SCHOOLS OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY - I
(SOC2C05)

STUDY MATERIAL

II SEMESTER
CORE COURSE

M.A. SOCIOLOGY
(2019 Admission onwards)

UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION
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School of Distance Education
University of Calicut

STUDY MATERIAL
FIRST SEMESTER

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CORE COURSE:

SOC2C05 : SCHOOLS OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY - I

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SEMESTER II

CORE COURSE

NO. OF CREDITS: 5

SOC2C05 SCHOOLS OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY I

Objectives

1. To familiarize with various schools of sociological theory

2. To enable a critical examination of the major schools of thought

3. To help recognize the utility and relevance of the theoretical premises

MODULE 1 STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION IN SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

1.1 Social anthropological tradition: Malinowski , Radcliffe-Brown

1.2 Empirical functionalism: Robert K. Merton

1.3 Analytical Functionalism: Talcott Parsons

1.4 Linguistic Tradition: Ferdinande de Saussure, Structuralism of Claude Levi-Strauss

MODULE 2 CONFLICT THEORY

2.1 Conflict Perspective: Influence of Marx, Weber and Simmel

2.2 The Dialectical Conflict Theory: Ralph Dahrendorf

2.3 The Conflict Functionalism: Lewis A. Coser

2.4 Conflict and Geopolitical Theory: Randall Collins

MODULE 3 SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

3.1   Theory of Mind, Self and Society: G.H.Mead

3.2   Theory of Looking Glass self: C.H.Cooley

3.3   Interpretative approach: Herbert Blumer

3.4   Dramaturgical Analysis: Erving Goffman

MODULE 4 PHENOMENOLOGY

4.1   The idea of Phenomenology: Edmund Husserl

4.2   Phenomenological Interactionism: Alfred Schutz

4.3   Social Construction of Reality: Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann

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MODULE 1

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION IN SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Chapter outline

1.1 **Social anthropological tradition: Malinowski , Radcliffe-Brown**

1.2 **Empirical functionalism: Robert K. Merton**

1.3 **Analytical Functionalism: Talcott Parsons**

1.4 **Linguistic Tradition: Ferdinande de Saussure, Structuralism of Claude Levi-Strauss**

Introduction

In this paper we will start with the understanding of modern sociological theories. As a theoretical perspective functionalism emphasizes on the positive contributions made by any given social arrangement (e.g., institutions, cultural values, norms, rites, and so forth) to the current operation and continued reproduction of society and its cultural pattern. Its classical root rested heavily on the theory of analogy between societies and biological organisms developed by Spencer. Functionalists also regularly couple the use of analogical reasoning with a claim to the objective analysis of society through the use of scientific methods and have linked their theorizing to one or another form of positivism in philosophy.

According to classical theories, Functionalism emphasized on the functional relation between political, economic, religious, and moral phenomena. They argued that changes in any one of these spheres would bring out corresponding changes in other spheres. They asserted that discovering these correspondences or interrelationships between the various social phenomena was the aim of sociology.

The Origins of Functionalism

The classical root of functionalism lies in the works of Comte, Spencer and Durkheim. Functionalism as a mode of thinking arose in Europe in the 18th 19th century. Auguste Comte revived analogies made by the Greeks and, closer to his time, by Hobbes and Rousseau that society is a kind of organism. In so doing, Comte effectively linked sociology with the prestige of biological science. For functional theory, then, society is like a biological organism that grows, and as a consequence, its parts can been examined with respect to how they operate (or function) to maintain the viability of the body social as it grows and develops.

As Comte emphasized, there is a ''true correspondence between Statical Analysis of the Social Organism in Sociology, and that of the Individual Organism in Biology''. Moreover, Comte went so far as to ''decompose structure anatomically into *elements, tissues*, and *organs*'' and to ''treat the Social Organism as definitely composed of the Families which are the true elements or cells, next the Classes or Castes which are its proper tissues, and lastly, of the cities and

Communes which are its real organs''. Yet, since these analogies were not systematically pursued by Comte, his main contribution was to give sociology its name and to reintroduce organismic reasoning into the new science of society.

Turner (2007) cites the "organicism of Auguste Comte", the father of sociology who approached the question through the scientific lens of looking for social laws. Similar to natural laws, Comte believed that social phenomena expressed law-like tendencies, studying which explanation of society was possible. Though Comte himself did not identify himself as a functionalist, his comparison of elements of society (like families) to cells and tissues whose proper functioning leads to the maintenance of the "social organism"- makes him a key associate and one of the founders of functionalism, according to Turner (2007:40).

Herbert Spencer also contributed to the development of functionalism by comparing societies to an organism and generated "requisite functionalism" as Turner (2007) calls it. This implies that social structures reveal certain „universal requisites that must be fulfilled in order for them to adapt to an environment" (Turner 2007:43). The key idea of functionalism was that - social processes and structures have certain „requisites" or needs that must be met for social order to be possible. Emile Durkheim's functionalism was most explicit in his work *The Division of Labor in Society* in which he illustrates how specialized organs (institutions) of the society (the modern, industrial or "organic" society) work in tandem to bring about social order. Through his concepts of 'normal' and

'pathological' he demonstrated how social order is disrupted when the parts of the social body deviate from their adaptive roles. 'Social systems have needs that must be fulfilled if "abnormal" states are to be avoided' (Turner 2007: 45).

In the anthropological tradition, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and Bronislaw Malinowski's names are associated for their contribution to functional school of thought. From Durkheimian functional analysis of structures, they found answers to the intellectual challenges faced by anthropology at that time. Turner claims that it was Malinowski who "extended Durkheim and Radcliffe- Brown's limited functional orientation into directions that were to be adopted by the first sociological functionalists of the 1940s and early 1950s" (Turner and Maryanski 1988). These anthropologists were introduced to sociology for the first time by Merton at Harvard University, America. According to Turner, American sociology was not developed as to deal with questions of total social systems and it was through these European influences that functionalism 'took hold' in sociology and a revival of it was seen in works of Parsons and Merton. Functionalism held great significance in the 1940s to the early 60s.

1.1 Social anthropological tradition: Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown

Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown are two prominent British Social Anthropologists. They played an important role in the development of functional theorization. As we know, anthropological tradition of Functionalism emerged in the first

quarter of the 20th century. In the year 1922 Alfred Radcliffe-Brown's *The Andaman Islanders* and Bronisław Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* were published.   According to them, individual action and behaviour cannot be understood or explained independently of the wider social system, within which are embedded collective practices and beliefs. In other words, the diverse elements of social life depend upon each other and exist to fulfill functions that contribute towards the maintenance of the social order and its reproduction.

Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942)

Bronislaw Malinowski, a brilliant Polish scientist turned anthropologist, founded the functionalist school in Britain. He was one of the founding fathers of British social anthropology. He did his honors in subjects like mathematics, physics and philosophy and in 1910 he enrolled in the London School of Economics to study anthropology. With Radcliffe-Brown, Malinowski pushed for a paradigm shift in British Anthropology that brought a change from the historical to the present study of social institutions. This theoretical shift gave rise to functionalism and established fieldwork as the constitutive experience of social anthropology.

This marked a turning point in the history of social anthropology because under Malinowski's leadership, functionalism was firmly grounded into the directly observable and scientifically collected information (empirical reality) about society and its institutions. Malinowski's functionalism was greatly influential in the 1920s and 1930s. As applied

methodology, this approach worked, except for situations of social or cultural change. However, Malinowski made his greatest contribution as an ethnographer. He also considered the importance of studying social behavior and social relations in their concrete cultural contexts through participant-observation. He considered it essential to consider the observable differences between what people say they do and what they actually do. His work made a radical shift in the anthropological knowledge productions. They are,

1) Arm-chair anthropology to fieldwork-based studies;

2) The study of the origin and stages of evolution of society and its institutions (diachronic studies) to society 'here and now' (synchronic studies);

3) The study of the entire societies and cultures (macro approach) to the study of particular societies, especially the small-scale societies (micro approach); and

4) An understanding of society confined to a theoretical level to putting the knowledge of society 'here and now' to practical use, to bring about desired changes in society.

Rather than remaining just an 'academic study of the oddities of society' — different and bizarre customs and practices — the knowledge we have acquired should be used for improving upon the conditions of people, for improving upon the relations of local people with the outside world. Incidentally, Malinowski called this concern of anthropology 'practical anthropology'.

However, Malinowski made his greatest contribution as an ethnographer. He emphasized the importance of studying social behavior and social relations in their concrete cultural contexts through participant-observation. He considered it crucial to consider the observable differences between norms and action; between what people say they do and what they actually do. His detailed descriptions of Trobriand social life and thought are among the most comprehensive in world ethnography and his Argonauts of the Western Pacific (1922) is one of the most widely read works of anthropology. Malinowski's enduring conceptual contributions lay in the areas of: kinship and marriage (e.g., the concept of "sociological paternity"); in magic, ritual language and myth (e.g., the idea of "myth as social charter"); and in economic anthropology (notably the concept of "reciprocity") (Young 1991:445).

Radcliffe-Brown

Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955) was a founding father of functionalism associated with the branch known as structural-functionalism. He attended Cambridge where he studied moral science, which incorporated philosophy, economics and psychology. It was during this time that he earned the nick-name "Anarchy Brown" because of his political interests and affiliations. After completing his degree in 1904, he conducted fieldwork in the Andaman Islands and Western Australia.

Radcliffe-Brown's emphasis on examining the contribution of phenomena to the maintenance of the social structure

reflects the influence of French sociologist Emile Durkheim (Winthrop 1991:129). He particularly focused on the institutions of kinship and descent and suggested that, at least in tribal societies, they determined the character of family organization, politics, economy, and inter-group relations (Winthrop 1991:130).

The primary starting points of Malinowski's theorizing included: 1) understanding behavior in terms of the motivation of individuals, including both rational, 'scientifically' validated behavior and 'irrational', ritual, magical, or religious behavior; 2) recognizing the interconnectedness of the different items which constituted a 'culture' to form some kind of system; and 3) understanding a particular item by identifying its function in the current contemporary operation of that culture (Firth 1957:55). The inclusiveness of Malinowski's concept of culture is apparent in his statement:

"It obviously is the integral whole consisting of implements and consumers' goods, of constitutional charters for the various social groupings, of human ideas and crafts, beliefs and customs. Whether we consider a very simple or primitive culture or an extremely complex and developed one, we are confronted by a vast apparatus, partly material, partly human and partly spiritual by which man is able to cope with the concrete specific problems that face him" (Malinowski 1944:36).

Essentially, he treated culture as everything pertaining to human life and action that cannot be regarded as a property

of the human organism considered as a physiological system. In other words, he treated it as a direct manifestation of biologically inherited patterns of behavior. Culture is that aspect of behavior that is learned by the individual and which may be shared by pluralities of individuals. It is transmitted to other individuals along with the physical objects associated with learned patterns and activities (Firth 1957:58). Malinowski clearly states his view of a functionalist approach to understanding culture in his posthumously published text, *The Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*:

1. Culture is essentially an instrumental apparatus by which man is put in a position to better cope with the concrete, specific problems that face him in his environment in the course of the satisfaction of his needs.

2. It is a system of objects, activities, and attitudes in which every part exists as a means to an end.

3. It is an integral in which the various elements are interdependent.

4. Such activities, attitudes and objects are organized around important and vital tasks into institutions such as family, the clan, the local community, the tribe, and the organized teams of economic cooperation, political, legal, and educational activity.

5. From the dynamic point of view, that is, as regards the type of activity, culture can be analyzed into a number of aspects such as education, social control, economics,

systems of knowledge, belief, and morality, and also modes of creative and artistic expression" (1944:150).

Malinowski considered institutions to be examples of isolated (in the sense of 'bounded') organized behaviors. Since such behavior always involves a plurality of persons, an institution in this sense is therefore a social system, which is a subsystem of society. Though functionally differentiated from other institutions, an institution is a segmentary cross-section of culture that involves all the components included in Malinowski's definition of culture (Firth 1957:59). Malinowski believed that the central feature of the charter of an institution is "the system of values for the pursuit of which human beings organize, or enter organizations already existing" (Malinowski 1944:52).

As for the concept of function, Malinowski believed it is the primary basis of differentiation of institutions within the same culture. In other words, institutions differ because they are organized to serve different functions. He argued that institutions function for continuing life and "normality" of an organism, or an aggregate of organisms as a species (Firth 1957:60). Indeed, for Malinowski, the primary reference of the concept of function was to a theory of the biological needs of the individual organism:

"It is clear, I think, that any theory of culture has to start from the organic needs of man, and if it succeeds in relating (to them) the more complex, indirect, but perhaps fully imperative needs of the type which we call spiritual or

economic or social, it will supply us with a set of general laws such as we need in sound scientific theory" (Malinowski 1944:72-73).

Malinowski's basic theoretical attempt was to derive the main characteristics of the society and its social systems from a theory of the causally pre-cultural needs of the organism. He believed that culture is always instrumental to the satisfaction of organic needs. Therefore, he had to bridge the gap between the concept of biologically basic needs of the organism and the facts of culturally organized behavior. His first major step was to set up the classification of basic needs which could be directly related to a classification of cultural responses which could then in turn be brought into relation to institutions. Next, he developed a second category of needs (derived needs) which he inserted between his basic needs and the institutional integrates of collective behavior (Firth 1957:63).

Radcliffe-Brown's emphasis on social function is derived from the influence of the French sociological school. This school developed in the 1890s around the work of Emile Durkheim who argued that "social phenomena constitute a domain, or order, of reality that is independent of psychological and biological facts. Social phenomena, therefore, must be explained in terms of other social phenomena, and not by reference to psychobiological needs, drives, impulses, and so forth" (Broce 1973:39-40).

Emile Durkheim argued that ethnographers should study the function of social institutions and how they function

together to maintain the social whole (Broce 1973:39-40). Radcliffe-Brown shared this emphasis of studying the conditions under which social structures are maintained. He also believed that the functioning of societies, like that of other natural systems, is governed by laws that can be discovered though systematic comparison (Broce 1873:40). It is important to note here that Firth postulated the necessity of distinguishing between social structure and social organization. Social structure "is the principle(s) on which the forms of social relations depend. Social organization refers to the directional activity, to the working out of social relations in everyday life" (Watson-Gegeo 1991:198).

Radcliffe-Brown established an analogy between social life and organic life to explain the concept of function. He emphasized the contribution of phenomena to maintaining social order. However, Radcliffe-Brown's disregard for individual needs was apparent in this analogy. He argued that as long as a biological organism lives, it preserves the continuity of structure, but not preserve the unity of its constituent parts. That is, over a period of time, while the constituent cells do not remain the same, the structural arrangement of the constituent units remains similar. He suggested that human beings, as essential units, are connected by a set of social relations into an integrated whole. Like the biological organism, the continuity of the social structure is not destroyed by changes in the units.

Although individuals may leave the society by death or other means, other individuals may enter it. Therefore, the

continuity is maintained by the process of social life, which consists of the activities and interactions of individual human beings and of organized groups into which they are united. The social life of a community is the functioning of the social structure. The function of any recurrent activity is the part it plays in the social life as a whole and thereby, the contribution it makes to structural continuity (Radcliffe-Brown 1952:178).

Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski formulated distinct versions of functionalism, yet the emphasis on the differences between them obscures their fundamental similarities and complementarily. Both viewed society as structured into a working unity in which the parts accommodate one another in a way that maintains the whole. Thus, the function of a custom or institution is the contribution it makes to the maintenance of the entire system of which it is a part. On the whole, sociocultural systems function to provide their members with adaptations to environmental circumstances and to connect them in a network of stable social relationships. This is not to say that functionalists failed to recognize internal social conflict or other forms of disequilibrium. However, they did believe that societies strongly tend to maintain their stability and internal cohesion as if societies had homeostatic qualities (Broce 1973:38-39).

The functionalists also shared an emphasis on intensive fieldwork, involving participant-observation. This methodological emphasis has resulted in a series of excellent monographs on native societies. In large part, the quality of these monographs may be attributed to their theoretical

framework, since the investigation of functional interrelationships of customs and institutions provides an especially fruitful perspective for the collection of information.

In their analysis, the functionalists attempted to interpret societies as they operated in a single point in time, or as they operate over a relatively short period of time**.** This was not because the functionalists opposed, in principle, the study of history. Instead, it was a consequence of their belief that very little reliable information could be secured about the long-term histories of primitive peoples. Their rejection of the conjectural reconstructions of the evolutionists and the diffusionists was based largely on this conviction (Broce 1973:39).

1.2 Analytical Functionalism: Talcott Parsons

Before going in to Talcott Parsons works and his theoretical contributions to functional analysis we just have to his biographical and professional context in which he developed his perspective. He was born in Colorado in 1902. His father was a (Protestant) Congregational minister who served on the faculty and as dean at Colorado College; the family emphasized a modest and disciplined lifestyle. Parsons completed his undergraduate education at Amherst College (in Massachusetts), and subsequently studied at the London School of Economics (LSE), and the University of Heidelberg (Germany), where he received his PhD, based on his analysis of capitalism in German thought (including Weber's).

In 1927, Parsons became an instructor in the Department of Economics at Harvard University; he

transferred in 1930 to the newly created Sociology Department, where he eventually received tenure, and subsequently was a founding member of Harvard's interdisciplinary Department of Social Relations, which combined sociology, cultural anthropology, and social psychology. Parsons married Helen Walker, whom he had met while at the LSE, and they had three children. He remained at Harvard until his death in 1979. During his lifetime, Parsons received many national and international awards and honors, and served as president of the American Sociological Association (1949–1950)

Talcott Parsons's theoretical contributions to structural-functional theory came in the early 1950s in several works, most notably *The Social System* (1951). In *The Social System* he focused on the structures of society and their relationship to each other. Those structures were seen as mutually supportive and tending toward a dynamic equilibrium. And his emphasis was on how order was maintained among the various elements of society. According to Parsons, change can be seen as an orderly process, and he adopted a neoevolutionary view of social change. Parsons was concerned not only with the social system per se but also with its relationship to the other *action systems,* especially the cultural and personality systems. But his basic view on intersystemic relations was essentially the same as his view of intrasystemic relations; that is, they were defined by cohesion, consensus, and order. In other words, the various *social structures* performed a variety of positive *functions* for each other. It is clear, then, why Parsons came to

be defined primarily as a *structural functionalist*. As his fame grew, so did the strength of structural-functional theory in the United States. His work lay at the core of this theory, but his students and disciples also concentrated on extending both the theory and its dominance in the United States.

It was Parsons, in *The Structure of Social Action* (1937), who brought European classical theory, especially the work of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, to the attention of American sociology. And he created his own distinctive "grand" theory. Parsons was undoubtedly the most important American sociological theorist. His written work was widely cited and used by sociologists. Even more important, he shaped the structure of a large portion of American sociological theory, as well as sociology in general, from his position as professor at Harvard University. Many of the most important American theorists were his students, and they went on to endow their own departments, and their own students, with Parsonsian-style theory. Among the many theorists who worked with Parsons at Harvard were Robert Merton, Kingsley Davis, and Wilbert Moore.

As Ritzer and Stepenisky noted, Parsons tried to develop an integrated approach to sociological theory. We can see a number of manifestations of this.

- First, Parsons founded the Department of Social Relations at Harvard University with the intention of unifying the various social sciences. Included in his integrative goal were such fields as clinical

psychology, behavioral psychology, anthropology, and sociology.

- Second, in his own theorizing Parsons developed a clear sense of levels of social analysis, best exemplified in his notion of four action systems—behavioral organism, personality, social system, and cultural system.

- Finally, Parsons argued in one of his most important works, *The Social System*, that the integration of levels of social analysis is of central importance in the social world.

On the basis of these integrated approach Parsons set his goal of construction of an adequate general theory or a grand theory that was to be analytical, systematic, complete, and elegant. According to Parsons, this grand theory must have five characteristic futures, they are,

- First, such a theory must, from his point of view, be an action theory in which "the central mechanism must always be some notion of actors orienting themselves to situations, with various sorts of goals, values, and normative standards, and behaving accordingly".

- Second, such a theory must be based on the principle of *voluntarism*, that is, an actor's "choice among alternative values and courses of action must remain at least potentially free".

- Third, such cultural phenomena as ideas, ideals, goals, and norms must be considered causally relevant factors.

- Fourth, Parsons adopted the idea of *emergence*—the notion that higher-order systems emerge out of lower-order systems. Such higher-order systems, he felt, must not be able to be inferred from, or explained in terms of, component parts.

- Finally, the emergent systems must never become wholly detached from their component parts.

Although Parsons moved away from this base as his career progressed, the principles are those upon which he built his entire theory.

Philosophical and theoretical roots of Parsons's work lied on his critic of utilitarianism. He analyzed and utilitarianism and classical economics for dealing with isolated individuals, for assuming individual rationality, and for holding the view that social order came either from the pursuit of individual self-interest or from externally imposed sanctions. Parsons believed that we need to analyze nonrational as well as rational action and that we need to look toward institutionalized common values for the source of social order.

He attacked positivism for its view of the world as a closed, deterministic system leaving no room for such critical notions as mind, consciousness, values, ends, and norms. Finally, Parsons lauded idealism for accepting the very ideas rejected by positivism, but he rejected the view that the entire social world could be explained by such cultural factors. The bulk of *The Structure of Social Action* is devoted to a

discussion of Alfred Marshall, Vilfredo Pareto, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber, who developed ideas that were converging on what Parsons called the "voluntaristic theory of action."

Parsons began his climb to fame in 1937 when he opened his first big book with a famous quote that he borrowed: "Who now reads Spencer?" Today, we might ask the same question about Parsons, but much like Spencer, Parsons still exerts a very large influence on theorizing; we do not see it because few read Parsons' major works and, perhaps more significantly, many of Parsons' ideas have simply been absorbed into mainstream sociology without the functionalist trappings.

Parsons' Theory of Action

Parsons' ideas on social systems and his theory of action or action approach are rooted in the thinking of his predecessors. In his monumental book *The Structure of Social Action* (1937) Parsons has reviewed the contributions of many social scientists, but gave special emphasis to Pareto, Durkheim and Max Weber. In this work Parsons attempts to highlight the underlying unity in the contributions of most of these thinkers. By sorting out these unities, Parsons felt that his quest for a general theory of social system would be forwarded. Parsons divides earlier contributions into three broad schools of thought, viz., the utilitarian, the positivist, and the idealist.

❖ **Utilitarian:** The utilitarians see social action in a highly individualist fashion. They emphasize utilitarian

rational calculation but at the level of the individual. For this reason they are unable to accommodate the fact that social life is collectively cohesive and not a random effect.

❖ **Positivist:** The positivists on the other hand believe that social actors have complete knowledge of their social situation. This leaves no room for error on the part of actors or variation among actors.

❖ **Idealist:** The idealist posit that social action is the realisation of the social spirit and the ideas such as, of a nation or a people, and consequently pay scant attention to real everyday impediments on the ground that obstruct the free realisation of ideas.

According to Parsons, both the utilitarian and idealist approaches to the study of social systems and social reality were one-sided. The utilitarian approach treated social systems as products of rational impulses of human beings (individuals) to integrate their needs and urges as orderly systems. Similarly, in the idealist treatment of social system, democracy is seen simply as the fulfillment of the spirit of a nation. Idealism places too much emphasis on values and ideas and not enough on social practice. The positivists go to the other extreme and insist that true human action is born out of full information of the situation. There is thus finality and inflexibility in their scheme for there is only one way to act: the correct way. Consequently there is no room for values, error and variations in social action.

Parsons formulates this approach through his theory of social action, which is an intrinsic element of the social system. Action, according to Parsons (1973) does not take place in isolation. It is not "empirically discrete but occurs in constellations" which constitute systems. The concept of action, according to Parsons, is derived from behavior of human beings as living organism. As living organisms they interact with outside reality as well as within their own mind. Behavior becomes action when four conditions are present.

➢ it is oriented to attainment of ends or goals or other anticipated affairs,

➢ it occurs in situations,

➢ it is regulated by norms and values of society,

➢ it involves an investment of 'energy' or motivation or effort.

When all these factors are present, a behavior becomes action. Orientation of action can therefore be divided into two components, the motivational orientation and the value orientation. Motivational orientation refers to a situation in which action takes place taking into account needs, external appearances and plans. The second form of orientation is value orientation, which is based on considerations of standards of values, aesthetics, morality and of thinking.

On the basis of his theory of action, Parsons developed his system theory. These constellations of action constitute systems. According to him, as we discussed, action does not

occur in isolation but occurs in constellations. These systems of action have three modes of organisation, which Parsons describes as the personality system, the cultural system and the social system.

> ➢ The personality system refers to those aspects of the human personality, which affect the individual's social functioning.

> ➢ The cultural system encompasses instead, the actual beliefs, concrete systems of values and symbolic means of communication.

> ➢ The social system, in this context, refers to the forms and modes of interaction between individuals and its organisation.

A social system, according to Parsons, has the following characteristics.

1. It involves an interaction between two or more actors, and the interaction process is its main focus.

2. Interaction takes place in a situation, which implies other actors or alters. These alters are objects of emotion and value judgement and through them goals and means of action are achieved.

3. There exists in a social system collective goal orientation or common values and a consensus on expectations in normative and cognitive (intellectual) senses.

Concept of Pattern Variables

Parsons use the concept of pattern variables in order to

explain the properties of all action systems. In relation to motivational orientation and value orientation, in the performance of roles, each actor faces dilemmas. These dilemmas emanate from strains in an individual's choice of or preference within a range of orientations both related to needs and to values. Though these dilemmas are often seen dichotomously they in fact are placed along continua. But for reasons of simplicity let us proceed as if these dilemmas were dichotomous in character. The actor must choose between the options, before she or he can act with respect to the situation. There are five pattern variables, each side of it represents one polar extreme. These pattern variables are

1) **Affectivity versus affective neutrality:** Affectivity versus affective neutrality concerns the dilemma of role performance where evaluation is involved in relation to a situation. How much a situation should be evaluated in emotional terms or with a degree of emotional neutrality? This poses a difficult choice in most roles that we are expected to perform in society.

2) **Self-orientation versus collectivity orientation:** self-orientation in self-orientation versus collectivity orientation pattern variable the main issue is that of moral standard in the procedure of evaluation. The moral standard arises from the fact that actor has to make a choice between his or her own gratification and its deferment for the good of a larger number of people, a collectivity.

3) **Universalism versus particularism:** Universalism versus particularism is a pattern variable which defines the role situation where the actor's dilemma is between the cognitive versus the cathective (or emotional standards) evaluation.

4) **Ascription versus achievement:** The actor's dilemma in the ascription versus achievement pattern variable is based on whether or not the actor defines the objects of his or her role either in terms of quality or performance.

5) **Specificity versus diffuseness:** The specificity versus diffuseness pattern variable concerns the scope of the object of role performance. Scope, in this case, is to be understood in terms of the nature of social interaction.

The pattern variables, according to Parsons, not only define the nature of role interaction and role expectations in social system but provide in addition, the overall direction in which most members of a social system choose their roles. It also gives us an idea about the nature of the social system.

After his first big book, it was thirteen years before Parsons' wrote his first functionalist book, *The Social System*. Parsons' functionalism erupted in a very brief three-year period between 1950 and 1953, where the basic scheme was put forth, often in rather difficult prose. The general theory is, in many ways, a re-blending of Spencer's, Durkheim's, and Malinowski's ideas.

As he mentioned, the self-maintenance of systems is

possible because human actors as social beings are socialised in society and their motivational and value orientations accordingly are patterned. In order to maintain itself, social systems have to perform some indispensable adjustment between its internal organisation and outer environment. Social systems, Parsons argues, also have a self-adjustive and self-maintaining quality. These adjustment processes which maintain the social system internally and through its boundary conditions are called functions. Functions are processes of system's self-maintenance. There are certain functions without which a social system cannot subsist. These are called 'functional prerequisites' by Talcott Parsons. There are four such functional prerequisites. They are,

1. **Adaptation:** The requisite for securing resources from the environment, converting them into useable substances and produce, and distributing them to members of the population

2. **Goal Attainment:** The requisite for setting goals for the system as a whole and for mobilizing resources to meet these goals

3. **Integration:** The requisite for coordinating relations and actions of all actors—collective and individual—in a system

4. **Pattern Maintenance and Tension Management:** The requisites for (a) sustaining and reproducing social units—both individual and collective—in a system and (b) managing tensions that arise within and between individual and collective units in a system.

Second, he begins to see distinctive system levels: the (1) personality, (2) social, (3) cultural, and (4) organismic (later to become the *behavioral*) systems. Each of these systems levels meets one of the more the more inclusive action systems four functional needs for *adaptation, goal attainment*, *integration*, or *latency*. These functions of each action system for the overall action system are summarized in the following figure.
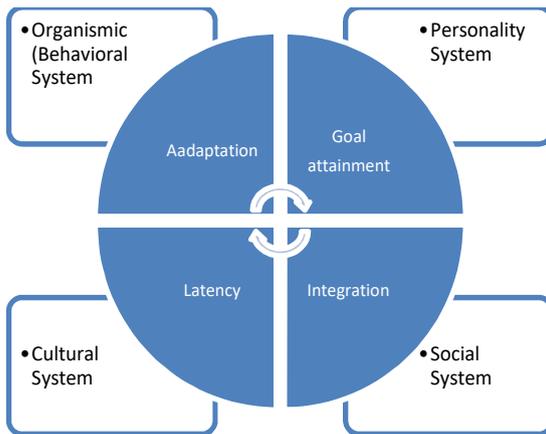
With this relatively simple conceptual edifice, Parsons began an almost forty-year elaboration of the scheme. One of the most important elaborations was the creation of a graphic way of conceptualizing the four requisites as sectors in a box with four divisions, denoted at the corners by *A* for adaptation, *G* for goal attainment, *I* for integration, and *L* for latency (subdivided into *pattern maintenance* and *tension*

management). In Parsons' view, placing a structural feature of a society in the proper box in the AGIL scheme, such as its core institutional systems, would represent an explanation of these systems. For example, Above figure offers a view of an AGIL box for the overall action system, while below figure presents an example of a societal-level social system (a social system in the overall action system that meets the integrative requisites in the overall action system). In the below figure placed within the four sectors are core institutional systems of a society, thus indicating the requisite that each institution fulfills.
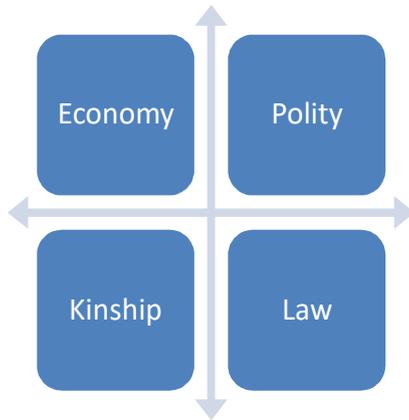
Functions of Key Institutional Domains in a Societal Social System and Their Interchanges

The four boxes labeled A, G, I, and L in the above figure emphasizing core institutions for the societal social system. When actors from different sectors—and in this case, from differentiated institutional domains like economy, polity, law, family, and religion in the societal social system—

interact, they often exchange their symbolic medium for that of another sector. For instance, the medium of *love/loyalty* in the family is given to polity as loyalty and commitment to the polity's right to make decisions in a society (thus giving legitimacy to polity) in exchange for family authority, or the right of families to govern their internal affairs without extensive intrusion by polity. Or, to look at the exchange between economy and family, working members of families receive *money* from the economy for commitments (as a form of *love/loyalty*) to work hard in economic roles. The full list of the generalized symbolic media and the nature of exchanges of these media is provided in Figure. In this kind of analysis, Parsons and Smelser felt that they had been able to understand "the glue" that binds actors in mutual relations of interdependencies within and between differentiated institutional domains.

To conclude, Talcott Parsons had contributed on the theory of social action, discussed about the action frame of reference and social-system. His contribution on what he calls it AGIL — Paradigm and Pattern-Variable Scheme are also well known. We shall discuss about them briefly. Talcott Parsons had the advantage of reviewing several scholars from classical sociology and some other social scientists as well. He believed that he could present an integrated theoretical point of view where all the formulations of previous social scientists would lead to.

His theoretical constructions, later integrated the points of view of psychologists like Sigmund Freud, economists like

Alfred Marshal and sociologists like Vilfredo Pareto, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber to name a few. He also believed that all the contributions made by various social scientists lead in one direction to arrive at or rather converge at one single notion of what he calls it 'social action'. Parsons also wanted to understand how social and cultural values are internalised into personality system. In his later work *The Social System* (1951), Parsons said that the three essential components of action are 'personality system, 'social system' and 'cultural system', although each one being a part of action, but none being reducible to the other.

As we discussed, in another work, *Working Papers in the Theory of Action* (1953), Talcott Parsons along with his colleagues like Robert Bales and Edward Shills has explained about what he calls it the 'AGIL Paradigm'. Accordingly, A refers to Adaptation, G to Goal — Attainment, I to Integration and L to Latency. Thus AGIL — Paradigm developed by Parsons provided him much higher respect as he ascended towards formulation of sociological theories at a much higher level.

Another important theoretical formulation has been what he called it, the "Pattern Variable Scheme". It suggests that either an individual or community as an actor has important choices to make against two polar opposite categories. For example, whether an individual or community in general promote ascription or achievement, alternatively universalism or particularism. Talcott Parsons has referred to five sets of such alternative choices. Additionally, within these

five sets of choices, some permutations and combinations could also be made out. For example, from the earlier referred choices mentioned here, it could be ascertained whether the choices made are for universalist achievement or alternatively particularistic ascription sort of orientations.

But regarding the theories developed by him, several scholars from the Western societies as well as from elsewhere have expressed the opinion that his formulations are difficult to understand and there is a need to present it all in the simpler form. There is another criticism which is associated with his work. It has been stated by several scholars that the works of Talcott Parsons are too much theoretical in nature, sometime they appear as 'grand theories' and generally have very little to do with the existing life of today or with the empirical reality. Agreeing with all such criticisms that it is true that Parsons theoretical formulations might appear difficult to comprehend, might not refer to the empirical material but nonetheless, they could be considered as important contributions.

1.3 Empirical Functionalism: Robert K. Merton

Along with Parsons, Robert K. Merton played an important role in the development of functionalism. He was a well know American sociologist. He was born on July 4, 1910, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and died in February 23, 2003, New York. He was interested in sociology of science and the professions, sociological theory, and mass communication. After receiving a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1936, Merton joined the school's faculty. In his first work in the

sociology of science, *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England* (1938), he studied the relationship between Puritan thought and the rise of science. He next served on the faculty of Tulane University (1939–41) and then accepted an appointment at Columbia University (1941), where he became a full professor in 1947 and was named Giddings Professor of Sociology in 1963.

He served as associate director of the university's Bureau of Applied Social Research (1942–71), which had opened under the direction of Paul Lazarsfeld one year before Merton's arrival. The two men's work was complementary: Lazarsfeld combined quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, along with his logic of concept clarification, and thereby influenced Merton's orientation to historical studies. Moreover, Merton's gift for theory influenced Lazarsfeld's philosophical grasp of sociology. Their academic collaboration, from 1941 to 1976, strengthened the standards of training for the social sciences.

Merton received a doctorate from Harward University where he was one of the earliest and most intelligent students of Talcott Parsons. Parsons stated that of the significant relations he had with students, "The most important single one was with Robert Merton". For a long time, Parsons and Merton came to be known as leaders of structural functional theory among American Sociologists. At Harward, Merton was also influenced by Pitrim Sorokin who was not sympathetic towards Parsons.

After serving for only a small span elsewhere, Merton joined Columbia State University, New York and came in contact with Paul F.Lazarsfeld. Both were closely associated and established Bureau of Applied Social Research. He became active in empirical research under the influence of his colleague Lazarsfeld since 1941. In 1994 Merton became the first sociologist to receive a National Medal of Science. His son, economist Robert C. Merton, won a Nobel Prize in 1997.

Here we will summarize his overall contributions in to Sociology. In *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1949), Merton developed a theory of deviant behaviour based on different types of social adaptation. He defined the interrelationship between social theory and empirical research, advancing a structural-functional approach to the study of society and creating the concepts of manifest and latent function and dysfunction. Other works by Merton include *Mass Persuasion* (1946), *On the Shoulders of Giants* (1965), *On Theoretical Sociology* (1967), *Social Theory and Functional Analysis* (1969), *The Sociology of Science* (1973), and *Social Ambivalence and Other Essays* (1976). He edited *Qualitative and Quantitative Social Research* (1979), containing papers in honour of Paul Lazarsfeld, and *Sociological Traditions from Generation to Generation* (1980).

Much of Merton's work found its way into the mainstream. While at the Bureau of Applied Social Research, he began using focused interviews with groups to obtain reactions to such things as films and written materials. This technique gave

rise to focus groups, which have become critical tools for marketers and politicians. Merton also coined colloquial terms such as "self-fulfilling prophecy" and "role models," and he wrote at length on the concept of serendipity.

Some of his writings became very famous and he was the most quoted author not only in social science but also of science in 1960's. On theory, his writings include, "Manifest and Latent Functions", "Theory and Empirical Research – Two Essays", 'theory of status and role', "Reference Group Behaviour" and further "Continuities in the Theory of Reference Group Behaviour". All his essays and papers which are pertinent writings in the area of sociological theory, published in various sources, have been compiled in one volume 'Social Theory and Social Structure' first published in 1949, second edition in 1957 and the third enlarged edition in 1968. This book has been translated into many languages.

As we discussed, after the initiation of functional theory by Emile Durkheim, B.Malinowski and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, and Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton have given a new shape to functional analysis in the middle twentieth century. R.K. Merton not only provides a critique of the notions and assumptions of functionalism advocated by Durkheim, Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown but also traces the clear etimology of the concept of function, reformulates their inherent assumptions and placed a systematic frame work for functional analysis in sociology.

The Concept of Function

R.K. Merton has done a unique exercise by tracing various etymological/contextual meanings of the term function under the heading "Single Term, Diverse Concepts".

1. Function means 'simple public gathering or festive occasion', usually conducted with ceremonial overtones.

2. Function is 'equivalent to occupation', tracing a definition of occupation from the writings of Max Weber.

3. Function refers to the 'activities assigned to the incumbent of a social status', more particularly to the occupant of an office or political position.

4. Function as used in mathematics, refers to 'a variable considered in relation to one or more variables' in terms of which it can be expressed on the value of which its own value depends $(y = fx)$.

5. As used in biology, function refers to the 'vital or organic processes considered in respects in which they contribute to the maintenance of the organism'. Merton states that it is this usage, with modifications appropriate to the study of human society, that anthropologists have adopted and clarified the key concept of function.

Merton has derived the essence of the concept of function formulated and used by A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and B.

Malinowski. Both Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown used the concept of function in the understanding of primitive societies. The essence of their formulations has been examined by Merton in order to use the concept of function in the understanding of complex societies like the American society in early and middle twentieth century.

The essence of these formulations on the concept of function has been presented by Merton in terms of postulates of functionalism. In his essay "manifest and latent functions" which is reprinted as a chapter in the book "Social Theory and Social Structure", he reformulates these postulates in the light of the institutions and processes of complex societies so as to make use of these theoretical capsules in the understanding of the society in which he himself was living. Though, the clarification and elaboration of the concept of function will be discussed in detail in the 'paradigm for functional analysis in Sociology' in the next section but briefly the meaning of function may be noted here which will be used in the examination and reformulation of the earlier meanings of function given by Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski.

Merton firmly believed that the whole of functional theory could not be abandoned or discarded because some of the mistakes were committed by some of the contributors to it at the earlier stages. His approach was to learn from the mistakes, identify them, try to remove them and make functional theory as a viable approach for research investigations in sociology. Regarding social research he explained it as an interplay between theory and facts.

Different types of Function

According to Merton functionalism is located in time and space. It deals with empirical reality. He particularly draws our attention to the reasons why functional theories of Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski which were formulated to deal with the realities of a simpler tribal society, isolated from rest of the world, could not be applied to contemporary societies of our own time which are complex and where historical traditions have overlapped on social institutions over several centuries. Therefore, Merton says that an institution such as religion, which is universally integrative in simpler tribal societies, may cause disharmony in our own society where there are many religions, which often compete against one another. So religion instead of being functional (integrative), may become dysfunctional (disintegrative) in society. Similarly his concepts of latent and manifest functions are also based on the historical experience of modern society.

Function and Dysfunction: It is now clear that functions are those observed consequences, which make for the adaptation or adjustment of a given system. But, then not everything is functional. Not everything helps to make for the adaptation of a system. So Merton uses another concept called dysfunction. Dysfunctions, according to Merton, are those observed consequences, which lesson the adaptation or adjustment of the system.

Manifest Function and Latent Function: With these clarifications it is no longer difficult for you to come to the

main problem, manifest function and latent function. Be it a manifest function or a latent function, it is the objective, observed consequence which makes for the adaptation or adjustment of a given system. There is, however, only one difference and it goes to the credit of Merton that he is able to bring it out sharply and intelligently. Whereas the participants are aware of the manifest function, they are not aware of the latent function. In other words, the latent function is neither intended nor recognised.

Merton's views on social research could be found in his book, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1968). His views on the functional theory could also be seen in the same book. While reconstructing functional theory, Merton has referred to three postulates,

1. The postulate of functional unity of society,
2. The postulate of universal functionalism,
3. The postulate of indispensability.

He later suggested that such postulates which once upon a time guided the works of some earlier sociologists were no longer necessary. Additionally, Merton has explained about what he calls it, "Middle Range Theories" and its necessities in the contemporary period. Merton has also clarified in detail about what he calls it "Reference Group Theory". In this way we could see that in his own way, Robert K. Merton tried to build-up the much required ground and created the environment for the development of sociology as a scientific discipline. From the above discussion it is now clear that both

Talcott Parsons as well as Robert K. Merton made great efforts to carry forward the discipline of sociology and in this endeavor they were quite successful too.

1.4 Linguistic Tradition: Ferdinande de Saussure, Structuralism of Claude Levi-Strauss

Linguistic Tradition: Ferdinande de Saussure

Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure's ideas on structure in language laid the foundation for much of the approach to and progress of the linguistic sciences in the 20th century. He born on Nov. 26, 1857, Geneva, Switzerland and died on Feb. 22, 1913, Vufflens-le-Château.   After an unsatisfactory year in 1875 at the University of Geneva studying physics and chemistry, Saussure went to the University of Leipzig in 1876 to study languages. Then, in the wake of eighteen months studying Sanskrit in Berlin, he published, at the age of 21, his much acclaimed memoire entitled, *M emoire on the Primitive System of Vowels in Indo-European Languages*.

In 1880, after defending his thesis on the absolute genitive case in Sanskrit, Saussure moved to Paris, and in 1881, at the age of 24, he was named lecturer in Gothic and Old High German at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes E´ tudes. For just over a decade Saussure taught in Paris until he was appointed professor of Sanskrit and Indo-European languages at the University of Geneva.

In the historical epoch of the twentieth century something quite unique occurred, so that a new model of

language based on Saussure's structural approach emerged to become the model for theorising social and cultural life. Saussurian theory has its basis in the history of linguistics, and its implications extend to the whole of the social sciences. We thus need to consider both these aspects.

Saussure contended that language must be considered as a social phenomenon, a structured system that can be viewed synchronically (as it exists at any particular time) and diachronically (as it changes in the course of time). He thus formalized the basic approaches to language study and asserted that the principles and methodology of each approach are distinct and mutually exclusive. He also introduced two terms that have become common currency in linguistics—"parole," or the speech of the individual person, and "langue," the system underlying speech activity. His distinctions proved to be mainsprings to productive linguistic research and can be regarded as starting points on the avenue of linguistics known as structuralism.

With the emergence of the Saussurian model in the human sciences, the researcher's attention was turned away from documenting historical events, or recording the facts of human behaviour, and towards the notion of human action as a system of meaning. Such was the result of emphasizing, at the broader societal level, the arbitrary nature of the sign and the corresponding idea of language as a system of conventions. Whereas a search for intrinsic facts and their effects had hitherto been made (as exemplified when the historian supposed that human beings need food to survive, just as they

need language to communicate with each other – therefore events turned out this way), now the socio-cultural system at a given moment in history, becomes the object of study. This is a system within which the researcher is also inscribed, much as the linguist is inscribed in language. A greater concern to be more reflexive thus also becomes the order of the day.

Saussurian insights initially paved the way for a more rigorous and systematic approach to human sciences – an approach that would genuinely attempt to take seriously the primacy of the socio-cultural domain for human beings. Just as Saussure had emphasised the importance of not studying speech acts in isolation from the system of conventions which gave them currency, so it was deemed inadequate to study social and cultural facts independently of the social or cultural system which gave them currency.

Society or culture at a given state of development, and not discrete individual human actions in the past or present, became the focus of study. The generation before (the generation of Sartre) had sought to discover the natural (intrinsic) basis of human society in history – much as nineteenth-century linguists had sought to reveal the natural elements of language – the structuralist generation's effort was directed towards showing how the differential relations of the elements in the system – whether the latter be a series of texts, a kinship system, or the milieu of fashion photography – produced a meaning, or meanings, and thus had to be 'read' and interpreted. In other words, the study of socio-cultural life is seen to entail deciphering signs through focusing on their

differential value, and not on their putative substantive value (often equated with the 'natural'), and also paying attention to the symptomatic level of signification, as well as to the explicit level.

Structure, as inspired by Saussure's theory of language, can thus refer to the 'value' of elements in a system, or context, and not to their mere physical, or natural existence. Now it has become clear that the physical existence of an entity is complicated by the effects of the linguistic and cultural milieu. Structure, then, is a reminder that nothing social or cultural (and this includes, of course, the individual) exists as a 'positive', essential element outside it in isolation from all other elements. Such an approach reverses the one taken in the political philosophy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where the biological individual is placed at the origin of social life. And just as this philosophy saw no society as existing prior to the individual, so it also denied the relative autonomy of language.

Structuralism of Claude Levi-Strauss

Claude Lévi-Strauss, the French structuralist, who is famous for his ingenious cross-cultural analysis of myths and kinship systems. If for functionalism, society is a 'kind of living creature', consisting of parts, which can be 'dissected and distinguished', for structuralism, it is the analogy from language that helps us in conceptualizing society. From the study of a given piece of language, the linguist tries to arrive at its grammar, the underlying rules which make an expression

meaningful, although the speakers of that language may not know about it.

Similarly, the structuralist from a given piece of social behaviour tries to infer its underlying structure. In structuralism, the shift is from observable behaviour to structure, from organic analogy to language (Barnard 2000). Further, structuralism submits that the set of relations between different parts can be transformed into 'something' that appears to be different from what it was earlier. It is the idea of transformation — of one into another — that lies at the core of structuralism, rather than the quality of relations.

Anthropological structuralism achieved celebrity in the third quarter of the twentieth century through the writings of Claude Levi Strauss. He argued that structural factors pat tern our cultural expressions so as to make them resonate with us beneath awareness. His explanatory strategy first involved reducing expressive objects (e.g., artwork or mythological stories) to contrastive structures in which some elements were opposed to others. These structures were then argued to be similar in form to (or otherwise influenced by) an abstract picture of the social structure in which they were produced. The formal correspondence produced a resonance that explained why particular expressive objects were enjoyed and repetitively consumed.

Methodologically, Levi Strauss followed Prague School linguists who saw meaning as conveyed structurally by contrasts among sound elements, as well as Ferdinand de

Saussure's suggestion that meaning arose from relations among essentially arbitrary linguistic elements. Substantively, Levi Strauss followed Durkheim's suggestion in The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life and in Primitive Classification (written with Marcel Mauss) that certain cognitive constructs have the same form as elements of social life. For example, in Tristes Tropiques Le´vi Strauss reduced the face paintings of the Caduveo of Brazil to a pattern that is diagonally] sectioned, defining two dimensions of contrast such as we see in playing cards.

The two dimensions played symmetry off against asymmetry to achieve a striking effect unique to the Caduveo among surrounding tribes. To explain this, Levi Strauss argued that the Caduveo faced a particular social structural problem that their neighbors had solved. A system of castes which exchanged marriage partners within themselves exerted disintegrative pressures on Caduveo society, pressures reduced in surrounding tribes by marriage rules that forced exchanges across caste lines. This produced a social symmetry that balanced the hierarchic asymmetry of castes and thus held these tribes together.

The Caduveo were too snobbish to marry across caste lines, argued Le´vi Strauss, but they produced the same balance of symmetry and asymmetry in their face paintings, which he interpreted as a cultural solution to a social structural problem. In this analysis, both the cultural product and the social structure were reduced to contrastive relations between

symmetric and asymmetric features, with social factors influencing cultural phenomena.

Lévi-Strauss (1963) aptly showed this in one of his studies where he compared the totemic society of the Australian Aborigines with Indian caste system, and found that both of them had the same structure. If for Radcliffe-Brown, structure is observable, for Lévi- Strauss, it is an abstract concept. If for Radcliffe-Brown, what persists is the 'structure' of a particular society, at a particular point of time and place, for Lévi-Strauss, what persists is the 'structure of the entire human society' (Barnes, R.H. 2001).

In his celebrated essay of 1953 in A.L. Kroeber's *Anthropology Today*, titled 'Social Structure', Lévi-Strauss says that social structure is not a field of study; it is not a 'province of enquiry'. We do not study social structure, but it is an explanatory method and can be used in any kind of social studies. In opposition to Radcliffe-Brown, Lévi-Strauss says that the term 'social structure' has nothing to do with empirical reality. It refers to the models that are built up from empirical reality. He writes: '…the object of socialstructure studies is to understand social relations with the help of models' (1953: 532).

Social structure is a model; it is a method of study. Here, Lévi-Strauss distinguishes the concept of social structure from that of social relations. The latter are the 'raw data of social experience' – they are the relations between people, empirical and observable. It is from social relations that

models comprising the social structure are built. Although the models are built from raw, empirical reality, they cannot be reduced to it. The ensemble of social relations in a given society can be described, but social structure is an anthropologist's construction, built for the purpose of analysis.

Lévi-Strauss makes three distinctions: first, between observation and experimentation on models; second, the conscious and unconscious character of the models; and third, between mechanical and statistical models. The observation of social relations and the construction of models after these facts need to be distinguished from 'experiments' on models. By experimentation, Lévi-Strauss means the 'controlled comparison' of models of the same or of a different kind, with an intention to identify the model that accounts best for the observed facts. In a structural analysis, the first step is to observe the facts without any bias, then to describe them in relationship to themselves and in relation to the whole. From this, models are constructed, and in the final analysis, the best model is chosen. This distinction is with reference to the anthropologist who studies society.

Decline of Structural Functionalism

In the 1940s and 1950s structural functionalism had a greatest dominance in American Sociological theory. But in the mid 1950s we witnessed the beginnings of the decline of Parsonian structural functionalism. In the 1940s, as we discussed, Parsons produced his major works that clearly

reflected his shift from action theory to structural functionalism. During this time Parsons's students had occupied dominant positions in many of the major sociology departments such as Columbia University and Cornell University. Their works widely recognized as the contributions to structural functional theory.

However, just as it was gaining theoretical hegemony, structural functionalism came under attack, and the attacks mounted until they reached a climax in the 1960s and 1970s. There was an attack by C. Wright Mills on Parsons in 1959, and other major criticisms were mounted by David Lockwood (1956), Alvin Gouldner (1959/1967, 1970), and Irving Horowitz (1962/1967). In the 1950s, these attacks were seen as little more than "guerrilla raids," but as sociology moved into the 1960s, the dominance of structural functionalism was clearly in jeopardy.

According to George Huaco (1986) the rise and decline of structural functionalism is linked to the position of American society in the world order. As America rose to world dominance after 1945, structural functionalism achieved hegemony within sociology. Structural functionalism supported America's dominant position in the world in two ways. First, the structural-functional view that "every pattern has consequences which contribute to the preservation and survival of the larger system" was "nothing less than a celebration of the United States and its world hegemony" (Huaco, 1986:52). Second, the structural-functional emphasis on equilibrium (the best social change is no change) meshed

well with the interests of the United States, then "the wealthiest and most powerful empire in the world." The decline of U.S. world dominance in the 1970s coincided with structural functionalism's loss of its preeminent position in sociological theory.

Functionalism of Parsons and Merton have been criticised by many sociologists for their various limitations. One of the major limitations pointed out by critics is the over-dependence of functionalism on the assumption that a social system is based on principles of agreement or consensus. Functionalism thus assumes that all institutions largely reflect values and goals, which are commonly accepted by most of the members of the society. It thus neglects aspects of dissent and conflict in the social system.

Marxist sociologists criticise functionalism for its neglect of class conflict or class antagonism that exist in society. Political sociologists have criticised it for neglecting the role of power and domination in the structure and function of social institutions. But the main drawback in functionalism is not of total omission of these issues because both Merton, and also Parsons, deal with aspects of dissent and conflict in society. What is neglected perhaps is the balance in the role played by both consensus and conflict in society. This is a question, which remains largely unresolved in their sociological theory.

Emergence of Neo-Functionalism

Parsons's theory received sweeping dismissal during

the 1960s and 1970s. Critics argued that his stand on the subjective-objective issue, on the nominal-realist or individual-society question is irrelevant because his emphasis on norms committed him to an 'unacceptable degree' of voluntarism, intentional action. Idealists emphasized that although he spoke of intentional action, it is not really intentional because it is influenced by internalised norms which are influenced by the social structure. Materialist critics, on the other hand, who oppose the individualistic strand of social theory that gives prominence to the intentional aspect of action, argued that by relating action to internal normative elements, Parsons ignored the supra-individual social forces that constrain rather than facilitate action.

Alexander (1978) responds to Parsons critics by stating that according to Parsons, no individual can be absolutely free of constraints in the radical sense as suggested by individualist theory because an individual is influenced by different social forces, the most important being the symbolic forces that contain normative elements. These normative elements are internalised by the individuals and therefore they are not visible in concrete terms. „Parsons sought to articulate a structure for social action that ascribed voluntarism to the influence of subjective ideal elements, which are internalised by the individual and which allow him or her autonomy *vis-a-vis* material constraints. In this manner, Parsons rejects the nominalist notion that freedom involves the complete lack of constraint" (Alexander 1978: 179).

But at the same time, Alexander argues, it is precisely

at this point that Parsons arrives at his great insight into the voluntary quality of action: what appears or seems to be free, intentional action but requires the actor''s application of an internal judgment that is again influenced by the normative standards that the actor has internalised. In the words of Parsons 'The voluntaristic system does not in the least deny an important role to conditional... nonnormative elements.... (rather) consider...them as interdependent with the normative'' (1937:82). It would, therefore, not be wrong to agree with Alexander when he says that critics have failed to see that the major segment of Parsons'' work, from the very beginning, has been aimed at bridging the fundamental theoretical gaps in addressing the objective and subjective divide while studying human action.

There is another group of critics who have argued that Parsons ignores social change in his theory. But Alexander (1978) argues that Parsons theory of voluntarism is embodied in the theory of social change as differentiation. „If formal voluntarism refers to a universal property of all action abstracted from time and space, and from any specifically ideological properties, substantive voluntarism refers exactly to the opposite: to the degree that particular historical and social conditions allow the realization of individual freedom defined in terms of a particular ideological perspective. Therefore, although Parsons has discarded the individualistic position as a formal framework, his theory of differentiation accepts it as providing the basic parameters within which any theory of substantive freedom must be rooted... In contrast to

his formal theory, Parsons"... substantive theory does, in fact, take the concrete person as the point of reference" (1978:184).

In that vein, Alexander continues that according to Parsons" theory of social change, '...personal autonomy is achieved to the degree that the institutions associated with the different dimensions of society, the functional subsystems of economics, politics, integration, and value maintenance, become differentiated from one another and, in the process, develop (1) their own independent criteria for performance as expressed in institutionally separated media; (2) the capacity to mobilise the resources of the dimensions by asserting a partial but independent regulation over them" (1978:186). Thus, intellectuals like Jeffrey Alexander revived Parsonian thought which became a distinguishing feature of sociology in the 1980s, and marked the emergence of neo-Functionalism.

Alexander looked at Parsonian theory as a point to begin his synthetic social theory, and not as an end point, where he tried to relate Parsons to different forms of classical and contemporary work. Alexander approached the interdependent dynamics of social action and order with multi-dimensional analysis. While emphasizing the challenge of explaining social order, he maintained that though social processes facilitate social order through normative commitments, yet it is important to recognise the existence of conflicting interests, environmental conditions and constraints, and the unforeseen contingencies actors face while dealing with particular situations they find themselves in.

Apart from defining neo-Functionalism as a model of explanation on the basis of needs of systemic wholes, Alexander outlined the other general features of neo-Functionalism as 'a concern with action as well as structure; a recognition of the dialectic among control, integration, and deviance; a reformulation of equilibrium in Keynes" sense of systemic strains; a maintenance of the distinctions among, as well as a description of the strains between, personality, culture, and social structure; and an emphasis on differentiation as a major mode of change." (Turner and Maryanski, 1988:117-118)

Key Concepts

Achievement versus ascription: One of Parsons's five patternedvalue-orientations whereby, for example, modernsociety emphasizes achievement rather than ascriptive (e.g., inherited status) criteria.

Adaptation: Economic function (or institutional subsystem) necessary in all societies and societal sub-units.

Cultural lag: When societies that experience economic and social modernization experience a delay in adjusting their (traditional) values to accommodate change.

Cultural system: Institutionalized norms, values, motivations, symbols, and beliefs (cultural resources).

Functions: Necessary tasks accomplished by specific social institutions (e.g., family, economy, law, occupational structure) ensuring the smooth functioning of society.

Goal attainment: Political function (or institutional subsystem) necessary in all societies and societal sub-units.

Grand theory: Eaborate, highly abstract theory which seeks to have universal application.

Integration regulatory (e.g., legal) function (or institutional subsystem) necessary in all societies (and societal sub-units).

Latency (or pattern maintenance): Cultural socialization function (or institutional subsystem) necessary in all societies and societal sub-units.

Neofunctionalism refers to the approach of contemporary sociologists who embrace Parsons's theoretical perspective but who amend some of its claims.

Neutrality versus affectivity: One of Parsons's five patterned value-orientations whereby, for example, modern societies differentiate between institutional spheres and relationships based on impersonality (e.g., work) rather than emotion (e.g., family).

Pattern maintenance (latency); socialization function (or institutional subsystem) necessary in all societies and societal sub-units.

Pattern variables: Parsons's schema of five separate, dichotomously opposed value-orientations determining social action.

Personality system: The individual's inculcation of the values and habits necessary to effective functioning in a given society

(e.g., ambitious, hardworking, and conscientious personality types favored in the US).

Secularization: The thesis that religious institutions and religious authority decline with the increased modernization of, and institutional differentiation in, society.

Self versus collectivity orientation: One of Parsons's five patterned value-orientations whereby, for example, modern society emphasizes individual over communal interests.

Social system(s): Interconnected institutional subsystems and relationships that comprise society and all of its sub-units.

Specificity versus diffuseness: One of Parsons's five patterned value-orientations whereby, for example, modern society emphasizes role specialization rather than general competence.

Structural-functionalism: Term used to refer to the theorizing of Durkheim and Parsons because of their focus on how social structures determine, and are effective in (or functional to) maintaining, the social order, society (social equilibrium).

Subsystems: Spheres of social (or institutional) action required for the functioning and maintenance of the social system (society) and its sub-units (institutions, small groups, etc.).

Unit act: Analytically, the core of social action; comprised of a social actor, a goal, specific circumstances, and a normative or value orientation.

Universalistic versus particularistic: One of Parsons's five patterned value-orientations whereby, for example, modern society emphasizes impersonal rules and general principles rather than personal relationships.

Value system: Shared value-orientation (culture) that functions to maintain societal cohesion/integration.

Voluntaristic action: Social actors are free to choose among culturally constrained goals and the means to accomplish those goals.

Latent functions: Unanticipated and unrecognized (functional or dysfunctional) consequences of an intended course of action.

Manifest functions intended and recognized consequences of a particular course of action.

Functional analysis: the combination of theory, method, and data to provide a detailed account of a given social phenomenon such that the description illuminates the phenomenon's particular social functions.

Middle-range theory generates theoretical explanations grounded in and extending beyond specific empirical realities.

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MODULE 2

CONFLICT THEORY

Chapter outline

2.1 **Conflict Perspective: Influence of Marx, Weber and Simmel**

2.2 **The Dialectical Conflict Theory: Ralph Dahrendorf**

2.3 **The Conflict Functionalism: Lewis A. Coser**

2.4 **Conflict and Geopolitical Theory: Randall Collins**

Introduction

Conflict theories focus on destabilizing factors such as social inequalities and social change. Karl Marx usually is credited with ushering in this orientation, with his emphasis onstruggles between social classes with opposing interests, the emergence of collective consciousness among the oppressed, and the conditions for violent revolutionary change. Early versions of the perspective were further articulated by Max Weber and Georg Simmel.

Beginning in the late 1950s and extending through the 1970s, a succession of theorists extended and refined various strands of thought within the developing tradition. Ralf Dahrendorf, Lewis Coser, Jonathan Turner, and Randall Collins are among the more prominent. Each developed a critique of prior work, and each sought to integrate and streamline some of the disparate insights of his predecessors.

The conflict approach since has evolved into other lines of work, e.g., neo Marxist theories, resource mobilization theory, theories of social revolutions, and breakdown theories of social movements.

As we saw, during the 1960s, we witnessed the development of an alternative to and rival of functionalism and the emergence of ''conflict theory'' in sociology. The strongest contemporary advocates of conflict theory are Ralph Dahrendorf, Lewis A Coser and Randall Collins. For them, the roots of conflict theory includes not only Marx and the Marxists, but also Weber and a number of other social theorists extending back to earlier times. Collins (1974, 1975) has done more than any sociologist to develop a synthesized conflict theory that owes more to Weber than to any other sociologist.

Modern theory of conflict is builds upon Marxist analysis of class conflicts, but it is detached from any ideological commitment to socialism. Max Weber generalized conflict to the arenas of power and status as well as economic class, and this multidimensional approach has become widespread since the 1950s. Different thinkers had different opinions regarding what constitutes a conflict group. For Marx and Engels, a society's conflicting interests derive from the division between owners and nonowners of property. Dahrendorf (1959) proposed that conflicts are based on power, dividing order-givers, who have an interest in maintaining the status quo, from order-takers, who have an interest in changing it. Property is only one of the bases of power conflict, and

conflicts can be expected inside any type of organization, including socialist ones.

In the Weberian model there are even more types of conflict, since every cultural group (such as ethnic, religious, or intellectual groups) can also struggle for advantage. In addition, economic conflict takes place in three different types of market relations, pitting employers against workers, producers against consumers, and lenders against borrowers (Wiley 1967). Gender stratification produces yet another dimension of conflict.

Sociologists have often regarded Lewis Coser's *The Functions of Social Conflict* (1956) as a version of conflict theory, but it is more a functionalist analysis of the role of conflict in social life than a use of conflict propositions to explain various social phenomena. Conflict theory presupposes the following:

(1) Conflict or struggle between individuals and groups who have opposing interests or who are competing for scarce resources is the essence of social life;

(2) Competition and conflict occur over many types of resources in many settings, but power and economic resources are the principal sources of conflict and competition;

(3) Conflict and struggle typically result in some individuals and groups dominating and controlling others, and patterns of domination and subordination tend to be self-perpetuating;

(4) Dominant social groups have a disproportionate influence on the allocation of resources and on the structure of society.

1.1 Conflict Perspective: Influence of Marx, Weber and Simmel

For Marxists, social class is the source of conflict in all societies above the level of primitive egalitarian communities. Class conflict – between masters and slaves or landlords and peasants, for example – pervades history and is the engine of historical change. Marxists have focused most of their attention, though, on the class structure of modern capitalist society. The most prominent feature of capitalist society is the class struggle between capitalists and workers. Marx assumed, and nearly all later Marxists have assumed as well, that to understand the structure, functioning, and evolution of capitalist society you had to start from the fact that capitalists have as their main objective maximizing profits and accumulating capital. They do this by exploiting the working class, i.e., by paying them wages that are less than the full value of the goods they produce. Workers are motivated to resist capitalist exploitation as much as they can, and thus there is an inherent antagonism between capitalists and workers. This class struggle is the foundation of capitalism and the root cause of all other forms of struggle or conflict within capitalism.

In the "The Communist Manifesto" Marx and Engels in their classical statement emphasized that "The history of all

hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freemen and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guild master and journeymen in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried in an unintrrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in common ruin of the contending classes." And the manifesto is a "propaganda pamphlet in which Marx and Engels presented some of their scientific ideas in collective form" (R. Aron : 116). Its central theme is class struggle to explain the above classical statement in some detail:

1. Human history is characterized by the struggle of human groups which will be called social classes.

2. The society is characterized by an antagonism between oppressors and oppressed and there is a tendency towards a polarization into two blocks.

3. Among the two polarized classes (bourgeoisie and proletariat) the bourgeoisie is incapable of maintaining its ascendancy without revolutionizing the instrument of production.

4. The basis of antagonism is the contradiction between the forces and the relationship of production.

5. By revolutionizing the instrument of production the capitalist system is able to produce more and inspite of this increase in wealth poverty remains the lot of the majority.

6. This contradiction will eventually produce a revolutionary crisis.

7. The proletariat being the vast majority of the population will become a class i.e. a social entity aspiring to the seizure of power and the transformation of social relations.

8. The proletarian revolution will mark the end of classes and of the antagonistic character of capitalist society.

9. According to Marx (in the Communist Manifesto), in place of the old bourgeoisie society with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

In developing this emancipatory project, Marx produced a formal theory of conflict and change, which he might disavow as a positivistic theory but which has been use nonetheless in developing contermporty conflict theory. In elaborating his model of revolutionary class conflict and social change, Marx delineated an image of social organization that still influences a major portion of contemporary sociological theory. Marx began with a simple-and; Economic organization, especially the ownership of property, determines the organization of the rest of a society. The class structure and institutional arrangements, as well as cultural values, beliefs, religious dogmas, and other idea systems are ultimately a reflection of the economic base of a society.

Then he added another assumption: Inherent in the economic organization of any society except communistic society-are forces inevitably generating revolutionary class conflict. Such revolutionary class conflict is seen as dialectical

and conceptualized as occurring in epochs, with successive bases of economic organization sowing the seeds of their own destruction through the polarization of classes and subsequent overthrow of the dominant by the subjugated class. Hence, a third assumption: conflict is bipolar, with exploited classes under conditions created by the economy becoming aware of their true interests and eventually forming a revolutionary political organization that stands against the dominant, property holding class. On the above mentioned assumptions, conflict theory directly challenge those attribute to functionalism.

1. While social relationships display systemic features, these relationships are rife with conflicting interests.

2. This fact reveals that social systems systematically generate conflict.

3. Conflict is therefore an inevitable and pervasive feature of social systems.

4. Such conflict tends to be manifested in the opposition of interests.

5. Conflict most frequently occurs over the distribution of scare resources, most notable power and material wealth.

6. Conflict is the major source of change in social systems.

Weber on Conflict

In the 1970s some sociologists began to rethink the

traditional interpretation of Weber handed down by Talcott Parsons, viewing Weber as offering a kind of conflict theory that was similar to Marxian theory in certain ways, but different in crucial respects (Cohen et al. 1975; Collins 1975, 1986). Collins developed this idea most thoroughly. He argued that Weber was a complex and multidimensional thinker who later in life evolved into a conflict theorist. Like Marx, Weber emphasized the role of conflict, struggle, and discord in social life, viewing them as pervasive features of society and the keys to understanding it. There are certain crucial differences in the conflict theories of Marx and Weber, and in the conflict theories of their various followers. Four crucial differences can be emphasized:

(1) **Class and other struggles.** For Marxian theory, class struggle is most fundamental and underlies all other forms. Political, ethnic, religious, and ideological conflicts not only manifest the predominant form of class conflict and the nature of the dominant class, but also in essence would not exist at all were class conflict to be eradicated. Weberians view this position as excessively ''class reductionist.'' They view class struggle as important in many societies, but often not as the most important form of struggle or as the basis for other forms of struggle. For contemporary Weberian conflict theorists, political, ethnic, and religious struggles are often most important and thus cannot be explained simply by relating them to class struggle. The neo Weberian theorist Frank Parkin (1979), for

example, regards racial conflict as the most crucial type in South African society.

(2) **Inevitability of conflict, domination, and inequality.** Marxists have held that the capitalist class struggle can be eradicated and, along with it, the other major forms of social conflict that flow from it. Weberians, on the other hand, tend to view at least some degree of conflict as permanent and ineradicable. Attempts to eliminate certain types of conflict are likely to be only partially successful. If more fully successful, then they may very well intensify or create other forms of conflict. Weber, for example, famously argued that attempts to replace capitalism with socialism would intensify the power of the state, and thus would increase the conflict between the state and the citizenry. Weber was a kind of cynical realist (Collins 1986) who saw social life as a continual process of individuals maneuver ing for power and control over situations and over each other.

(3) **Nature and role of the state.** Marx himself, and the majority of Marxists, have tended to view the state as the political agent of the ruling class, although more recently some Marxists have conceded a certain autonomy to state action. Weberians tend to see this type of class reductionism as a great over simplification. The state is often tied to the ruling class and may do its bidding, but the state has its own interests to pursue, such as maintaining order,

enhancing its status, and competing with other states (Collins 1975; Parkin 1979; Skocpol 1979). The autonomous role of states, and the importance of the international states system and geopolitics, are major emphases in Weberian conflict theory but receive little in Marxism.

(4) **Bureaucratic and organizational power struggles.** Bureaucratic organization was a major focus in Weber's work but almost totally absent from Marx's. For Weber, the alienating consequences of the modern division of labor were produced more by bureaucratic forms of organization than by who owned the means of production. Not only did these forms of organization play a major role in shaping modern social life, but they were also themselves the sites of major power struggles.

Simmel on Conflict

Along with Marx and Weber, Georg Simmel played an important role in the development of contemporary conflict theory. He disagreed with Marx about the conflict-producing effects of capitalism, but he also disagreed with Weber on rationalization. For Simmel, market-driven societies provide individuals with choices about what they purchase and how they live their lives, thereby increasing their sense of value and well-being. True, market societies are more impersonal and perhaps cutthroat. Yet, they are also much more free and allow individuals to chose their group affiliations rather than be

bound by them and the traditional authority inherent in pre-capitalist groups.

Moreover, people have choices in markets to secure resources that match their individual needs. Given this view of modernity, Simmel's theory of conflict tends to focus on the integrative or "positive" effects of conflict rather on the disintegrative consequences of conflict. Simmel argued that conflict will have integrative effects on a society when the conflicts are *frequent* as well as low in intensity and in violence. Such conflicts release tensions and are more readily managed by law and polity. These kinds of conflicts are the most likely in societies revealing high levels of structural interdependence among potential conflict parties; once interdependencies are high, actors have an interest in normatively regularizing conflict rather than letting it break rewarding interdependencies.

For Simmel, conflict can also have integrative consequences for the parties to a conflict. Conflict increases the sense of group boundaries, centralization of authority, decreased tolerance for deviance and dissent that, in turn, increases group solidarity. Conflict can also lead to coalition formation, as successful groups are drawn into the conflict by forming alliances with the original parties of a conflict. All of these outcomes promote some degree of integration in the larger social system.

However, conflicts are not always integrative. If the parties to a conflict have high degrees of emotional

involvement to a conflict—often an outcome of the enhanced group solidarity of parties to a conflict—it can become violent and malintegrative. Moreover, the level of violence to a conflict will increase when moralized so that the conflict is over fundamental values and ethics. Under these conditions, parties to a conflict will often not be able to compromise, and given their emotional involvement in the conflict, violence and intensity will increase, and they will increase the potential for disintegration.

Indeed, Marx's theory would predict that these more disintegrative processes would always be part of societal-level conflict, whereas Simmel only indicated that this was a possibility, although the high levels of *structural interdependence* that typify market-driven capitalist societies mitigate against this polarization and value-infusion to conflict. Still, Simmel's ideas can be rather easily blended into both Weber's and Marx's formulation of conflict processes; and so, by the modern era of theorizing in sociology, there existed a sophisticated body of theoretical principles on conflict dynamics that could be expanded upon to create a more robust theory of conflict dynamics.

Conflict in Modern Social Theory

Let us start with understanding of some basic difference between functionalist theories and modern conflict theories. To the functionalists, society is static or, at best, in a state of moving equilibrium, but to the conflict theorists, every society at every point is subject to processes of change. Where

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functionalists emphasize the orderliness of society, conflict theorists see dissension and conflict at every point in the social system. Functionalists (or at least early functionalists) argue that every element in society contributes to stability; the exponents of conflict theory see many societal elements as contributing to disintegration and change. Functionalists tend to see society as being held together informally by norms, values, and a common morality.

Conflict theorists see whatever order there is in society as stemming from the coercion of some members by those at the top. Where functionalists focus on the cohesion created by shared societal values, conflict theorists emphasize the role of power in maintaining order in society. Conflict theory builds upon Marxist analysis of class conflicts, but it is detached from any ideological commitment to socialism. Max Weber generalized conflict to the arenas of power and status as well as economic class, and this multidimensional approach has become widespread since the 1950s.

As we know, conflict as an element of society has existed from the moment there were two or more humans to interact with each other. Most sociologists from the conflict tradition considered conflict as an unavoidable part for human association (Dahrendorf, 1959a; Coser, 1956). In sociology, conflict can be viewed from many theoretical perspectives. Conflict can be the catalyst for revolution or the basis for a meeting of the minds.

Among the many definitions of conflict (all with

negative connotations), Webster's dictionary defines it as a battle, a fight or a war. Collin's Sociological Dictionary defines conflict as any overt act of aggression between individuals or nations. For Karl Marx, conflict resulting from a fight over resources inevitably leads to revolution. For Dahrendorf, conflict is "the inequality of power and authority which inevitably accompanies social organizations" (Dahrendorf, 1959). In addition, Dahrendorf considered 'conflict' as a 'conflict of interest' or of 'one's interests' (Straus, 1979).

1.2 The Dialectical Conflict Theory: Ralph Dahrendorf

As we discussed, during the late 1950sand 60s we witnessed the development and spread of functional analysis in American academia. Conflict theorists of late 60s argued that the Parsonian scheme and functionalism in general presents an overlay consensual, integrated, and static vision of society. Dahrendorf is one of the major exponent of the position that society has two faces (conflict and consensus) and that sociological theory therefore should be divided into two parts, conflict theory and consensus theory. Consensus theorists should examine value integration in society, and conflict theorists should examine conflicts of interest and the coercion that holds society together in the face of these stresses. Dahrendorf recognized that society could not exist without both conflict and consensus, which are prerequisites for each other. Thus, we cannot have conflict unless there is some prior consensus.

In other word, Dahrendorf claimed that the formation of class refers to the organization of common interests. Like political groups, class is also groups of people united by common interests. In his book, Dahrendorf describes the situation as follows: "parallel with political organization of classes there grows up a theoretical class- consciousness, awareness on the individual's part of the interest of his class generally" (Dahrendorf, 1959a: 17)

In Dahrendorf's view, society has two faces-one of consensus, the other of conflict. And it is time to begin analysis of society's ugly face and abandon the utopian image created by functionalism. For Dahrendorf, the process of institutionalization involves the creation of "imperatively coordinated associations" (ICAs) that, represent a distinguishable organization of roles. This organization is characterized by power relationships, with some clusters of roles having power to extract conformity from others.

Furthermore, although power denotes the coercion of some by others, these power relations in ICAs tend to become legitimated and can therefore be viewed as authority relations in which some positions have the "accepted" or "normative right" to dominate others. Dahrendorf thus conceives the social order as maintained by processes creating authority relations in the various types of ICAs existing throughout all layers of social systems. At the same time, however, power and authority are the scare resources over which subgroups within a designated ICA compete and fight. They are thus the major

sources of conflict and change in these institutionalization patterns.

This conflict is ultimately a reflection of where clusters of roles in an ICA stand in relation to authority, since the "objective interests" inherent in any role in a direct function of where that role possesses authority and power over other roles. However, even though roles in ICAs possess varying degrees of authority, any particular ICA can be typified in terms of just two basic types of roles, ruling and ruled. The ruling cluster of roles has an interest in preserving the status quo, and the ruled cluster has an interest in redistributing power, or authority. Under certain specified conditions, awareness of these contradictory interests increases, with the result that ICAs polarize into two conflict groups, each now aware of its objective interests, which then engage in a contest over authority.

The resolution of this contest or conflict involves the redistribution of the authority in the ICA, thus making conflict the source of change in social systems. In turn, the redistribution of authority represents the institutionalization of a new cluster of ruling and ruled roles that, under certain conditions, polarize into two interest groups that initiate another contest for authority. Social reality is thus typified in terms of this unending cycle of conflict over authority within the various types of ICAs in a society overlap, leading to major conflicts cutting across large segments of the society, while, at other times and under different conditions, these conflicts are confined to a particular ICA.

This image of social organization represents a revision of Marx's portrayal of social reality :

1. Social systems are seen by both Dahrendorf and Marx as in a continual state of conflict.

2. Such conflict is presumed by both authors to be generated by the opposed interests that inevitably inhere in the social structure of society.

3. Opposed interests are viewed by both Marx and Dahrendorf as reflections of differences in the distribution of power among dominant and subjugated groups.

4. Interests are seen by both as tending to polarize into tow conflict groups.

5. For both, conflict is dialectical, with resolution of one conflict creating a new set of opposed interests that, under certain conditions, will generate further conflict.

6. Social changes is thus seen by both as ubiquitous feature of social systems and the result of inevitable conflict dialectics within various types of institutionalized patterns.

Much like, Marx, this image of institutionalization as a cyclical or dialectic process has led Dahrendorf into the analysis of only certain key casual relations:

➢ conflict is assumed to be an inexorable process arising out of opposing forces within social-structural arrangements;

➢ such conflict is accelerated or retarded by a series of intervening structural conditions or variables;

➢ Conflict resolution at one point in time creates a structural situation that, under specifiable conditions, inevitably leads to further conflict among opposed forces.

While borrowing much of Marx's about power and coercion in social systems, Dahrendorf actually ends up position a much different source of conflict: the institutionalized authority relations of ICAs, such a position is much different from that of Marx, who viewed such authority relations as simply a superstructure erected by the dominant classes, which, in the long run, would be destroyed by the conflict dynamics occurring below institutional arrangement. While Dahrendorf acknowledges that authority relations are imposed by the dominant groups in ICAs and frequently makes reference to "factual substrates," the source of conflict becomes, the legitimated authority role relations of ICAs. I think that this drift away from Marx's emphasis on the institutional substructure forces Dahrendorf to seek the source of conflict in those very relations that integrate, an ICA.

Although emphasizing different sources of conflict, Dahrendorf and Marx's models reveal similar causal chains of events leading to conflict and the reorganization of social structure. Relations of dominant and subjugation create an "objective" opposition of interests; awareness or consciousness by the subjugated of this inherent opposition of interests occurs

under certain specifiable conditions; under other conditions, this newfound awareness leads to the political organization and then polarization of subjugated groups, who tend to join in conflict with the dominant group; the outcome of the conflict will usher in a new pattern of social organization; this new pattern of social organization will have within it relations of domination and subjugation that set off another sequence of events leading to conflict and then change in patterns of social organization.

The intervening conditions affecting these processes are outlined by both Marx's and Dahrendorf only with respect to formation of awareness of opposed interests by the subjugated, the politicization and polarization of the subjugated into a conflict group, and the outcome of the conflict. The intervening conditions under which institutionalized patterns generate dominant and subjugated groups and the conditions under which these can be typified as having opposed interests remain unspecified apparently because they are in the nature of institutionalization, or ICAs and do not have to be explained.

İdris Guclu (2014) provided a detailed comparative analysis of Karl Marx and Ralf Dahrendorf. According to him without a doubt, Marx and Dahrendorf gave depth and understanding to class formation and conflict, social phenomenon that often have a strong pre- sence in society. For Marx, class formation comes from the ownership of private property and the means of production. Marx took a material view of conflict and explained it in terms of materialism. But, for Dahrendorf, this formulation of classes based on

possession/non-possession of means of production is reductionist because classes constructed purely on the basis of ownership are confined to the economic sphere. Dahrendorf argued that classes are social phenomena rather than economic and authority was the source of class stratification.

The concept of "non-antagonistic classes" is meaningless for Dahrendorf. Similar to Marx, class antagonisms specific to each particular mode of production played a part in the emergence of classes. Dahrendorf pointed out that class inequality and conflict always exist since authority is a universal phenomenon. The groups with power pursue their interests, and those without power pursue theirs. There is always an inevitable conflict between these two classes and this conflict is the great creative force of human history. The major class-dividing line is between power groups, between superordination and subordination. In addition, the key concept of social conflict is conflict between dominant and subject groups in imperatively coordinated associations. Dahrendorf claimed that the formation of class refers to the organization of common interests.

For both Marx and Dahrendorf, conflict involves only two sides and has similar views of latent interests. On the other hand, Dahrendorf disagreed with Marx's argument that people's class positions determine their entire social life and behavior. Dahrendorf saw another difference from Marx regarding the structure of societies: consensus and conflict. Finally, in contrast to Marx, Dahrendorf believed the lumpen proletariat would not form a conflict group since people are

recruited into this group by random chance. Marx and Dahrendorf agreed on this common dynamic: social structure is shaped by conflict; social interaction is filled with conflict; and conflict leads to social change and development.

The concept of conflict is a key word for many sociological approaches, especially for Marx and Weber; social order and social change are based on 'conflict'. Class conflict in industrial society is a main dynamic to social change. According to Mar's prediction, along with increased industrialization in capitalist society, class solidarity and conflict would also increase. However, Dahrendorf argues development would be in the opposite direction and current developments have proved Dahrendorf right. With continued technological development, the working class is increasingly diverse and divided.

While, mechanization becomes more complex, the need of skilled designers, builders, maintenance, and repair staff has increased. This increased along with specialized, working class wages, due to variations in status and skills uniting and dividing, and is undergoing a huge differentiation. In contrast to the formation of class consciousness and empowerment divisions and separations have occurred instead. Dahrendorf benefited from the Marxist theory of class struggle when constructing his own class theory and functionalist can also be seen in his ideas.

For Dahrendorf, class centers on having more authority, not ownership of the means of production. However, in every

aspect of society Dahrendorf's theory is far from being comprehensive. Because of man's moral, economic, and the like, the psychological dimensions of human beings were ignored; only human just as a social asset arises from the reduction and analysis. As in functionalism, conflict theory sociologists also adopt the macro level approach and many contemporary theorists have accepted Marx's assumptions regarding social conflict. However, Marx's views should be combined with Dahrendorf's ideas and that could provide a better synthesis of both approaches for understanding class formation and conflict.

So, Dahrendorf looked at change rather than equilibrium, conflict rather than order, how the parts of society contribute to change rather than to stability, and conflict and coercion rather than normative constraint. Dahrendorf offered a large-scale theory of conflict that parallels the structural functionalist's large-scale theory of order. His focus on authority, positions, imperatively coordinated associations, interests, quasi groups, interest groups, and conflict groups reflects this orientation. Dahrendorf's theory suffers from some of the same problems as structural functionalism; in addition, it represents a rather impoverished effort to incorporate Marxian theory. Dahrendorf also can be criticized for being satisfied with alternative theories of order and conflict rather than seeking a theoretical integration of the two.

Ralf Dahrendorf's model of class conflict emphasized the contrasts between modern industrial societies and the early forms of capitalism of Marx's time that render Marx's

predictions regarding class conflict and revolutionary change unlikely. With his focus on the authority structure of organizations as the primary basis for class formation (in contrast to Marx's focus on property ownership), Dahrendorf's model specifies the conditions leading to the formation of interest groups that seek to change the authority structure of society and its major organizations. However, there are several features of modern industrial society that make evolutionary change more likely than revolutionary change, including the growth of a large middle class, the limited and crisscrossing nature of conflict issues, and the development of mechanisms to regulate conflict.

1.3 The Conflict Functionalism: Lewis A. Coser

Lewis Coser analyzed conflict from a functionalist perspective. In this book *The Functions of Social Conflict* he suggested the term "conflict functionalism" as an appropriate label for his approach. He criticized the functionalist emphasis on value or normative consensus, order, and harmony. He pointed out that conflict, if dealt with at all, was treated as a disruptive or dysfunctional problem that potentially could be resolved by the application of appropriate sociological expertise.

Coser's perspective was based heavily on the ideas of Georg Simmel. However, while Simmel had viewed conflict as one of the basic forms of social interaction that is linked in complex ways with alternative forms, such as cooperation, Coser's goal was to show that certain kinds of conflict may

have positive or beneficial consequences for the larger system in which it occurs. This does not mean that conflict is good in a moral sense; instead, the focus is on its objective sociological consequences. Whether these consequences are good or bad in a moral sense is a separate question.

Coser argued that conflict may serve to solidify a loosely structured group. In a society that seems to be disintegrating, conflict with another society may restore the integrative core. Conflict with one group may serve to produce cohesion by leading to a series of alliances with other groups. Within a society, conflict can bring some ordinarily isolated individuals into an active role. Conflict also serves a communication function. Prior to conflict, groups may be unsure of their adversary's position, but as a result of conflict, positions and boundaries between groups often become clarified.

Individuals therefore are better able to decide on a proper course of action in relation to their adversary. Conflict also allows the parties to get a better idea of their relative strengths and may well increase the possibility of rapprochement, or peaceful accommodation. From a theoretical perspective, it is possible to wed functionalism and conflict theory by looking at the functions of social conflict. Still, it must be recognized that conflict also has dysfunctions.

Conflict is viewed as a process that, under certain conditions, functions to maintain the body social or some of its vital parts. From this vantage point, Coser develops an image of society that stresses:

1. The social world can be viewed as a system of variously interrelated Parts.

2. All social systems reveal imbalances, tensions, and conflicts of interests among variously interrelated parts.

3. Processes within and between the system's constituent parts operate under different conditions to maintain, change, and increase or decrease a system's integration and adaptability.

4. Many processes, such as violence, dissent, deviance, and conflict, which are typically viewed as disruptive to the system, can also be viewed, under specifiable conditions, as strengthening the system's basis of integration as well as its adaptability to the environment.

Coser offers some propositions about the conditions under which conflict leads to disruption and malintegration of social system. The main thrust of his analysis is revolving around statements on how conflict maintains or reestablishes system integration and adaptability to changing conditions. Coser's analysis thus emphasizies;

1. imbalances in the integration of system parts leads to

2. the outbreak of varying types of conflict among these parts, which in turn, causes

3. temporary reintegration of the system, which causes

4. increased flexibility in the system's structure,

5. increased capability to resolve future imbalances through conflict, and

6. increased capability to adapt to changing conditions.

Thus, Coser's analysis showed how conflict can have positive functions in promoting social integration if conflict issues are openly acknowledged and conflict regulation mechanisms are developed to deal with them. Conflict between groups promotes solidarity within the conflicting groups, and it is often followed by the formation of alliances between them. Moderate conflict within groups prevents tensions and antagonisms from building up to the point that the relationship itself is threatened. Conflict can stimulate positive social change if it is oriented toward realistic goals. In contrast, nonrealistic conflicts may provide emotional release but do not deal with the underlying causes or lead to positive social change.

1.4 Conflict and Geopolitical Theory: Randall Collins

In his introduction to the intellectual history of the discipline *Sociology Since Midcentury* Randall Collins mapped the pre history of the development of conflict theory. According to him midcentury sociology was dominated by a set of theoretical positions. The main pretender to being a general theory was functionalism, the strongest of the various abstract classificatory schemes that had emerged since the 1930s. For social change, the preference was ethnocentric evolutionist developmentalism. On the microlevel, there was the narrow positivism of social behaviorism, or the "loyal

opposition" of symbolic interactionism with its antideterminist emphasis on the emergence and negotiatedness of behavior and on the definition of the situation.

All this has changed radically in the last decade and a half. One obvious development is the upsurge of antipositivism. There has been an explicit reaction against rigidly statistical sociology, and against the "black box" agnosticism of social behaviorism. There has been a widespread rejection of the idea of science itself. This has been abetted, rather ironically, by the rise of an empirical sociology of science, of which Thomas Kuhn has been the most famous representative. To be sure, positivism is still with us. But it has nothing like the theoretical prestige it once had, when even rather a scientific functionalists gave ritual obeisance to it, and Talcott Parsons used to call his theoretical analysis an empirical exercise.

Positivist sociology now constitutes only another enclave within the field of contending schools. Its most specialized statistical and mathematical forms have grown increasingly isolated from the rest of sociology, although there are some important exceptions like Harrison White's block modeling, which have managed to tie in with current theoretical concerns. Another, separate positivist enclave has recently come on the scene as well. This is sociobiology, which is reminiscent of a much older, turn-of-the century positivism, and sometimes of its racist and sexist overtones as well. But these are sidelights to the more prominent theoretical developments of recent years. Among the most obvious of

these is the upsurge of Marxism. As a sociological theory, Marxism has virtually come back from the dead, and not only because of a shift in the political winds since the virulent anticommunism of the 1950s. For Marxism had virtually given up the ghost as an avowedly economic sociology, seemingly frightened off by the inexplicable survival of twentieth-century capitalism and by the repressive political regimes of the socialist states.

But post-midcentury Marxism has come back from the philosophical and humanistic enclave in which it made its last-ditch defense a few years ago, and has again claimed empirical relevance for the processes of politics and economics, class struggle and world upheaval. Post-midcentury sociology has also been a golden age for historical and macro comparative sociology generally. Some of this has been Marxist in theme, some Weberian, some avowedly eclectic. All versions have shown a willingness to drastically revise received positons, and the result has been a quantum leap forward in our macro theories. The resonances among the various historical sociologies, moreover, promise a much more powerful macro paradigm in the making (Collins: 1981).

Collins has done more than any sociologist to develop a synthesized conflict theory that owes more to Weber than to any other sociologist. In his analysis of Conflict theory Collins proposed the six steps for building social theory. They are following:

1. Examine typical real-life situations where people encounter each other.

2. Focus on the material arrangements that affect interaction – the physical layout of situations, the means and modes of communication, the available tools, weapons, and goods.

3. Assess the relative resources that people bring to, use in, or extract from encounters.

4. Entertain the general hypotheses that those with resources press their advantage, that those without resources seek the best deal they can get under the circumstances, and that stability and change are to be explained in terms of the lineup and shifts in the distribution of resources.

5. Assume that cultural symbols – ideas, beliefs, norms, values, and the like – are used to represent the interests of those parties who have the resources to make their views prevail.

6. Look for the general and generic features of particular cases so that more abstract propositions can be extracted from the empirical particulars of a situation.

Collins says of his early work, "My own main contribution to conflict theory . . . was to add a micro level to these macro-level theories. I especially tried to show that stratification and organization are grounded in the interactions of everyday life" (1990:72). Collins made it clear that his focus on conflict would not be ideological; that is, he did not begin with the political view that conflict is either good or bad. Rather, he claimed, he chose conflict as a focus on the realistic

ground that conflict is a— perhaps *the* —central process in social life.

Collins approached conflict from an individual point of view because his theoretical roots lie in phenomenology and ethnomethodology. Despite his preference for individual-level and small scale theories, Collins was aware that "sociology cannot be successful on the micro level alone" (1975:11); conflict theory cannot do without the societal level of analysis. Collins was inclined to see social structures as interaction patterns rather than as external and coercive entities. In addition, whereas most conflict theorists saw the actor as constrained by external forces, Collins viewed the actor as constantly creating and recreating social organization.

Collins saw Marxian theory as the "starting point" for conflict theory, but it is, in his view, laden with problems. For one thing, he saw it (like structural functionalism) as heavily ideological, a characteristic he wanted to avoid. For another, he tended to see Marx's orientation as reducible to an analysis of the economic domain, although this is an unwarranted criticism of Marx's theory. Actually, although Collins invoked Marx frequently, his conflict theory shows relatively little Marxian influence. It is far more influenced by Weber, Durkheim, and above all phenomenology and ethnomethodology.

On the basis of his approach on social stratification, Collins developed five principles of conflict analysis that he applied to social stratification, although he believed that they could be applied to any area of social life.

➢ First, Collins believed that conflict theory must focus on real life rather than on abstract formulations. This belief seems to reflect a preference for a Marxian-style material analysis over the abstraction of structural functionalism. Collins urged us to think of people as animals whose actions, motivated by self-interest, can be seen as maneuvers to obtain various advantages so that they can achieve satisfaction and avoid dissatisfaction. However, unlike exchange and rational choice theorists, Collins did not see people as wholly rational. He recognized that they are vulnerable to emotional appeals in their efforts to find satisfaction.

➢ Second, Collins believed that a conflict theory of stratification must examine the material arrangements that affect interaction. Although the actors are likely to be affected by material factors such as "the physical places, the modes of communication, the supply of weapons, devices for staging one's public impression, tools, goods" (R. Collins, 1975:60), not all actors are affected in the same way. A major variable is the resources that the different actors possess. Actors with considerable material resources can resist or even modify these material constraints, whereas those with fewer resources are more likely to have their thoughts and actions determined by their material setting.

➢ Third, Collins argued that in a situation of inequality, those groups that control resources are likely to try to exploit those that lack resources. He was careful to

point out that such exploitation need not involve conscious calculation on the part of those who gain from the situation; rather, the exploiters are merely pursuing what they perceive to be their best interests. In the process they may be taking advantage of those who lack resources.

➤ Fourth, Collins wanted the conflict theorist to look at such cultural phenomena as beliefs and ideals from the point of view of interests, resources, and power. It is likely that those groups with resources and, therefore, power can impose their idea systems on the entire society; those without resources have an idea system imposed on them.

➤ Finally, Collins made a firm commitment to the scientific study of stratification and every other aspect of the social world. Thus, he prescribed several things: Sociologists should not simply theorize about stratification but should study it empirically, if possible, in a comparative way. Hypotheses should be formulated and tested empirically through comparative studies. Last, the sociologist should look for the causes of social phenomena, particularly the multiple causes of any form of social behavior.

Randall Collins' conflict theory represents a theoretical synthesis between the micro and macro levels of analysis, with a strong emphasis on the notion that existing patterns of socioeconomic stratification reflect the enduring outcome of

previous conflicts. His view of social structure, including the stratification system, is that it is based on subjective definitions developed and sustained through micro-level interaction processes, particularly interaction between those in positions of dominance and subordination in occupational settings. The resources involved in developing and reinforcing these definitions are differentially distributed and include not only material resources but also the means of mental and emotional production, plus the means of violence and coercive control. People's positions in the authority structure in their employment settings are highly correlated with their income and education as well as with various social status indicators such as residential neighborhood, lifestyle choices, leisure activities, and the types of social groups with whom they identify.

Criticisms against Conflict Theory

Conflict theory has been criticized on a variety of grounds. For example, it has been attacked for ignoring order and stability, whereas structural functionalism has been criticized for ignoring conflict and change. Conflict theory has also been criticized for being ideologically radical, whereas functionalism was criticized for its conservative ideology. In comparison to structural functionalism, conflict theory is rather underdeveloped. It is not nearly as sophisticated as functionalism, perhaps because it is a more derivative theory.

In general and Dahrendorf's model of conflict theory in particular faced criticism from different corners. Some of the important criticisms are:

1. This conflict model is not as clear a reflection of Marxian ideas as they claimed.

2. Conflict theory has more in common with structural functionalism than with Marxian theory. As a result, conflict theory suffers from many of the same inadequacies as structural functionalism.

3. Conflict theory seems to suffer from many of the same conceptual and logical problems (for example, vague concepts, and tautologies) as structural functionalism.

4. Finally, like structural functionalism, conflict theory is almost wholly macroscopic and as a result has little to offer to our understanding of individual thought and action.

In this module we studied conflict theories of Lewis Coser, Ralf Dahrendorf, Randall and Collins. Coser, Dahrendorf, and Collins gave considerable emphasis to social processes whereby actual overt conflict, particularly the use of coercion and violence, is avoided. Conflict theory emphasizes the following features of the internal dynamics of societies: hierarchical distribution of the population in different social strata, reflecting differential access to valued resources; the opposing interests of different groups and social classes; the ability of dominant groups to maintain their dominance by persuading or requiring other groups to conform to its rules and fulfill the obligations of their roles in it; and the struggles of disprivileged and subordinate groups as a major stimulus for social change. However, contrary to the widely accepted image

of conflict theory as concentrating on class struggle and drastic social change, the conflict theories we have reviewed devote considerable attention to explaining how disruptive forms of conflict are avoided and institutionalized mechanisms of social change tend to occur within an overarching framework of structural stability.

Key Concepts

Functions of social conflict: Social integration due to the interdependent coexistence of conflict groups, and social change resulting from institutional resolution of group conflict.

Group conflict emerges when the manifest interests of one group conflict with those of another.

Interest group: Any group whose members consciously share and express similar interests.

Conflict groups: Competing interest groups in society.

Latent interests: Unspoken, tacit interests of one group vis-à-vis another.

Manifest interests: Explicitly stated objectives.

Neo-Marxist: Ideas derived from Marx's theory of capitalism but reworked in new ways and/or with new applications to take account of the transformations in capitalism; (*neo* derives from the Greek word for new).

New middle class: The expanding sector of educated (but politically indifferent) salaried managers, professionals, and sales and office workers that resulted from the post-World War II expansion of bureaucracy and the consumer economy.

Power: An unequally divided, perpetual source of conflict and resistance.

Power elite: Upper echelon in the interlocking network of economic, political, and military decision-makers; holders of power, prestige, and wealth in society.

Triangle of power: The intersection of economic, political, and military institutions.

Underdevelopment: Economies in the third world whose development is hindered by their relational dependence on, and exploitation by, the economically developed first world.

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MODULE 3
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Chapter outline

Introduction

In this module we will discuss different streams and aspects of Symbolic interactionism. As we know, symbol is a stimuli that is abstract and arbitrary to which meaning is applied. Symbols are things that are used to represent other things. Language can be thought of as a collection of symbols that are organized according to rules to communicate. We need symbols to coordinate, connect, and to have ideas. The importance of symbols to the development of humans both as individuals and collectives is at the heart of symbolic interaction theory.

Symbolic interactionism is essentially about how the presence of symbols is fundamental to the existence of societies, our self-concepts, and our minds. Elements of symbolic interaction can be found in the work of many scholars going back over a hundred years. However, George Herbert Mead is usually identified as the scholar who first put

all the pieces together in a comprehensive and coherent treatment of symbolic interaction. Sociologist Herbert Blumer later crystalized and extended Mead's ideas and was the person who described the ideas as "symbolic interactionism."

Thus, symbolic interaction claims that facts are based on and directed by symbols. The foundation of this theory is meanings. Symbolic interaction examines the meanings emerging from the reciprocal interaction of individuals in social environment with other individuals and focuses on the question of "which symbols and meanings emerge from the interaction between people?" Symbolic interaction theory has developed in the light of the theorists such as Dewey (1930), Cooley (1902), Parks (1915), Mead (1934, 1938), etc. Symbolic interactionists demonstrate differences in respect of their points of view.

All interactionists agree that the source of data is human interaction. Moreover, there is a general agreement among the symbolic interactionists that perspectives and empathy developing abilities of participants are the key subjects of symbolic interaction (Stryker & Vryan, 2003; Berg, 2000). Schenk and Holman (1980) state that symbolic interaction is a dynamic theory because according to this theory objects feature meanings within themselves and individuals formulate their activities in the direction of their evaluation of themselves and also people and objects around them. Thus, it is the social actors that attribute meaning to objects according to this perspective.

George Herbert Mead believes that mind and ego are

products of society. Mead assumes that symbols develop mind and they are used as means for thinking and communication (Ashworth, 2000). Mead focused on how people interact in their daily lives by means of symbolic interaction and how they create order and meaning (Korgen & White, 2008). Blumer, who is a student of Mead, is the first one to use symbolic interaction term. For that reason he is also named as the founder of symbolic interaction. According to Blumer (1969) human forms "meaning" in two ways:

1. Meaning is something attributed to objects, events, phenomenon, etc.

2. Meaning is a "physical attachment" imposed on events and objects by human.

Blumer believes that meaning is a condition that emerges as a result of the interaction of group members and not an intrinsic feature of the object (Tezcan, 2005). Consequently, meaning is created as a result of the interaction between people, and meaning allows people produce some of the facts forming the sensory world. These facts are related to how people form meaning. Thus, fact consists of the interpretation of various definitions. Thomas (1928) says "it is not important whether interpretation is accurate or not". He believes that fact is based on personal perceptions and changes in time (Berg, 2000).

There are three core principles in symbolic interaction perspective of Blumer: Meaning, language (language provides means [symbols] for debating meaning) and thinking principle.

Symbolic interaction theory acknowledges the principle of meaning as the center of human behavior. Language provides a meaning to humans by means of symbols. It is symbols that differentiate social relations of humans from the level of communication of animals. Human beings give meaning to symbols and they express these things by means of language. Consequently, symbols form the basis of communication. In other words, symbols are indispensable elements for the formation of any kind of communication act.

As the last principle in the symbolic interaction perspective thinking changes the interpretation of individuals pertaining to symbols (Nelson, 1998). Symbolic interaction is based on three basic propositions according to Blumer (Poloma, 1999: 224-225; Tye & Tye, 1992: 36); (a) Humans develop their attitudes towards things according to the meanings that things propose to them. (b) These meanings are inferred from the "interaction of one of them from its addressees". (c) These meanings change within an interpretive process.

It originated from the work of George Herbert Mead and his students at the University of Chicago as well as the work of pragmatic philosophers. While Mead was formally associated with the psychology and philosophy departments at the University of Chicago, his classes on social psychology and social philosophy attracted a large number of students from the fledgling sociology department. One of the sociology students, Herbert Blumer, coined the term symbolic interactionism and other sociology students were instrumental

in publishing Mead's ideas, after his death, concerning the individual. These ideas center on his discussions of the mind (what makes humans uniquely social creatures), self (how we become uniquely social creatures), and society (how our interactions are affected by social institutions).

Mead wrote extensively about issues concerning more macro level social phenomena such as the role of government in funding education and the role of education for socialization, but he is mainly recognized for his contributions to symbolic interactionism. Generally, the symbolic interactionist perspective in social psychology focuses on studying the meanings that underlie social interactions in terms of how they are created, how they are maintained, and how we learn to understand such meanings.

Additionally, theorists writing within this perspective argue that individual interactions lead to the creation of formal social organizations and social institutions. Therefore, to understand society, it is necessary to understand the inter actions that shape it and maintain it. There are three main theoretical approaches in the symbolic interactionist perspective, symbolic interactionism, phenomenological, and life course, each of which examines different aspects of these meanings and the self on which they are derived.

The symbolic interactionism approach is most closely related to Mead's original ideas concerning social psychology and focuses on exploring how meanings are created and maintained within social interactions with the self as the basis

for such interactions. The underlying theme of this approach is that individuals create and manage meanings through the roles and identities they hold. It is important to note that each individual holds any number of roles and identities, depending on the people with whom they interact as well as the environment in which they find themselves. Classical symbolic interactionist studies include the work of Herbert Blumer, Charles Horton Cooley, and Manford Kuhn.

Blumer elaborated on Mead's discussion of the social self examining itself as an object outside the individual, while Cooley focused on explaining the process in which the self recognizes itself as an object. Kuhn's discussions explored different dimensions of the self as a way of explaining individuals' ability to take on a variety of identities, depending on the situation and the other actors involved.

Contemporary developments of these ideas are found in the work of Erving Goffman, Peter Burke, Sheldon Stryker, and their associates and students. Goffman's discussion of dramaturgy and the presentation of self, among other ideas, examined the ways in which individuals identified the role held in any particular interaction and the expectations associated with that role. Stryker and others explored how roles are linked to individuals' identity and how meaningful these identities are to people. Burke and associates proposed a more formal theoretical explanation of how different parts of the self are associated with specific identities people hold.

The phenomenological approach originated from

European sociology and philosophy, emphasizing the meanings themselves and how such meanings reflect unstated normative expectations for interactions. The underlying theme of this approach is that language, verbal and non verbal, represents the informal and formal rules and norms that guide social interactions and structure society. The early work in phenomenology, as represented by the ideas of Alfred Schutz and Harold Garfinkel, differentiated between different aspects of how people create social reality as well as operate within already existing social reality. Schutz examined how language and communication represented an intersubjective process of reality creation and maintainance, while Garfinkel explored how people managed reality through the development of ethnomethodology. Contemporary developments of phenomenology are found in the work of theorists such as Howard Becker, Peter Berger, and Douglas Maynard.

Through a series of studies, Becker explored the way individuals' interpretations of social interactions and social experiences reflect their own experiences and unspoken norms for behavior. Berger, along with Thomas Luckmann, is considered the American introduction to Schutz's ideas and phenomenology. Equally important, Berger and Luckmann also clearly demonstrated how everyday interactions and language create seemingly formidable social institutions and organizations. Finally, Maynard further developed ethnomethodology by focusing on conversation analysis as a way of understanding how social talk creates and represents reality.

The central theme of symbolic interactionism is that

human life is lived in the symbolic domain. Symbols are culturally derived social objects having shared meanings that are created and maintained in social interaction. Through language and communication, symbols provide the means by which reality is constructed. Reality is primarily a social product, and all that is humanly consequential—self, mind, society, culture—emerges from and is dependent on symbolic interactions for its existence. Even the physical environment is relevant to human conduct *mainly* as it is interpreted through symbolic systems.

The life course approach in symbolic interactionism focuses on how humans learn the meanings associated with interactions throughout their lifetime and the stages that reflect such learning processes. The underlying theme of this approach is that the norms, rules, and values that guide interactions and shape society change throughout individuals' lives, especially as they move into different social positions and environments. As a relatively newer approach in the symbolic interactionist perspective in terms of identifying as a unique approach, the key ideas can be traced to Mead's discussion about socialization and Georg Simmel's ideas about interactions within and between groups.

Mead explained how humans become uniquely social creatures in his lectures about the self, where he describes a three stage process (preparatory, play, and game) for humans to learn the norms, rules, and values of the group into which they are born. He argued that by the end of this process, people will have a fully developed self. Simmel's discussions

concerning interactions and groups examined how individuals' interactions with one another changed as group size, group composition, and social environment changed. Contemporary theorists such as Glenn Elder, Roberta Simmons, and Dale Dannefer, and their students and colleagues, build on these ideas in similar ways.

First, the contemporary approaches assume that socialization is a lifelong process that changes as individuals change. Second, theorists in the approach examine both individual level factors and societal factors that contribute to the socialization process. Elder has focused on how socialization is consistent across cohorts of people, varying only in qualitative aspects related to differences in environments and resources. Simmons has examined how the socialization process itself varies depending on individuals' stage in life, and Dannefer has explored the ways in which groups with which people are associated play an important role in their continuing socialization throughout life.

Symbolic interactionism was developed in opposition to functionalist approaches. In drawing on Mead's work, Herbert Blumer, who coined the term symbolic interactionism, con siders ''society as symbolic interaction'' (Blumer 1969). He argues that society and its norms and values do not predefine how people act and interact. However, people act in situations according to the meaning these situations have for them. The ''definition of the situation'' is produced in interaction with others. Hence, symbolic interactionist research is particularly interested in the interpretive processes by virtue

of which participants negotiate the definition of the situation. Blumer's theoretical work has initiated the emergence of the Chicago School, which produced a large body of ethnographic studies tackling topics such as social problems, race relations, and industrial relations (Everett C. Hughes, Howard S. Becker).

Symbolic interactionism rests on three simple premises. First, human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that things have for them. Symbolic interactionists therefore believe that to understand social behavior, the researcher must understand the meanings that actors assign to the situation and action. Second, the meanings that people assign to the objects in their environment are drawn from the social interactions in which they engage. That is to say, we do not simply form our meanings as a result of psychological elements in our personalities, but other people's actions define the meanings for us. Third, the meanings of things are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process. There is a process of interaction that goes on within the individual, as people engage in an internal conversation about what things mean and how they should respond.

3.1 Theory of Mind, Self and Society: G.H. Mead

George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) was born in Massachusetts but moved with his family to Oberlin, Ohio, where his father (who had been a Congregational minister) was called to teach. Following his graduation from Oberlin College, Mead eventually enrolled at Harvard University and

later went to Europe for additional study. He began his professional career at the University of Michigan, but after three years went with John Dewey to the University of Chicago, where both he and Dewey contributed to the development of pragmatic philosophy at the University of Chicago. Mead's influence on American sociology is manifested primarily in the development of symbolic interaction theory, with its distinctive emphasis on micro level processes of subjective interpretation and communication.

George Herbert Mead's contributions are important for analyzing the close relationship between social interaction and subjective mental processes, as well as the way individuals' self-concepts link them with the life of the larger community or society. Mead's perspective on how knowledge develops through the process of adaptation to the environment and problem solving provides a bridge between pragmatism and sociology. Mead referred to his perspective as social behaviorism, but many of his ideas were later incorporated in symbolic interaction theory. Mead's focus on interaction was similar to Simmel's, but Mead stressed more explicitly the way interaction is linked with subjective interpretation (the thinking process).

Mead's (1934) social behaviorism was intended as a critique of psychological behaviorism, which he considered incomplete for understanding both the social and the subjective dimensions of human behavior. For Mead, the simple stimulus response model of behavioral psychology ignored the subjective process of interpretation whereby the meanings of

environmental stimuli are established through interaction. This does not mean that stimulus-response patterns do not apply to human beings.

But the intentional responses of human beings to their environment, and to one another, go beyond these automatic, nonreflective conditioned responses by incorporating the process of subjective interpretation that occurs between stimulus and response. Mead regarded the mind itself as the thinking process whereby human beings seek to make sense of their environment in the process of adapting to it.

The generalized other is one of George Herbert Mead's central concepts in his seminal discussion of the social genesis of the self. According to Mead, the self resides in the individual's ability to take account of himself or herself as a social being. It thus requires the individual to take the role of the other as well as taking account of how his or her actions might affect the group. Generalized other is Mead's (1962: 154–8) term for the collection of roles and attitudes that people use as a reference point for figuring out how to behave in a given situation.

This term is often used in discussions of the play and game stages of development. According to Mead, selves develop in social contexts as people learn to take the roles of their consociates such that they can with a fair degree of accuracy predict how one set of actions is likely to generate fairly predictable responses. People develop these capacities in the process of interacting with one another, sharing meaningful

symbols, and developing and using language to create, refine, and assign meanings to social objects (including themselves). In order for complex social processes such as these to work, people have to develop a sense for the rules, norms, roles, understandings, and so on that make responses predictable. While they learn these sets of rules from concrete others, their aggregate constitutes a generalized other.

Since different social settings are governed by different sets of rules, competent social actors have to be able to take account of different sets of rules as they move from one social setting to another. Each setting, then, is governed by its own generalized other. If one were to invoke Mead's preferred sports metaphor, the athlete has to be able to take account of different sets of rules as she or he moves from sport to sport. As people develop more complete selves, then, they learn to internalize and recognize a greater diversity of perspectives operating among different communities. As they move among settings and/or communities, they have to take into account the aggregate expectations of the people they are likely to encounter in that setting, the culture that is likely to make that aggregate make sense, and the reasons that aggregate is different from other aggregates.

Thus, while children in the play stage take the role of a single other, and children in the game stage learn to take the roles of several others, a person who has developed a sense of a generalized other can take the role of abstract sets of attitudes, beliefs, and norms she or he expects concrete others to embody. In a sense, then, the generalized other is the

process through which the individual internalizes and takes account of society's expectations. As society is processual, emergent, and contextual, so must be the person's ability to take account of different generalized others that are likely to govern people's behaviors from setting to setting.

3.2 Theory of Looking Glass self: C.H.Cooley

Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929) was born in Michigan and was associated with the University of Michigan for all of his professional life. Like Mead, his ideas also contributed to the development of symbolic interaction theory. His perspective on the relation between a person's self-concept and face-to-face interaction within primary groups is expressed in his frequently cited concept of the "looking glass self" (Cooley: 1964). This metaphor refers to the way one's identity is formed from the reflections one sees of oneself in the reactions of others. This concept is clearly parallel to Mead's insights regarding the social origins of one's self-concept. More than Mead, however, Cooley stressed the importance of our emotional reactions to these responses. When we perceive the reactions of others as indicating either approval or disapproval, we feel pride or shame as a result.

In his book, *Human Nature and Social Order*, he examines the ''distributive aspect'' (Cooley 1964: 37) of intersubjective relationships from a social psychological perspective; namely, the development of the self through symbolically mediated interaction. Cooley reconstructed three progressive phases of the evolving self:

1. the ''sense of appropriation,'' which is the expression of a biologically manifested spontaneity and activity;

2. the ''social self,'' which is developed by taking in the attitude of others;

3. the famous ''looking glass self '' (Cooley 1998: 155–75),

Which describes neither an ''over socialized self'' characterized by passive internalization of given habits and values, nor an ''unencumbered self'' freed from all social constraints. The metaphor ''looking glass self,'' as Cooley explicitly declared, means not a ''mere mechanical reflection of ourselves,'' but it represents an open and distinctive self image, created through the imagination and interpretation of the world we inhabit. A looking glass self, according to Cooley, has three ''principal elements'':

1. The imagination of our appearance to the other person;

2. The imagination of his judgment of that appearance;

3. Some sort of self feeling, such as ''pride or mortification'' (Cooley 1964: 184).

Cooley used the image of a mirror as a metaphor for the way in which people's self concepts are influenced by their imputations of how they are perceived by others. Cooley distinguished three ''principal elements'' of the looking glass self: ''the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his [sic] judgment of that appearance; and some sort of self feeling, such as pride or mortification.'' Much of the time, Cooley thought, our experience of self is an

emotional response to the supposed evaluations of others, especially significant others. Children learn the meaning of ''I'' and ''me'' and ''mine'' through the appropriation of objects they desire and claim as their own, in contrast to the things they cannot control.

Importantly, among the objects they seek to control and appropriate as their own are their parents and others in the primary group. As infants and toddlers discover they can influence others by their actions, they simultaneously discover and realize reflections of themselves in these others. Cooley based his self theory on observations of his own children, confirming his initial hypotheses with a systematic study of his third child from shortly after birth to the thirty third month, in order to determine how the word ''I'' is learned and its meaning. Children begin appropriative processes with attempts to control the things closest to them, including their own bodies, and then move outward to the people in their vicinity, even as infants ''exerting [their] social power'' to attract attention. They lay claim to their parents in much the same way they assert as their own their noses and their rattles.

In order to learn the meaning of personal pronouns, which refer to different objects when used by different people, children must imagine themselves from the perspective of others. After coming to understand what others mean when they refer to themselves, that is, that ''I'' refers to self feeling, children ''sympathize'' with these others and this empathetic process gives meaning to their own incipient self feelings. ''I'' is social because when it is used it is always addressed to an

audience (for Cooley, usually the child's mother), and its use thus indicates children's newly acquired ability to take the role of their audience.

Once they begin to do this, they can also perform different selves for different audiences. Indeed, Cooley argued that even young children are capable of manipulating their audiences, care more about the opinions of some people than others, and selectively ''own'' those with whom they are the closest and over whom they have the most influence (e.g., ''my mama''). Adults are not that much different; their imaginations are merely more complex and specific and their manipulations of others more subtle. The self, then, emerges in interaction, becomes meaningful only in contrast to that which is not of self (society), and is, therefore, inextricable from society. Cooley described the looking glass self in his first major work, Human Nature and the Social Order, published in 1902.

His analysis of self was influenced by his early reading of idealist and transcendentalist literature, including Thoreau, Goethe, and Emerson, as well as the pragmatism of Dewey, also at Ann Arbor at the time. The social self draws upon the work of the psychologist and philosopher William James and the social psychologist James Mark Baldwin and was articulated within the populist, progressive intellectual milieu of the Midwestern scholarship of Cooley's era and the sheltered academic environs of the University of Michigan, which granted him the leeway to develop his reflective notion of self based on his observations of his own children and introspection. As Cooley was also a painfully shy and

reclusive man who wrote in his journals of his obsession with gaining the approbation of others, his theorization of a self that depends on a reflexive, emotion laden response to imagined evaluations is distinctly autobiographical.

Cooley's methodological approach follows directly from his conception of the self: human action must be understood in terms of the subjective meanings actors impute to situations. In his conjoining of the social self with society as the communicative imaginations of multiple selves, his looking glass self is a culturally and historically specific product of his social location and his conceptual and political idealism. Cooley's looking glass self was elaborated by George Herbert Mead in the latter's development of the notion of taking the role of the other, especially the generalized other, as the mechanism through which a unified self emerges in interaction.

Cooley also influenced Goffman's dramaturgical analysis of the self as a situated performance. There is a significant body of research on what is now commonly referred to as ''reflected self appraisal'' and its role in the development of self concepts, and with those of Mead and Goffman, Cooley's ideas about the self have become a constitutive and foundational core of theories of self in sociological social psychology and symbolic interactionism, and because of his emphasis on the emotional aspects of identity, have influenced the sociology of emotions.

Cooley has been critiqued: Mead thought his work was

too ''mentalistic'' and others have suggested that the looking glass self, if accurate, suggests an over socialized human, passive and overly dependent on the opinions of others. Cooley himself answered both of these concerns, claiming in the introduction to Social Organization in 1907 that imagination was not all of society, but only his particular focus. His discussion of the looking glass self, moreover, is only one dimension of the social self conceptualization, in which he points not only to the importance of reflection, but also to the ways in which humans selectively and actively interpret and appropriate these reflections.

3.3 Interpretative approach: Herbert Blumer

The label *symbolic interactionism* was coined by Herbert Blumer (1969), one of Mead's students. Blumer, who did much to shape this perspective, specified its three basic premises: (1) Humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings that things have for them; (2) the meanings of things derive from social interaction; and (3) these meanings are dependent on, and modified by, an interpretive process of the people who interact with one another. The focus here is on meaning, which is defined in terms of action and its consequences (reflecting the influence of pragmatism).

The meaning of a thing resides in the action that it elicits. For example, the meaning of "grass" is food to a cow, shelter to a fox, and the like. In the case of symbols, meanings also depend on a degree of consensual responses between two or more people. The meaning of the word *husband,* for

example, depends on the consensual responses of those who use it. If most of those who use it agree, the meaning of a symbol is clear; if consensus is low, the meaning is ambiguous, and communication is problematic. Within a culture, a general consensus prevails on the meanings associated with various words or symbols. However, in practice, the meanings of things are highly variable and depend on processes of interpretation and negotiation of the interactants.

The interpretive process entails what Blumer refers to as *role-taking,* the cognitive ability to take the perspective of another. It is a critical process in communication because it enables actors to interpret one another's responses, thereby bringing about greater consensus on the meanings of the symbols used. The determination of meanings also depends on negotiation—that is, on mutual adjustments and accommodations of those who are interacting. In short, meaning is emergent, problematic, and dependent on processes of role-taking and negotiation. Most concepts of symbolic interactionism are related to the concept of meaning.

3.4 Dramaturgical Analysis: Erving Goffman

The work of Erving Goffman centered on explicating the structures and processes of the ''interaction order,'' the domain of social life brought about and facilitated by the physical presence of persons. In a series of extraordinary writings published from the early 1950s through the early 1980s, Goffman developed an utterly singular vision of social

life, expressed in a highly distinctive language that reflected his extraordinary observational acuity and his unmatched sociological grasp of metaphor and irony.

Born in Mannville, Alberta, Canada to Jewish migrants from the Ukraine, Erving Manual Goffman was educated at the universities of Manitoba (1939–42), Toronto (BA 1945) and Chicago (MA 1949; PhD 1953). His doctoral studies included a spell at Edinburgh University's department of social anthropology, which sponsored and funded 12 months of fieldwork on the remote Shetland island of Unst. Follow ing research posts at Chicago and with the National Institute of Mental Health (where he conducted fieldwork at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Washington, DC for Asylums), he was appointed to the faculty of the University of California, Berkeley's sociology department in 1958, becoming a full professor in 1962.

While teaching at Berkeley he influenced a number of graduate students, including John Lofland, Dorothy Smith, David Sudnow, and Harvey Sacks. He also used his proximity to Nevada to undertake participant observation of casino life, first as a gambler, then as a croupier. Goffman relocated to the University of Pennsylvania in 1968, where his work became increasingly sensitized to sociolinguistic and gender issues. He remained there until his death in 1982 from stomach cancer.

Goffman's primary contribution to sociology was to show how social interaction was fundamentally organized in social terms and amenable to close sociological investigation.

He demonstrated how the building blocks of social encounters – the talk, gestures, expressions, and postures that humans constantly produce and readily recognize – were responsive not to individual psychology or social structural constraints but to the locally specific demands of the face to face social situation.

This central analytic aim was pursued through a score of papers and eleven widely read books, including The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959), Asylums (1961), Stigma (1963), and Frame Analysis (1974). In opening the interaction order as a distinct sub area of sociology Goffman brought a novel analytic attitude, a spirit of inquiry, and a persistent skepticism that connected narrow disciplinary concerns to wider social currents.

Goffman burst onto the scene with the 1959 US publication of The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, a book that breathed new life into the ancient ''all the world's a stage'' metaphor. Embarking from a psychobiology that emphasized the immediate symbolic functions of the expressions humans constantly ''give'' (through the content of their talk) and ''give off'' or exude (through tone, posture, gesture, facial expression, and the like) when in the presence of others, Goffman brilliantly analyzed the ''dramaturgical'' aspects of this conduct.

Using a wide range of illustrative materials – ranging from respectable treatises, ethnographies, and social histories through memoirs, popular journalism, and novelistic accounts

to his own acute observations of human conduct – Goffman showed how interactional details could be cogently understood in sociological terms as ''performances'' fostered by an ''audience'' requiring cooperative ''teamwork'' among performers to bring off a desired definition of the situation. Performances may be presented in ''front'' regions (such as workplaces or formal ceremonial settings) that are usually differentiated by ''barriers to perception'' from ''back regions,'' the back stage areas (bath rooms, restaurant kitchens, private offices) where performers prepare themselves. Goffman went on to examine how ''discrepant roles'' and ''communication out of character'' can threaten the fostered reality. A recurrent theme in his writings was that successful interaction needs not Parsonsian role players enacting the institutionalized obligations and expectations of a status, but rather ''interactants'' skilled in ''the arts of impression management.''

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. øn other words, symbolic interactionism doesn't put forward a society picture or theory. 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 implies that symbolic interaction is not completely psychological and the second one implies that symbolic interaction is not completely sociological.

This theory pictures meaning as something emerging by itself, during interaction under a certain condition. It doesn't take into account the basic social context in which the interaction is positioned. Consequently, it doesn't produce the sources of meaning. Moreover, symbolic interactionism doesn't 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.

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". 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.

Key Concepts

Appearance: Signals indicating the individual's social statuses and "temporary ritual state" (e.g., a nurse dressed for work).

Audience: Individuals who witness our role performance and for whom we perform.

Back-stage: Staging area for front-region behavior, where actors do the preparatory work to ensure a successful performance.

Behaviorism: Strand in psychology emphasizing that humans behave in predictable ways in particular situations.

Conversation of gestures: Process by which our signals or gestures bring forth a meaningful response in another.

Cues: Verbal and non-verbal signs, signals, gestures, messages.

Definition of the situation: Socialization of individuals into a society's generalized expectations of behavior across an array of social settings (Thomas); crucial to how actors interpret and perform in a particular role-performance setting (Goffman).

Dramaturgical perspective of SI (Goffman) using the metaphor of drama to describe social life.

Encounter: Acts and gestures comprising communication about communicating (e.g., how we respond when we encounter a stranger on an elevator or unexpectedly meet an acquaintance on the street).

Frame: Simplifies reality by selectively interpreting, categorizing (and prioritizing) simultaneously occurring activities.

Front: The self-presentation maintained by the individual to project an intended definition of the situation in executing a particular role performance.

Front-stage area where role performances are given.

Generalized other community or society as a whole.

"**I**" part of the self; the "I" is the (subjective) acting self, and is only able to act because it internalizes the attitudes toward the "me" (as an object) received from others' behavior/ responses toward the acting "I" (Mead).

Impression management: Symbolic and strategic communicative work toward orchestrating a particular definition of the situation and a successful role performance.

Language: A socially shared symbol and meaning system.

Looking-glass self: Self-perception and behavior contingent on our knowing (or imagining) how others (would) respond toward us.

Manner: Signals which function to indicate the tone in the interaction role a performer expects to play in an oncomingsituation (e.g., the sympathetic grief counselor).

"**Me**" part of the self; the self as object ("me"); the internalization of the expectations and attitudes of others toward "me" and to which "i" (as the acting subject) respond (Mead).

Performance the idea that social life, society, is based on the socially structured, acting out (performance) of particular social roles.

Pragmatism strand in american philosophy emphasizing the practicalities that characterize, and the practical consequences of, social action and interaction.

Presentation of self ongoing symbolic work the role-performing actor does to project an intended definition of a situation.

Primary group has a crucially formative and enduring significance in child socialization (e.g., the primacy of the family).

Self reflexively active interpreter of symbols and meanings in the individual's environment; composed of the "i" and the "me" (mead).

Social roles socially scripted role-performance behavior required of a person occupying a particular status and/or in a particular setting; individuals perform multiple social roles.

Socialization process by which individuals learn how to be social – how to participate in society – and thus how to use and interpret symbols and language, and interact with others.

Stage: Specific setting or place where the role-performing actor performs a particular social role.

Stigma: Society's categorization or differentiation of its members as inferior based on the social evaluation and labeling of various attributes of undesired difference.

Symbol: Any sign whose interpretation and meaning are socially shared.

Symbolic interactionism: Sociological perspective emphasizing society/social life as an ongoing process wherein individuals continuously exchange and interpret symbols.

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MODULE 4

PHENOMENOLOGY

Chapter outline

4.1	**The idea of Phenomenology: Edmund Husserl**
4.2	**Phenomenological Interactionism: Alfred Schutz**
4.3	**Social Construction of Reality: Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann**
4.4	**Ethnomethodology: Harold Garfinkel**

Introduction

In this module we will look at the phenomenological perspective. It was the mathematician turned philosopher Edmund Husserl who laid the foundation of the twentieth century phenomenological movement by taking to task the positivistic approach to psychology. In contrast to the focus on macro societal structures and large-scale social processes that characterizes many sociological theorists (e.g., Marx, Durkheim, Weber, critical theorists, Parsons), phenomenologists analyze "the world of everyday life" (Schutz 1970: 72).

The significance of everyday reality and everyday experiences in how individuals construct knowledge of their social world, and the practical implications of that knowledge in informing the sense of order we impose on how the world

works, is the focus of a strand in sociological theory called phenomenology. Phenomenology is attentive to how individuals recognize and make sense of the experiences that characterize their everyday reality. This approach is called "phenomenology" because it probes how particular experiences or *phenomena* (things as perceived by us) are selected and given attention from the ongoing, flowing stream of experiences that exist.

Thus, phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. The central structure of an experience is its intentionality, its being directed toward something, as it is an experience of or about some object. An experience is directed toward an object by virtue of its content or meaning (which represents the object) together with appropriate enabling conditions. In other word, phenomenology is the study of "phenomena": appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience. Phenomenology studies conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view.

Basically, phenomenology studies the structure of various types of experience ranging from perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity. The structure of these forms of experience typically involves what Husserl called "intentionality", that is, the directedness of experience toward things in the world, the

property of consciousness that it is a consciousness of or about something. According to classical Husserlian phenomenology, our experience is directed toward—represents or "intends"—things only *through* particular concepts, thoughts, ideas, images, etc. These make up the meaning or content of a given experience, and are distinct from the things they present or mean.

Originally, in the 18th century, "phenomenology" meant the theory of appearances fundamental to empirical knowledge, especially sensory appearances. The Latin term "Phenomenologia" was introduced by Christoph Friedrich Oetinger in 1736. Subsequently, the German term "Phänomenologia" was used by Johann Heinrich Lambert, a follower of Christian Wolff. Immanuel Kant used the term occasionally in various writings, as did Johann Gottlieb Fichte. In 1807, G. W. F. Hegel wrote a book titled *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (usually translated as *Phenomenology of Spirit*). By 1889 Franz Brentano used the term to characterize what he called "descriptive psychology". From there Edmund Husserl took up the term for his new science of consciousness, and the rest is history.

Husserl's work was followed by a flurry of phenomenological writing in the first half of the 20ᵗʰ century. The diversity of traditional phenomenology is apparent in the *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology* (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997, Dordrecht and Boston).

1. Transcendental constitutive phenomenology studies how

objects are constituted in pure or transcendental consciousness, setting aside questions of any relation to the natural world around us.

2. Naturalistic constitutive phenomenology studies how consciousness constitutes or takes things in the world of nature, assuming with the natural attitude that consciousness is part of nature.

3. Existential phenomenology studies concrete human existence, including our experience of free choice or action in concrete situations.

4. Generative historicist phenomenology studies how meaning, as found in our experience, is generated in historical processes of collective experience over time.

5. Genetic phenomenology studies the genesis of meanings of things within one's own stream of experience.

6. Hermeneutical phenomenology studies interpretive structures of experience, how we understand and engage things around us in our human world, including ourselves and others.

7. Realistic phenomenology studies the structure of consciousness and intentionality, assuming it occurs in a real world that is largely external to consciousness and not somehow brought into being by consciousness.

Broadly, this perspective deals with implicit, taken-for-granted forms of knowledge that are widely accepted as everyday "common sense." This shared knowledge contrasts with the unique details of each individual's own personal

subjective experience. In comparison to symbolic interaction theory, the emphasis is more on the relation between experience and consciousness than the relation between language and discourse.

4.1 The idea of Phenomenology: Edmund Husserl

Edmund Husserl, a nineteenth century German philosopher, theorizes the importance of the lifeworld in how individuals come to understand the world around them. The primary focus of his work theorized the nature of logical thought, particularly the origins of knowledge. Husserl developed a philosophy of what he later termed the lifeworld. He wrote *The Idea of Phenomenology* in 1906. Yet, even for Husserl, the conception of phenomenology as a new method destined to supply a new foundation for both philosophy and science developed only gradually and kept changing to the very end of his career.

Two positions were prominent within the philosophical debates of the late nineteenth century. The first stressed formal systems of logic and methods of knowledge construction. The second tradition stressed the importance of lived experiences in the development of an intuitive reflection and subsequent construction. Husserl's early work attempted to bridge these two traditions. In doing so, he argued that the logic involved when thinking does not simply utilize ideal forms, but must incorporate the context of what is specifically being thought about. Thought, for Husserl, is an interplay between pure logic and the store of knowledge accumulated from lived

experiences. By examining the relationship between a phenomenon as it occurs and how individuals subsequently conceptualize and make sense of that experience, Husserl attempts to find those logical frames that transcend the ongoing stream of experiences.

In elaborating on this work, Husserl recognizes that knowledge transcends the boundaries of individual perception and reflection, and he finds the need to theorize the role of others in the construction of meaning. In attending to these issues, Husserl employs the concept of the lifeworld, which for him comes to mean that set of knowledge that is shared inter subjectively. This intersubjective knowledge is about common experiences, but emerges from the common logical forms that people hold. In Husserl's life world we find perhaps the most presocial iteration of the lifeworld, as Husserl links the concept to the idea that all people have a ''natural attitude'' or innate set of logics that predates learned modes of inquiry and that individuals all hold as a common feature of their cognitive processes.

The basic method of all phenomenological investigation, as Husserl developed it himself—and on which he worked throughout his entire lifetime—is the "reduction": the existence of the world must be put between brackets, not because the philosopher should doubt it but merely because this existing world is not the very theme of phenomenology; its theme is rather the manner in which knowledge of the world comes about.

The first step of the reduction consists in the phenomenological reduction, through which all that is given is changed into a phenomenon in the sense of that which is known in and by consciousness, for this kind of knowing—which is to be taken in a very broad sense as including every mode of consciousness, such as intuition, recollection, imagination, and judgment—is here all-important. There are several reasons why Husserl gave a privileged position to intuition; among them is the fact that intuition is that act in which a person grasps something immediately in its bodily presence and also that it is a primordially given act upon which all of the rest is to be founded. Furthermore, Husserl's stress on intuition must be understood as a refutation of any merely speculative approach to philosophy.

The second step is to be found in the eidetic reduction. To get hold of consciousness is not sufficient; on the contrary, the various acts of consciousness must be made accessible in such a way that their essences—their universal and unchangeable structures—can be grasped. In the eidetic reduction, one must forgo everything that is factual and merely occurs in this way or that. A means of grasping the essence is the intuition of essences and essential structures. This is not a mysterious kind of intuition. Rather, one forms a multiplicity of variations of what is given, and while maintaining the multiplicity, one focuses attention on what remains unchanged in the multiplicity; i.e., the essence is that identical something that continuously maintains itself during the process of variation. Husserl, therefore, called it the invariant.

4.2 Phenomenological Interactionism: Alfred Schutz

Alfred Schutz was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1899; he served in the Austrian-Hungarian army during World War I, and studied law and social sciences in Vienna. In 1938, with the rise of Hitler and Nazism in Germany, he, with his wife, Ilse, and their two children, emigrated to Paris and then to New York, where (along with many other war-exile intellectuals) he was affiliated with the New School for Social Research. Schutz founded the International Phenomenological Society in 1941; he died in New York in 1959. Alfred Schutz (b. 1899, d. 1959), more than any other phenomenologist, attempted to relate the thought of Edmund Husserl to the social world and the social sciences. His *Phenomenology of the Social World* supplied philosophical foundations for Max Weber's sociology and for economics, with which he was familiar through contacts with colleagues of the Austrian school.

From the beginning, Schutz had been taken with the methodological writings of Max Weber, who had lectured in Vienna in the summer of 1918 and whose work was immensely popular among Viennese intellectuals. However, Schutz felt that Weber's work rested on tacit, unexamined presuppositions resulting from his lack of interest in fundamental epistemological problems that had no direct bearing on his special sociological problems. In 1925–1927, Schutz turned to Henri Bergson's philosophy of consciousness and inner time in order to clarify notions such as meaning, action, and intersubjectivity, and his results have been collected in manuscripts published as *Life Forms and Meaning*

Structure. Dissatisfied, though, with his analyses of temporality to the extent that he never published them and prompted by comments of Felix Kaufmann, he discovered the relevance of the phenomenology of the consciousness of inner time of Edmund Husserl (1859–1938).

He then went on to produce his major life's work, *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (1932), a work for which Husserl praised him as "an earnest and profound phenomenologist." He spent the rest of the 1930s authoring brief essays showing how his phenomenology of the social world could come to terms with the economic thought of Mises and Hayek. Also, before any direct encounter with American pragmatism, he developed a manuscript on personality in the social world that stressed the pragmatic elements of the everyday social world.

Schutz's career, academic and business, was thoroughly convulsed when Adolf Hitler implemented the annexation (*Anschluss*) of Austria by Germany on March 13, 1938, especially since he, on a business trip in Paris, was separated for three months from his own family, whose emigration to Paris he finally arranged. As an international lawyer and businessperson, he was able to assist numerous intellectuals to escape Austria, but the westward movement of the Nazi juggernaut eventually compelled him to immigrate with his family to the United States on July 14, 1939.

Alfred Schutz incorporated the works of Husserl, Weber, and Bergson to develop his own contributions to the

fledgling phenomenology of the early twentieth century. Because Schutz was particularly interested in how people both construct their own senses of reality and also must cope with others' senses of reality, his work elaborates on the intersubjective functions of the lifeworld that Husserl develops by examining the lifeworld as a product of both collective life and also individual experiences. As such, the lifeworld is external to the individual, predating his or her birth and serving to place constraints on the constructions of reality that people create, but the lifeworld is also an individualized part of our ability to make sense of the world, as it is the product of our individual ongoing experience of daily life. Schutz enumerates a number of key characteristics of the lifeworld. Among these, it is important to note that the lifeworld requires ''wide awakeness'' from individuals in that they must maintain a level of consciousness of the world around them in order to live life.

The construction and management of meaning is an active event, although not perceived to be thought, but rather taken for granted knowledge. Much of how we employ the lifeworld in making sense of the world around us is through typification, specifically what Schutz calls ''first order'' typification that rests on the stock of knowledge found in the lifeworld, as opposed to second order typification, which utilizes complex information beyond the scope of the lifeworld. Another important characteristic for Schutz's lifeworld is that people accept it as reality without question, until something compels them to think otherwise. When problems do occur, people then

turn to various more overt logical processes to reinstate normalcy. Given this, Schutz's legacy can be seen to include the later work of Harold Garfinkel and the ethno methodological tradition.

4.3 Social Construction of Reality: Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann are sociologists who popularized Schutz's ideas in their well-known book *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966). Peter Berger was born in Vienna in 1929; he and his wife, Brigitte Berger, also a sociologist, moved to the US after World War II. After many years on the faculty at Rutgers University, New Jersey, the Bergers moved to Boston University, where Peter is currently an emeritus professor and director of the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture. Thomas Luckmann was born in Germany in 1927 and is currently an emeritus professor of sociology at the University of Konstanz.

Their analysis moves beyond Schutz's perspective on consciousness and Garfinkel's focus on everyday life routines at the micro level in that it deals more explicitly with the macro-level institutional structures of society. Berger and Luckmann did not focus primarily on the interaction process itself at the micro level as is done in symbolic interaction theory. However, their perspective incorporates the basic insights of symbolic interaction theory in their analysis of the interrelations between subjective consciousness and the everyday life practices and patterns of communication

whereby cultural meanings are sustained. But while symbolic interaction theory emphasizes the relation between micro level interaction and the formation of individuals' consciousness, Berger and Luckmann emphasize how the formation of individuals' consciousness and worldviews, plus their sense of psychological security, are related to macro-level cultural meaning systems as these are reflected in society's major institutional structures.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann emphasize that social reality is human-made and human-experienced, and is a highly ordered reality: "Social order is a human product, or more precisely, an ongoing human production" (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 52). More so than Schutz, Berger and Luckmann emphasize the significance of institutions – human-made and human-experienced institutions – in the dynamic, ongoing construction of social reality. The social construction of reality means that individuals collectively create an objective social reality whose objects (e.g., things, tools, institutions) they designate and arrange or order in ways that make sense to them as they subjectively experience that reality.

Social reality is produced as a result of individuals' ongoing negotiation and experience of the external, objective reality – of the socially institutionalized processes and practices in a given society. Thus the "institutional world" is "experienced as an objective reality" (1966: 60), i.e., it is an objectification of the product of human-social activity and

given externalization in the institutions and order created by humans in society.

This objective, externalized reality is, through a process of internalization, appropriated by individuals on the basis of, and out of, the particular (objective) social reality which they experience and make sense of from within their own particular familycommunity- social environment (1966: 130–132). The objective social reality (e.g., economic inequality) is thus internalized and interpreted, in part, on the basis of idiosyncrasies that characterize the individual's family reality (e.g., income level, and whether the family mood is one of contentment with, or resentment of, the status quo).

Berger and Luckmann (1966) used three principle concepts to analyze the mutual relationships between human action, social institutions, and subjective consciousness:

1. **Externalization**: Externalization refers to the ongoing human activity through which the material and cultural conditions of the social world are actually created and reproduced. These activities range from the production of tools, technology, and other material artifacts to the development of laws, morals, science, and various belief systems in the nonmaterial realm. Social structures of all types, ranging from friendships and family groups to neighborhoods, formal organizations, and large-scale institutional patterns, emerge from the process of interaction whereby people develop shared definitions of the material, social, and symbolic world they share and

develop stable patterns of interdependent relations with one another based on these definitions.

2. **Objectification**: Berger and Luckmann refer to this as the process of objectification. The objective or external nature of the social world is clearly evident with various artifacts of material culture, including tools, art, buildings, highways, and the entire "built environment" which seems sometimes to eclipse the "natural environment," especially in large cities. Even so, the meaning of the various artifacts of material culture, plus the knowledge needed to make use or make sense of them, rest on shared definitions developed and sustained through interaction. This external objective world also includes all the diverse areas of nonmaterial culture as well, including beliefs, values, rules, norms, and customs

3. **Internalization:** The third of the three major concepts in Berger and Luckmann's perspective, occurs as people are socialized into their culture or subculture and thus develop a basic understanding of "the way things are" and "the way things should be." When the process is successful, these understandings become deeply embedded in people's subjective consciousness and are eventually taken for granted and accepted as everyday commonsense. This process of internalization begins right after birth and eventually includes not only the general culture and worldview shared throughout society but also the common sense customs and particular viewpoints reflected in the various subcultures associated with different social classes,

racial/ethnic groups, regions, groups, and institutional settings.

The three interrelated processes of externalization, objectivication, and internalization form the heart of Berger and Luckmann's "social construction of reality" perspective. Overall, these processes portray a reciprocal relationship between individuals and society. Individuals create society (through externalization) but the objective social reality that is created then shapes individuals' development (through internalization) and insures that their actions will continue to reproduce the external social world.

It is through interaction among people who share the same cultural worldview that the social world is continually reproduced (or sometimes transformed) and reinforced in people's consciousness. The importance of interaction for sustaining the social world applies clearly to nonmaterial aspects of culture such as basic worldviews, religious beliefs, knowledge, customs, morals, and so on.

Artifacts of material culture (such as art, texts, buildings, and tools) obviously do not require interaction for them to exist in a purely physical sense, but their meanings could not be maintained without interaction. Cultural remains such as "dead languages" or artifacts in museums have a quite different meaning for those who encounter them today than they did to those who produced them or used them originally in the normal course of their everyday lives.

4.4   Ethnomethodology: Harold Garfinkel

Ethnomethodology is a separate field of study founded by the American sociologist Harold Garfinkel. Garfinkel was born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1917. While taking business courses at the University of Newark, he learned the "theory of accounts," a method that would later impact his sociological thinking. He received his master's degree at the University of North Carolina, and after serving time in the air force during World War II, he completed his PhD at Harvard, studying with Talcott Parsons.

At this university he also met Alfred Schütz, who took great influence on his further work. This makes its present felt in his dissertation thesis. Therein is a detailed study on the different action-theoretical basic ideas and mental backgrounds of Talcott Parsons and Alfred Schütz. The book 'Studies in Ethnomethodology' was published in 1967. Garfinkel subsequently established a long and distinguished career at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), making UCLA the center for ethnomethodological studies. He and his wife, Arlene, whom he married during the war, had two sons.

Garfinkel created a countermovement to the structural functionalism with his basic approach of ethnomethodology. Ethnomethodology concerns with the world we usually do not appreciate. This raises further question: Why do we not take notice of it? It is not merely because the world is too sophisticated and far afield, but rather it is nearby and taken for granted. The term 'ethnomethodology' can be explained by

separating the word in two parts. The first is 'ethno', which Garfinkel describes as the common sense knowledge of society members and in which way single members know about it. The term 'ethno' is attributed to ethnos and ethnography. This means the practice of common humans. The Second part: 'methodology' refers to the methods of the society members used during the interaction as subject-matter of studies. The term 'methodology' is attributed to 'methods', which describes the structure of practical activity. Accordingly ethnomethodology wants to reveal knowledge and methods whereby members of society accomplish the quantity of everyday behavior.

It is also important to mention that there were no sociological terms to have recourse to. For that reason Harold Garfinkel coined this phrase. "Ethnomethodological studies analyze everyday activities as members' methods for making those same activities visibly-rationaland-reportable-for-all-practical-purposes, i.e., 'accountable,' as organizations of commonplace everyday activities." (Garfinkel, 1967, p. Preface vii). Action and interaction is based on common sense knowledge. This knowledge has to be seen definitely and as a matter of course to be able to operate. One of the main points of ethnomethodology therefore is to expose the knowledge and methods which society member use for daily routines. "Their study is directed to the tasks of learning how members' actual, ordinary activities consist of methods to make practical actions, practical circumstances, common sense knowledge of social structures, and practical sociological reasoning

analyzable; and of discovering the formal properties of commonplace, practical common sense actions, 'from within' actual settings, as ongoing accomplishments of those settings." (Garfinkel, 1967).

The term "ethnomethodology" simply refers to the methods people use to create an ordered reality; *ethnos* is the Greek word for people. Garfinkel (1967), concerned with what he regarded as sociological theory's general tendency to take social order and social processes for granted, argued instead that these fundamentals need to be accomplished on an ongoing basis. Specifically targeting Durkheim's assumption of the given-ness (or thing-ness) of "social facts," Garfinkel's stated intention was to focus on the processes by which social facts get made, and thus on the accomplishment of social reality. According to Garfinkel;

> 'Ethnomethodology's fundamental phenomenon and its standing technical preoccupation u in its studies is to find, collect, specify, and make intractably observable the local endogenous production and natural accountability of immortal familiar society's most ordinary organizational things in the world, and provide for them both and simultaneously as objects and procedurally as alternate methodologies.

Hence, Garfinkel coined ''ethnomethodology'' to refer to the study of how members of the jury engage in practices whereby they could decide indigenous problems of adequate

accountability, description, and evidence in relation to the deliberative outcomes they produced.

In his influential Studies in Ethnomethodology chapter on Agnes, a male to female transsexual, he set the agenda and tone for many subsequent investigations into the accomplishment of ''gender.'' Garfinkel's extensive interviews and observations concerning Agnes provide access to something that is utterly routine in everyday life: the achievement of one's visible and objective status as a man or woman, boy or girl. Because Agnes did not experience her gender visibility as routine or taken for granted, Garfinkel was able to document how members regularly employ tacit means for securing and guaranteeing the rights and obligations attendant upon being seen as a normal, natural, adult female. Agnes was a ''practical methodologist'' and artfully displayed what is required of anyone who claims to be a bona fide woman.

Conversation analysis is another variety of ethnomethodology. The goal of conversation analysis is "the detailed understanding of the fundamental structures of conversational interaction" (Zimmerman, 1988:429). Conversation is defined in terms that are in line with the basic elements of the ethnomethodological perspective: "Conversation is an *interactional activity* exhibiting *stable, orderly* properties that are the analyzable *achievements* of the conversants" (Zimmerman, 1988). Although there are rules and procedures for conversations, they do not determine what is said but instead are used to "accomplish" a conversation.

The focus of conversational analysis is the constraints on what is said that are internal to the conversation itself and not external forces that constrain talk. Conversations are seen as internally, sequentially ordered. Zimmerman details five basic working principles of conversation analysis.

1. Conversation analysis requires the collection and analysis of highly detailed data on conversations. These data include not only words but also "the hesitations, cut-offs, restarts, silences, breathing noises, throat clearings, sniffles, laughter, and laughter like noises, prosody, and the like, not to mention the 'nonverbal' behaviors available on video records that are usually closely integrated with the stream of activity captured on the audiotape" (Zimmerman, 1988:413). All these things are part of most conversations, and they are seen as methodic devices in the making of a conversation by the actors involved (Lynch, 1999).

2. Even the finest detail of a conversation must be presumed to be an orderly accomplishment. Such minute aspects of a conversation are not ordered just by the ethnomethodologist; they are first "ordered by the methodical activities of the social actors themselves" (Zimmerman, 1988:415).

3. Interaction in general and conversation in particular have stable, orderly properties that are the achievements of the actors involved. In looking at conversations, ethnomethodologists treat them as if they were autonomous, separable from the cognitive processes of the

actors as well as the larger context in which they take place.

4. "the fundamental framework of conversation is sequential organization" (Zimmerman, 1988:422).

5. "the course of conversational interaction is managed on a turn-by-turn or local basis" (Zimmerman, 1988:423). Here Zimmerman invokes Heritage's (1984) distinction between "context-shaped" and "context renewing" conversation.

Conversations are context-shaped in the sense that what is said at any given moment is shaped by the preceding sequential context of the conversation. Conversations are context-shaping in that what is being said in the present turn becomes part of the context for future turns.

To sum up, ethnomethodology and phenomenology are often seen as closely aligned. One of the major reasons for this association is that the creator of this theoretical perspective, Harold Garfinkel, was a student of Alfred Schutz at the New School. Interestingly, Garfinkel previously had studied under Talcott Parsons, and it was the fusion of Parsonsian and Schutzian ideas that helped give ethnomethodology its distinctive orientation. Basically, *ethnomethodology* is the study of "the body of common-sense knowledge and the range of procedures and considerations [the methods] by means of which the ordinary members of society make sense of, find their way about in, and act on the circumstances in which they find themselves" (Heritage, 1984). Writers in this tradition are heavily tilted in the direction of the study of everyday life.

Whereas phenomenological sociologists tend to focus on what people think, ethnomethodologists are more concerned with what people actually do. Thus, ethnomethodologists devote a lot of attention to the detailed study of conversations. Such mundane concerns stand in stark contrast to the interest of many mainstream sociologists in such abstractions as bureaucracies, capitalism, the division of labor, and the social system. Ethnomethodologists might be interested in the way a sense of these structures is created in everyday life; they are not interested in such structures as phenomena in themselves.

Key Concepts

Lifeworld from the German word *Lebenswelt*; the world of everyday life and its taken-for-granted routines, customs, habits, and knowledge.

Objective reality the social reality, including objectively existing social institutions (economic, legal, etc.), language, and social processes (e.g., gender/race inequalities), into which individuals are socialized.

Subjective reality the individual's subjective experience and interpretation of the external, objective reality.

Phenomenology focuses on the reality of everyday life and how individuals make sense of their everyday experiences.

Social construction of reality social reality as the product of humans acting intersubjectively and collectively. Social reality exists as an objective (human-social) reality which individuals

subjectively experience, to which they respond and, acting collectively, can change.

Symbolic universes overarching meaning systems (e.g , religion, science) that integrate and order individuals' everyday realities.

Typifications customary (typical) ways in which an individual's intersubjective social environment is organized; how things, individuals (e.g., as role/status types), and institutions are presumed to work/behave.

Background knowledge an individual's stock of previous experiences and knowledge of reality; impacts how they categorize and evaluate current experiences.

Breaching experiments designed to disrupt a particular micro-social reality in order to illustrate the fragility that underlies the order and routines of everyday reality.

Conversation analysis detailed analysis of the specific, pragmatic steps in how language and speech are used in everyday conversation to create order.

Ethnomethodology shared methods societal members use to make sense of everyday experiences across different settings.

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