

INVITATION TO SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

VI SEMESTER

CORE COURSE: SGY6 B11

B.A. SOCIOLOGY

(2019 Admission onwards)

CBCSS



UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

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Study Material

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INVITATION TO SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

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INVITATION TO SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Course Outcomes

- Traces the transformation from social thought to Sociological theory
- Identifies the basic components of theory
- Develops a sociological thinking
- Recognises the paradigmatic orientations in Sociology
- Evaluates Sociology as a humanistic discipline

MODULE I FROM SOCIAL THOUGHT TO SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

- 1.1 Social thought, Social theory and Sociological theory
- 1.2 Nature and significance of theory in Sociology
- 1.3 Relation between Theory and Research

MODULE II BASIC ELEMENTS OF THEORY

2.1 Building blocks of Theory: Concepts, Variables, Statements and Formats

2.2 Major Theoretical Schemes: Meta theoretical, Analytical, Propositional and Modelling schemes

2.3 Models of Theorising: Inductive-Deductive, Micro- Macro, Grounded-Grand

MODULE III THINKING SOCIOLOGICALLY

3.1 Sociology and Commonsense (Zygmunt Bauman & Tim May)

3.2 Sociological Imagination (C.Wright Mills)

3.3 Sociology and Critical thinking (Role of Frankfurt School)

MODULE IV PARADIGMS IN SOCIOLOGY

4.1 Perspectives, Paradigm and Theory; Concept of Paradigm in Sociology

4.2 Paradigmatic orientations in Sociology: Functional paradigm, Conflict paradigm, Interactionist paradigm

4.3 Sociology as a Humanistic Discipline (Peter Berger)

MODULE I

FROM SOCIAL THOUGHT TO SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

- 1.1 Social thought, Social theory and Sociological theory
- 1.2 Nature and significance of theory in Sociology
- 1.3 Relation between Theory and Research

Introduction

In the first paper **Sociological Theory: An Introduction** we discussed the foundations of social thought in the context of Europe. As we illustrated, modern social thought emerged in the 18th and 19th century. And historical and geographical context played an important role in the development of classical social thought. We discussed the social and intellectual conditions of eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe which triggered the development of sociology and sociological theory.

In this paper we are going to discuss different aspects of ‘theorizing’ in sociology. In the first part we will traces the transformation from social thought to Sociological theory in the early period to the contemporary time. It identifies the basic components of theory and the process involved in the development of sociological theories. In this process, developing a sociological thinking is very important. We will discuss the contribution of Zygmunt Bauman and Tim May in the

conceptualization of Sociology and Commonsense, C.Wright Mills's idea of Sociological Imagination and the role of Frankfurt School in the development of Critical thinking in sociology. Finally, this course ends up with the discussion of the paradigmatic orientations in Sociology such as Functional paradigm, Conflict paradigm, Interactionist paradigm and Humanistic paradigm of Peter Berger.

1.1 Social thought, Social theory and Sociological theory

There has been an attempt to comprehend human activities since the earliest records of the Assyrians and Egyptians, the Chinese, and the Greeks. Sociology is a discipline that attempts to answer the age-old question of how to scientifically explain human connections. Thinking and theorizing occur within a social context and at a certain point in time.

People, who live at a certain time, in a specific place, and under unique conditions, are the source of thoughts. All social ideas have been developed by social philosophers. We need to investigate the intellectual, social, and cultural context in which they worked. It's difficult to pinpoint exactly when sociological theory originated. The development of social life theories has been going on for a long time and is currently going on. Every period has seen the emergence of theories in the social and political situations.

Let us start with the understanding of the theory and its relation with the practice. As we know, theory is the explanation of broad principles of an art or discipline that is built through practice. True, we draw certain principles from practice, and we are sometimes able to disentangle these rules

from what we have observed in practice. As a result, we can start to distinguish between theory and practice. Theory is often useful in understanding practice; yet, theory refers to a much higher level of abstraction than practice, whereas practice relates to an empirical scenario. When we consider the link between theory and practice, we can perceive two possibilities:

1. Theory and practice might be seen as quite distinct from each other
2. Theory and practice might be conceived as complementary to each other.

According to the first point of view, a difference between theory and practice appears to be required. As a result, we hear things like "that's a great idea in theory, but it might not work in practice." Theory and practice, in this view, are two completely separate things. According to the second point of view, theory and practice are not mutually exclusive but can aid in understanding one another. Although it is critical to comprehend the differences between theory and practice, there is also a need to see the relationship between the two, in our opinion.

In fact, both theory and practice make up a whole that may be studied independently. All of this, however, is about the common understanding of the term theory, which is frequently contrasted with practice. However, the term theory has been used in a slightly different sense in the fields of logic and philosophy. As a result, theory refers to a collection of interconnected propositions. A proposition is a statement that can be proven to be true or untrue.

As a result, the statement must be constructed in such a way that it may be refuted. This method is extremely useful in formulating not just sociological theories, but also in reflecting their required scientific quality. As previously stated, any theory is made up of a set of interconnected premises. These assertions usually illustrate the conditions under which they can be falsified, and it is this condition that leads to scientific investigation. As a result, before formulating any statement, we must guarantee that it satisfies the constraints of fallibility in order for it to be well accommodated in theory. Following that, we will attempt to comprehend the nature, meaning, and many forms of sociological ideas.

Ideas, arguments, hypotheses, thought experiments, and explanatory guesses concerning how and why human societies—or aspects or structures of such societies—form, change, and develop over time, or disappear, are referred to as social theory. Most typically, social theory refers to the set of explanatory concepts, analytical techniques, and heuristic devices that sociologists and social scientists use to analyze statistical or qualitative evidence regarding specific empirical social phenomena.

General sources of ideas on social phenomena applicable to various social sciences and humanities disciplines, such as anthropology, political science, economics, history, culture and media studies, and gender studies, are referred to as social theory. And, in ways that connect strongly with problems in the domains of moral, political, and legal philosophy, social theory can be seen of as incorporating normative considerations bearing on arguments about desirable goals or values of social life—about how social life ideally "ought to be." As most of the

core themes of social theory name merely a practise of systematic theoretical thought applicable to specific substantive problems or challenges in society,

In this rather narrow sense, the terms "social theory" and "sociological theory" are frequently used interchangeably. Sociological ideas are significantly impacted by and anchored in a specific social situation. Each sociological thinker or theorist must react to the social circumstances in which he or she finds themselves and attempt to make sense of the culture that surrounds them. To put it another way, sociological theory is a sociologist's response to his or her environment. As you study the unit, this truism will become more evident. However, it is important to note that there is an inner and an exterior context.

Sociological theory is the result of the interaction between these two interconnected realms of existence. The theorist's inner context includes his or her background and mindset, as well as the powerful influences and ideas that drive a thinker to become a social theorist. The total social and physical environment in which the society is embedded is the outside context. This isn't to imply that alternative ideas can't or won't emerge in similar situations. As a result, the development of social theory takes place in a specific social and psychological context. We will now describe the broader social framework in which sociological theory arose. As is commonly known, sociology began in the west and evolved from there.

Social thought

In simple words, it can be said that “social thought” essentially refers to the thought concerning the special life and

activities of man. Sociologists have given their own definitions of social thought among which the following may be cited

- Bogardus: “Social Thought is thinking about social problems by one or a few persons here and there in human history or at the present’
- Rollin Chambliss: “Social Thought is concerned with human beings in their relations with their life’
- HE Jenson; Social Thought is “ the totality of man’s thought about his relationship and obligations to his fellowmen”
- William P. Scott; “Social thought refers to any relatively systematic attempt to theorize about society and social life, whether is it is classical or modern, scientific or unscientific”

Characteristics of social thought:

1. Social thought is societal thought, basically regarding societal issues or matters.
2. It is not the sum total of the thoughts of all the members of society- It has evolved out of the capacity for critical and analytical thinking of a few scholars, rationalists, scientists and philosophers.
3. Social thought need not be scientific always- Social thought touches upon various aspects of our life, experiences, conclusions, assessments, valuations and etc. All these cannot be put to scientific tests to assess their validity and dependability. In spite of this deficiency they have their own practical importance

4. Social thought is not the same Everywhere-Social thought has been immensely influenced by factors such as time, place, environment and conditions. Social thought normally arises in part from the nature of the prevailing social conditions. To understand it properly the student must know the times which furnish the setting for it. A thorough on going knowledge of the culture and of the school, economic, political and religious standards of people is a minimum essential for a social thought
5. Every human community has its own contribution to the development of social thought
6. Social thought is continuous in its development-As Bogardous has pointed out “ the history of social thought rises out of the beginnings of human struggles on earth and with jogged edges extends along the full sweep of the changing historical horizons”
7. Social crisis or hardships have always provided motivation for the general social thought.
8. Other feature-Social thought though continuous is very slow and gradual in its development. We do not find fast developments taking place in this field as in the realm of physical sciences. Social thought is abstract-says Bogardous. Social thought has not always been utilitarian and beneficial to mankind

Social Theory

Broadly speaking, social theories are analytical frameworks or paradigms used to examine social phenomena.

The term ‘social theory’ encompasses ideas about ‘how societies change and develop, about methods of explaining social behaviour, about power and social structure, gender and ethnicity, modernity and ‘civilisation’, revolutions and utopias’ (Harrington 2005, 1). In contemporary social theory, certain core themes take precedence over others, themes such as the nature of social life, the relationship between self and society, the structure of social institutions, the role and possibility of social transformation, as well as themes such as gender, race and class (Elliot 2008).

Alongside the existence of this broad range of issues, there is also a large number of what could be termed social theories – feminist theories of various persuasions could be labelled as such, likewise with critical race theories. But prominent among those branded as social theorists are the likes of Jacques Derrida, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault (pictured) and Jürgen Habermas, as well as Julia Kristeva, Zygmunt Bauman, Judith Butler, Jean Baudrillard and Ulrich Beck. The influence of these theorists has extended well beyond their home disciplines and into the broader public sphere, combining the role of social theorist with that of public intellectual. Intellectualising the problems and issues of the day, they provide spaces within which educational researchers as well as others can adopt an intellectual stance to their subjects with some level of legitimation and credibility.

The main difference between social theory and sociological theory is that social theory is a set of ideas, hypotheses, arguments, or paradigms that help to study and analyze social phenomena while the sociological theory is basically a set of ideas that provides an explanation

about society. Sociological theory is different from social theory. Social theory focuses on commentary and critique of modern society rather than explanation, and its goals are intensively political. Prominent social theorists include Jürgen Habermas, Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, Erving Goffman, Michel Foucault, Dorothy Smith, Alfred Schutz, Jeffrey Alexander, and Jacques Derrida.

Sociological theory, on the other hand, is centered on the attempt to understand the society. Whereas sociological theory relies heavily on the scientific method, is objective, and does not presume to judge the society, social theory is closer to philosophy, more subjective, and is much more likely to use the language of values and judgment, referring to concepts as "good" or "bad".

Sociological theory

The social world consists of the behaviors, interactions, and patterns of social organization among human beings. Sociological theory tends to focus on interaction and organization more than behavior as such, but interactions are interpersonal behaviors, and patterns of social organization are ultimately built from interactions among individuals. Sociological theory is a set of assumptions, assertions, and propositions, organized in the form of an explanation or interpretation, of the nature, form, or content of social action. Sociological theory is defined as a set of interrelated ideas that allow for the systematisation of knowledge of the social world. This knowledge is then used to explain the social world and make predictions about the future of the social world.

The important characteristics of sociological theory are as follows.

1. Sociological theories are abstract generalisations.
2. Sociological theories are logical prepositions.
3. Sociological theories are conceptualisations regarding social phenomena.
4. Sociological theories are empirical generalisations.
5. Sociological theories are factual based.
6. Sociological theories are provisional in nature.
7. Sociological theories are verifiable

1.2 Nature and significance of theory in Sociology

Social scientists are interested in mapping out the basic structures of society and the resources, both social and non-social, that underpin these structures, in addition to the intentions and meanings connected with behaviour. They're likewise worried about the unintended effects of their activities and interactions. In all of these studies, social scientists look beyond the meaning and significance of behaviours and relationships to discover their larger causes and effects. Indeed, causal explanations become integrated into theories of social life, which often go well beyond the self-understandings of the agents involved, depending on how comprehensive and successful social science is at this task.

Beyond the intentions and meanings associated with behaviour, social scientists are also interested in mapping out

the basic structures of society and the resources, social and otherwise, that underwrite these structures. They are also concerned with the unintended consequences of actions and relations. In all of these investigations, social scientists go beyond deciphering the meaning and import of acts and relations to uncover their broader causes and effects. Indeed, depending on how broad and successful social science is in this task, causal explanations become integrated into theories of social life—theories that typically go far beyond the self-understandings of the agents involved.

To these sorts of questions, humanists have sometimes insisted that causality in the social sciences is different in kind than causality in the natural sciences. Others have tried to work out a middle road that combines the best of both the naturalist approach, with its focus on causality, and the humanist approach, which focuses on meaning. The methodological writings of the German sociologist Max Weber are a particularly vivid instance of this.

An important class of theories in the social sciences—so-called competence theories—constitute a distinctive type. Theories of this type explain human behaviour as arising from principles of rationality or from internalized systems of rules. Examples include game theory (including prisoner's dilemma games), Noam Chomsky's theory of transformational grammar, and Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative competence. These examples are indicative of the ways in which theorizing in the social sciences may be fundamentally different from that in the natural sciences.

Nature and Characteristics of Theory

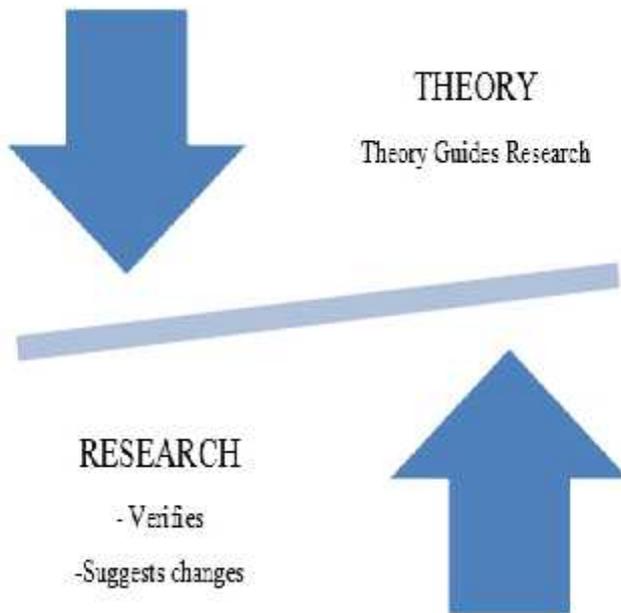
A theory is a hypothesis about how two or more concepts are related. To put it another way, a theory is an explanation for why something happens. We wouldn't be able to understand cause and effect linkages in social life without theories to describe the relationship between concepts. The following are some of the most important characteristics of theory.

- 🌈 Time boundedness: Scientific ideas are continually attempting to transcend the specific and temporal. Thus, scientific theories are concerned with the general, fundamental, timeless, and universal.
- 🌈 Objectivity: Another distinguishing feature of scientific theories is that they are expressed in a more formal manner than ordinary language. The theory is stated in unbiased, objective, and straightforward words so that everyone who examines it understands it.
- 🌈 Reliability and Verifiability: A last feature of scientific theories is that they are designed to be systematically evaluated against the realities of specific empirical situations using reproducible procedures.

1.3 Relation between Theory and Research

Here we will discuss about the relationship between research and theory. Theories are systems of concepts and propositions which help us to explain the interconnections between different variables in a social or natural phenomenon. Theories are set of principles or beliefs which help us to explain

some things. In the science, theories are explanations that are supported by the empirical facts and evidences. Thus, theory and research are mutually complimented with each other. Theories without research or research without theory are incomplete.



In the research methodology, theory guides the development of research problems and research helps to the formulations of new theories. There are different kinds of theories. On the basis of the scale of its operation there are two broader categories, first, some theories try to explain huge areas of human behavior. These grand theories are make an attempt to

fit together different variables in logical pattern to explain the phenomenon. On the other hand, there are theories which focus on small number of concepts and propositions. On the basis of the effectiveness, theories can be understood as proved theories which are developed on the basis of tested by empirical research. There are many benefits to using theories in research.

- ✚ First, theories provide the underlying logic of the occurrence of natural or social phenomenon by explaining what are the key drivers and key outcomes of the target phenomenon and why, and what underlying processes are responsible driving that phenomenon.
- ✚ Second, they aid in sense-making by helping us synthesize prior empirical findings within a theoretical framework and reconcile contradictory findings by discovering contingent factors influencing the relationship between two constructs in different studies.
- ✚ Third, theories provide guidance for future research by helping identify constructs and relationships that are worthy of further research.
- ✚ Fourth, theories can contribute to cumulative knowledge building by bridging gaps between other theories and by causing existing theories to be reevaluated in a new light.

Let us look how do researchers construct theories? Four approaches are recommended by Steinfeld and Fulk (1990).

- ❖ The first method involves inductively developing theories based on observed patterns of occurrences or behaviours. Because the theory is based on empirical observations, this

approach is commonly referred to as "grounded theory building." The researcher's observational and interpretive talents are strongly reliant on this technique, and the resulting theory may be subjective and non-confirmable. Furthermore, noticing specific patterns of events does not automatically imply the development of a theory unless the researcher is able to provide consistent explanations for the patterns observed.

- ❖ The second technique to theory development is to use a specified framework to conduct a bottom-up conceptual investigation to identify alternative sets of predictors relevant to the phenomenon of interest. A simple input-process-output framework might be one such framework, in which the researcher looks for different categories of inputs, such as individual, organisational, and/or technological factors that might be related to the phenomenon of interest (the output), and describes the underlying processes that connect these factors to the target phenomenon. This is also an inductive approach that relies heavily on the inductive abilities of the researcher, and interpretation may be biased by researcher's prior knowledge of the phenomenon being studied.
- ❖ Extending or modifying existing ideas to explain a new environment, such as extending theories of individual learning to explain organisational learning, is the third way to theorising. Certain ideas, propositions, and/or boundary conditions of the old theory may be kept while others are adjusted to meet the new environment while developing such an extension. This deductive approach takes advantage of the vast library of social science theories developed by

previous theoreticians, and it's a quick way to create new theories by expanding on old ones.

- ❖ The fourth method is to use existing theories in completely new contexts by leveraging structural commonalities between them. This method is based on analogy thinking and is perhaps the most inventive manner of speculating utilising a deductive method. Markus (1987) proposed a critical mass theory of network expansion based on analogies between a nuclear explosion and uncontrolled network or network-based business growth. Markus proposed that, just as a nuclear explosion required a critical amount of radioactive material to support it, a network requires a critical mass of users to continue its growth, and that without this critical mass, users may leave.

MODULE II

BASIC ELEMENTS OF THEORY

2.1 Building blocks of Theory: Concepts, Variables, Statements and Formats

2.2 Major Theoretical Schemes: Meta theoretical, Analytical, Propositional and Modelling schemes

2.3 Models of Theorising: Inductive-Deductive, Micro- Macro, Grounded-Grand.

Introduction

As we are familiar, social science deals with knowledge of society and the social world. It focuses on the study of socially constructed phenomena and how they relate to each other, the structure of society, and the activity of its members. It also has been divided further into a number of subareas, including anthropology, communication, economics, history, political science, psychology, and sociology, with each of these fields concentrating on a different aspect of the social world.

In this module we will discuss about the basic elements of theory. It starts with the building blocks of theory such as concepts, variables, statements and formats. It also looks at different theoretical schemes in social science in general and sociology in particular such as Meta theoretical, Analytical, Propositional and Modelling schemes. Finally, this chapter ends

with a discussion on different Models of Theorising in the discipline of sociology such as Inductive-Deductive, Micro-Macro, and Grounded-Grand.

2.1 Building blocks of Theory: Concepts, Variables, Statements and Formats

Most people's eyes glaze over when they hear the term theory. This is hilarious, because theory is derived from the Greek word *theoria*, which means "to gaze upon." Theory, on the other hand, appears to most people to indicate "far from reality." Although most people have little knowledge of theory, they regard it as unrealistic, irrelevant, and unnecessary. Theories are either incomprehensible to them because they are esoteric and sophisticated, or they are so ubiquitous and clear that they are platitudinous. In any case, theories appear to be of little use to the majority of individuals.

Simply put, a theory is one's understanding of how something works. We may refer to the theories we accept as common knowledge, common sense, aphorisms, or maxims. Disliked theories are referred to as folktales, folklore, superstitions, or old wives' tales. Many people, including families, friends, business associates, instructors, spiritual leaders, and government officials, pass on informal theories to us. We don't question things as long as they operate well.

A theory is a collection of interconnected concepts that are used to define, explain, and forecast how society and its components interact. Theories are collections of interconnected thoughts and ideas that have been empirically examined and combined to better explain people, their behaviour, and their civilizations. Science would be pointless if there were no

theories. A theory is a group of premises that, using a deductive or inductive methodology, provide an explanation. Description, explanation, and prediction are the three main functions of theory.

Theory building is difficult because it requires both great discipline and great creativity, and although a person may possess one of these attributes, few people seem to possess both. In fact, we suspect that those who possess one of these attributes are likely not to possess the other—that those characteristics that make for a great disciplinarian do not make for great creativity, and vice versa. But that is just an untested hypothesis we have. What we do know, tried and tested from many personal experiences, is that theory building requires excruciating attention to detail coupled with wild flights of imagination. About the only solace we can give those about to embark on theory building is that it probably won't kill you and that if it doesn't kill you it probably will make you stronger. Theory building requires hard work, but, unfortunately, hard work isn't enough. Theory building also requires an ability to see things that others have not been able to see, to synthesize disaggregated parts into a new whole. It is this part of theory building that is perhaps most frustrating.

Theories should explain rather than just describe or predict what happens. It's worth noting that a set of predictors can be used to forecast occurrences or behaviours without necessarily explaining why they occur. For example, based on previously discovered correlations, market analysts estimate stock market swings depending on market announcements, earnings reports from large firms, and fresh data from the Federal Reserve and other organisations. Only correlations are

required for prediction. In contrast, explanations require *causations*, or understanding of cause-effect relationships. Establishing causation requires three conditions:

- (1) correlations between two constructs,
- (2) temporal precedence (the cause must precede the effect in time), and
- (3) rejection of alternative hypotheses (through testing).

Scientific theories are different from theological, philosophical, or other explanations in that scientific theories can be empirically tested using scientific methods.

Idiographic and nomothetic explanations are both possible. Idiographic explanations are those that explain a single situation or event in specific scenario or event. For example, you may have performed poorly on an exam because: (1) you forgot you had an exam that day, (2) you arrived late to the exam due to traffic, (3) you panicked midway through the exam, (4) you worked late the night before and were unable to study for the exam, or (5) your dog ate your text book. Although the explanations are extensive, correct, and legitimate, they may not apply to other identical circumstances, even if they involve the same person, and hence are not generalizable.

Nomothetic explanations, on the other hand, aim to explain a group of situations or occurrences rather than a single situation or event. Students who perform poorly on tests, for example, do so because they did not devote enough time to studying or because they suffer from anxiousness, attention deficit disorder, or another medical condition. Nomothetic

explanations are less accurate, thorough, and detailed since they are supposed to be generalizable across contexts, events, or persons. They do, however, explain economic phenomena with only a few explanatory factors. Theoretical explanations are often nomothetic in character since they are designed to serve as broad explanations for patterns of events, actions, or occurrences.

Thus, theory is a mental activity centered on the development of concepts that explain how and why things happen. The essential ingredients or building blocks of theory are

- (1) Concepts,
- (2) Variables,
- (3) Statements,
- (4) Formats.

Despite the fact that there are many different interpretations of what theory is or should be, these four characteristics are present in all of them. Let me go over each of these points in further depth.

(1) Concepts

Concepts are the foundation of theories. Concepts, in general, denote phenomena; they do so by isolating aspects of the world that are thought essential at the time. Atoms, protons, neutrons, and other concepts, for example, are concepts that point to and isolate phenomena for certain analytical reasons. Production, power, interaction, norm, role, status, and

socialisation are all well-known sociological ideas. Each phrase refers to a concept that encompasses parts of the social world that are deemed necessary for a specific function.

A concept encompasses all parts of the social world that are deemed necessary for a specific purpose. Definitions are used to build concepts. A definition is a set of terminology that informs researchers about the reality that a notion denotes. A definition allows you to visualise the phenomenon that the notion represents. It allows all investigators to view and understand what is being investigated in the same way. As a result, ideas used in constructing theory have a unique feature: they seek to express a consistent meaning to all users.

However, because ideas are commonly articulated using everyday phrases, it's difficult to avoid using words that have various meanings for different groups of scientists, and so point to different phenomena. As a result, many scientific topics, such as mathematical symbols, are described in more specialised or neutral languages. In sociology, it is frequently not only impossible, but also undesirable, to explain ideas in such specialised languages. As a result, the word symbols used to establish a notion must be defined as accurately as possible, so that all investigators are pointing to the same phenomenon.

Theoretical notions have a unique quality: they are abstract. Some conceptions are related to specific events occurring at specific periods and places. Other, more abstract ideas refer to phenomena that have nothing to do with specific dates or places. Concrete concepts in small-group research, for example, would refer to persistent interactions between specific individuals, whereas abstract concepts would refer to the generic qualities of face-to-face groups that are not tied to specific

individuals engaging at a certain time and location. Concrete notions, unlike abstract concepts, are bound to a specific situation.

(2) Variables

Different values of the concept can be seen once the measurement system has been provided by the operational specification. Because it may respond to variances in the "actual world" by taking on various values, the notion can now be referred to as a variable, as described in the operational definition. When it comes to building theories, there are two types of concepts:

- (1) those that simply label phenomena and
- (2) those that relate to phenomena of varying degrees.

Common phrases like group, social class, and so on are examples of concepts that simply label phenomena. Size, weight, density, velocity, and other terms that imply attributes allude to differences in degree among phenomena. The variable aspects of the world should be denoted by some scientific theory notions. It is vital to examine how variation in one phenomenon is related to variation in another in order to comprehend happenings.

(3) Statements

Theoretical concepts must be linked to one another in order to be useful. Theoretical statements are made up of such links between ideas. These statements both indicate how and why events denoted by ideas should be connected while also

providing an interpretation of how and why they should be connected.

(4) Formats

When these theoretical statements are grouped together, they constitute a theoretical format. Concepts are constructed from definitions; theoretical statements link concepts together; and statements are organized into five basic types of formats.

Characteristics of a Strong Theory

Theories are typically simplistic and partial descriptions of complicated social realities. As a result, there can be good explanations and bad explanations, and thus good theories and bad theories. What criteria may we use to assess a theory's "goodness"? Different studies have offered various criteria, the most important of which are given below:

- ❖ **Logical consistency:** Is there logical consistency between the theoretical constructs, propositions, boundary conditions, and assumptions? If some of a theory's "building blocks" contradict each other (for example, if a theory assumes rationality but some constructs represent non-rational concepts), the theory is poor.
- ❖ **Explanatory power:** How well does a theory describe (or anticipate) what happens in the real world? As frequently measured by the variance explained (R-square) value in regression equations, good theories clearly explain the target phenomenon better than rival hypotheses.
- ❖ **Fallibility:** In the 1940s, British philosopher Karl Popper asserted that viable theories must be falsifiable. Fallibility

implies that the theory can be disproved if empirical data does not fit theoretical statements, allowing researchers to test it empirically. To put it another way, theories are only theories if they can be empirically tested. Because a hot day is defined (and measured) as a day with high temperatures, tautological statements like "a day with high temperatures is a hot day" cannot be experimentally tested, such statements cannot be treated as theoretical propositions.

- ❖ **Parsimony:** Parsimony looks at how much of a phenomenon can be explained by a small number of variables. The simplest theory (i.e., one that uses the fewest variables or makes the fewest assumptions) is the best, according to 14th century English logician Father William of Ockham, which states that among competing explanations that sufficiently explain the observed evidence, the simplest theory (i.e., one that uses the fewest variables or makes the fewest assumptions) is the best. By adding more and more constructs, the explanation of a complicated social phenomenon can constantly be improved. Such an approach, on the other hand, negates the goal of having a theory, which is to provide "simplified" and generalizable explanations of reality.

2.2 Major Theoretical Schemes: Meta theoretical, Analytical, Propositional and Modelling schemes

There are five basic approaches in sociological theory for generating theoretical statements and formats: (1) metatheoretical schemes, (2) analytical schemes, (3) discursive schemes, (4) propositional schemes, and (5) modeling schemes.

- 1. Meta-theoretical schemes** deal with the basic issues that a theory must address. In many sociological circles, meta-theory is considered an essential prerequisite to adequate theory building. The philosophical debates like idealism versus materialism, induction versus deduction, causation versus association, subjectivity versus objectivity, and so on are re-evoked and analyzed with respect to social reality.
- 2. Analytical Scheme** is a classification scheme that denotes the key properties, and interrelations among these properties, in the social universe. There are many different varieties of analytical schemes, but they share an emphasis on classifying basic properties of the social world. Explanation of an empirical event comes whenever a place in the classificatory scheme can be found for an empirical event. There are two basic types of analytical schemes: (1) naturalistic schemes, which try to develop a tightly woven system of categories that is presumed to capture the way in which the invariant properties of the universe are ordered and (2) sensitizing schemes, which are more loosely assembled congeries of concepts intended only to sensitize and orient researchers and theorists to certain critical processes.
- 3. Discursive Schemes** are typically easier to understand than those that are more formal, but the weakness is that the variables and forces highlighted and the dynamic relations among them are vague and imprecise. Even with a certain vagueness in language, it is still possible to recognise the basic theoretical argument and convert it into a more formal format like an analytical model or propositions scheme.

4. Propositional Scheme is a theoretical statement that specifies the connection between two or more variables. It tells us how variation in one concept is accounted for by variation in another. Propositional Schemes vary perhaps the most of all theoretical approaches. They vary primarily along two dimensions: (1) the level of abstraction and (2) the way propositions are organized into formats. Some are highly abstract and contain concepts that do not denote any particular case but all cases of a type. By using these two dimensions, several different types of propositional schemes can be isolated: (a) axiomatic formats, (b) formal formats, and (c) empirical formats. An axiomatic organization of theoretical statements involves a set of concepts some of which are concepts are highly abstract; others, more concrete. Second, there is always a set of existence statements that describe those types and classes of situations in which the concepts and the propositions that incorporate them apply. Third, propositional statements are stated in a hierarchical order. At the top of the hierarchy are axioms, or highly abstract statements, from which all other theoretical statements are logically derived. The axioms should be consistent with one another, although they do not have to be logically interrelated. The axioms should be highly abstract; they should state relationships among abstract concepts. These relationships should be law-like in that the more concrete theorems derived from them have not been disproved by empirical investigation. Formal theories are loose versions of axiomatic schemes. The idea is to develop highly abstract propositions that are used to explain some empirical event. Some highly abstract propositions are seen as higher-order laws, and the goal of explanation is to visualize empirical events as instances of this covering law.

Deductions from the laws are made, but they are much looser, rarely conforming to the strict rules of axiomatic theory. Moreover, there is recognition that extraneous variables cannot always be excluded, and so the propositions have a condition that if other forces do not impinge, then the relationship among concepts in the proposition should hold true.

5. **Empirical Formats** consist of generalizations from specific events, in particular empirical contexts. They are too tied to empirical contexts, times, and places. In fact, they are generalizations that are in need of a theory to explain them. There are other kinds of empirical generalizations also. These are often termed middle-range theories, because they are more abstract than a research finding and because their empirical content pertains to variables that are also found in other domains of social reality.
6. **Analytical Modeling Scheme** is a diagrammatic representation of social events. The diagrammatic elements of any model include: (1) concepts that denote and highlight certain features of the universe; (2) the arrangement of these concepts in visual space so as to reflect the ordering of events in the universe; and (3) symbols that mark the connections among concepts, such as lines, arrows, vectors, and so on. The elements of a model may be weighted in some way, or they may be sequentially organized to express events over time, or they may represent complex patterns of relations and other potential ways in which properties of the universe affect one another. In sociology, most diagrammatic models are constructed to emphasize the causal connections among properties of the universe. That is,

they are designed to show how changes in the values of one set of variables are related to changes in the values of other variables. Sociologists generally construct two different types of models, which can be termed analytical models and causal models. Analytical models are more abstract: they highlight more generic properties of the universe, and they portray a complex set of connections among variables. In contrast, causal models are more empirically grounded. They provide a more detailed interpretation of an empirical generalization.

2.3 Models of Theorising: Inductive-Deductive, Micro-Macro, Grounded-Grand

2.3.1 Inductive-Deductive

Both inductive and deductive studies are important building blocks of the social sciences. Inductive approaches often generate theories which can be tested with deductive methods, and deductive theories can form a framework for inductive studies. The main difference between inductive and deductive reasoning is that inductive reasoning aims at developing a theory while deductive reasoning aims at testing an existing theory. Inductive reasoning moves from specific observations to broad generalizations, and deductive reasoning the other way around. Both approaches are used in various types of research, and it's not uncommon to combine them in one large study.

When there is little to no existing literature on a topic, it is common to perform inductive research because there is no theory to test. The inductive approach consists of three stages:

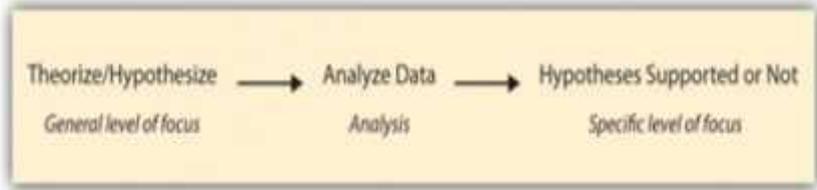
1. Observation
2. Observe a pattern
3. Develop a theory



A limitation of an inductive approach is that a conclusion drawn on the basis of an inductive method can never be proven, but it can be invalidated.

When conducting deductive research, you always start with a theory (the result of inductive research). Reasoning deductively means testing these theories. If there is no theory yet, you cannot conduct deductive research. The deductive research approach consists of four stages:

1. Start with an existing theory
2. Formulate a hypothesis based on existing theory
3. Collect data to test the hypothesis
4. Analyse the results: does the data reject or support the hypothesis?



Limitations of a deductive approach is that the conclusions of deductive reasoning can only be true if all the premises set in the inductive study are true and the terms are clear. Based on the premises we have, the conclusion must be true.

2.3.2. Micro- Macro

The macro- and micro-level theories differ significantly. Individuals and their interactions are the emphasis of the micro-level. Consider the interaction between adult children and their parents, or the impact of unfavourable attitudes on the elderly. Micro-level theories have been criticised by some because they focus on what elderly people do rather than the societal conditions and policies that cause them to act the way they do. The macro-level examines societal structure, processes, and problems, as well as their interrelationships. For example, the effects of industrialization on the status of older people, or how gender and income affect the well-being of older people. This approach tends to undervalue people's ability to act and overcome social constraints. Both micro and macro-level theories can be viewed from one of three perspectives: interpretive perspective, normative, and conflict.

According to the normative viewpoint, rules and status exist in society to give social control and order. Survival necessitates social order. The macro-level is the centre of this

viewpoint, for instance, structural-functionalism, role theory, modernization theory, and age-segregation. According to the interpretive approach, the social reality is always being constructed through social interaction. How do we interact with one another on a daily basis? It concentrates on the micro-level. The macro and micro dimensions of conflict are addressed in the conflict perspective. Poverty causes, health inequities, and the allocation of life chances based on socioeconomic class and gender.

The study of small scale structures and processes in society is known as micro level perspectives. It claims that explanations of social life and structures can be discovered at the person or social interaction level. Objects and events, according to George Mead, have no meaning in and of themselves. People, on the other hand, give them significance through their everyday interactions. Gray hair, for example, is a sign of maturity. People give objects meanings and then act on those meanings, such as refusing to wear a hearing aid because it represents decrepitude and helplessness.

2.3.3. Grounded-Grand

The term "grounded theory" refers to a collection of procedures for conducting research, as well as the end product, a theoretical interpretation of an empirical situation. The term "grounded theory" refers to the idea that academics can and should build theories based on rigorous empirical data analysis. Grounded theory refers to a set of systematic principles for data gathering, coding, synthesising, categorising, and integrating concepts to develop middle range theory as a methodological technique.

Data collection and analysis are carried out simultaneously in grounded theory methodologies, and each informs the other. The researcher evaluates the data from the beginning of the research process and discovers analytic leads and tentative categories to develop through more data collection. A grounded theory of a research topic begins with tangible evidence and concludes with an explanatory theory.

When studying the social organisation of dying in hospitals, Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss used grounded theory methodologies. In their cutting-edge book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, they explained their methodological approach (1967). Prior to the release of the book, field researchers had learnt qualitative approaches through an oral tradition and extensive field work immersions. By explaining systematic procedures for interpreting qualitative data, Glaser and Strauss revived qualitative research in sociology and gave it fresh impetus. They advocated for the reestablishment of the qualitative tradition in sociology at a period when quantification had come to dominate the discipline.

Quantitative researchers used a logico-deductive approach to generate hypotheses based on broad macro-sociological theories. The gap between great theories and empirical realities had increased, and there had been a stark division of labour between theorists and methodologists. According to Glaser and Strauss, qualitative research can yield theory, and qualitative methodologists can bridge the gap between theory and reality. Thus, they proposed that

- 1) qualitative inquiry could make significant theoretical and empirical contributions in its own right, rather than merely serve as a precursor to quantitative research;

- 2) qualitative analysis could be codified in analogous ways as quantitative analysis had been;
- 3) inductive methods could be used to develop middle range theory; and
- 4) the divide between theory and methods was artificial.

Glaser and Strauss introduced grounded theory as a comparative method for analyzing basic social and social psychological processes. When involved in conducting their studies, diverse grounded theorists do agree on the following strategies:

1. collecting and analyzing data simultaneously;
2. using comparative methods during each analytic stage;
3. devising analytic categories early in the research process;
4. engaging in analytic writing throughout; and
5. sampling for the purpose of developing ideas.

In Sociology, grand theory is the broadest kind of theory. A theory can be defined as a collection of concepts and their interrelationships. Theories in the human sciences are frequently categorised according to their breadth, from the smallest to the widest. Micro theories, often known as partial or situational theories, have the most limited reach. Micro theories are limited to a single phenomenon or scenario, as the name implies. Micro theories have been equated with research hypotheses by some scientists because of their restricted scope, which allows them to be investigated with as little as one research study.

Grand theories, also known as conceptual frameworks or conceptual models, are broad explanations for a field or body of knowledge. Grand theories deal with abstract notions that are difficult to operationalize into variables or employ in hypotheses. Grand theories are thus untestable. Grand theories have been defined as normative by certain authors, implying that they describe how a discipline should be rather than how it is.

Grand theories are typically valuable as organisational frameworks for knowledge creation or as foundations for mid-range theory development, despite the fact that they are untestable. Many disciplines have examples of great theories. In sociology, Talcott Parsons's structural-functional theory, developed in the 1960s, has had considerable influence.

From symbolic interactionism to general systems theory, qualitative researchers employ a variety of grand theories. Furthermore, openly normative grand theories like Marxism and feminism are prominent in qualitative research, however there is debate over whether these methods are grand theories, ideological orientations, or epistemological traditions.

Of course, the scope of grand theories has led to criticism. Grand theories have been described as too broad, leading to oversimplification of complex issues; as lacking in clear definitions of central concepts; as empirically unverifiable (i.e., untestable); and as static and unresponsive to changing conditions. Despite these criticisms, grand theory continues to hold an important place in knowledge development in the human sciences.

MODULE III

THINKING SOCIOLOGICALLY

3.1 Sociology and Commonsense (Zygmunt Bauman & Tim May)

3.2 Sociological Imagination (C.Wright Mills)

3.3 Sociology and Critical thinking (Role of Frankfurt School)

Thinking Sociologically

Sociology includes tools for understanding and explaining the social world as well as ways of framing the social world. It has accumulated a substantial corpus of information during the duration of its existence. Over the period of two thousand years, sociological thoughts can be found in the writings of philosophers and theologians. The phrase was first employed in the early nineteenth century, and its development drew on this rich past to examine social order and change.

The discipline of Sociology has a rich tradition of studies, as demonstrated through books and journals in libraries. They educate the general public, students, and those aspiring to be professional sociologists, allowing them to have a better grasp of the world we live in. Culture, economics, crime, organisations, sexuality, politics, identity, fashion, management, state, environment, media, youth, gerontology, health, housing, bio-technology, and rural and urban life are all covered in the

process. As a result, sociology is a constant source of effort aimed at better understanding new phenomena and putting established theories to the test against experiences and data.

Sociology celebrates the individual, but the atomism, or social isolation that is assumed to exist between us that is embodied in the idea of individualism, is another matter; which is not to say that this may not be a symptom of social dislocation. Sociology is primarily concerned with a relational viewpoint: that is, we are born into and are members of a society which pre-exists us. We are forged in those relations and our experiences are influenced by social structures and our ways of seeing by cultural frames of references. We are dependent upon others and our views of ourselves are mediated in those relations.

The central questions of sociology thus become: how do the types of social relations and societies we inhabit relate to how we see ourselves and each other, construct our knowledge, view our environments, and with what consequences? It is these kinds of questions -components of the practical realities that inform our everyday lives - that constitute what it is to think sociologically and which define the discipline as a relatively autonomous branch of the social sciences. Thinking sociologically encapsulates a relational way of understanding the world which also opens up the possibility for thinking about the world in different ways.

3.1 Sociology and Commonsense (Zygmunt Bauman & Tim May)

Thinking sociologically has a particular relationship with what is often called "common sense:" Because of its subject

matter, sociology and common sense are implicated in ways that have consequences for its standing and practice. It is precisely these relations that lead to it being relevant, insightful and, at times, contentious. The physical sciences, after all, do not appear to be concerned with spelling out their relationship to common sense.

Whilst there are undoubtedly social components to the practices of the physical sciences - from the ways in which phenomena may be inferred, rather than observed by scientists, to what sort of science is funded and how the findings of science have implications for how we see ourselves and the world around us - there tends to be a separation of the immediate effects of the content of the knowledge from the social contexts in which it is produced. Boundaries thereby exist with a rich yet often disorganized, non-systematic, sometimes inarticulate and ineffable knowledge referred to as common sense.

Common sense appears to have nothing to say of the matters that preoccupy physicists or chemists. The subjects they deal with do not seem to fall within the daily experiences of people. Those without knowledge and skills do not normally consider themselves able to form opinions about such matters unless aided by the scientists who focus on the domain of the content of their research. After all, the objects explored by the physical sciences appear only under very special circumstances: for example, through observed effects in giant particle accelerators or the lenses of powerful microscopes.

The scientists view or infer the phenomena, subject it to experimentation under certain conditions, and then justify their findings within a bounded community of inquirers. Being the owners of the experience, the process, analysis, and

interpretations remain within their control. Results have to withstand the critical scrutiny of other scientists trained in the specialist area. Their resulting knowledge does not compete with common sense for the simple reason that there is no commonsensical point of view on their subject matter.

Is the characterization of this separation as simple as the above implies? The production of scientific knowledge contains social factors which inform and shape its practice, while scientific findings can have social, political, and economic implications which, in any democratic society, are riot for scientists to determine. Scientific and contextual, or indigenous knowledge, interact with one other: for example, how long people accumulate knowledge to maintain habitats for human survival in relation to plants and animals, or the increasing availability of medical information to the general population with which to question the expertise of medical doctors.

We cannot, in other words, easily separate the means of scientific research from the ends to which it may be put, nor practical or local knowledge from scientific knowledge itself. How research is funded and by whom may have a bearing upon the results of that research with these interests potentially distorting results. Public concerns over the quality of the food we eat, digital storage of our personnel usage of the Internet, the protection of the environments upon which we rely and live in, the role of genetic engineering, the patenting of genetic information are just a few of the matters that science alone cannot determine. These concern not just the bounded justifications for scientific knowledge within an expert group, but other forms of justification, as well as its application and consequences for our lives and futures. After all, we are talking

about the control we have over our lives and the direction in which our societies are moving.

Such matters are the raw materials for sociological investigation. All of us live in the company of other people and interact with each other. In the process we display an extraordinary amount of tacit knowledge that enables us to get on with the business of everyday life. Each of us is a skilled actor. Yet what we obtain and who we are depend on others. After an: most of us have lived through the agonizing experience of a communication breakdown with partners, friends, and strangers and we experience varying degrees of social dislocation, ostracization, togetherness, and belonging.

The subject matter of sociology is embedded in our everyday lives and without this fact we would be unable to conduct our lives in the company of others. Yet whilst deeply immersed in our routines, informed by a practical knowledge oriented to the social settings in which we interact, we may not systematically think about the meaning of what we have gone through or the reasons for its occurrence, nor compare our private experiences with the fate of others; with the exception, perhaps, of seeing private responses to public issues paraded for consumption on television and social media. Here, however, the privatization of social issues is often reinforced thereby relieving us of the burden of understanding the dynamics and consequences of social relations within what is seen as individual reactions, rather than more general cultural expressions.

Sociological thinking takes us into a relational understanding. It sees the individual, but situated within a social milieu. As a mode of investigation, it will then ask questions

such as: "how do our individual biographies intertwine with the history we share with other human beings?" Or, "how do our cultures shape what we see and do?" Sociologists themselves are part of that experience and so however hard they may try to stand aside from the objects of their study - life experiences as objects "out there" - they cannot break off completely from the knowledge that they seek to comprehend.

Equally, however, this can be an advantage to the extent that they possess both an inside and outside view of the experiences they seek to comprehend through the methods of research that they deploy: from the extensive through general comparisons within and between societies, to intensive experiences of immersion in social groups to understand their dynamics. The result is a rich and insightful body of studies into the human condition whose basis of comprehension, seen from within the frames of practical reason, ranges from the proximate to the distant. When it comes to studies of the human condition, sociology needs to understand the meanings that are attributed to human actions, artifacts, and environments before they commence their investigations with questionnaires, interviews, visual materials, or observations. Families, organizations, kinship networks, neighborhoods, cities and villages, nations and churches, and any other groupings held together by regular human interaction have already been given meaning and significance by the actors involved.

As a result, sociological phenomena are already endowed with meaning and so it is implicated in the realities that make up practical reason. With fluid borders between these forms of knowledge, their boundaries also move. As with the application of the genetic scientists' findings and their

implications for social life, the sovereignty of sociology over social knowledge is one of reflection, reinforcement, and even contestation. Whilst this is not peculiar to sociology and is of relevance to the social and physical sciences in general, we can consider the relations between sociology and common sense in the following ways.

In the first place sociology subordinates itself to the rules of responsible communication according to its modes of justification: that is, accepted and institutionalized ways of constituting understanding and explanation based on evidence. This is an attribute of science among a common community of inquirers that distinguishes a discipline from other forms of knowledge and ways of justification. Sociologists are expected to take great care to distinguish between the statements corroborated by available evidence and those propositions whose status is of provisional, untested ideas. The rules of responsible speech require that the procedures which have led to the resulting insights be open to scrutiny.

Further, that it should relate to other works on the topic and engage with those in a manner that is argued to advance its understanding. In this way, credibility and applicability will be significantly enhanced. Indeed, the legitimacy of science is based in our belief that its practitioners have followed the rules of responsible speech whilst those scientists, in turn, can refer to the validity and reliability of the knowledge they produce according to the rigor of the production process.

Second, there is the size of the field from which sociological thinking is drawn. For most of us, our terrain is our life-worlds: that is, the things we do, the people we meet, the pursuits we follow, and the times and places in which we

normally interact. We also find ourselves confronted with the experiences and viewpoints of others mediated through, for example, the Internet, television, newspapers, books, and social media. To this extent, the horizons of our experiences are broadened. However, this can be selective and reliant upon particular viewpoints which can be nothing more than the amplification of existing life-worlds where differences can turn into objects of distrust and opprobrium, rather than understanding.

Thus, despite the rich and various conditions and experiences in the world, each is a particular point of view which may be partial and even prejudiced. These issues can be examined only if we bring together and compare experiences drawn from a multitude of life-worlds: that is, a disciplined viewpoint on those points of view. Only then will the bounded realities of individual experiences be revealed, as will the complex network of dependencies and interconnections in which they are entangled - a network which reaches far beyond the realm that may be accessed from the point of view of a singular biography. It is for this reason that the sociologists' pursuit of this wider perspective makes a great difference - not only quantitatively, but also in the quality and the use of knowledge. Sociological knowledge has something important to offer that common sense, for all its richness and insight cannot, by itself, provide.

There is a third way in which these forms of knowledge differ: in the ways that each makes sense of human reality in terms of how they understand and explain events and circumstances. We know from our experiences that we are "the author" of our actions; we know that what we do is an effect of

our intentions or feelings even though the outcomes may not be as we intended. We normally act to achieve a state of affairs whether, for example, in order to possess an object, to receive praise, or to prevent something we do not like or help a friend.

Quite naturally, the way we think of our actions serves as a model for making sense of other actions. To this extent the only way we can make sense of the human world around us is to draw our tools of explanation solely from within our respective life-worlds. We tend to perceive everything that happens in the world at large as an outcome of somebody's intentional action. We look for the persons responsible for what has occurred and once we have found them, we believe our inquiries to be complete. We assume that goodwill lies behind those events to which we are favorably predisposed and ill intentions lie behind those we dislike. In general, people find it difficult to accept that a situation was not an effect of the intended actions of an identifiable person.

Those who speak in the name of reality within the public realm - politicians, journalists, market researchers, commercial advertisers - tune in to the above tendencies and speak of the "needs of the state" or the "demands of the economy:' This is said as if the state or economies were made to the measure of individual persons with specific needs and wants. Similarly, we read and hear of the complex problems of nations, states, and economic systems as the effects of the thoughts and deeds of a select group of individuals who can be named, pictured, and interviewed. Equally, governments and their spokespersons often relieve themselves of responsibility by referring to those things outside of their control, or speaking of what "the public demands" through the use of focus groups or opinion polls.

Sociology stands in tension and sometimes opposition to the particularity of such views as if they can easily translate into believing they represent some general state of affairs. It does not take for granted ways of understanding as if they constituted some natural way of explaining events that may be simply separated from historical change, or the social location from which these utterances emerge. As it starts its survey from figurations (networks of dependencies) rather than from individual actors or single actions, it demonstrates that the common metaphor of the isolated, motivated individual as the key to understanding the human world - including our own, thoroughly personal and private, thoughts and deeds - is not an appropriate way to understand ourselves and others. To think sociologically is to seek to make sense of the human condition via an analysis of the manifold webs of human interdependency - those toughest of realities to which we refer in order to explain our motives and the effects of their activation.

We should also note that the power of common sense has a twofold character. Whilst it enables us to navigate our ways through our worlds, it thereby depends on the self-evident: that is, not to question its precepts and to be self-confirming in practice. It may easily, therefore, rest upon the routine, habitual character of daily life that informs our common sense and is simultaneously informed by it. We need this in order to get on with our lives. When repeated often enough, things tend to become familiar and the familiar becomes self-explanatory; it enables us to navigate our ways through the world, presents no problems and so may arouse little curiosity. Questions are not asked if people are satisfied that "things are as they are" for reasons that are not open to scrutiny and, should they be questioned, resistance to such intrusion may easily follow.

Fatalism may also play its role via the belief that one can do little to change the conditions in which we act, thereby relieving us of the burden of change.

To this extent, familiarity, and inquisitiveness can be in tension. The familiar world has the power to confirm established beliefs leaving sociology viewed as an irritant whose credibility is then to be questioned. By examining the taken-for-granted and the basis in which the life-world is constituted and sustained, it has the potential to disturb comfortable certitudes whether it sees that world as a topic for its investigations or as a resource upon which to draw for its insights. With the daily ways of life and the social conditions in which they take place under examination, they emerge as one of the accomplished ways, but not necessarily the only way, of getting on in our lives and organizing relations between us.

Here, however, routines and the ways in which we constitute understanding between us, have their place. After all, they enable us to do things without continuously reflecting upon our actions, which could easily lead to uncertainty. Here, we may recall Kipling's centipede, who walked effortlessly on all her hundred legs until a sycophantic courtier began to praise her exquisite memory. It was this memory that allowed her never to put down the eighty-fifth leg before the thirty-seventh, or the fifty-second before the nineteenth. Having been made self-conscious, the poor centipede was no longer able to walk. Equally, defamiliarization has benefits. It opens up new and previously unsuspected possibilities of living one's life with more self-awareness, understanding of others, and comprehension of our surroundings in terms of greater knowledge and, with that, perhaps more freedom and control.

To those seeking to live their lives in a more conscious way through an understanding of the environments, its effect upon ourselves, our actions, and how we live together and organize ourselves, thinking sociologically is a welcome guide. When addressing, illuminating, or challenging our shared knowledge, sociology prompts and encourages us to reassess our experience, to discover new possibilities, and to become in the end more open and less reconciled to the idea that learning about ourselves and each other has an end point, rather than being an exciting and dynamic process whose aim is to enhance an understanding of the human condition in the environments we inhabit. A distance from the realms of our particular experience cannot diminish the significance of sociological insight whose justifications cannot be based within the province of practical reason alone.

Thinking sociologically is a challenge whose process can render us more sensitive to and tolerant of difference and diversity. It sharpens our senses and opens our eyes to a relational horizon beyond our immediate experiences in order that we can explore and explain. Once we understand better how the apparently natural, inevitable, immutable, eternal aspects of our lives have been brought into being through the exercise of human power and resources, it becomes a power in its own right that opens up a world of possibilities. It widens the scope and practical effectiveness of our degrees of freedom and so has the potential to make us less subject to manipulation and even more resilient to times of oppression and control. As a mode of thinking it can enable us to become more effective social actors in seeing the connections between character, action, and context and how those things which, by their fixity, claim to be irresistible to change, are open to transformation.

There is also that which lies beyond us as individuals and requires us to stand back and enter into the realm of analysis. Whilst situated in networks of social relations, our work can take us into an extensive terrain of investigation that deals with movements and changes within societies as a whole through the generation and use of different forms of data. That is important, but not to the extent that matters of concern should then be dissipated in the exercise of dispassionate indifference. Sociology stands in praise of the individual, not individualism.

To think sociologically means to understand more fully the values, hopes, desires, worries, and concerns of people. In this way, we may better recognize and respect different cultures and how people practice their lives according to particular values. To this extent it also has the potential to promote solidarity between us: that is, solidarity grounded in mutual understanding and respect and in a joint resistance to suffering and a shared condemnation of the cruelties that are its causes. Going back to what we were saying about the fluidity of that which appears inflexible, sociological insight into the inner logic and meaning of forms of life other than our own may well prompt us to think again about the boundaries that have been drawn between ourselves and others. We perhaps have more in common with each other than those forces which seek to separate us. Ultimately, if this is achieved, the cause of freedom will be greatly enhanced through being elevated to the rank of common cause.

To analyze and represent sociological findings can draw attention to the extent to which individual and collective freedoms are enabled and constrained. That has a destabilizing effect on existing power relations or what are called "social

orders:' Charges of "political disloyalty;" or questions concerning its status as a discipline, are often made against sociology by corporations, governments, and power-holders of the prevailing social order. This is very evident among those who seek to view reality in their name, or claim that an existing state of affairs is somehow natural. When we witness reactions of this type, it is often what has been revealed which is the subject of contention and sociology the means through which it has been brought into the public realm. It is here where its implications can be debated and actions decided upon, but this may also reveal the extent to which only certain voices are then heard.

Sociology can be a powerful instrument in the hands of organizations and its ideas may be drawn upon not for the furtherance of freedom, but control. No discipline can prevent this happening, but it can bring attention to its presence and effects. There is no guarantee that thinking sociologically can dissolve and disempower the "tough realities" of life for that is to over-extend its practices into realms of deliberation and action that are rightly beyond its remit. Quite simply, the power of understanding may be no match for the forces of coercion or those who mobilize people through the rhetoric of blame of particular populations which provides apparently easy solutions to feelings of estrangement induced by prevailing political and economic conditions. Without that understanding, however, the collective management of shared life conditions would be diminished further. It is a way of thinking whose value is often cherished by those who cannot take it for granted and when it comes to those who can do so, it may easily be undervalued.

3.2 Sociological Imagination (C.Wright Mills)

The Sociological Imagination (1959) by Charles Wright Mills had a huge impact on the history of social science. In the 1960s, his compelling writing, particularly in *The Sociological Imagination*, influenced and inspired left-wing politics. Mills was born on August 28, 1916, in Waco, Texas. His early academic training included both philosophy and sociology at the University of Texas at Austin, and his philosophical training influenced how he approached his chosen profession of sociology later on.

By his mid-twenties, he was teaching at the University of Maryland, and he was a research associate at Columbia University while still in his twenties. Before *The Sociological Imagination*, he published important books on how society is divided into social classes and who holds power within it: *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (1951) and *The Power Elite* (1956). These works, widely debated by academics, are still read today.

Mills became a symbol of a politically involved America outside the United States during the Cold War, a period of indirect conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union (Soviet Union). His theories regarding the role of intellectuals, as well as his criticisms of both American imperialism (domination of other countries) and Soviet-style authoritarianism (dictatorship), left a significant influence for politics around the world. Mills was named one of the most significant personalities in worldwide left-wing politics by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in 1968, nearly six years after his death. His thoughts are still relevant in the twenty-first century.

C. Wright Mills was one of the most influential sociologists of our time. His writings are still very relevant in the field of social science. In his day, he was a radical intellectual and an inventive sociologist who stated views on politics and the social sciences that sparked debate among his sociology colleagues and the general public. He was a thinker ahead of his time in many ways, and his political activities were out of the ordinary.

Generations of sociology students have benefited from reading his best-known work, *The Sociological Imagination*, to learn about the discipline (Mills 1971 [1959]). The title has evolved into a phrase in and of itself, with a wide range of interpretations, many of which are distant from the original. The importance of history for comprehending modern society and the individuals who live in its unique neighbourhoods was central to Mills' thought. Similarly, he believed that ideas must be viewed in the context of their period and place of birth. Mills' insistence on tying the interpretation of concepts and theories to their historical context is precisely why his own ideas and works retain their clarity and freshness despite the passage of time.

Although the world has changed dramatically in the half-century after Mills' death, many of the issues recognised and discussed in *The Sociological Imagination* and other publications remain relevant today. The public issues may alter from time to time, but the private issues are frequently the same. Indeed, the interaction between these two notions and their relationship goes to the heart of Mills' vision for sociology: the relationship between biography and history:

“Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both. Yet men

do not usually define the troubles they endure in terms of historical change and institutional contradiction. The well-being they enjoy, they do not usually impute to the big ups and downs of the societies in which they live. Seldom aware of the intricate connection between the patterns of their own lives and the course of world history, ordinary men do not usually know what this connection means for the kinds of men they are becoming and the kind of history-making in which they might take part". (Mills, 1971 [1959], pp. 9–10)

The primary function of sociology is to make sense of this relationship: 'the sociological imagination enables its bearer to comprehend the greater historical picture in terms of its implications for the inner lives and external career of a variety of individuals' (p. 11). Mills' ambition for sociology, if not for all of the social sciences, was for the sociological imagination to lead scientists' thoughts and behaviours.

In *The Sociological Imagination* (1959) Mills posits that, sociologists require a unique "state of mind" known as the "sociological imagination." An knowledge of the relationship between biography and history—between a person and their specific historical and social context—within certain social structures can be aided by such imagination. According to Mills, sociology should transform individual "problems" into public "issues."

Many social scientists, according to Mills, had forgotten how to do this. He pinpoints two trends in social science at the time that stifled this creativity. One was for researchers to become stuck in their research method, unable to work on anything except the topics that their empirical method could handle, rather than the questions that mattered to people's lives

("empirical" here refers to approaches that rely on measurable, verifiable evidence). Furthermore, because this method was typically costly, it connected social scientists with people and powers at the top of society—business executives and government administrators—who could fund the research.

Another tendency among social scientists was to become fixated on theoretical issues. This was a problem because ideas were presented at such a high level of abstraction (i.e., far removed from their practical significance) that they were difficult to apply to actual research and were divorced from the problems of ordinary life. This second tendency was dubbed "great theory" by Mills. This was the case, he argued, because of theory's focus on the way existing social relations were maintained.

This two types of research that were distorting the task at hand: grand theory and abstracted empiricism. The first abandons real social problems in favor of abstract theoretical models; in the second, "the method" (that is, statistical analysis of survey results and other real-world data) limits the choice of research problems, leading to the study of small-scale questions that remain isolated from their larger context.

Mills continues by claiming that social scientists cannot undertake value-free ("neutral") research since values define what constitutes a "issue." Social scientists must be conscious of this and tackle the issues it poses; for example, a founder of research funding may restrict what can be examined. Mills believes that three ideals are essential to the social science tradition: truth, reason, and liberty. He claims that social science's potential is linked to these principles, and that social scientists must determine for themselves how to stay true to

them. Then and only then will they comprehend their intellectual and political responsibilities.

The Sociological Imagination by begins with a discussion of the promise and mission of social science. According to Mills, social science should link individual difficulties to societal-structural issues (that is, problems arising from the way society is organized).

Mills goes on to discuss the social and historical backdrop of these two developments. He seeks to demonstrate that they impede intellectual autonomy and critical thinking by putting researchers under the control of economic and political interests. "Liberal practicality" and "bureaucratic science" are the two key notions here.

Scholars who prefer to investigate one social milieu at a time, neglecting the impact of relationships with other milieus, are said to have "liberal practicality." This is done in order to capture the complexity of social problems by focusing on a smaller environment, but Mills contends that this technique isolates problems from their structural and historical context. Meanwhile, bureaucratic science places scientists under the control of companies, government agencies, and the military.

Five main ideas of Mills's Sociological Imagination

-  The first is that the malaise (the sense of unhappiness and not belonging) found in modern societies should set the task for social science. Despite material well-being, in late capitalism people share a feeling of unease that they are unable to understand: they feel a threat, but they cannot identify it, and so they retreat into inaction. The task of

social science is “to make clear the elements of contemporary uneasiness and indifference.” The main tool of the social scientist in the completion of this task is the “sociological imagination.”

 The second main idea is that of the sociological imagination itself. This is a quality of mind that enables us “to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society”: that is, to understand the relations between large-scale historical processes and the stories and experiences of individuals. Only by looking at individual actions can we fully observe how social structures either change or remain the same. At the same time, however, it is only once we understand how social structures and their changes affect the situations of individuals that we can understand why people feel and act the way they do. It is through the mastery of this complex interaction that social scientists can address their task.

 The third big idea is that social problems are defined by the values that individuals and public cherish; social problems are the situations that threaten these values. While social science needs to be problem-oriented, the difficulty is that values are always involved in the selection and formulation of the problems. The sociological imagination helps by defining problems through the consideration of “troubles” and “issues”: the former “occur within the character of the individual and within the range of his immediate relations with others,” while the latter “transcend these local environments” and are related to “the institutions of an historical society as a whole.” Individuals are directly aware of their “troubles”:

the sociological imagination relates these private troubles to public issues, and thereby reveals the problems to be researched.

-  The fourth central idea is that bureaucratic social science puts intellectuals under external interests and restraints, keeping them from fulfilling their task. Bureaucratic social science serves “whatever ends its bureaucratic clients may have in view,” uncritically assuming their “political perspective.” Bureaucratic science, he says, produces research with “conservative uses.”

-  The final idea key to Mills’s text is “history-making.” This refers to the potential for humans to modify their collective destiny. Mills believes it to be stronger in modern society than ever before; at the same time, however, he observes that the “means of history-making are being centralized”—they are being placed in the hands of power elites (the rich and powerful in society). Mills defines democracy in opposition to this power of the elites. Democracy “means some kind of collective self-control over the structural mechanics of history.” The main task of social science can also be stated in relation to history-making and the role of Enlightenment* values (roughly, reason and liberty). From this viewpoint, modern malaise results from “the collapse of the assumed coincidence of reason and freedom”—modernization has not brought freedom to individuals, as we thought it would. The task of social science is, therefore, “to determine the limits of freedom and the limits of the role of reason in history.” In other words, Mills invites the scholar to embrace the values of modernity and critically study the limitations of those

values. He especially invites them to study what is holding back the realization of reason and freedom. This is the core of *The Sociological Imagination*.

Through this work Mills was addressing a group of young social science scholars and students in particular. He set the goal of creating a critical, imaginative, and active form of social science, rejecting technocratic and bureaucratic deformations of social studies, as well as professors' useless and isolating jargon (hard-to-understand, specialised language). The *Sociological Imagination* concludes with an addendum in which Mills offers tangible, almost personal guidance to young researchers: it is a book about sharing sociology's "craftsmanship."

Mills, on the other hand, was writing to both youngsters and the general public. He achieved this by employing a straightforward and aggressive approach that gained him the positive label of "public intellectual" as well as the negative label of "social journalist." The *Sociological Imagination* provides various examples of "translations" of sociological texts into clear and easy language, demonstrating the importance of style. While the topics of Mills' earlier writings were arguably more relevant to the general public, few social science publications have succeeded to reach such a broad audience as *The Sociological Imagination*. And, of course, the term "sociological imagination" has now become widely used in academic circles.

3.3 Sociology and Critical thinking (Role of Frankfurt School)

As we know, sociology's fundamental understanding is that it studies social changes, social causes, and the repercussions of human behaviour. With its multi-spectral approach to a wide range of social phenomena, sociology has a tangled relationship with a variety of disciplines. "The function of sociology, like every science, is to unveil that which is hidden," argues French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Sociology gives us the ability to evaluate and examine existing realities, which are sometimes referred to as "societal prerogatives."

Sociological imagination incites individuals to develop a deeper understanding of how their biography has evolved as a result of historical processes within a larger social context. This leads them to critique and appraise different cultural and social paradigms.

Mills says, the more we understand what is happening in the world, the more frustrated we often become, for our knowledge leads to powerlessness. When individuals begin rationalizing and critically analyzing cultural and social orders existing in the society, their awareness about contemporary issues affecting their lives at large, becomes more nuanced. Dissent in a society highlights its 'liveliness' and implies that, by all means, the society is toiling forward to bring a change. Frankfurt School and Critical thinking tried understand these changes in 1960s and 70s.

The Frankfurt School identifies a school of thought originating at the Institute for Social Research established at Frankfurt University in 1923. As such, its members, many

Jewish radicals and all various Marxist scholars, observed firsthand the German fascists' rise to power. Austrian economist and historian Carl Gru'nberg became the first director of the Institute. Under Gru'nberg's charge, the Institute's research followed an orthodox Marxist avenue to investigate the economic structures of bourgeois society and problems with the European working class movement.

Institute staff during its first six years included economist Henryk Grossman, who worked on crisis theory, and Orientalist Karl Wittfogel, then an active member of the German Communist Party (KPD). After Gru'nberg suffered a stroke, Max Horkheimer became director in 1930. With this change of directorship came changes in the Institute's general approaches to studying capitalism and socialism. In addition to Horkheimer, some notable Frankfurt School figures from this period include Erich Fromm (psychologist and philosopher), Theodor W. Adorno (philosopher, sociologist, and musicologist), Herbert Marcuse (philosopher), and Walter Benjamin (essayist and literary critic).

Changes in the way Institute members approached capitalism and socialism included distancing academic study from activism while nurturing inquiry into how cultural systems, Marx's historical materialism, and Freud's psychoanalysis help explain dynamics of working class political struggles. Later in the 1950s and 1960s, former Hitler Youth member Ju'rgen Habermas and others steered the Frankfurt School back toward left wing student activist stances, which required ongoing intellectual disagreement amongst Institute members.

Critical theorists integrated Weber's notions of rationality and Freud's theories of character and desire into a

theory of capitalism and its culture. They looked at sociology, political science, philosophy, art, literature, and cultural studies, including film theory and popular culture, to fashion a multidisciplinary, multidimensional, dialectical social theory largely concerned with the alienation, domination, and commodification and dehumanization in modern societies (Kellner 1989).

Critical theory thus embraced the notion of totality: society was an outcome of a number of not always harmonious parts and levels; contradictions and tensions are seen as inherent. It is critical in the sense of critique as explicating what is not empirically given but apprehended through critical reason. Thus, unlike most social theories, it is very concerned with epistemology. Nor does it attempt “objectivity” because this is assumed both to promote and to hide domination.

Rather, as an emancipatory theory, it seeks to foster the freedom, equality, and fraternity promised by the Enlightenment thinkers, these qualities being incompatible with late capitalism and hence undercut by technological logic, consumerism, and mass culture. It promotes a society where people may create democratic communities and realize their creative, unique human potentials.

It was in this context that a uniquely talented collection of scholars came together in the mid 1920s to establish the Institute for Social Research, loosely affiliated with the University of Frankfurt. The best known of these men, whose work is influential to this day, were the philosophers Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse, and sociologist turned psychoanalyst Erich Fromm. The goal of the group was to retain Hegel’s notion of the movement and promise of reason, to

rethink the Marxian critique of capital and the categories of its analyses in view of the social and technological changes of the age, and to develop an interdisciplinary theory that would go beyond the boundaries of economics, philosophy, sociology, and even psychoanalysis.

Their first task was to revive the tradition of Kant's critiques of reason as actively engaging and constructing the world. But with Hegel, they agreed that reason was historically determined, yet that unfolding of history promised human freedom and joyous consciousness. Weber, however, argued that rationality, i.e., instrumental reason, led to capitalist prosperity and technologies of domination over nature. Yet that same logic dehumanized people and led to their entrapment into 'iron cages.' Inspired by the discovery of Marx's writings on alienation and Luka'cs's analysis of the reification of consciousness, the critical theorists looked at the consequences of various epistemologies.

More specifically, the logic of the physical sciences, when applied to the human sciences, served the goals of domination by reducing people to objects or reified entities, much as did capitalism. The logic of scientific objectivity and rationality fostered passivity and sustained the domination of capital. When Erich Fromm introduced Freud to the group, depth psychology – specifically, the theory of the superego as internalized authority – became part of a larger critique of domination.

Critical theory can be considered a product of capitalist domination that inspires intellectual, social, and political critique. Critical theory, with its multidisciplinary, dialectical analysis and critique of advanced capitalist society, its shallow

consumerism and its suppression of human freedom, is not, nor can it really be, one of the dominant schools of social thought. But at the same time, the power of its logic, its capacities to reveal and clarify what might otherwise be obscured, mean that it will remain an enduring part of social theory and retain an influence that extends far and wide, even to those who would question its premises and conclusions. As long as social systems breed alienation, oppression, and domination, critical theory will seek to understand and to alleviate these problems.

MODULE IV

PARADIGMS IN SOCIOLOGY

4.1 Perspectives, Paradigm and Theory; Concept of Paradigm in Sociology

4.2 Paradigmatic orientations in Sociology: Functional paradigm, Conflict paradigm, Interactionist paradigm

4.3 Sociology as a Humanistic Discipline (Peter Berger)

Paradigms in Sociology: An Introduction

As we know, Sociology is the scientific study of society and human behavior. The field of sociology is the professional application of scientific and humanistic approaches to the understanding of society and human behavior. It is a science based profession used to understand the social and human condition. Sociologist, C. Wright Mills (1959) in his text, *The Sociological Imagination*, encourages readers to think about the relationship between themselves and the society in which they reside. Mills espouses that we are innately influenced by the larger society and the historical context in which we find ourselves.

Thus, the unit of analysis in sociology can range from the individual person to a large group of persons. The unit of analysis can be one to a whole society. Different theoretical perspectives within sociology focus on different units of

analysis. Sociologists use the terms Micro, Mezzo, and Macro to define what level of analysis is being utilized.

There is debate in the field of sociology as to what are the major theoretical orientations that guide the profession. These debates merit attention to those within the field, however, sociologists would generally state that the profession is primarily focused on three theoretical orientations. These three theoretical orientations are: Structural Functionalism, Symbolic Interactionism, and Conflict Perspective.

4.1 Perspectives, Paradigm and Theory; Concept of Paradigm in Sociology

A perspective is an essential component of everyone's existence, serving as a filter through which we experience and understand everything around us. Individuals' perspectives sensitise them to see aspects of reality, desensitize them to other parts, and lead them in making sense of the reality to which they are exposed. There is no possibility for an individual to see reality "in the raw;" that is, as it is, because what is seen can only be a part of the genuine circumstance. In other words, we never directly experience the world; we encounter it through our perspectives. The sociological perspective has specific sets of words associated with it as well, and these words order and make the world comprehensible in a specific way.

A paradigm is a broad viewpoint, perspective, or lens that allows social scientists to define society and then construct hypotheses and theories using a variety of techniques. Paradigms can also be thought of as guiding principles or belief systems. The words paradigm, perspective, theory, and method are all used interchangeably in the text.

A paradigm is a description of how people behave in any given culture. Paradigms are broad perspectives or viewpoints that give social scientists a wide range of instruments with which to describe society and subsequently construct hypotheses and theories. The only thing that paradigms do is describe the social phenomenon. They assess the situation based on their data collected from the field. They're scientific instruments. People and social events do not follow paradigms: a paradigm is a point of view, a perspective, a guiding principle, or a set of beliefs. Although paradigms cannot be confirmed or disproven, they do contribute to the development of new theories.

For an educated sociologist theory is his/her perspective—it is a means of seeing and not seeing the world. Theories are valuable because they draw our attention to specific aspects of the social environment. Functionalism, conflict theory, interactionist theory, critical theory (including feminism, race, and queer theory, postmodernism, and so on), exchange theory, rational choice theory, dramaturgy, ethnomethodology, structuration, network theory, ecological theory, social phenomenology, and so on are just a few of the theoretical perspectives in sociology that tell us what to look for in order to gain insight into the social world.

4.2 Paradigmatic orientations in Sociology: Functional paradigm, Conflict paradigm,

Interactionist paradigm

To understand a theoretical orientation in any profession it is critical to understand what is meant by the term theory. Simply stated, “A theory is a statement of how and why specific facts are related”.

Functional paradigm

Functional paradigm or Structural Functional Approach views society as a complex interconnected system of parts that work together in harmony. "... This approach points to the importance of social structure, any relatively stable pattern of social behavior. [Secondly], this approach looks for any structure's social function, the consequences of any social pattern for the operation of society as a whole" (Macionis 2006: 12-13). Structural Functionalists approach society from a macro-level perspective; they view society and its pieces as a whole. Major sociological theorists or contributors to this theoretical approach include: Auguste Comte (considered the founder of sociology); Emile Durkheim; Herbert Spencer; Talcott Parsons; and Robert Merton.

Structural functional theory holds that society is best understood as a complex system with various interdependent parts that work together to increase stability. For most of the twentieth century the structural functional perspective (also called functionalism) was the dominant sociological approach in the US and Western Europe. Although the label structural functional theory has subsumed multiple perspectives, there are a few basic elements that generally hold for all functionalist approaches in sociology: social systems are composed of interconnected parts; the parts of a system can be understood in terms of how each contributes to meeting the needs of the whole; and social systems tend to remain in equilibrium, with change in one part of the system leading to (generally adverse) changes in other parts of the system.

Comte, the social theorist first to use the term sociology, attempted to gain legitimacy for his emerging field by linking it

with the biological sciences. Comte's social theory largely grew out of his vision of a good or correct society. In his view, society had in many ways broken down as a result of influences including the French Revolution, and he sought ways to restore order to society. As an outgrowth of these interests, Comte initiated a focus on how various aspects of society contribute to the functioning of the whole. In this vein, and in an attempt to link sociology with the more established field of biology, Comte likened society to a biological organism. He theorized that society is an ordered system of interdependent parts, but in a sense greater than the sum of those parts, requiring that it be studied as a whole.

With this approach, a reasonable concern becomes how each part of the system contributes to the functioning of the whole. Spencer argued that in order to determine the function of a social institution or arrangement one must determine the need that it meets for society as a whole. Toward this end, he developed the concepts of structure and function that lie at the core of structural functional theory. To Spencer, understanding society consists of understanding the functions that various structures serve for society as a whole.

Another theorist closely associated with structural functional theory is Durkheim. While rejecting many of the positions of Comte and Spencer, Durkheim retained the primary elements of their functional approaches. Durkheim's sociology focused on the interrelationships among the parts of society and their contributions to the functioning of the whole. For example, Durkheim (1965) discussed the function of religion in society: "Before all, it is a system of ideas with which the individuals represent to themselves the society of which they are members,

and the obscure and intimate relations which they have with it. This is its primary function.”

Durkheim also built on the functionalism of Comte and Spencer in his distinction between causal analysis and functional analysis. Causal analysis, to Durkheim, consists of studying why a structure or social form exists. Functional analysis, in contrast, assesses the functions that a structure performs for society as a whole. Durkheim argued that a sociological analysis of any structure is incomplete without each of these elements.

Talcott Parsons was perhaps most instrumental in promulgating structural functional theory in the twentieth century (Parsons 1937). He constructed a theory of social action which argued that individual action is rooted in the norms of society and constrained by its values. In this way, individuals carry out actions that benefit the whole of society.

He synthesis of the insights of Durkheim, Webber, and others provided the corner stone for his “grand theory.” Parsons’ functionalism takes the form of a schema or descriptive framework of society, its component parts, and the interactions between them. Post-WW2 the new framework was widely welcomed by the growing army of researchers conducting empirical research into social phenomena. Drawing on Spencer’s work, Parsons also asserted that all societies must meet certain needs in order to survive. His AGIL scheme (Parsons 1951) proposed that all societies must fulfill an adaptive function, a goal attainment function, an integrative function, and latent pattern maintenance (latency).

Parsons built his theoretical structure on an “action frame of reference and a voluntaristic theory of action” derived

from a careful reworking of the work of the “classical” sociologists, Durkheim, Weber, and others. This theory of action (depicting an actor interpreting his situation and acting in it according to his goals, interests, and normative standards) provided the corner stone for the development of an extensive descriptive framework of the social system; in deriving his framework (in the form of a schema) he and his collaborators drew on theoretical and empirical work in biology, economics, psychology, anthropology, and sociology.

In his seminal book, *The Structure of Social Action*, Parsons develops a frame of reference based on a voluntaristic theory of action. In doing so, he reviews the genesis of positivism, the dominant theoretical tradition in the social sciences at that time.

Starting with his overall action frame of reference and his voluntaristic theory of action, Parsons sought to develop a framework to characterise the structure of social interaction. In developing his approach, he draws on concepts and theories from sociology, the biological sciences, linguistics, psychology, economics, political science, and social anthropology; he addresses the integration of the very disparate concepts taken from these fields and relates them to the social context in terms of social interaction, stability, and change. His ideas are worked out in considerable detail in his second major work, *The Social System* (1951), which draws on an edited book containing contributions from a variety of scholars, *Values, Motives, and Systems of Action*.

From its inception, Parsons’ functionalism (structural functionalism) came under fierce attack. Mills, believed by some to be the most inspiring sociologist of the second half of

the 20th century, provides an entertaining debunking of Parsons' functionalism in his book *The Sociological Imagination* (Wright, 1959). He asserts that *The Social System* (Parsons, 1951) is 50% verbiage, 40% well-known textbook sociology and 10% left open for empirical investigation.

Following Parsons, Robert K. Merton laid out a working strategy for how to “do” structural functional theory in distinguishing between manifest (or intended) functions and latent (or unintended) functions, noting that the same acts can be both functional and dysfunctional for the social whole. Merton (1968) proposed that sociologists can examine the functional and dysfunctional elements of any structure, determine the “net balance” between the two, and conclude whether or not the structure is functional for society as a whole.

Conflict paradigm

Conflict paradigm or conflict Approach is considered a macro-level approach that focuses on inequality. Society is composed of unequal distribution of desired resources that benefit a minority at the expense of the majority. This unequal distribution of desired resources causes conflict within a society. Those that have the resources develop structures and methods to maintain these resources. Those that do not have the resources are always creating new ways to acquire resources; hence this approach views society in constant conflict. Major sociological theorists or contributors to this theoretical approach include: Karl Marx; W. E. B. DuBois; C. Wright Mills; and Ralf Dahrendorf.

The term “conflict theory” came into wide use in sociology during the 1960s, when it was seen as an alternative to and rival of functionalism. Initially, the term seemed merely to identify a more politically neutral Marxian perspective, but for some it meant something much broader. The strongest contemporary advocate of conflict theory is Randall Collins. For him, conflict theory includes not only Marx and the Marxists, but also Weber and a number of other social theorists extending back to earlier times.

He sees as early forerunners of modern conflict theory such thinkers as Machiavelli and Pareto. 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. 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.

Marxian conflict theory is the more prominent of two major lines of work. 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 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. 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.

Symbolic Interaction Approach

This theoretical orientation is considered a micro-level approach, which is an individual level approach. In symbolic interaction society is viewed as an ongoing, ever changing event or drama. The primary focus in this approach is communication and exchange of ideas using symbols. In this approach, “society is nothing more than the reality people construct for themselves as they interact with one another” (Macionis 2006: 14). Major sociological theorists or contributors to this theoretical approach include: Max Weber; George Herbert Mead; Charles Horton Cooley; Erving Goffman; George Homans; and Peter Blau.

“Interaction” describes particular kinds of social relationship that are different from, but constitutive of, groups, organizations, and networks. Interaction occurs when two or more participants are in each other’s perceptual range and orient to each other through their action and activity. It ends when the participants dissolve their mutual orientation and leave the social situation.

Sociological research only gradually recognized the significance of social interaction. It initially focused on groups and organized relationships before progressively finding that temporary bound social relationships are critical to understanding the emergence and organization of more

persistent forms of relationship. Georg Simmel was one of the first sociologists to mark the difference between relatively persistent social relationships such as groups and fleeting social encounters such as the mutual exchange of glances. He differentiates various “forms of interaction” and demonstrates their significance for social life. Simmel’s work has been of great importance for the development of sociological approaches to understanding interaction, in particular symbolic interactionism and conversation analysis.

George Herbert Mead argues that the emergence of interaction is grounded in the fact that people’s actions function as social stimuli that affect a reaction of the other. He differentiates interaction mediated by gestures and symbolic interaction. The former, a “conversation of gestures,” is relatively primitive and unreliable. Mead famously compares it to a “dog fight.”

Symbolic interaction uses “significant symbols” like language that stimulate the same reaction in the actor and the other. It provides the basis for people’s ability “to take the role of the other” and align each other’s actions. Mead’s work provides the intellectual basis for the emergence of symbolic interactionism (Mead 1934).

In light of these theories, early twentieth century sociology began to take seriously interaction as a “social fact.” Functionalist approaches investigate interaction as social system integrated by a common set of cultural symbols and norms that ensure people orient to situations in the same way (Parsons 1951). In recent years, Talcott Parsons’s approach has been updated by Niklas Luhmann, who opposes social theories based on a consensus about meanings and values.

He views social systems as communication systems that have developed specific mechanisms to organize their communication processes. Society's subsystems, such as politics or economy, organize their communication processes by virtue of generalized media such as power or money; they are autonomous from the co presence of participants. Contrarily, the emergence of interaction systems relies on the co presence of multiple participants who orient to each other's actions (Luhmann 1995). Systems theory remains relatively underdeveloped with regard to the social organization of interaction systems.

Symbolic interactionism was developed in opposition to functionalist approaches. In drawing on Mead's work, Herbert Blumer, who coined the term symbolic interactionism, considers "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.

4.3 Sociology as a Humanistic Discipline (Peter Berger)

Peter L. Berger's *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective* first appeared in 1963. Peter Berger was one of the most prominent thinkers in Western sociology. He described the sociologist in a certain way, he used the term "ideal type" (Weber) - this term has a certain meaning - as a theoretical concept - it is a concept that speaks of some prototype, a purely theoretical model used by us to examine reality

Berger's sociology presents itself as a special kind of modern and Western thinking. The sociologist does not work to correct society, but to understand the existing (cf Georg Simmel). The sociologist understands by the term "society" a large set of human relations, a system of interactions. The application of the concept cannot be determined solely by quantitative indices (what is "big"?), And can be applied only at a set of relationships.

The title "social" also needs a different definition from its general use in everyday life: a situation in which people direct their actions towards each other (the quality of interaction). This is a definition by Max Weber. The set of meanings, expectations and behaviors obtained from mutual intentionality is the material for sociological analysis.

The sociologist looks at social phenomena differently from other researchers, he is interested in the variety of human relationships and interactions that may occur. Berger spoke of the sociologist as a spy for society, gathering information and passing it on to someone else. A sociologist, then, examines different levels of meaning in each act, and tries to see beyond the defined goals of human actions. Because it is an unconventional thinking and an examination of things that go unnoticed, times that excel in severe shocks to self-perception are good for the development of sociology, as they lead people to question the accepted powers.

Berger asks questions we ask ourselves on a daily basis. Sociology does not invent the questions, but there is a difference in the way sociology looks. The sociologist, in fact, fights for granted. A sociologist, then, "goes into the depths of things" and "discovers what goes on behind the scenes." Most people and

social activities hide behind fronts (physical fronts, even: apartments, for example), and a research and intellectual effort is needed to initiate breaking through these fronts. Following section, from *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective*, summarize the Humanistic perspective of sociology.

Sociology, from the beginning, understood itself as a science. Very early in our argument we discussed some methodological consequences of this self-understanding. In these final remarks, we are not concerned with methodology but rather with the human implications of having an academic discipline such as sociology. We have tried to depict in previous chapters the way in which sociological perspective helps to illuminate man's social existence. In the last excursus we briefly asked what the ethical implications of such perspective may be. We now conclude by looking once more at sociology as one discipline among many in that particular corner of the social carnival that we call scholarship. One very important thing that many sociologists can learn from their fellow scientists in the natural sciences is a certain sense of play with regard to their discipline.

Natural scientists, on the whole, have with age acquired a degree of sophistication about their methods that allows them to see the latter as relative and limited in scope. Social scientists still tend to take their discipline with grim humorlessness, invoking terms such as empirical," "data," "validity" or even "facts" as a voodoo magician might his most cherished hobgoblins. As the social sciences move from their enthusiastic puberty to a mellower maturity, a similar degree of detachment from one's own game may be expected and, indeed, can already be found. One can then understand sociology as one game

among many, significant but hardly the last word about human life, and one can afford not only tolerance but even an interest in other people's epistemological entertainments.

Such a mellowing in self-understanding is in itself of human significance. It might even be said that the mere presence in an intellectual discipline of ironical skepticism concerning its own undertakings is a mark of its humanistic character. This is all the more important for the social sciences, dealing as they do with the peculiarly ludicrous phenomena that constitute the "human comedy" of society. Indeed, an argument could be made that the social scientist who does not perceive this comic dimension of social reality is going to miss essential features of it.

One cannot fully grasp the political world unless one understands it as a confidence game, or the stratification system unless one sees its character as a costume party. One cannot achieve a sociological perception of religious institutions unless one recalls how as a child one put on masks and frightened the wits out of one's contemporaries by the simple expedient of saying "boo." No one can understand any aspect of the erotic who does not grasp its fundamental quality as being that of an opsm bouffe (a point one should especially emphasize to serious young sociologists teaching courses on "courtship, marriage and the family" with an unsmiling seriousness that hardly fits the study of a field every aspect of which hangs, so to speak, from that part of the human anatomy that is most difficult to take seriously).

And a sociologist cannot understand the law who does not recollect the jurisprudence of a certain Queen in Alice in Wonderland. These remarks, needless to say, are not meant to

denigrate the serious study of society, but simply to suggest that such study itself will profit greatly from those insights that one can obtain only while laughing. Sociology will be especially well advised not to fixate itself in an attitude of humorless scientism that is blind and deaf to the buffoonery of the social spectacle. If sociology does that, it may find that it has acquired a foolproof methodology, only to lose the world of phenomena that it originally set out to explore—a fate as sad as that of the magician who has finally found the formula that will release the mighty jinn from the bottle, but cannot recollect what it was that he wanted to ask of the jinn in the first place.

However, while eschewing scientism, the sociologist will be able to discover human values that are endemic to scientific procedures in both the social and the natural sciences. Such values are humility before the immense richness of the world one is investigating, an effacement of self in the search for understanding, honesty and precision in method, respect for findings honestly arrived at, patience and a willingness to be proven wrong and to revise one's theories, and, last but not least, the community of other individuals sharing these values.

The scientific procedures used by the sociologist imply some specific values that are peculiar to this discipline. One such value is the careful attention to matters that other scholars might consider pedestrian and unworthy of the dignity of being objects of scientific investigation —something one might almost call a democratic focus of interest in the sociological approach. Everything that human beings are or do, no matter how commonplace, can become significant for sociological research.

Another such peculiar value is inherent in the sociologist's necessity to listen to others without volunteering his own views. The art of listening, quietly and with full attention, is something that any sociologist must acquire if he is to engage in empirical studies. While one should not exaggerate the importance of what is often nothing more than a research technique, there is a human significance at least potentially present in such conduct, especially in our nervous and garrulous age in which almost nobody finds the time to listen with concentration.

Finally, there is a peculiar human value in the sociologist's responsibility for evaluating his findings, as far as he is psychologically able, without regard to his own prejudices, likes or dislikes, hopes or fears. This responsibility, of course, the sociologist shares with other scientists. But it is especially difficult to exercise in a discipline that touches so closely on the human passions. It is evident that this goal is not always achieved, but in the very effort lies a moral significance not to be taken lightly.

This becomes particularly appealing when one compares the sociologist's concern for listening to the world, with out immediately shouting back his own formulations of what is good and what is bad, with the procedures of normative disciplines, such as theology or jurisprudence, where one meets with the constant compulsion to squeeze reality into the narrow frame of one's value judgments. Sociology appears by comparison as standing in an apostolic succession from the Cartesian quest for "clear and distinct perception."

In addition to these human values that are inherent in the scientific enterprise of sociology itself, the discipline has other traits that assign it to the immediate vicinity of the humanities if they do not, indeed, indicate that it belongs fully with them. In the preceding chapters we have been at pains to explicate these traits, all of which could be summarized by saying that sociology is vitally concerned with what is, after all, the principal subject matter of the humanities—the human condition itself. Just because the social is such a crucial dimension of man’s existence, sociology comes time and again on the fundamental question of what it means to be a man and what it means to be a man in a particular situation. This question may often be obscured by the paraphernalia of scientific research and by the bloodless vocabulary that sociology has developed in its desire to legitimate its own scientific status.

But sociology’s data are cut so close from the living marrow of human life that this question comes through again and again, at least for those sociologists who are sensitive to the human significance of what they are doing. Such sensitivity, as we have argued, is not just an adiaphoron that a sociologist may possess in addition to his properly professional qualifications (such as a good ear in music or a knowing palate for food), but has direct bearing upon sociological perception itself. Such an understanding of the humanistic place of sociology implies an openness of mind and a catholicity of vision. It should be readily conceded that such a posture may be acquired at the cost of rigorously closed logic in the task of sociological system-building.

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