs (CURA), and is now part of the Boston University Pardee School of Global Studies. He remained the Director of CURA from 1985 to 2010.

Berger was a moderate Christian Lutheran conservative whose work in theology, secularization, and modernity at times has challenged the views of contemporary mainstream sociology which tends to lean away from any right-wing political thinking. Ultimately, however, Berger's approach to sociology was humanist with special emphasis on "value-free" analysis

Berger's work was notably influenced by Max Weber. Weber focused on the empirical realities of rationality as a characteristic of action and rationalization. In comparison, Berger proposed the usage of the word 'options' rather than freedom as an empirical concept. Therefore, much of the empirical work of Berger and Weber have revolved

around the relationship between modern rationalization and options for social action. Weber argued that rationalism can mean a variety of things at the subjective level of consciousness and at the objective level of social institutions. The connection between Berger's analysis of the sociology of religion in modern society and Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* aligns. Weber saw capitalism as a result of the Protestant secularisation of work ethic and morality in amassing wealth, which Berger integrates into his analysis about the effects of losing the non-secular foundations for belief about life's ultimate meaning.

Berger's own experiences teaching in North Carolina in the 1950s showed the shocking American prejudice of that era's Southern culture and influenced his humanistic perspective as a way to reveal the ideological forces from which it stemmed.

Biography of Thomas Luckmann

Thomas Luckmann (October 14, 1927 - May 10, 2016) was an American-Austrian sociologist of German and Slovene origin who taught mainly in Germany. His contributions were central to studies in sociology of communication, sociology of knowledge, sociology of religion, and the philosophy of science.

He was born in Jesenice, then part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. His father was an Austrian industrialist, while his mother was from a Slovene family from Ljubljana. On his mother's side, he was the cousin of the Slovene poet Bo•oVodušek. He grew up in a bilingual environment. In the family, they spoke both Slovene and German, and he attended Slovene-language schools in Jesenice until 1941, and then German ones.

During World War II, in 1943, he and his mother moved to Vienna. In 1944 he was drafted for the army, joining the Luftwaffe where he served as a Luftwaffenhelfer. In 1945 he became a prisoner of war, and escaping after three months. He then settled in Vienna.

Luckmann studied philosophy and linguistics at the University of Vienna and Innsbruck. In 1950 he married Benita Petkevic, with whom he moved to the United States, where he studied at The New School in New York City. The couple had three daughters.

He worked as a professor of Sociology at the University of Konstanz in Germany from 1970 to his retirement, and later professor emeritus.

He died at the age of 88 on May 10, 2016, at his home in Austria.

10.4 Sociological thought (The social construction of reality)

Human beings construct a shared social reality. This is explained in Berger and Thomas Luckmann's book, *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966). This reality includes things from ordinary language to large-scale institutions. Our lives are governed by the knowledge about the world that we have and use the information that is relevant to our lives. We take into account typificatory schemes, which are general assumptions about society. As one encounters a new scheme, one must compare it to the ones that are already established in one's mind and determine whether to keep those schemes or replace the old ones with new ones. Social structure is the total of all these typificatory schemes.

The reality of everyday life

Berger and Luckmann present this as the sphere of reality that presents itself upon human existence most intensely and immediately. Everyday life is contrasted with other spheres of reality - dreamworlds, theatre - and is considered by a person to be the objective, intersubjective (shared with others) and self-evident. Life is ordered spatially and temporally. Spatial ordering allows interaction with other people and objects; the human ability to manipulate zones of space can intersect with another's ability.

The reality of everyday life is taken for granted as reality. It does not require additional verification over and beyond its simple presence. It is simply there, as self-evident and compelling facticity.

Social interactions in everyday life favour personal, face-to-face encounters as the best scenarios where human beings can actually connect with each other through interactions. Humans perceive the other in these interactions as more real than they would themselves; we can place a person in everyday life by seeing them, yet we need to contemplate our own placement in the world as it is not so concrete. Berger believes that although you know yourself on a much deeper scale than you would the other person, they are more real to you because they are constantly making "What he is" available to you. It is difficult to recognize "What I am" without separating oneself from the conversation and reflecting on it. Even then, that self-reflection is caused by the other person's interactions leading to that self contemplation.

Language is imperative to the understanding of everyday life. People understand knowledge through language. The knowledge relevant to us is the only necessary

knowledge to our survival, but humans interact through sharing and connecting the relevant structures of our lives with each other. Language helps create shared symbols and stocks of knowledge and participation in these things inherently makes us participate in society.

Social reality on two levels

Social reality exists at both the subjective and objective levels. At the subjective level, people find reality personally meaningful and created by human beings in aspects such as personal friendships. At the objective level, people find reality in aspects such as government bureaucracies and large corporations where reality is seen as more out of one's control.

Society as objective and subjective

Objectively, social order is a product of our social enterprise: it is an ongoing process that results from human activity. Institutions are a product of the historicity and need to control human habituation (the repeated behaviours or patterns). The shared nature of these experiences and their commonality results in sedimentation, meaning they lose their memorability. Many behaviours lose sedimented institutional meanings. Institutional order involves specified roles for people to play. These roles are seen as performing as this objective figure - an employee is not judged as a human but by that role they have taken.

The process of building a socially-constructed reality takes place in three phases. Initially, externalization is the first step in which humans pour out meaning (both mental and physical) into their reality, thus creating things through language. In externalization, social actors create their social worlds and it is seen through action. Following that, reality becomes established by the products of externalization through the course of objectivation (things and ideas "harden" in a sense). People see either a social practice or institution as an objective reality that cannot be changed, such as something like language. Lastly, this newly-made, and man-made reality (or society) has an effect on humans themselves. In this third phase, internalization, the external, objective world to a person becomes part of their internal, subjective world. Social actors internalize norms and values, accepting them as givens, and make them our reality.

Levels of socialization

Subjectively, we experience first and second socialization into society. Firstly, we are socialized into the world during one's childhood by family members and friends. Secondly, we internalize institutional "sub worlds" during one's adulthood, put in various positions in the economy. We maintain our subjective world through reaffirmation with social interactions with others. Our identity and the society are seen as dialectically related: our identity is formed by social processes, which are in turn ordered by our society. Berger and Luckmann see socialization as very powerful and able to influence things such as sexual and nutritional choices. People have the ability to do whatever they want in these spheres, but socialization causes people to only choose certain sexual partners or certain foods to eat to satisfy biological needs.

Humanistic perspective

The humanistic perspective is generally outside of mainstream, contemporary sociology. It is considered as a view that relates more to the humanities - literature, philosophy - than to social science. Its ultimate purpose lies in freeing society of illusions to help make it more humane. In this sense, we are the "puppets of society," but sociology allows us to see the strings that we are attached to, which helps to free ourselves. Berger's "*Invitation to Sociology*" outlines his approach to the field of sociology in these humanistic terms. Methodologically, sociologists should attempt to understand and observe human behaviour outside the context of its social setting and free from whatever influence a sociologist's personal biases or feelings might be. The study of sociology, Berger posits, should be value-free. Research should be accrued in the same manner as the scientific method, using observation, hypothesis, testing, data, analysis and generalization. The meaning derived from the results of research should be contextualized with historical, cultural, environmental, or other important data.

10.4.1 Religion and society

Religion and the human problems of modernity

Berger believed that society is made aware of what he referred to as the *nomos*, or the patterns a particular society wants its members to see as objectively right and to internalize. The *nomos* is all the society's knowledge about how things are, and all of its values and ways of living. This is upheld through legitimacy, either giving special

meaning to these behaviours or by creating a structure of knowledge that enhances the plausibility of the nomos. The existence of an eternal cosmic entity that legitimizes a nomos makes the nomos itself eternal; an individual's actions within its set society are all based on a universal and orderly pattern based on their beliefs.

A more stringent phenomenological approach to the sacred was offered by Peter Berger in a series of influential works written since the late 1960s (e.g., Berger 1967). In Berger's account religion is essentially derived from a subjective interpretation of reality from which meaning is given to the world (including the social world) and, indeed, the entire cosmos. Religion is thus one of the most important means by which human beings categorize and make sense of their existence. Such an enterprise is a collective one and, in constructing a universe of meaning, human beings perceive a "plausibility structure" of understanding which, in turn, feeds back to inform and sustain the social order.

According to Berger, this plausibility structure constructs a "sacred canopy" which includes not just religious belief systems but also philosophical notions about how the world is and enforces everyday taken for granted knowledge. In doing so, the sacred canopy upholds the precariousness of human existence. Therefore, in most historical society's religion helped build, maintain, and legitimate a universe of meaning and provided ultimate answers to ultimate questions. This was achieved through beliefs in supernatural powers that created all things and further functioned to legitimate social institutions through a sacred and cosmic frame of reference. Since the sacred canopy is derived from a social base, that which is regarded as "true" and legitimate is only so in the minds of the human actors who have conceived it. Hence, through notions of the sacred, as an ultimate frame of reference, any given social order comes to see itself as the center of the world and the cosmos.

In a more recent account, in which he makes a contribution to the secularization debate, Demerath (1999) differentiates the concept of religion from that of the sacred. Demerath argues that the sociological study of religion has long labored under the constraint and misleading premise of concepts of religion, and has not sufficiently dwelt on the sacred. He thus argues that religion should be defined "substantively" and the sacred "functionally," thus resolving the longstanding tension in earlier definitions of both. Religion, according to Demerath, is a category of activity, and the sacred a statement of function. Demerath observes that religious activities do not always have sacred

consequences. This is very often because religion frequently displays organized expressions and bureaucratic encumbrances. Nonetheless, the substantive definition of religion does suggest an orientation towards the supernatural world and "externally" imposed moral systems. By contrast, "the sacred" is a category of social phenomena which is not religious in conventional terms even though sacred phenomena may display some aspects of religion. Demerath therefore sees "folk," "implicit," "quasi," and "para" religions as part of the "sociology of the sacred," conceptions which hitherto had the disadvantage of using a conventional image of religion with unfortunate consequences, one of which has been to narrow the search for the sacred to include those things which are religious in character. There are sacred entities and symbols which have a compelling power without necessarily being religious. Since any social activity has potentially sacred functions there may be a large inventory of any society's cultural stock which constitutes the sacred.

10.4.2 Modern pluralization

It has stemmed from the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, There set forth a new set of values, including: separation of the religious and secular spheres of life, a person's wealth as a determinant of value, maximizing freedom to enhance wealth, increasing prediction and control to increase wealth, and identifying oneself as a member of a nation-state. This, in turn, spread capitalism and its ideals and beliefs of individualism and rationalization and separated Christians from their Gods. With globalization, even more beliefs and cultures were confronted with this.

Religion is a collection of cultural systems, belief systems, and worldviews that relate humanity to spirituality and to moral values. Many religions have narratives, symbols, traditions, and sacred histories that are intended to give meaning to life or to explain the origin of life or the universe.

Many languages have words that can be translated as "religion," but they may use them in a very different way, and some have no word for religion at all. For example, the Sanskrit word "dharma," sometimes translated as "religion," also means law. Throughout classical South Asia, the study of law consisted of concepts such as penance through piety and ceremonial and practical traditions. Medieval Japan at first had a similar union between "imperial law" and universal or "Buddha law," but these later became independent sources of power.

The Paradox of Ritual

Religious rituals have a property of danger where powers of the unknown are confronted in forms of petition. Sacrifice in ritual manifests a gift destroyed to secure that which cannot be realized solely through social means. These elements point to a crucial function of religious rituals, of providing social means of domesticating fear of the unknown. These capacities give them a mysterious power of transformation and representation that invokes faith in the symbolic and hidden basis of the transactions. Somehow they manage to implicate the definiteness of their form into the indefiniteness of that which they signify. As settled social procedures drawn from tradition and custom, these rites also serve to handle routinely transitions in life cycles in the setting of religious belief. They contribute to social and spiritual notions of health in their capacity to domesticate fractious issues in a harmonizing manner where otherwise the social fabric might be rent. Religious rituals embody cultural values that relate both to the secular and to the sacred. Civic and traditional properties merge with those of the *sacerdotal*, especially in English society. Religious rites relate to values of national pride and are vehicles for sentiment, such as mourning. They give condensed expression to national sensibilities of grief or celebration such as royal funerals and weddings. They also have a dual collective function of ameliorating egoism and at the same time affirming the necessity of belief in the transcendent and the mysterious. These dual spiritual and social functions have led to divisions of understanding within sociology and anthropology.

Like other ritual forms, religious rites dignify transactions that risk sliding into the trivial. The ceremonial resources of rite, its stylized actions, its formalized gestures, elaborate clothing and speech serve as artificial means of providing a protective mantle to theological propositions that might otherwise slip into trivia, into presumption, and into insignificance. Religious rituals operate in a series of paradoxes that are routinely overcome: The tradition that makes them seem unoriginal endows them with the authority of servicing a lineage of collective memory (Hervieu-Léger 1993) and making rites anew in the present; the fixed order of enactment that diminishes discretion permits the routine handling of dangerous emotions and that which might evaporate into ephemeral enthusiasms; and despite a tangible social apparatus that represents the unutterable, they manage to re-present utterances that belong to the Divine in a mysterious manner. The fixedness of ritual form contrasts with the unfixed properties they routinely handle, of death, marriage, and initiation. This fixedness proclaims a security, a witness to a

mysterious capacity for inexhaustible repetition.

The multitude of functions of religious rites and readings that can be derived from their stereotypical social facades generates a sociological fascination as to their ritual style and order, their symbols and procedures for handling routinely the unknown. But this management of antinomies and ambiguities in a credible manner marks a limit to sociological understandings of the social basis of rite.

Religious rituals can be understood as forms of theatre (Turner 1982). As social transactions, these rites can be characterized as forms of play or games that give them a significance in a culture of postmodernity (Flanagan 1991, Gadamer 1979, Huizinga 1949). Music, silence, awe, terror, and joy are some of the experiential properties so released that also form the characterizing phenomena of rite. The numinous and mysterious properties of being acted on by forces beyond human manufacture provide a fascination for the actors so engaged in this holy hunt.

10.4.3 Berger's belief on modernity

The technological production paradigms of thinking and bureaucracy, alienated the individual from primary institutions and forced individuals to create separate spheres of public and private life. There is no plausible structure for any system of beliefs in the modern world; people are made to choose their own with no anchors to our own perceptions of reality. This lowers feelings of belonging and forces our own subjectivities onto themselves. Berger called this a "homelessness of the mind." It is the product of the modern world, he believed, as it has transformed the technology of production into our consciousness, making our cognition componential, always searching for a "means to an end." Ideas and beliefs are varied in the modern world, and an individual, not sharing their system of beliefs with the public whole, relegates any behaviors that are contingent on it to their private life. Certain beliefs that an individual has that may not be widely accepted by society as a whole, are then kept to one's self and may only be seen within one's private life and are not seen by society.

The socialist myth, a non-pejorative term of Berger's, actually arises from intellectual leftism masking a need to resolve the lacking sense of community in the modern world through the promise to destroy the oppression of capitalism. Berger believed resolving community in modern society needs to emphasize the role of "mediating structures" in their lives to counter the alienation of modernity. Human existence in the age of modernity

requires there to be structures like church, neighbourhood, and family to help establish a sense of belonging rooted in a commitment to values or beliefs. This builds a sense of community and belonging in an individual. In addition, these structures can serve a role in addressing larger social problems without the alienation that larger society creates. The role of mediating structures in civil society is both private and public, in this sense.

Pluralism

The general meaning of pluralism is the coexistence, generally peaceful, of different religions, worldviews, and value systems within the same society. Berger believes pluralism exists in two ways. The first being that many religions and worldviews coexist in the same society. The second is the coexistence of the secular discourse with all these religious discourses. Some people avoid pluralism by only operating within their own secular or religious discourse, meaning they do not interact with others outside of their beliefs. Pluralism generally today is that it is globalized. Berger sees benefits in pluralism. One is that pluralism makes complete consensus in beliefs very rare, which allows people to form and hold their own beliefs without trying to conform to a society that holds all the same beliefs. This ties into the second benefit which is that pluralism gives freedom and allows people free decisions. Another benefit is that if pluralism is connected to religious freedom, religious institutions now become voluntary associations. Lastly, pluralism influences individual believers and religious communities to define the core of their faith separately from less central elements, which allows people to pick and choose certain aspects of their chosen form of belief that they may or may not agree with, while still remaining true to the central parts of it.

Transcendence

In daily life, people experience symbols and glimpses of existence beyond empirical order and of transcendent existence. Berger calls these "rumours of angels". People feel in times of great joy, in never-ending pursuit of order against chaos, in the existence of objective evil, and in the sense of hope that there exists some supernatural reality beyond that of human existence. People who choose to believe in the existence of a supernatural other require faith - a wager of belief against doubt - in the modern rationalised world. Knowledge can no longer sufficiently ground human belief in the pluralized world, forcing people to wager their own beliefs against the current of doubt in our society.

Secularization theory

Like most other sociologists of religion of his day, Berger once predicted the all-encompassing secularization of the world. He has admitted to his own miscalculations about secularization, concluding that the existence of resurgent religiosity in the modernised world has proven otherwise. In the *Desecularization of the World*, he cites both Western academia and Western Europe itself as exceptions to the triumphant desecularization hypothesis: that these cultures have remained highly secularized despite the resurgence of religion in the rest of the world. Berger finds that his and most sociologists' misconceptions about secularisation may have been the result of their own bias as members of academia, which is a largely atheist concentration of people.

Works

Luckmann was a follower of the phenomenologically oriented school of sociology, established by the Austrian-American scholar Alfred Schütz. He contributed to the foundation of phenomenological sociology, the sociology of religion in modern societies, and the sociology of knowledge and communication.

In his works, he developed the theory of social constructionism, which argues that all knowledge, including the most basic common sense knowledge of everyday reality, is derived from and maintained by social interactions. Together with Peter L. Berger, he wrote the book *The Social Construction of Reality* in 1966. The book was an important part of the move in sociology, and particularly the sociology of religion, away from the view of religion and religious values as central to the social order, arguing that social order is socially constructed by individuals and/or groups of individuals.

In 1982 he continued the work of Alfred Schütz, drawing on Schütz's notes and unfinished manuscripts to complete *Structures of the Life-World*, published (posthumously for Schütz) in 1982. Together with Richard Grathoff and Walter M. Sprondel, Luckmann founded the Social Science Archive Konstanz (also known as the Alfred Schütz Memorial Archives).

Luckmann was a member of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts and held honorary doctorates from the Universities of Linköping, Ljubljana, Trier and Buenos Aires. In 1998 he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). In 2004 Luckmann became an honorary member of the Slovenian Sociological Association. The German Sociological Association awarded

him a prize for his outstanding lifetime contribution to sociology at its 2002 Congress, and Luckmann became an honorary member in 2016

10.5 Conclusion

The common ideas, values, processes, and notions are habitualised and then institutionalised, making the base for the people's reality which becomes socially constructed. Thus, Berger and Luckmann state that "all human activity is subject to habitualisation. Any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern" (Berger & Luckmann 1967, p. 53). As a result, the habitualised actions and processes are institutionalised within the society as the definite constructs.

To understand the specifics of Berger and Luckmann's view according to the socially constructed reality along with determining its strengths and weaknesses, it is necessary to evaluate the relevance of using such notions as objectification, internalisation, externalisation, habitualisation, institutionalisation, socialisation, and 'recipe knowledge' as important ones to explain the idea of the reality which is presented by Berger and Luckmann as socially constructed.

10.6 Summary

Berger saw the field of sociology as not only just a way to help people and the community, but sociological insights are also important to all people interested in instilling action in society. Sociologists are a part of a multitude of fields, not just social work. Berger stated that sociology is not a practice, but an attempt to understand the social world. These understandings could be used by people in any field for whatever purpose and with whatever moral implications. He believed that sociologists, even if their values varied greatly, should at the very least have scientific integrity. Sociologists are only humans and will still have to deal with things such as convictions, emotions, and prejudices, but being trained in sociology should learn to understand and control these things and try to eliminate them from their work. A sociologist's job is to accurately report on a certain social terrain. Sociology is a science, and its findings are found through observation of certain rules of evidence that allow people to repeat and continue to develop the findings.

10.7 Questions

Answer briefly (6 marks, total 6-8 questions).

- a. Who was Peter Berger?
- b. Who was Thomas Luckmann?

Answer in detail. (12 marks, total 5-6 questions).

- a. Give a brief idea on work of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann?

Essay Type Question. (20marks, total 3-4 questions).

- a. Explain with examples, what are the various spheres of work both Berger and Luckmann worked?

10.8 References

1. The Precarious Vision: A Sociologist Looks at Social Fictions and Christian Faith (1961)
2. The Noise of Solemn Assemblies (1961)
3. Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective (1963)
4. The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge (1966) with Thomas Luckmann
5. The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion (1967)
6. A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural (1969)
7. Movement and Revolution (1970) with Richard John Neuhaus
8. Sociology (1972) with Brigitte Berger. Basic Books. - Dutch translation: Sociologie (1972).
9. The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness (1973) with Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner. Random House
10. Pyramids of Sacrifice: Political Ethics and Social Change (1974)
11. Facing Up to Modernity: Excursions in Society, Politics and Religion (1979)

12. The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation (1979)
13. Sociology Reinterpreted, (with Hansfried Kellner) (1981)
14. The Other Side of God: A Polarity in World Religions (editor, 1981)
15. The War Over the Family: Capturing the Middle Ground (1983) with Brigitte Berger
16. The Capitalist Revolution (1986) New York: Basic Books
17. The Capitalist Spirit: Toward a Religious Ethic of Wealth Creation (editor, 1990)
18. A Far Glory: The Quest for Faith in an Age of Credulity (1992)
19. Redeeming Laughter: The Comic Dimension of Human Experience (1997)
20. Four Faces of Global Culture (The National Interest, Fall 1997)
21. The Limits of Social Cohesion: Conflict and Mediation in Pluralist Societies: A Report of the Bertelsmann Foundation to the Club of Rome (1998)
22. The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics (editor, et al., 1999)
23. Peter Berger and the Study of Religion (edited by Linda Woodhead et al., 2001; includes a Postscript by Berger)
24. Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World (2002) with Samuel P. Huntington. Oxford University Press
25. Questions of Faith: A Skeptical Affirmation of Christianity (2003). Blackwell Publishing
26. Religious America, Secular Europe ?, (with Grace Davie and Effie Fokas) (2008)
27. In Praise of Doubt: How to Have Convictions Without Becoming a Fanatic (2009) with Anton Zijderveld. HarperOne
28. Dialogue Between Religious Traditions in an Age of Relativity (2011) Mohr Siebeck
29. The Many Altars of Modernity. Towards a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age" (2014)

10.9 Glossary

1. **Pluralism** : a condition or system in which two or more states, groups, principles, sources of authority, etc., coexist.
2. **Secularization** : disassociation or separation from religious or spiritual concerns.
3. **Transcendence** : existence or experience beyond the normal or physical level.

Unit–11 : Society as Objective and Subjective Reality

Structure :

- 11.1 Objectives**
- 11.2 Introduction**
- 11.3 Origins of Institutionalization**
- 11.4 Society as subjective reality**
 - 11.4.1 Primary Socialization**
 - 11.4.2 Secondary Socialization**
- 11.5 Conclusion**
- 11.6 Summary**
- 11.7 Questions**
- 11.8 References**
- 11.9 Glossary**

11.1 Objectives

- Concept of institutionalization
- What is objective reality?
- Different perspectives
- What subjective reality means.
- Concepts and types of socialization.

11.2 Introduction

It should be clear from the foregoing that the statement that man produces himself in no way implies some sort of Promethean vision of the solitary individual. Man's self-production is always, and of necessity, a social enterprise. Men together produce a human environment, with the totality of its socio-cultural and psychological formations. None of these formations may be understood as products of man's biological constitution,

which, as indicated, provides only the outer limits for human productive activity. Just as it is impossible for man to develop as man in isolation, so it is impossible for man in isolation to produce a human environment. Solitary human being is being on the animal level (which, of course, man shares with other animals). As soon as one deserves phenomena that are specifically human, one enters the realm of the social. Man's specific humanity and his sociality are inextricably intertwined. *Homo sapiens* is always, and in the same measure, *homo socius*.

The human organism lacks the necessary biological means to provide stability for human conduct. Human existence, if it were thrown back on its organismic resources by themselves, would be existence in some sort of chaos. Such chaos is, however, empirically unavailable, even though one may theoretically conceive of it. Empirically, human existence takes place in a context of order, direction, and stability. The question then arises: From what does the empirically existing stability of human order derive? An answer may be given on two levels. One may first point to the obvious fact that a given social order precedes any individual organismic development. That is, world-openness, while intrinsic to man's biological make-up, is always preempted by social order. One may say that the biologically intrinsic world-openness of human existence is always, and indeed must be, transformed by social order into a relative world closedness. While this reclosure can never approximate the closedness of animal existence, if only because of its humanly produced and thus "artificial" character, it is nevertheless capable, most of the time, of providing direction and stability for the greater part of human conduct. The question may then be pushed to another level. One may ask in what manner social order itself arises.

The most general answer to this question is that social order is a human product. Or, more precisely, an ongoing human production. It is produced by man in the course of his ongoing externalization. Social order is not biologically given or derived from any biological data in its empirical manifestations. Social order, needless to add, is also not given in man's natural environment, though particular features of this may be factors in determining certain features of a social order (for example, its economic or technological arrangements). Social order is not part of the "nature of things," and it cannot be derived from the "laws of nature." Social order exists only as a product of human activity. No other ontological status may be ascribed to it without hopelessly obfuscating its empirical manifestations. Both in its genesis (social order is the result of past human activity) and

its existence in any instant of time (social order exists only and insofar as human activity continues to produce it) it is a human product.

While the social products of human externalization have a character *sui generis* as against both their organismic and their environmental context, it is important to stress that externalization as such is an anthropological necessity. Human being is impossible in a closed sphere of quiescent interiority. Human being must ongoingly externalize itself in activity. This anthropological necessity is grounded in man's biological equipment. The inherent instability of the human organism makes it imperative that man himself provide a stable environment for his conduct. Man himself must specialize and direct his drives. These biological facts serve as a necessary presupposition for the production of social order. In other words, although no existing social order can be derived from biological data, the necessity for social order as such stems from man's biological equipment.

To understand the causes, other than those posited by the biological constants for the emergence, maintenance and transmission of a social order one must undertake an analysis that eventuates in a theory of institutionalization.

Society exists as both objective and subjective reality. These aspects receive their proper recognition if society is understood in terms of an ongoing dialectical process composed of the three moments of externalization, objectivation and internalization.

11.3 Origins of Institutionalization

All human activity is subject to habitualization. Any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be reproduced with an economy of effort and which, *ipso facto*, is apprehended by its performer as that pattern. Habitualization further implies that the action in question may be performed again in the future in the same manner and with the same economical effort. This is true of non-social as well as of social activity.

Habitualized actions, of course, retain their meaningful character for the individual although the meanings involved become embedded as routines in his general stock of knowledge, taken for granted by him and at hand for his projects into the future. Habitualization carries with it the important psychological gain that choices are narrowed.

Habitualization provides the direction and the specialization of activity that is lacking in man's biological equipment, thus relieving the accumulation of tensions that result from undirected drives. And by providing a stable background in which human activity may proceed with a minimum of decision-making most of the time, it frees energy for such decisions as may be necessary on certain occasions. In other words, the background of habitualized activity opens up a foreground for deliberation and innovation.

In terms of the meanings bestowed by man upon his activity, habitualization makes it unnecessary for each situation to be defined a new, step by step. A large variety of situations may be subsumed under its predefinitions. The activity to be undertaken in these situations can then be anticipated. Even alternatives of conduct can be assigned standard weights.

These processes of habitualization precede any institutionalization, this can be made to apply to a hypothetical solitary individual detached from any social interaction. The fact that even such a solitary individual, assuming that he has been formed as a self (as we would have to assume in the case of our matchstick-canoë builder), will habitualize his activity in accordance with biographical experience of a world of social institutions preceding his solitude need not concern us at the moment. Empirically, the more important part of the habitualization of human activity is coextensive with the latter's institutionalization. The question then becomes how institutions arise.

Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors. Put differently, any such typification is an institution. What must be stressed is the reciprocity of institutional typifications and the typicality of not only the actions but also the actors in institutions. The typifications of habitualized actions that constitute institutions are always shared ones. They are available to all the members of the particular social group in question, and the institution itself typifies individual actors as well as individual actions.

Institutions further imply historicity and control. Reciprocal typifications of actions are built up in the course of a shared history. They cannot be created instantaneously. Institutions always have a history, of which they are the products. It is impossible to understand an institution adequately without an understanding of the historical process in which it was produced. Institutions also, by the very fact of their existence, control human conduct by setting up predefined patterns of conduct, which channel it in one

direction as against the many other directions that would theoretically be possible. It is important to stress that this controlling character is inherent in institutionalization as such, prior to or apart from any mechanisms of sanctions specifically set up to support an institution. These mechanisms (the sum of which constitute what is generally called a system of social control) do, of course, exist in many institutions and in all the agglomerations of institutions that we call societies. Their controlling efficacy, however, is of a secondary or supplementary kind. As we shall see again later, the primary social control is given in the existence of an institution as such. To say that a segment of human activity has been institutionalized is already to say that this segment of human activity has been subsumed under social control. Additional control mechanisms are required only in so far as the processes of institutionalization are less than completely successful. Thus, for instance, the law may provide that anyone who breaks the incest taboo will have his head chopped off. This provision may be necessary because there have been cases when individuals offended against the taboo. It is unlikely that this sanction will have to be invoked continuously (unless the institution delineated by the incest taboo is itself in the course of disintegration, a special case that we need not elaborate here). It makes little sense, therefore, to say that human sexuality is socially controlled by beheading certain individuals. Rather, human sexuality is socially controlled by its institutionalization in the course of the particular history in question. One may add, of course, that the incest taboo itself is nothing but the negative side of an assemblage of typifications, which define in the first place which sexual conduct is incestuous and which is not.

In actual experience institutions generally manifest themselves in collectivities containing considerable numbers of people. It is theoretically important, however, to emphasize that the institutionalizing process of reciprocal typification would occur even if two individuals began to interact A and B alone are responsible for having constructed this world. A and B remain capable of changing or abolishing it. What is more, since they themselves have shaped this world in the course of a shared biography which they can remember, the world thus shaped appears fully transparent to them. They understand the world that they themselves have made. All this changes are made in the process of transmission to the new generation. The objectivity of the institutional world "thickens" and "hardens," not only for the children, but (by a mirror effect) for the parents as well. The "There we go again" now becomes "This is how these things are done." A world

so regarded attains a firmness in consciousness; it becomes real in an ever more massive way and it can no longer be changed so readily. For the children, especially in the early phase of their socialization into it, it becomes the world. For the parents, it loses its playful quality and becomes "serious." For the children, the parentally transmitted world is not fully transparent. Since they had no part in shaping it, it confronts them as a given reality that, like nature, is opaque in places at least.

Only at this point does it become possible to speak of a social world at all, in the sense of a comprehensive and given reality confronting the individual in a manner analogous to the reality of the natural world. Only in this way, as an objective world, can the social formations be transmitted to a new generation. In the early phases of socialization the child is quite incapable of distinguishing between the objectivity of natural phenomena and the objectivity of the social formations. To take the most important item of socialization, language appears to the child as inherent in the nature of things, and he cannot grasp the notion of its conventionality. A thing is what it is called, and it could not be called anything else. All institutions appear in the same way, as given, unalterable and self-evident. Even in our empirically unlikely example of parents having constructed an institutional world *de novo*, the objectivity of this world would be increased for them by the socialization of their children, because the objectivity experienced by the children would reflect back upon their own experience of this world. Empirically, of course, the institutional world transmitted by most parents already has the character of historical and objective reality. The process of transmission simply strengthens the parents' sense of reality, if only because, to put it crudely, if one says, "This is how these things are done," often enough one believes it oneself.

11.4 Society as subjective reality

11.4.1 Primary Socialization

Primary socialization could be more important than secondary socialization as the primary socialization phase is the basic step that an individual takes to enter into society. Socialization has been described as to render social or make someone able to live in society and learn the social norms and customs. Socialization is central to the functioning of any society and is also central to the emergence of modernity.

Socialization tends to serve two major functions of preparing an individual to play and develop roles, habits, beliefs and values and evoke appropriate patterns of emotional, social and physical responses helping to communicate contents of culture and its persistence and continuity (Chinoy, 1961). However social rules and social systems should be integrated with the individual's own social experiences. However individual social experiences have become much less important in the study of socialization as the focus is now on identifying functions of institutions and systems in socialization and cultural changes.

Socialization is especially true in family and education and has been seen in many family forms and differences in gender roles, in cultural diversity and in occupational standards. However it is important to note the relationship between ethics, norms, values and roles in socialization. Socialization is the means through which social and cultural continuity is attained however socialization itself may not lead to desirable consequences although it is a process and meant to have an impact on all aspects of society and the individual (Chinoy, 1961). Socialization provides partial explanation for the human condition as also the beliefs and behaviour of society although the role of environment may also be significant in any process of socialization (Johnson, 1961).

Both socialization and biology could have an impact on how people are shaped by the environment and their genes and behavioural outcomes are also significantly different as the capacity for learning changes throughout a lifetime.

Socialization could have many agents such as the family, friends and school, religious institutions and peer groups as also the mass media and work place colleagues. The family establishes basic attitudes whereas schools build ethics and values, religious institutions affect our belief systems and peer groups help in sharing social traits. Socialization is usually seen as a life process and a continued interaction with all agents of society in a manner that is most beneficial to individuals.

Socialization could be primary which occurs in a child as the child learns attitudes, values, actions as members of particular societies and cultures. If a child experiences racist attitudes in the family, this could have an effect on the child's attitudes towards minorities and other races. Primary socialization is the first and basic step towards interactions with the outside world and the family is the first agent in primary socialization as the family introduces a child to the world outside, to its beliefs, customs, norms and

helps the child in adapting to the new environment (Clausen, 1968). Secondary socialization happens when a child moves out of family and learn how to behave within a small community or social group and teenagers or adolescents are largely influenced by secondary socialization as they may enter a new school. Entering a new profession is also secondary socialization of adults and whereas primary socialization is more generalized, secondary socialization is adapting to specific environments. Primary socialization happens early in life and is the first socialization in children and adolescents when new attitudes and ideas develop for social interaction. Secondary socialization refers to socialization that takes place through one's life and can occur in children as well as in older adults as it means adapting to new situations and dealing with new encounters (White, 1977).

There are other types of socialization such as developmental socialization and anticipatory socialization. Developmental socialization is about developing social skills and learning behaviour within a social institution and anticipatory socialization is about understanding and predicting future situations and relationships and developing social responses or skills to these situations. Re-socialization is another process of socialization in which former behavioural patterns are discarded to learn new values and norms. This could be a new gender role if there is a condition of sex change.

Socialization is a fundamental sociological concept and the elements of socialization are generally agreed upon as having specific goals such as impulse control and cultivating new roles, cultivation of meaning sources. Socialization is the process that helps in social functioning and is often considered as culturally relative as people from different cultures socialize differently (White, 1977). Since socialization is an adoption of culture, the process of socialization is different for every culture. Socialization has been described as both a process and an outcome. It has been argued that the core identity of an individual and the basic life beliefs and attitudes develop during primary socialization and the more specific changes through secondary socialization occurs in different structured social situations. Life socialization, especially through social situations as in secondary socialization, the need for later life situations highlights the complexity of society and increase in varied roles and responsibilities.

However there could be several differences between primary and secondary socialization as Mortimer and Simmons (1978) showed how these two types of socialization differ.

Content, context and response are the three ways in which the differences between primary and secondary socialization could be explained. In childhood socialization involves regulation of biological drives and impulse control which is later replaced by self image and values in adolescence. In adulthood socialization is more about specific norms and behaviors and relates to work roles and personality traits development.

Context or the environment in socialization is also important as the person who is socialized seeks to learn within the context of family and school or peer groups. Relationships are also emotional and socialization also takes place as an individual takes the adult role. Formal and informal relationships tend to differ according to situational context and in some cases contexts tend to affect the emotional nature of relationships. As far as responding to situations is concerned, children and adolescents could be more easily moulded than adults as adult socialization is more voluntary and adults could manipulate their own responses considerably.

Socialization involves contacts with multiple groups in different contexts and interactions at various levels. Socialization is a social process and in the process of socialization, parents, friends, schools, co workers, family members tend to play a major role (Chinoy, 1961).

However socialization could have its positive or negative impact as seen in broad and narrow socialization process as in broad socialization, individualism, and self expression are important whereas in case of narrow socialization conformity is more important. This differentiation was provided by Arnett (1995) who suggested that socialization could result in both broad and narrow social interaction process as broad socialization helps in expansion and narrow socialization is more about conformity and according to Arnett, socialization could be broad or narrow within the socialization forces of friends, family, school, peer group, co workers etc. Socialization type could vary across cultures as in America for instance there is an increased emphasis on individualism whereas in many Asian countries as in India or Japan socialization could be about conformity to religious or social norms (Arnett, 1995).

However primary socialization could be more significant than secondary socialization as primary socialization is about forming a basic attitude towards people and society and this in turn helps in shaping the identity of individuals as a child. Primary socialization is social learning process in childhood whereas secondary socialization is social learning

in adulthood or social learning added to already existing basic learning process so secondary socialization is about added learning and in some cases substitute learning where changes in the socialization process takes place due to new environments such as change of workplace or entering new work environments or new schools (Johnson, 1961).

Primary socialization is more basic as in primary socialization the child learns the very first social responses and develops the first social beliefs and attitudes. Based on primary socialization process, secondary socialization is about using the primary socially learned responses to adapt them to new environments through secondary socialization. Since primary socialization occurs in childhood and in the child's immediate environment as through home or family, it is more significant and has a greater impact on the child's attitudes and beliefs as well as social and emotional development. Primary socialization could be said to have a direct impact on the child and shapes the future of the child and how he grows up with certain beliefs as in case of children who see racial hatred in the family is more prone to develop their own hatred towards other races as a result of direct conditioning in the family environment. In fact the young people in later years are peculiarly shaped by what they learnt and experienced in childhood and how they were conditioned to react to situations and people and thus primary socialization is of greater significance in later years than secondary socialization (Clausen, 1968).

Within this context, families and schools are of prime importance and are considered as the first agents that implement the processes of social control. Youth crime and anti social behavior could be explained with the aid of direct primary socialization as what the individual learns at home is of major importance and shapes his later life and could also explain any kind of deviance (Pitts, 2001). Young people enter crime possibly through racial hatred or lack of social inclusion and these attitudes such as against other races are formed in childhood or adolescence and the child usually learns from the family members, school peers and direct social environment (Muncie, 2004).

Social inclusion is one of the major issues of socialization as emphasized by the government as minority communities and individuals from different races and religions may feel excluded and this exclusion leads to a sense of frustration and crime among the youth of the excluded groups (McAuley, 2007). In order to overcome this sense of exclusion, minority groups and especially the young people of minority groups have been

given special support through various social services of inclusion and inclusion is also part of the socialization process and could be considered as secondary as individuals go through social inclusion adaptive processes and behavior after they have been already brought up and undergone primary socialization in their family homes or schools that were not too conducive to inclusion.

In fact the making of responsible citizens include adaptive processes at home, family and school, work or general community and the young people develop knowledge of cultures at home and in the community and also endorse their own subcultures of social attitudes and behavior that are influenced by primary rather than secondary socialization (Hall and Jefferson, 1976). Considering that primary socialization and what we learn from the immediate environment in childhood is more important than secondary socialization Even if we learn a lot of things learn at the workplace or in new environments, primary socialization still remains the basic socialization process Moreover secondary socialization only implies a change or an addition to what has been already learnt in childhood.

To be in society is to participate in its dialectic. In the life of every individual, there is a temporal sequence, in the course of which one is inducted in the societal dialectic. The beginning point of this process is internalization: the immediate apprehension or interpretation of an objective event as expressing meaning, that is, as a manifestation of another's subjective processes which thereby becomes subjectively meaningful to ourselves.

Internalization of Reality

Internalization in this general sense is the basis, first, for an understanding of one's fellowmen and, second, for the apprehension of the world as a meaningful and social reality. Only when he has achieved this degree of internalization can an individual become a member of society. The ontogenetic process by which this is brought about is socialization, which may thus be defined as the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or a sector of it. Primary socialization is the first socialization an individual undergoes in childhood, through which he become a member of society. Every individual is born into an objective social structure within which he encounters the significant others who are in charge of his socialization. Primary socialization involves more than purely cognitive learning.

The individual becomes what he is addressed as by his significant others. It entails

a dialectic between identification by others and self-identification, between objectively assigned and subjectively appropriated identity. Primary socialization creates in the child's consciousness a progressive abstraction from the roles and attitude of specific others to roles and attitudes in general. The formation within consciousness of the generalized other marks a decisive phase in socialization. It implies the internalization of society as such and of the objective reality established therein, and, at the same time, the subjective establishment of a coherent and continuous identity. When the generalized other has been crystallized in consciousness, a symmetrical relationship is established between objective and subjective reality. What is real 'outside' corresponds to what is real 'within'. Objective reality can readily be 'translated' into subjective reality, and vice versa. Primary socialization ends when the concept of the generalized other has been established in the consciousness of the individual. At this point he is an effective member of society and in subjective possession of a self and a world.

11.4.2 Secondary Socialization

Secondary Socialisation is the wider process of learning; a child learns what is expected of them, and what is acceptable/appropriate behaviour, for them; within a small group that is part of a larger society and culture. Secondary socialisation represents a new developmental stage, and is generally associated with teenagers and adults. The social changes we experience are different to those of primary socialisation. An example would be, starting a new level of education at college or university, relocating to a new environment or a change in social status or society. Some students may be transferring from a rural community to a more urban environment, whilst others may be international students being socialised to the British way of life. Others may be mature students without any prior higher educational experience. Moreover, any social structure can act as a socialising agent. For example, the work environment socialises the employees to conform to their way of business and their culture. In most organisations employees have clear responsibilities to respect authority, adhere to corporate policies, and work hard in exchange for financial compensation in the form of income and status promotions. Also, the wider public venues we all go to; such as shopping centres, libraries, hospitals, football matches, act as social interaction and educate us about new boundaries and constraints - thereby influencing our behaviour. When considering the norms of behaviour, of passengers on airplanes; those of a dinner at a Michelin Star restaurant; or the fans at a Rugby or Tennis game. We all conform and adapt without conscious thought a large

percentage of our lives - this conditioning allows us to move in a complex structure of Culture and Society.

The secondary socialisation process is crucial particularly in times of stress and change. Transition from infancy to childhood to adolescence and adulthood are all accompanied by a socialisation process that is designed socially and culturally to give the individual, all the skills necessary to grow and co-exist. If the process of secondary socialisation fails, due to internal or external factors, the individual may not be in possession of the necessary social or cultural skills to cope logically and rationally. This situation could lead to a change in their values and social group. As an adult we experience the socialisation process through changes in careers, family structure, personal relationships, interests, such as politics. As our lives continue, we move to retirement age, the changes in family and career are now viewed differently; our priorities change, as situations such as being, unwell, or alone take precedence. The extended older family highlight the changing cultural values in the socialisation process.

With the introduction of media, older generations, are now learning and experiencing new experiences of information and communication, which is a new form of socialisation for them. This is a new agent of socialisation and is a powerful teacher and influencing agent within the context of socialisation, second only to Family. The media plays a significant role in shaping the social attitudes and social behaviours of our children and adolescents... Parents do exert the most influence on children; however the mass media can be considered secondary agents of socialisation. For example, viewing of advertisements that are specifically targeted at the respective age group is related to poor self-esteem and juvenile depression among children who come from low-income families. It is likely that children feel inadequate in their peer group because they cannot have the products that are most sought by that peer group. Media and Marketing work hand in hand to influence our views - We are targeted as either specific social groups, age groups and economic groups - specifically to sell Products and Services. What we buy, where we buy, how we spend, and who we vote for, is heavily influenced by a range of Multi - Media; such as the TV, internet, Radio, advertising in magazines. The role of religion within society and family has diminished. However, it can be argued that the family and religion are an integrated cultural and social element for many ethnic groups. We provide "Faith schools" for many diverse religions with the UK. Ultimately religion presents itself in society as a double-edged sword - much of the segregation in society is either

politically or religiously motivated. Therefore, religion is subjective and open to be interpretation - being first established within the family, and then the wider cultural and social experiences; it is also a very individual experience and within the period of secondary socialisation, these religious views, which translate as values and norms can be challenged by wider social and cultural diversity.

Secondary socialization is the internalization of institutional or institution-based 'sub-worlds'. Its extent and character are therefore determined by the complexity of the division of labour and the concomitant social distribution of knowledge. The 'sub-worlds' internalized in secondary socialization are generally partial realities in contrast to the 'base-world' acquired in primary socialization. Furthermore, they, too, require at least the rudiments of a legitimating apparatus, often accompanied by ritual of material symbols. This role-specific language is internalized in toto by the individual as he is trained. The character of such secondary socialization depends upon the status of the body of knowledge concerned within the symbolic universe as a whole. It always presupposes a preceding process of primary socialization; that is, it must deal with an already formed self and an already internalized world. It cannot construct subjective reality.

It is necessary to love one's mother, but not one's teacher. Socialization in later life typically begins to take on an affectivity, reminiscent of childhood when it seeks radically to transform the subjective reality of the individual. Formality and anonymity are, of course, linked with the affective character of social relations in secondary socialization. The reality accent of knowledge internalized in secondary socialization is more easily bracketed. It is relatively easy to set aside the reality of the secondary internalizations. The institutionalized distribution of tasks between primary and secondary socialization varies with the complexity of the social distribution of knowledge.

MAINTAINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION OF REALITY

Since socialization is never complete and the contents it internalizes face continuing threats to their subjective reality, every viable society must develop procedures of reality maintenance to safeguard a measure of symmetry between objective and subjective reality. Primary socialization internalizes a reality apprehended as inevitable. The more 'artificial' character of secondary socialization makes the subjective reality of its internalizations even more vulnerable to challenging definitions of reality, not because they are not taken for granted or are apprehended as less than real in everyday life, but

because their reality is less deeply rooted in consciousness and thus more susceptible to displacement. It is convenient to distinguish between two general types of reality-maintenance - routine maintenance and crisis maintenance. Reality is originally internalized by a social process, so it is maintained in consciousness by social processes.

The significant others in the individual's life are the principal agents for the maintenance of his subjective reality. The most important vehicle of reality-maintenance is conversation. One may view the individual's everyday life in terms of the working away of a conversational apparatus that ongoingly maintains, modifies and reconstructs his subjective reality. Exchange confirms the subjective reality of this world. This reality-generating potency of conversation is already given in the fact of linguistic objectification. In order to maintain subjective reality effectively, the conversational apparatus must be continual and consistent. Subjective reality is thus always dependent upon specific plausibility structures, that is, the specific social base and social processes required for its maintenance.

Typically, the transformation is subjectively apprehended as total. Since subjective reality is never totally socialized, it cannot be totally transformed by social processes. Such transformations we will call alternations. Alternation requires processes of re-socialization. These processes resemble primary socialization, because they have radically to re-assign reality accents and, consequently, must replicate to a considerable degree the strongly affective identification with the socializing personnel that was characteristic of childhood. A 'recipe' for successful alternation has to include both social and conceptual conditions, the social, of course, serving as the matrix of the conceptual. The historical prototype of alternation is religious conversion. Religious community provides the indispensable plausibility structure for the new reality.

Alternation thus involves a reorganization of the conversational apparatus. The partners in significant conversation change. The most important conceptual requirement for alternation is the availability of a legitimating apparatus for the whole sequence of transformation. In addition to this reinterpretation in toto there must be particular reinterpretations of past events and persons with past significance. In re-socialization the past is reinterpreted to conform to the present reality, with the tendency to retroject into the past various elements that were subjectively unavailable at the time. In secondary socialization the present is interpreted so as to stand in a continuous relationship with the past, with the tendency to minimize such transformations as have actually taken

place.

Socialization always takes place in the context of a specific social structure. Not only its contents but also its measure of 'success' have social-structural conditions and social-structural consequences. 'Successful socialization' means the establishment of a high degree of symmetry between objective and subjective reality. 'Unsuccessful socialization' is to be understood in terms of asymmetry between objective and subjective reality. Maximal success in socialization is likely to occur in societies with very simple division of labour and minimum distribution of knowledge. Everybody knows who everybody else is and who he is himself. There is, therefore, no problem of identity. In other words, the individual in such a society not only is what he is supposed to be, but he is that in a unified, 'unstratified' way.

INTERNALIZATION AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Incipient counter-definitions of reality and identity are present as soon as any such individuals congregate in socially durable groups. This triggers a process of change that will introduce a more complex distribution of knowledge. A counter-reality may now begin to be objectivated in the marginal group of the unsuccessfully socialized. Once there is a more complex distribution of knowledge in a society, unsuccessful socialization may be the result of different significant others mediating different objective realities to the individual. Put differently, unsuccessful socialization may be the result of heterogeneity in the socializing personnel. Unsuccessful socialization may also result from the mediation of acutely discrepant worlds by significant others during primary socialization. When acutely discrepant worlds are mediated in primary socialization, the individual is presented with a choice of profiled identities apprehended by him as genuine biographical possibilities. There may be a socially concealed asymmetry between 'public' and 'private' biography.

From the point of view of society, socialisation is the way through which society transmits its culture from generation to generation and maintains itself. From the point of view of the individual, socialisation is the process by which the individual learns social behaviour, develops his 'self'.

The process operates at two levels, one within the infant which is called the internalisation of objects around and the other from the outside. Socialisation may be

viewed as the "internalisation of social norms. Social rules become internal to the individual, in the sense that they are self-imposed rather than imposed by means of external regulation and are thus part of individual's own personality.

The individual therefore feels an urge to conform. Secondly, it may be viewed as essential element of social interaction. In this case, individuals become socialised as they act in accordance with the expectations of others. The underlying process of socialisation is bound up with social interaction.

Man's animality is transformed in socialization, but it is not abolished. Man is even capable of eating and theorizing at the same time. It is possible to speak of a dialectic between nature and society. Externally, it is a dialectic between the individual animal and the social world. Internally, it is a dialectic between the individual's biological substratum and his socially produced identity. Man is biologically predestined to construct and to inhabit a world with others. This world becomes for him the dominant and definite reality. Its limits are set by nature, but, once constructed, this world acts back upon nature. In the dialectic between nature and the socially constructed world the human organism itself is transformed. In this same dialectic man produces reality and thereby produces himself.

11.4 Conclusion

Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product. It may also already be evident that an analysis of the social world that leaves out any one of these three moments will be distortive. One may further add that only with the transmission of the social world to a new generation (that is, internalization as effectuated in socialization) does the fundamental social dialectic appear in its totality. To repeat, only with the appearance of a new generation can one properly speak of a social world?

Berger and Luckmann developed a theory that aims at answering the question of how subjective meaning becomes a social fact. The argument from the authors is that "Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 79). The main message from Berger and Luckmann which is important is that reality is socially constructed. It is constructed by us, by the people living and working in society. However, we often forget that and take reality for granted, as if it were something given from the outside, that we just have to adapt to. We can

analyse trends and construct explanations about them or we can engage, trying to foster change with other territorial actors. Since reality is socially constructed it can be changed. This is the mission for action research: to engage the actors in processes and to challenge taken for granted realities by actors in society.

One example of such a taken for granted reality, is context. Although context is much used by social scientists, it is usually used to denote something that is given. However, policy learning is actually about understanding the context and trying to change the context through policy. This is a different approach to policy learning: from an actor approach towards a contextual approach. This implies that context plays a more complex and important role that is usually assumed in innovation and regional development theory. One lesson from our study of policy learning is that cognitive frameworks of policy makers as well as researchers are a part of the context that needs to be challenged during an action research process. This kind of change can be hard for all the actors involved in a change process because it is about challenging and changing taken for granted assumptions about realities. However as Berger and Luckmann demonstrate, what man sees as realities are socially constructed by humans, and can therefore be changed.

11.5 Summary

An institutional world, then, is experienced as an objective reality. It has a history that antedates the individual's birth and is not accessible to his biographical recollection. It was there before he was born, and it will be there after his death. This history itself, as the tradition of the existing institutions, has the character of objectivity. The individual's biography is apprehended as an episode located within the objective history of the society. The institutions, as historical and objective facticities, confront the individual as undeniable facts. The institutions are there, external to him, persistent in their reality, whether he likes it or not. He cannot wish them away. They resist his attempts to change or evade them. They have coercive power over him, both in themselves, by the sheer force of their facticity, and through the control mechanisms that are usually attached to the most important of them. The objective reality of institutions is not diminished if the individual does not understand their purpose or their mode of operation. He may experience large sectors of the social world as incomprehensible, perhaps oppressive in their

opaqueness, but real nonetheless. Since institutions exist as external reality, the individual cannot understand them by introspections. He must "go out" and learn about them, just as he must to learn about nature. This remains true even though the social world, as a humanly produced reality, is potentially understandable in a way not possible in the case of the natural world.

It is important to keep in mind that the objectivity of the institutional world, however massive it may appear to the individual, is a humanly produced, constructed objectivity. The process by which the externalized products of human activity attain the character of objectivity is objectivation. The institutional world is objectivated human activity, and so is every single institution. In other words despite the objectivity that marks the social world in human experience, it does not thereby acquire an ontological status apart from the human activity that produced it. The paradox that man is capable of producing a world that he then experiences as something other than a human product will concern us later on. At the moment, it is important to emphasize that the relationship between man, the producer, and the social world, his product, is and remains a dialectical one. That is, man (not of course, in isolation but in his collectivities) and his social world interact with each other. The product acts back upon the producer. Externalization and objectivation are moments in a continuing dialectical process, which is internalization (by which the objectivated social world is retrojected into consciousness in the course of socialization), will occupy us in considerable detail later on. It is already possible, however, to see the fundamental relationship of these three dialectical moments in social reality. Each of them corresponds to an essential characterization of the social world.

Socialisation is a comprehensive process. According to Horton and Hunt, Socialisation is the process whereby one internalises the norms of his groups, so that a distinct 'self emerges, unique to this individual. The heart of socialisation", to quote Kingsley Davis. "is the emergence and gradual development of the self or ego. It is in terms of the self that personality takes shape and the mind comes to function". It is the process by which the new-born individual, as he grows up, acquires the values of the group and is moulded into a social being.

Socialisation is, thus, a process of cultural learning whereby a new person acquires necessary skills and education to play a regular part in a social system. The process is essentially the same in all societies, though institutional arrangements vary. The process

continues throughout life as each new situation arises. Socialisation is the process of fitting individuals into particular forms of group life, transforming human organism into social beings and transmitting established cultural traditions.

Presumably all men, once socialized, are potential 'traitors to themselves'. The possibility of 'individualism' (that is, of individual choice between discrepant realities and identities) is directly linked to the possibility of unsuccessful socialization. A third important situation leading to unsuccessful socialization arises when there are discrepancies between primary and secondary socialization. The subjectively chosen identity becomes a fantasy identity, objectified within the individual's consciousness as his 'real self'. A society in which discrepant worlds are generally available on a market basis entails specific constellations of subjective reality and identity. There will be an increasingly general consciousness of the relativity of all worlds, including one's own, which is now subjectively apprehended as 'a world', rather than 'the world'.

Identity is, of course, a key element of subjective reality and, like all subjective reality, stands in a dialectical relationship with society. Identity is formed by social processes. Once crystallized, it is maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations. The social processes involved in both the formation and the maintenance of identity are determined by the social structure. Identity is a phenomenon that emerges from the dialectic between individual and society. Identity types, on the other hand, are social products and relatively stable elements of objective social reality. Theories about identity are always embedded in a more general interpretation of reality; they are 'built into' the symbolic universe and its theoretical legitimations, and vary with the character of the latter.

11.6 Questions

Answer briefly (6 marks, total 6-8 questions).

- a. Define institutionalization?
- b. Define objective reality?

Answer in detail. (12 marks, total 5-6 questions).

- a. Give a brief idea on concept of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's concept of institutionalization?

Essay Type Question. (20marks, total 3-4 questions).

- a. Explain with examples, what are the various types and forms of institutionalization of both Berger and Luckmann?

Answer briefly (6 marks, total 6-8 questions).

- a. Give a brief description of socialization

Answer in detail. (12 marks, total 5-6 questions).

- a. Explain “Society as Subjective Reality : Socialization” by Berger and Luckmann?

Essay Type Question. (20marks, total 3-4 questions).

- a. Explain with examples objective reality of Berger and Luckmann?
- b. What is understood by socialization according to Berger and Luckmann?

11.7 Reference

Adolescents' Educational Plans: Some Further Evidence." American Journal of Sociology 87:363-87.

Alwin, Duane F. 1984. "Trends in Parental Socialization Values: Detroit, 1958-1983." American Journal of Sociology 90: 359-82.

Barry, Herbert III. Irvin Child, and Margaret Bacon. 1959. "Relationship of Child Basic Books-Russell Sage Foundation.

Berger, Peter (2011). Adventures of an Accidental Sociologist: How to Explain the World Without Becoming a Bore. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

Berger, Peter (2011). Adventures of an Accidental Sociologist: How to Explain the World Without Becoming a Bore. Amherst: Prometheus.

Berger, Peter L (1966). The Social Construction of Reality: a Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge. Garden City, New York: Anchor.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie. 1970. Two Worlds of Childhood: U.S. and U.S.S.R. New York:

Bush, Diane Mitsch. 1985. "The Impact of Changing Gender Role Expectations upon

- Collins, Glenn. 1984. "Experts Debate Impact of Day Care on Children and on Society."
- Comstock, George, Steven Chafee, Natan Katzman, Maxwell McCombs, and Donald Cummings, Scott and Del Taebel. 1978. "The Economic Socialization of Children: A
- Curtiss, Susan. 1977. *Genie*. New York: American Press.
- Davies, Mark and Denise B. Kandel. 1981. "Parental and Peer Influences on
- Della Fave, L. Richard. 1980. "The Meek Shall Not Inherit the Earth: Self-evaluation and the Legitimacy of Stratification." *American Sociological Review* 45:955-71.
- Mann, Douglas (2008). *Understanding Society: A Survey of Modern Social Theory*. Canada: Oxford University Press. pp. 207-210. ISBN 978-0-19-542184-2.
- Neo-Marxist Analysis." *Social Problems* 26:198-210
- New York Times (September 4): B11
- Roberts. 1978. *Television and Human Behavior*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Socialization in Adolescence: Understanding the interaction of Gender, Age, and Cohort Effects." Pp. 269-97 in *Research in the Sociology of Education and Socialization*. Vol. 5, edited by Alan C. Kerchhoff. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Training to Subsistence Economy." *American Anthropologist* 61:51-63.

11.8 Glossary

1. **Institutionalization** : The action of establishing something as a convention or norm in an organization or culture.
2. **Objective reality**: Objective reality means that something is actual (so it exists) independent of the mind.
3. **Socialization** : the process of learning to behave in a way that is acceptable to society.
4. **Internalization** : Internalization is directly associated with learning within an organism (or business) and recalling what has been learned. In psychology and sociology, internalization involves the integration of attitudes, values, standards and the opinions of others into one's own identity or sense of self.

5. **Social structure :** Social structure, in sociology, the distinctive, stable arrangement of institutions whereby human beings in a society interact and live together. Social structure is often treated together with the concept of social change, which deals with the forces that change the social structure and the organization of society.
6. **Subjective reality :** Subjective reality means that something is actual depending on the mind. For example: someone walks by a flower and experiences the beauty of the flower.

Module - IV
Critical Social Theory

Unit : 12 □ General Arguments : Frankfurt School

Structure

12.1 Learning Objectives

12.2 Introduction

12.3 General Arguments:

The First Argument: Critical Scrutiny is inevitable

The Second Argument: Reality is Historically Constructed, Not Natural

The Third Argument: Social Theory Must Critique Its Own Foundations

The Fourth Argument: Theory and Practice Must Be Unified

The Fifth Argument: Theory is Historically Situated and Evolves with Social Change

The Sixth Argument: Rethinking Marxism in Light of Totalitarianism

The Seventh Argument: Mass Culture and the Manipulation of Consciousness

The Eighth Argument: From Liberation to Domination

The Ninth Argument : Interpolation between the different approaches.

12.4 Conclusion:

12.5 Summary

12.6 Questions

Short Questions:

Long Questions:

12.7 References

12.8 Glossary

12.1 Learning Objectives

- Understand the Frankfurt School's Critique of Modern Society – Analyze how critical theorists challenged traditional Marxism by shifting focus from class struggle to cultural and ideological domination, emphasizing the role of instrumental rationality in reinforcing bureaucratic control and consumer capitalism.

- Evaluate the Role of the Culture Industry and Mass Domination – Examine how mass media, advertising, and political structures create an illusion of choice while suppressing genuine social and political alternatives, leading to passive acquiescence rather than active resistance.
- Engage with Critical Theory as an Open-Ended Inquiry – Explore the Frankfurt School’s emphasis on negation and continuous critique, recognizing the historical construction of social systems and the potential for transformation through intellectual and social engagement.

12.2 Introduction

The term critical theory is closely linked to a group of German social theorists associated with the Institute for Social Research. Established in Frankfurt in 1923, the Institute aimed to investigate the contradictions of modernity, critically assess the constraints of the existing social order, and transcend the limitations of contemporary social and philosophical thought. To achieve these goals, the Frankfurt School—as the Institute’s founders and early scholars came to be known—drew upon a diverse intellectual framework, incorporating Marxism, idealist philosophy, psychoanalysis, and empirically driven sociology.

The early Frankfurt School was shaped by key figures such as Max Horkheimer, who served as the Institute’s long-time director, along with Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse. While the term critical theory is often equated with their work—and they themselves occasionally claimed to be the only truly critical theorists of their time—restricting the label exclusively to the Frankfurt School would be misleading. Such a narrow definition would suggest a rigidity that critical theory neither possessed nor could sustain. Like any dynamic intellectual tradition, it has evolved through contributions from successive generations of scholars. Moreover, the founders of the Frankfurt School emphasized that critical theory must remain deeply engaged with historical transformations, offering both a critique of the present and a means to shape the future. In this regard, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse were profoundly influenced by Marx’s assertion that while philosophers have merely interpreted the world, the real task is to change it (Marx, 1978: 145). However, as Marx himself maintained, transforming the world did not necessitate abandoning theoretical inquiry in favor of direct action. In response to this opposition, Frankfurt School theorists maintained that theory should not remain confined to an abstract and cerebral philosophical tradition that merely reinforced the existing social order. Instead, they argued for reclaiming theory as a practical and critical tool,

one that could actively contribute to movements striving for radical and emancipatory social transformation.

Since the Enlightenment, philosophers and social theorists have often framed modernity in opposition to tradition. However, this perspective tended to portray modernity as a uniform and linear progression, overlooking its internal complexities. Drawing from the dialectical tradition of Hegel and Marx, the Frankfurt School challenged this notion, arguing that modernity was inherently contradictory and multifaceted. They viewed history as a process in which conflicting potentials unfolded, encompassing both oppressive regimes like Nazism and Stalinism, as well as the advancement of democracy and scientific progress. Understanding history in this way required recognizing the diverse trajectories within modernity and acknowledging that theory itself is historically situated, shaped by the very conditions it seeks to analyze.

This is one of the key reasons why critical theory should not be exclusively identified with the original Frankfurt School theorists. Rather, it represents a broader intellectual project that critically examines both the possibilities and contradictions of modernity, engaging a wider range of scholars. Even among the early Frankfurt School thinkers, there were significant divisions, particularly concerning the potential for revolutionary change. Moreover, they maintained close intellectual exchanges with contemporaries such as Walter Benjamin, who, despite his influence, was never formally part of the Institute for Social Research.

A second generation of Frankfurt School theorists—including Jürgen Habermas, Albrecht Wellmer, and others—actively engaged with and critically reassessed the work of their predecessors. More recently, a third generation has emerged, led by figures like Axel Honneth in Germany and Seyla Benhabib in the United States. However, the scope of critical theory extends far beyond the Frankfurt School's direct lineage. In a broader sense, it intersects with various intellectual traditions, including Michel Foucault and François Lyotard's analyses of overarching social processes and epochal transformations, Pierre Bourdieu's exploration of the interplay between human agency and the reproduction of social structures, and Jacques Derrida's deconstructive approach to philosophical history.

This unit primarily focuses on the original Frankfurt School, as later theorists are discussed in other sections of the book. Our emphasis is on the first generation of Frankfurt School critical theorists, highlighting their key ideas and contributions. A central theme is the interdisciplinary approach of the Institute, which sought—though not always

successfully—to integrate philosophy, psychology, cultural critique, and empirical sociology into a cohesive framework.

12.3 General Arguments

Although the Frankfurt theorists viewed philosophy as constrained by its detachment from both social action and empirical inquiry, they nevertheless drew extensively from German philosophical traditions of critique. Influences such as Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche were as central to their thought as Marx, Weber, and Freud. In this tradition, critique is understood not merely as criticism but as a profound investigation into the underlying conditions that shape any form of thought. Four key dimensions of this approach stand out from where we can derive the general arguments:

The First Argument: Critical Scrutiny is inevitable

The very conditions of knowledge cannot be taken as self-evident and must themselves be subject to critical scrutiny. While sensory perception certainly provides us with knowledge of the world, critical theory argues that this is far from the full picture. For instance, our visual system processes different wavelengths of light, enabling color perception. However, this biological mechanism alone does not determine where one color transitions into another—such distinctions, such as where blue shifts into turquoise or teal, are shaped by language and cultural interpretation.

Language and social learning play a crucial role in shaping our understanding of the world. While sensory perception provides raw information, our ability to categorize and interpret that information is guided by linguistic and cultural frameworks. For instance, the distinction between colors, such as where blue transitions into turquoise or teal, is not purely biological but also shaped by language and convention. Similarly, while mathematics offers a degree of certainty distinct from empirical knowledge, it is not entirely free from arbitrariness or internal contradictions.

Moreover, different kinds of knowledge operate in distinct ways. Knowing an empirical fact, such as the number of pages in a book, is not the same as knowing whether a painting is beautiful or an action is ethically right. The latter involve judgment and practical reasoning, which can be evaluated as better or worse rather than simply true or false. These distinctions are significant for both empirical and theoretical inquiry. For critical theory, they underscore the idea that while human beings perceive the same empirical world, they interpret it through different languages, ideologies, and theoretical frameworks. A fundamental task of critical theory, therefore, is to analyze how these

diverse modes of knowing and judging shape our understanding of the world and influence social reality.

Similarly, mathematical knowledge offers a form of certainty and abstraction distinct from our understanding of the empirical world. However, even mathematics is not entirely free from arbitrariness or internal contradictions. There is a fundamental difference between knowing an objective fact—such as the number of pages in a book—and making a judgment about the beauty of a painting or the ethical correctness of an action. The latter falls under the domain of practical reason, where assessments can be more or less justified, yet they do not adhere strictly to the binary of true or false.

This distinction is crucial for both empirical and theoretical inquiry. In the context of critical theory, it underscores the idea that while human beings may observe the same physical world, their interpretations are shaped by differing languages, conceptual frameworks, ideologies, and theoretical perspectives. A core objective of critical theory is to analyze how these different ways of knowing and evaluating reality influence our understanding of the social world and the structures that govern it.

These are examples of judgement and 'practical reason' that can be better or worse without necessarily being true or false. All this is important to various kinds of empirical and theoretical enquiry. Its specific importance for critical theory lies in the fact that human beings see the same empirical world, but use different languages, concepts, ideologies, and theories to understand it. Critical theory includes as part of its task the effort to analyse the effects of these different ways of knowing and judging the world.

The Second Argument: Reality is Historically Constructed, Not Natural

The second fundamental argument of the Frankfurt School is that reality is not just about what is immediately visible or appears on the surface. Instead, it is shaped by deeper causes and conditions that are not always obvious and cannot be fully understood through simple observations or empirical generalizations. To truly grasp why things are the way they are, a theoretical and critical analysis is necessary.

For example, capitalism is not a natural or eternal system—it dominates today's world because of specific historical developments. Similarly, people do not rely on courts to resolve disputes simply because it is a logical solution; rather, legal systems have evolved over time due to particular social, political, and economic conditions. This means that our current world is not fixed but shaped by historical processes and human actions.

The Frankfurt School emphasizes that understanding society requires recognizing that change is constant. Social structures, like capitalism or legal institutions, are not permanent facts of nature but can be transformed through human effort. A crucial concept in this analysis is reification, which refers to the mistaken belief that human-created systems and institutions are natural, unchangeable things. For instance, people often see capitalism as a necessary and inevitable system rather than as a result of historical choices and power relations. Critical theory aims to expose this illusion and show that the social world can be reshaped through collective action.

The Third Argument: Social Theory Must Critique Its Own Foundations

Building on the first two arguments, the Frankfurt School emphasizes that critical theory must also turn its scrutiny toward social theory itself. Instead of simply discarding older theories, critical theorists examine them to uncover their underlying assumptions and limitations. This approach is not about outright rejection but about understanding how theories develop over time and why they eventually reach conceptual limits.

Karl Marx's *Capital* is a key example of this method. Marx did not merely criticize classical political economy; he analyzed its core categories—such as labor, value, and capital—to reveal their underlying biases and constraints. Similarly, critical theorists argue that no social theory can claim to uncover absolute or timeless truths. Theories evolve as intellectual tools to interpret a constantly changing world, but they also reflect the interests and ideologies of their time. Some theories may unintentionally uphold the status quo or serve dominant power structures.

Therefore, critical theorists do not only critique external theories but also apply this same self-reflection to their own work. They recognize that every theory has blind spots—while it may reveal some aspects of reality, it will inevitably obscure others. This ongoing process of self-critique ensures that critical theory remains dynamic and responsive to historical and social change.

The Fourth Argument: Theory and Practice Must Be Unified

Critical theory is not just an intellectual exercise—it is actively engaged with society. Unlike traditional academic approaches that claim to be neutral or detached, critical theorists argue that all knowledge is shaped by its social context. There is no purely objective or external standpoint from which to analyze society. Instead, every theory, including social science itself, emerges from within society and is influenced by historical conditions, institutional settings, and political commitments.

Following Marx, the Frankfurt School refers to this fusion of theory and practice as praxis—a commitment to understanding the world in ways that can also help change it. Many social scientists assume their research is independent of social influences, but critical theorists challenge this assumption. They argue that the task of social science is not to pretend objectivity but to openly acknowledge and examine the social and political foundations on which knowledge is built.

This commitment to praxis also shapes the subjects critical theorists choose to study. Rather than focusing on abstract or purely academic problems, they prioritize topics of direct social relevance—issues that affect real people's lives. Their goal is to develop clearer, less biased categories of understanding, making it possible for more people to recognize and challenge the structures of power that shape society.

The Fifth Argument: Theory is Historically Situated and Evolves with Social Change

The Frankfurt School's first generation of theorists, particularly Horkheimer and Adorno, emphasized that theory is always historically embedded. They rejected the idea that theory could stand outside of history or offer a fixed, universal explanation of social change. Instead, they argued that theory itself must evolve alongside historical developments, adapting to new realities rather than relying on outdated frameworks.

This perspective was especially significant because critical theory was meant to engage directly with society and its transformations. In the 1930s, witnessing the rise of Nazism and Stalinism, Horkheimer and Adorno realized that traditional Marxist ideas—such as class struggle leading to proletarian revolution—were no longer viable in the same way. The brutal realities of totalitarianism and war forced them to reconsider the potential for radical change, making them deeply pessimistic about immediate social transformation.

However, rather than abandoning their project, they saw their work as a heritage—a "message in a bottle" meant for future theorists who might find new possibilities in different historical conditions. Like history itself, critical theory remains open-ended, continuously evolving to respond to new challenges and possibilities.

The Sixth Argument: Rethinking Marxism in Light of Totalitarianism

The rise of totalitarianism in the 20th century forced Frankfurt School theorists to confront a fundamental crisis in Marxist thought. Traditional Marxism had long viewed the working class as the driving force of social emancipation. However, with the rise of Nazism and Stalinism, it became clear that large sections of the working class had actively

supported these oppressive regimes. This development challenged one of Marxism's core assumptions and forced critical theorists to rethink their understanding of social change.

Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse saw totalitarianism not just as a failure of Marxism but as a broader crisis for both liberal democracy and the Enlightenment's promise of progress. They argued that capitalism's history needed to be reinterpreted without assuming that the working class naturally held a revolutionary role. Instead of relying on economic determinism or class struggle as the sole path to liberation, they sought to understand how mass society, ideology, and culture had shaped people's consciousness, often making them complicit in their own oppression. This shift led to a deeper analysis of media, culture, and authoritarianism, marking a significant departure from classical Marxist thought.

The Seventh Argument: Mass Culture and the Manipulation of Consciousness

The Frankfurt School's exile in America profoundly influenced their critique of capitalism and totalitarianism. Their experience in the U.S. revealed that social contradictions could be managed not just through repression but also through more subtle forms of control, particularly via mass culture and consumerism. This realization led them to shift away from classical Marxist concerns with class struggle and economic determinism toward a broader, more pessimistic cultural analysis.

Drawing from Max Weber's idea of the "iron cage" of instrumental rationality, Frankfurt theorists argued that reason—once seen as a liberating force in Enlightenment thought—had been co-opted into systems of control. Both bureaucratic states and capitalist corporations worked together to suppress deeper social change, using advertising, political campaigns, and mass entertainment to shape public consciousness. Instead of seeking radical transformation, people were encouraged to find satisfaction within the existing system, mistaking consumer choices (whether of products or political candidates) for real freedom.

This critique of mass culture and the "administered society" became central to the Frankfurt School's thought. They argued that mass media and popular culture did not merely reflect public preferences but actively shaped them in ways that discouraged critical thinking and real opposition. By offering only limited choices—ones that reinforced

rather than challenged the system—capitalism ensured its own stability while keeping people passive and complacent.

The Eighth Argument: From Liberation to Domination

The Frankfurt School's critique of reason as an instrument of domination reveals a deep paradox within the Enlightenment project. While Enlightenment thinkers envisioned reason as a force for liberation—one that would enable individuals to critically assess institutions and create a more just society—subsequent history demonstrated how reason was instead harnessed by capitalism and the state to reinforce control. Rather than serving as a tool for human emancipation, reason became instrumentalized, reduced to a technical means of increasing efficiency in governance, production, and social organization.

This transformation had profound consequences. Institutions such as markets, states, and corporations, once perceived as products of human agency, began to appear as independent, uncontrollable forces beyond individual critique. As bureaucratic and capitalist structures expanded, individuals felt increasingly powerless, leading to widespread alienation. The Frankfurt theorists argued that this very sense of helplessness contributed to the rise of totalitarian regimes, as people, unable to envision alternatives, willingly submitted to systems that provided stability but eroded freedom.

This critique remains highly relevant in contemporary society, where surveillance capitalism, mass media, and algorithmic governance continue to shape public perception and behavior. The Frankfurt School's analysis warns that true emancipation is not achieved merely through the expansion of reason but through a continual process of critical reflection that challenges how reason is used and by whom.

Horkheimer and Adorno's critique in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* exposes a fundamental paradox in the Enlightenment project: while reason and progress were intended to liberate humanity from fear and oppression, their full realization led instead to new forms of domination and disaster. This tension underlies much of the Frankfurt School's thought, which sought to reconcile the Enlightenment's promises with the realities of modern capitalist and authoritarian systems.

Their analysis extends beyond economic structures to culture, psychology, and ideology. Adorno's negative dialectics rejects simplistic progressivist narratives, while Marcuse's concept of one-dimensional society highlights how advanced industrial societies suppress critical thought and alternative possibilities. Similarly, Walter Benjamin's insights into history and culture emphasize the importance of ruptures and moments of revolutionary

potential. Jürgen Habermas, in contrast, attempts to reclaim elements of the Enlightenment, searching for pathways toward genuine emancipation within the structures of modern society.

Ultimately, the Frankfurt School's critique does not reject the Enlightenment entirely but urges a deeper engagement with its contradictions. The challenge remains to identify and cultivate forms of reason and cultural expression that resist domination rather than reinforce it.

The Ninth Argument : Interpolation between the different approaches.

The Frankfurt School aimed to analyze and critique modern society by drawing from various disciplines, including Marxism, psychoanalysis, and aesthetics. Their work focused on two major concerns.

The first was the challenge of negation—the ability to reject the existing social order. In classical Marxism, the working class was seen as the force that would challenge capitalism. However, the Frankfurt theorists, observing the rise of totalitarianism, found no clear revolutionary actor capable of such resistance. This led them to question not just the possibility of social change but also the role of critical theory itself. If no group could challenge the system, could theory still be relevant?

The second issue was the increasing direct domination of individuals by political and economic systems. Early Frankfurt theorists explained totalitarianism as a result of institutions like class, family, and law losing their independence, leaving only the state in control. Later, in liberal societies, domination took a different form—through the culture industry. Mass media and consumer culture shaped people's desires, making them believe they had choices while actually reinforcing conformity.

At its heart, Frankfurt School theory sought to expose how people accepted the existing system as natural and unchangeable. Inspired by thinkers like Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, they argued that understanding the historical roots of oppression could help individuals break free from it. Their work was ultimately a call to recognize the limits of the present and imagine a different future.

12.4 Conclusion

The Frankfurt School's critical theory stands as one of the most profound intellectual responses to the crises of the twentieth century. Initially grounded in Marxist thought, it was forced to reassess its foundations in the face of totalitarianism, the failures of the

working-class revolution, and the growing influence of mass culture. The rise of Nazism and Stalinism shattered the belief that the proletariat would necessarily act as the agent of emancipation, leading thinkers like Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse to search for new frameworks to understand domination and resistance. Their analysis shifted away from classical Marxist preoccupations with political economy and class struggle toward a broader critique of reason, culture, and ideology, drawing heavily from psychoanalysis, German idealism, and aesthetics.

One of their most significant contributions was the concept of instrumental rationality, which argued that Enlightenment reason, once seen as a liberating force, had been transformed into a tool of domination. Building on Max Weber's iron cage of rationalization, they demonstrated how both totalitarian states and capitalist democracies used bureaucratic structures and mass media to suppress genuine autonomy. This insight was particularly evident in their critique of the culture industry, where they argued that mass-produced entertainment and advertising created a passive consumer base, offering the illusion of choice while stifling real political and social alternatives. Marcuse further developed this idea in his theory of the one-dimensional society, where capitalism had absorbed all opposition, rendering resistance ineffective by co-opting even countercultural movements.

A crucial dimension of their critique was the recognition that traditional sites of resistance—such as class identity, family structures, and legal institutions—had been eroded, leaving individuals more vulnerable to direct forms of domination. This loss of mediating structures made people increasingly susceptible to authoritarianism, whether in the form of fascist states or corporate capitalism. Without a revolutionary class to challenge the system, the Frankfurt theorists saw their own role as one of negation, continually questioning and deconstructing the existing order rather than proposing fixed alternatives. Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* reflected this commitment, arguing that critique must remain open-ended, resisting the temptation to settle into dogmatic conclusions.

Walter Benjamin added another crucial dimension to this critique through his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, where he rejected the idea of history as a linear progression. Instead, he saw history as a constant struggle between forces of domination and moments of possible emancipation, urging intellectuals to rescue the past from narratives that justified the present order. Jürgen Habermas later sought to rehabilitate some of the Enlightenment's emancipatory potential by theorizing the public sphere—a space where rational discourse and communication could serve as a means of democratic resistance, counteracting the manipulations of state and corporate power.

At its core, the Frankfurt School's critical theory remains a call to demystify the present and challenge the reification of existing structures into a supposedly natural order. Their work warns against complacency, urging people to recognize that the social world is not inevitable but shaped by human forces—and, therefore, open to change. Even in its most pessimistic moments, Frankfurt School thought offers a crucial imperative: to take the future seriously and to remain vigilant against the subtle and overt mechanisms of domination that shape modern life.

12.5 Summary

The Frankfurt School's critical theory critically examines the evolution of domination in modern society, shifting from classical Marxist concerns with class struggle to a broader analysis of reason, culture, and ideology. Reacting to the failures of proletarian revolution, the rise of totalitarianism, and the expansion of mass culture, theorists like Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse argued that Enlightenment reason, once seen as a force for liberation, had been co-opted into a system of instrumental rationality that reinforced bureaucratic control and consumer capitalism.

Their critique of the culture industry highlighted how mass media and entertainment created an illusion of choice while suppressing real political and social alternatives. The erosion of traditional mediating institutions, such as class identity and family structures, left individuals more vulnerable to direct domination, making resistance increasingly difficult. Lacking a clear revolutionary subject, the Frankfurt theorists embraced negation—a relentless critique of existing systems rather than proposing fixed solutions. Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* emphasized the need for open-ended critique, while Walter Benjamin's historical materialism challenged dominant narratives that justified the present order.

Later, Jürgen Habermas attempted to reclaim Enlightenment ideals by theorizing the public sphere as a potential space for democratic discourse. Despite their often pessimistic outlook, the Frankfurt School's central message remains a call to expose the mechanisms of domination and resist the reification of the present, insisting that society is a human construct—and, therefore, subject to change.

12.6 Questions

Short Questions:

1. What is the central aim of Critical Theory according to the Frankfurt School?

2. How did Horkheimer and Adorno view the Enlightenment in Dialectic of Enlightenment?
3. Why did the Frankfurt School move away from traditional Marxist ideas of class struggle?
4. What role does the culture industry play in modern capitalist societies?
5. How did the experience of exile in America influence the Frankfurt School's analysis of capitalism?
6. What is meant by the 'iron cage' of instrumental rationality?
7. How did totalitarianism challenge Marxist expectations about proletarian revolution?
8. What is the significance of the concept of negation in Critical Theory?
9. How did the Frankfurt School critique the idea of historical inevitability?
10. What was Marcuse's vision of a 'desublimated' culture?

Long Questions:

1. Explain how the Frankfurt School theorists understood the relationship between reason, domination, and social power.
2. Discuss how the Frankfurt School reinterpreted Marxism in response to the rise of totalitarianism in the 20th century.
3. How does the concept of the culture industry reflect the Frankfurt School's critique of capitalism and mass society?
4. Analyze the Frankfurt School's view on the loss of mediating structures (such as class, family, and law) and its impact on individual autonomy.
5. In what ways did the Frankfurt School theorists challenge both Marxist and liberal ideas about social change?
6. Compare and contrast the Frankfurt School's critique of totalitarianism and consumer capitalism.
7. How does Critical Theory propose to reconcile intellectual activity with social transformation?

8. Evaluate the Frankfurt School's argument that modern capitalist societies suppress true resistance by offering controlled consumer choices.
9. What does the Frankfurt School mean by treating social power as historically constructed? How does this approach shape its critique of the present?
10. Discuss the relevance of Frankfurt School Critical Theory in contemporary society. Does it still offer valuable insights into power, culture, and social control?

12.7 References

- Adorno, T. W., & Horkheimer, M. (1987). *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Verso.
- Benjamin, W. (1968). *Illuminations*. Schocken Books.
- Habermas, J. (1984). *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Beacon Press.
- Habermas, J. (1987). *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*. MIT Press.
- Jay, M. (1973). *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923–1950*. University of California Press.
- Kellner, D. (1989). *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Marcuse, H. (1964). *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Beacon Press.
- Marcuse, H. (1955). *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. Beacon Press.
- Neumann, F. (1942). *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933–1944*. Oxford University Press.
- Weber, M. (1991). *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (H. H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills, Eds.). Routledge.

12.8 Glossary

Frankfurt School – A group of German intellectuals associated with the Institute for Social Research, known for developing critical theory to analyze society, culture, and politics.

Critical Theory – A philosophical approach that critiques social structures, power dynamics, and ideology to promote emancipation and social change.

Historical Embeddedness – The idea that theories and intellectual thought are shaped by historical and social conditions rather than existing independently.

Totalitarianism – A form of government characterized by absolute control over public and private life, often associated with Nazi Germany and Stalinist USSR.

Dialectic of Enlightenment – A work by Horkheimer and Adorno arguing that the Enlightenment's rationality led to domination rather than liberation.

Instrumental Rationality – A concept describing reason as a tool for control and efficiency rather than for genuine human freedom.

Culture Industry – A term used by Horkheimer and Adorno to describe how mass media and entertainment manipulate public consciousness and maintain social control.

One-Dimensional Man – A concept by Marcuse referring to a society where individuals are absorbed into consumer culture, limiting critical thought and resistance.

Negation – The process of rejecting or opposing the existing social order, which Marx attributed to the proletariat, but which the Frankfurt School struggled to locate in modern society.

Administered Society – A term describing a system where individuals are controlled through bureaucracy, consumerism, and mass media rather than direct oppression.

Reification – The process by which social relations and ideas are treated as natural and unchangeable, obscuring their human origins and historical context.

Mass Culture – The homogenized, commercialized culture produced by the media and capitalist institutions to pacify individuals and suppress critical thought.

Utopian Energy – The hope or vision for a radically different and better society, often expressed in art, philosophy, or political movements.

Disembedding – The breakdown of traditional structures (family, class, community) that once mediated between individuals and large social systems.

Negative Dialectics – Adorno's method of critique that refuses simple resolution or synthesis, emphasizing contradiction and complexity.

Iron Cage – A term from Max Weber describing how rationalization and bureaucratic control limit human freedom and creativity.

Social Emancipation – The process of freeing individuals or groups from oppressive social structures and conditions.

Freudianism – The influence of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis on Frankfurt School thinkers, particularly in analyzing repression and ideology.

Modernity – The historical period marked by industrialization, capitalism, and rationalization, which the Frankfurt School critiqued for its contradictions.

Post-Structuralism – A movement in philosophy and social theory that challenges fixed meanings and structures, influenced by the Frankfurt School's critiques.

Unit : 13 □ Max Horkheimer

Structure :

- 13.1 Objectives
- 13.2 Introduction
- 13.3 Revisiting Critical Social Theory, and the Frankfurt School of Thought
- 13.4 Max Horkheimer: A Brief Biography (1895-1973)
- 13.5 Major Selected Works and Contributions of Max Horkheimer
 - 13.5.1 Traditional and Critical Theory (1937)
 - 13.5.2 Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments (1947)
 - 13.5.2.1 The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception
 - 13.5.3 Eclipse of Reason (1947)
- 13.6 Conclusion
- 13.7 Summary
- 13.8 Questions
- 13.9 References
- 13.10 Suggested Readings
- 13.11 Glossary

13.1 Objectives

In this particular unit, we will cover one of the most prominent German thinkers, philosophers, sociologists and a monumental leading figure in Frankfurt School [Germany], and Critical Social Theory : **Max Horkheimer**. His contributions are enormous and influential towards understanding critical social theory. Critical Social Theory is one of the core theoretical perspectives in Sociology which has been interdisciplinary in nature wherein the basic outlook of this theory has been to present a criticism of modern society. Students, Max Horkheimer is one of the most prolific and important principal figures when we study critical social theory, and henceforth his contributions have been important

in laying down some of the basic tenets of this theory. This unit will then shed light on his major contributions, and the significance of his perspectives in analysing society during the societal upheavals of his times, and its relevance.

Thus, the salient learning objectives of this unit are:

- To explore, and understand the major tenets of the critical social theory especially in the context of the Frankfurt School.
- To introduce you all with a brief biography of Max Horkheimer, and a basic understanding of his vision, lifeworks, and perspectives.
- Furthermore, in context of the former objective, we will critically examine and explore three of the major selected contributions of Max Horkheimer amidst other works. The three works that will be explored in this unit are: *Traditional and Critical Theory* (1937); *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (1947); and *Eclipse of Reason* (1947).

13.2 Introduction

Sociology is a fascinating and an intriguing discipline in the social sciences. The vast gamut of perspectives and theoretical domains within the sociological framework gives us ample ways and lenses to explore, examine and explicate the social world. As George Ritzer (2003) stated that a sociological theory is a set of interrelated ideas that allow for the systematization of knowledge of the social world (UK Essays: 2017). Furthermore, the eminent scholars of their times who studied society tried to understand the social phenomenon, and thus laid down different theoretical foundations to understand society. The sociological perspective is rich in insights about our social world wherein different theoretical domains opens up new ways of looking at the social world. For instance, the feminist perspective will help us to examine the gender issues, experiences of women, gender inequality, role of women in society etc. Thus, multiple social perspectives are important for a critical social inquiry of the social world we inhabit because different perspectives aid us with a lens to view the world from different social locations. Students, as you may have already explored in your earlier social theory paper that the major canonical sociological perspectives entail the Functionalist, the Symbolic Interactionist, and the Conflict Perspectives which forms the core domain of classical sociology. A critique and further exploration of these classical perspectives then gave impetus to other

contemporary perspectives and theoretical domains in sociology which have been monumental in studying society. One such theoretical domain is Critical Social Theory.

Critical social theory is a social philosophy, and a theoretical domain which is oriented towards critiquing and changing society as a whole by examining the structures of power, social domination and control in society. It is shaped by a critical engagement with society (Calhoun & Karaganis: 2003). However, we need to understand that critical social theory has been interdisciplinary in its nature, and Kellner (n.d.) posits that the term critical theory has had many meanings in different historical contexts. For our reference, and in the context of this unit, we will explore critical social theory of Max Horkheimer. Critical Social Theory predominantly came to light from the Marxist tradition, and was developed by a group of sociologists at the **University of Frankfurt in Germany** who associated and referred to themselves as the Frankfurt School. The major works of this school's members, including Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, Walter Benjamin, Jürgen Habermas, and Herbert Marcuse, are considered the heart and core of critical social theory (Crossman:2020). Furthermore, when we refer to the Frankfurt school we need to understand that it was not a school, in the institutional sense, but a school of thought associated with scholars at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt in Germany (Cole: 2020). The School in its entirety has a profound significance for engaging not only with recent world history, but with the impacts of large-scale societal processes upon individuals and their private worlds (Elliott: 2014).

Moving ahead, in this particular unit as have been mentioned before, we will study the major contributions of Max Horkheimer, and some of his selected works which have been important in the formulation of critical social theory. But before we delve into examining Horkheimer's visions, and how he came to formulate his perspectives, we need to describe and revisit the critical social theory again, and its roots in the Frankfurt School.

13.3 Revisiting Critical Social Theory, and the Frankfurt School of Thought

As we have mentioned in the introduction, critical theory came into light as an emergence of the criticisms of modern society. Furthermore, as it has been stated before

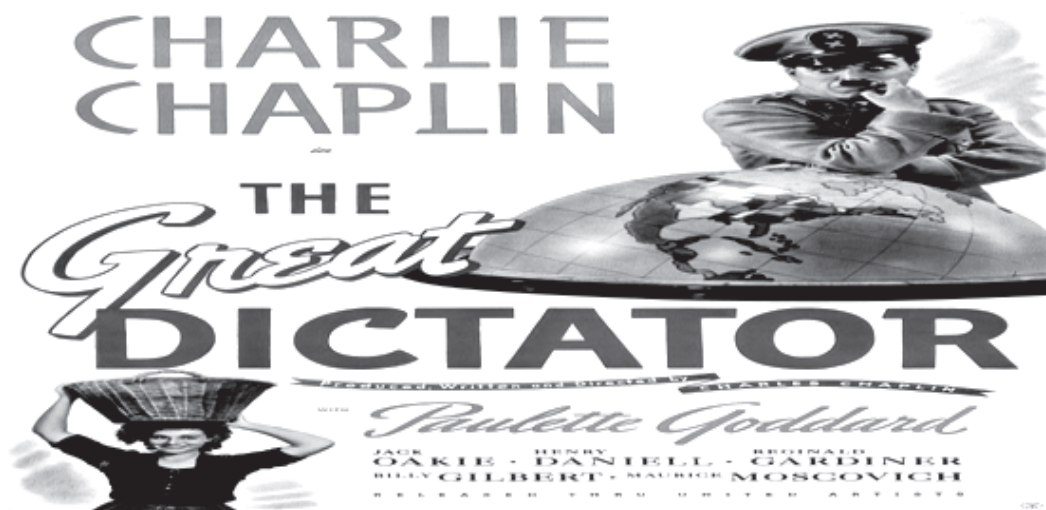
that in the contemporary context, different people use the term critical social theory in diverse and contested ways. However, in the context of this unit we will stick to the roots of the theoretical perspective of the critical social theory Frankfurt School. The Second World War [1939-1945] primarily, and the socio-political upheavals and transformations in Europe at the time played a significant role in shaping the field of vision of the critical theorists from Germany. Douglas Kellner states that the critical social theory stood as a code for the quasi-Marxist theory of society of a group of interdisciplinary social theorists collectively known as the Frankfurt School. Dubiel (1978) asserts that critical social theory does not form a unity and it does not mean the same thing to all of its advocates (as cited in Bottomore: 1983). The term "Frankfurt School" refers to the work of members of the 'Institut für Sozialforschung' (Institute for Social Research) that was established in Frankfurt, Germany in 1923 as the first Marxist-oriented research centre affiliated with a major German University. When the first director of the Institute for Social Research, Carl Grünberg, suffered a stroke in January of 1928, Horkheimer was considered as one of the best candidates for the directorship of this institute (Abromeit:2018). Max Horkheimer became the director of the institute in 1930. The Frankfurt School's epistemological program was established by Horkheimer's key essay "Traditional and Critical Theory" (Solty: 2020). He was one of the first to define and use the term critical theory in his 1937 essay "Traditional and Critical Theory" which we will discuss in detail in the next section of this unit.

The Institute sought to develop an interdisciplinary social theory that could serve as an instrument and medium of social transformation. Critical theory drew on Hegelian dialectics, Marxian theory, Nietzsche, Freud, Max Weber, and other courses of contemporary thought (Kellner: n.d.). Additionally, Tom Bottomore (1983:183) states that the school can be divided into 2 branches: 1) the first branch stems from the works of these eminent scholars- Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Friedrich Pollock and others, and 2) the second branch emerges from the works of Jürgen Habermas who recasted the notion of critical theory. These theorists were majorly concerned with the way in which social interests, conflicts and contradictions are expressed in thought, and are produced and reproduced in systems of domination (Bottomore: 1983:183). Also, these theorists defined a theory of setting humans free of human enslavement, and manipulation (UK Essays: 2018).

The Frankfurt school which emerged in Germany during the 1920s and 30s was

designed with a practical intent to criticise and subvert domination and control of all forms. Thus, many of its leading theorists conducted numerous studies seeking to grasp the wave of political irrationalism and totalitarianism sweeping Western Europe (Elliott: 2014: 42). In a wave and series of studies carried out in the 1930s, the Institute formulated and developed varied theories of monopoly capitalism, the new industrial state, the role of technology and giant corporations in monopoly capitalism, the key roles of mass culture and communication in reproducing contemporary societies, and the decline of democracy and of the individual (Kellner: n.d.).

DO YOU KNOW THE FILM "THE GREAT DICTATOR"?



THE POSTER OF THE FILM THE GREAT DICTATOR, 1940

SOURCE: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Dictator#/media/File:The_Great_Dictator_\(1940\)_poster.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Dictator#/media/File:The_Great_Dictator_(1940)_poster.jpg)

Do you know that during the time of the Nazi regime, and the horrific reign of the dictator Adolf Hitler in Germany (1933-1945), it was not only some of the critical thinkers of that time who were criticising the fascist regime of Hitler but also some of the artists like the great comedian of his times Charlie Chaplin who also critiqued in a satirical and humorous manner the reign of Hitler and the atrocities of his regime.

on the Jews. You can find this in his movie "**The Great Dictator**" which was released in 1940. The Great Dictator is considered as a classic. It's startling in its depictions of violence, which stand out less for their outright brutality than for how memorably they depict the Nazis' betrayal of everyday humanity.

(source:<https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2019/10/satirizing-hitler-charlie-chaplin-great-dictator>).

In the following sections, you will see how Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno were critical of the regime through their critical analysis of reason and science in their work on *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Moving ahead, it was during the Second World War, the Institute had to split up due to pressures of the war and had to relocate to America while Hitler was ruling Germany. After the Second World War, Adorno, Horkheimer and Pollock returned to Frankfurt to re-establish the institute in Germany, while Lowenthal, Marcuse and others remained in the USA. In Germany, Adorno, Horkheimer and their associates published a series of books and became a dominant and well-known intellectual current. During the 1950s and 1960s the term "Frankfurt School" can really be applied only to the work of the institute in Germany under Horkheimer and Adorno. Eventually, there was a gradual shift in Critical theory which turned to a "politics of representation" during the 1960s and 1970s (Kellner: n.d.).

Though we have already briefly touched upon Max Horkheimer in the previous sections, we have covered that in the broader domain of the critical social theory of the Frankfurt School. Now we will cover his brief biography, and then we will explore three selected important contributions of his work to understand in detail his version of the critical theory.

DO YOU KNOW?

Critical theory began going global in the post-1960s disseminations of critical discourses. Postcolonial theory in various parts of the world developed particular critical theories as a response to colonial oppression and to the hopes of national liberation and emancipation. Frantz Fanon in Algeria, Wole Soyinka in Nigeria, Gabriel Marquez in Latin America, Arundati Roy in India, and others all gave voice to specific experiences and articulated critical theories that expanded its global and multicultural reach.

SOURCE-DOUGLAS KELLNER

(<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/63ab/444adf40fa5704ba8fa0bfa30d91dd894565.pdf>)

13.4 Max Horkheimer: A Brief Biography (1895-1973)

One of the most influential proponents of critical theory Max Horkheimer was born on February 14, 1895. He passed away on July 7, 1973, at the age of 78. He was born in Stuttgart to a Jewish family, and he was the son of Moses Horkheimer. Due to family and parental pressure, he did not initially pursue an academic career, leaving secondary school at the age of sixteen to give a helping hand to his father's business. However, after World War I, he enrolled at Munich University in Germany, where he pursued philosophy and psychology with Edmund Husserl's disciple Martin Heidegger in Freiburg. Germany's turbulent and tumultuous period and era post-1918, the experience of social revolution and protofascist counterrevolution eventually led him to derive his interest in Karl Marx, and he was highly influenced by Marx's ideas. In 1922, Horkheimer submitted his PhD thesis under Hans Cornelius, and in 1925 he finished his habilitation with a book on Kant's Critique of Judgment. A habilitation is a thesis required for a tenured position in a German university. He then became director of the new Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt in 1930 as have been mentioned before (Osborne: 2010). His general goal and aim was to develop a Marxian critique of society, based on a holistic approach which would overcome the disciplinary separation between philosophy and the social sciences. The political events and turmoil soon put an end and halt to his plans. On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler was named Reich Chancellor, and a few days later Horkheimer fled from Germany because of the current critical situation in the country, and also because he was of a Jewish descent. Later on, the Institute for Critical Research emerged in New York, associated with Columbia University. Here, he was rejoined by Friedrich Pollock, Herbert Marcuse, Leo Löwenthal, the psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, and also another influential member Theodor Adorno (Ingar Solty:2020). During the period of exile, Horkheimer remained as a guiding spirit for the members (Kellner: 1989).



PICTURE: MAX HORKHEIMER (1895-1973)

SOURCE : <https://criticaltheoryofreligion.org/max-horkheimer/>

Under his apprenticeship and directorship, the Institute for Social Research was oriented to the development of a critical theory of society. Although Horkheimer's position changed considerably over time but he stressed at least three elements in this project (Tom Bottomore:1983:213)—

1. There was the idea of the critique of ideology which he took to be similar in structure to Marx's critique of capitalist commodity production and exchange.
2. There was a necessity of reintegrating disciplines through interdisciplinary research.
3. There was an emphasis on the central role of praxis in the ultimate verification of theories.

Horkheimer's most important achievements and contributions are an elaboration of the philosophical basis of critical theory and critique of empiricism and positivism; an analysis with Adorno of the origin and nature of instrumental reason; an account of the commodification of modern culture; an exploration of the way authoritarianism crystallises at the intersection of the economic structure of the capitalist society and its ideological superstructure, that is at the point of the patriarchal family; and a vast array of commentaries on contemporary culture and politics (Tom Bottomore:1983:213).

Horkheimer has also produced numerous essays on politics and culture. In the next section, we will explore some of the selected works of Max Horkheimer wherein we can understand his critical bent and major themes of his scholarly and philosophical occupation.

DO YOU KNOW?

In 1953, the city of Frankfurt bestowed upon him its highest honor, the Goethe Award (Abromeit:2018).

13.5 Major Selected Works and Contributions of Max Horkheimer

During his lifetime, Max Horkheimer engaged and produced a wide number of texts and made immense contributions in critical theory. For the purpose of this unit, we will broadly cover the three most important texts/essays/books by him: *Traditional and Critical Theory* (1937); *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* (1947); and **The Eclipse of Reason** (1947) because these are some of the dominant texts which laid important foundations for the critical theory. Let us now explore the first major work by Horkheimer which is his essay on the *Traditional and Critical theory* (1937).

13.5.1 Traditional and Critical Theory (1937)

Max Horkheimer is prominently known for his essay "Traditional and critical theory" (1937), which is widely held to define the Frankfurt school's project of an open, critical Marxism insulated from the historical contingencies of political practice (Osborne: 2010). This essay helped in understanding what exactly was critical theory of society. Furthermore, the essay laid down the basis for a critique of "positivist sciences" (Soltz: 2020). Horkheimer was extremely critical of positivism which failed to see the human aspect of things and which did not focus on the genuine needs of humans (Vaidya: n.d). In this essay, he tried to examine and explore the differences between 'traditional and critical theory'. Traditional theory he stated is the type of theory typically encountered in the natural sciences. As a theory, its primary criteria is harmony which is that all of the constituent parts in society function in order to maintain the whole wherein there is no conflict or contradiction. Traditional theory according to Horkheimer tends to be deductive which privileges science and mathematics (Kellner:1989: 45). Traditional theory is a theory of the status quo, which is crafted to increase the productivity and functioning

of the world as it presently exists. This traditional theory which exhibits the positivist ideology disconnects science from society which then curbs human emancipation and liberation.

Horkheimer's major critique was that traditional theories essentially replicate capitalist society ideologically or help make capitalist exploitation and oppression function more smoothly (Solty: 2020). Thus, Horkheimer engaged in a detailed critique both of the objects of traditional theory and of its method (Aronowitz: 2015). He was of the view that the traditional theory misses on the suffering that is caused by the social structure, and the fact that science is complicit in this oppression and social domination. On the other hand, critical theory is a social theory which is oriented and mediated towards critiquing and changing society as a whole in contrast to the traditional theory which has been oriented towards only explaining society, and not reforming it. Critical theorising is pertinent because it thoroughly examines the way in which theory is immersed in a particular historical and social setting. It then seeks to critique that social setting/system for an emancipatory effect.

Critical theory is immersed in critical activity and is oppositional in nature. For Horkheimer, mainstream theories which are the traditional theories sought to predict the outcome of social situations based on abstract assumptions about fixed human characteristics thereby eliminating human freedom from their analysis of society. Critical theories on the other hand then constitute an effective remedy and counters as well as resist and challenge the scientific tendencies in orthodox Marxism itself. While traditional theory uncritically reproduces the existing society, critical theory as compared to it is an expression of activity which strives to transform it (Kellner:1989: 45). The task of critical theory, according to Horkheimer, was to penetrate the world of things to show the underlying relations between persons and power. It is the task of Critical Theory to see "the human bottom of nonhuman things" and to demystify the surface forms of equality. For Horkheimer, Critical Theory proceeds from the theorist's awareness of his own partiality (Aronowitz: 2015: 106).

Max Horkheimer had argued that in a capitalist society, science was useful to the extent that it was transformed into an industrial technique. However, this empiricism had gone too far and served social domination, oppression and control of the bourgeois. The two sides of bourgeois thought, positivism and metaphysics, are the unified worldview of the bourgeoisie, split according to the prevailing division of labor between science,

which serves industry, and religions and secular spiritual ideologies, which serve social domination (Aronowitz: 2015: 107). This seminal and groundbreaking essay by Horkheimer was originally published in 1937 in the journal of the Institute in Paris when the members of the school were already in exile. Tom Bottomore contends that this essay on traditional and critical theory should be regarded as the founding document, or charter, of the Frankfurt School (Bottomore: 1984: 16).

DO YOU KNOW ?

In 1931, Max Horkheimer had established a new journal for the Institute, the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, which he continued to edit until it was discontinued in 1941 (Abromeit: 2018 : 21).

SOME MAJOR WORKS BY CRITICAL THEORISTS

Here is a brief list of the major works by the different critical theorists along with Max Horkheimer. These critical thinkers have made an exceptional mark in the domain of critical social theory. The critical theorists have deeply influenced contemporary social theory, philosophy, communications theory and research, cultural theory, and other disciplines for six decades (Douglas Kellner).

1. *Authority and the Family* (1936) - Max Horkheimer
2. *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968)- Jurgen Habermas
3. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962)- Jurgen Habermas
4. *One-Dimensional Man* (1964)- Herbert Marcuse
5. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935)- Walter Benjamin

The critique against positivism and science by Horkheimer can also be seen in a similar vein in his other major work "*Dialectic of Enlightenment*" which he had written in collaboration with Theodore W. Adorno which we will discuss in the next section.

13.5.2 *Dialectic of Enlightenment* : Philosophical Fragments (1947)

Another monumental work of Max Horkheimer that we will examine here is *Dialectic of Enlightenment* which was co-written with Theodor Adorno by 1944, and then published

in 1947. It was published later in English in 1972. Horkheimer was immensely impressed by Adorno's philosophical brilliance and prowess, and henceforth they both collaborated to produce this prominent work of the Frankfurt School (Vaidya: n.d.). While they were exiled in the United States, Adorno and Horkheimer wrote *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that sought to grasp the dark side of the modern age (Elliott: 2014). It was the wider historical conditions underlying the perceived break between theory and politics which is outlined in Horkheimer's important joint work with Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Osborne: 2010). This seminal outcome of the collaboration between Horkheimer and Adorno was also as a part of response to the rise of fascism. Students, you need to remember that the rise of Hitler in power in Germany; the spread of social domination through fascism, and the exile of these thinkers who were either Jews or had socialist ideology were forced to flee, played a monumental role in shaping their ideas and is reflective in their writings.

Dialectic of Enlightenment is an extremely interesting and important text as it provides the first critical questioning of modernity, Marxism, and the enlightenment from within the tradition of critical social theory (Douglas Kellner: n.d.). Horkheimer and Adorno addressed one of the prime concerns of the Frankfurt school, namely, the rise and domination of instrumental reason. Horkheimer and Adorno asserted that the celebration of reason by thinkers of the 18th-century Enlightenment had led to the development of technologically sophisticated but brutal, barbaric and inhumane modes of governance like the totalitarian system of governance (Bowler & Arneson: Britannica.com: n.d.). Written with remarkable philosophical range and sociological insight, the task Adorno and Horkheimer (1947) set for themselves was spelt out thus: 'The discovery of why mankind, instead of entering into a truly human condition, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism' (as quoted in Elliott: 2014:43). Students, as we know that when Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany, he spread his authoritarian dictatorial power and ruthless rule, and persecuted millions of Jews. The thinkers, philosophers at the time were astonished to see how his regime used science and technology in achieving that. Likewise, Adorno and Horkheimer examined how science and technology had created massive and horrendous instruments of devastation and death wherein the culture was commodified into products of a mass-produced culture industry, and democracy was transformed into fascism, in which masses chose despotic and authoritarian leaders to rule. In the next subsection, we will examine one important chapter of this book on the

culture industry which is another important theme central to the critical theorists.

13.5.2.1 The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception

The study and critical analysis of the concept of mass culture was important for the critical theorists especially TW Adorno. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Adorno and Horkheimer then sought to present a critique of culture industry expressed as a mass deception. The chapter on the culture industry is one of the most important examinations of social control through cultural forms in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Lotz states that the concept of the 'culture industry' is the magnifying glass of critical theory, and the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is its telescope (Lotz: 2018: 973). Wiggershaus (1994) asserts that when moving from Nazi Germany to the United States, the Frankfurt School experienced at first hand the rise of a media culture involving film, popular music, radio, television, and other forms of mass culture (as cited in Douglas Keller: The Frankfurt School: n.d.). Horkheimer and Adorno then coined the term "culture industry" to signify the process of the industrialisation of mass-produced culture and the commercial imperatives and structures that drove the system. Additionally, they both adopted the term 'culture industry', and not concepts like 'popular culture' or 'mass culture', because they wanted to resist notions that products of mass culture emanated from the masses or the people (Kellner: 1989). We will explore the culture industry in the next unit also on Adorno, and the earlier origins of critical theorists take on the culture industry can be found in Adorno's writings on music.

Moving ahead, Horkheimer and Adorno were both convinced that culture and ideology essentially fulfilled the social function of nurturing an acceptance of the status quo and powerful authority, of reproducing labor power for the next shift, and furthermore nurturing the acceptance that there is no alternative to capitalist social relations (Soltz: 2020). This served as an instrument and tool for control and not human freedom or liberty. They observed how technology and culture was becoming both a major force of production and formative mode of social organization, social control and domination. Furthermore, the Frankfurt school had experienced first hand the ways that the Nazis used the instruments of mass culture to produce submission to fascist culture and society (Douglas Keller: The Frankfurt School: n.d.). Thus, Simon Frith states that culture industries are simply those industries which produce cultural goods. But when we intend to describe the film, music, publishing, or television industries as culture industries it is to imply critical questions

about both their creative practices and social effects on the masses (Frith: 2010:169). Marcel Stoetzler (2018) contended that for these theorists when culture became an industry it was a scam.

As we have seen so far in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* these authors were concerned with the critique of instrumental reason. Thus, they examined the increasingly comprehensive sweep of instrumental reason throughout modern societies and found signs or symptoms of fascist domination in liberal democracies too, especially America (Elliott: 2014: 43). They had argued that the system of cultural production dominated by film, radio broadcasting, newspapers, and magazines, was controlled by advertising and commercial imperatives, and served to create subservience to the system of consumer capitalism (Douglas Keller: The Frankfurt School: n.d.). 'Enlightenment,' wrote the two authors of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, is totalitarian. From the rise of National Socialism in Germany to the culture industry in the United States of America, from Hitler's annihilation of European Jews to the unparalleled destruction of modern technological warfare: enlightenment reason has failed the West and indeed humanity as a whole (Elliott: 2014: 44). That scientific technological progress which could have served human liberation and freedom gave rise to unmatched horrors of new forms of social domination.

Horkheimer and Adorno contended that instead of using reason in modern societies to emancipate people from power relations, the oppressive and hegemonic forces in society had created new institutions and processes, states, markets, that seemed beyond the control of human actors and increasingly beyond their power to critique or challenge or resist them. This was the major essence of Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of the Enlightenment and the culture industry in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Calhoun & Karaganis: 2003).

Adorno's and Horkheimer's critique of modernity and reason later provided the framework for the critique of instrumental reason in Horkheimer's another important work *Eclipse of Reason* (1947). Horkheimer in this work focused on themes which were also at the core of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* wherein they had argued that production of knowledge is not neutral but is always mediated for some purpose like the profit for the capitalist furthermore leading to more efficient control over workers in the workplace. Let us now move on to the last section for Horkheimer's major contributions, and briefly examine another work *Eclipse of Reason* (1947).

DO YOU KNOW ?

Max Horkheimer has also written extensively on "family and authority" during the 1930s. He explored how the family produces patterns of submission and conformity to the authority. Such exploration he believed would also help in assessing submission to dominant and irrational authority even at the societal level. Eric Fromm, another eminent critical theorist, too had carried forth important studies on the connection between the family and the authority (Bottomore: 1984).

In the next unit on TW Adorno, we will see how he also examined authority through a socio-psychological investigation in the context of examining authoritative personality traits amidst people in US.

13.5.3 Eclipse of Reason (1947)

In yet another pertinent work by Horkheimer *Eclipse of Reason* (1947), Horkheimer presented a process of how enlightenment rationality degenerated into instrumental rationality which was a calculation of means to the ends to achieve self interests. In *Eclipse of Reason* Horkheimer investigated the implications of the use of reason (Rodrigues: 2015). This was supposed to be objective in the sense of having communal and interpersonal basis, however, it became instruments to serve for achieving subjective-self-interests (New encyclopaedia: n.d.). Horkheimer (1947) states that people in the contemporary industrial culture come across a universal feeling of fear and disillusionment, the roots and origins of which can be traced from the conception of reason in enlightenment. According to Horkheimer, the individual in mass modern society is a cynical conformist and conventionalist wherein the idolization of progress leads to the decline of the individual. Horkheimer (1947) talks about two two forms of reasons 'the subjective or the instrumental reason' and 'the objective reasoning'. Horkheimer equates instrumental reason with subjective reason (Zucker: 2017). Objective reason has to do with "the idea of the greatest good, on the problem of human destiny. Subjective reason has much to do with the 'means and ends' but primarily its concern lies with the 'means' (as cited in Das and Gilani; n.d.). Horkheimer was of the view that this domination of instrumental reason mediates and affects all aspects of life and culture.

13.6 Conclusion

Critical social theory is an important theoretical perspective in sociology. It laid down the framework for the critique of the capitalist and modern society by reformulating and re-assessing Marx's critique of the capitalist mode of production by doing a critical reading of it and formulating new ways of critically assessing society. Max Horkheimer has been one of the most eminent and important figures of the Frankfurt School and advocate of critical theory. His perspectives aimed to enlighten and emancipate people from the conformist ideologies that they adhere to and are oppressed by the modes of social domination. The horrors of the World war; rise and spread of fascism; and the ruthless turbulent times in Germany during Hitler's reign all shaped his perspectives, and a call for engaging in a critical assessment of society. Critical theory of Horkheimer and others have influenced many social scientists, thinkers and philosophers. The critical theorists have deeply influenced contemporary social theory, philosophy, communications theory and research, cultural theory, and other disciplines for six decades (Douglas Kellner: Revisiting the Classics: n.d.). Today one can understand critical theory in many feminist theories and approaches to conducting social science. The main tenets of critical theory can also be found in critical race theory, cultural theory, gender, and queer theory, as well as in media theory and media studies.

13.7 Summary

In this unit, we first began examining critical social theory, its main aspects especially its roots in the Frankfurt School of thought. We then examined Max Horkheimer's major selected contributions to critical social theory by exploring three of his selected works- Traditional and Critical Theory (1937); Dialectic of Enlightenment (1947); and finally Eclipse of Reason (1947). These works have been important for us to examine some of the major perspectives of Horkheimer and how it shaped critical social theory of the Frankfurt School.

13.8 Questions

Answer briefly :

1. What is the Frankfurt School?
2. What is critical theory?
3. Briefly examine Max Horkheimer's views in Eclipse of Reason.

Answer in detail :

4. What is the difference between traditional theory and critical theory?
5. Examine the main argument of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in Dialectic of Enlightenment.
6. Write an essay on the culture industry.

13.9 Reference

- Arneson, Richard J., and John Edward Bowle. "Political Philosophy." Britannica.com. N.p., (June 04, 2019) Web. 5 Oct. 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/political-philosophy>
- Aronowitz, S. Against Orthodoxy: Social Theory and Its Discontents. Springer, 2015.
- Berendzen, J.C., "Max Horkheimer", The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/horkheimer/>>.
- Best, Beverley, et al. The SAGE Handbook of Frankfurt School Critical Theory. SAGE, 2018-
- Bottomore, T. Bottomore: A Dictionary of Marxist Thought (Pape R). Harvard University Press, 1983.
- Calhoun, Craig and Joseph Karaganis. "Critical Theory" In George Ritzer, and Barry Smart. Handbook of Social Theory. pp. 179- 216 SAGE, 2003.
- Crossman, Ashley. "Understanding Critical Theory." Thought Co, Aug. 28, 2020,

thoughtco.com/critical-theory-3026623.

Cole, Nicki Lisa, Ph.D. "The Frankfurt School of Critical Theory." Thought Co, Aug. 28, 2020, [thoughtco.com/frankfurt-school-3026079](https://www.thoughtco.com/frankfurt-school-3026079).

Das, Biswajit and Ajaz Ahmad Gilani. Module : The Frankfurt School in Paper : Media, Culture and Society. n.d. Retrieved from <https://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/Home/ViewSubject?catid=24>

Elliott, Anthony. Contemporary Social Theory: An Introduction. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2014.

González, Francisco, et al. "Traditional vs. Critical Cultural Theory." Cultural Critique, no. 49, 2001, pp. 139-154. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1354706. Accessed 22 Oct. 2020.

"Importance of Sociological Theory." UKEssays.com, www.ukessays.com/essays/sociology/why-is-theory-important-in-the-area-of-sociology.php.

Kellner, Douglas. Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity. Polity Press in association with Basil Blackwell, 1989.

Kellner, Douglas_Critical Theory. Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/63ab/444adf40fa5704ba8fa0bfa30d91dd894565.pdf>

Kellner, Douglas. Critical Theory Today: Revisiting the Classics. Retrieved from <https://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/essays/criticaltheorytoday.pdf>

Kellner, Douglas_The Frankfurt School. Retrieved from <https://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/essays/frankfurtschool.pdf>

Marshall, T. H. "Authority and the Family." <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1937.tb01346.x>, The Sociological Review, 1937, doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1937.tb01346.x.

"Max Horkheimer." Obo, www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195396577/obo-9780195396577-0200.xml?rskey=pc9Jkc&result=1&q=max+horkheimer#firstMatch.

"Max Horkheimer." Info:Main Page - New World Encyclopedia, www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Max_Horkheimer.

- Michael J. *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Theory*. Springer, 2017. 2017
- Osborne, Peter. Horkheimer. Max in Payne, Sir Michael, and Jessica Rae Barbera, eds. *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*. 2nd ed. pp- 335-336. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. Print.
- Payne, Sir Michael, and Jessica Rae Barbera, eds. *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory* 2010.
- Solty, Ingar. "Max Horkheimer, a Teacher Without a Class." *Jacobin*, 15 Feb. 2020, www.jacobinmag.com/2020/02/max-horkheimer-frankfurt-school-adorno-working-class-marxism.
- "Summary of Horkheimer's Traditional and Critical Theory." Uberbau, 25 Apr. 2012, uberbau.wordpress.com/2012/04/25/summary-of-horkheimers-traditional-and-critical-theory/.
- Tom Bottomore. *The Frankfurt School and Its Critics*. Routledge, 2002.
- UKEssays. (November 2018). *Critical Theory in Sociology*. Retrieved from <https://www.ukessays.com/essays/sociology/what-is-the-critical-theory-of-sociology-essay.php?vref=1>
- Francisco Rodrigues, Eli Vagner. "(PDF) *The Critique of Reason in Human and Natural Sciences* on "The Eclipse of Reason" by Max Horkheimer." ResearchGate, 3 Oct. 2015, www.researchgate.net/publication/282441734_The_critique_of_reason_in_human_and_natural_sciences_on_The_Eclipse_of_Reason_by_Max_Horkheimer.
- Vaidya, Shubhangi. "The Critical Theory : The Frankfurt School : Contributions of Max Horkheimer" "*E-PGPathshala*." E-PGPathshala, epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/Home/ViewSubject?catid=33.
- Yildirim, Nuarn. "Frankfurt School on Authority and the Family." *Nurareads*, 8 Mar. 2019, nuranyildirim.wordpress.com/2017/09/09/the-frankfurt-school-on-authority-and-family/.
- Wolin, Richard. "MAX HORKHEIMER." *Britannica.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 5 Oct. 2020

13.10 Suggested Readings

Held, David, 1980 (1989) : *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas*.

Horkheimer, Max 1938 (1972) : *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*.

Horkheimer, Max and T.W. Adorno (1972) *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Herder and Herder.

Abromeit, John- *Max Horkheimer and the Foundations of the Frankfurt School*. Cambridge UP, 2011.

Horkheimer, Max- *Eclipse of Reason*. A&C Black, 2013.

13.11 Glossary

- **Critical Theory** : Critical social theory is a social philosophy which is oriented towards critiquing and changing society as a whole by examining the structures of power and social domination. It is shaped by a critical engagement with society. Horkheimer defined critical theory as a social theory which is oriented and mediated towards critiquing and changing society as a whole in contrast to the traditional theory which has been oriented towards only explaining society, and not reforming it.
- **Traditional Theory** : Max Horkheimer defined traditional theory as a type of theory typically encountered in the natural sciences. This traditional theory which exhibits the positivist ideology disconnects science from society which then curbs human emancipation.
- **Frankfurt School** : The term "Frankfurt School" refers to the work of members of the 'Institut für Sozialforschung' (Institute for Social Research) that was established in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1923 as the first Marxist-oriented research centre affiliated with a major German university. Max Horkheimer became director of the institute in 1930.
- **Culture Industry** : Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno coined the term "culture industry" to signify the process of the industrialisation of mass-produced culture and the commercial imperatives that drove the system. They had argued that the system

of cultural production dominated by film, radio broadcasting, newspapers, and magazines, was controlled by advertising and commercial imperatives, and served to create subservience to the system of consumer capitalism.

Unit : 14 □ Theodor W. Adorno

Structure :

- 14.1 Objectives
- 14.2 Introduction
- 14.3 Theodor W. Adorno: A Brief Biography [1903-1969]
- 14.4 Major Selected Works and Contributions of Theodor W. Adorno
 - 14.4.1 Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments [1947]
 - 14.4.2 The Authoritarian Personality [1950]
 - 14.4.3 Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life [1951]
 - 14.4.4 Negative Dialectics [1966]
 - 14.4.5 Aesthetic Theory [1970]
- 14.5 Reflecting on Some Other Engagements : Adorno on Music, Education, and Culture Industry
- 14.6 Conclusion
- 14.7 Summary
- 14.8 Question
- 14.9 References
- 14.10 Suggested Readings
- 14.11 Glossary

14.1 Objectives

In the previous unit 14, we discussed one of the most influential and prominent members of the Frankfurt School and the famous critical theorist– Max Horkheimer. We discussed some of the major writings by Max Horkheimer, and laid down the important foundations of his lifeworks, and his critical theory. In the previous unit we also examined one pertinent contribution of the Frankfurt School- *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) co-authored by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. This is where and while discussing the Frankfurt School we were introduced to another pioneer social critic and leading figure of critical theory- Theodor W. Adorno. Thus, this unit further examines, and presents Adorno's works which have played a monumental role in establishing

critical social theory, and is regarded as influential in Sociology and many other disciplines like Cultural Studies, Critical Race Theory, Media Studies etc.

Moving ahead, the major Objectives of this unit are—

1. The most important objective of this unit is to introduce you all with the critical social theory of Theodor W. Adorno. We will begin this unit with a brief biography of him, and lay down the foundation of his early philosophical influences.
2. Secondly, we will explore Theodor W. Adorno's critical social theory by examining some of his major selected works amidst other engagements. For this unit, we will in detail explore five of his most renowned works to help you shape your understanding of Adorno's perspective. The five works that we will explore are— *Dialectic of Enlightenment* [1947]; *The Authoritarian Personality* [1950]; *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* [1951]; *Negative Dialectics* [1966]; and *Aesthetic Theory* [1970]. Though we have already covered *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in the previous unit on Max Horkheimer, we will briefly examine it in this unit also because this text was one of the most important developments in critical social theory. Hence, its recapitulation is important.
3. Thirdly, we will also briefly examine some other important sociological domains like music, culture industry, and education [apart from the aforementioned works to be discussed] wherein Adorno has made important contributions.
4. Lastly, we will briefly examine some general criticisms of Adorno's works towards the conclusion of this unit.

14.2 Introduction

Multiple sociological perspectives presents us with important social and critical lenses through which we explicate the social world around us. Sociologists, critical thinkers, philosophers of their times have contributed immensely to the vast gamut of sociological perspectives. One such theoretical domain we discussed in the previous unit on Max Horkheimer was on Critical Social Theory. Before we delve into exploring the critical theory of Theodor W. Adorno, we will briefly recapitulate the major tenets of critical theory to establish our further analysis of Adorno. Thus, as we examined in the previous unit that the Critical Theory was a product of the Institute for Social Research (the first Marxist-oriented research institute in Germany) headed by members who were also

referred to as the Frankfurt School theorists (Kellner: 1989). We explored the contributions of the Frankfurt School through the works of Max Horkheimer. As we had established in the previous unit, that the Frankfurt School of German social theory has wielded a considerable impact over the sociology of the last two generations. The Frankfurt School through their critical social theory extended their views beyond classical Marxism, and amalgamated an interdisciplinary integration of sociology, economics, politics and psychoanalysis, and had the most compelling views on the the problems and questions of modern society (Elliott: 2014: 70; Thompson:2017). Hamilton states that the development of a distinct critical social theory of society by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno and its reworking by later eminent Frankfurt theorists like Jurgen Habermas, and others constituted a thread of themes and concepts which gave the Frankfurt School an important role in the expansion of modern sociology (as cited in Bottomore: 1984).

We have already seen in the previous unit that critical theory is a unique form of social theory which posits a more comprehensive means to grasp social reality and diagnose social pathologies. Critical theory is a form of social criticism that contains within it the seeds of judgment, evaluation, and practical, transformative activity. Furthermore, the chief insight of a critical theory of society is to unfold the contradictions that already exist within it, and to make evident an emancipatory insight into the very fabric of what we take as given, as basic to our social world (Thompson: 2017:1-3). Thus, the critical social theory of the Frankfurt School was concerned with the dark side of the modern age, and traced various social pathologies back to general developments in the nature of reason, rationality and the Enlightenment (Elliott: 2014). Douglas Kellner (n.d.) posits that in the contemporary times, there are conflicting models of critical theory which are utilised by different groups and people in diverse fields of inquiry in different parts of the world.

The first generation of the critical social theorists of the Institute for Social Research in Germany like Horkheimer, Marcuse, Adorno and Fromm were responsible for a theory of capitalist society which focussed on its cultural manifestations. The critical theory developed by these scholars mainly during the period of World War II was primarily concerned with the mounting irrationality of social and cultural values, and their reflection in the ideas of positivism and scientism (Hamilton as quoted in Bottomore: 1984:8). The first generation of Critical Theorists were influenced by Marx in viewing modernity as

the result of capitalist industrialisation, and followed classical Marxism in seeing political economy and economic development as the foundation of the historical trajectory of modernity. Moving beyond classical marxism, their analyses included a wide range of new theories of consumerism and the development of the consumer society, of the culture industries, of the incorporation of science and technology into relations of production and new forms of social control, of changing patterns of socialisation, personality development and values, and of the decline of the individual (Kellner: 1989: 5-6).

Thus, Frankfurt School established one of the most important tenets of cultural criticism. Furthermore, when we begin analysing the critical social theory of the Frankfurt School two monumental names Max Horkheimer, and Theodor W. Adorno have had one of the most considerable impact in the formulation of this theory. They both had developed critical theory as a way to think through the consequences of multiple historical tragedies: fascism in Germany, anti-semitism, Stalinism in Soviet Russia, and the apparent mistake of Marx's prediction for revolution worldwide (Payne & Barbera: 2010). We will see how many members of the Frankfurt school had to live in exile during the reign of Adolf Hitler in Germany which had a profuse impact on their works. Students, this unit will not only help you understand the critical theory of Adorno but will also help you understand the crisis of the period when Adorno was writing his works, and also how few of his thematic analysis of society are sociologically relevant even in the contemporary times. Let us now turn to the next section wherein we will briefly explore Adorno's biography, his philosophical influences and the questions which were central to him in examining the society and social world of his times.

14.3 Theodor W. Adorno: A Brief Biography

As we have seen so far in the previous unit, and in the introduction that Theodor W. Adorno was one of the most prominent members of the Frankfurt school of critical theorists. He is a renowned sociologist, philosopher, social critic, music theorist and composer. Alongside social philosophers like Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein, Adorno is one of the most important German-language philosophers of the century (Osborne: 2010). Theodor Ludwig Wiesengrund Adorno was born on September 11 1903 in Frankfurt am Main, Germany to a middle class Jewish family.



PICTURE: THEODOR W. ADORNO [1903-1969]

[SOURCE:https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/94301.Theodor_W_Adorno]

He was the son of an assimilated Jewish wine merchant Oscar Alexander Wiesengrund and the Catholic singer Maria. During his school years he had first encounters with Anti-Semitism, which later influenced his work strongly (Spatscheck: 2010). Additionally, from secondary school onwards Adorno developed interests in both philosophy and music. After receiving his doctorate in 1924 for a work on Edmund Husserl he studied composition and piano with Alban Berg and Eduard Steuermann in Vienna. In 1931, he began teaching philosophy at the University of Frankfurt. When the National Socialists took over power in Germany in 1933 he was impeached as a university teacher on grounds of his Jewish descent, and left Germany for England (Bottomore; 1983: 4-5; Spatscheck: 2010). During the Nazi era and the rule of Adolf Hitler in Germany he resided in Oxford, New York City, and Southern California (Zuidervaat: 2015). His period of exile in the United States had a profuse impact on some of his major writings. However, after the Second World War Adorno, Horkheimer and Pollack returned to Frankfurt to reestablish the Institute in 1949.

DO YOU KNOW?

Theodor W. Adorno prepared his Habilitationsschrift in 1927. Habilitationsschrift is a thesis required for a tenured position in a German university which is known as 'Habilitation' in English language. His Habilitation was on "The concept of the unconscious in the transcendental theory of the mind" in 1927 (Osborne: 2010).

Theodor Adorno was one of the most important intellectuals of Europe. His views and philosophical critical questions he explored during his lifetime have been pertinent in the formulation of the first generation of critical social theory of the Institute for Social Research. Tom Bottomore (1983) states that while Adorno was one of the most distinguished representatives of the Frankfurt school his work was in many facets unique. Adorno asserted through his works that we live in a world which is completely caught up in a web spun by bureaucracy, administration and technocracy. For him, individual autonomy is a thing of the past wherein the age of concentrated capital, planning and mass culture has destroyed personal freedom. Adorno had hoped to undermine ideologies, and to generate conditions through which the social world could once more become visible. Which is why we saw in the previous unit that critical social theory was most importantly concerned with revealing and examining the contradictions within modern societal structures. Furthermore, Adorno wanted to create capacities for independent criticism, and receptivity to the possibility of radical social change (Bottomore: 1983:4-5).

DO YOU KNOW?

Theodor W. Adorno was not only one of the most influential intellectuals, sociologists, and philosophers but was also a renowned musicologist. A pianist and composer, and an accomplished prose stylist, he also published immensely on music and literature (Thompson:2006). Adorno had developed an almost limitless passion for music under the influence of his mother and her sister Agathe Calvelli-Adorno. In the 1920s, he published several pieces of music criticism under the pseudonym Hector Rottweiler in Vienna (Nico Bobka & Dirk Braunstein: 2018). We will explore some more of his views on popular music in section 5 of this unit.

Peter Osborne (2010) posits that the range of Adorno's output is huge which includes studies of central figures in the German philosophical tradition (Hegel, Kierkegaard, Husserl, Heidegger); monographs and essays on composers (Wagner, Mahler, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Berg), four volumes of Literary criticism, a variety of sociological writings, and numerous essays and fragments of cultural criticism. Adorno was also highly influenced by Walter Benjamin, another pertinent critical theorist. Furthermore, as we saw for Horkheimer even Adorno's philosophical position developed significantly during his period of exile from Germany (1934 - 50), initially in Oxford, then later, along with the rest of the Frankfurt school in the United States. Osborne contends that Adorno's

outputs can be divided into three basic domains: social critiques of philosophies, philosophical criticism of culture, and more purely philosophical works (Osborne: 2010: 13-14). While Adorno was in exile with other members of the Frankfurt School in US, he wrote several books for which he later became famous, including *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (with Max Horkheimer), *Philosophy of New Music*, *The Authoritarian Personality* (a collaborative project), and *Minima Moralia*. It was during this period of time that Adorno had become a provocative critic of mass culture and the culture industry (Zuidervaat: 2015).

Theodor W. Adorno became the Institute's director in 1958. He died of a heart attack on August 6, 1969. Adorno died during the period of self-proclaimed revolutionary agitation by the student movements of the late 1960s, wherein he had a particularly uncomfortable relationship (Wilson: 2007). Theodor Adorno is an intellectual legacy, and has been a highly educated German Jew who lived through turbulent and volatile times of the totalitarian regime in Germany. We will now explore some of the major themes of his intellectual developments through his major contributions.

14.4 Major Selected Works and Contributions of Theodor W. Adorno

As we have already established that Theodor Adorno has been an important figure in the formation of critical social theory, and his contributions are enormous. The works that we are going to explore in this section reflects the course of the intellectual developments of the Frankfurt School and the critical social theory made by Adorno. Theodor Adorno has made some original contributions across a range of fields, including aesthetics, moral philosophy, and social theory, wherein he has also written extensively on the history of modern philosophy (Thomson: 2006). We will now explore the first collaborative work, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) by Adorno with Max Horkheimer which we also discussed in the previous unit to revisit some of the important aspects of this work, and how this book remains one of the classics in Critical Social Theory. Students, before we move to explicating some of Adorno's major contributions we need to know that most of Adorno's works were in German. Ross Wilson (2007) states that Adorno had written the great majority of his works in German language. So most of the works that we will explore have been translated into English which are readily available in its translated version.

14.4.1 Dialectic of Enlightenment : Philosophical Fragments (1947)

Students, when we explore the works of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno we need to understand that their intellectual collaboration has been an epitome of some most important works produced in the Institute for Social Research. Ross Wilson (2007) posits that Adorno's intellectual relationship and personal friendship with Max Horkheimer played a fundamental role in the development of his work throughout his life. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is an example of that engagement. It was written in the concluding months of the Second World War and was a product of the wartime exile of Adorno and Horkheimer. If we reiterate the previous unit, we have seen how the rule of Hitler in Germany and the spread of the fascist ideologies played a paramount role in shaping Horkheimer and Adorno's work, especially *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. This work was one of the most important developments in the domain and trajectory of the critical theory. Douglas Kellner (1989) states that the shift from Classical Marxism could be mapped by looking at how the theorists started to focus on a new philosophical critique of science, technology and instrumental reason.



MAX HORKHEIMER [LEFT]; AND THEODOR W. ADORNO [RIGHT]

SOURCE: <https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/postcolonialstudies/2014/06/01/65/>

Lambert Zuidervaart (2015) posits that long before postmodernism became fashionable, Adorno and Horkheimer wrote one of the most searching critiques of modernity which is the major premise of this book. This work was an outcome of what the two authors

witnessed as the victory of barbarism which was the horrific rule of Adolf Hitler in Germany and the spread of anti-Jewish feelings in Germany. This was the period of the final darkening of the historical horizon at the time of the Second World War, and in the face of Nazi and Stalinist terror (Wellmer: 2014). *Dialectic of Enlightenment* examined the oppression and physical atrocities perpetrated by the regime and sought to explain these in terms of the wider philosophical background (Roberts: 2004: 58). Douglas Keller asserts that through this work Adorno and Horkheimer discussed how reason and enlightenment in the contemporary era turned into their opposites, transforming what promised to be instruments of truth and liberation into tools of domination. Furthermore, Horkheimer and Adorno believed that science, scientific reason, and technology were part and parcel of existing processes of production and social domination, and thus should not be trusted. The book consists of long studies of the concept of Enlightenment, and the culture industry, with two *excurses* on enlightenment, a shorter series on anti-semitism, and some notes and drafts on major themes of their emerging Critical Theory of the administered society (Kellner: 1989: 83). Thus, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in short was a powerful manifesto for the fight against modernist barbarity (Roberts: 2004: 72). What they saw was how scientific method and thought had become increasingly traditionalist, conformist, and instrumental to the interests of the existing social system. This resulted in the loss of their potentialities for social insight and critique (Kellner: 1989: 97).

These two thinkers while in exile were not only interested in the totalitarian regimes but were also interested in what was happening in post world war Europe, particularly in the United States of America, and how capitalism perpetuated new forms of control and domination. One such domain they explored in *Dialectics of Enlightenment* was the "culture industry". Horkheimer and Adorno's one of major essays in this book was devoted to a subject which became one of the chief engagements of the Frankfurt School, namely the "culture industry-enlightenment as mass deception". If you rewind to the previous unit where we discussed the culture industry in detail we explored how Adorno and Horkheimer examined technology and technological consciousness and how they produced a new phenomenon in the shape of a uniform and debased 'mass culture' which aborts and silences criticism and creates standardisation (Bottomore: 1984). We will discuss the "culture industry" more in section 5 because Adorno had expanded his views on this in other works also. Let us now cover the next section of his yet another important contribution– *The Authoritarian Personality* [1950].

DO YOU KNOW?

Students, did you know that apart from Adorno and Horkheimer who expressed their discontent with scientism and modern technology, there was also another prolific sociologist, political theorists and philosopher associated with the Frankfurt School who also presented his critique of technology. It was Herbert Marcuse. Marcuse was most attentive to the critique of technology. In his 1941 essay, "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology," and *One-Dimensional Man* [1964], Marcuse launched his most thorough critique of the place of the modern individual in industrialized and technologized society (Smulewicz-Zucker:2017).

14.4.2 The Authoritarian Personality (1950)

The Authoritarian Personality is yet another prodigious contribution of Adorno which was a collaborative project. The theme of "authority" has been extremely significant in sociological studies. For instance, if you recall classical thinker Max Weber, he had explored different types of authorities in his seminal writings. Mark P. Worell (2017) states that the problem of authority, and the love of authority, has been a central question of critical social theory and critical sociology. In critical social theory, the sociological explorations of authoritarianism arose as a response to the First World War. James Murphy (2018) states that "the authoritarian personality" or "the authoritarian character" was a category deployed by the Frankfurt School in the early twentieth century. One of the first German scholars of critical theory to explore and render a social-psychological investigation of the authoritarian personality was Eric Fromm. Later, drawing inspiration from Eric Fromm and other similar social-psychological studies on the authoritarian personality type, Adorno's collaboration with other thinkers resulted in "*The authoritarian personality*" to understand social domination, and the traits of an authoritarian.

"*The Authoritarian Personality*" was published in 1950, which was a five-year long research project based in Berkeley, California. This work focussed on the prevalence of authoritarian personalities in the United States by a collaboration of Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel Brunswik, Daniel Levinson, and R. Nevitt Sanford (Murphy: 2018). Adorno was an ardent cultural critic and thought it was important to study pathologies of culture, especially fascism not only both physiologically but also psychologically. For Adorno, investigating the role of irrational authoritarianism in the rise of fascism and anti-Semitism throughout Europe during the Second World War was of the utmost political importance, and to further examine whether such evil could ever firmly take root in the

United States (Elliott: 2014:53). We had seen in Adorno's collaborative work with Max Horkheimer in the *Dialectics of Enlightenment* (1947) as well that the role of totalitarian regimes and unsympathetic authority like that of Hitler's played a crucial role in shaping their philosophical and sociological questions. *The Authoritarian Personality* thus, sought to explore these questions. In this work Adorno and other co-authors were primarily concerned with the potentially "fascistic individual, one whose structure is such as to render him particularly susceptible to anti-democratic propaganda" (Adorno et al., 1950:1 as quoted in Murphy: 2018: 900). Adorno and his colleagues were thus able to provide a highly refined account of the structure and dynamics of authoritarianism through this work. Furthermore, this study examined how the roots of anti-Semitism and other forms of authoritarian attitudes were rooted in the dialectical interplay between psychological factors and social factors (Thompson: 2017). Adorno and others found in "The Authoritarian Personality" that the very core essence of a fascist character was authoritarian aggression (sadism) and authoritarian submission (masochism) (Worrel: 2017). For Adorno and his collaborators, the basic exposition for the emergence of authoritarian and anti-democratic attitudes and values was the repressive nature of authoritarian parenting which fostered attitudes of intolerance. Individuals were shaped by power and authority and reproduced it (Thompson: 2017). Anthony Elliott (2014: 541) states that Adorno sought to see how the society overpowers the individual through a standardized, monotonous mass culture, leaving little room for authentic individualism wherein society produces authoritarian social character types. Also, then the individual sees a fascist leader like Hitler as a guardian of social bonds, and the individual then gives in to the collective ideology propagated by such social authority.

The most important facet of this study was the designing of the survey instrument known as the "F-Scale" by Adorno and his co-authors. The F scale was designed as a measurement of fascist potential amidst men and women and to examine how social authority is internalised by individuals. Moreover, the F scale sought to measure implicit 'pre-fascist tendencies' towards anti-Semitism, ethnocentrism and political and economic conservatism. Also, by employing over two hundred questionnaires and detailed psychoanalytic profiles, Adorno and his co-authors explored such topics as their respondents' early childhoods, family relationships and wider political 'world-views' (Elliott: 2014:56).

DO YOU KNOW?

To clarify the personal dimensions of fascist ideology, *The Authoritarian Personality* identified nine emotional traits of interviewees who were judged to be high as regards possible authoritarian tendency such as (Anthony Elliott: 2014):

- *Conventionalism - Authoritarian Submission - Authoritarian Aggression*
- *Anti-Intraception - Stereotype and Superstition - Power and Toughness*
- *Destructiveness and Cynicism - Projectivity - Sex*

Thus, the pertinent premise and outcome of "*The Authoritarian Personality*" was that the authoritarian suffers from ego weakness, idealises social authority, submits in the face of powerful social forces, and demonstrates propensities for racial prejudice and ethnic hatred (Elliott: 2014). We will now explore his next work which is *Minima Moralia*.

14.4.3 *Minima Moralia* : Reflections from Damaged Life [1951]

Yet another captivating and crucial work by TW Adorno was *Minima Moralia* published in 1951. The book is arranged in three sequences of fragments, each of which ranges over topics from family life through to world history, from a child's experience of the zoo to Adorno's criticisms of Hegel (Thompson: 2006: 88). *Minima Moralia* has been considered as one of the most pertinent texts and works by Adorno. It is an exploration and examination of everyday life distorted by the principle and logic of the capitalist exchange. The book sheds light on Adorno's philosophy and vision of social science which was opposed to strictly positivist and traditional theoretical analysis. Students, if you remember, in the previous unit, we had discussed Horkheimer's views on the difference between traditional and critical theory, and how traditional theory is uncritical as compared to critical social theory. The alternative methodological turn for the social theory was important for these scholars.

Adorno was of the view that the main task of critical theory was to uncover the contradictions in social life with a view to transform the system. As soon as Adorno returned from American exile to Frankfurt in November 1949, he published *Minima Moralia*. Adorno dedicated this book to Max Horkheimer 'as thanks and promise'. The '*reflections from damaged life*' the subtitle of this book is based on 'the narrowest private sphere, that of the intellectual in exile' (Bobka & Braunstein: 2018). Furthermore, the

subtitle also reflects the damage which was mediated by the exile and by the triumph of Nazism in Germany and subsequently throughout Europe. Adorno's *Minima Moralia* was an attempt to confront the contemporary impossibility of moral philosophy and, indeed, of moral life itself (Wilson: 2007: 91). The book consists of numerous tales, narratives, fables and aphorisms with reflections on the damaged lives. Additionally, Adorno's stay in the US examined how the chaos of capitalism also damages life. Thus, in *Minima Moralia* Adorno saw the 20th-century modernity as a progressive enclosure of the human within mechanical systems that crush thought, spontaneity, complexity, creativity, and individuality (Pistelli: 2018). We will now explore his next work briefly which is "*Negative Dialectics*".

14.4.4 *Negative Dialectics* [1966]

Adorno started his work on *Negative Dialectics*, one of the most radical and impactful writings of the last century, at the end of the 1950s, and which was finished and published by 1966 (Bobka & Braunstein: 2018). One can describe *Negative Dialectics* as a "metacritique" of idealist philosophy, specially of the philosophy of philosophers like Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Hegel. Lambert Zuidervaart (2015) posits that the book aimed to complete what Adorno considered as his lifelong task as a philosopher: which was "to use the strength of the [epistemic] subject to break through the deception of constitutive subjectivity". In this important work, Adorno stated that "negative dialectic" was an ongoing auto-critique of philosophy. As we have seen earlier also how the critical theorists were extremely critical of modernity and sought to examine the contradictions within the social structure. Adorno was of the view that modernity represents for us not an affirmative reconciliation of the subject and object, but rather, a negative one where the world is now governed by a kind of rationality that destroys difference and forces identity onto the subject (Thompson: 2017). Adorno also asserted that in a world which is dominated by the instrumentalization of thought, dialectics pushes against the self-satisfaction of thought which is not identity thinking. The negative dialectic was Adorno's alternative to reified, instrumentalized and identity thinking. The negative dialectic was then refutation and resistance of the promise of freedom through philosophical systems which attempted to retain a utopian moment through the resistance to those systems (Zucker: 2017). What Adorno called 'negative dialectics' was then a criticism of all philosophical positions and social theories (Bottomore: 1984: 18). Let us now examine the final work for this unit by Adorno which is of outstanding philosophical originality

: *Aesthetic Theory* published in 1970.

14.4.5 *Aesthetic Theory* [1970]

J.M. (2004) asserts that *Aesthetic Theory* is not only Theodor W. Adorno's chief-work, but perhaps was the pivotal document of twentieth-century philosophical aesthetics which was published after his death in 1970. Theodor Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* is a theoretical discourse, and also a collection of essays written over an extended period of time, on the relationship between authentic art and a critical theory of society. These essays were written from 1961 to 1969 were revised, divided into chapters and was posthumously published in 1970. Adorno believed in the true essence and critical importance of art and its autonomy. He believed that the relationship between authentic art, truth and morality could lead to a form of praxis and habitus freed up from both the totalized and reified world. Authentic art for Adorno was autonomous art that remains free from rationalized, Enlightenment forms of truth and morality. Autonomous art maintains its power to convey the truth. Adorno believed that art has become alienated from truth because it too has fallen victim to a totally reified instrumentalized modern society. *Aesthetic Theory* posits that art has become distanced from truth in a society that has lost its capacity to critically engage the present (Freeman: 2017:280). Adorno in this work withheld the importance of critical theory as reflective and that which challenges coercion and power and a non-commercialised art form can serve as a form of true resistance.

We will now move on to the next section before we conclude this unit. In the next section, we will briefly focus on other important domains and themes extended by Adorno i.e. education; culture industry; and music. We will examine how Adorno contributed to these aspects as well, and how these have extended important insights to critical social theory of the Frankfurt School.

14.5 Reflecting on Some Other Engagements: Adorno on Music, Education, and Culture Industry

Theodor W. Adorno as we have explored so far is one of the most influential intellectuals of Europe who has produced many critically engaging texts throughout his lifetime. One important theme we have explored is how the rise and spread of fascist and authoritarian ideologies affected the perspectives of Adorno who had to live in exile in the US because

he was of a Jewish descent, and was impeached from his University position at the time. Thus, the social, political and cultural contexts which Adorno encountered with the rise of totalitarianism and Nazism in Germany led him and other critical theorists especially the first generation theorists of the Frankfurt School to ask questions not only about power or coercion but also why people believed that such regimes like that of totalitarianism were good for the society. Furthermore, Adorno's critical social theory was also influenced by his encounter of the capitalist informed culture industry in the US, and how this industry serves to reinforce the established social order and inhibit critical thinking. We will now see briefly, how the stated factors also affected his analysis of Music, Education, and Culture Industry.

1. **Adorno on Music :** Theodore W. Adorno, as we have stated elsewhere, was a gifted musician whose mother played a monumental role in shaping and enriching his early years for his love of music. He has written extensively on aesthetics, music and literary forms. Adorno's engagement with music at a young age has had considerable impact on him as a musician, and later as a critical thinker on assessing mass produced music as well. Thus, we can see how "music" was a central concern for Adorno throughout his life. We also stated in his biography that Adorno had briefly studied composition in Vienna with the composer Alban Berg. Furthermore, Adorno's early formulation of Critical Social Theory can best be derived from *The Actuality of Philosophy*, a lecture he presented upon taking up a teaching position at Frankfurt in 1931 (Rush: 2004). Furthermore, David Held (1980) posits that Adorno's works on music are enormous. Adorno had studied and examined the works of several composers, including Beethoven, Mahler, Wagner, Schoenberg, Berg and Stravinski. Additionally, Adorno was such an ardent scholar of music that he has also discussed the nature of different types of musical instruments, for example the violin and saxophone. Also, he has written on a number of cultural critics, for example Otto Spengler and Thorstein Veblen; on literary figures such as Franz Kafka and Beckett; on literary critics such as Lukács; and he published a large volume on aesthetic theory (Held: 1980:221). Moreover, one such classic text by Adorno is *Philosophy of the New Music* published in 1949 which sheds light on his perspectives on music, and also his critique of the system and social structure in which the music is produced and consumed.

DO YOU KNOW?

Theodor W. Adorno's reach and passion for music was commendable. In 1928, Adorno became the editor of the Viennese musical journal *Anbruch* (Peter Osborne : 2010).

2. Adorno on Education : Theodor Adorno has been one such intellectual and cultural critic in the history of Europe who has written on education enormously. One important essay written by him was *Education After Auschwitz*. This has appeared as radio talk in 1966. One famous quotation with which the essay begins is "The premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again" (Adorno: 1966 as quoted in Cho: 2009). Students, you may all be familiar with the atrocities and horrific events which were inflicted on the Jews with the rise of Hitler and his Nazi regime in Germany. Auschwitz located in Poland was one of the largest concentration and death camps set up for the extermination of political prisoners especially the Jews at the hands of German Nazis. The atrocities inflicted by the Nazi's on the Jews, and their enemies in such death camps for their complete eradication are those events in the bloody history of the world which can never be erased from the collective memory of the world history. As we have been exploring this time and again that this historical event in the history of Europe wherein millions of Jews were subjected to dehumanizing conditions due to which millions lost their lives; *others had to flee the countries wherein fascists ideology permeated remains important when exploring the critical social theory of Adorn.* Adorno as we have mentioned before too had to flee when the Nazi's ruled Germany. When in exile in the US not only did he witness the growing control of capitalist driven culture industry produced on a mass scale to inhibit critical thinking amidst the masses but also was aware of the barbaric conditions in which other Jews were subjected to in Germany and other parts of Europe where the Nazis had their control and domination. In the context of education, Adorno was concerned about how the space of education would be after Auschwitz particularly in a post world war world. We even saw this in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) that for Adorno and Horkheimer since the Enlightenment, society had become an increasingly inhuman and ruthless place because of how enlightenment and technology instead of freeing and emancipating individuals created new forms of domination and control. The central premise for Adorno's essay on education

was that life after Auschwitz is thus thickened by the moral sense that something must be done so that nothing like it ever happens again (Daniel K. Cho: 2009: 84). Adorno was of the view that nothing like the rise of fascist ideology should ever take place in the world again which led to the horrors of Auschwitz. This according to him could only be possible when the "only education that has any sense at all, and will be reflecting democratic ideals, in the world after Auschwitz, is an education toward critical self-reflection, an education for contradiction and resistance. Adorno propagated and endeavored for a critically self- reflexive school and an educational space like school that is for a critically self-reflexive culture (Daniel K. Cho: 2009). For Adorno, the prime purpose and task of democratic societies is education, and a real democratic society can only be comprehended with one which has matured citizens. Thus, education to maturity becomes the key strategy for enlightened societies (Spatscheck: 2010).

3. **Adorno on Culture Industry :** When the members of the Frankfurt School were in exile in the US through the 1940s, they encountered the proliferation of mass communications and culture and the inevitable rise of consumer society. This is where they experienced at first hand the advent of the cultural power of the commercial broadcasting systems. As we saw in the previous unit, Adorno and Horkheimer were able to see how capitalist interests dominated mass culture and observed the fascination which the entertainment industries exerted within the emerging media and consumer society (Kellner: 1989). We explored this in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and how the culture industry was considered by these thinkers as mass deception. The critical theorists called the 'culture industries' as a central part of a new organisation of capitalist modernity, which employed culture, advertising, mass communications and new mediums of social control to garner consent for the new forms of capitalist society (Kellner: 1989). If we look at Adorno's views on Culture Industry he has mediated his views on the culture industry on three occasions and works. The first could be seen *On Popular Music*, which summarized Adorno's studies of popular music. Secondly, we have already mentioned that Adorno and Horkheimer discussed culture industry in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947). The third is *Culture Industry Reconsidered* (Welty: 1984). In this essay, Adorno posits the manner with which the cultural products have been standardized and distributed by means of rationalized and strictly controlled organization (Wilson: 2007).

Students, the most important premise of the Critical Theorists engagement with the culture industry has been how the culture industry produces mass products of culture mediating homogeneous dominant ideology amidst the masses, and thus controlling them and inhibiting critical thinking while also mediating social domination through these cultural forms. They saw the culture industry as involving administered culture, imposed from above, as an instrument of indoctrination and social control (Kellner: 1989: 130). Thus, for critical thinkers and theorists critical reflective thinking has been extremely important which stressed on the importance of understanding and questioning the underlying contradictions of the social system.

14.6 Conclusion

Theodor W. Adorno is one such scholar and critical thinker of Europe who garnered fame through his distinguished ways of cultural and philosophical criticism. His famous scholarly works and writings have had a profound impact on the formation of critical social theory of the Frankfurt School. Even though many scholars have noted that Adorno's contribution to the formation of a school of critical theory is much more ambiguous and obscure (Bottomore: 1984: 18), yet his engagement in his own nuanced ways and then particularly with Horkheimer laid down some critical tenets of critical social theory for the first generation of the Frankfurt School. As we have seen that our exploration of Adorno's work and his engagement and interest in aesthetic theory, analysis of culture, music and psychoanalysis has produced some of the best texts for sociological analysis. Even though Adorno remains a leading figure in the history of important thinkers of Europe, yet some criticism has been mediated towards him. Andrew Fagan states that one criticism that has been extended on Adorno has been on how esoteric and difficult to comprehend his kind of writing by Adorno which are at times hard to decipher. Furthermore, another critique has been mediated by Jurgen Habermas who is a prolific figure of the Frankfurt School and contemporary critical social theory. Habermas has been critical of Adorno's views on instrumental reason. Students, even though Adorno has had his fair share of criticisms we cannot deny the fact that his writings still have a considerable impact on sociological explorations. Also, as students of sociology we should seek to see how important and fitting the ideas that Adorno discussed are relevant in the 21st century. For instance, how and whether to what extent the culture industry in contemporary times, especially the new social media, indoctrinates social domination and is relevant for

understanding technological progress today. We should keep asking critical questions with which the critical theorists, especially the first generation like Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, were concerned, and analyse how the social system functions, and how we should question the taken for granted social world and its reality. Overall, this unit and Adorno's perspectives have helped us explore how critical thinkers like him were concerned with the horrors that World War inflicted on people; and how new forms of capitalism especially in the United States employed mass cultural products to spread ideology for social domination, control, and indoctrination. These themes have been pertinent for us to unravel how power works in multidimensional ways, and critical thinkers like Adorno of his times were concerned with the societal upheavals and desired for a democratic society with critical reflective thinking amidst the masses.

14.7 Summary

In this unit, we first began with a brief recapitulation of critical theory and the major tenets of this theory to establish our base for assessing Adorno's writings. Later on we examined and explored Adorno's five most famous writings amongst other works which have been monumental in getting insights to Adorno's perspectives, and the major themes of his works. We also explored three other important domains wherein Adorno has made contributions, that is music, education and culture industry. Towards the conclusion we assessed very briefly some criticisms mediated at Adorno.

14.8 Questions

Answer briefly :

1. Examine briefly Theodor W. Adorno's biography.
2. What was Theodor W. Adorno's view on Education?
3. Write a short note on :
 - a) Adorno on Music
 - b) Culture Industry
 - c) Aesthetic Theory

4. Write a short essay on "Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments" [1947].

Answer in detail :

4. Elucidate Theodor W. Adorno's views in *Minima Moralia*.
5. Examine Adorno's views in "*The Authoritarian Personality*".
6. What is *Negative Dialectics*?

14.9 Reference

- Adorno, Theodor W., and Anson G. Rabinbach. "Culture Industry Reconsidered." *New German Critique*, no. 6, 1975, pp. 12-19. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/487650. Accessed 11 Dec. 2020.
- Best, Beverley, et al. *The SAGE Handbook of Frankfurt School Critical Theory*. SAGE, 2018.
- Bottomore, T. *Bottomore: A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Pape R). Harvard University Press, 1983.
- Bronner, Stephen E., and Douglas M. Kellner. *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*. Routledge, 1989.
- Bronner, Stephen E. *Critical Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2017.
- Callaghan, Jennefer. "Adorno, Theodor - Postcolonial Studies." ScholarBlogs | Emory's Own Word Press, *Instance for Teaching and Research*, 2017, scholarblogs.emory.edu/postcolonialstudies/2014/06/01/65/.
- Cho, Daniel K. "Adorno on Education Or, Can Critical Self-Reflection Prevent the Next Auschwitz?" ResearchGate, 2009, www.researchgate.net/publication/233653776_Adorno_on_Education_or_Can_Critical_Self-Reflection_Prevent_the_Next_Auschwitz. Accessed 8 Dec. 2020.
- Elliott, Anthony. *Contemporary Social Theory: An Introduction*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2014.
- Fagan, Andrew. "Adorno, Theodor." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* | An

Encyclopedia of Philosophy Articles Written by Professional Philosophers,
iep.utm.edu/adorno/#H1.

Fred Rush, et al. *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*. Cambridge UP, 2004.
Held, David, 1980 (1989): Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas.

Kellner, Douglas *Critical Theory Today: Revisiting the Classics*. Retrieved from <https://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/essays/criticaltheorytoday.pdf>

Kellner, Douglas. *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity*. Polity Press in association with Basil Blackwell, 1989.

Payne, Sir Michael, and Jessica Rae Barbera, eds. *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory 2010*.

Sim, Stuart, and Borin VAN. Loon. *Introducing Critical Theory*. ICON Books LTD., 2012.

Spatscheck, Christian (2010). 'Theodor W. Adorno on Education' *The encyclopaedia of pedagogy and informal education*. Retrieved from www.infed.org/thinkers/adorno_on_education.htm on 8 Dec. 2020]

"Theodor Adorno". In obo in Literary and Critical Theory. 8 Dec. 2020. <<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780190221911/obo-9780190221911-0062.xml>>.

"Theodor Adorno, Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life." John Pistelli, 19 June 2020, johnpistelli.com/2018/11/28/theodor-adorno-minima-moralia-reflections-on-a-damaged-life/.

Thomson, Alex. *Adorno: A Guide for the Perplexed*. A&C Black, 2006.

Thompson, Michael J. *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Theory*. Springer, 2017.

Tom Bottomore. *The Frankfurt School and Its Critics*. Routledge, 2002.

Wellmer, Albrecht. "On Critical Theory." *Social Research*, vol. 81, no. 3, 2014, pp. 705-733. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/26549646. Accessed 22 Dec. 2020.

Welty, Gordon. "'Theodor Adorno and the Culture Industry' (1984)." Wright State University, 1984, www.wright.edu/~gordon.welty/Adorno_84.htm.

Wilson, Ross. *Theodor Adorno*. Routledge, 2007.

Zuidervaat, Lambert, "Theodor W. Adorno", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2015/entries/adorno/>>.

14.10 Suggested Readings

- *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*. Routledge, 1989- Bronner, Stephen E., and Douglas M. Kellner.
- *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, ed. by Tom Huhn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 395-420
- *Adorno: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 1998- Jarvis, Simon.
- *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*- Ed. J.M. Bernstein. London: Routledge, 1991.

14.11 Glossary

- **Authoritarian Personality** : Authoritarian Personality has been discussed by Theodor Adorno in one his classic co-authored text *The Authoritarian Personality* published in the year 1950. This Research project which was based in Berkeley, California was the product of a collaborative social- psychological investigation into the potentiality for fascist sympathies among the American population. Thus, it sought to explore the prevalence of authoritarian personalities/traits in the United States.
- **F-Scale** : The F- Scale was a survey instrument which was designed by Adorno and his colleagues/co-authors of the *Authoritarian Personality* (1950). The F scale was designed as a measurement of fascist potential amidst men and women and to examine how social authority is internalised by individuals. Moreover, the F scale sought to measure implicit 'pre-fascist tendencies' towards anti-Semitism, ethnocentrism and political and economic conservatism.
- **Negative Dialectics** : Negative Dialectics is a monumental work by TW Adorno published in 1966. What Adorno called 'negative dialectics' was then a criticism

of all philosophical positions and social theories (Bottomore: 1984: 18).

- **Culture Industry** : Culture industries can be defined as those industries which produce cultural goods. The Critical Theorists called the 'culture industries' as a central part of a new organisation of capitalist modernity, which employed culture, advertising, mass communications and new mediums of social control to garner consent to the new forms of capitalist society (Kellner: 1989).
 - **Auschwitz** : "Auschwitz" located in Southern Poland was one of the largest concentration and death camps set up for the extermination of political prisoners especially the Jews during the second world war and the reign of Hitler and his Nazi party. Adorno in one of his classic essays *Education after Auschwitz* expressed his views on education and that nothing like Auschwitz should ever happen again. Education, Adorno asserted, was the task of democratic societies, and a democratic society is one which has matured citizens. He stressed on the importance of schools as critically self- reflexive, and a school that is for a critically self-reflexive culture (Daniel K. Cho: 2009).
 - **Minima Moralia** : Minima Moralia is another important contribution of TW Adorno published in the year 1951. It is an exploration and examination of everyday life distorted by the principle and logic of the capitalist exchange. The book sheds light on Adorno's philosophy and vision of social science which was opposed to strictly positivist and traditional theoretical analysis.
-

Unit : 15 □ Herbert Marcuse

Structure :

- 15.1 Objectives**
- 15.2 Introduction**
 - 15.2.1 Marcuse and the Critical Theory**
 - 15.2.2 The principle of domination**
 - 15.2.3 Instrumental Reason**
 - 15.2.4 A Conformist Character and Personality**
- 15.3 Critical Theory, Marcuse and Marxism**
- 15.4 One Dimensional Man and Industrial Society**
 - 15.4.1 One Dimensional Man**
 - 15.4.2 Attributes of One Dimensional Society**
 - 15.4.3 Emergence of a Managerial Class**
 - 15.4.4 Attributes of an Affluent Society**
- 15.5 One Dimensional Man and Surplus Repression**
 - 15.5.1 One Dimensional Man**
 - 15.5.2 The Theory of Surplus Repression**
 - 15.5.3 Marcuse, Freud and Marx**
- 15.6 Marcuse's sketch of an Alternative Society**
- 15.7 Conclusion**
- 15.8 Summary**
- 15.9 Questions**
- 15.10 References**
- 15.11 Glossary**

15.1 Objectives

In keeping with the rapidly changing scenario at the social and economic levels, new sociological theories also emerged so as to attempt a correct line of interpretation of what was happening and being experienced around. The traditional classical sociological

theories as promulgated by Comte, Spencer, Durkheim or even Marx, was thought to be either faulty or inadequate or one sided to provide a plausible interpretation of the social situation. The positivist line of thinking aimed at arriving at certain 'laws' of human behavior pattern or social events, was thought to be inadequate in comprehending the dynamics of human behavior. The Marxist interpretation of society, regarded as a dominant theoretical model of interpretation and action, was, side by side, reoriented and given a new twist by a host of writers starting from the thirties of the last century. These new trends of thought, emerging in the realm of sociological theory, continued well up to the last decade of the last century. Among these new theories, which emerged during this period, the Critical School or the Frankfurt School - deriving its name from Frankfurt where the principal advocates of this theory were located - occupies a prominent place. Herbert Marcuse broadly belongs to this School. The main persons belonging to this School were Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse. Though there are differences among them, there are major commonalities shared also by them. Other important writers belonging to this School are Walter Benjamin, Karl Wittfogel. The School is named as Critical School as they share a common critical orientation to the present system of economy and society. At the same time, their criticism is not as radical as those of the Marxists so as to suggest the revolutionary overthrow of the present system of economy and society, as the Marxists did.

In the present section, we will be analyzing only Herbert Marcuse as one principal exponent of the Critical Theory. The objectives of the present section are

1. Outlining the major orientations of Critical theory
2. Outlining the major conformities of and deviations from the Hegelian and Marxian line of thinking as developed by Marcuse.
3. The major areas of thought of Marcuse
4. Appreciations of, and limitations to, Marcuse's line of thinking.

15.2 Introduction

15.2.1 Marcuse and the Critical Theory

It has been mentioned already that Marcuse's writings share some of the common principles expounded by the critical theorists, especially Adorno and Horkheimer. The

principles which constitute the fundamental core of these writers are the following:

15.2.2 The principle of domination

In the writings of the critical theorists, there is an overwhelming presence of an idea of a system of domination but this domination is not based on the contradiction between the forces and the relations of production, as the Marxists would argue. The productive forces now produce so much of wealth that the worker is now more affluent and that instead of coming into conflict with private ownership, they seem to reinforce private ownership. But there is another way in which the principle of domination works. The critical theorists are concerned with the way the system dominates : with the ways in which it forces, manipulates, blinds or fools people into ensuring its reproduction and continuation. This is done through a manipulated world view ensuring a system of culture which justifies domination. Alan Swingehood says, "The School concentrated on cultural analysis. Culture was the realm of humanity's essential being, not economics or politics; humanity defined its goals and purposes and affirmed itself through cultural forms which resisted incorporation into the alienated structure of industrial society. Mass culture was the ultimate denial of affirmative culture, the means whereby the individual is stripped of individuality, creativity and autonomy (1984; 309). Critical theorists mention particularly two areas in which it is done.

15.2.3 Instrumental Reason

The elaboration of this principle is to be found in the writings of all the critical theorists including Herbert Marcuse. They argue that the economic level of capitalist society is such that human relations come to appear as relations between things, that people come to see themselves as objects. Relations become valuable not for the sake of relations but as instruments to pursue one's goal. Instrumental reason is concerned only with practical purposes. Instrumental reason is seen as the dominant way of thinking in the modern world, both in the spheres of natural and social sciences. Nature has become an instrument for exploitation "whereas, previously, people had seen nature as God's creation, entrusted to humanity to care for and preserve, they now come to see it as an instrument, a raw material, to be developed and exploited". Human beings are regarded as valuable not for themselves but as possessors of qualities and skills to be exploited for purposes outside of themselves. The development of instrumental reason has been a historical process preceding capitalism. Capitalism is a product of instrumental

reason rather than instrumental reason being a product of capitalism. It is this importance being given on rationality in a new form which is the dominant development in its new form and which has been interpreted from the materialistic point of view, that the supporters of this approach are often labeled "Weberian Marxists".

15.2.4 A Conformist Character and Personality

For the principle of domination to survive, a particular type of character and personality is required which sustains the capitalist economy. In doing so, the critical theorists have gone beyond Freud. Freud holds that the natural instincts and the sexual urge have got to be repressed in a civilized society. For some sort of ordered life to exist, we need to restrain ourselves, to repress our desires and direct the energy elsewhere into socially useful activities. But the critical theorists suggest that this 'repression' need not be present always. In the earlier stages of capitalism, Marcuse argues a high degree of repression was necessary for the system to survive but the growth of the productive forces in late capitalism means that such a high degree of repression is no longer necessary. Capitalism develops a particular type of culture industry, a particular type of conformist character structure which feeds the system and is reinforced by it. This orientation is to be found in Marcuse's (1898-1979) *Eros and Civilization*, in Adorno et al *The Authoritative Personality*, in Horkheimer's (1895-1973) *Studies in Prejudice* and in Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society* (1950). While talking about the critical theory, Ritzer says, "Critical theorists made an effort to integrate individually oriented Freudian theory with the societal and cultural level insights of Marx and Weber. This seemed to many Sociologists to represent a more inclusive theory than that offered by either Marx or Weber alone". (Ritzer G, 1984, p-204).

15.3 Critical Theory, Marcuse and Marxism

While talking about the critical theory, Ritzer Says, 'Critical sites sists made on effort to in it grate individually oriented Frendian Treevy with the so evetal level and cultural level and cultural level in... of Marx and Weber. This seemed to many sociologists to represent a more incluzire thery than offered of either Marx or Weber above. (Ritzer, 1984, p. 204)

As the critical theory is highly critical of the present system of society, it creates an

apparent impression of being akin to the Marxist interpretation of the dialectics of society. But the underlying assumptions and conclusions of the two are totally different. To Marx, capitalism is a "union of contradictions. It gets freedom through exploitation, wealth through impoverishment, advance in production through restriction in consumption, so that the very structure of capitalism is a dialectical one". But the critical theorists' analysis of the nature of capitalism and of the place of the proletariat in it is totally different. There has been a metamorphosis in the nature of capitalism itself since its inception. Individual competitive capitalism has been replaced by monopoly and state capitalism. This transformation to state capitalism is marked by the development of mass culture and the extension of social domination into the psychological as well as the economic experience of human beings. Rationality becomes subjective and instrumental, as Weber also argued. Instrumental rationality is concerned only with matching effective means to selected goals and thus acts as a mechanism of repression in modern society. Technological progress results in the negation of human freedom. As Marcuse observes "in modern society, conscience and personal responsibility decline 'objectively' under conditions of total bureaucratization ... where the functioning of the apparatus determines - and overrides - personal autonomy (Marcuse). These observations of the critical theory reminds us of Marx's theory of alienation. But whereas, to Marx, alienation is experienced by the working class only, for the critical theorists the degradation is universal, not related to any particular class. As Marcuse says 'individuality is subverted by technology in the 'One dimensional society', of enslaved consumers and mass culture audiences".

According to Wallace and Wolf, 'the Frankfurt analysts' consider themselves 'materialists' because of their emphasis on the importance of economic organization. During the 1930s for example, they argued consistently that fascism was rooted in capitalism. For the most part, however their studies are concerned with aspect of personality, culture and thought and not with social institutions. Horkheimer, Adorno and their colleague have always affirmed that thought and personality are rooted in the economic system but unlike more orthodox Marxist they also argue that culture and ideology can play an independent role in society and that pure economic determinism is simplistic" (1986; 171).

15.3.1 The Culture Industry

In the Marxian analysis the proletariat or the working class are the worst victims of the capitalist system since capitalism thrives on the extract of surplus value produced by the worker. The inherent class contradiction of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat

leads the proletariat to organize, fight and ultimately to overthrow the capitalist system. But the critical theorists do not think that class conflict is any longer the dominant theme of the present society. It might have been so in the earlier days of capitalism when productive forces were not well developed. But today, the workers have been accommodated in the system, the system producing so much that the 'needs' of individuals are satisfied at the individual level. Marcuse says this quite unequivocally. "The integration of the largest part of the working class into the capitalist society is not a surface phenomenon : it has its roots in the infrastructure itself, in the political economy of monopoly capitalism. In Marcuse's view, capitalism remains a class society. But class divisions and class conflict are no longer the major sources of schism, under the impact of the harmonizing effect of the one dimensional order". Marcuse further declares "The integration of the largest part of the working class into the capitalist society is not a surface phenomenon. "It has its roots in the infrastructure itself, in the political economy of monopoly capitalism" (Marcuse, *Counter Revolution and Revolt*, 1972, p-6). The critical theorists put emphasis on such cultural phenomena as instrumental rationality, 'the culture industry,' 'the knowledge industry', communicative action and the like. Though in many places Marcuse uses the term capitalist society, he prefers the adoption of the term 'Industrial society' or 'advanced industrial society'. That also indicates a departure from the Marxian point of view.

15.4 One Dimensional Man and Industrial Society

15.4.1 One Dimensional Man : Marcuse's principal work

We come now to the analysis of Marcuse's major work viz., *One Dimensional Man*. This work is organized into three major sections. At the beginning, Marcuse enters into a discussion of one dimensional society or what he interchangeably calls advanced industrial society. In the second part, he discusses the attributes of 'one dimensional thought', the cultural and social underpinnings of man living in such a society, where man loses the spirit of protest and becomes a conformist. Here there is a 'defeat of the logic of protest' and he surrenders before the machination of the advanced industrial order. In the third part of the work, Marcuse speaks - though very inadequately - of the possibilities of a transformed society - a society which will not be repressive in nature, a society where the free forces of voluntary and spontaneous action will predominate.

15.4.2 Attributes of one Dimensional Society

What, according to Marcuse, are the attribute of one dimensional society? Marcuse has gone into the discussion of the evolution of the capitalist society. He takes into consideration the Marxian analysis of the role of the proletariat vis-à-vis the bourgeoisie. Marcuse holds that whereas this might have been true in the earlier stage of capitalism, where the two classes had a confronting relationship, in modern times, the working class can no longer be regarded as harbinger of social change and instrumental in the downfall of the capitalism. In fact capitalism has got to stay in modern times. To him, the working class has ceased to be 'material-negation' of the industrial order, but instead has become an integral part of that order. Two things have facilitated the continuation of the capitalist order in recent times, viz., the conjunction of the welfare state and the warfare state. Technological progress in production process has ensured huge escalation in the production of goods and services and the state, large corporations and unions are coordinating their activities to further economic growth. So, it is not a confronting relation but a cooperative endeavour today. The welfare arm of the modern affluent society has benefitted everybody. Secondly, writing at a time when the capitalist world was engaged in 'fighting the specter of international communism', Marcuse holds that the entire capitalist economy has geared up to the threat of war. As he says "mobilized against this threat, capitalist society shows an internal union and cohesion unknown at previous stages of industrial civilization".

15.4.3 Emergence of a Managerial Class

Additionally, changes in technology and production forces make the production process appear as smooth and harmonious. The harshness of the work environment is concealed by a technical organization where there is the emergence of managerial class and a bureaucratic organization. Class domination now appears as merely neutral administration. Marcuse says that capitalist and managers tend to lose their separate identity as exploiters just as workers do not feel that they are exploited. So, in spite of the apparent claim of modern democracies to be liberal democracy, these political system are essentially totalitarian as these systems operate through a 'non-terroristic economic-technical coordination which operates through the manipulation of the needs of vested interest'.

15.4.4 Attributes of an Affluent Society

While discussing the stresses and strains of the contemporary 'affluent society', Marcuse

characterizes its nature as follows:

1) an abundant industrial and technical capacity which is to great extent spent in the production and distribution of luxury goods, gadgets, waste, planned obsolescence, military or semi-military equipment - in sort in what economist and sociologist would call 'unproductive goods and services'; 2) a rising standard of living, which also extends to previously underprivileged parts of the population; 3) a high degree of concentration of economic and political power, combined with a high degree of organization and Government intervention in the economy; 4) scientific and pseudo scientific investigation, control and manipulation of private and group behavior, both at work and at leisure for commercial and political purposes. All these tendencies are interrelated: they make up the syndrome which expresses the normal functioning of the affluent societyThe stresses and strains suffered by the individual in the affluent society are grounded in the normal functioning of this society, rather than in its disturbances and diseases. (H. Marcuse - Aggresiveness in Advanced Industrial society, 1987 00 1-2)

15.5 One Dimensional Man and Surplus Represion

15.5.1 One Dimensional Man

The idea of one dimensional society of Marcuse is complemented by his notion of one dimensional man. In fact, these two are mutually supportive and reinforce each other. Man becomes one dimensional as he is the product of a conformist ideology which sustains the modern industrial capitalist society. This was not so in the earliest stage of capitalism. There was scope for dissension, disagreement and alternate points of view. As Marcuse says, in earlier times 'high culture' or 'intellectual culture' celebrated ideas different from, or even antagonistic to, the existing social realities. As it was nurtured and nourished by the intellectual elites, who always constituted a minority of population, it did not pose a challenge to the system though it posed a range of alternative conceptions of the world. These alternative points of view and the possibility of its emergence has been 'swallowed up' in todays world. Not that this high culture has been destroyed today but it has been 'appropriated'. The values enshrined in 'high culture' are now disseminated through the mass media and 'reduced to comfortable banalities stripped of their negating force'. In modern technologically dominant society - be it a capital society or a communist society - there has emerged a whole system of domination and coordination. As Wallace

and Wolf say "Affluence assimilates into the existing order all those who once dissented and in return for material goods, people give up liberty. In doing so, they surrendered to 'false needs' which are superimposed upon the individual by particular social interest in his repression. This is a totalitarian social order which has succeeded the previous liberal one. It is one dimensional as it has eliminated the possibility of alternative ideas" (Wallace and Wolf, p 103). Marcuse coins the term 'repressive desublimation' to denote the process. Literature and art earlier rested upon the sublimation of instinctual impulses and they were sources of creativity. But today the need for immediate gratification results in trivialization of values and ideals. This is called the process of desublimation and it reinforces the totalitarianism of the one dimensional society. As Marcuse says, repressive desublimation manifests itself in all the manifold ways of fun, relaxation and togetherness which practice the destruction of privacy, the contempt of forms, the inability to tolerate silence, the proud exhibition of crudeness and brutality" (Eros and Civilization, page X)

15.5.2 The Theory of Surplus Repression

Freud's influence on Marcuse becomes evident when we discuss Marcuse's theory of surplus repression. The compulsion of social living induces man to impose restrictions on his libidinal impulses. The repression of instinctual nature, which is necessary for individual and social progress, results in a transition from what Freud call the pleasure principle to the reality principle. Marcuse introduces two terms that one can justifiably extrapolate from Freud's. These are 1) surplus repression: this occurs because of the "restrictions necessitated by social domination". Capitalism today produces an abundance (surplus) that can liberate humans from scarcity, but the 'established order of domination' strives hard (represses) to maintain and streamline conduct in such a manner that the requirement of the existing privileged groups (established order of dominance) are maintained. So surplus production, which is an outcome of technological progression, does not result in the liberation of the toiling masses due to the repression mechanism of the dominant groups. 2) Added with surplus repression, Marcuse talked about the performance principle which is "the prevailing historical form of the reality principle". This prevailing historical form is the principle of interest of the dominant section and their interest works against the principle of the rationality. As Marcuse says "no matter how useful this rationality was for the progress of the whole, it remained the rationality of domination and the gradual conquest of scarcity was inextricably bound up with and

shaped by the interest of domination. Domination differs from the rational exercise of authority Domination is exercised by a particular group or individual in order to sustain and enhance itself in a privileged position. Such domination does not exclude technical, material and intellectual progress, but only as an unavoidable byproduct". (Marcuse - *Eros and Civilization* pp. 33-34).

15.5.3 Marcuse, Freud and Marx

Here we find the influence of both Freud and Marx on Marcuse. But Marcuse had modified them to suit his own theoretical framework. He agrees with Freud that a repressive organization of the instincts underlies all historical forms of the reality principle in civilization. But Marx's theory of alienation is also clearly reflected in the following statement of Marcuse, "for the vast majority of the population, the scope and mode of satisfaction are determined by their own labour, but their labour is work for an apparatus which they do not control, which operates as an independent power to which individual must submit if they want to live. Marcuse further says that while people work, they do not fulfill their own needs and faculties but they work in alienation. Work becomes a general principle and so also the restrictions placed upon the libido; labour time which is the largest part of individual's life time is painful time because, Marcuse continues, alienated labour is absence of gratification, negation of the pleasure principle. (Marcuse, *ibid* P 41).

But, as has already been stated, this state of alienation does not remain confined to working class only. It is an attribute of the general masses. And this alienation does not result in any feeling of dissent - and least of all, revolt. Affluence assimilates into the existing order all those who once dissented. People are lured by and surrender to "false needs", which are "superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his depression. (Marcuse - *One Dimension Man*, p. 70). This situation results in totalitarian conformity and not liberal democracy.

15.6 Marcuse's sketch of an alternative society

Marcuse does not elaborately discuss his conception of "chance of the alternative" to the one dimensional society and one dimensional thought. His discussion of "transcendent project" of an alternative society is contingent upon the development of its particular rationality as distinguished from 'rationality of technique' as in modern advanced industrial

society. It must demonstrate its 'higher rationality' which will demonstrate values of human freedom and self realization. In place of modern technical rationality there has to evolve qualitatively new technology. This will evolve as a matter of course, as today the present type of technological rationality is "approaching its limits within the repressive order of advanced industrial society". The furthering of the mechanization and automation of labour reaches a phase at which it can no longer be contained within the one dimensional society but threatens its disintegration. Marcuse says "it would open the possibility of an essentially new human reality - viz., existence in free time on the basis of a fulfilled vital needs. Under such conditions, the scientific project itself would be free for trans-utitarian ends and free for the art of living beyond the necessities and luxuries of domination". Does this remind us of the Marxian goal of the ultimate aim of a communist society where man will act according to his own free will being free of the dominance of any ruling class? We think that this is so. Marcuse's ideas resembles half baked Marxism without the notions of the existence of the proletariat and class struggle. The law of iseritality of technological progression - unlike the law of inevitability of law of revolution as in Marxism, will determine the future shape of society, according to Marcuse.

15.7 Conclusion

At a time when Marxism was losing its theoretical grandeur and was overreached by contemporary developments obliterating sharp class divisions, the Frankfurt or Critical School appealed to many because its criticism of the existing capitalist order and of its dehumanizing effect on man, was thought as an attractive alternative. That is why starting from 30s and 40s of the last century up to the 60s, the critical school as developed by Erich Fromm, Horkheimer, Adorno or Marcuse gained popularity as a viable sociological theory. But with the passage of time the criticisms against this theory in general, and against Marcuse in particular, became strong. We can mention some of them briefly.

The characterization of western liberal democracy as totalities which stifles all voices of dissent is considered as superficial and simplistic. His writings offered very little empirical evidence in support of his claims. The line of division between 'false needs' and 'real needs' of the masses remained also indistinct and the claim of the critical

theories that they only know what the real needs of the people are, appears to be not very much convincing. The view that western society portrayed a picture of 'totalitarian conformity' is criticized by many as they believe that western societies of today are becoming more internally differentiated and its internal sources of tension and antagonisms and their effects on the world system are much more challenging to comprehend than the wholesale branding of them as totalitarian. Marcuse's description of the 'diarchy of welfare economy' and 'warfare economy' as providing two strong pillars of support, is also too simplistic. It does not help us to understand the dynamics of development within the western capitalist world, nor does it provide a theoretical tool to understand the nature of the 'unipolar world' after the fall of Soviet Union and other east European countries since 1991. Marcuse's assumption that 'liberalism and fascism are closely affiliated : the real enemy of both is radical Marxian socialism' is fundamentally defective. Rather than providing a basis for political analysis, it avoids it.

But the strongest criticism against Marcuse is his analysis of the relation between technological rationality, political servitude and human freedom. It is true that man is now the slave of technology. Technology in modern world is leading to totalitarianism. The prime example of this is the use of television to socialize, indoctrinate and pacify the population. The actors inner freedom has been invaded and whittled down by modern technology. Marcuse did not see technology par se as the enemy. He says "technology, no matter how pure, sustains and streamlines the continuum of domination. The fatal link can be cut only by a revolution which makes technology and technique subservient to the needs and goals of free man" (Marcuse - An Essay on Liberation, p. 56).

So far as this analysis is concerned, we have no objection. But the solution to this problem, as Marcuse suggests, appears to be rather naïve and not a result of scientific thinking. His assertion that in place of modern technical rationality, there has to evolve a "qualitatively new technology" which will demonstrate the value of human freedom and self realization, is a wishful thinking. It is philosophical and conjectural in nature. So Marcuse's criticism against the modern industrial society and the type of culture it generates, and feeds on, is valid but his analysis regarding its causes and the views of an alternative framework which he provides, is not acceptable to us. Criticisms like these led Bottomore to conclude "the Frankfurt School, in its original form, and as a School of Marxism or Sociology, is dead" (Bottomore - the Frankfurt School, 1984 p. 76). Bottomore further says, "any assessment of the present, or recent, situation of the

working class in advanced capitalism requires, moreover, an analysis of the whole class structure and its changes, which the Frankfurt School or the neo-critical theory have signally felt to produce or even venture upon" (Ibid p. 78). Even though the critical theorists also have a number of positive contributions, one of the basic criticism made against critical theory is that it offers more criticism than it does of positive alternatives. The whole outlook thereby is pessimistic.

15.8 Summary

The critical theory, otherwise known as Frankfurt School of Thought, emerged in the realm of sociological theory when the world was changing rapidly and the inadequacies of the Marxian mode of analysis was becoming increasingly apparent. A galaxy of writers contributed to the development of this theory, among whom Marcuse occupies a prominent place. Marcuse's writings became increasingly popular at a time when the western capitalist democracies were facing myriad challenges of dissent and unrest from within and challenges of the socialist world which was felt from outside. Marcuse's writings provided a voice for those who were opting for a non-socialist democratic set up which will not be like a 'totalitarian democratic set up' like the present western democracies. Marcuse aimed at providing a theoretical tool for explaining the present degeneration of western democracies. We have discussed above the nature of that theoretical tool. We have also shown above that Marcuse's criticisms of the present democratic set up are well accepted but not if so much his analysis of its origin or his discussion on the "search for an alternative".

15.9 Questions

A. Answer briefly :

1. What is Marcuse's notion of the nature of working class in modern industrial society?
2. What, according to Marcuse, is the meaning and role of 'surplus repression'?
3. How does Marcuse interpret the meaning and role of 'high culture' today?

B. Answer in detail :

4. What is the role of instrumental reason in modern industrial society?
5. What are the attributes of one dimensional society, as portrayed by Herbert Marcuse?
6. How does Marcuse's analysis differ from the Marxian analysis of society?

15.10 Reference

(a) Texts

1. Marcuse, Herbert— Eros and Civilization (Boston 1951)
2. " " One Dimensional Man (Boston, Beacon Press, 1964)
3. " " Aggressiveness in Advanced Industrial Society
(Beacon Press, 1967)
4. " " An Essay of Liberation (Beacon Press, 1969)

(b) References

1. Adams, Sydnie, R.A. Sociological Theory (Pine Forge, 2001)
2. Bottomore, Tom - The Frankfurt School (Tavistok Publications, 1995)
3. Collins, Rendall - Theoretical Sociology (Harcourt Brace Janovitch Pub. 1988)
4. Craib, Ian - Modern Social Theory (Harvester Wheat Sheaf, 1984)
5. Giddens, Anthony - Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory (The Macmillan Press, 1982)
6. Giddens, Anthony and Turner, Jonathan - Social Theory Today (Disha Publications, 1989)
7. Milner, A and Browitt, J - Contemporary Cultural Theory (Rawat Publications, 2003)
8. Ritzer, George - Sociological Theory (Tata McGraw Hill, 2011)
9. Srivastava, R.S. Traditions in Sociological Theory (1991)
10. Swingehood, A - A Short History of Sociological Thought (Mcmillion, 1984)

11. Wallace, R.A. and Wolf, A - Contemporary Sociological Theories : Continuing the Classical Tradition (Prentice Hall, 1986)
12. Zeitlin, I.M. - Rethinking Sociology (Rawat Publications, 2004)

15.11 Glossary

Productive Forces.

The technology of production at a particular age. For example in capitalism the machine tools. In feudalism, land.

Production Relation.

The way men are bound together and participate in the production system. For example, in capitalism the bourgeoisie, who own the means of production and the proletariat, who work with the machines as wage labourers.

Instrumental Reason.

Where reason is subjected to the principle of satisfaction of needs as the primary factor. Relations become valuable not for the sake of relations but as instruments to pursue one's goal.

Culture Industry.

Where cultural items and activities are not regarded as intrinsically valuable but becomes an object of consumption and merchandise.

High Culture.

Cultural activities pursued by the elites of the society who are in a minority. Their culture have never been the dominant culture at that given time but they tend to portray an alternative picture of change and challenge.

Repressive Desublimation.

High culture activities which were earlier sources of creativity and gratification, have now been trivialized because they do not result in immediate satisfaction of the material needs of contemporary industrial society. Hence, these have been devalued and or 'desublimated' in modern industrial society. And this has been done through a process of repression which is not overt but covert.

Surplus Repression.

Technological advancement results in the creation of surplus production which is characteristic of modern affluent societies. But this surplus production does not result in the liberation of the masses. The dominant class appropriates this surplus through a process of covert repression, in order to satisfy their own requirement of domination.

Unit : 16 □ Habermas

Structure

- 16.1 Objectives**
- 16.2 Introduction**
- 16.3 Evolution of Theoretical Frameworks**
- 16.4 Communicative Action**
- 16.5 Habermas' Critique of Modernity**
- 16.6 Theory of Normal Communication**
 - 16.6.1 Strategic and communicative action**
 - 16.6.2 Understanding and validity claims**
 - 16.6.3 Necessary presuppositions of normal communication**
 - 16.6.4 System and Lifeworld: The Theory of Pathologies**
 - 16.6.5 Lifeworld**
 - 16.6.6 System**
 - 16.6.7 Rationalization and differentiation**
 - 16.6.8 Social pathologies**
 - 16.6.9 Criticisms**
- 16.7 Communicative Action and Discourse Ethics**
- 16.8 Discourse theory and law**
- 16.9 Summing Up**
- 16.10 Questions**
- 16.11 References**

16.1 Objectives

- To gain insight into the critical perspective of society.
- To construct an evolutionary framework for theoretical analysis.

- To explore the concept of communicative action.
- To examine Habermas's critique of modernity.

16.2 Introduction

Habermas's theory is essentially a form of critical theory. In this case, "critical theory" is understood in two ways: both as a broad approach to analysis and specifically as the tradition developed by the Frankfurt School—a group of neo-Marxist thinkers that includes notable figures like Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, and Erich Fromm. Habermas is widely regarded as the leading figure of the Frankfurt School's second generation, and his work is informed not only by the school's ideas on critical theory but also by the shortcomings that hindered the first generation from fully realizing its potential.

This perspective invites us to consider how the evolution of theoretical frameworks can be shaped by both inspirational ideas and recognized failures. It also encourages a deeper look at the dialectical process—learning from previous missteps to develop a more effective critique of society.

16.3 Evolution of Theoretical Frameworks

Habermas regards his work as a re-interpretation of Weber within the framework of Western Marxism. Essentially, his project aims to counter the formal, instrumental rationality that Weber criticized for leading to disenchantment and a confining "iron cage" of bureaucracy. Weber argued that Western culture has been increasingly dominated by a distinctive form of reasoning—one that, unlike other types of thought associated with achieving specific moral ends, is solely concerned with efficiency, calculability, and control. This narrow focus inevitably strips activities of meaning while fostering the bureaucratic systems characteristic of modern capitalist society.

This perspective invites further exploration of how the elevation of efficiency and control can, in modern contexts, lead to systemic consequences that diminish our deeper values.

Horkheimer and Adorno pushed Weber's pessimism even further by arguing that formal, instrumental reason forms the corrupted core of the Enlightenment project. They noted a fundamental paradox: the same rationality intended to establish the objective

conditions for freedom ends up undermining our subjective and interpersonal ability to experience that freedom. Since human beings have unavoidable material needs, our liberty depends on our capacity to control the natural world. In our effort to better manage nature, we extend this control to others—and, ultimately, our pursuit of efficiency even compels us to regulate our innermost selves. The tragic irony of the "Dialectic of Enlightenment" is that in our bid to harness nature and secure freedom, we end up stifling the very human nature that fuels our desire for freedom, leaving us with a repressed and diminished self in the face of newfound opportunities.

Habermas contends that both Weber and the early Frankfurt School were mistaken in believing that reason exists solely to exert control in order to meet our material needs. In Habermas's view, the Enlightenment project does not advocate only for instrumental reason; it also includes the development of another form of rationality, which he terms communicative action. This type of reason offers an alternative way to interact with others—one that does not reduce people to mere instruments for achieving self-serving, material objectives. Instead, its aim is to foster mutual understanding, thereby steering clear of the personal alienation and bureaucratic excesses that instrumental reason tends to produce.

16.4 Communicative Action

In 1970, Habermas (1980: 189-90) set the course for his work by outlining two distinct approaches to formulating a critical theory of communication. The first approach involves a rational reconstruction of the regulatory framework that clearly defines what general linguistic competence entails. Here, one begins with an "ideal" speech situation that acts as a standard from which current communicative practices can be critically evaluated. The second approach starts by examining the real-world crises of everyday communication and then devises a model for the societal changes needed to correct these deficiencies. Essentially, the first method can be seen as a theory of normalcy—establishing what a healthy, non-pathological state should look like—while the second is a theory of pathologies, focusing on identifying and remedying communication breakdowns.

While ideas about normalcy and pathology are closely intertwined, they are distinct and cannot simply be reduced to each other. In fact, to label certain crises as pathological rather than as unavoidable growing pains, we first need a clear, standalone understanding of what constitutes a normal, non-pathological state. For instance, although it is clear

that war is a crisis, that fact alone does not serve as an argument against war. Instead, we require additional explanation to demonstrate that war is not merely an essential, inevitable stage on our journey toward a just and peaceful society.

The idea of normalcy cannot stand on its own—it leans on the concept of pathology. In other words, when we reconstruct the historical development of the competencies required for communicative action, that reconstruction only becomes a critical theory if we can also argue that certain behaviors or practices are abnormal, not just natural stages or necessary processes. For example, a theory describing how children learn to perform gender roles based on their biological sex is only critical if we accept that these gender performances are dysfunctional or harmful. Otherwise, such a theory might simply serve as a blueprint for reinforcing traditional gender roles. In this light, Habermas' critique of modernity holds its critical edge only if he can demonstrate that the encroachment of administrative systems into communicative action leads to avoidable crises.

16.5 Habermas' Critique of Modernity

Jürgen Habermas's critique of modernity is multifaceted and deeply rooted in his theories of communication, rationality, and democratic legitimacy. His analysis is not a wholesale rejection of modernity but a critical examination of its internal tensions and pathologies. Here are the key elements of his critique in detail:

1. Dual Forms of Rationality:

At the heart of Habermas's critique lies the distinction between instrumental (or strategic) rationality and communicative rationality:

- **Instrumental Rationality:** This form of rationality is concerned with efficiency, control, and the achievement of specific ends. It characterizes modern bureaucratic and economic systems where actions are evaluated based on their effectiveness in reaching predetermined goals. In modern capitalist societies, institutions such as markets, bureaucracies, and legal systems are organized around this form of rationality.
- **Communicative Rationality:** In contrast, communicative rationality is about reaching understanding and consensus through open dialogue. It assumes that through rational discourse, individuals can share reasons, debate validity claims, and arrive at mutually acceptable norms and ethical principles. For Habermas, this form of rationality is essential for democracy, ethical discourse, and the legitimation of social norms.

Habermas argues that modern society has increasingly prioritized instrumental rationality at the expense of communicative rationality, leading to a disconnect between human interaction and the systems that govern society.

2. Lifeworld vs. System:

A central aspect of his critique is the distinction between the lifeworld and the system:

- **The Lifeworld:** This concept represents the everyday realm of personal interactions, cultural traditions, and shared meanings—the domain in which communicative action and mutual understanding naturally occur. It is the source of identity, social integration, and cultural reproduction.
- **The System:** In contrast, the system encompasses the institutionalized structures of modern society—economies, bureaucracies, political institutions—that operate on the basis of instrumental rationality. These systems are characterized by impersonal, complex, and often abstract processes that coordinate actions through mechanisms like money, power, and administrative rules.

Habermas points out that problems arise when the system intrudes upon or "colonizes" the lifeworld. When system processes begin to dictate everyday life, they undermine the organic, communicative practices that sustain culture and democratic participation. This colonization can lead to alienation, fragmentation of identities, and a breakdown in genuine public discourse.

3. The Colonization of the Lifeworld:

Modernity, in Habermas's analysis, is marked by the colonization of the lifeworld—a process by which the impersonal forces of the system encroach upon domains that should be governed by mutual understanding and cultural traditions. Some key points include:

- **Undermining Democratic Discourse:** In advanced capitalist societies, the regulation of key social spheres (e.g., education, health care, or the welfare state) increasingly relies on bureaucratic or market-oriented control rather than on communicative practices. For instance, policies meant to secure public welfare may be justified through top-down legal and administrative processes, rather than through open, rational debate among citizens. This undermines the democratic process because rules that affect everyone are imposed without the consensus that communicative action could generate.

- **Impact on Social Integration:** The lifeworld's ability to foster social integration through traditions, cultural practices, and communicative action is weakened. As traditional norms lose their binding power in a rationalized society, they are replaced by abstract regulations and market mechanisms that do not necessarily reflect shared values or foster genuine inclusion.

4. The Emancipatory Potential and Its Limits:

While Habermas is critical of modern institutions for their tendency to favor instrumental rationality and for the resulting social pathologies, he does not entirely dismiss modernity. Instead, he believes in its emancipatory potential:

- **Revitalizing Communicative Action:** Habermas envisions a modern society where communicative rationality is reinvigorated—where public debate, open discourse, and participatory democracy can counterbalance the overly technical and impersonal logic of the system. By emphasizing discourse ethics, he argues that norms and laws should be the result of inclusive, reasoned debate, thus ensuring that they are legitimate and reflective of the collective will.
- **A Call for Reform:** His critique is essentially a call for reform. He suggests that modern institutions should be reoriented to allow for the reassertion of the lifeworld within their operations. This means creating spaces for dialogue where citizens can participate directly in shaping the policies and norms that govern them, allowing the communicative potential of language to limit or check the dominance of bureaucratic and market forces.

5. Implications for Democracy and Society:

Habermas's critique of modernity lays a theoretical foundation for understanding the challenges of contemporary democratic societies:

- **Legitimacy through Discourse:** For a law or norm to be considered legitimate, it must have been formed through a process where all affected parties could engage in rational discourse. This idea of legitimacy is central to his vision of deliberative democracy.
- **Balancing Efficiency and Participation:** Modern society faces the challenge of balancing the need for efficient, functional institutions with the equally important need for participatory, communicative processes that ensure social inclusion and democratic accountability. Habermas argues that without this balance, modernity risks degenerating

into a system where personal alienation, disenchantment, and social fragmentation become the norm.

In summary, Habermas's critique of modernity is a profound examination of how rationalization and the dominance of instrumental rationality in modern systems threaten the very foundations of social integration and democratic participation. By distinguishing between the lifeworld and the system, he illuminates how the encroachment of impersonal, bureaucratic mechanisms into everyday life can lead to social pathologies. Nevertheless, Habermas also offers a hopeful vision: one where communicative action, rooted in open dialogue and mutual understanding, can reclaim its central role in both personal identity and the legitimacy of democratic institutions. This dual perspective—both critical and hopeful—remains one of Habermas's most significant contributions to contemporary sociology and political thought.

16.6 Theory of Normal Communication

Habermas characterizes normalcy in terms of a form of communicative rationality that he sees as essential for maintaining both social continuity and individual identity. This idea—that we rely on a specific kind of rational communication to function normally—has been central to his work from the very beginning. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1991a), he argues that society has lost its genuine space for public dialogue, having replaced it with a contrived form of publicity that merely simulates real communication.

Habermas' seminal work, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1971), sought to establish an epistemological foundation for a form of rationality that diverges from the purely instrumental. He introduced the notion of cognitive interests to differentiate among various kinds of rationality. One of these, the drive for communication aimed at mutual understanding—which later became central to his work—is just one of three core interests underpinning knowledge. The other two are the instrumental interest and the emancipatory interest. While part of his argument promoted keeping the sphere of communication distinct from that of instrumental functioning, his early focus was primarily on the emancipatory interest, the domain in which a critique of ideological systems could take place.

Early in his career, Habermas centered his critical theory on the idea of critiquing ideology through reflection. However, this reliance on reflection drew substantial criticism because it was unclear how such ostensibly neutral, critical reflection could occur, given his own view that knowledge is always shaped by inherent interests (see Dallmayr, 1972; McCarthy, 1978; Ottmann, 1982). As a result, Habermas shifted his focus away from ideology critique via reflection and, instead, sought to reconstruct the fundamental assumptions that are necessary for society's reproduction through communication.

Habermas's effort to reconstruct the essential assumptions of communication serves two key purposes. First, it seeks to recover and legitimize the rationality inherent in everyday discourse, which is crucial for the ongoing reproduction of society. Second, it aims to show that it is possible to adopt a perspective that transcends specific local contexts—even within an intellectual environment that is generally wary of such universalizing views. In this way, Habermas offers a theory of normalcy that is firmly rooted in everyday communication, yet capable of rising above its immediate, localized settings.

Habermas contends that the communicative abilities assumed in every act of language use can be reconstructed into what he calls a "pragmatics of human communication." This framework emphasizes the formal, structural aspects of language rather than its specific content. Although his reconstruction draws on concrete, context-bound examples of language use, he deliberately focuses on the abstract, essential competencies that underpin communication. By doing so, he aims to establish a notion of validity that transcends the particular conventions of any single society. It is upon this universally valid foundation of communication that Habermas seeks to build his theory of normalcy.

Habermas's theory of communication builds on the idea, also advanced by George Herbert Mead and others, that our personal identity—our sense of self—is formed through intersubjective, symbolic interaction, or communication. Because this process underlies who we are, the basic assumptions required for communication should not be seen merely as norms, even though they carry normative weight (Habermas, 1979: 88). They aren't simply specific values that we can choose to endorse or reject (Habermas, 1982: 226). Instead, these essential assumptions are what form the basis of our identity, shape our viewpoints, and give rise to the norms we eventually adopt. Moreover, language—as an intersubjective medium—is not only central to the development of personal identity but

also provides the means by which we understand ourselves as members of a social group and coordinate the activities of individuals within those groups.

For Habermas, language is fundamentally crafted to function as a means of critique. While it's true that any challenge to the existing order must be voiced through language, this observation only hints at the deeper significance he attributes to it. Habermas argues that the very framework of communication is permeated with an emancipatory purpose—a striving for mutual understanding that carries the potential to free us from oppression. Even though routine language use often falls short of realizing this liberatory capacity, the possibility is always latent. Thus, his theory critically examines current conditions by revealing the gap between the inherent promise of emancipation in communication and what is actually practiced.

16.6.1 Strategic and communicative action

Habermas distinguishes between two forms of communication. One is "strategic," and the other is genuine "communicative action," which is dedicated to fostering mutual understanding. Only this latter form embodies what Habermas views as normal communication.

In strategic communication, the aims of social action are already set and often kept hidden. The purpose is not to reach a mutual consensus about these aims, but merely to implement the speaker's predetermined plans, even when the audience might disagree. While this form of communication employs language and involves interaction with others, its goals are not inherent to language itself; instead, people are treated as mere instruments. Social norms—and even the speaker's personal expressions—are used as tools for advancing these predetermined objectives. The rationality of such communication is evaluated solely based on its effectiveness in compelling others to act according to the speaker's wishes (Habermas, 1982: 264). Ultimately, strategic communication is governed by instrumental reason, leading to the very problems predicted by Weber and the Frankfurt School.

In contrast, communicative action is aimed at attaining understanding—a goal that Habermas considers the very purpose of human speech (1984: 287). Central to his concept of communicative action is a distinctive interpretation of "understanding." In German, the term *Verständigung* encapsulates both the state of understanding and the process of reaching it. Habermas ties these meanings together by suggesting that arriving at

understanding (*Verständigung*) essentially involves a collective process of reaching agreement (*Einigung*) among those who communicate and act.

In communicative action, people are not treated as mere instruments for achieving pre-set goals; rather, objectives are determined collectively through dialogue that honors each individual's autonomy. Social coordination arises directly from the process of reaching understanding—where the very act of comprehending one another simultaneously fosters shared objectives and agreements. As a result, communicative action embodies a form of rationality that transcends instrumental reasoning, offering a benchmark for what constitutes healthy, non-pathological communication—and thus, providing a basis for diagnosing social crises as deviations from this norm.

The distinction between strategic and communicative action isn't about whether they are goal-oriented—both coordinate actions to reach objectives. Rather, the difference lies in how language relates to those goals. In strategic action, language is merely a tool used to achieve a preselected objective; it's simply a means to an end. In contrast, communicative action centers on achieving understanding, with the very nature of its goal intrinsically tied to the process of language itself (Habermas, 1991b: 241). For instance, consider persuading a child to rake the yard. One might simply tell her there's money hidden under the leaves—using language as one tactic among many (like offering payment or imposing punishments) to ensure she rakes the yard. Alternatively, one might engage in a discussion about the importance of raking the yard, where the aim is to reach a mutual understanding and consensus about its value—a process that can only be achieved through genuine dialogue.

For Habermas, the contrast between these two modes of action is more than just a matter of individual attitudes. He argues that genuine communicative action depends on a unique set of underlying assumptions that fundamentally distinguishes it from linguistic interactions designed merely to manipulate others toward a pre-determined goal. This difference stems from the distinct social coordination mechanisms involved in strategic versus communicative action. In essence, the contrast can be boiled down to mutual influencing versus mutual understanding.

In the case of communicative action, individuals coordinate by building consensus—drawing upon what Habermas describes as the "binding and bonding energies of language itself" (Habermas, 1998: 221). On the other hand, strategic action is organized around

matching and manipulating interest situations, often using non-linguistic means to steer circumstances so that cooperation appears to serve someone's self-interest. The self-centered objectives of strategic action might be achieved without any communication at all; when language is used in this context, it functions merely as a vehicle for transmitting information or asserting power.

In contrast, communicative action integrates language into the very fabric of social action. While all language conveys information and reflects interests, Habermas (1998: 224) contends that in genuine communicative exchanges, the transmission of information about extralinguistic interests is disrupted. There is a shift from the objectifying attitude of an actor who seeks success to the performative stance of a speaker who strives to achieve understanding with another about something in the world. Consequently, as Habermas (1998: 220) notes, both types of action are inherently intertwined even though they appear in different configurations.

Because communicative action inherently involves coordinating actions through speech, Habermas (1987b: 196) contends that this should be seen as the standard, natural use of language. In contrast, strategic action treats language merely as one tool among many for coordinating behavior and thus depends on the normal functioning of communication to be effective—it leeches off the very process that defines normal language use.

Although words like "parasitic" and "normal" carry inherent value judgments, we argue that it's most useful to approach Habermas's work as a theory distinguishing normal from pathological communication rather than a strict normative critique opposing strategic action in favor of communicative action. His theory primarily focuses on describing what constitutes normal communication, with its normative implications taking a secondary role. Habermas himself is aware of the appeal of strategic action. When goals are clear and the cause is just, it might even be deemed unethical to pursue them via communicative action if that method is risky or inefficient. For example, in quests for equality, justice, and freedom—or even in the basic effort to feed the hungry—strategic action might seem necessary. Yet Habermas challenges us by asking why communicative action persists despite these challenges. Why hasn't society, in pursuit of primarily admirable goals, simply defaulted to the purely instrumental action that Weber, Horkheimer, and Adorno predicted?

This argument is more nuanced than the usual interpretation of Habermas suggests. Instead of merely arguing that the gloomy theoretical impasse identified by Weber, Horkheimer, and Adorno must be replaced by a theory of communicative action, Habermas contends that their pessimism is historically mistaken. Our culture has not been—and ultimately cannot be—entirely dominated by a rigid, formal instrumental reason. Instead, communicative action serves as a theory that explains why instrumental reason has neither fully taken over nor can ever completely subsume our society.

16.6.2 Understanding and validity claims

Habermas contends that communicative action endures because even strategic action ultimately relies on the kind of shared understanding that comes from reaching an agreement. He argues that understanding cannot be reduced to a mere transfer of meaning from speaker to listener—since meaning extends beyond the speaker’s exclusive intention—nor can it be explained as simply recognizing the correspondence between an utterance and the world, an idea based on a questionable copy theory of truth. Instead, understanding is an intersubjective process that arises within the sphere of language, which serves both as the medium and the ultimate aim of this process.

Understanding a linguistic utterance means evaluating its claim to validity—a claim that can only be substantiated through language. This justification emerges as a reasoned consensus about a matter in the world. Even though strategic action might reference fixed norms or objects that seem external to language, these too ultimately rely on such rational consensus to be truly understood. In essence, reaching understanding involves the capacity to logically accept or reject the validity claims made by a speech act. This process is the foundational function of language, ensuring that communicative action coordinates social behavior in a healthy, non-pathological manner.

A validity claim functions to synchronize social action because it is intrinsically intersubjective. It establishes shared expectations for both speaker and listener. The speaker is obliged to responsibly justify their claim when it is questioned, while the listener is expected either to agree with or challenge the claim and support their stance with reason. Viewing a statement as a validity claim means that participants set aside the notion of its inherent 'truth,' regarding it instead as open to scrutiny. This mutual willingness to invite challenge and critique demands that both speakers and listeners maintain a reflective attitude.

Habermas's approach is mainly a description of how normal communication functions rather than a set of prescriptive ethical rules. In this view, the inherent binding expectations set by validity claims represent the standard mode of communication. However, his formulation also carries a normative dimension: it ethically obliges speakers to stand by their claims and substantiate them through further dialogue, without leaning on outside justifications. This ethical requirement is part and parcel of what understanding entails. Thus, while communicative action strives to meet these obligations, strategic action merely exploits these expectations without any intention of fulfilling them.

The aim of normal communication is to reach an agreement about a validity claim, even if that agreement doesn't match the original expectations of either party. Habermas isn't suggesting that everyday interactions always succeed in this, but rather that the potential for agreement is implicitly assumed in our pursuit of understanding. Every genuine communicative act involves making validity claims that require a reflective stance and, through their need for recognition, help bind social actions together. In practice, however, many communicative exchanges don't culminate in full agreement. Still, the process of understanding remains inherent to communicative action, regardless of whether actual consensus is achieved.

Validity claims are not an unusual or exceptional type of communication. According to Habermas, every exchange aimed at achieving understanding inherently involves validity claims—these are a fundamental part of how communication is structured. In his theory of communicative action, Habermas identifies these embedded claims as a persistent, albeit often unspoken, appeal to reason that must be acknowledged whenever consensus is sought. Although such claims are rarely made explicit or fully resolved, the potential for their explicit redemption is embedded in the very nature of understanding, serving as the ideal model for communicative action.

Validity claims are always rooted in specific contexts, but Habermas contends that they also extend beyond these local circumstances to assert universal principles. Making a claim to validity inherently assumes that any rational person would agree, thereby lending it a universal character that rises above its immediate origins. In this way, Habermas's idea of normal communication applies across all cultural settings. Communicative action, which involves validity claims that can be questioned, represents the standard form of speech and offers a framework for critically evaluating any society.

16.6.3 Necessary presuppositions of normal communication

The foundational assumptions for communication function as potent idealizations, which is why Habermas often terms them an "ideal speech situation." Although these assumptions may not always be fully realized in practice, they must be taken for granted by participants for the interaction to qualify as genuine communication. Habermas recognizes the challenge he faces in proving that these essential presuppositions are not merely artifacts of Western academic biases but are, instead, unavoidable elements of discourse.

Habermas responds by proposing what he calls "reconstructions." Although his concept of reconstruction evolved over time, its essence is to make the implicit, everyday knowledge of competent individuals explicitly theoretical. In doing so, a reconstruction serves merely as a descriptive account of normal communication. This approach differs fundamentally from the methods of an objectivating science, like the natural sciences, which can frequently challenge or debunk common everyday knowledge. In contrast, while reconstruction may render pre-theoretical knowledge more explicit or adequately represented, it is not in a position to falsify it.

Based on Habermas's ideas about understanding and validity, we can reinterpret the underlying assumptions in terms of what skilled communicators must be capable of doing. Habermas argues that the main purpose of communication is to achieve mutual understanding, which he defines as the ability to critically assess a validity claim purely on the strength of its rational argument. This reinterpretation makes clear the natural, intuitive skills that competent communicators need to bring to the process to ensure that communication truly leads to understanding.

To elaborate further:

Reconstruction of Presuppositions: We derive the implicit assumptions from the range of abilities that effective communicators are expected to have, based on Habermas's framework.

Habermas's Perspective on Communication: Communication's ultimate goal is to reach understanding. This understanding involves evaluating claims through rational consideration, without resorting to extraneous influences.

Intuitive Competence: The restructuring explicitly highlights the tacit skills and intuitions

that competent actors use, ensuring that the process of communication effectively fosters genuine comprehension.

According to Habermas, every act of communication begins with the assumption of an "ideal speech situation"—a setting where consensus is reached without coercion. In this scenario, when someone takes a stance on a claim's validity, they are implicitly assuming that the claim is debated and defended solely through rational argument, free from the influence of status, wealth, or power. This idealized context forms the crux of what Habermas calls communicative action and serves as a metaphor for genuine, untainted communication. Moreover, even strategic behavior relies on imagining this ideal scenario—even if only as a counterfactual—since, even in the most manipulative situations, speakers must consider how agreement would be reached in the absence of manipulation to more effectively shape opinions.

This concept not only defines the theoretical foundation for rational discourse but also underscores the inherent responsibility of communicators to strive for authenticity even when engaging in strategic actions.

Based on the notion of an ideal speech situation, we can identify two fundamental assumptions underlying typical communication—as well as a range of related traits. The first is that participants must be capable of taking a position solely based on the rational merit of an argument. The second is that communication relies on reciprocity, which is grounded in the mutual acknowledgment of each participant's competence.

The first assumption is essential when the aim of communication is true understanding. Habermas argues that understanding influenced by external factors does not qualify as genuine comprehension. For example, imagine a teacher informing a student that he will receive a "C" in a course. For the grade to have a clear meaning, both the teacher and the student must set aside outside influences so that the student's evaluation relies solely on the reasoned explanation provided by the teacher. In this scenario, the student might view the "C" as a lost opportunity for a scholarship, while the teacher might see it simply as reflecting a performance that met only the basic requirements. Genuine understanding is achieved only if the teacher suspends her authoritative role to articulate her reasoning and the student disregards external pressures to consider that reasoning

on its own merits. In this way, assigning a grade becomes an act of consensus-building through rational discussion.

This perspective invites us to consider how other forms of communication might similarly benefit from a focus on pure rationality, even in contexts where external pressures are otherwise prevalent.

The second assumption asserts that every capable individual should be regarded as an equally valid source for both making and challenging claims about what is valid. This means that when we base our positions solely on the rational strength of an argument, we must be open to the possibility that other perspectives might offer stronger reasoning. For the most compelling argument to prevail, no pertinent point should be ignored or silenced. Everyone who can speak and act has the right to join the discussion, question any idea, introduce new proposals, and express their own beliefs, desires, and needs.

One might wonder how this principle plays out in real-world debates or policy discussions. For instance, in a community planning meeting, every stakeholder—from local residents to experts—should have the chance to voice concerns and ideas, ensuring that decisions are grounded in a broad spectrum of rational argument rather than dominated by a few powerful voices.

In his later work, Habermas argues that these foundational assumptions are not fixed. For instance, he proposes abandoning the term "ideal speech situation" because it can lead us to mistakenly treat the system of validity claims as a concrete entity. Instead, what truly matters is not the exact nature of the assumptions, but that there are hypothetical, counterfactual assumptions in place. These assumptions provide a perspective that enables us to move beyond local justifications and overcome the limitations imposed by our specific spatial and temporal contexts. This idea suggests that rather than clinging to rigid definitions, we should focus on the broader function of these assumptions in expanding our understanding of communication.

Habermas argues that rejecting these fundamental communicative assumptions results in a self-defeating position. In other words, by participating in an argument, one inadvertently relies on the very premise they try to deny. For instance, if we assume that all competent speakers are mutually recognized, then every argument is built on the idea that any rational person would eventually agree if they truly understood the reasoning. Even a skeptic claiming that arguments don't rest on such assumptions necessarily undermines

their own stance, because their act of arguing presupposes that any rational individual would be convinced by sound reasons. This perspective challenges us to reflect on the inherent commitments we make in any rational discourse.

It's possible to think that one could simply avoid these indispensable assumptions by not engaging in genuine argumentation. However, Habermas contends that the very process of human socialization inherently involves communicative interaction. This fact makes it impossible to deny the universal norms that such communication implies. As Habermas (1990: 100) put it, "The skeptic may reject morality, but he cannot reject the ethical substance of the life circumstances in which he spends his waking hours, not unless he is willing to take refuge in suicide or serious mental illness."

This doesn't mean that everyday discussions actually live up to these assumptions; rather, they can only be made sense of by invoking them. In this sense, the basic assumptions required for normal conversation carry their own normative weight (Habermas, 1975: 120). For instance, assuming that every competent speaker is equally recognized underpins democratic decision-making and serves as a critique of any dialogue that excludes certain groups.

This idea forms the foundation of Habermas' well-known discourse ethics. He isn't offering an external ultimate principle or a fixed set of rules dictating what should or shouldn't be done. Instead, his aim is to prescribe a methodological approach for making moral decisions. In this framework, morality, as established through discourse ethics, is rooted in the inherent pattern of mutual understanding present in language right from the start (Habermas, 1990: 163).

These foundational assumptions about everyday communication form a core element of Habermas' analytic and descriptive sociology. They establish an internal framework that allows us to evaluate how specific communicative situations develop under varying conditions. More significantly, they lie at the center of his critical sociology, providing a perspective from which the current state of affairs can be examined and critiqued. Habermas argues that such a critical viewpoint is absent from non-transcendental approaches, which, due to their cultural relativism, lack this clear standpoint.

16.6.4 System and Lifeworld: The Theory of Pathologies

Habermas's critical theory arises from two intertwined yet distinct sources. The first is

his theory of normalcy, which defines a non-pathological state in terms of the essential assumptions underlying communication—a point we discussed earlier. The second source originates from our lived experiences of crises, which Habermas interprets as the pathological dimensions of modernity. The theory of normalcy is crucial because it allows us to identify that contemporary crises are genuine disorders rather than merely unavoidable, unpleasant phases. However, since the theory of necessary communicative presuppositions is a descriptive account of the status quo, it alone cannot offer a critical stance on that very status quo. Consequently, we cannot simply derive a critical theory of societal pathologies from the theory of normalcy alone.

Instead, Habermas builds his critical theory on the argument that the seemingly disparate crises we experience are best understood as arising from a conflict between the “lifeworld”—which relies on communicative action—and a “system” that, although dependent on the lifeworld, encroaches on and undermines it. We are compelled to strive for the ideal conditions for communicative action because if the lifeworld’s essential processes were entirely overtaken by a system that circumvents genuine understanding, those processes would ultimately collapse. This framework not only challenges us to recognize the tensions between communicative norms and systemic forces but also encourages a deeper exploration of how such conflicts shape our social reality.

A significant portion of Habermas' analysis of modernity's crises is influenced by Weber and the early Frankfurt School, highlighting issues such as the erosion of meaning, the expansion of bureaucracy, alienation, and reification. Although these issues often appear as individual experiences of crisis, Habermas aims to explain them as preventable disorders rather than inevitable outcomes or necessary phases of modernity. In fact, his theory's critical edge relies on viewing these crises as the result of a specific, alterable interaction between the systematic forces and the lifeworld.

To understand Habermas' theory of societal pathologies, we must clearly grasp his definitions of both the lifeworld and the system, as well as the negative dynamics between them in advanced capitalist societies. He first introduced the distinction between these two realms in *Legitimation Crisis* (1975) and later elaborated it in the second volume of *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1987a). This differentiation should not be mistaken for common sociological dichotomies like macro versus micro or structure versus agency. Rather, it separates distinct sectors of social reproduction, unique integrative functions,

and different settings for action. In short, the system represents a specialized domain focused on material reproduction, where actions are coordinated within a strategic framework that links their outcomes. In contrast, the lifeworld is mainly about symbolic reproduction, unified through mutual understanding in a communicative context. Although both the system and the lifeworld coexist in practice, a thorough analysis of modernity requires that they be viewed as distinct entities. These models together offer a two-tiered conception of society, with each level developing increasingly independent operational modes. Much of Habermas' work is dedicated to exploring the relationship between these two relatively autonomous realms.

16.6.5 Lifeworld

The concept of the lifeworld refers to the set of culturally inherited and language-organized interpretive patterns that shape both group identities and individual personalities. For Habermas, these elements are intrinsically symbolic and rely on language-mediated processes of social reproduction. He describes the lifeworld as both a collection of unchallenged, diffuse background convictions and as a form of integration. This duality highlights two ways of looking at the lifeworld: from the perspective of the individual, who experiences it as a reservoir of implicit assumptions, established knowledge, and traditional practices, and from the sociological perspective, where it serves to coordinate social action—even during conflicts—by providing the shared intersubjective foundation on which all disputes are conducted.

The lifeworld, in its strictest sense, is the aspect of society that cannot be fully objectified for sociological analysis, even though parts of it can be examined. In other words, it serves as the implicit backdrop against which any social phenomenon is revealed. Habermas contends that the lifeworld only becomes a useful sociological concept when we examine the roles it plays in sustaining social life. He identifies three mechanisms through which society reproduces itself. First, cultural reproduction, where people replicate and adjust the archive of pre-interpreted knowledge they rely on to reach mutual understanding. Second, social integration, in which individuals manage personal interactions and determine group membership to build societal solidarity. Third, socialization, the process by which individuals acquire the capabilities necessary for engaging in reciprocal communication—a set of competences that Habermas defines as a personality (Habermas, 1987a: 137-8). This framework invites us to consider how the everyday, often unnoticed, background

of our social lives is actively maintained and transformed through our cultural practices, social bonds, and individual development.

Habermas maintains that the lifeworld depends on ordinary, effective communication to perform its three essential roles in sustaining social life. When this communication breaks down and the lifeworld fails to fulfill these functions, social disorders emerge and are experienced as personal crises. In advanced capitalist societies, Habermas argues that this breakdown is occurring because the system is wrongly assuming the roles that should belong to the lifeworld. This perspective invites a deeper look at how the invasion of systemic forces into everyday communicative practices can lead to broader societal challenges.

16.6.6 System

The system refers to those areas of society where interactions are organized based on the practical outcomes of actions, aimed at achieving specific adaptive objectives. In this context, social order is maintained by integrating the effects of actions taken by anonymous individuals, coordinated through impersonal, abstract mechanisms.

A free-market economy serves as the quintessential example of a system. For instance, if we try to identify who determines the price of a commodity in an ideal free market, we quickly realize that no single individual does. Instead, prices are established by the interplay of producers' and suppliers' actions with those of consumers—that is, the coordination of supply and demand. Money functions as the abstract medium that connects these actions. If a producer increases the output of a commodity while consumer demand remains unchanged, the price will fall. Although you might say the producer caused the price drop, that was not the intention. It is more accurate to say that the market's functional relations set the price. Consequently, fluctuations in prices, the fortunes of companies, employment decisions, and consumer satisfaction are all results of market interactions that cannot be traced back to the purpose of any single person or group.

Both in theory and in practice, systems are closely connected to lifeworld processes. In reality, systems and the lifeworld are always intertwined; even when sociologists analyze systems as separate entities, these systems remain deeply rooted in everyday life. For instance, the formal model of a market—as an autonomous, self-governing system—is merely a simplified abstraction that overlooks the countless informal relationships constituting the actual market. Prices are determined not solely by the

mechanics of abstract exchange but also through lifeworld factors such as crowd psychology, scams, trust, personal rivalry, and similar influences. This reflection invites us to consider how these intangible yet powerful elements continually shape economic realities in ways that abstract models often fail to capture.

A system is intimately connected to the lifeworld, not only in practice but also conceptually. It encompasses those dimensions of social interaction that cannot be fully explained as products of communicative action within the lifeworld. To thoroughly understand the system, one must begin by interpreting the knowledge and experiences of individuals within the lifeworld (a hermeneutic approach) and then proceed with an objective analysis to uncover the broader conditions and constraints that extend beyond the participants' own awareness.

Habermas (1987a: 233) contends that the systems model is far from being a mere theoretical invention. While it's true that most aspects of society can be interpreted either as part of the lifeworld—through the eyes of those participating—or as components of a functional system when viewed objectively, there exist elements of social reality that do not fit neatly into a lifeworld framework. Habermas terms these elements "steering media," citing money and power as prime examples. These media are central to the system, guiding interpersonal interactions without relying on traditional norms or consensus achieved through communication. In this way, the system comprises the operating mechanisms of society that function below or beyond the conscious awareness of its members.

Systems such as the economy and political administration are governed primarily by money and power rather than by the deliberate choices of individuals. As these systems grow more complex, the underlying logic guiding them diverges from any one person's reasoning. This allows individuals to pursue self-interested, even harmful objectives, while still contributing to the overall order of the system. In other words, it becomes unnecessary for people to agree upon or even understand the system's goals through rational ethical debate for social order to prevail. This phenomenon, which Habermas refers to as the "uncoupling" of the system from the lifeworld, occurs because the coordination enabled by abstract media—like money—operates independently of the direct, communicative engagement that typically characterizes everyday life.

Habermas contends that the current imbalance between the lifeworld and the system is perilous, as it gives rise to social dysfunctions. However, he does not imply that any separation between the two is inherently negative. In fact, such a disconnect may be inevitable given the complexities of modern society. After all, we cannot rely solely on traditional norms to determine things like commodity prices, nor is it practical to devote all our time to reaching a consensus on every price detail.

Modern, complex societies can no longer rely on an unquestioned body of traditional interpretations to coordinate actions. Instead, reaching any consensus now demands rational discussions that often challenge the very foundations for resolving disputes. This makes agreements based on understanding both harder to achieve and more fragile once established. Conversely, institutions like economic markets are capable of managing increasingly intricate interactions without needing shared understanding or consensus. In our diverse society, it's nearly unthinkable to consider an alternative method for setting commodity prices, deciding what gets produced, determining which companies survive, or who finds employment. For this reason, Habermas views the emergence of such systems as an evolutionary development.

Even though systems may appear to operate independently of the lifeworld, they remain inherently linked to it. The system's guiding forces—money and power, for example—must be embedded both institutionally and motivationally within the lifeworld. Consider a capitalist system, which depends on a lifeworld that values wealth and measures success by its accumulation. Moreover, any changes within the system must be anchored in lifeworld processes to gain adherence and legitimacy. As Habermas observes, every new dominant mechanism that differentiates the system must be integrated into the lifeworld through means such as family status, official authority, or bourgeois private law. For these reasons, he argues that the internal logic of how the lifeworld is symbolically reproduced places inherent limits on the reproduction of societies, which we externalize as systems maintaining clear boundaries.

In summary, while the system model is a helpful tool, society cannot be reduced merely to a mechanism that maintains boundaries. Certain sectors of society—especially those driven by forces like money and power—can indeed be viewed as systems, provided we remember that they originate from the lifeworld and remain inherently connected to its processes. Habermas argues that using the system model is crucial because it reveals

the dangers that current conditions pose to the lifeworld. The clear distinction between lifeworld and system is vital to his theory of pathologies, as it allows him to scrutinize both the instrumental functions of the system and the communicative actions of the lifeworld, as well as the troubling relationship between the two.

16.6.7 Rationalization and differentiation

The main distinction between the system and the lifeworld lies in how they organize human interactions. Habermas terms these approaches "system integration" and "social integration," respectively. In the lifeworld, social integration works by fostering mutual understanding—whether through established traditions or active communication—and relies on the deliberate engagement of individuals. In contrast, system integration coordinates interactions by linking the functional outcomes of actions, often circumventing the conscious intentions of those involved (Habermas, 1987a: 117). Habermas's theory of pathologies is built on the idea that problematic effects can arise when the mode of integration typical of systems overtakes or bypasses the communicative, deliberative integration found in the lifeworld.

Habermas argues that these two modes of integration aren't just alternative ways of viewing the same phenomena; rather, they are distinct forms that evolve along their own unique paths. He sees the growing complexity of the system and the increasing rationalization of the lifeworld as two separate yet interconnected processes. His theory of pathologies relies on our ability to understand the intrinsic evolutionary logic behind their distinct development. Without grasping this logic, we cannot effectively critique the current evolution as pathological.

Over time, the divergence between the development of the system and the lifeworld becomes more pronounced. Simultaneously, the lifeworld increasingly fragments into different value domains—such as the aesthetic, scientific, and normative—that each cultivate their own unique criteria for judging validity. For Habermas, this process epitomizes rationalization: the formation of an internal, discursively justifiable logic within each mode of social integration. Differentiation and rationalization are inherently linked because the distinct internal logic of any given sphere becomes clearly articulated and defensible only when contrasted with and observed from other differentiated and rationalized spheres. For instance, assumptions that were once taken for granted within

the religious field must now be supported by reasoned argument because they can be challenged by the standards of a separate scientific domain.

In today's complex and rationalized lifeworld, traditional beliefs no longer automatically secure mutual understanding. For traditions to remain meaningful, they must be openly discussed and critically examined through communicative action—in effect, they cease to be mere traditions. In our diverse and rationalized society, traditions lose their ability to unify people and instead become reduced to personal, subjective reasoning. Here, rationalization means that how we justify our actions moves away from relying on age-old, normative standards and increasingly depends on dialogue. As Habermas (1984: 340) explains, a lifeworld is considered rationalized when interactions are guided not by pre-assumed, normative agreements but by understanding that is reached, directly or indirectly, through communicative processes.

As interactions within the lifeworld become less anchored in traditional norms, they increasingly depend on the uncertain and fragile process of reaching consensus. This reliance on an unstable form of agreement creates a demand for integration at the level of systems. In other words, the drive for rationalization in the lifeworld ultimately leads to the emergence of systems. Moreover, it's not only that different value spheres within the lifeworld are becoming more differentiated and rationalized; the very processes that reproduce the lifeworld are undergoing similar transformations. In cultural reproduction, for instance, established sacred traditions give way to specialized, expert knowledge. In social integration, legal systems evolve as distinct entities separate from traditional moral values. And in socialization, a stage of post-conventional moral autonomy allows individuals to distance themselves from conventional norms and articulate their own ethical choices through reasoned discourse.

As the lifeworld and its ways of being reproduced become more clearly defined and rationalized, they increasingly depend on communicative processes. Yet, this same differentiation causes each area—such as expert knowledge, legal interpretations, and ethical or religious systems—to drift away from everyday dialogue. Expert knowledge becomes isolated from general understanding; legal reasoning diverges from common ideas of justice; and ethical or religious frameworks separate from our ordinary moral intuitions.

This separation makes it extremely challenging to reintegrate expert insights into daily life. When scientific, legal, and religious expertise is cut off from everyday communication, it tends to harden into inflexible systems. As a result, crucial questions—about what should be studied, which laws are fair, and what actions are morally right—are increasingly determined by functional relations driven by money and power rather than by shared, communicative deliberation.

Moreover, as everyday life splits into distinct realms of rationality, individuals lose a unified center. For instance, the functional and strategic mindset of the workplace differs so markedly from the communicative, relational approach of family life that people can end up feeling out of place in both settings. This phenomenon, which Habermas describes as fragmentation, results in individuals experiencing themselves as multiple, separate selves rather than a coherent whole.

The rationalization of the lifeworld establishes the connection between Habermas' view of the essential assumptions underlying communication and his analysis of social disorders. In the past, communicative understanding primarily functioned as a tool for transmitting traditional values within the lifeworld. However, in modern society, with the disintegration of these traditions, the lifeworld is increasingly defined by communicative understanding itself. As a result, the coordination of interpersonal interactions now relies less on inherited traditions and more on the interpretive achievements of those involved in communication. Hence, a rationalized lifeworld depends on active communicative actions for its ongoing reproduction.

As we've seen, relying on communicative action for social integration is inherently precarious and unstable. It can fail in many ways, most notably when its key functions are overtaken by the more efficient operations of systems. This dynamic is central to Habermas' theory of pathologies; under current circumstances, the lifeworld and the communicative processes that sustain it are increasingly at risk due to the expanding influence of systems.

16.6.8 Social pathologies

Unlike the rationalization of the lifeworld, the system evolves by becoming increasingly complex, differentiated, and by developing more advanced steering mechanisms. While a well-rationalized lifeworld is necessary for a system to emerge in the first place, once the system becomes detached, its growing complexity operates independently of how

the lifeworld rationalizes itself. In essence, the system develops its own distinct internal logic, which turns pathological when it begins to dominate or "colonize" the core functions traditionally carried out within the lifeworld.

Habermas acknowledges that while the form of understanding he describes isn't required for every type of communication, it is essential for the kind of communicative action that sustains the rationalized lifeworld and prevents social dysfunctions. As he notes (Habermas, 1990: 102), cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization can only take place through actions aimed at achieving mutual understanding—there is no other medium capable of fulfilling these roles. Individuals develop and maintain their identities through these communicative exchanges, making it untenable to permanently detach from contexts that strive for understanding. In fact, abandoning the communicative practices that form the lifeworld can lead to personal crises, such as schizophrenia or suicide, which are indicative of broader social pathologies.

It is not always evident that personal crises signal a broader social pathology, as there is no universally accepted standard of societal health by which to judge dysfunction. However, the essence of Habermas' critical theory is to demonstrate that these developments are pathological in a manner that transcends specific contexts. He contends that such crises stem from a breakdown in the lifeworld's capability for symbolic reproduction—a failure caused by the marginalization of communicative action and its essential underlying assumptions.

From the perspective of communicative action, Western modernization has proceeded in a lopsided way, emphasizing instrumental rationality and strategic communication. As the complexity of systems grows at the cost of the lifeworld, these systems begin to assume roles—like cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization—that they are inherently unsuited to perform. Habermas (1991b: 259) argues that these functions can only be achieved through communicative action, not by means of money or power, because meaning cannot be bought or imposed by force.

Mechanisms driven by power and money have begun to infiltrate areas that ideally require coordination through open communication—child socialization, for example. Nowadays, television shows and advertisements play an increasingly significant role in shaping how children are socialized. Yet, the values, models, and images they present aren't the result of mutual, consensus-based dialogue; instead, they're determined by

market forces operating through money. Habermas contends that, although such a system is effective at, say, pricing commodities on TV, it is fundamentally unsuited to socializing children because it treats them merely as strategic targets rather than engaging with them to achieve genuine, collaborative understanding.

This does not mean that the system is inherently malevolent. According to Habermas, the problem lies not in the mere separation of the system from the lifeworld, but in system processes encroaching upon areas vital for the lifeworld's symbolic reproduction. As a result, these areas are forced to depend on economic and bureaucratic mechanisms that actually undermine mutual understanding. This scenario is not an inevitable one—the system and the lifeworld could theoretically separate in such a way that allows the lifeworld to impose limits on system functions. However, in advanced capitalist societies, it is the system that has ended up constraining the lifeworld, leading to pathological outcomes.

Colonization of the lifeworld takes place when economic and political systems, instead of confronting their own crises, avoid them by undermining the very processes that shape shared cultural meanings. For example, the capitalist economy naturally encounters difficulties—problems that could cause businesses to collapse and lead to investor losses. To counter these risks, governments routinely introduce policies that often serve corporate interests rather than the common good. In order to secure public backing for these corporate bailouts, public opinion is increasingly manufactured through top-down strategies rather than emerging from genuine, grassroots debate over public policy. As a consequence, democratic decisions become nothing more than the sum of isolated, easily manipulated individual views instead of the product of collective, rational discourse. Ultimately, by colonizing the lifeworld to avert economic or bureaucratic crises, society also experiences heightened personal alienation, fragmented identities, and the erosion of democratic solidarity.

A key example of colonization, according to Habermas, is juridification—the process of transforming everyday situations to fall under legal regulation. Juridification, like many systemic phenomena, has both benefits and drawbacks. On one hand, it broadens social rights; on the other, it creates a new form of dependency. The traditional reliance on interpersonal bonds fostered within the lifeworld—in homes, communities, churches, and schools—is supplanted by a dependence on legal and administrative bureaucracies

operating under their own rules. Consequently, the orientation toward mutual understanding and consensus inherent in the lifeworld is replaced by strategic interactions with bureaucratic institutions.

A recent instance illustrating this trend is the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Davis v. Monroe*, which holds school administrators accountable for sexual harassment among students. While this decision enhances the rights of children, it also creates a new dependency: potential issues are managed through strict, legally enforced regulations rather than through more adaptable, community-based discussions among parents, teachers, and administrators.

Habermas acknowledges that the lifeworld, grounded in long-standing traditions, also faces its own set of problems, and that juridification is an effort to address these issues. However, he notes the irony that while juridification aims to secure personal liberties and rights, it simultaneously undermines the foundation of free civic discourse. For example, although the welfare state addresses the traditional shortcomings in caring for the poor, it also erodes the old caregiving practices and the consensual ways they were managed by imposing a new, bureaucratic system on what was once handled through community-based efforts.

The remedy for these social dysfunctions lies in revitalizing the lifeworld, creating an environment where the different organized value domains—such as science, economics, law, and politics—can interact freely within everyday communication. These spheres must be receptive to open, critical debate and reinterpretation through communicative action. This ideal scenario criticizes modern society because such unfettered interaction is at odds with advanced capitalism and a welfare state, which often seeks to control the lifeworld to shape public opinion. However, Habermas points out that elements of this vision already exist in everyday discourse. In essence, daily communication inherently relies on the foundational assumptions of communicative action. Thus, to avoid the pathologies of modernity, it is crucial that communicative practices are allowed to penetrate and check the influence of system mechanisms.

16.6.9 Criticisms

Habermas' concept of normalcy has drawn considerable criticism, much of which stems from a general doubt about any attempt to define what is "normal." Critics contend that any definition—even one based on processes rather than concrete substances, and one

that addresses something as universal as communication—tends to fall prey to charges of ethnocentrism. This issue is particularly pronounced because Habermas derives his idea of normalcy from a specific historical context. His discussion of the ideal speech situation begins with "idealized cases of the communicative action typical of everyday life in modern societies" (Habermas, 1982: 236), which hardly seems like a solid foundation for a theory aiming to transcend local contexts.

Habermas' assertion that communicative action, centered on the use of validity claims, serves as the ideal model for communication is not entirely convincing. Other forms of language-based communication certainly draw on the core attributes of language. For instance, consider rhetoric—a form that Habermas (1984: 331) explicitly distinguishes from communicative action—which might very well represent the utmost expression of language. Rather than relying on validity claims and a transcendental speech ethics, rhetoric achieves rational decisions by leveraging language's inherent persuasive power. Habermas offers no argument to suggest that the creative and expressive nature of rhetoric is any less central to the purpose of communication than his own concept of understanding. While there are certainly situations where the focus on validity claims in communicative action is preferable, it is not justified to assert that communicative action, as opposed to rhetoric, is the normal or ideal way to use language.

Whether communicative action is the prevailing form of communication or not, it's hard to deny that both communication and understanding are vital for individuals and for the functioning of society. However, Habermas' critical theory doesn't depend on a conventional notion of everyday understanding. Instead, he bases his necessary assumptions on his unique definitions of communication and understanding. For Habermas, truly understanding a communication means being able to assess its validity claims solely on the rational merits of the argument.

Even his most supportive critics have struggled with Habermas' definition of understanding. Thomas McCarthy (1985) notes that you don't necessarily have to take a firm position to understand something. Likewise, Jeffrey Alexander (1991: 64) dismisses Habermas' equation of understanding with rational, consensual agreement over validity claims as nothing more than a "wishful equation." In everyday language, communication and understanding don't imply that consensus must be achieved entirely free of non-rational influences. Thus, Alexander argues that Habermas is simply embedding his utopian aspirations into his foundational definitions.

Communicative action is not crucial for achieving social integration. In fact, long-held traditional norms and non-rational feelings tend to unite society more effectively than rational, validity-based arguments—even in advanced capitalist systems. This conclusion is supported by historical evidence. Since past societies have managed to integrate successfully with minimal reliance on communicative action, Habermas's claim that such action is now indispensable rests on an unproven evolutionary theory. He argues that, in today's environment, society can function only by relying on communicative presuppositions.

16.7 Communicative Action and Discourse Ethics

Habermas identifies two primary forms of action: communicative and strategic. Communicative action is aimed at achieving mutual understanding and consensus, while strategic action—which he regards as emerging from communicative action—is focused on attaining success. According to Habermas, an interaction is considered communicative when participants coordinate their plans through a consensual process, with any agreement being assessed based on the shared recognition of its validity claims.

He argues that, historically, social integration has largely depended on communicative action. This concept is grounded in his studies of speech acts and universal pragmatics. Habermas maintains that, when we communicate, we all make certain underlying assumptions—most notably, that if our validity claims are challenged, they will be defended by rational reasons. As he puts it, even the briefest speech acts, like simple yes or no responses, presuppose the possibility of rational justification. Without this assumption, according to Habermas, language would lose its meaning.

Language coordinates social interaction precisely by making and defending validity claims. This process enables speakers to reach consensus on a variety of issues: moral concerns (how to govern communal life for everyone's benefit), ethical-political debates (concerning the quality of life), and pragmatic matters (determining the means to achieve established goals and preferences). Given the growing importance of coordinated action in our increasingly diverse cultural and political landscapes, Habermas emphasizes the significance of moral claims and counterclaims. He argues that these moral claims are embedded in the fabric of everyday communication, intertwined with our moral feelings and attitudes. Although discord among participants is always a possibility, he believes

that such conflict is mitigated by an underlying shared lifeworld—a common background consensus within communities and societies.

Habermas further contends that moral claims have cognitive meaning and can be justified with reason. In contrast to thinkers like Horkheimer and Adorno, he locates practical reason squarely within the realm of language. In his view, communicative action involves one participant attempting to rationally motivate another through the inherent binding effect of the speech act—what he terms the "illocutionary binding effect." Moreover, Habermas argues against the idea of deriving normative justification solely from individual thought. Instead, he maintains that norms must be validated through an actual discourse among individuals. This conviction is the cornerstone of his discourse ethics, asserting that only those norms which would—or could—gain the approval of all affected parties in a practical discussion can be considered valid.

16.8 Discourse theory and law

Habermas has worked diligently to build a clear and convincing argument about the role of cognitivism in the formation of moral claims. Beyond that, he has sought to expand the implications of his theory of communicative action by developing a discourse theory of law and democracy. He contends that in complex societies, moral principles only gain real effect when they are incorporated into legal frameworks. Importantly, Habermas approaches this issue with a commitment to radical democracy. His aim is to demonstrate that the legal system can help counteract the inherent uncertainties of socialization and is essential for sustaining society. Moreover, he argues that with the rise of strategic actions, such as those driven by rapid globalization, the role of law in coordinating society becomes even more critical, since today's social integration cannot rely solely on a shared moral consensus.

Habermas contends that modern law embodies a tension between two dimensions: facticity and validity. By facticity, he refers to the notion that law is a system of enforceable rules and procedures—a tangible aspect of social reality. In contrast, validity emphasizes that law also carries a claim to legitimacy, representing standards that everyone should recognize and respect. For Habermas, the intertwined nature of law and democracy lies in the way the legitimacy of legal systems depends on deliberative democratic processes. He argues that a democratic framework enables the rational formation of political opinions

and collective will through a system of rights, which guarantees each individual an equal opportunity to participate in the legislative process, all underpinned by communicative practices that are legally secured.

According to him, a law is truly legitimate only when those governed by it are, in effect, its co-creators—that is, when it could be reasonably accepted by every citizen after a process of open and critical discussion. In practice, this model places significant normative responsibility on public forums, informal associations, and social movements where citizens can effectively articulate their concerns. Habermas is especially interested in basic rights because he views them as carrying a universal claim to validity and addressing issues of such breadth that moral reasoning alone can justify them, without the need for additional ethical-political or pragmatic arguments. In this regard, these fundamental norms are ideally equipped to handle the challenges posed by cultural and social diversity.

16.9 Summing Up

Habermas's contributions have reshaped our understanding of how modern societies function. By highlighting the importance of communicative action, articulating the tension between lifeworld and system, and arguing for democratic legitimacy through discourse ethics, he offers both a diagnostic framework for the pathologies of modernity and a normative vision for a more inclusive, rational public sphere. His work remains central to contemporary debates in sociology, political theory, and ethics, influencing both academic research and practical approaches to fostering democratic dialogue in an increasingly complex world.

16.10 Questions

Answer in brief (5 Marks)

1. What is critical theory?
2. Write a short note on the communicative action.
3. What is rationalization?

Answer in details (10 Marks)

- I. Explore the theory of communicative action.

II. Elaborate on Habermas's interpretation of modernity.

III. Outline the theory of social pathologies.

16.11 References

- Ritzer, G and Smart, B, Handbook of Social Theory edited (2001), Sage Publication.
- Jürgen Habermas and Seyla Ben-Habib, Modernity versus Postmodernity, New German Critique, No. 22, Special Issue on Modernism (Winter, 1981), pp. 3-14, Duke University Press.
- Jürgen Habermas, Sara Lennox and Frank Lennox, The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964), New German Critique, Autumn, 1974, No. 3 (Autumn, 1974), pp. 49-55, Duke University Press.
- Peter Uwe Hohendahl, Reappraisals: Shifting Alignments in Postwar Critical Theory Book, Published by: Cornell University Press.
- John P. Scott, Critical Social Theory: An Introduction and Critique, The British Journal of Sociology, Mar., 1978, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Mar., 1978), pp. 1-21, Wiley on behalf of The London School of Economics and Political Science.
- James Johnson, Habermas on Strategic and Communicative Action, Political Theory, May, 1991, Vol. 19, No. 2 (May, 1991), pp. 181-201, Sage Publications, Inc.
- Margaret Canovan, A Case of Distorted Communication: A Note on Habermas and Arendt, Political Theory, Feb., 1983, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Feb., 1983), pp. 105-116, Sage Publications, Inc.
- Robert B. Pippin, HEGEL, MODERNITY, AND HABERMAS, The Monist, JULY 1991, Vol. 74, No. 3, Hegel Today (JULY 1991), pp. 329-357, Oxford University Press.
- Fred Dallmayr, The Discourse of Modernity: Hegel and Habermas, The Journal of Philosophy, Nov., 1987, Vol. 84, No. 11, Eighty-Fourth Annual Meeting American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division (Nov., 1987), pp. 682-692, Journal of Philosophy, Inc.
- Peter U. Hohendahl, The Dialectic of Enlightenment Revisited: Habermas' Critique of the Frankfurt School, New German Critique, Spring - Summer, 1985, No. 35, Special Issue on Jürgen Habermas (Spring - Summer, 1985), pp. 3-26, Duke University Press.

Module : V
Feminist Perspective

Unit-17 □ General Arguments of Feminism

Structure

- 17.1 Objectives**
- 17.2 Introduction**
- 17.3 Feminist Theory and Sociological Theory**
- 17.4 Why build a Feminist Sociological Theory?**
- 17.5 Basic Questions**
- 17.6 Historical Roots : Feminism and Sociology**
- 17.7 A Theory for the Sociology of Women**
- 17.8 Propositions for a Sociology of Women**
- 17.9 Conclusion**
- 17.10 Summary**
- 17.11 Questions**
- 17.12 References**

17.1 Objectives

- Gaining a clear understanding of the major movements of feminist thought and related areas of the body of knowledge making up the field of Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies.
- Developing critical thinking in various disciplinary traditions, ethics of understanding disciplinary responsibility in order to conduct interdisciplinary work.
- Developing a domain of inquiry including a variety of methodologies employed to address gender related issues.

17.2 Introduction

What has been the focus of feminist movement today? Feminist thought has been around for over a century now, bringing to light the lives and struggles of women and gender minorities. From the early 1900's to the recent '# Me-too' movement in 2018, feminists have had a very hard time convincing the world that it is, in fact, equal rights that they want and not disproportionate 'special treatment'. However, today, feminism has become a 'bad word', especially in the digital age, where there is, an abundance of opinions on social media equating it with 'man-hating' or misandry. Most people readily profess their commitment to 'equality', but shy away from identifying themselves as feminist. Feminists, both offline and online, continue to be dismissed, discredited and threatened with violence for demanding rights and speaking truth to power.

Feminist theory is a generalized, wide-ranging system of ideas about social life and human experience developed from a woman-centered perspective. Feminist theory is woman-centered—or women-centered—in two ways. First, the starting point of all its investigation is the situation (or the situations) and experiences of women in society. Second, it seeks to describe the social world from the distinctive vantage points of women. Feminist theory differs from most sociological theories in that it is the work of an interdisciplinary and international community of scholars, artists, and activists. Feminist sociologists seek to broaden and deepen sociology by reworking disciplinary knowledge to take account of discoveries being made by this interdisciplinary community. In general, we draw on both feminist and sociological theories to reframe our understanding of women's material and cultural condition. Feminist theories often omit women's contemporary position, concentrating on historical antecedents or utopian futures. The focus on praxis is often on creating revolution, egalitarian reform or cultural utopias. Most sociology is grounded in what is the relation of the individual to the world as it exists and is maintained. Feminist theory is an emancipatory theory focusing on the relation of the individual or group to the world as it can be conceived. Much of feminist theory emphasizes a social philosophy of women as opposed to a sociology of women. According to Janet Chafetz (1988) the following elements comprise a feminist sociological theory :

- a. Gender comprises a central focus or subject matter of the theory.
- b. Gender relations are viewed as a problem.
- c. Gender relations are not viewed as either natural or immutable.

d. The test is whether feminist sociological theory can be used to challenge, counteract or change a status-quo that disadvantages or devalues women.

Chafetz deliberately omits activism as a central component of what makes a theory feminist. Earlier sociological theories, which were also feminist, claim that theory must involve praxis (Millman and Kanter, 1975; Cook and Fonow, 1986). The feminist sociologist is involved in changing society in the very process of doing sociology. Chafetz rejects this activist definition of sociology. To her, feminist sociology is one which can be used for activist purposes but is not by definition activist. “It is a judgment of the theory itself, not of the scholar who created it” (Chafetz, 1988:5).

17.3 Feminist Theory and Sociological Theory

A genuinely feminist approach to theory draws on concepts and analytic tools that are appropriate to the questions of women’s experiences of inequality that promote activism. We can begin from an understanding of our own conditions (a sociology by women). This understanding need not depend on the concepts or definitions set by traditional research. We can develop models that use nonsexist concepts and language and move away from rigid either/or dichotomies. Instead of assuming a gulf between rational concepts such as the public and private spheres, or between the subject (researcher) and object (women respondents), feminist theorists acknowledge the continuity between them (a sociology about women). This new assumption reduces that bipolarity. Finally, the products and consequences of our thinking can be assessed against the probability of change for women (a sociology for women). The reasons for such feminist approach to theory move from the criticisms toward an integrative model which allows us to :

- (1) examine the possibility of a theoretical integration
- (2) account for historical fluctuation
- (3) develop models that are testable and challengeable through the use of feminist methodologies and praxis.

17.4 Why build a Feminist Sociological Theory?

It is clear that early patriarchal and liberal feminist theories are inadequate to explain the development and maintenance of and the change in women’s oppression in different cultures (Chafetz, 1988). The reasons for building a feminist theory or explanation derived from women’s studies frameworks are clear. But why build a sociological theory? Theory as a practice can itself be examined from a feminist perspective, analyzed for potential

consequences, and revisioned for its potential contributions to a understanding of women's lives.

Patricia Hill Collins points to those aspects of the white scholarly community that have excluded black feminist intellectual traditions. These aspects include the assumption that scientists are distanced from their values, vested interests, and emotions attached to their gender, race, or class situation (Collins, 1990). A primary characteristic of white masculinist epistemology is the distinction between wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom consists of "mother wit" and experience as a criterion of meaning. Knowledge consists of "book learning" and additive objective facts which are accumulated and legitimated through scholarly processes controlled by dominant groups. Collins notes that a Black feminist epistemology rises out of an assertion that knowledge without wisdom is "adequate for the powerful, but wisdom is essential to the survival of the subordinate" (Collins, 1990:208).

Collins then challenges us to reject competitive, additive theory building processes. She draws on the processes of dialogue to assess knowledge claims, a dialogue among women who share their wisdom about the world around them. She adds to this dialogue an ethic of care which includes personal expressiveness and emotions in the knowledge validation process.

Theory "seeks to explain why phenomenon exist and why they reveal certain processes and properties" (Turner and Beeghley, 1981:2). If, then, sociological theory building can be used to illuminate not only products, outcomes, properties and classification schemes but also process, then sociological theory retains utility for feminist purposes. Our purpose is to explain some dimensions of the following questions : Why does sex inequality exist? What are its origins and consequences? How is it maintained? What are the dynamics of change? These are basic questions outlined by Chafetz in *Feminist Sociology* (1988), and expanded by the epistemological frameworks of Collins (1990) and Smith (1987) who argue for a dialogue grounded in women's experiences. Currently, the process of building a theory in the social sciences involves a set of rational, objective steps. These steps must be questioned, evaluated, and revised to maintain integrity from a feminist perspective.

17.5 Basic Questions

The impetus for contemporary feminist theory begins in a deceptively simple question: "And what about the women?" In other words, where are the women in any situation being investigated? If they are not present, why? If they are present, what exactly are

they doing? How do they experience the situation? What do they contribute to it? What does it mean to them?

In response to this question, feminist scholarship has produced some generalizable answers. Women are present in most social situations. Where they are not, it is not because they lack ability or interest but because there have been deliberate efforts to exclude them. Where they have been present, women have played roles very different from the popular conception of them (as, for example, passive wives and mothers). Indeed, as wives and as mothers and in a series of other roles, women, along with men, have actively created the situations being studied. Yet though women are actively present in most social situations, scholars, publics, and social actors themselves, both male and female, have been blind to their presence. Moreover, women's roles in most social situations, though essential, have been different from, less privileged than, and subordinate to the roles of men. Their invisibility is only one indicator of this inequality.

Feminism's second basic question is: "Why is all this as it is?" In answering this question, feminist theory has produced a general social theory with broad implications for sociology. One of feminist sociological theory's major contributions to answering this question has been the development of the concept of gender. Beginning in the 1970s, feminist theorists made it possible for people to see the distinctions between (a) biologically determined attributes associated with male and female and (b) the socially learned behaviors associated with masculinity and femininity. They did so by designating the latter as "gender." The essential qualities of gender remain a point of theoretical debate in feminism, and these debates offer one way to distinguish among some of the varieties of feminist theory. But a starting point of agreement among nearly all varieties of feminist theory is an understanding of gender as a social construction, something not emanating from nature but created by people as part of the processes of group life.

The third question for all feminists is: "How can we change and improve the social world so as to make it a more just place for all people?" This commitment to social transformation in the interest of justice is the distinctive characteristic of critical social theory, a commitment shared in sociology by feminism, Marxism, neo-Marxism, and social theories being developed by racial and ethnic minorities and in postcolonial societies. Patricia Hill Collins (1998:xiv) forcefully states the importance of this commitment to seeking justice and confronting injustice: "Critical social theory encompasses bodies of knowledge... that actively grapple with the central questions facing groups of people differently placed in specific political, social, and historic contexts characterized by injustice." This commitment to critical theorizing requires that feminist theorists ask how their work will improve the daily lives of the people they study.

As the circle of feminists exploring these questions has become more inclusive of people of diverse backgrounds both in the United States and internationally, feminist theorists have raised a fourth question: “And what about the differences among women?” The answers to this question lead to a general conclusion that the invisibility, inequality, and role differences in relation to men that generally characterize women’s lives are profoundly affected by a woman’s social location—that is, by her class, race, age, affectional preference, marital status, religion, ethnicity, and global location.

But feminist theory is not just about women, nor is its major project the creation of a middle-range theory of gender relations. Rather, the appropriate parallel for feminism’s major theoretical achievement is to one of Marx’s epistemological accomplishments. Marx showed that the knowledge people had of society, what they assumed to be an absolute and universal statement about reality, in fact reflected the experience of those who economically and politically ruled the world; he effectively demonstrated that one also could view the world from the vantage point of the world’s workers. This insight relativized ruling-class knowledge and, in allowing us to juxtapose that knowledge with knowledge gained from the workers’ perspective, vastly expanded our ability to analyze social reality. More than a century after Marx’s death we are still assimilating the implications of this discovery.

Feminism’s basic theoretical questions have similarly produced a revolutionary switch in our understanding of the world: what we have taken as universal and absolute knowledge of the world is, in fact, knowledge derived from the experiences of a powerful section of society, men as “masters.” That knowledge is relativized if we rediscover the world from the vantage point of a hitherto invisible, unacknowledged “underside”: women, who in subordinated but indispensable “serving” roles have worked to sustain and recreate the society we live in. This discovery raises questions about everything we thought we knew about society, and its implications constitute the essence of contemporary feminist theory’s significance for sociological theory.

Feminist theory deconstructs established systems of knowledge by showing their masculinist bias and the gender politics framing and informing them. To say that knowledge is “deconstructed” is to say that we discover what was hitherto hidden behind the presentation of the knowledge as established, singular, and natural—namely, that that presentation is a construction resting on social, relational, and power arrangements. But feminism itself has become the subject of relativizing and deconstructionist pressures from within its own theoretical boundaries. The first and more powerful of these pressures comes from women confronting the white, privileged-class, heterosexual status of many

leading feminists—that is, from women of color, women in postcolonial societies, working-class women, and lesbians. These women, speaking from “margin to center” (hooks, 1984), show that there are many differently situated women, and that there are many women-centered knowledge systems that oppose both established, male-stream knowledge claims and any hegemonic feminist claims about a unitary woman’s standpoint. The second deconstructionist pressure within feminism comes from a growing postmodernist literature that raises questions about gender as an undifferentiated concept and about the individualself as a stable locus of consciousness and personhood from which gender and the world are experienced. The potential impact of these questions falls primarily on feminist epistemology—its system for making truth claims.

17.6 Historical Roots : Feminism and Sociology

Feminism and sociology share a long-standing relationship originating in feminists turning to sociology to answer feminism’s foundational questions: what about the women, why is all this as it is, how can it be changed to produce a more just society, and, more recently, what about differences among women? Sociology was identified from its beginning by activist women as one possible source of explanation and change. One strand of this history has been women sociologists’ identifying and conceptualizing gender as both a descriptive and at least partially explanatory variable in their answers, providing a tool for separating biological maleness and femaleness from social masculinity and femininity (Feree, Khan, and Morimoto, 2007; Finlay, 2007; Tarrant, 2006). Feminism and sociology need to be understood both as systems of ideas and as social organizations—for feminism, this means as a theory and as a social movement; for sociology, as an academic discipline and as a profession. Looked at in this way, we find that women, most of whom were feminist in their understandings, were active in the development of sociology as both a discipline and a profession from its beginnings, and that repeatedly, generation after generation, these women have had their achievements erased from the history of sociology by a male-dominated professional elite (Delamont, 2003; Skeggs, 2008).

Despite such erasures, the feminist perspective is an enduring feature of social life. Wherever women are subordinated—and they have been subordinated almost always and everywhere—they have recognized and protested that situation (Lerner, 1993). In the Western world, published works of protest appeared as a thin but persistent trickle from the 1630s to about 1780. Since then feminist writing has been a significant collective effort, growing in both the number of its participants and the scope of its critique (Cott, 1977; Donovan, 1985; Giddings, 1984; Lerner, 1993; Alice Rossi, 1974; Spender, 1982, 1983).

Feminist writing is linked to feminist social activism, which has varied in intensity over the last two hundred years; high points occur in the liberationist “moments” of modern Western history. In U.S. history, major periods of feminist mobilization frequently are understood as “waves.” First Wave feminism began in the 1830s as an offshoot of the anti-slavery movement and focused on women’s struggle for political rights, especially the vote. It is marked by two key dates—1848, when the first women’s rights convention was held at Seneca Falls, New York, and 1920, when the Nineteenth Amendment gave women the right to vote. Second Wave feminism (ca. 1960–1990) worked to translate these basic political rights into economic and social equality and to reconceptualize relations between men and women with the concept “gender.” Third Wave feminism is used in two senses—to describe the responses by women of color, lesbians, and working-class women to the ideas of white professional women claiming to be the voice of Second Wave feminism (Feree, 2009) and to describe the feminist ideas of the generation of women who will live their adult lives in the twenty-first century.

Feminist ideas were, thus, abroad in the world in the 1830s when Auguste Comte coined the term “sociology” and feminist Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) was asked to edit a proposed journal in “sociology.” Martineau is an important player in the history of sociology whose work has only been recovered under the impact of Second Wave feminism (Deegan, 1991; Hill, 1989; Hoecker-Drysdale, 1994; Lengermann and Niebrugge, 1998; Niebrugge, Lengermann, and Dickerson, 2010) and whose contribution undergirds the claim that women were “present at the creation” of sociology (Lengermann and Niebrugge, 1998). Sociology’s development into an organized discipline in its “classic generation”—the period marked by white male thinkers who did significant work from 1890 to 1920 (e.g., Emile Durkheim [1858–1917] and Max Weber [1862–1920]) overlapped with the rise in activism in First Wave feminism as women pushed their crusade for the right to vote). Feminists Jane Addams, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Florence Kelley, and Marianne Weber played important roles in the development of sociology, creating theory, inventing research methods, publishing in sociological journals, belonging to sociological associations, and holding offices in professional associations—and directly or indirectly speaking from the standpoint of women. United States women of color Anna Julia Cooper and Ida B. Wells-Barnett, though barred by racist practices from full participation in the organization of sociology, developed both social theory and a powerful practice of sociological critique and activism. Gilman is particularly significant in the history of feminist contributions to sociology, providing the first conceptualization of what will become the idea of gender in her concept of excessive sex distinction, which she defines as socially maintained differences between men and women that go beyond the differences dictated by biological reproduction.

Between 1920 and 1960 feminist thinking and activism ebbed, partly due to a sense of anomie produced by its victory in getting the vote, partly in response to social crises—World War I and its aftermath, the Great Depression, World War II and its aftermath, and the Cold War of the 1950s. Women sociologists were left without a framework for critique of their professional marginalization. They worked as isolated individuals for a foothold in the male-dominated university. Even so these women sociologists did research on women's lives and worked to conceptualize gender within the prevailing framework of "sex roles" in work such as Helen Mayer Hacker's "Women as a Minority Group" (1951) and Mirra Komarovsky's "Cultural Contradictions of Sex Roles" (1946).

Beginning in the 1960s, as a second wave of feminist activism energized feminist thinking, women in sociology drew strength to confront the organization of their profession and to (re-) establish a feminist perspective in the discipline (Feree, Khan, and Morimoto, 2007; Niebrugge, Lengermann, and Dickinson, 2010). Key to their success was the leadership of individual women like Alice Rossi, the establishment of the Women's Caucus within the American Sociological Association and then in 1971 of a separate feminist organization, Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS), which in 1987 undertook the financially daring launch of a new journal, *Gender & Society*, under the editorship of Judith Lorber. These moves brought women a feminist base from which to speak to the profession and a feminist publication from which to introduce ideas to the discipline.

The effects of Second Wave feminism continue to this day in sociology. Women have moved into the profession in unprecedented numbers, as students, teachers, and scholars; the majority of undergraduate majors and about half of Ph.D. recipients are now women (Stacey and Thorne, 1996). Women hold office in the discipline's professional associations in percentages greater than their overall presence in the discipline (Rosenfeld, Cunningham, and Schmidt, 1997).

Central to this Second Wave triumph has been establishing gender as a core concept in sociology. Gender, which is broadly understood as a social construction for classifying people and behaviors in terms of "man" and "woman," "masculine" and "feminine," is now an almost unavoidable variable in research studies—a variable whose presence implies a normative commitment to some standard of gender equality or the possibility that findings of inequality may be explained by practices of gender discrimination. The emphasis on gender vastly expanded the reach of feminist understandings to clearly include men as well as women, and the community of feminists scholars, though still primarily female, now includes important work by male feminists (Brickell, 2005; Connell, 1995; Diamond, 1992; Hearn, 2004; M. Hill, 1989; A. Johnson, 1997; Kimmel, 1996,

2002; Messner, 1997; Schwalbe, 1996; Trexler, 1995). Yet there remains a recurring unease about the relationship between feminism and sociology, an unease classically framed by Stacey and Thorne in their 1985 essay “The Missing Feminist Revolution in Sociology” and revisited subsequently (Alway, 1995b; Chafetz, 1997; Stacey and Thorne, 1996; Thistle, 2000; Wharton, 2006). A “feminist revolution in sociology” presumably would mean reworking sociology’s content, concepts, and practices to take account of the perspectives and experiences of women. This effort has been far from wholesale or systematic. For instance, within the sociological theory community, feminists constitute a distinct and active theory group, intermittently acknowledged but unassimilated, whose ideas have not yet radically affected the dominant conceptual frameworks of the discipline.

The concern with gender has focused the energy of much feminist scholarship in sociology. But it may also have moved that energy away from two original primary concerns of feminist theory—the liberation of women and, as a means to that end, an articulation of the world in terms of women’s experience. The study of gender is certainly not antithetical to these projects but neither is it coterminous with them. This issue attempts to take account of the enormous developments around the concept of gender while at the same time remembering that feminist theory is not the same thing as the sociology of gender, an awareness that may help explain recent developments in feminist theorizing such as the growth of intersectionality theory and the resurgence of sexual difference theory, as well as the persistence of materialist or socialist feminism.

17.7 A Theory for the Sociology of women

A major challenge for feminist theorists is to bridge the structural and interpretive approaches available in the social sciences and in women’s studies theory. An integrative theory of women’s oppression should draw from all available models, not to construct a hodgepodge, but with an eye toward the patchwork quilt of women’s traditional crafts. Such a patchwork would take the useful concepts of feminist models and draw them together to make a strong theoretical fabric.

We first draw on structural approaches which contribute generalizable concepts and an “anticipated social structure” (Glaser and Strass, 1971). These generalizable concepts should not determine ahead of time the questions we ask of women or the answers we hear from them. Instead, these provide frameworks for anticipating those social structures and organizations that might influence women’s lives. Interpretive approaches then can contribute meaning and process at the individual level (Smith, 1987). We outline how the concept of value can be used to frame women’s experiences of

oppression from a formal perspective. The poststructuralists argue that we cannot answer the question, “Are there women?” or “What is value?” – We believe that these questions must be asked, even if the medium of language will ultimately distort the reality of women’s lives.

17.8 Propositions for a Sociology of Women

What is the relationship of use value to exchange value in a given society? How does this relationship affect women in varying institutions such as the economy or the family? What are the relationships among patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism in the construction of societal values? We need to identify the relationships among different concepts in our model.

a) Economics and Value

The first proposition is that in a capitalist market economy, exchange value takes priority over use value. This model is expanded to show the interconnection of use value and exchange value in the patriarchal structure (Benston, 1969). The contribution of Feminist theory has been the recognition that throughout any period of economic history women have contributed in both types of labor.

b) Sexuality and Value

In the definition and everyday experience of sexuality, there are several frames of reference. The first is the family, as this is the major institution in which sexual behaviors, attitudes and norms are structured. The other frames are the politics of motherhood and reproductive freedom, and finally, public sexuality markets of prostitution and pornography. Each of these dimensions helps us to identify the integration and contradictions in the roles of heterosexual women predominantly and the roles of all women in light of market and colonial factors.

c) Self -esteem and Value

The social- psychological construct of self- concept identifies important aspects of how society and the individual interact. Every social being has a self-concept. The self-evaluation of that identity provides the comparative concept which Weber stated we must come to understand. Use value, in this instance, would include both the individual self- evaluation which leads to personal well- being (Am I a good person? Do I have value?) and the social factors which influence the construction of that evaluation by which the self-concept becomes a resource or a liability in social settings.

In a market context, self-esteem becomes both a resource and a liability. Much of the human capital required for employment is predicted on some self-resource : achievement in school; ability to persevere in the face of failure; and the presentation of a confident, skilled self. As a resource we can build self-esteem through a range of self-help courses and books, but most psychological literature indicates that females, in general, will have access to lower levels of this resource than men. Thus, we have the proliferation of consumer products targeted toward women to “assert ourselves gently”, or to “dress for success”.

17.9 Conclusion

Feminist theory develops a system of ideas about human life that features women as objects and subjects, doers and knowers. Feminism has a history as long as women’s subordination—and women have been subordinated almost always and everywhere. Until the late 1700s feminist writing survived as a thin but persistent trickle of protest; from that time to the present, feminist writing has become a growing tide of critical work. While the production of feminist theory has typically expanded and contracted with societal swings between reform and retrenchment, the contemporary stage of feminist scholarship shows a self-sustaining expansion despite new conservative societal trends.

17.10 Summary

Feminist scholarship is guided by four basic questions: And what about the women? Why is women’s situation as it is? How can we change and improve the social world? and What about differences among women? Answers to these questions produce the varieties of feminist theory. This section patterns this variety to show four major groupings of feminist theory. Theories of gender difference see women’s situation as different from men’s, explaining this difference in terms of two distinct and enduring ways of being, male and female, or institutional roles and social interaction, or ontological constructions of woman as “other.” Theories of gender inequality, notably by liberal feminists, emphasize women’s claim to a fundamental right of equality and describe the unequal opportunity structures created by sexism. Gender oppression theories include feminist psychoanalytic theory and radical feminism. The former explains the oppression of women in terms of psychoanalytic descriptions of the male psychic drive to dominate; the latter, in terms of men’s ability and willingness to use violence to subjugate women. Structural oppression theories include socialist feminism and intersectionality theory; socialist feminism describes oppression as arising from a patriarchal and a capitalist attempt to control social production and reproduction; intersectionality theories trace

the consequences of class, race, gender, affectional preference, and global location for lived experience, group standpoints, and relations among women.

Today, women's empowerment is on the development agenda of governments and civil society organizations around the world, and this is owed in large part to the relentless struggles undertaken by feminists over several decades. Both governments and corporations seem to now understand the importance of women empowerment, even as they continue to keep their distance from "radical feminists". Nothing demonstrates this better than the cause of the #MeToo Movement, where, particularly the corporate sector, which had co-operated gender equality as a cause, showed that it would only care about women's rights as long as they were not asking for "too much". Closer home, schemes such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and the Pradhan Mantri Yojana that have been introduced to benefit women in India, still look like stop-gap measures because they only target the most visible, material parts of gender disparity. They however, do not attempt to address the patriarchal structures that cause this disparity.

17.11 Questions

- (1) What has been the focus of Feminism in the last decade specially in India?
- (2) Discuss in brief the historical roots of Feminism.
- (3) How far Feminist Theory is different from the grand sociological theories?
- (4) Do you think that women are really empowered today? Justify your answer with reasons.

17.12 References

1. Ritzer George, "*Sociological Theory*"(2011), Rawat Publications ; Delhi.
2. Ray, Raka. *Fields of Protest: Women's Movements in India* Archived 7 July 2014 at the Wayback Machine. University of Minnesota Press; Minneapolis, MN. 1999. Page 13.
3. Kumar, Radha. *The History of Doing* Archived 10 January 2016 at the Wayback Machine, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1998.
4. Sen, Amartya. "The Many Faces of Gender Inequality." *The New Republic*, 17 September 2001; page 39.
5. Feminism in the Last Decade: An Interactive | Economic and ...www.epw.in > engage > article > womens-day-feminism-in-the-last-de..

Unit - 18 □ The Stages of Development of Feminism

Structure

- 18.1 Objectives**
- 18.2 Introduction**
- 18.3 Salient Features: What is Feminism about?**
- 18.4 Waves of Feminism**
 - 18.4.1 The First Feminist Wave**
 - 18.4.2 The Second Feminist Wave**
 - 18.4.3 The Third Wave**
- 18.5 Criticism**
- 18.6 Conclusion**
- 18.7 Summary**
- 18.8 Questions**
- 18.9 Suggested Readings**
- 18.10 References**
- 18.11 Glossary**

18.1 Objectives

- To understand the history of feminism
- To understand the rise of feminism as an ideology in Europe and America
- To conceptualize feminism and to bring out its characteristics.

18.2 Introduction

The rise of Feminism as an ideology in Europe and America can be traced back to the mid 19th century as a consequence of emergence of the ideals from the Enlightenment and French Revolution. The tensions and conflicts of Enlightenment made the starting

point of the debate regarding the role and position of women in the society. The existing ideas at the 18th century society was that of master-slave, based on the assumed physical and intellectual differences between them. Masculinity and Femininity were constructed as opposite two poles. The former was assigned rational, objective and scientific tone while the latter with the stereotypes of emotionalism, sensuality and irrationality. Thinkers such as Jean Jacques Rousseau (1718-78) reinforced this dichotomy. Rousseau in *Emile* (1762) propounded different models of education based on sexual differences. He proposed that education for boys should be intended to develop their natural instincts for freedom and rationality whereas the female should be educated so that they can be good mother and wife.

But later the Feminist thinkers forcefully challenged the assumption about female inferiority and the birth of Feminism. These early feminist thinkers were Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97), Margaret Fuller (1810-50) and Harriet Martineau (1802-76). To speak precisely, the term Feminism can be used to describe a political, cultural or economic movement aimed at establishing equal rights and legal protection for women. One important point here to remember is that Feminism must not be merged with Women's Movement that encompassed a broader designation. Not all women associates are necessarily feminists. They are generally drawn from an urban elite. Feminists were and remain a minority. Sometimes they have been criticized as being "bourgeois" and critics try to discredit them. Feminism is actually a method of analysis, a way of looking at the world from women's perspective. The origin of the term can be tracked back to 1871 when it was used as a medical term to define feminisation of the bodies of male patients.

18.3 Salient Features: What is Feminism about?

Before we start with Feminism let us make some points with Feminism clear. Firstly, Feminism is not the belief that women are superior. Secondly, Feminism is not hating man (Misandry). Thirdly, Feminism is not male oppression. It aims only at achieving and establishing equality between men and women. Therefore, Feminist is a person who believes in the social, political and economic equality of the sexes.

18.4 Waves of Feminism

The history of the feminist movement is divided into three waves. The First wave refers to the movement of the 19th through early 18th centuries, which dealt mainly with suffrage, working conditions and educational rights for women and girl. The Second wave (1960-1980) dealt with the inequality of laws, as well as cultural inequalities and the role of

women in society. The Third wave of Feminism (1990-2000) is seen as both a continuation of the second wave and a response to the perceived failures. The metaphor of the wave has been used extensively to characterize feminist activities. The first wave relates to the initial period of Feminism and the Second wave emerged during the late 1960's. More recently there has been a debate on the usefulness of the wave metaphor for capturing the complexities of feminism. The discussion seeks to challenge the metaphor and replace it with others, such as geological one with eruptions and flowers or radio waves with their many frequencies.

Apart from all other things to understand Feminism today, it is important to know their history. As already noted, this will depend largely on the National contexts for the period being studied, for example the link between the abolition of slavery movement at the beginning of U.S. feminism or the importance of 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, the aim of which was "to discuss the social, civil, religious condition and rights of women. Born during the last decade of the 19th century the golden age of feminism was reached prior to the outbreak of World War I in 1914. During the war the Feminists prioritized concentrating on serving their countries and they generally suspended their claims in the context of Patriotism. The assumption was like that after the war was over they will be rewarded with the granting of rights, particularly the right to vote. Although this did happen in the United Kingdom in 1918, Germany in 1919 and the United States 1920, many countries continued to deny women the franchise for many years. For example, Spain, Brazil, France Japan Argentina, Greece, India, Finland, Norway, Denmark enfranchised women after quite a long period of time. The waves of feminism are discussed in detail as follows:

18.4.1 The first feminist wave

The First wave of Feminism consisted largely of white, middle class, well educated women. It refers to an extended period of feminist activity during the 19th century and early 20th century, in the United Kingdom and United States. Originally it focused on the promotion of equal contract and property rights for women. However, by the end of the 19th century activism focused primarily on gathering political power particularly on women's suffrage. Discussions about the vote and women's participation in politics led to an examination of the differences between men and women. But still huge sacrifice was made by the First wave Feminists who showed enormous courage and daring in their demand not just for votes but the reform of Laws in which women and children are literally the property of man. The end of First wave is often associated with the periods in the early 20th century during and after World War 1.

To be more specific the first wave of feminism actually started in the late 1700 and lasted till the early 1900. Apart from all other things this time abuse with women began to be considered as a matter of shame to the intellectuals. This time the society and government started recognising the importance of equal rights. First Wave feminism promoted equal contract and property rights for women opposing ownership of married women by their husbands. By the late 19th Century, feminist activism was primarily focused on the right to vote.

American first wave feminism ended with passage of the 19th Amendment to the US constitution in 1919, granting women voting right. But the struggle for the vote was only in the beginning and it had many different opinions. First Wave feminism promoted equal contract and property rights for women opposing ownership of married women by their husbands. By the late 19th Century, feminist activism was primarily focused on the right to vote. American first wave feminism ended with passage of the 19th Amendment to the US constitution in 1919, granting women vote right. But the struggle for the vote was only in the beginning and it had many different opinions. After securing the right to vote apparently around 1920's-the great depression of the 1930's forced the menfolk to return to the home. During this period of high unemployment, women were accused of taking the jobs from man. The interwar period was marked by the rise of Fascism in many countries, and the consequent hostile environment in which feminists were forced with limited margin from manoeuvre. With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, men were obliged to fight and women got back their jobs. Then, after the war had ended the women were expected to return to the home and take responsibility for their "Domestic obligations".

18.4.2 The second feminist wave

The second Feminist wave is often associated with the periods in the early 20th Century, during and after World War I (1914-1918) when most women in the western world were granted the right to vote. Second wave feminism broadened the debate to a wide range of issues like sexuality, family and workplace, reproductive rights and office inequalities whereas First wave Feminism focused mainly on suffrage and gender equality

Second wave feminism refers to the period of activity in the early 1960's and lasting throughout the late 1980's. It was actually a continuation of the earlier phase of Feminism. Second wave Feminism has continued to exist since that time and co-exists with Third wave Feminism.

The Feminist activist and author Carol Hawick coined the slogan “The Personal is Political” which became synonymous with the Second wave. Second wave feminists saw women’s cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked and encouraged women to understand as per their personal life as deeply politicized and as reflecting sex-based power structure.

The French author and philosopher Simon De Beauvoir wrote novels and now she is best known for her metaphysical novels including the *Second sex* a detailed analysis of women’s oppression and a foundation base of Contemporary Feminism. It was written in 1949 and was translated in English in the year 1953. It sets out a feminist existentialism which accepted the affirmation that “One is not born a woman but becomes one”. She argued that women have been considered deviant and abnormal. Even Mary Wollstonecraft considered men to be the ideal towards which women should aspire. The phrase women’s liberation was first used in the United States in 1964 and first appeared in print in 1966. Bra burning also became associated with the movement though the actual prevalence of Bra burning is debatable.

Within the broader second wave feminists’ movement, two movements emerged; while one wants to change society from within, the other radical movement questions fundamentally if society’s hierarchical and patriarchal nature was the main problem. Both these movements made major contributions however through their influence in society in general. Whereas today we take many things for granted such as women in the workforce become increasingly acceptable after the 1960’s. Moreover, delaying in marriage is not a question in today’s society but this was not the rule in pre 1960’s and parts of Europe. Ultimately the second wave feminists movement gave women the opportunity to talk more about the condition of state and politics also. In short, the second wave Feminism has the following agenda like Birth control, Equal rights amendment, Sexual discrimination, sexual harassment and so on.

Just as the abolitionists, 19th century women were more aware of their lack of power and encouraged them to form the first women’s rights movement which is also termed as First Wave Feminism-the Protest movement in the 1960’s inspired many white and middle class women to organize their own movement which is known as second wave Feminism.

Second wave Feminism actually refers mostly to the radical feminism of the leftist movement in post war western societies-among them the student’s protest, the anti - Vietnam war movement, the lesbian and gay movement and in the United states the Civil rights and the Black power movement. These movements criticised capitalism

and Imperialism and focused on the notion and interest of oppressed group. The demand of the second wave was not only the political and legal equality but also control over their reproductive and sexual roles. The need for this change was originally felt during second world war which acted as a base stone for the movement that was supported by the feminist political activists. This tendency is also called Gyno-criticism and involves three major aspects. First of them examines and recognizes the work of female writers. This aspect observes their place and how they are considered in the literary history. The Second aspect of the second wave is based on how a woman is characterized by the works of both male and female authors. The third is the most important aspect which recognises the context of women empowerment and criticizing the way women have been treated in different cultures. The achievements of the Second wave were the equal pay act of 1963 Education amendment of 1972. The leaders and activists of Second wave were Betty Friedman (1921-2006), Emma Goldman (1869-1940) Margaret Sanger (1879-1966) and Hillary Clinton. Because the second wave of feminism found voice amid so many other social movements it was easily marginalized and viewed as less important. Whereas the first wave feminism was generally propelled by middle class, western and white women the second phase drew in women of colour and developing nations, seeking sisterhood and solidarity claiming women's struggle is class struggle.'

18.4.3 The Third Wave Feminism : Transversal Politics

Third wave feminism began in the early 1990's -arising as a response to perceived failures of the second wave. It seeks to challenge or avoid the second wave's definitions of feminism which overemphasized the experience of upper middle-class women. Started in the early 1990s, this wave continued until 2012. The feminists consider the role of equal civil rights and other movements during the second wave, but they see the feminism from a different perspective. They emphasise on the individual rights as well as the acceptance of diversity. Third wave feminists often focus on micro politics and challenge the Second wave's paradigm as to what is or is not good for females. Born with the privileges that the first and second wave feminists see themselves as capable, strong and assertive social agents.

Third wave feminists and Post-modern Feminists attack the binaries of the masculine and the feminine sex-gender related structure. Although the term inter sectionally was coined in 1989, a few years before the Third wave began, they embraced this concept during this wave. Rebecca Walker coined the term to highlight the third wave's focus on queer and non-white women. In 1992, she published an article in response to the Anita Hill case, about how she is sick of women being silenced and man using their

privileges to get away with sexual harassment and other forms of oppression. In the end she states “I am not a post-feminism feminist. I am the third wave.” Walker wanted to establish that third wave feminism is not just a reaction but a movement itself, because women’s issues were far from over. Third wave feminists have broadened their goals, focusing on theory, and abolishing gender role expectations and stereotypes.

Unlike the determined position of Second wave feminists about women in pornography, sex work and prostitution, third wave feminists were rather ambiguous and divided about these themes (feminist sex wars). While some thought these sexual acts are degrading and oppressing women, others saw it as empowering that women own their sexuality. There was a division of opinion but Third wave feminism embraced differences, personal narratives and individualism instead of having one agenda. Its focus was less on political changes and more on individualistic identity. Third wave feminists wanted to transform traditional notions of sexuality and embrace “an exploration of women’s feelings about sexuality that included vagina centered topics as diverse as orgasm, birth and rape. One of Third wave feminists’ primary goals was to demonstrate that access to contraception and abortions are women’s reproductive rights. Besides Third wave feminism regarded race, social class and trans gender rights as central issues. It also paid attention to workplace matters such as glass ceiling, unfair maternity leave policies, respect for working mothers and the rights of mothers who decide to leave their careers to raise their children full time. In fact, third wave Feminism broke the boundaries.

18.5 Criticism

One issue raised by critics was a lack of cohesion because of the absence of a single cause for third wave feminism. The first wave fought for and gained the right for women to have access to an equal opportunity in the work place, as well as the end of legal sex discrimination. The Third wave allegedly lacked a cohesive goal and was often seen as an extension of the Second wave. Some argued that the third wave could be dubbed the Second wave part two when it comes to the politics of feminism. Though a number of different approaches exist in feminist criticism there exist some areas of commonality. The list is excerpted from Tyson (92).

Women are oppressed by patriarchy, politically, socially and psychologically. Patriarchal ideology is the primary means by which women are oppressed. In every domain, where patriarchy reigns, woman is other; she is marginalized, defined only by her difference from male norms and values. All of western (Anglo-European) civilization is deeply rooted in patriarchal ideology, for example, in the Biblical portrayal of Eve as the origin of sin and death in the world. While Biology determines our sex, culture determines our

gender. All feminist activity, including feminist theory and literary criticism, has as its ultimate goal to change the world by promoting gender equality.

Feminist criticism has, in many ways, followed what some theorists of the three waves of feminism had pointed out:

First Wave Feminism-late 1700 s and early 1900's writers like Mary Woolstonecraft highlight the inequalities between the sexes. Activists like Susan B. Anthony contributed to the women's suffrage movement which led to National Universal Suffrage in 1920 with the passing of the 19th Amendment. But critics considered the way novelists discriminate and marginalize the women characters here.

Second Wave Feminism The second wave of Feminism was started in the early 1960's and continued till late 1970's. It was the time when the movement of equal rights and equal working conditions for women was on peak. National organization for women was started in 1966 as a movement to create equal working conditions for women in America. Many Feminist scholars see the generational division of second wave as problematic

Third wave Feminism. Third wave was criticised for the lack of cohesion because of the absence of a single cause for third wave feminism. The third wave allegedly lacked a cohesive goal and was often seen as an extension of the second wave. One argument ran that the equation of the third wave feminism within individualism prevented the movement from growing and moving.

18.6 Conclusion

The long, and at times radically innovative, history of feminism is all too easily forgotten. When 'second-wave' feminism emerged in the late 1960s, it seemed, at the time at least, unexpected, surprising, and exciting. One big difference during the years since then has been the way Western women have become much more aware of other feminisms – not just in Europe, but across the world – that, hopefully, may challenge our cherished ideas and certainties, and undermine any complacency that we may have developed.

That wider awareness is due to a number of factors. Technical advances are certainly important: the fact, for example, that feminists in different countries can now communicate quickly and effectively, share experiences and information with large numbers of people, through the Internet. Academic feminism has played an important role in this. A great many universities, certainly in most Western countries, now run courses on women's studies, and specifically on feminism. Academic research has given us extremely valuable

insights into women's lives at other times and in other cultures, inviting us to think about differences, as well as about common causes. Academic theses, scholarly articles and texts, as well as conferences, have all helped disseminate important information about feminism across the world.

18.7 Summary

In the 20th century, we find that the first-wave' feminists had demanded civil and political equanimity. In the 1970s, 'second-wave' feminism focused on, and gave great importance to, sexual and family rights for the women. 'The personal is the political' was a popular 1970s catch word that some contemporary feminists seem to want to oppose. The political is reduced to the merely personal questions revolving around sexuality and family life – which have other greater political implications under consideration. Natasha Walter, in her work, *The New Feminism* (1998), while reinforcing that women are 'still poorer and less powerful than men', debates that the task for recent feminism is to 'attack the material basis of economic and social and political inequality'. An important point she made though she remains extremely unclear about precisely what that attack would mean. She reveals to have come up with a new idea instead of one that had been around for long, that we want to shoulder with men to change society and do not want to pit against men. After all, especially if things are to change in the family arena, there is a need for men to take on a fair share of domestic work as more and more women move out of the home. In short, we must collaborate and work with men to create a more equal society.

The long, and at times radically innovative, history of feminism is all too easily forgotten. When 'second-wave' feminism emerged in the late 1960s, it seemed, at the time at least, unexpected, surprising, exciting. One big difference during the years since then has been the way Western women have become much more aware of other feminisms – not just in Europe, but across the world – that, hopefully, may challenge our cherished ideas and certainties, and undermine any complacency that we may have developed. That wider awareness is due to a number of factors. Technical advances are certainly important: the fact, for example, that feminists in different countries can now communicate quickly and effectively, share experiences and information with large numbers of people, through the Internet. Academic feminism has played an important role in this. A great many universities, certainly in most Western countries, now run courses on women's studies, and specifically on feminism. Academic research has given us extremely valuable insights into women's lives at other times and in other cultures; inviting us to think about differences, as well as about common causes. Academic theses, scholarly articles

and texts, as well as conferences, have all helped disseminate important information about feminism across the world (Walters:2005).

Feminist history calls on us to imagine the world in new ways. It has the power to alter social relations by exposing the undeserved privileges that perpetuate long-standing social inequities. Feminism and its historical sequence will help you rethink history through the lens of feminist analysis. It explores the origins and strategies of women's activism,

Ranging through different waves and argues for the importance of valuing women in a society that has long devalued women's contributions. The nit will help your understanding of feminist history by highlighting the regulation of sexual boundaries, with an emphasis on the elasticity of both sexual identities and sexual politics (Freedman:2006).

18.8 Questions

I. Answer Briefly:

- a. What is First Wave Feminism?
- b. What is Second Wave Feminism?

II. Answer in Detail:

- a. How will you bring out the history of the emergence of Feminism in the world?
- b. How is contemporary Feminism different from its classical forms?
- c. Write a critique of the Feminist understanding of the social world.
- d. What is the post modernist feminist view on the bifurcation of the masculine and the feminine issues?

18.9 Suggested Readings

Sheila Rowbotham, *The Past is Before Us: Feminism in Action since the 1960s* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990).

Sheila Rowbotham, *A Century of Women: The History of Women in Britain and the United States* (London: Viking, 1997).

Marsha Rowe (ed.), *Spare Rib Reader* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982).

Jennifer Mather Saul, *Feminism: Issues and Arguments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Lynne Segal, *Is the Future Female? Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism* (London: Virago Press, 1987).

Lynne Segal, *Why Feminism?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

Bonnie G. Smith, *Global Feminisms since 1945* (London: Routledge, 2000).

Freedman, Estelle B, *Feminism, sexuality, and politics: Essays* (The University of North Carolina Press | Chapel Hill, 2006).

18.10 References

Chamberlin, Prudence (2017) *The Feminist Fourth wave: Affective temporarily*, Springer ISBN-9783319536828 Retrieved 27th May, 2019.

Evans Elizabeth (2015) *The Politics of Third wave Feminisms: Neo liberalism, Intersectionality and the state in Britain and the US*.

Walters, Margaret (2005) *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Natasha Walter, *The New Feminism* (London: Virago, 1999).

Naomi Wolf, *Fire with Fire* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993).

Germaine Greer, *The Whole Woman* (London: Doubleday, 1999).

18.11 Glossary

Enlightenment- The **Enlightenment** included a range of ideas centered on the sovereignty of reason and the evidence of the senses as the primary sources of knowledge and advanced ideals such as liberty, progress, toleration, fraternity, constitutional government and separation of church and state.

French Revolution- The **French Revolution** was a period of far-reaching social and political upheaval in France and its colonies beginning in 1789. The Revolution overthrew the monarchy, established a republic, catalyzed violent periods of political turmoil, and finally culminated in a dictatorship under Napoleon who brought many of its principles to areas he conquered in Western Europe and beyond.

Masculinity- **Masculinity** (also called **manhood** or **manliness**) is a set of attributes, behaviors, and roles associated with boys and men.

Although masculinity is socially constructed, some research indicates that some behaviors considered masculine are biologically influenced. To what extent masculinity is biologically or socially influenced is subject to debate

Femininity-

Femininity (also called **womanliness** or **girlishness**) is a set of attributes, behaviors, and roles generally associated with women and girls. Although femininity is socially constructed some research indicates that some behaviors considered feminine are biologically influenced. To what extent femininity is biologically or socially influenced is subject to debate. It is distinct from the definition of the biological female sex as both males and females can exhibit feminine traits.

Bourgeoisie-

Bourgeoisie is a French term that can mean sociologically-defined social class, especially in contemporary times, referring to people with a certain cultural and financial capital belonging to the middle or upper middle class: the upper, middle, and petty bourgeoisie (which are collectively designated “the bourgeoisie”); an affluent and often opulent stratum of the middle class who stand opposite the proletariat class.

Unit - 19 □ Development Varieties of Feminism

Structure

- 19.1 Objectives**
- 19.2. Introduction**
- 19.3. Varieties of Feminist Theory**
 - 19.3.1 Gender Difference (Cultural Feminism)**
 - 19.3.2 Gender Inequality (Liberal Feminism)**
 - 19.3.3 Gender Oppression (Radical Feminism)**
 - 19.3.4 Structural Oppression (Socialist Feminism)**
- 19.4. Other Varieties of Contemporary Feminist Theory**
 - 19.4.1 Black Feminism**
 - 19.4.2 Post-Structuralist Feminism**
- 19.5. Conclusion**
- 19.6. Summary**
- 19.7. Questions**
- 19.8. References**
- 19.9. Suggested readings**
- 19.10 Glossary**

19.1 Objectives

- Developing a system of ideas about human life that features women as objects and subjects, doers and knowers
- Getting to know the varieties that show four major groupings of feminist theory
- Understanding the contemporary stage of feminist scholarship which shows a self-sustaining expansion despite new conservative societal trends

19.2 Introduction

Feminism has a history as long as women's subordination—and women have been subordinated almost always and everywhere. Until the late 1700s feminist writing survived as a thin but persistent trickle of protest; from that time to the present, feminist writing has become a growing tide of critical work. While the production of feminist theory has typically expanded and contracted with societal swings between reform and retrenchment, the contemporary stage of feminist scholarship shows a self-sustaining expansion despite new conservative societal trends. Feminist theory remained on the margins of sociology, ignored by the central male formulators of the discipline until the 1970s. Since the 1970s, a growing presence of women in sociology and the momentum of the women's movement have established feminist theory as a new sociological paradigm that inspires much sociological scholarship and research.

Feminist scholarship is guided by four basic questions: What about the women? Why is women's situation as it is? How can we change and improve the social world? and What about differences among women? Answers to these questions produce the varieties of feminist theory.

19.3. Varieties of Feminist Theories

This variety shows four major groupings of feminist theory. Theories of gender difference see women's situation as different from men's, explaining this difference in terms of two distinct and enduring ways of being, male and female, or institutional roles and social interaction, or ontological constructions of woman as "other." Theories of gender inequality, notably by liberal feminists, emphasize women's claim to a fundamental right of equality and describe the unequal opportunity structures created by sexism. Gender oppression theories include feminist psychoanalytic theory and radical feminism. The former explains the oppression of women in terms of psychoanalytic descriptions of the male psychic drive to dominate; the latter, in terms of men's ability and willingness to use violence to subjugate women. Structural oppression theories include socialist feminism and intersectionality theory; socialist feminism describes oppression as arising from a patriarchal and a capitalist attempt to control social production and reproduction; intersectionality theories trace the consequences of class, race, gender, affectional preference, and global location for lived experience, group standpoints, and relations among women. At the current moment, this typology is located within the following intellectual trends:

- (1) A steady movement toward synthesis, toward critically assessing how elements of these various theories may be combined;
- (2) A shift from women's oppression to oppressive practices and structures that alter both men and women;
- (3) Tension between interpretations that emphasize culture and meaning and those that emphasize the material consequence of powers;
- (4) Finally, the fact that feminist theory is coming to be practiced as part of what Thomas Kuhn has called "normal science," that is, its assumptions are taken for granted as a starting point for empirical research.

19.3.1 Gender Difference

Theories of gender difference are currently among the oldest of feminist theories experiencing a resurgence of interest and elaboration. Although historically the concept of "difference" has been at the center of several theoretical debates in feminism, we use it here to refer to theories that describe, explain, and trace the implications of the ways in which men and women are or are not the same in behavior and experience. All theories of gender difference have to confront the problem of what usually is termed "the essentialist argument": the thesis that the fundamental differences between men and women are immutable. That immutability usually is seen as traceable to three factors: (1) biology, (2) social institutional needs for men and women to fill different roles, most especially but not exclusively in the family, and (3) the existential or phenomenological need of human beings to produce an "Other" as part of the act of self-definition. There has been some interest in sociobiology by feminist scholars, most notably Alice Rossi (1977, 1983), who have explored the thesis that human biology determines many social differences between men and women. A continuation of this feminist interest in the interaction of biology and sociocultural processes is also to be found in recent statements on new (or neo-) materialism (Ahmed, 2008; Davis, 2009; Hird, 2004). But overall the feminist response to sociobiology has been oppositional (Chancer and Palmer, 2001; Risman, 2001). Theories of gender difference important in feminist theory today issue from a range of locations: the women's movement, psychology, existential and phenomenological philosophy, sociology, and postmodernism.

Cultural Feminism

Cultural feminism is unique among theories analyzed here in that it is less focused on explaining the origins of difference and more on exploring—and even celebrating—the social value of women’s distinctive ways of being, that is, of the ways in which women are different from men. This approach has allowed cultural feminism to sidestep rather than resolve problems posed by the essentialist thesis. The essentialist argument of immutable gender difference was first used against women in male patriarchal discourse to claim that women were inferior to men and that this natural inferiority explained their social subordination. But that argument was reversed by some First Wave feminists who created a theory of cultural feminism, which extols the positive aspects of what is seen as “the female character” or “feminine personality.” Theorists such as Margaret Fuller, Frances Willard, Jane Addams, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman were proponents of a cultural feminism that argued that in the governing of the state, society needed such women’s virtues as cooperation, caring, pacifism, and nonviolence in the settlement of conflicts (Deegan and Hill, 1998; Donovan, 1985; Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, 1998). This tradition has continued to the present day in arguments about women’s distinctive standards for ethical judgment (Day, 2000; Gilligan, 1982; Held, 1993), about a mode of “caring attention” in women’s consciousness (Fisher, 1995; Reiger, 1999; Ruddick, 1980), about a female style of communication (M. Crawford, 1995; Tannen, 1990, 1993, 1994), about women’s capacity for openness to emotional experience (Beutel and Marini, 1995; Mirowsky and Ross, 1995), and about women’s lower levels of aggressive behavior and greater capacity for creating peaceful coexistence (Forcey, 2001; Ruddick, 1994; Wilson and Musick, 1997).

The theme from cultural feminism most current in contemporary literature is that developed from Carol Gilligan’s argument that women operate out of a different method of moral reasoning than men. Gilligan contrasts these two ethical styles as “the ethic of care,” which is seen as female and focuses on achieving outcomes where all parties feel that their needs are noticed and responded to, and the “ethic of justice,” which is seen as male and focuses on protecting the equal rights of all parties (Gilligan and Attanucci, 1988). Although much research is concerned with whether there are gender differences in people’s appeal to these two ethics, the more lasting influence of this research lies in the idea that an ethic of care is a moral position in the world (Orme, 2002; Reitz-Pustejovsky, 2002; F. Robinson, 2001). Despite criticism (Alcoff, 1988; Alolo, 2006) cultural feminism has wide popular appeal because it suggests that women’s ways of being and knowing may be a healthier template for producing a just society than those of an androcentric culture.

19.3.2 Gender Inequality

Four themes characterize feminist theorizing of gender inequality. Men and women are situated in society not only differently but also unequally. Women get less of the material resources, social status, power, and opportunities for self-actualization than do men who share their social location—be it a location based on class, race, occupation, ethnicity, religion, education, nationality, or any intersection of these factors.

This inequality results from the organization of society, not from any significant biological or personality differences between women and men. For although individual human beings may vary somewhat from each other in their profile of potentials and traits, no significant pattern of natural variation distinguishes the sexes. Instead, all human beings are characterized by a deep need for freedom to seek self-actualization and by a fundamental malleability that leads them to adapt to the constraints or opportunities of the situations in which they find themselves. To say that there is gender inequality, then, is to claim that women are situationally less empowered than men to realize the need they share with men for self-actualization.

All inequality theories assume that both women and men will respond fairly easily and naturally to more egalitarian social structures and situations. They affirm, in other words, that it is possible to change the situation. In this belief, theorists of gender inequality contrast with the theorists of gender difference, who present a picture of social life in which gender differences are, whatever their cause, more durable, more penetrative of personality, and less easily changed.

Liberal Feminism

The major expression of gender inequality theory is liberal feminism, which argues that women may claim equality with men on the basis of an essential human capacity for reasoned moral agency, that gender inequality is the result of a sexist patterning of the division of labor, and that gender equality can be produced by transforming the division of labor through the re-patterning of key institutions—law, work, family, education, and media (Bem, 1993; Friedan, 1963; Lorber, 1994; Pateman, 1999; A. Rossi, 1964; Schaeffer, 2001). Historically the first element in the liberal feminist argument is the claim for gender equality. This claim was first politically articulated in the Declaration of Sentiments drafted at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 with the express purpose of paralleling and expanding the Declaration of Independence to include women. It opens with the revisionist line “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all man and women are created equal”, changes the list of grievances to focus on women’s state, and concludes with a call for

women to do whatever is required to gain equal rights with men. In its arguments, the Declaration of Sentiments let the women's movement lay claim to the intellectual discourses of the Enlightenment, the American and French revolutions, and the abolitionist movement. It claimed for women the rights accorded to all human beings under natural law, on the basis of the human capacity for reason and moral agency; asserted that laws which denied women their right to happiness were "contrary to the great precept of nature and of no authority"; and called for change in law and custom to allow women to assume their equal place in society. The denial of those rights by governments instituted by men violates natural law and is the tyrannical working out of multiple practices of sexism. The radical nature of this foundational document is that it conceptualizes the woman not in the context of home and family but as an autonomous individual with rights in her own person (DuBois, 1973/1995).

Liberal feminism, thus, rests on the beliefs that (1) all human beings have certain essential features—capacities for reason, moral agency, and self-actualization—(2) the exercise of these capacities can be secured through legal recognition of universal rights, (3) the inequalities between men and women assigned by sex are social constructions having no basis in "nature," and (4) social change for equality can be produced by an organized appeal to a reasonable public and the use of the state.

Contemporary liberal feminism has expanded to include a global feminism that confronts racism in North Atlantic societies and works for "the human rights of women" everywhere. And this discourse has continued to express many of its foundational statements in organizational documents such as the National Organization for Women's Statement of Purpose and the Beijing Declaration. These organizational statements of purpose rely on an informing theory of human equality as a right that the state—local, national, international—must respect. These arguments are being freshly invoked in debates with the political right over reproductive freedom (Bordo, 1993; Solinger, 1998), in debates with postmodernists over the possibility and utility of formulating principles of rights (K. Green, 1995; A. Phillips, 1993; P. Williams, 1991), and in feminist considerations of the gendered character of liberal democratic theory and practice (Haney, 1996; Hirschmann and Di Stefano, 1996; A. Phillips, 1993; Thistle, 2002).

Liberal feminists' agenda for change is consistent with their analyses of the basis for claiming equality and the causes of inequality: they wish to eliminate gender as an organizing principle in the distribution of social "goods," and they are willing to invoke universal principles in their pursuit of equality (Sallee, 2008). Some recent writings even argue for the elimination of gender categories themselves (Lorber, 2000, 2001). Liberal feminists

pursue change through law—legislation, litigation, and regulation—and through appeal to the human capacity for reasoned moral judgments, that is, the capacity of the public to be moved by arguments for fairness. They argue for equal educational and economic opportunities; equal responsibility for the activities of family life; the elimination of sexist messages in family, education, and mass media; and individual challenges to sexism in daily life. Liberal feminists have worked through legislative change to ensure equality in education and to bar job discrimination; they have monitored regulatory agencies charged with enforcing this legislation; they have mobilized themselves to have sexual harassment in the workplace legally defined as “job discrimination”; and they have demanded both “pay equity” (equal pay for equal work) and “comparable worth” (equal pay for work of comparable value) (Acker, 1989; England, 1992; R. Rosenberg, 1992).

For liberal feminists, the ideal gender arrangement would be one in which each individual acting as a free and responsible moral agent chooses the lifestyle most suitable to her or him and has that choice accepted and respected, be it for housewife or househusband, unmarried careerist or part of a dual-income family, childless or with children, heterosexual or homosexual. Liberal feminists see this ideal as one that would enhance the practice of freedom and equality, central cultural ideals in America. Liberal feminism, then, is consistent with the dominant American ethos in its basic acceptance of democracy and capitalism, its reformist orientation, and its appeal to the values of individualism, choice, responsibility, and equality of opportunity.

19.3.4 Gender Oppression

Theories of gender oppression describe women’s situation as the consequence of a direct power relationship between men and women in which men have fundamental and concrete interests in controlling, using, and oppressing women—that is, in the practice of domination. By domination, oppression theorists mean any relationship in which one party (individual or collective), the dominant, succeeds in making the other party (individual or collective), the subordinate, an instrument of the dominant’s will.

Instrumentality, by definition, is understood as involving the denial of the subordinate’s independent subjectivity (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, 1995). Women’s situation, for theorists of gender oppression, is centrally that of being dominated and oppressed by men. This pattern of gender oppression is incorporated in the deepest and most pervasive ways into society’s organization, a basic arrangement of domination most commonly called patriarchy, in which society is organized to privilege men in all aspects of social life. Patriarchy is not the unintended and secondary consequence of some other set of

factors—be it biology or socialization or sex roles or the class system. It is a primary power arrangement sustained by strong and deliberate intention. Indeed, to theorists of gender oppression, gender differences and gender inequality are by-products of patriarchy.

Radical Feminism

Radical feminism is based on two emotionally charged central beliefs: (1) that women are of absolute positive value as women, a belief asserted against what they claim to be the universal devaluing of women, and (2) that women are everywhere oppressed—violently oppressed—by the system of patriarchy (Bunch, 1987; Chesler, 1994; Daly, 1973; C. Douglas, 1990; Dworkin, 1989; Echols, 1989; French, 1992; Frye, 1983; Hunnicutt, 2009; MacKinnon, 1989, 1993; Monrow, 2007; Rhodes, 2005; Rich, 1976, 1980). With passion and militance similar to the “black power” cry of African-American mobilization and the “witnessing” by Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, radical feminists elaborate a theory of social organization, gender oppression, and strategies for change.

Radical feminists see in every institution and in society’s most basic stratificational arrangements—heterosexuality, class, caste, race, ethnicity, age, and gender—systems of domination and subordination, the most fundamental structure of which is the system of patriarchy. Not only is patriarchy historically the first structure of domination and submission, it continues as the most pervasive and enduring system of inequality, the basic societal model of domination (Lerner, 1986). Through participation in patriarchy, men learn how to hold other human beings in contempt, to see them as nonhuman, and to control them. Within patriarchy men see and women learn what subordination looks like. Patriarchy creates guilt and repression, sadism and masochism, manipulation and deception, all of which drive men and women to other forms of tyranny. Patriarchy, to radical feminists, is the least noticed yet the most significant structure of social inequality.

Central to this analysis is the image of patriarchy as violence practiced by men and by male-dominated organizations against women. Violence may not always take the form of overt physical cruelty. It can be hidden in more complex practices of exploitation and control: in standards of fashion and beauty; in tyrannical ideals of motherhood, monogamy, chastity, and heterosexuality; in sexual harassment in the workplace; in the practices of gynecology, obstetrics, and psychotherapy; and in unpaid household drudgery and underpaid wage work (MacKinnon, 1979; Rich, 1976, 1980; L. Roth, 1999; B. Thompson, 1994; N. Wolf, 1991). Violence exists whenever one group controls in its own interests the life chances, environments, actions, and perceptions of another group, as men do to women. Patriarchy exists as a near-universal social form because men can muster the most

basic power resource, physical force, to establish control. Once patriarchy is in place, the other power resources—economic, ideological, legal, and emotional—also can be marshaled to sustain it. But physical violence always remains its base, and in both interpersonal and intergroup relations, that violence is used to protect patriarchy from women's individual and collective resistance.

How is patriarchy to be defeated? Radicals hold that this defeat must begin with a basic reworking of women's consciousness so that each woman recognizes her own value and strength; rejects patriarchal pressures to see herself as weak, dependent, and second-class; and works in unity with other women, regardless of differences among them, to establish a broad-based sisterhood of trust, support, appreciation, and mutual defense (Chasteen, 2001; McCaughey, 1997; Whitehead, 2007). With this sisterhood in place, two strategies suggest themselves: a critical confrontation with any facet of patriarchal domination whenever it is encountered and a degree of separatism as women withdraw into women-run businesses, households, communities, centers of artistic creativity, and lesbian love relationships. Lesbian feminism, as a major strand in radical feminism, is the practice and belief that "erotic and/or emotional commitment to women is part of resistance to patriarchal domination" (Phelan, 1994; Rudy, 2001; Taylor and Rupp, 1993).

19.3.4 Structural Oppression

Structural oppression theories, like gender oppression theories, recognize that oppression results from the fact that some groups of people derive direct benefits from controlling, using, and subjugating other groups of people. Structural oppression theorists analyze how interests in domination are enacted through social structure, here understood as those recurring and routinized large-scale arrangements of social relations that arise out of history, and are always arrangements of power. These theorists focus on the structures of patriarchy, capitalism, racism, and heterosexism, and they locate enactments of domination and experiences of oppression in the interplay of these structures, that is, in the way they mutually reinforce each other. Structural oppression theorists do not absolve or deny the agency of individual dominants, but they examine how that agency is the product of structural arrangements. In this section we look at two types of structural oppression theory: socialist feminism and intersectionality theory.

Socialist Feminism

The theoretical project of socialist feminism develops around three goals: (1) to achieve a critique of the distinctive yet interrelated oppressions of patriarchy and capitalism from a standpoint in women's experience, (2) to develop explicit and adequate methods for social analysis out of an expanded understanding of historical materialism, and (3) to incorporate an understanding of the significance of ideas into a materialist analysis of the determination of human affairs. Socialist feminists have set themselves the formal project of achieving both a synthesis of and a theoretical step beyond other feminist theories, most specifically Marxian and radical feminist thought (Acker, 2008; Eisenstein, 1979; Fraser, 1989, 1997; Fraser and Bedford, 2008; Gimenez, 2005; Hartsock, 1983; Hennessey and Ingraham, 1997; Jackson, 2001; MacKinnon, 1989; Dorothy Smith, 1979, 1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2004a, 2009; Vogel, 1995).

Socialist feminists accept the Marxian analysis of capitalism's class relations as an explication of one major structure of oppression. But they reject the Marxian analysis of patriarchy as a by-product of the same economic production. Instead they endorse the radical feminist argument that patriarchy, while interacting with economic conditions, is an independent structure of oppression. Socialist feminism sets out to bring together these dual knowledges—knowledge of oppression under capitalism and of oppression under patriarchy—into a unified explanation of all forms of social oppression. One term used to try to unify these two oppressions is capitalist patriarchy (Eisenstein, 1979; Hartmann, 1979; A. Kuhn and Wolpe, 1978). But the term perhaps more widely used is domination, defined above (under "Gender Oppression") as a relationship in which one party, the dominant, succeeds in making the other party, the subordinate, an instrument of the dominant's will, refusing to recognize the subordinate's independent subjectivity. Socialist feminism's explanations of oppression present domination as a large-scale structural arrangement, a power relation between categories of social actors that is reproduced by the willful and intentional actions of individual actors. Women are central to socialist feminism as the primary topic for analysis, and as the essential vantage point on domination in all its forms. But these theorists are concerned with all experiences of oppression, both by women and by men. They also explore how some women, themselves oppressed, actively participate in the oppression of other women, for example, privileged-class women in American society who oppress poor women (Eisenstein, 1994; Hochschild, 2000).

19.4. Other Varieties of Contemporary Feminist Theory

Let us discuss some other varieties of feminism in this connection. These are of prime importance in this regard.

19.4.1 Black Feminism

Black feminists point out that while gender may be the main source of oppression experienced by white, middle class women, black women are typically oppressed by their race and class as well. What is a source of oppression for white women may be a source of liberation for blacks ; whereas the family can be the principal instrument of subordination for white women, it can be a haven from a racist outside world for blacks. White women are often the racist oppressors, which hardly equates with the concept of 'sisterhood'- women's solidarity. When white women talk of the need to expand opportunities for women to work in the labor market in order to liberate themselves from the stranglehold of domesticity, they do not usually mean the kind of work many black women are forced to do, since most black women are working class. Preoccupation among some white feminists is profoundly irrelevant for many women in the third world, where poverty and starvation, lack of education are ubiquitous.

19.4.2 Post-structural Feminism

In the case of Post-structural Feminism it has led its proponents to explore the implications of the use of the category 'women' in feminist analysis. In practice this means questioning whether feminism is correct to claim it speaks on behalf of all human beings who are called women. According to Butler(1990), problems arise if we assume that being called a woman indicates a life being led in a common set of circumstances and with a common set of experiences. Furthermore, there are also problems if it is assumed that 'women' all have a similar sense of themselves- that all women share a common identity. She points out that while it is useful at times to highlight the common interests of women over a specific issue, for example, over the question of equal pay, assumptions of a shared core identity between women usually backfires on feminism. Once feminism claims to be speaking for all women, a process of resistance and division almost always sets in among the very women feminism is supposed to be unifying. Butler suggests that rather than trying to make the category of women the fixed point at the center of feminism, feminist theory should encourage a flexible, open-ended exploration of what it means to be a woman. In this light, different experiences and attitudes among women are valued as sources of richness and diversity that help to empower, rather than undermine feminism.

19.5. Conclusion

For most of the time that sociological theorists debated the nature of modern society, a source of disadvantage experienced by half the world's population went unattended. The assumption was that the world as experienced by men was the same as that experienced by women. It was not until the political clamour of the 1960's and the renewed vigor of a woman's movement which originated at the turn of the century to secure the vote, that feminist theorizing became established as an indispensable part of sociology. During this so-called 'second wave of feminism', sociological theories began to be constructed to explain the specific experiences of women and to point out the societal route to female emancipation and fulfillment. Purpose of feminism has been to show how the acquisition of an understanding of the social conditions in which women live their lives open up the opportunity to reconstruct their world and thereby offer them the prospect of freedom. Feminist theory offers five key propositions as a basis for the revision of standard sociological theories. First, the practice of sociological theory must be based in a sociology of knowledge that recognizes the partiality of all knowledge, the knower as embodied and socially located, and the function of power in effecting what becomes knowledge. Second, macro social structures are based in processes controlled by dominants acting in their own interests and executed by subordinates whose work is made largely invisible and undervalued even to themselves by dominant ideology.

19.6 Summary

Thus, dominants appropriate and control the productive work of society, including not only economic production but also women's work of social reproduction. Micro-interactional processes in society are enactments of these dominant-subordinate power arrangements, enactments very differently interpreted by powerful actors and subordinate actors. These conditions create in women's subjectivity a bifurcated consciousness along the line of fault caused by the juxtaposition of patriarchal ideology and women's experience of the actualities of their lives. Thus what has been said for women may be applicable to all subordinate peoples in some parallel, though not identical, form.

19.7 Questions

- a) What are the main contributions of feminism to the contemporary lifestyle?
- b) Discuss the main currents of feminism- black, radical and others.
- c) Evaluate the obstacles faced by feminists in recent times.
- d) Hatred to men : a myth or a real threat of feminism? Justify with reasons.

19.8 References

- Brunell, Laura; Burkett, Elinor. "Feminism". *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Retrieved 21 May 2019.
- Lengermann, Patricia; Niebrugge, Gillian (2010). "Feminism". In Ritzer, G.; Ryan, J.M. (eds.). *The Concise Encyclopedia of Sociology*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 223. ISBN 978-1-40-518353-6.
- Mendus, Susan (2005) [1995]. "Feminism". In Honderich, Ted (ed.). *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press. pp. 291–294. ISBN 978-0199264797.
- Hawkesworth, Mary E. (2006). *Globalization and Feminist Activism*. Rowman& Littlefield. pp. 25–27. ISBN 9780742537835.
- Beasley, Chris (1999). *What is Feminism?*. New York: Sage. pp. 3–11. ISBN 9780761963356.
- Gamble, Sarah (2006) [1998]. "Introduction". In Gamble, Sarah (ed.). *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism*. London and New York: Routledge. p. vii.
- Echols, Alice (1989). *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967–1975*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. ISBN 978-0-8166-1787-6.
- Roberts, Jacob (2017). "Women's work". *Distillations*. Vol. 3 no. 1. pp. 6–11. Retrieved 22 March 2018.
- Messer-Davidow, Ellen (2002). *Disciplining Feminism: From Social Activism to Academic Discourse*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. ISBN 978-0-8223-2843-8.
- Hooks, bell (2000). *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press. ISBN 978-0-89608-629-6.
- Chodorow, Nancy (1989). *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press. ISBN 978-0-300-05116-2.
- Gilligan, Carol (1977). "In a Different Voice: Women's Conceptions of Self and of Morality". *Harvard Educational Review*. 47 (4): 481–517. doi:10.17763/haer.47.4.g6167429416hg510. Retrieved 8 June 2008.
- Weedon, Chris (2002). "Key Issues in Postcolonial Feminism: A Western Perspective". *Gender Forum* (1). Archived from the original on 3 December 2013.

Goldstein, Leslie F. (1982). "Early Feminist Themes in French Utopian Socialism: The St.-Simonians and Fourier". *Journal of the History of Ideas*. 43 (1): 91–108. doi:10.2307/2709162. JSTOR 2709162.

19.9. Suggested readings

Butler, J. "Introduction: Acting in Concert." In *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004. pp. 1-16.

Fausto-Sterling, A. "The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough," *The Sciences* 33(2), 1993: 20-24.

Haslanger, Sally. "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?" *Noûs* 34(1), 2000: 31-55.

Cudd, A. *Analyzing Oppression*. Chapters 3 and 7: "Psychological Mechanisms of Oppression" and "Resistance and Responsibility" (total 60 pages)

Frye, M. "Oppression," and Sexism." In her *The Politics of Reality: Essays in feminist theory*. Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 1983. pp. 1-40.

Young, I. M. "Five Faces of Oppression," *Philosophical Forum* 19 (4), 1988.

19.10 Glossary

Intersectional feminism: If feminism is advocating for women's rights and equality between the sexes, intersectional feminism is the understanding of how women's overlapping identities — including race, class, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and disability status — impact the way they experience oppression and discrimination.

Trans-feminism: Defined as "a movement by and for trans women who view their liberation to be intrinsically linked to the liberation of all women and beyond." It's a form of feminism that includes all self-identified women, regardless of assigned sex, and challenges cisgender privilege. A central tenet is that individuals have the right to define who they are.

Equity feminism (conservative feminism): Christina Hoff Sommers, a resident scholar at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, is a champion of what she calls "equity feminism." In her view, "equity feminism" is focused on legal equality between men and women, while "gender feminism" focuses on disempowering women by portraying them as perpetual victims of the patriarchy. In the words of

President Trump's advisor Kellyanne Conway: "I look at myself as a product of my choices, not a victim of my circumstances, and that's really to me what conservative feminism, if you will, is all about."

First wave feminism: Kicked off with the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention to discuss the "social, civil, and religious condition of woman" and continued into the early twentieth century. It culminated in 1920 with the passage of the 19th amendment, which gave women the right to vote, though some states made it difficult for women of color to exercise this right until well into the 1960s.

Second wave feminism: Began in the 1960s and bloomed in the 1970s with a push for greater equality. Think Gloria Steinem, Dorothy Pittman Hughes, Betty Friedan. It was marked by huge gains for women in legal and structural equality.

Third-wave feminism: Beginning in the 1990s, it looked to make feminism more inclusive, intersectional and to allow women to define what being a feminist means to them personally.

Notes
